

Notes from the Office

Sharing the Vision: Themes and Practical Ideas for Vibrant Dance Communities (Part 2)

by Max Newman, Youth Projects Intern



Traveling and talking with folks, I've learned more about what makes vibrant music and dance communities. I'm sharing a few insights and ideas in this column, directed primarily at organizers of dances but useful, I suspect, to

many roles in many communities.

The Vision: It's the least technical, most overlooked, and perhaps most important aspect of any dance. A vision is the frame through which organizers, performers, and dancers make their decisions, the ideal for which they strive, the source from which they draw inspiration. But for that to work, people have to know what it is.

You must have a vision to share a vision. Organizers, performers, and dancers all have (at least) one, whether or not they have articulated it. Having a vision that is articulated gives organizers and the community as a whole valuable guidance and inspiration. *

Avoid the Vision Void. While not without merit, an unsubstantive vision—sometimes expressed as the “so long as it's fun for the dancers” attitude—is often a dodge. After all, what is “fun,” who are “the dancers,” and how do you determine what “they” want? Organizer Larry Jennings noted, “If there is no objective, you cannot achieve it.” An organizer's vision should be engaged with the community, but this doesn't mean shying away from presenting a vision that will inspire ideas and attitudes dancers may not have even know they shared.

You must communicate the vision for people to know the vision. Make sure people know what your vision is by sharing it in both passive ways, e.g., in writing, and active ways, e.g., person-to-person.

Write it out. How else do you know what it is? It might be a few sentences or a few pages, but it should define what you care about.

Make it accessible. Put a public version of your vision prominently on your website. Email newcomers a link to it. Have it on fliers at the door. Put up posters with your values, e.g., “Anyone can ask anyone to dance!”

Each individual in the community is an asset for communicating a vision, both through their words and through their actions. Most central are:

- *The organizers.* If you are to help communicate the vision, you benefit from being visible. Some ideas to consider: make announcements, wear name badges, and have posters with your pictures.
- *The performers.* Share the vision with performers. Maybe this means explaining how to treat sit-ins to the band or suggesting to the caller how much time for socializing between dances is appropriate. Callers have authority and visibility and they can assist sharing (and crafting) a dance's vision so be sure they know what it is.
- *The leaders on the floor.* Share the vision with those charismatic and wonderful people on the floor, especially leaders of peer groups, e.g., a homeschool group. You may find this to be an informative two-way street.

State your vision in positive terms. Presumably you like your vision because there is something fun and wonderful about it. Although there's a place for “no” and “don't”, presenting the joy behind your vision is the most compelling way.

Crafting and sharing a vision has many rewards and I hope organizers and others continue to share techniques to make this happen.

* For an excellent articulated vision, see “10 Things About BIDA” which will be posted on our website in early January as an addendum to this column.

Group Corner

by Jeff Martell, Group Services Manager



We can't tell you enough how grateful we are for the remarkable work you do at the local level to support and promote English and American dance and song. You are the ones out there making your dance and song events happen: you are the leaders, the musicians, the dancers, the sound system haulers, hall-renters, web site maintainers, mailing list compilers, and brownie-bakers. Your events are happening in hundreds of large and small venues all across the continent.

Those of you directly involved in organizing dance and song activities are probably aware of at least part of what CDSS is doing to support you, but there may be some things you are unaware of.

Some of your local dance leaders may have

attended our summer programs or camps, where they learned new dances, shared insights and ideas with other dance leaders, became better dancers, strengthened their commitment to the dance community, made important connections, and learned from some of the finest leaders and musicians in the world. Your leaders and musicians may even have taken one of our many leadership training courses or received scholarship assistance from us in order to attend any of the above. Your local leaders have the opportunity to use your Group Priority form to gain some advantage in the camp lottery.

Your group may get tax exempt status or liability insurance through CDSS. This is the kind of nuts and bolts support that allows the music and dance to happen, but that folks in front of the house never see. Your group might have received a grant from New Leaders for leadership training, youth activities or mentorship programs. You may have purchased hard to find dance and song materials from the CDSS Store! You may have received outreach grants for dance organizer training, or to produce an event, book or CD. (What? You have not applied for one? Go check it out at www.cdss.org/outreach.html). You may have gotten business advice or made connections with other groups through the CDSS staff or board, or had our Youth Intern host a discussion at one of your events.

CDSS has a lot to offer groups, and we are just getting started! Wait until you see what is coming down the pike for the CDSS Centennial in 2015! This will be the last print version of the newsletter, but rest assured, the Group Corner will continue on in the new online version and on the website. Our Group Affiliates are what keeps the music going!

More About the Online News by Caroline Batson, Editor



Thanks to those who sent their congratulations or concerns about the plan, announced in the last issue, for an online-only newsletter. Two concerns in particular cropped up: receiving large attachments in people's email and a dislike of reading long articles on a computer screen.

For the first, as soon as each issue is ready, we'll send you an email announcing the posting, with a link to the issue (i.e., no inbox-busting attachments); for the second, posting the newsletter online only, while not the ideal solution, is the most affordable option to us these days. A four-

page highlights version of each issue will be mailed to those members without Internet access or for whom we don't have email addresses.

We expect to keep the quarterly publication schedule although some deadlines may change. If you haven't given us your email address yet to get our quarterly eblasts and, beginning in the spring, the online newsletter, go to the Site Login section on our website, www.cdss.org.

Support CDSS

by Robin Hayden, Development



Our annual fund appeal is underway! As you know, we count on your support for everything we do. Your gift will enable us to continue providing outreach, scholarships, advice, group services, camp programs, print, media, and online resources, and so much more, to the traditional dance, music, and song community.

If you've already contributed, thanks so much. If you haven't gotten around to it yet—no time like the present! You can mail your credit card info or check, made out to CDSS, to PO Box 338, Haydenville, MA, 01039 (be sure to specify "fund appeal") or make your gift online at www.cdss.org/general-donation.html. It's easy, tax deductible, and so important. As Max Newman writes in this year's appeal, "Your support changes lives." So true!

Publications Desk

by Pat MacPherson, Education



As part of our e-library, we are excited to announce that the dances and reconstructions of Charles Bolton are now available on our website. Sincere thanks to Charles for granting CDSS permission to publish his life's work in such a way as to make it available to the widest possible audience, and to Trevor Monson, who was the instigator of the project and who tirelessly scanned every page of every book. As you explore this vast collection, you will find both well-known dances and hidden gems.

Retreads is a collection of interpretations of ninety-two English country dances from seventeenth and eighteenth century sources, the majority from volumes of Playford's *Dancing Master*, plus selections from Johnson, Thompson, Walsh, Burbank, Griffiths,

and Kynaston. The collection is in Volumes 1-9, and includes two previously unpublished dances. Each dance appears with music, the original dance instructions, Charles's interpretations, and notes on interpretative decisions. You may search by dance title, volume and page number.

Charles is also a prolific composer and choreographer for English country dancing. His nine booklets of original dances, with original or traditional music, plus more reconstructions, are also online and are searchable by dance title, volume title, volume and page number. Booklet titles include: *The Optimist*, *More Optimistic Dances*, *Not All My Own Work*, *More of the Same*, *Courtesy Turns*, *Occasions*, *People and Places*, *What's New*, and *Round Robin*.

Camp Notes

by Steve Howe, Programs



We've added some special mini-courses to our 2011 summer programs. At OGONTZ, *Teachers Training Course*, taught by Jane Miller, will run concurrently with Family Week, July 30-August 6. At PINWOODS, *Singing Squares Callers Course*, taught by Ralph Sweet and Nils Fredland, will be held during American Week, July 30-August 6; *English Dance Musicians Course*, taught by Jacqueline Schwab, and a *Viol Intensive*, taught by Mary Springfels, will be held during Early Music Week, August 13-20; and *American Dance Musicians Course*, taught by Eden MacAdam-Somer and Larry Unger, will be held during English & American Dance Week, August 27-September 3.

CAMP JOBS—Each year we need help running our summer dance and music camps. If one of the following appeals to you, write to me c/o CDSS, PO Box 338, Haydenville, MA 01039, or camp@cdss.org. Sound system operators are needed at all weeks, with compensation ranging from full scholarship to paid staff, depending on the session. Office positions are available at Pinwoods, from July 16-September 3, at Timber Ridge from August 13-21, and at Ogontz from July 30-August 6. In exchange for full scholarships, we need lifeguards with CPR/First Aid certificates for all sessions, dining hall managers for all sessions, and a doctor or nurse for Family and Campers' weeks. Some full scholarships are also available at Ogontz for kitchen and/or grounds work and some evening monitoring of sleeping children. In exchange for partial scholarships, we need assistant lifeguards and evening monitors for all Family and Campers' weeks.

SCHOLARSHIPS—One of the finest things about dance and music camps is the monetary assistance given by current and former campers through scholarship donations. Many of us have been lucky recipients of these gifts so we know firsthand its benefits. When registering for camp this year—or even if you can't attend—we urge you to help someone else attend. We are happy to accept large or small donations to the general scholarship fund or to our many special funds. There's a list on our website identifying them—www.cdss.org/special-funds.html.



Catch Up On Your Reading

You may have seen Larry Edelman's review of our book, *On the Beat with Ralph Sweet*, in the last issue of the newsletter. Bill Litchman, longtime archivist and librarian for Lloyd Shaw Foundation thinks well of the book too; see his review at www.cdss.org/tl_files/cdss/documents/reviews/on_the_beat_litchman.pdf. (Or go to www.cdss.org, then click on Newsletter, then E-blast, then scroll down to Publications.)

From Brad Foster: "Here's an interesting short history of the song Kumbaya and its political meaning today: www.nytimes.com/2010/11/20/us/20religion.html?scp=1&sq=kumbaya&st=cse."

From Bruce Hamilton: "Our Scottish country dance group's newsletter is at www.rscds-sf.org/newsletters/pdf/2010.01.pdf. The lead article is about an incident at our weekend where a dancer had a heart attack, and what the group did in response."

From David Millstone, passing on a message he received: "The British Columbia Square and Round Dance Federation commissioned a fitness expert to evaluate the health benefits of square dancing. You can find the report at squaredance.bc.ca/articles/Fitness_Evaluation.pdf."

And from Nancy, a link to the recent *New York Times* article on Country Dance New York: www.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/nyregion/03cotillion.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=yuletide%20cotillion&st=cse.

Lifetime Contribution Award 2011

Suggestions for nominations for this year's award are being accepted through the end of January. For guidelines, see www.cdss.org/cdss-lifetime-contribution-award-2010.html.