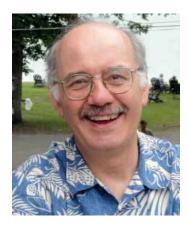
## President's Report

by David Millstone



What an exciting time this is for Country Dance and Song Society!

After a period of transition—Brad Foster moving into **Emeritus** his after twenty-eight years at the helm, an interim year under the leadership of Marie Dalton-Meyer, the successful search for a

new Executive Director—I'm happy to report that CDSS is moving steadily forward. An experienced nonprofit professional, Rima Dael has brought fresh insights and expertise to the E.D. position and she has enthusiastically immersed herself in the world of traditional music, dance and song that we all enjoy so much.

When Rima was hired, we expected that she would push staff and Board in new directions. Little did we know! The staff is energized and working well under her leadership—staff members speak about her professional expertise, supportive attitude and sense of humor—and the Board is being challenged to clarify goals for the organization and to examine how it might function more effectively. We're looking at the basic structure of CDSS, examining whether there are changes we can make in how we are organized and how we can best serve the interests of our members now and in the future.

It's been a busy twelve months. CDSSsupported regional conferences, brought together dance organizers in the Northeast (White River Junction. Vermont) and Midwest (Cincinnati. Ohio), and plans are underway for a similar event in the Southwest. Drawing on classic recordings, we released another booklet/CD package of classic English country dances. We continued publishing the companion booklets to the Boston Centre/ Bare Necessities series, bringing the total to ten, with more to come; after publishing the English country dances of choreographer Charles Bolton on our website, we will be doing the same with the compositions of Ken Sheffield. In the American realm, we published a booklet providing transcriptions and musical arrangements for the Shindig in the Barn CD of singing squares. Staff participated and

supported the Keith Blackmon Memorial Weekend, a celebration of this veteran caller from upstate New York, and CDSS is preparing a collection of dances from his repertoire. We also released our first CD-ROM publication (see page 2), a detailed syllabus and audio files from the Dare To Be Square weekend held at Brasstown, North Carolina, in conjunction with the CDSS-supported Square Dance History Project, which launched its own website this fall.

The CDSS Board, an energetic group, established seven—count 'em, seven!—Task Groups at its annual meeting in April:

- Contra Dance—Contra dancers are a growing, dynamic segment of the population. What materials, resources or services can a national organization offer the burgeoning contra dance communities around North America? How can we bring groups together within a region to share resources and learn from one another?
- New Camp Location—For decades, CDSS has been known for our signature camp programs, first at Pinewoods, later at Buffalo Gap, Timber Ridge and Ogontz. Although our camps are popular, they are expensive to staff, putting them out of the reach of many would-be campers. We offset some of that challenge with generous scholarship support—CDSS provided some \$50,000 in scholarships last summer—but travel costs can be an additional barrier. Particular attention is being focused on three underserved areas—the Rocky Mountains and Southwest region; upper Midwest (Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota); and central Canada, in the Winnipeg vicinity. Can we find an appropriate venue for a new CDSS camp?
- Song—The Harmony of Song and Dance program at Pinewoods has established itself as a popular summer offering, and CDSS is supporting the Youth Traditional Song Weekend in January. What additional ways can we help strengthen the role of song in our communities?
- Dance Musicians—We are blessed with large numbers of musicians providing music for English country dance, contras, squares and family dances. Indeed, increasing numbers of people are trying to make a living as dance musicians. How can we increase the pool of musicians, improve musical quality, and offer services that will benefit musicians?
- Technical Assistance—CDSS has a handful of large affiliate groups, but many smaller affiliates have expressed a need for help with their

websites. This issue of the newsletter contains a note from the Website Technology Task Group about their questionnaire seeking more information about specific needs (see page 4).

Two other task groups are looking into internal issues that may help the Board function more effectively. How can we make better use of volunteers around the U.S. and Canada? What changes will make it easier to set policies? Should we modify the basic governing structure of the organization?

Finally, throughout this past year, planning groups have been laying the groundwork for the CDSS Centennial celebration less than three years from now. In March of 1915, in New York and Boston, Cecil Sharp established two American affiliate groups of the English Folk Dance Society, the start of today's CDSS. From that small beginning, we've grown an organization hundreds of affiliate groups and thousands of individual and family members. It's time to draw attention to our work as we expand our offerings with new initiatives: Centennial publications, strategic partnerships with kindred organizations. community celebrations throughout the United States and Canada, tours of bands and callers, and a dynamic and expanded website. Stay tuned!



(Sacred Harp Singing, continued from page 12)

space located in an abandoned former mansion and library. (Many singers returned to this location for a second ad hoc social Sunday night, putting off our inevitable departure for a few more hours.)

On Sunday the singing was slightly more subdued—a core group of participants had been singing now for nine straight days and were, unsurprisingly, tired, but the singing was nonetheless strong all day. As the convention wound down thanks were given to the Polish organizers of the weekend's (and the week's) activities; the teachers, organizers and planners of camp; the singing masters who had helped get Poland singing going; and two United States-based nonprofit organizations who had supplied free Sacred Harp songbooks for use at the convention.\* After singers resolved to meet again for a future Poland convention, and took announcements of upcoming singings to be held around the world, the class sang a favorite song, "Hallelujah," to bring the convention to a close. After singing on the shape notes, the singers spontaneously rose to their feet and began to shake hands and embrace—taking the traditional parting hand that concludes most Sacred Harp conventions in the United States.

At these unprecedented international gatherings, singers from across Europe and the United States formed new life-changing emotional connections made possible through community singing. Transplanted to these fertile new grounds, Sacred Harp singing facilitates cultural exchange and continues to inspire community and forge emotional and spiritual connection as it does in the United States. In the wake of these events, Sacred Harp singing in Europe seems stronger than ever before and poised to experience continued growth.

Jesse P. Karlsberg is a singing master, composer, organizer and singer (tenor and bass) in the Sacred Harp singing community and travels regularly to singings across the United States and Europe. He is a CDSS Board member and also serves on the board and as vice president of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, the organization that prints the book, The Sacred Harp. A New England native, he now lives in Atlanta where he is pursuing a PhD in interdisciplinary liberal arts at Emory University.

Here are some videos from the many posted on youtube from the UK and Poland Conventions by user bigglories; the links will be posted on our website with this article by mid-December:

- Singers from across Europe and the United States take the parting hand while singing "Hallelujah" at the conclusion of the first Poland Sacred Harp Convention: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bbvDc7js8A
- Allison Blake Steel of Chatham, New York leads "I'll Seek His Blessings" at the first Poland Sacred Harp Convention: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2gJbXFc8LQ
- Jesse P. Karlsberg of Atlanta, Georgia leads "Alabama" at the first Poland Sacred Harp Convention: http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=wAMErk4QdnE
- \* The Sacred Harp Publishing Company (originalsacredharp.com) donated the cost of shipping the songbooks and the Joe Beasley Memorial Foundation (joebeasleymemorialfoundation.org) donated the cost of the books themselves. The Publishing Company now offers subsidized shipping for all international Sacred Harp case orders so that the cost of books in places like Poland and Australia isn't prohibitively high. The Beasley Foundation often donates cases of songbooks to new singing groups that can't afford a case to use as loaners to newcomers to their regular singings.