

CCDR Newsletter

Number 15

Spring 1999

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

This has been a year of many changes for CCDR, yet they are all built on the foundations created in 1981 when the organization was formed. Happily, we can say that while new systems and programming are coming into being, much of what has been integral remains continuous. Of these, I'd like to address the mission of CCDR: "To promote a holistic appreciation and understanding of dance and related arts in cultures, locally and throughout the world, *in order to promote world peace.*" World peace....

Upon first meeting Joann, my excitement for the organization soared as I read this mission statement. From the time I made my commitment to dance, it was for peace. My question was, how could we be at odds with other people if we were to dance together. To then find a small resource center in Flagstaff, Arizona who named it, who actually promotes the understanding of the arts in culture for peace was amazing.

I believe we accomplish this in a number of ways. First, there is

a prayer "Let peace begin with me". Throughout the organization, I see board, staff and members whom I have met, individuals living as peace-seeking, compassionate, loving human beings. From Antonio Chavez, board member who seeks racial unity, to long-time member Cynthia Knox who recently danced for the Dali Lama, people are making personal stands for peace in diverse ways. Secondly, CCDR's programming reflects its commitment to creating appreciation of various cultures and their art forms. Our events include festivals, performing arts and humanities packages, and Soup Seminars. These reflect both the diversity of the arts within our own community here in Flagstaff, as well as our ability to feature artists and scholars from many other places in the world. The theme of this past winter's programs was 'bridging cultures'. Something no one could remember having happened, Hopi and Navajo performers came together to share their stories and dances with each other and a wonderful audience in "Winter Stories".

These tribes are neighbors. Another unusual program, "Bridging

Cultures through Music and Dance", brought classical symphonic, contemporary, popular and traditional Native American music together united by the commonality of percussion and rhythm.

International peace efforts recently found us revisiting long time favorite "Soup Seminar". Dance Ethnologist and board member Elsie Dunin discussed her experience in Macedonia with the Rom (Gypsies), the "forgotten refugees" of the Kosovo conflict. In various ways we sponsor and support community events such as the upcoming May Day Celebration for World Peace featuring international musicians from countries at war who have established refugee status in Phoenix, Arizona.

My guess is that many of our supporters likewise involve themselves with efforts that bring dance and peace work together. To all of us, I give my thanks and congratulations. Perhaps together we will build bridges for peace and well being in the next one thousand years.

Marti Johnston

POST-EARTHQUAKE DANCE EVENTS RESTORE PERSONAL BALANCE

By Edy Greenblatt

Edy Greenblatt, MA in Dance Ethnology from UCLA wrote this article for the CCDR Newsletter after the Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles in 1994. After a temporary suspension of the Newsletter we are printing Edy's article, at last. We think this article's message is timeless - although traumatic experiences disrupt normal mind/body structures and function, complex behaviors with strong affective components like dancing significantly restore balance.

Monday, January 17th 1994 just after 4 a.m. the Northridge earthquake shook our homes, our confidence and our lives. Although intellectually one might expect the quake and its large aftershocks to dramatically affect our lives, I was surprised nonetheless by the resultant changes in dance motor memory and social interactions among my students. Moreover, 20 years of involvement in the dance community and concomitant knowledge in the restorative powers of dance events did not prepare me for the dramatic well-being enhancing effects which I witnessed in the Recreational Israeli Dance (RID) community. The most notable post-quake changes in dance behavior were to motor memory as it affected the ability to learn and perform dances.

First, adult dancers returning to post-quake events had forgotten many of the dances. If one imagines dances as step sequences stacked on the shelves in the mind, then the earthquake seemed to knock the dances off the memory shelves. To "reshef" a dance required simply a review of the step sequences. This phenomenon occurred the first occasion at which dancers returned to dancing re-

gardless of whether it had been days or weeks since the last jolt. Motor memory for well-rehearsed, long known dances was more easily recalled after brief review than recently introduced repertoire that required almost complete re-teaching. A less vigorous version of this "misplaced step" phenomenon occurred following each of the 5.0+ aftershocks as well. Additionally, significant aftershocks, even those less than 5.0 affected other more subtle changes in the dancers' ability to learn and recall movements. The repeated trauma appeared to make dancers unusually impatient, fatigued, slower to learn, and more needy of encouragement and reassurance. The specific psychophysical mechanisms by which the earthquakes interfered with learning, performance and recall is a mystery awaiting an inquiring researcher.

In addition to the changes in learning behaviors, dancers displayed marked changes in their social behaviors. Typically, American dancers at RID events are rather shy. When they arrive at the beginning of an event, most say a few words to the cashier, take a cookie and a cup of coffee and go to sit by themselves the few minutes until class begins. During the event, they speak a few words to other dance acquaintances, engage in abbreviated conversations with others whose first names they rarely know, and say a few event-related sentences to the teacher/deejay. At the end of the instruc-

tion period they often request their favorite songs, dance whichever dances they recall and then go home, most often without saying either goodnight or thank you to the staff.

Behaviors in the first two weeks post-quake were markedly changed. Dancers tended to arrive quite early. On arrival, dance acquaintances acted like close friends. They sat close together at one or two tables (and consumed double the usual amount of refreshments). People who had never spoken to each other embraced and inquired about family members' well being. They shared information about the fate of other members in the dance affinity group, often having to describe people by their clothing and dance styles because they did not know each other's names. They brought flashlights, radios and their own water (the water supply was contaminated). They offered each other assistance, information and in some cases shelter. It was difficult to get them to end their conversations in order to dance. Once coaxed from their seats, they danced with a vengeance. Dancers were unusually impatient and rather insistent about dancing to their personally favorite songs. Similarly amplified was their appreciation when their requests were honored. Exits and entrances included hugs and smiles for all staff members.

The quake damaged and de-

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COLLECTION NEWS**The 3 K's; Kurath, King,****Kealiinohomoku**

by Kari Morehouse

New materials, methodologies, and scholars are coalescing to re-define the "Three Ks" collection of Joann Kealiinohomoku, Eleanor King, and Gertrude Prokosch Kurath. Last fall Director of Collections, Joann Kealiinohomoku, submitted a report of the Kurath collection archive project to Ellen Kurath. At the time she finished the report, most of the Kurath materials had been archived, with the exception of a recently unearthed folder containing 117 pieces of correspondence between Kurath and Kealiinohomoku.

This folder of correspondence was a reminder of the special relationship Kealiinohomoku had with, not only Kurath, but also King. This reminder prompted Kealiinohomoku and Collections Volunteer, Kari Morehouse, to work on a series of oral histories that would contextualize Kurath and King's collections in relation to Kealiinohomoku's knowledge of their work. Morehouse plans to interview Kealiinohomoku using materials from all three collections to prompt memories and discussions.

But first, since the Kurath collection is so close to being complete, Kealiinohomoku and Morehouse approached Kurath's daughter, Ellen, about interviewing her regarding her mother's life and work. During the first interview, conducted by phone in March, Ellen described how her

*(Continued on page 4)**(Continued from page 2)*

stroyed homes, commercial and public buildings, freeways, businesses and lives. In response to the turmoil, fear and stress, dancers seemed to intuitively know to reach out to their community for aid. Monday morning the earthquake hit. Tuesday I received 35 messages inquiring about dancing (I still had electricity and phone service). Thursday night was the opening of our new weekly event "Gotta Dance". I'd reduced my post-quake attendance expectations to between three and ten dancers. When forty showed up, hugging, chatting, dancing, I experienced a new appreciation for the importance of dance and the community it creates. More than half of the attendees that night still had neither electricity nor phone service. Few had gas and uncontaminated water. Freeway collapses caused participants to navigate to the sound of traffic news with map and flashlight in hand. But, despite the obstacles, they had come.

As days passed, people and their stories surfaced. Quake induced relocation's disrupted people's ability to dance at their local groups. Dancers soon began to reappear at events in other areas. Ann, age 84, says that dancing has kept her alive for the past 12 years. The day after the quake forced her to move in with her daughter 20 miles away from her home, she attended class at a new site. The new class, she says, preserved her sanity and her will to live. That same week Fay appeared with her newly cohabiting daughter

and a full-page article in hand. Her daughter Linda, was the sole first-floor survivor in the collapsed Northridge Meadows apartment. The quake induced cohabitation of adult mothers and daughters was clearly made easier by the dance events at which the relatives had the security of attending a common event while having the ability to interact with others in the same situation.

Since the Northridge quake, Recreational Israeli Dance events have provided an important social, physical and emotional support system for participants. Dance events provided the context in which dancers were able to help each other find solace, professional counseling, contractors, FEMA advice, friendship, shelter and fun. In addition to the psychological, social, physiological and spiritual benefits we know dance provides, these events helped provide some normalcy and predictability during a tumultuous period. Because of its capacity to restore personal resilience on multiple levels, perhaps we should insist that communities in North America sponsor appropriate dance events to help heal their populations after traumatic events. *Please direct all correspondence regarding this article to egreenblatt@hbs.edu.*

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mother prepared for, proceeded with, and conducted research trips. Mostly she talked of a trip to Mexico during which she and her mother observed the Los Concheros rituals. Ellen was 11 years old, but vividly remembers her mother's incredible networking skills that allowed them to learn when and where festivals were taking place, her acute observation and note-taking skills, and thorough immersion in the language and culture. Currently the interview is accessible on audiocassette. Eventually, this and subsequent interviews will be transcribed.

We now have an inventory of the supplemental King collection in the New York City Public Library, and, when it is completed,

will have the Iroquois portion of the Kurath collection located at the Woodland Cultural Center in Canada. *Kari Morehouse is the Marketing and Public Relations Assistant at the Museum of Northern Arizona. A professional dancer, she has a B.A. in both Journalism and Anthropology.*

Please Note: The bibliographic entry concerning Gertrude P. Kurath in the 1998 *International Encyclopedia of Dance* is incorrect. The Kurath collection has been repositied with CCDR since 1993.

CCDR receives funding through the Arizona Commission on the Arts through appropriations from the Arizona Legislature and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts; the the City of Flagstaff Arts & Science Commission; Gopher Sounds; members; donations.

1999-2000 PLANNED EVENTS

September 10-11, 1999 Ramudi Sapera and Party. East Indian cultural package includes performance, film *Latcho Drom*, dance class, exhibit, reception.
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October, 1999 First Annual CCDR Benefit Masquerade Dance.
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January, 2000 Hispanic Arts and Culture events sponsored by NAU's Master of Liberal Studies Program (dates tba)
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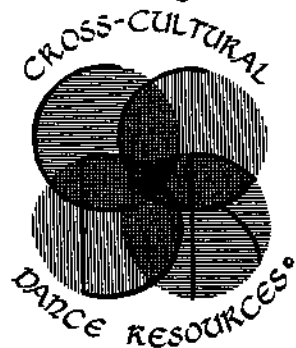
April, 2000 African Dance and Drumming. A family event in conjunction with NAU's Spectrum Series (date tba)
* * *

July/Oct/Jan/Apr Informal Showcase of Performance. A quarterly opportunity for artists to show work-in-process.
* * *

CORRECTION: PLEASE AMEND THIS ISSUE TO REFLECT NUMBER 16; SPRING, 1999.

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