

Sing Loudly for CDSS's Year of Song

by Rima Dael, CDSS Executive Director

Given the breadth of artistic genres CDSS represents, it's challenging to address the needs of our various communities all at once. After our Centennial year, we will start a cycle of focusing on one or two genres at a time, allowing for better use of time and resources as we identify community needs. We are pleased, therefore, to announce that next year, 2016, will be the CDSS Year of Song. To start, we'd love to hear from you about where song is happening in your community. Please add your concerts, weekends, festivals, house sings and other song event info to our Events Calendar, events@cdss.org.

C# in Appalachia, another centennial

During Cecil Sharp's second trip to the United States, in 1916, his intention was to collect songs and dances in the southern Appalachian Mountains. This he did with his assistant, Maud Karpeles, eventually collecting over fifteen hundred tunes for over five hundred different songs in forty-six weeks. We're not suggesting CDSS is going out collecting songs next year—although we'd enjoy that—but part of next year will be celebrating this artistic anniversary. We've learned that the English Folk Dance and Song Society also will be celebrating Sharp's Appalachian collecting. As part of the celebration, Malcolm Taylor, retired library director at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at EFDSS, will be giving talks in the United States. This provides a prime opportunity to partner with EFDSS and Malcom; we will share more information as we know it.

Dance, dance, dance...and song

Did you know that "song" was added to our name only in 1967 although it had been a part of camp programs and festivals for many years? Next year will offer us an opportunity to examine that history and look at how song fits within our mission and activities. We also will be asking what important issues we should consider with living folk song traditions in modern society. Lorraine Hammond, CDSS Board member and Song Task Group Chair, will spearhead this effort.

CDSS's song traditions are based primarily in the English and Anglo-American traditions—folk songs, ballads, sea shanties, rounds, songs with choruses. We also include spirituals, work songs, country harmony, African call and response, shape note and gospel, contemporary a cappella, and new arrangements of traditional songs. Our particular emphasis is on community singing.

At the Youth Traditional Song Weekend this past January, Rhys McGovern facilitated a session titled "It's a really great song, but...": Content and Sensitivity in Songs." CDSS has been approached by members and communities on this topic and we'll participate in this conversation. We plan to pull together a working group this fall or winter to help frame the issues of importance in song communities today.

So Start Warming Up

Get ready to lift your voices in song and sing loudly in 2016. And remember to send your song event information for the Events Calendar, events@cdss.org.



Peter Amidon and campers singing at Harmony of Song and Dance 2015 (photo: Mary Wesley)