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## **DCAC Archive : Director's Letters November : December 2011**

I love sin. I love sinning and those who sin.

If you are someone who has known me for a long time you are probably saying to yourself, "Oh no, the young B. Stanley has come back and possessed the grown-up B. Stanley!" Not quite. Let me clarify. For many of us, sin and our concept of sin primarily comes from the Bible. In the Old Testament, written originally in Hebrew, there are several words that are translated into English as sin. (No, I am not a biblical scholar, and I am sure some will have dissenting opinions on my views, but at least that means that someone actually reads our newsletter.) The word for sin to which I have such an attraction is "chattah." Chattah, unlike some of the other words translated as sin doesn't mean inequity or transgression, but means missing the mark, not achieving the desire for which one aimed. And this idea is something that I really like, because it infers trying. So really, I could say I love those who try and miss the mark. Especially when they realize that there is a mark and they keep trying.

In the mid-1980's I ran a performance space on 14th and T Streets in Northwest (St. Ex is there now) called the Java Rama. It was an open slate and anyone could perform anything there. We had open mics, improvisational music, Lydia Lunch read her poetry, all kinds of stuff; and not all of it good. It was a place to try and hit the mark. And people missed different marks; some didn't do good publicity and no one came to their shows, others weren't quite ready with their performance, some needed rewrites, Jim Rose couldn't always get his cigarette up his nose, but it didn't stop them from trying again. They got better by trying over and over and Java Rama was their proving ground.

I was reminded of all that just the other day when Andrew Baughman, director of Landless Theater and a member of DCAC's Board of Directors, commented during a meeting that he had lived through a similar progression. In his own words, "some of the stuff we used to do was pretty crappy, but we kept coming back." I probably don't need to tell you that these days Landless Theater does a sell-out business on most of their plays. DCAC is a place to try, and if you miss the mark, it's the place to try again. For me, failing isn't a reason to stop trying. I like process and I think trying to do something once to see if pays off is too much like gambling. Art isn't a crap shoot; it's a lifetime of work and chattah. It requires dedication, perseverance and resilience.

I think the audiences get to share in this sin as well. We all know that not everything one sees is great, perfect or even our cup of tea. Often it takes a while for something to grow on us, or to see the progress of an artist. So, we keep coming back, trying again, and with ticket prices so low at DCAC, you can try many times and still not break the bank. Typically, two tickets to a performance cost less than a two-topping pizza at my local carry out.

DCAC is special in this way. We want the rough, unfinished work. There should be more places like DCAC, where artists at every level can take risks and not worry that they will lose the chance to try again. So there it is: my idea of sin. It just tickles me to no end that art and sin can be so closely correlated. Well, at least in my own mind. So come on over and let's sin together.

**B Stanley,**  
Executive Director