



**District of Columbia
Arts Center**

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DCAC Archive : Director's Letters September : October 2010

Finally, we are reaching the end of one of the hottest summers on record, and I, for one couldn't be happier. Washington truly sizzles in the summer, and of course, it will continue to simmer at high heat until mid October, but we can at least dream of cooler temperatures to come. And this also means that the artistic season of 2010 – 2011 is upon us and soon you'll be seeing the fall round up of arts events in the Washington Post and your email and snail mailboxes will be overflowing with invitations to art openings, plays, dance concerts and fundraisers. Ah, the cultured life for me!

Despite my tone, DCAC is no different, and we will be inundating you with information as fast as we can. In fact, we have so much on the schedule it's hard for us to believe. Not hard to believe because we are not used to having a lot of things going on, but because as a nation we are in a financial crisis that has been with us almost two years now and doesn't seem to be getting any better. Of course, this is election season, and we hear what everyone is supposedly going to do to help the arts, but we know better. We know, and understand, that housing the homeless and educating the future generations are higher up on the priority list. They should be. Frankly, I don't see how people without homes or education would get much out of arts programming. Fortunately for DCAC, we are not tied to the restrictions of the DC government nor the area foundations. Almost every arts organization has had its budget cut because they receive funds from those folks. DCAC receives its funds from you. And while membership hasn't grown in dollars, it has grown in people, which means that we are able to keep afloat, even when some of our members feel they need to give a little less. Don't get me wrong, I am not encouraging you to give less to DCAC, quite the contrary, we need your donation now as much as ever. All of our operating expenses have risen significantly over the past years, particularly electricity, which is a huge part of our world over here. What I am trying to get across is that despite the financial situation we all face in all aspects of our lives, individual support for DCAC is steady, and even growing.

Artists are drawn to our space because it is down to earth, because we are run by artists like themselves who understand why it's important to keep producing art even in hard times. Audiences are drawn to us because our productions and exhibitions are also down to earth, and created by artists who care about our world, or community, and are willing to push the envelope. Not to mention DCAC is inexpensive. For artists interested in renting our theater we offer the lowest rates in town. Ticket prices reflect that, too. When you consider that a group of four people can come to DCAC, see an exhibition, enjoy refreshments, and see a performance

for less than the cost of a single ticket to some other theaters in DC, you can see why audiences like to come here. And then, of course, we are in the heart of clubs, bars and restaurants, so one need not go far to continue a great night of entertainment. And you may not have thought about it, but every time there is a performance in our theater, which is on average 4 times a week, that entire audience also sees the art exhibition currently in the gallery. So even if we aren't selling out every show, that's still around 150 people per week that pass through the gallery in addition to the regular foot traffic that the gallery draws on its own. These are the things that make DCAC important to people and keeps them coming back. It makes them think that maybe they should be members, so they can take the same sense of ownership and pride that we all have in such a unique place.

I am grateful to still be here, both personally, as speaking for the organization as a whole. As we start our 22nd year of service to this community, I like looking at all of the things coming up and saying to myself that not only are we still serving our mission, but our mission is relevant. We are a place for the people. The people who are creating with a little less, who are choosing less expensive ticket prices, who are looking for artwork they can afford to buy. As a whole, our artistic community may find itself being more frugal, but it is not finding itself without. If anything, the situation has spawned more creativity from the artists, and I think more interest from the audiences. We know there is going to be innovative art; we know there is going to be fantastic performance, and we know where you can find it. That's right, right here at the center of DC arts. You knew I'd get around to that, didn't you? I look forward to seeing you here soon.

B Stanley,
Executive Director