

2022 Artistic Executive Director's Report

Kat Single-Dain

This year I was given a literal, grey and green dusty pot of flowers by some wonderful highly involved members of our community and looking back on it I see this sweet gift of a dusty flowerpot that now sits on our welcome desk as a metaphor for what has been happening for the DFC in the past year; our roots are growing farther and wider than ever before, and we are showing more appreciation for each other as a community than ever before.

Firstly, our roots: With the beginning of the weekly Tuesday swing outs and the pre-production and production of Disco Inferno as well as the workshops associated with the development of Call Me CC we have reached a more diverse community of performers and audience this year than in any other year past. And though the roots grow, I am happy to say that the original seed of inspiration for the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret, as well as Public Dreams' seed of inspiration which we also adopted into ours with the adoption of Parade of Lost Souls, is still the same. As we grow roots, buds and flowers, the original seed remains the same ... We create and support original interdisciplinary performance art which simultaneously takes a tongue-in-cheek and a deliberate and sincere approach to its reflections of life. The new projects that we developed in the past year I believe have given us the perfect balance of these intentions and -dare I say- have done so very successfully.

I could start with the swing out as an example. The swing out is co-hosted by Joe Abbott leading the Dusty House Dance Band which is a band composed of players numbered among the top jazz musicians in Vancouver. I travelled down to Seattle last weekend for a swing dance event and lo and behold, who was the bandleader down south? It was Josh Roberts, the very guitarist that we have at our own little studio every week. So with a band of such calibre one might think that the vibe we create is one of exclusivity or perhaps an intimidating dance floor to be on, but the opposite is true. The vibe we are creating is one of inclusivity and freedom. People who are not swing dancers have felt comfortable week in and week out to join everyone on the dance floor, feel the music and enjoy themselves regardless of previous experience. And as such, our event has naturally spawned some intermediate swing dancers in the last season. I could probably write pages on just this one topic, but I will try to keep it brief. Not only on the dancing side but on the music side ours is an inclusive environment; any musician or aspiring musician can join the band up on stage for a song or more in the evening, creating a variety show-like, mutually supportive atmosphere. The Swing Out is a place where musicians, dancers and music lovers combine. People can enjoy the event in so many different ways and it has become quite a community. The feeling of appreciation is thick with each week –anyone who has a birthday is highlighted in a birthday dance or sometimes with a cake, songs are dedicated around for various reasons, audience applause is generous, and the last Swing Out saw the crowning of yours truly as the captain of an imaginary Dusty Pirate Ship that picks up wayward travellers floating adrift on the sea... A beautiful poetic thank you that I so deeply appreciate.

I could speak of each event individually for another half page, however instead of doing this I will pull out to look at the big picture of all of the events we have been doing in 2022 and how, as a whole, they represent our roots growing farther and wider. The events of

which I am referring to include the Swing Out of course, the Clown Gyms, the studio improvements, Disco Inferno, Call Me CC, comedic Speed Dating, contracts for many various events and clients, and as usual Parade of Lost Souls...to list our activities in non-exhaustive fashion. When seen as a whole it is clear that the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret is reaching into ever more pockets of the Vancouver Art scene as well as into delving into a wider range of topics in the content of our productions, from a celebration of life and love that is Disco Inferno, to a reminder of the death and destruction caused by climate change that is Call Me CC.

The Dusty Flowerpot does not shy away from any topic and yet maintains its comedic yet earnest take on each one. The point of our comedy is not to make fun of but to make fun happen....period. And, as stated in our land acknowledgment online and on the walls of the studio, I believe that when we laugh together and connect as a community we are more capable of making swift changes for the betterment of society and to benefit of all. And as we are all aware, many changes do **need to happen**. My hope, and I believe we have been successful in this, is that the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret is contributing positively to a connected arts community that will be a stronger voice in the discussions that shape our future politically and socially. Our mandate is not political, and so we the DFC do this as artists not as activists perse, however the two are closely linked. We make our art through action. The type of art that we provide and support is action-based. We dance! We sing! We **act**. And as far as I'm concerned we will never stop, which is definitely a statement, and a clear "vote" for humanity.

To cover some specific topics before concluding this report, our relationship with the city has strengthened in the past year. When one door closes another door opens, they say. The door that closed for us was my hopes for having a mutually supportive relationship with the Artiste building management in the immediate term. To be clear I will always be willing to open the door again, however because of some unprofessional behaviour on the part of the building management we have recently closed the door for the moment and the door that opened led straight to the City of Vancouver as a champion of our cause. We have successfully avoided what could have become another Vancouver venue eviction by being great tenants for the City of Vancouver and deserving of their protection of our rights within the building. The result has been that the City of Vancouver has taken on the burden of communication with the Artiste building management so that we are only beholden to our landlord which is the City of Vancouver itself. The city support has come in many forms including four separate infrastructure related grants in the past two years, including two grants that just came in this month!

Taking a wide look at the DFC, an area that has been identified for development is to increase our capacity in production personnel. On all levels the DFC has more room to grow now and looks forward to welcoming production support on various levels from small details such as 'how many drinks to buy for a production' to bookings and tour management. I personally look forward to passing on these duties to someone else and focusing much more on the creative side of the DFC; teaching, writing, choreographing, directing and performing. After a full 10 years now of taking on both production and artistic direction of many projects I feel it is most beneficial to the DFC for me to lean into my most unique strengths which are most distinctive, developed, and therefore most useful to the society, on the artistic and executive direction side.

As always, I am honoured to do all work I do for the society and have felt supported in the past year in more ways than ever including the ability to be paid for my work on a project by project contract basis. Never primarily motivated by payment from my work with the DFC, the support I have most appreciated has been from the board of directors, from the cast and crew of productions, from our audiences and from the general public in the form of other organisations and the news media. The feature article that was written about us by Chandler Walter of the Georgia Straight this month, May 2023, was written voluntarily when he came anonymously to the Swing Out two times and then Disco Inferno, and felt so welcomed that he was inspired to write about the society as a whole, and me as the leader of it. As our public relations contractor Michael Ianni told me it is a particular honour when the journalist chooses a story themselves as opposed to writing it based on a paid promotion from the subject of the article. We were also interviewed for both Parade of Lost Souls and Disco Inferno on separate occasions by Gloria Mackarenko on set at the CBC. Our efforts are being noticed by mainstream media, again, our reach growing wider over time. Still, the satisfaction felt in the moment of doing the art itself is the real reward. If that ever shifts out of balance, I hope I will have the wherewithal to stop making art entirely.

Thanks again goes to the board of directors for being the most unified supportive governing body that the DFC has ever known. Special thanks goes to Michael Udem for his incredible work at the studio making our improvements not only structurally sound but also beautiful and creative. And thanks goes to the production teams and casts—far too many people to name—of all of our various events who have made the DFC into a family.

Our events may not change the world as a whole but they do change us as individuals and as a local community, and for that I think we can be proud.

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Director of productions since 2010,
Artistic Director since 2014,
Artistic Executive Director since 2018

