



Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and Dance

* The New Facility Newsletter *

March 31, 2009

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The Case for Support

AACTMAD is at a pivotal moment in its history. It currently rents all of the spaces it uses for its many activities and has long felt the opportunity for sustainability and growth would be best served by having an ownership position in its own facility. Indeed, there has been growing development and economic pressure against the availability of suitable rental facilities for AACTMAD's activities, particularly dance events. An extensive search of the greater Ann Arbor area in 2001 concluded that no practical alternate rental spaces were available, none were likely to become available, and any further loss of existing rental spaces would seriously compromise AACMTAD's ability to function effectively and meet its mission. With a sense of urgency, AACMTAD adopted the stated goal to secure its own dance space, and it is now on the verge of accomplishing this goal. AACTMAD's current relative strength makes this the time to provide for its future. The Board of Directors anticipates a major push over the next few years to meet the following objectives:

- ❖ Ensure that AACTMAD can renovate a space in an existing building at 4531 Concourse Drive to include a large 3600 sq foot dance floor, meeting spaces, a resource library, storage for sound systems and other equipment, and ample parking,
- ❖ Enter into an ownership position in the building to secure control over the space,
- ❖ Use this New Facility to protect the future of AACTMAD and ensure sustainability and growth of traditional dance, music, and song for the entire community.

Why AACTMAD Matters

Traditional dance, music, and song has long been preserved, presented, and promoted by AACTMAD, a non-profit foundation created in 1974. Over the years, AACTMAD has been a

vital part of the folk community in the Ann Arbor area and in Southeast Michigan and has become known as a premier organization for its traditional dance and related programs. In 2002, AACTMAD converted to a membership organization to better serve its constituents and stakeholders, and subsequently experience considerable growth in membership and in programs and services offered. Today, AACTMAD directly conducts or supports considerable number of activities and services, and many of these indirectly stimulate and benefit similar folk based activities outside of AACTMAD in the local community.

The feeling of community and involvement when attending a Saturday night contra dance – where one can meet new people and reconnect with old friends and acquaintances has enthralled and captivated generations of dancers. Many life paths have been changed through experiencing the social and cultural part of traditional dancing. More than one person has met someone special that they otherwise may not have met. The wonderful times spent with families, friends, and others members of the community through participation in the folk scene remain vivid for many their entire lives.

The intensity, sense of community, and enrichment of people's lives achieved by AACTMAD through its activities have been major factors in introducing new people to traditional music and dance, keeping people involved, and teaching and inspiring participants to incorporate these experiences in all aspects of their lives. A dance, concert, or community sing is a place where one can be renewed and energized, and it serves as a focal point for a widespread community of common interest. The activities AACTMAD supports help build dance and music communities all over Michigan, the nation, and even the world.

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Record of Accomplishment

AACTMAD has operated at close to full capacity for most of its existence in various rented venues, often limited by the confines of the available rentable spaces. AACTMAD's portfolio has grown in three decades from relatively few activities that focused on Contra and English Country dancing, House Concerts, and the Dance Calendar, to a broad spectrum of activities that now include First Saturday Contra Dance, Fourth Saturday Contras, Ann Arbor Swing Dance Association, Concerts, Dancing in the Streets, Dawn Dance Weekend, Pittsfield Open Band, Tuesday English Country Dance, Second Friday Advanced English Country Dance, Fifth Friday Fusion Dance, Ann Arbor Morris, Midwest Morris Ale, Community Partnering with schools, churches, organizations, and other community settings, Sound System, Scholarships, Resource Library, English Country Dance Bookmobile, Events Calendar, and a Web site. The Board of Directors remains committed to continued growth, not only in the number and scope of activities and services, but in accommodating more attendees at its ongoing events. A significant and necessary step toward accomplishing that commitment is the New Facility Project.

The Board of Directors has been in consultation with an architect, building contractors, the Pittsfield Township Building and Zoning Departments, a lawyer, and fundraisers in preparation for embarking on this project. Considerably more work will be needed to operate and manage the New Facility and to structure and implement a path to ownership in the building. One of AACTMAD's stated goals in pursuing the New Facility Project is to have a shared use facility that allows it to be a good steward of its own financial resources as well as environmental resources. One of the great advantages to AACTMAD in pursuing this project is that the current owners and potential partners in the new building are and have been long time dedicated supporters of AACMAD. The office and administrative functions of the current owners' business is uniquely compatible with AACTMAD, making a shared use building very possible and indeed very attractive, both philosophically and financially.

Future Directions

AACTMAD will continue to present and supports a broad portfolio of events and programs that preserve living traditions of dance, music, and song, build community among the participants, and provide opportunities for healthy activity, fitness and exercise. It will continue as a resource to other individuals and groups engaged in similar activities. Specifically, AACTMAD's long range goals are:

Outreach - providing traditional music and dance opportunities for the larger community,

Programming - developing high-quality events that appeal to our audiences,

Teaching - encouraging ongoing development of dancers, musicians, and dance leaders,

Marketing and Communications - finding out what people want and telling our story to our members and the public, and

Operations - providing stable financial and operational management to enable a secure future.

AACTMAD will continue to progress and experience growth in each of these areas, but its success is greatly impacted by the limited availability of space, especially for dance activities. By creating a secure Facility for its operations, AACTMAD will ensure a vibrant and healthy future for traditional dance, music, and song in our community.

Why Now?

Now is the time to build on AACTMAD's organizational and financial strength to ensure the preservation of our folk dance, music, and song traditions and to ensure that AACTMAD is able to best serve the current and future generations of musicians and dancers. A unique opportunity exists now for AACMTAD to create and control its own Facility with a very large dance space in a suitable location at an affordable cost. The Board of Directors is moving forward rapidly to seize this opportunity. Now is the time to mobilize our dedicated members, volunteers, and resources to make it happen.

Questions? Contact Mark Hillemonds, President, at mhillemonds@comcast.net or Nawal Motawi, Facility Committee Chair at nawalandglen@tds.net.