

Director's Report—Arts Exist to Serve Communities

by Rima Dael

Arts organizations are “indispensable partners in improving lives. It is the creation and support of healthy, vital communities that provide the ultimate justification for the allocation of financial and human resources that the arts require. Communities do not exist to serve the arts; the arts exist to serve communities.”

— Doug Borwick (<http://www.artsjournal.com/engage/building-communities-not-audiences/>)

Those words from Doug Borwick capture so wonderfully the sentiments of our beliefs at CDSS. A shift in our thinking—to think of our work and its impact more broadly—leads us to ask, “How do traditional participatory dance, music and song communities thrive in today’s rapidly changing environments?” This is the question our programs, services and resources will address.

Our core programs and services have not changed—camps, group liability insurance, conferences, publications, online resources, store, and library and archives will continue, but we want to be sure too that what we offer helps your community thrive in today’s environment.

In our daily work, we receive questions that generally concern three areas:

- How to create a pipeline so dance, music and song can continue in a community. (Or how to start a dance, song circle, jam, house concert, workshop or event.)
- How to find resources, identify needs, and problem solve with issues that come up in a community.
- How to communicate within the dance, music and song community, and with the broader communities, on the importance and relevance of the participatory arts that we do.

CDSS is here because of the hard work and passionate support of our founders and the many individuals and groups who believe deeply in the transformative nature of participatory dance, music and song. Sustainability is an ongoing commitment and not just a one-time investment. Our Centennial in 2015 presents us with an opportunity to talk with you further to bring forth new ways to serve our communities. And it will be a time to fundraise to increase our resources to better plan for our mutual sustainability and resiliency.

We know that change is constant. Technology changes how we communicate. We know and are experiencing demographic shifts, generational shifts and economic shifts. We also know that past performance is no longer a good indicator for the future. In a rapidly changing environment, only those organizations that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel.

So, back to the question at hand, “How do traditional participatory dance, music and song communities thrive in today’s rapidly changing environments?” We have some good ideas but we don’t have a definitive answer...yet. We need to test our ideas. We are working hard to figure this out and we’ll share what we learn. CDSS is committed to answering this question and committed to using our organization and our backyard as a laboratory for ideas, creative experiments and collaborative problem-solving toward the many possible solutions to this question. This is the heart of what we look forward to in 2015 and beyond. Let’s work together to create resilient dance, music and song communities in the twenty-first century.



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