


Ideas into Practice



The genius thought
Floating through molecules of time
Until you
The idea — a spark
A reality to you
A tool for others
Grasp, latch on, harness
Grind the wheels
Make it real

P. J. Gibson



Ideas into Practice

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Introduction

While the creative process is a startling one emanating from the individual artist, it has to touch others to gain its full realization. In attempting to define that touching, we must clearly observe the artists, their tools, their experiments and their impact upon the artistic continuum. The artists' new concepts and experimentation become the threads from which the cultural tapestry in society is woven.

It is in the perspective of this creative process that we will examine some of the results and effects of the artistic movements which surfaced in the late 1950's, early 1960's, and formed foundations for new cultural structures. The social context of that period was one of change in all areas of American life, which, in turn, motivated many artists in the direction of smaller decentralized communities.

The possibility of developing a way of life in the everyday setting of a local community was, and still remains, a challenge to the artist. The shape of such effort has taken many forms, such as public murals, street theatre, instruction and training units in all artistic disciplines and revivals of traditional folk arts. The new arts landscape, while inspiring, is not devoid of perplexing pragmatic and functional issues. The artists working in these settings are the impulse and the catalyst of many of the projects aided by the Expansion Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The purpose of *Ideas Into Practice* is to explore some concepts which have become practical applications of arts for all the people. This manual attempts to trace the progress of artists' dreams as they grow from an idea into a concrete realization. The examples, drawn from an inventory of Expansion Arts projects, are used to illustrate the common experiences and problems of the programs at the artistic and managerial levels.

Ideas Into Practice is designed to be of value to your organization's board of directors, resource and funding agencies, related institutions and, of course, the artists and their associates operating the projects. You must remember that while the philosophical goals and objectives of all the programs may be shared, the specific intent and manifestations of each vary as much from program to program as do the individual artists, participants and communities.

The examples in this publication represent a full range of artistic disciplines. The filmmaker, musician/composer, theatre artist, dancer/choreographer, craftsman, writer and the multi-disciplined artist are the guiding forces in the development of community-based arts centers. A brief review of the artists' background reveals a full spectrum of training experiences, ranging from traditional institutions and workshops to alternative methods of creative apprenticeship and study. The principal ingredients required in the creation of the programs include artistic professionalism matched with communication skills—which assist in implementing concepts in situations where no standard models exist.

This publication is one in a series of four developed by the Expansion Arts Program to assist you in the development of your community-based program. Other topics in the series include basic management, institution building and dealing with space.



CHAPTER 1

The Idea Into Practice:

the
people
and the
concepts

Despite the presence of vigorous cultural traditions in disenfranchised and isolated groups, the people were not direct participants in, or shapers of, established institutions. The diverse lifestyles and regional heritages reflected in Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian American, rural and urban communities are major contributors to the lifelines of our culture. However, until recently, there have been few structures and institutions that gave forceful expression to these cultures.

The projects under discussion in this publication have been charted in new settings, for new audiences and with new goals. We shall consider some of the results and attempt to find the pulse that operates in the successful program, as well as the common areas of failure. Although there are no testing laboratories for the arts, we will attempt to formulate guidelines for the future based upon the experiences of existing projects.

Often, traditional molds must be broken and new ones formed to support artistic concepts, to maintain standards of artistic quality and to anticipate new forms and new objectives. Some of the flexible forms that have been generated over the past decades in the community arts field have taken the following shapes:

1. Mobility schemes: travel units for performances and other presentations, street theatre and various caravan ensembles.
2. Art for walls and street murals in urban and rural settings.
3. Creative projects that explore and affirm cultural heritages and traditions and revivals of the customs of given regions.
4. New training alternatives for insular communities—which bring new talent into the arts field.
5. Utilization of technology and media for communications and design centers.
6. Programming outdoor spaces such as waterways, parks, plazas, farmlands, streets, etc. into creative environments for visual and performing events.

7. New concepts in museum programming, as well as the development of environmental museum settings.

8. Art as a teaching tool in the classroom—for the teacher, as well as the student.

9. Arts in neglected communities—such as prisons, hospitals and other institutional settings.

Making these possibilities become realities requires a creative application of management skills, fearlessness and a strong dose of pragmatism. As we examine the steps from the conceptual stage to the implementation of project ideas we shall begin to understand the demands for creativity and discipline placed upon the artist.

ARTS PROGRAMS: EXAMPLES

In choosing examples of programs upon which to focus attention, we have taken into consideration the following characteristics to ensure that a rich sampling of experiences in art-related fields be represented:

1. We have included multi-discipline, as well as single-discipline, projects.
2. There are representative projects from all the categories funded by the Expansion Arts Program: instruction and training, arts exposure, special summer projects, neighborhood arts services, community cultural centers, regional tour events and community arts consortia.
3. Through field reports and on-site visits we have gathered data on many programs which have met rather high standards in their internal operations. The projects have a demonstrated impact upon the community, and the quality of the arts they generate is high.
4. We have chosen projects whose stated objectives and capability for delivery are realistic and viable.
5. The programs differ considerably and represent various regions of the United States, as well as different

national backgrounds and economic communities.

6. The programs under discussion range from those with expenditures of under \$50,000 a year to those with annual operating budgets of \$200,000 or more. The programs in each bracket operate with success and offer high standards of quality.

The idea originates with the artist. Very often, the first step in its realization involves the artist's initiating a dialogue with a person who is a creative thinker, a good administrator or an effective organizer. The success of the project often depends upon the strength of the relationship between the artist and the organizer. We have reviewed some cases of successful one-man projects which have worked due to the strength of their founders and the unique support they have been able to muster. We must bear in mind that the steps do not always occur in a sequential order.

The program activity may begin and elicit a strong response from the community before the artists and their associates have had time to plan for long-range effectiveness. However, if the original idea has vitality, urgency and high creative standards, it will touch the lives of people in a spontaneous, valid way. Through such impact, the organizers can begin to refine and shape an organization with potential for continuity and stability. A delicate balance is required in constructing an organizational structure; it must provide firm support for the art, while avoiding rigidity which obstructs the fluidity of creative experience.

BEHIND THE WALL—The Prison Program

The period of the 1960's caused many of us to realize that institutions needed to be changed. During this time artists conceived alternative ideas, and implemented innovative projects in such places as penal institutions, hospitals, schools, community groups and other institutions and agencies.

Despite difficulties—and an initial reluctance on the part of city and state

officials, prison wardens and other authorities—the artists began to make behind-the-wall contacts as volunteers as far back as 1960 and, in some instances, earlier. The successes of several programs confirmed that prison inmates could respond to the artistic experience in a positive and receptive way. Although, many of the inmates approached such programs with skepticism at first, the development of art workshops came to be more significant than simple recreation or keep-busy activities. In a relatively short time, inmates at various prisons began to respond with high interest and to participate in prison arts workshops. For the inmates it was an expressive experience on their own terms: a process of opening-up through writing a short story or play or participating in improvisational theatre pieces.

These programs began to bridge the gap between the prison and the outside community. The one element common to all these situations was the establishment of a valid relationship between two normally estranged segments of society.

Requirements for an artist going into a prison were:

1. A sensitivity to the local bureaucracy in order to win sufficient cooperation from the prison warden and other authorities for operating a program.
2. A realistic and honest responsiveness to the prisoners on the part of the artist. There was no instant or overnight acceptance. A performance or rap session usually served as the initial meeting, or a series of preworkshop meetings were held among the inmates and the artists. The artist would have to draw upon his sensibilities for communication during the early stages.
3. The artist had to find ways to assist the inmate upon reentry into non-prison life, without making false or unrealistic promises.
4. The project organizers were responsible for creating methods to circulate and to make available the artistic products to other prison audiences and the

outside. Bringing visibility to the effort was extremely important in gaining public support and funds for the projects and in providing encouragement for the inmates.

5. Encouraging and planning for inmates' take-over and leadership of their own programs was the final requisite.

The successes encountered by the inmates began to represent alternative values, new awareness and motivation towards outside alternatives. However, these benefits had to be weighed against the reality that the arts seldom provide a viable way to earn a living and to support a family on the outside; therefore, some practical applications had to be thought out. The communications field presented many interesting training possibilities.

At the outset, the artist and the inmate knew neither each other nor what the results would be. However, the artist and the inmate comprised a new force behind prison walls. Total human experiences were being examined through art, with results that the standard counseling and educational programs were not able to achieve. Writing workshops turned up talent not previously realized. Small theatre groups were developed, performing original material, as well as published plays from the outside. Professional performers began to appear before prison audiences and, in some cases, performing ensembles from within the prisons began to tour other penal institutions and the outside. Word got around to other prisons, and slowly, with determination, inmates began to request these programs and to take on organizing initiatives themselves. In order to establish validity in the inmate community, the artists who organized prison arts programs could not project a do-good attitude—that would simply cause the programs to fall apart.

The participating inmates began to feel a new energy and self-awareness. Thus, when a prisoner was released, the question was raised: "How do I now pursue a relationship with others on the outside so that I can continue to learn and grow as a creative person?" It became clear that there was a growing need for continued work by the same group of artists with the inmate during the reentry period.

More effective stimulating programming by agencies—such as the Department of Criminal Justice, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and other service agencies—is now being advocated and studied. Experiences of artists who have worked with the incarcerated have varied, yet the majority have been rewarding. Although prison programs have not been adopted into the penal system as ongoing programs, we now know that they can replace—at a lower cost—many of the services presently offered to inmates.

The artist had succeeded if he or she did not water down the artistic process or overestimate its impact. The artist touched base in a community hidden away from society and, as a result, changed it in the process. Whenever possible, the artists developed program models which the inmates could successfully adopt and put into operation.

GRAFFITI—On Second Glance, Not Simply an Urban Disorder

The creativity and ideas of a group of painters who came together after observing and considering the intense amount of graffiti on outdoor walls, signs, public vehicles and virtually all other public structures brought about a beneficial project for the community and graffiti artists. It occurred to these artists that the energy at work in these creations was neither incidental nor isolated, but rather the expression of an overwhelming need for a visual expression by residents in neighborhoods which offered no support or responsiveness to creative needs. The graffiti was a persistent, not a disappearing or lessening, phenomenon.

As a visual explosion, graffiti began to take on a more and more organized look. The gigantic cartoon fantasies created with spray materials often appeared to require a team effort for their realization. Destructive or not, this activity indicated that something was going on which might be redirected. Some of the artists who resided in the community began to

approach a few of the youths making it in graffiti. In a casual manner, almost one by one, the graffiti makers began coming into the studio the artists had organized. Early on, the youths saw slides of graffiti they had created. The graffiti slides were viewed along with works by professional artists. In this perspective, some of them were turned on by their very own visuals. Also, this method of comparison served to take them a step further in the creative process, beyond spontaneous graffiti.

Rap sessions helped the graffiti makers and the local artists to establish a sense of rapport. This relationship resulted in the youths beginning a design for an outdoor wall mural in their community. Designing, scaling and planning for the project became a technical and creative experience which evoked the same feelings of excitement encountered in producing graffiti. However, this time permanent tools and creative alternatives were being developed; the interested response of the community, from both the adults and the young people in the area, added incentive to the project.

Adapt programs to the communities' lifestyles, needs and heritage.

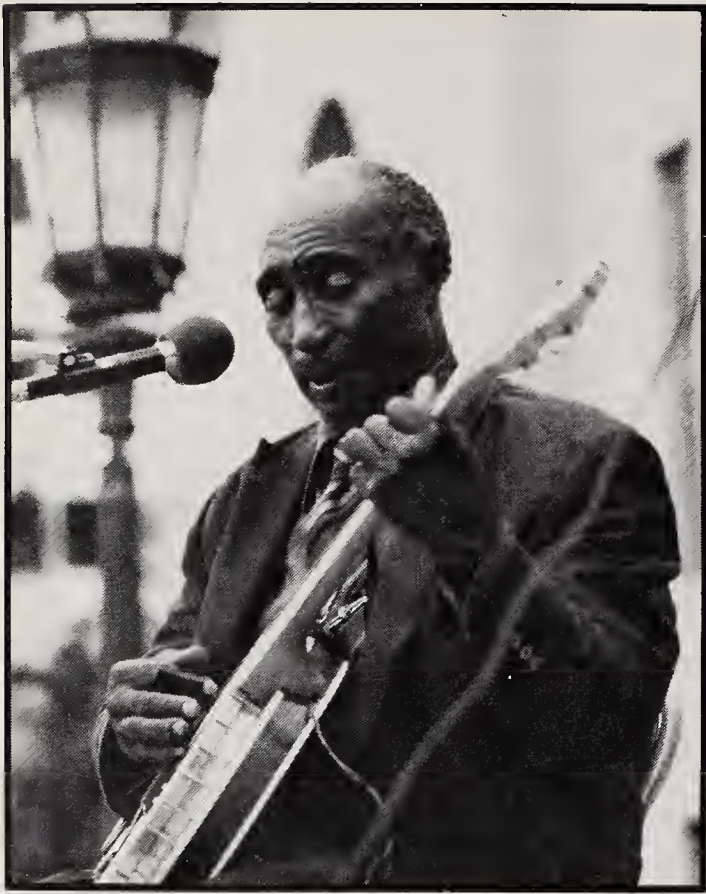


From this initial project, a mural studio and a professional training program for small design groups has evolved. The studio produced high quality work and began to acquire design projects; as the program developed it turned on the other committed, graffiti-producing youth in the area. The fact that less graffiti appeared in the neighborhood was a side effect of the project; the original intent was to allow a creative experience to evolve from existing activities in the neighborhood. That very experience began to neutralize and reverse the other activity and presented an alternative which was not artsy, but creative. In this case, as in the prison situation, the artists were not addressing themselves to mere substitutions for the existing conditions, but providing meaningful choices in people's lives. The program provided the youths with not only an opportunity to grow and express themselves, but also with a chance to probe and expand their environment.

Other wall mural and visual design groups have attracted numbers of young and developing artists within various neighborhoods. These programs have been commissioned to generate public arts projects—such as plazas and environmental projects in open spaces within the cities—and have often produced striking results. Although some of these programs earn income through contracted services, they do not usually become completely self-sustaining.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY—A Large Part of America

A high percentage of the United States population lives in rural communities. A major portion of the United States land mass remains rural, especially in the northeastern, southeastern, midwestern and far western regions of the country. Representative rural populations—including American Indians, poorer Appalachian settlements, farm and mining communities, migrant camp communities populated by Black Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans and Americans of varied European ancestry—often reside in dire poverty within the affluent society.



The growing consciousness within these communities has attracted diversified services; moreover, it has inspired dedicated professionals from the regions, as well as others who had settled in them, with a commitment to make change happen. Counted among these specialists are sculptors, painters, craftsmen, theatre artists, writers and other artists.

In the four-state Appalachian area—West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky and Arkansas (Cumberland Gap)—there has been a history of economic devastation. The conditions resulting from strip mining and low employment have created a myriad of social, economic and health problems for rural families. Since the nineteenth century, however, coal mining struggles, colorful and powerful labor leaders and a self-sustaining folk culture constituted a rich history and heritage in this area. Traditional crafts, folk songs and storytelling formed the traditions which have characterized this culture for many generations.

In an attempt to address some of the prevailing problems, federal government agencies generated programs which employed social workers, educators, community planners, developers and organizers to work in the area. Community design centers began to function: projects to support other creative activities began happen-

ing, and portions of the local population were attracted to these activities. In the process, people were re-inspired by their traditional lifestyles; they became involved in the projects, such as local craft fairs and folk festivals. Music of the area was recorded and performed in informal and organized settings. A renaissance of Appalachian cultural expression began to constitute a force in the reconstruction of the area. Cultural advocacy was occurring in accord with social needs.

Workshops which offered training in writing, theatre, dance, visual arts, barn murals and films were becoming real alternatives for many of the families living in remote areas. Many communities began to request such programs and to organize them whenever possible. This revitalization of a traditional culture brought the elders in the community together, because they were bearers of the traditional forms which were dying out; the interaction of old and young within the programs served to introduce these forms to the younger generation. The artists working in the region could not impose projects upon the people. In order to be successful they had to adapt their programs to the communities' lifestyles, needs and heritage.

The artists operated through a regional umbrella organization which supported satellite projects in the mountain communities. This original organization has accomplished its mission and does not function actively today. During its five years of operation, it spawned projects that are now rooted in various communities and are operated by the residents themselves, who define their shape and objectives. This is probably one of the best examples of the phasing out of a program that has realized its goal: in this case, to stimulate and to support a community towards creating its own cultural programs.

MUSEUMS—Community, Storefront, Alternative Programs

Most traditional American museums are based upon older European models; thus, they usually reflect the formal Grand Place home, housing art objects and treasures. As great resources,

museums are visited and used by large segments of our population. Nevertheless, they are not serving broad sections of the population.

Many factors contribute to the limited patronage of museums—for example: lack of viewing hours to accommodate working people; central, as opposed to decentralized, locations; and an awesome formality, rather than inviting atmosphere, to encourage a newcomer. The traditional style of museums has usually made them appear to be out of reach for artists and residents of small communities. Consequently, the establishment of museums was seldom considered a feasible undertaking at the local level. It is, however, clear that the museum is a significant force in the perpetuation of culture.

Within the past decade, groups from Black, Hispanic and other minority communities have begun to focus on ways to preserve the museum concept while making it more responsive to, and expressive of, diverse cultures. As people from various communities worked to determine what forms these new cultural

institutions should take, there was an urgency in their deliberations, stemming from the need and the desire to fulfill a special purpose for each community.

In the course of deliberations on new forms for museums in the community, a number of new concepts and problems came into focus:

1. There was a real need for museums that reflected both the contemporary and historical culture of the immediate neighborhood.
2. Community museums could and should provide neighboring schools with new resources for the classroom.
3. Local neighborhoods must be explored to find accessible settings for these new institutions.
4. Provision must be made for designing and adapting spaces to provide maximum flexibility for planning an installation.
5. Cultural objectives had to be defined, and programming undertaken, to provide neighborhood impact in line with these goals.



6. Development of professional staffing had to be instituted, including the development and training of minorities for museum operations.

These were some of the issues addressed at the time. The creation of a community museum in many cases originated from individual ideas and then was implemented through a collective of interested people who brought with them local and regional expertise, interests and drives.

Although current annual budgets of community museums may range from \$100,000 to over a million dollars, some of the following activities were characteristic of these programs at early stages in their development. The examples cited are drawn from the periods when the programs were without substantial funds.

1. The museums mounted traveling exhibitions, as well as mini-exhibitions, mobile units, which traveled to neighborhoods, schools and community groups.

2. Museums provided studio space and equipment for selected local artists through a resident artists program.

3. More recently, a museum allowed a local dance company to utilize museum space for rehearsals during evening hours.

4. Poetry readings, film showings and other art exhibition forms have been encouraged in the museum setting.

5. Another museum, having access to an adjacent commercial garage, converted the space into a working 330 seat theatre and offered free and very low-cost performances of local and low-budget professional productions.

Programs such as these have helped to define the new roles museums can play in the community and have shown how museums can be responsive to their communities.

As of this publication, there are approximately 50 community museums operating in the United States with the capability of long-range programming. Through exchange touring exhibitions, museum staff training programs, concept sharing for exhibitions and nonexhibition

programs, these museums are relating to community residents and projecting themselves as living resources—about life. Most of all, they are telling a generation of community people that there is a museum here, for and about you.

Although a museum requires extensive and thorough planning and organization before it begins to operate, it must also undergo many changes and modifications so that it remains responsive to the local community. At the same time, it can grow to have a regional or national impact. The community museum requires the patronage of local residents and those from the surrounding areas. Within a well-organized structure, open-ended planning should exist in order to allow for new, unusual and relevant program schemes. Acquiring a permanent collection at inception may not be of principal importance. Rather, the museum's organizers should concentrate on providing exhibitions and programs of quality which reflect the lifestyle and cultures of the host community and other sister communities. Free or minimal cost services to the local institutions, schools and artists should be featured. Possibilities for earning income are maximized through the establishment of a small gift or craft shop, restaurant facilities, etc. Such innovations will also stimulate the older institutions to explore new and vital roles for their operations to play.

FESTIVALS—An Ancient and Contemporary Ritual

Festivals represent a very old idea, known through history and across cultures. Their contemporary manifestations infuse a new vitality and coming together in the prevailing surroundings. Festivals have impact on large numbers of people and offer an intrinsic and spontaneous experience of contact, participation and collective celebration. They require careful planning, hard work, lots of help, materials, freely donated and equipment begged or borrowed.

The theme or core idea around which a festival is organized is important. It



A successful festival provides an opening for artists to create ongoing projects in an area.

may highlight a concept related to the local heritage, community issues or regional differences. Uncovering what really lies just below the surface of people's lives in this area is what determines a thematic presence.

The artists are important in putting festivals together and in bringing an artistic format and creative flow to the festival. However, such events require interest and participation from the community. The people are the living representatives of the community and have molded the local traditions. They offer spiritual leadership, as well as knowledge of the traditions and history of the community—often in the form of old family stories passed from generation to generation. The community's support and participation will make a festival happen and will make it real. The given community may be one or several groups within a city, a state or a region. The groups may be of varied nationalities, varied interests, etc. In a city, it may take one or many neighborhoods to design a festival; the impulses are different, but the reality of people is the same.

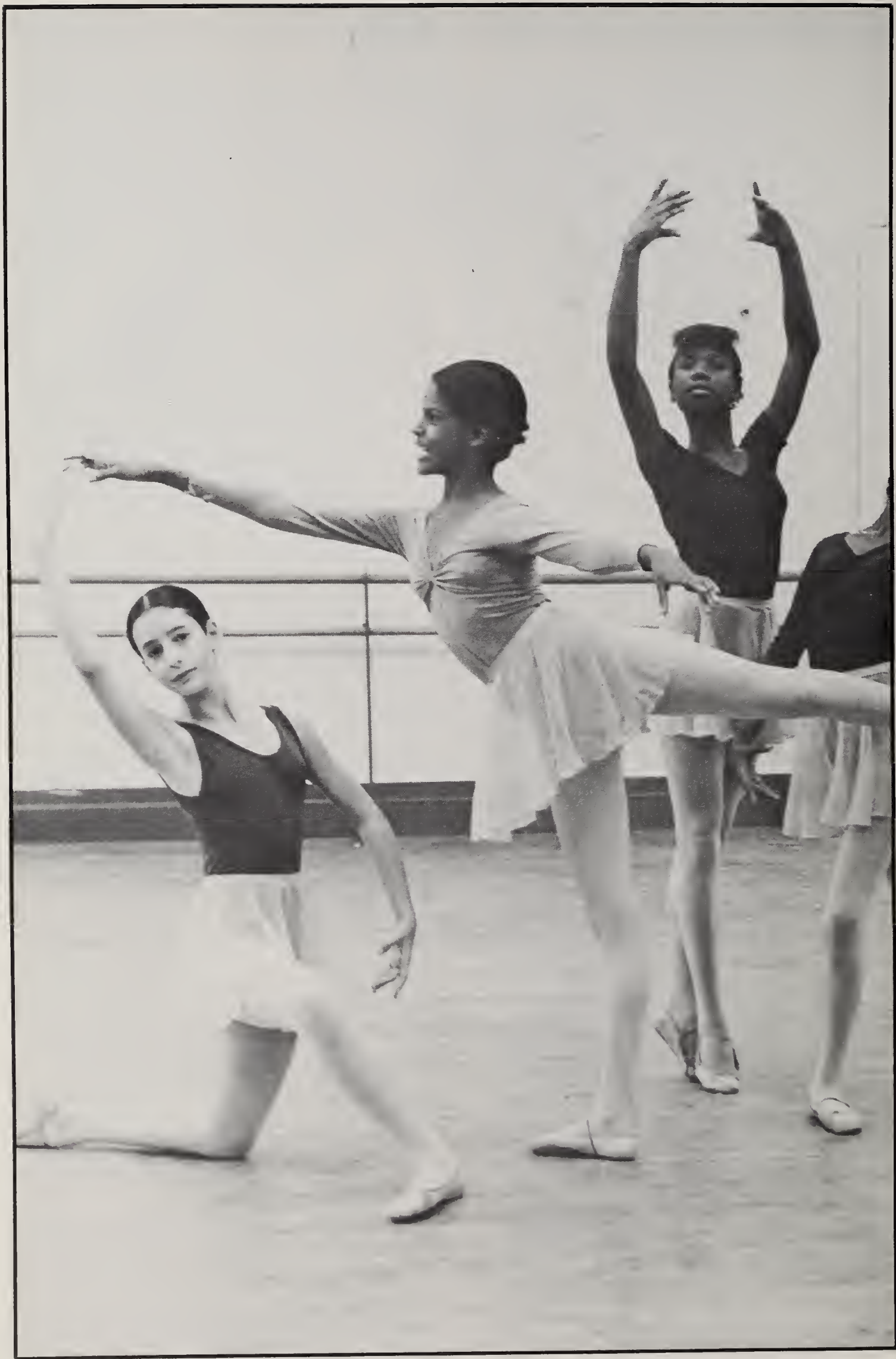
The wonderful thing about festivals is that they are a gathering of people and cultural or social expressions. They provide an environmental stage for traditional and contemporary arts, of all disciplines, happening simultaneously for one day, two days or a long holiday weekend. They attract people and bring them together; almost everyone can participate in, and add something to, them.

The Expansion Arts Tour Report had some of the following things to say about festivals:

"Festivals give us a sense of smell, touch, sight, sounds, and taste . . . The poetry, music, and dance in a festival can transform a straight formality into a moving experience. . . A ceremony is a symbolic theatre, providing moments in a festival day where people may focus together on a gesture having meaning to them."

These quotes capture the essence of the best festivals we have seen.

The impact of festivals is extremely important. A successful festival provides an opening for artists to create ongoing projects in an area. After the festival event, make good use of the receptivity that was gained.





CHAPTER 2

Growth:
steps,
stumbles
and the
pursuit
of excellence

achievements. The field now has many excellent models. We have to find ways of channeling the training gained from previous experiences into the current effort.

VARYING A PROGRAM: EXPANDING OR SHRINKING MAY BE A GOOD STEP FOR YOUR PROJECT

Expanded or added activity often becomes confused with making a program better or more attractive. Expansion does not necessarily make a better program. Nor should expansion be seen as program development and variation. These are separate, totally different issues which require effective planning and implementation. While being aware of the need for long-term planning to expand or curtail a program, the program director should give close attention to the demands of program development and variations. The following examples further illustrate how expansion or trimming may affect the arts program.

The first example is a children's community visual arts workshop which offered a variety of experiences in visual art forms to several age groups. During school hours local teachers brought classes to the site; in the afternoons and on Saturdays, older children came on their own or with parents. In a short time, because of the creative excitement happening with the children and adults in this rather inspiring setting, it was found that the parents tended to stop by more often and to volunteer for chores and fund-raising projects. In addition to a very dedicated parents' committee, a core of parents became interested in starting a workshop for themselves. As participants in the workshops, they created saleable objects which produced an income for the school.

Over a period of three years, several vital developments began to take place.

Expansion does not necessarily make a better program.

The example of building a community museum raised many questions—questions which are equally applicable to other programs. Essentially, the issues which were discussed dealt with the areas of space, the recruitment and training of expert staff, developing ties with local institutions and program planning.

Separately or together, these problems are demanding ones which often must be resolved over a relatively short period of time. It is important, however, to remember that many community-based programs are in their fifth to tenth year of operation and have taken that long to stabilize; others have been reorganized, taking on a new shape; and some have ceased to exist—a fact which should not be considered alarming. We have learned much over the last decade, gaining experience and knowledge through errors, as well as

There was an active parents' and neighborhood friends' committee which systematically took on fund-raising and promotional projects on a community- and city-wide level. Also, an after-school workshop for teachers in the community was established. Eventually, the program began to contract with child and youth service agencies for studies and other projects on a selective basis. The latter provided income and institutional credibility for the program, as well as broadening its fund-raising base.

The second example is a visual arts program which succeeded in realizing its original purpose. The neighborhood itself had no previous programs of this type, yet the project was able to involve the local families and schools. Initially, the project was dependent upon resources and funds from nonneighborhood institutions which were willing to support an outreach program within the community. Over a period of several years the program became less of an outreach program planned and implemented by others. Instead, it began to define its own character and to take over its fund-raising objectives; finally, the program was successful in purchasing and renovating a small building to house its activities. It did not expand or create new discipline areas. It did, however, vary and redevelop its programs to full capacity, realizing its objectives.

It is very important to keep in mind projects of this kind. However well planned and well funded at initiation, they must continue to define their program roles and purposes so that within the structure there are fluid and open-ended areas for development and community responsiveness. At the same time, projects have to be receptive to new program potentials or adaptations for enrichment and effectiveness.

For example, a parents' workshop that takes on a creative project may pay for itself with minimal fees and also generate a creative product which the parents can sell and distribute. In the example cited, the parents' participation was an extension that did not drain program staff and funds, but instead produced a small income. Also it created a better program and parent-staff-child rapport. Similarly, the contracted

There is a time to expand a program and a time to allow activity shrinkage.

services provided earned income and carried their own weight.

There is a time to expand a program and a time to allow activity shrinkage. Neither represents overwhelming signs of success or failure. They do, however, require objectives, planning and resources.

The third example is a community-based theatre. After about seven years of operating the program, the project organizers launched efforts to cut back on what had previously been multi-workshop activities; they hoped to create a single-discipline theatre program and to present three or four plays per season. The program had originally attracted the young people in the neighborhood; it sponsored writing, technical production and various acting workshops. In its early years the program had generated a number of fresh, vital and original productions under the leadership of the director.

Over a period of five years a core of the remaining workshop participants found themselves older and more experienced. While maintaining other means of employment, they continued theatre training. What became clear was that the project could absorb new, younger workshop applicants, develop a junior and advanced performing company and continue the various workshops. However, the surrounding community had other relatively successful training programs operating in other nearby theatre facilities—despite the fact that funds for all of these programs were less available than previously.

The director began to make some clear and purposeful decisions over a two-year period:

1. He began to concentrate upon a performing unit utilizing the most advanced talent developed by the program as apprentices. This included technical and artistic talent.

2. He began to organize and budget for showcase productions which allowed more experienced and professional actors to be cast in a production with the apprentice actors.

3. He also began to define a creative philosophy by presenting particular groupings of plays which best and most consistently expressed his approach to theatre. The plays were satirical, popular and vibrant, appealing to community audiences, as well as experienced theatregoers from all parts of the city.

With the commitment to producing a four-play season of high quality for the community and to maintaining the theatre, the other projects were becoming secondary and could not receive the attention they required. Finally, a decision had to be made. Shortage of funds was a clear reality, and the demand for the delivery of quality productions was increasing. The director decided in favor of reducing the training components and developing a theatre production program at professional and near-professional standards for the community. His reorganization also offered the older workshop apprentices professional theatre experience in a community-based program. Minimal fees based upon the box receipts were paid to the actors.

The decision was made to collapse most of the workshop programs and to disperse students and new applicants to similar programs in the neighborhood. The operation of the theatre program was tightened up managerially. The theatre productions now attract full houses of varied audiences—both from the surrounding community and across the city. The theatre is economically stable, operating on an annual budget of less than \$75,000. It has improved its relationship with the other local theatre projects by recommending training applicants to the other programs.

Additionally, the theatre now coordinates its promotional efforts with the other theatre programs in the community. The activity cutback was a decision which increased the program's effectiveness and quality.

The decision to modify or shrink aspects of your program is one which all directors must face at some point. It is advantageous to clearly observe your organization and make the choices which will heighten its purpose and life.

ALLOWING THE IDEA SPACE AND FOOD FOR GROWTH

Very special conditions are needed to generate the conceptual process: it requires time and thought. Oftentimes it is best not to implement an idea immediately, but to go back and examine it and to talk it out with others. Create other concepts around it; let it remain as fluid as possible; tap your inner source of creativity.



Whether a program has just begun or has been operating for a long time, this process is a vital part of the leadership function. Creative thoughts must be explored over and over, so that the program concepts do not stagnate or become appendages to administrative structure and organization; the opposite should be the operating mode. Structure and organization should result from the idea and concept, since their role is to provide support.

A clear choice has to be made in favor of art, or a creative drying up begins to happen. Therefore, this process should be built into the program—just as are monthly sessions with a bookkeeper or accountant, regular staff meetings and the board of directors meetings. The director—either with his or her associates or sometimes alone—must schedule several hours each month or two as a retreat to explore the creative element of the program.

TAKE TIME!

The effort involved in the conceptual process will help your operation in a qualitative way. It provides the philosophical and artistic leadership the program requires.

It is also important to have input from others who can contribute to the process. Creative dialogue is necessary in arriving at an aesthetic identity for the program. You and your colleagues must be responsible for the program's growth.

These sessions may range from exploration of pure forms to the specific creative ideas. Constructing a means for implementing the idea follows the discussion. Insights for methodology can be shared from your experiences and from the experiences of others. We all require these insights.





**The Goal
and Concept:**
fundamentals
to remember

CHAPTER 3

INQUIRIES TO CONSIDER

Some of the questions every program director should review periodically are:

1. What contribution does the program make?
2. What is the target group to be reached?
3. Are there several sub-program goals and various stages of program development in your operation to be reached in the process of achieving ultimate objectives?
4. Does your program fill a need that is not fulfilled at present?

These are some of the questions to spend time considering both at the formative and the operative stages of your program.

Observing other programs within or outside of your vicinity is also helpful in coming to conclusions about some of these questions. If you discover that your program is not in relative alignment with its concepts or goals, do not panic. The reasons which explain the disparity may contribute some healthy questions that can help the development of your program.

Changes or conflicts within a program may reflect a new phase toward which your program could redirect itself—a fulfillment of goals initially unarticulated.

You may discover that a certain need that was appropriate five years ago is no longer there in its original form. Pack up and go home? No! Not necessarily at all! Usually not so! This situation may mean that you have been successful. Others in the region may have duplicated your project; the impact of the project may have created a basic arts exposure in the surrounding community so that you may require a new component which addresses itself to a growing and somewhat more arts-aware community. Or perhaps you should continue to operate the project on the same idea premise, but the artistic quality has to be upgraded and, perhaps, the numbers served lessened, given your resources.

These revelations and others may require some soul searching about your project, your surrounding community and the field in general. Part of your initial and ongoing success was achieved because you brought initiative and organizing qualities to your work. Trust your sensitivity and perception even when you think you will have to withdraw or dissolve portions of the program from the general operation. Allow these possibilities and use your ability to perceive the need for change and to make change happen. Be dynamic in your program choices and be objective as a planner. You are accountable for the project. In addition to developing the concept idea and the creative goals, your ability to modify, adapt or reorganize is essential for a good program.

TIME AND STEPS: THE FOUNDATION

The painting, the novel or the dance does not simply spring forth. It must be carefully developed through initial drafts and revised stages before it arrives at its final realization. The artist brings a set of experiences and creative forces to the work. While the art work has been shaped by the artist, it has also fed back new experiences and perspectives to the artist. The creative process, therefore, usually requires time to evolve and proceeds through various stages of refinement.

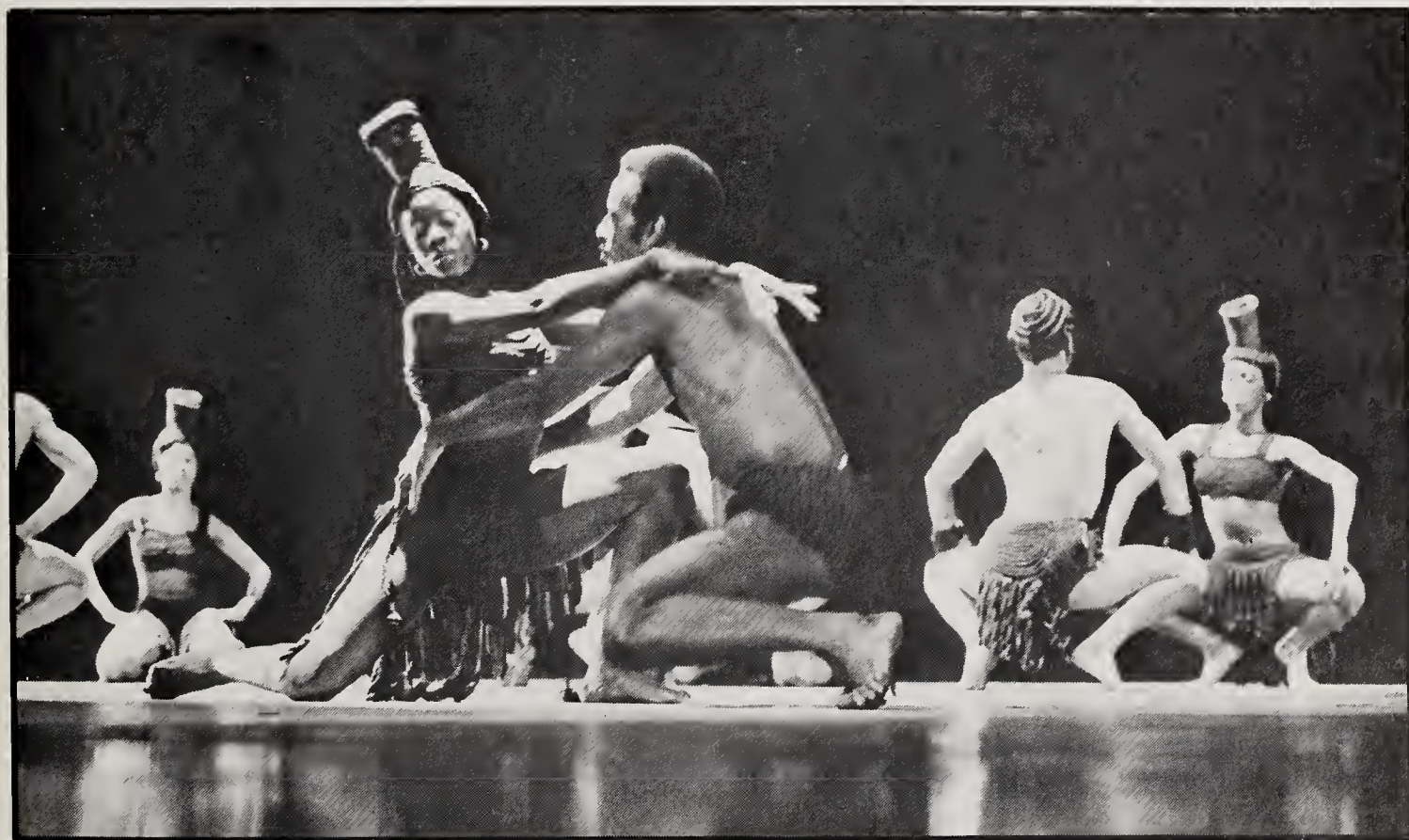
A program requires a similar process for its formation. Allow time for it to happen, allow flexible areas for regrouping and change. Your planning and organization should be structured to support the growing process.

In defining goals and activity, you must also be prepared for unpredictable, spontaneous possibilities. Plans should be flexible enough to allow for postponing or substituting a project. Do not force an activity upon the program if it will strangle it, drain off its healthier off-spring or precipitate a crisis. Leave it for another year without feeling you have failed. Quite to the contrary, you have been ineffective if you do allow over-activity or spread your program too thin. Programs require administrative and creative nourishment and must be stabilized in each stage of growth. Breathing space, instead of tight panic circles, will make the program a healthy one.

Be dynamic in your program choices; be objective as a planner.

TRAINING: KEEPING YOUR EYE ON QUALITY

You are training dancers with the intension of putting together a performance ensemble of high standards. Over a five-year period you plan to reach a level of professionalism which permits touring, contracted performances and a regional reputation of excellence. This will take time; it will require varied training, sometimes by guest instructors. The basic instruction in dance will have to be augmented with workshops in theatre techniques, mime and other disciplines. The vigorous pursuit of body discipline is a continuous one requiring a lengthy period of time for the development of the necessary skills. Exposure to others in the field, live performances, lecture demonstration and film are necessarily part of your training process. Do not shortchange the participants by diluting the training program; it will show. If necessary, intensify the training; diversify areas of it; and plan to readjust your training schedules to accommodate the time actually required to gain the skills, especially if you have to spend more time than you originally estimated.



Do not schedule that first concert if you are not ready. Substitute a lecture demonstration if the dancers cannot sustain a full performance. It is important for your dancers and your audiences to know that you are setting high standards which you will not compromise.

Do not ignore the importance of quality presentations even in a workshop dance program. Visibility is important for gaining added support and developing a good reputation; there are, however, no excuses for premature performances, unpreparedness or incompleteness—especially when an additional six months could have made a difference. The yardstick that you, the artist, use in your own work is one that you should use in the program.

The prerequisites for a quality training program in music, literature, plastic arts or theatre are the same. Training is vigorous and demanding, as well as more intensive than the trainees visualize during the early part of their studies. As the program director you must demonstrate that the acquiring of technique requires long hours and concentration. Moreover, a supportive study atmosphere has to be maintained and the participants must be handled like future artists. You must, of necessity, be selective about moving students to advanced levels. As director or administrator of an instruction program you are providing training for future composers, choreographers, filmmakers, writers and other artists. You have taken on a formidable responsibility. Examining instruction capabilities, exposure to other methods of training, guest resident artists and local resources in the field has to be continuous.

If your program is unable to offer the full compliment of training in all areas, be the first to recognize this fact. You may add the necessary ingredients without increasing your deficit. Some suggestions for augmenting instruction and training are:

1. Identify cooperating institutions in the field which can offer teachers for conducting general or specialized training.

2. Explore the need for varied, related disciplines and specialized programs for your students who indicate these needs. Make the outlets possible.

3. Create training exchanges with other programs for the swapping of teachers, workshop space and training in related areas or techniques—e.g., acting for dancers and vice versa.

4. Be certain to build in a strong exposure to other artists and professional examples of their work, even if it means traveling to other areas within your region.

YOUR NEIGHBORS: AFFILIATING AND CONSORTING WITH THEM

Many artists are faced with a great deal to do and shrinking funds with which to do it. Very often—unless they are located within major urban centers—available resources and talented people are limited for neighborhood arts programs.

Given the limitations under which individual artists work, each artist has to ask himself how he can find mutual assistance from others. In asking that question, you should make a mental list of operations similar to yours and of recent discussions which attempted to find some remedies to common problems.

During the past few years service and communications organizations geared to serve specific disciplines, regions or areas of need have appeared; they have grown from the recognition that by joining forces arts groups can help each other to overcome common problems. These new service organizations or arts consortia have taken some of the following forms:

1. Common equipment pools.
2. Theatre or dance consortia that work together as one company during a portion of a season.
3. Sharing of artistic and technical know-how for mounting productions.

4. Artistic and technical exchanges within a region.

5. One administration and management operation for several groups through a central office.

6. United fund-raising techniques.

7. Centralized promotional efforts by hiring one or two experienced publicists or press agents.

8. Combining as a group for lower advertising rates.

9. Central graphics pool for design and printing of promotional materials.

10. Establishing touring networks.

These are some of the solutions central groups or consortia have generated in order to reduce expenses and to strengthen the quality of the product. Some of the solutions work immediately; others require periodic adaptation and adjustment in order to make the relationship profitable to all of the participants affiliating in the plan.

SUMMING IT UP

The experiences and ideas presented here explored: 1) the internal planning required to make ideas into viable programs and 2) the quality and value of projects. In summarizing the material presented, the following questions should be underlined as food-for-thought for all of us. They fall into four categories.

The Importance and Originality of the Creative Idea in Relation to Its Practice and Application

1. What is the force and what does it offer to those around us?
2. To whom is it applicable and where?
3. Are you organizing program parameters for it? Which ones? When?

Work with others who have the expertise you lack.

4. Does the concept stand alone and offer a totally new experience to the community, or is it related to other similar efforts?

5. Does the project lend itself to consolidation with others?

6. Does this project require phases as steps towards some final qualitative goal?

7. Have you planned for them and do they all add up to the final projected goals?

The Artist: Your Sensibilities in New Settings

1. Have you examined what things you do not know about operating a program? How do you plan to overcome this lack of expertise?

2. Do you work well with others who have the expertise you lack?

3. How do you rate and utilize your intuitions about a program?

4. Can you take no for an answer?

5. What happens when you have encountered new ideas and responsibilities that were not previously foreseen in the plan?

The Artist: As Administrator, Leader, Everything to Everyone

1. Are your administrative skills good? Have they developed? How have you complemented these skills or lack of them?
2. Is it difficult for you to delegate responsibility?
3. Who is on your Board? What can the Board do to support the objectives and purposes of your program?

Some General Questions

1. How do you feel about similar projects now operating in your neighborhood?
2. With whom are you sharing your program and creative ideas these days? Is it helpful?
3. Would you give up or eliminate any of your program components for any reason?
4. Have you recently looked to see if there has been a point of saturation which tends to make your program either obsolete or ineffective?
5. Is someone doing your job better than you are? Can you learn by observing his or her methods?
6. Is your project a stimulator and fertilizer for others—perhaps, a service for others in the field?

These are provocative questions which those in the field face constantly. You may feel that you, alone, must deal with these issues. Successful programs have the same problems but are able to solve them in a manner which betters the program. Questions and problems should be brought to the surface, then, shared with others who can assist you in resolving them. Periodic review, evaluation and change will benefit your organization and guarantee its longevity.

CONCLUSION

This publication has discussed a cross-section of community programs with the aim of providing assistance to you in realizing your project ideas. Although detailed solutions to particular problems have not been described, we hope that the information opens areas of discussion and suggests possible approaches for you and your organization.

Periodic review, evaluation and change will benefit your organization.

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