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Known for its use of gongs and a variety of custom tuned metal instruments, gamelan playing represents one of the world's longest and most venerable musical traditions. Gamelan Dharma Swara is a New York-based gamelan ensemble following the Balinese tradition and one of the leading ensembles of its kind in the United States. This study highlights key moments in the group's early history and focuses on serious internal questions about its effort to respect the Balinese tradition while exploring new horizons with gamelan music. Conversations about Dharma Swara's identity, its level of professionalization, and its future cut across different aspects of the organization. The issue of attire serves as a proxy for larger questions at stake with the group.

This case study was prepared by Michael Alan Anderson, Associate Professor of Musicology at the Eastman School of Music. The Eastman Case Studies are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements or sources of primary data nor are they to serve as illustrations of effective or ineffective leadership or decision making.



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Dharma Swara and the Sound of the Balinese Gamelan

One of the world's great artistic traditions, gamelan music has been played for more than a millennium. The Indonesian practice has been cultivated and continues to thrive on the islands of Bali and Java. The Javanese word for 'hammer'—gamel—provides the basis of the word 'gamelan' and points to the emphasis on percussion (metallophones, drums, and gongs) among the instruments of its orchestra. Gamelan playing is rooted in Indonesian community life, not only among those with elite talent; groups may comprise dozens of performers. In its place of origin, the instrument is to be played outdoors and may suit both formal and informal occasions.

Though leaders are embedded in gamelan orchestras, one or more virtuosos do not steer and dominate the complicated rhythmic dialogue; rather, gamelan playing tests the group's ability as a whole to navigate sudden exchanges of tempo and dynamics without a formal conductor articulating musical transformations. Layered melodic and rhythmic patterns, hypnotic repetition schemes, and custom tuning of the instruments of the gamelan have had far-reaching influence worldwide, from European composers of the avant garde and global pop stars to electronic music composition.

The tradition of playing the Gamelan has been taken up internationally and is no small phenomenon in the United States. For example, the American Gamelan Institute lists 130 separate groups who perform on it; many of these groups are centered in California. Gamelan Dharma Swara is a New York-based gamelan ensemble in the Balinese tradition and one of the leading ensembles of its kind in the United States.

A music and dance ensemble of about two dozen members, Gamelan Dharma Swara (DS) was founded in 1989. After a period of inactivity, it emerged in 2000 and has captured critical attention around the globe. The organization is set up as 501(c)(3) not-for-profit

and operates under the legal name Arts Indonesia. DS's mission is "to inspire wonder through the Balinese performing arts." Its future-oriented vision statement, however, gives more texture to the purpose of the ensemble and the niche it intends to occupy: "Gamelan Dharma Swara is an influential ensemble known for its exhilarating experiential performances and regarded as a nexus of learning, creativity, collaboration, and dialogue among artists and audiences."

Like many gamelan ensembles, DS has a variegated composition of members. Some have been with the group for many years; others joined because of a positive experience with the instrument at a university. More than a few studied or lived in Bali and thus absorbed some of the spirit of the practice, which is otherwise hardly accessible to unacculturated gamelan players. Perhaps most impressively, DS has both preserved the Balinese musical tradition and forged new paths in gamelan repertoire. The group has collaborated with some of Bali's leading artists and yet also has appeared at some of New York's leading edge performance venues, ranging from Le Poisson Rouge and Roulette to the ISSUE Project Room and Basilica Hudson, performing new works by American contemporary composers. Traditional concert spaces have included Lincoln Center, the Asia Society, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the New Museum. This study reviews key moments in the group's early history and centers on persistent questions about its effort to balance the Balinese tradition with the desire to discover new horizons with its music and transform its organizational identity.

Gamelan Dharma Swara endeavors "to inspire wonder through the Balinese performing arts."

Consulate and Festival

In Dharma Swara's infancy, the Indonesian Consulate of New York on the city's posh Upper East Side served as the group's home. The consulate had both an

instrument and ample space to rehearse and perform on the gamelan. It also had regular contact with a cross-section of the city's Indonesian community, poised to embrace the country's native sounds. During the years at the consulate, DS had to first satisfy the broad needs of its patron, which meant preserving Balinese music and dance. This posed no problem for the ensemble. The consulate further asked DS to perform at occasional diplomatic events, including on the carpets of the United Nations. Essentially a musical diplomat already, DS easily took up these ambassadorial requests and was also afforded the opportunity to present one or two concerts of its own annually at the consulate. The latter events generated

strong revenues for the group as operating expenses were kept to a minimum through their patron.

Like other American gamelan ensembles but especially as the resident ensemble of the Indonesian Consulate, DS aimed to capture the Balinese style and culture as authentically

as possible in its preparations and performances. The group emphasized the 'gong kebyar' style of gamelan playing, widely known throughout Bali since around 1930. DS performed on gamelan 'semara dana' instruments, which paired gongs of varying sizes with melodic instruments, from bronze gongs and gong-chimes to drums and metallophones. In traditional performance, the rhythmic and melodic patterns undergo sudden shifts of tempo and dynamics marked by the gongs, infusing the style with great vitality and impulsive-sounding shifts, true to the meaning of 'kebyar' (to 'burst open' or 'flare up'). The special tuning of the semara dana instruments, which merge three common pentatonic modes, offers a seven-tone ensemble that expands repertorial possibilities.

The artistic leadership of DS assisted with the group's absorption of the venerable traditions of Balinese gamelan in its early years. Directors of the group were invariably ethnomusicologists who had full-time work in academia. Their goal was to teach the conventions of the musical style, not from a book but by ear and rote memorization. Other master teachers whether in music or dance often included Balinese natives, intimately familiar with the styles of their homeland. Traditional costumes and stage setup further highlighted the Balinese ethos in performance.

2010 was a pivotal year for Gamelan Dharma Swara. The group received an invitation to participate in the gong kebyar competition of the Bali Arts Festival. DS was the first ensemble outside of Bali to make a tour appearance at the annual festival. The group jumped at the chance to perform in a "battle of the bands" with some of Bali's leading ensembles. Members who traveled to Bali speak of the appearance as a defining moment in the history of DS, even "legendary," as one player described it. The *Bali Post* called DS's performance "spry and agile." Video from the event was widely circulated and was also replayed internally to remind DS's players of the group's grand debut on the international stage.

The Bali Arts Festival appearance represented a watershed in the history of Dharma Swara. Players uniformly carried positive and indelible memories of the tour experience. But others were ready to move in a new direction. Was the goal to continue the strict observance of the Balinese tradition for audiences in New York? Or were there new paths to explore? Any thought of veering from the conventional repertoire would put distance between the ensemble and the consulate, its unwavering sponsor. The ensemble had just established itself as a 501(c)(3) entity while in residence at the Indonesian Consulate, thus opening up the opportunity for DS to separate from its principal patron, if it wanted.

Dharma Swara aimed to capture the Balinese style and culture as authentically as possible in its preparations and performances.

Breaking Away

Following the acclaimed performance in Bali, Gamelan Dharma Swara released its first album in 2010, which featured not only traditional music but also two works commissioned by the ensemble from American composers. This mix was a harbinger of a possible direction the group had been considering. Was there a place to define itself differently from traditional gamelan ensembles? Ideally, members of the group wanted to maintain a foundation of Balinese gamelan playing with the freedom to move into new musical realms. Breaking ties with the consulate would go far to assure DS artists that the group was not beholden to the wishes of its sponsor. The organization formally separated from the consulate and the luxurious environs of its Upper West Side home, determined to make a fresh artistic start elsewhere in New York.

DS resituated at Queens College in 2012, with help from Michael Lipsey, a professor of percussion at the college's Aaron Copland School of Music and an ensemble member at the time. Despite the peripheral location in the city's easternmost borough, not easily accessed through public transportation, the fundamental structure and activities of the group stayed in place while housed at Queens. DS maintained rehearsals and occasional performances, continuing to work with Balinese artists. The school kindly provided the group access to its gamelan and additional storage space for a small rental fee. Yet for all the generosity of the arrangement, there was a set of constraints placed on the organization as it stood in the shadow of its new host. The location alone impacted recruitment of new players to DS, member retention, and on-time rehearsals. DS could only have access to the performing hall on weekends, and even then, student events would take priority in scheduling.

During the Queens College years, one appearance away from New York City showed the promise of a new horizon for Gamelan Dharma Swara. In 2014, the group was invited to perform at Basilica SoundScape, a Pitchfork-curated event billed as an "immersive,

innovative weekend of art, music and culture." Staged at the Basilica Hudson, a venue about 120 miles due north of the city overlooking the Hudson River, DS offered its music alongside mainstream pop groups. In its performance, the ensemble created a large circle for the players on the floor and held the audience spellbound with its spirited playing and precise shifts of colorful dynamics and tempos. While the group brought traditional repertory to the eclectic audience of Basilica SoundScape, it also experimented with a modern sound world that calls on the instrument to express contemporary musical ideas. In its raving review of the performance, *The New York Times* noted the success of one such work, *Synesthesia*, written for DS by ensemble member Joel Mellin.

The critical acclaim of this appearance caused DS to consider how its work is received by the concert public. The group was no longer explicitly ambassadors for Bali and the gamelan music tradition, though that spirit and repertory still infused its performances. The ensemble had also broken new ground with music that traditional ensembles would hardly touch. It was clear that DS could occupy this niche in the years ahead. Such a move would not be unprecedented: even some ensembles in Bali were testing new, experimental works for gamelan at the Bali Arts Festival.

An appearance at Basilica SoundScape in 2014 showed the promise of a new horizon for Dharma Swara.

Identity Crisis

For many members of Gamelan Dharma Swara, the years at Queens provided a moment to reflect on the nature of the organization. The group was no longer required to showcase exclusively the Balinese art, and most players were not Indonesian anyway. But the art of performing was rooted in the Balinese arts tradition. What was their purpose? Could the group's involvement with the repertoire, the enlisting of dancers, and display of the costumes be seen as a

misguided appropriation of Balinese culture? Another fresh start was in order to address difficult questions about the ensemble's *raison d'être*, which had been avoided for too long. In 2015, DS ensemble members voted to purchase a new set of gamelan instruments (another *semara dana*), obtained with the help of a fundraiser. The organization then left Queens College, avoiding overreliance on the vagaries of the academy. Composers such as Joel Mellin continued to develop new music for the group and also began to find ways to extract digital samples from the gamelan for generating notated scores for DS's use. The tradition normally demands 'rote' teaching of repertoire and performances without musical scores. The possibility of scores and samples offered ways for members to practice gamelan music outside of the live rehearsal

The prospect of expanding more intentionally into nontraditional music for the gamelan hovered over Dharma Swara's future.

while also serving as a vehicle to communicate new compositional ideas using the instrument. Such practices would pull the ensemble further away from its Balinese roots.

The prospect of expanding more intentionally into nontraditional music for the gamelan continued to

hover over Dharma Swara's future. Some wondered whether the master teaching artists would hesitate to work with DS if it gestured too heavily in the direction of contemporary music untested on the instrument. Young players who were hoping for instruction in conventional Balinese gamelan might also leave the organization. One former member of DS opined: "If you give up the tradition, then you're something else. You are skilled percussionists playing gamelan instruments." In Bali, the gamelan is part of everyday social life, its sounds embedded in communities and deeply connected to Hindu ritual. Seasoned members of the group realized what was at stake: if the experience of playing or listening to the instrument can scarcely be imitated in the United States or anywhere

else around the world, is it an unworthy pursuit? Resources were available for DS to operate as it had done, but the internal desire to represent Balinese gamelan playing authentically was also waning in some corners of the organization.

Audiences' attraction to DS's artistry could not be forgotten in the calculus. The mission of the ensemble after all is to inspire audiences not just through gamelan music, but rather through the Balinese performing arts more generally. Dance was central to the mission and was typically featured in two or three pieces of the ensemble's seasonal repertoire. Audiences expected dance as part of DS performances: anecdotal evidence revealed that dance was one of the main reasons audiences flocked to its concerts. About one-fifth of the group's members are dancers. As the musicians of DS looked to incorporate new sounds for the gamelan, dancers were not necessarily eager to develop new kinds of dance. Traditional Balinese dance is both visually arresting and physically challenging, and learning the classic styles and pieces was the reason many dancers joined the ensemble. This important minority was hesitant to see DS head in a direction that might not accommodate traditional dance.

Professional and Amateur

In 2016, members of Gamelan Dharma Swara elected a president from the player ranks to serve the executive and administrative needs of the group. In assuming this role, longtime member Victoria Lo Mellin aimed to develop a new vision for DS with short- and long-term strategies for its operation, while securing the organization financially. She quickly embarked on a benchmarking study of a half dozen music and/or dance-based ensembles, both emerging and veteran groups, all of which had made signal contributions in their fields. Lo Mellin gained many insights from the study (**Appendix 1**) and was prepared to take action in different areas of the organization to professionalize the enterprise.

Understanding how members contribute to Dharma Swara is key to knowing how the organization functions now and could affect decisions in the years ahead. While members did not perform on the gamelan as a full-time occupation, neither could the ensemble playing be considered a hobby. As Lo Mellin put it: “It is a serious dedication of time and pursuit of artistic expression, discovery, and excellence.”

DS straddles aspects of professional and volunteer-based ensembles. Like professional music groups, its performance standards are high, with virtuosic music and dance presentations revealing dazzling skill and spectacle. The group is also sought by major venues and commands considerable fees for its engagements. As a volunteer ensemble however, DS does not compensate its members for their participation in performances. (Players are coached by master teachers who do receive a stipend.) Some members of DS were professional musicians by trade, who joined the ensemble out of an interest in the group and expressed commitment to its values. If scheduling conflicts occurred, these professionals would be forced to prioritize paying gigs for their own groups over DS rehearsals and engagements.

DS members are asked to pay membership fees (currently \$200 per year) to perform with the organization. For those who cannot afford it, the organization offers payment plans and reduced rates. The dues-paying model is common among American gamelan groups and especially makes sense for those who come with little experience to the instrument and are eager to learn. The amount of rehearsal hours is extensive relative to occasions for performance. The absence of musical notation requires concentration, numerous run-throughs, and patience from the instructor as pieces are committed to memory. More seasoned members of DS are also called on to share

their experiences and knowledge of the gamelan with newer players.

Professionalization of DS has meant determining how it can be financially stable for the long term. In addition to the collection of dues from members and revenue from performance venues, the flow of

Professionalization of Dharma Swara has meant determining how it can be financially stable for the long term.

local grants helps cover the costs of programming, the gamelan’s upkeep, transportation of the instrument, and rental space in its new home at a private music academy (also in Queens)—all substantial expenses for the organization. Commissioning of new works for the gamelan is also an expenditure DS expects to grow.

This subject has implications for the organization’s identity. In the world of classical chamber music (one conceivable benchmark for gamelan groups), contemporary composition is often outsourced to professional composers. Such composers command large fees and would represent a serious commitment by DS were they to stray further away from the traditional repertoire. To this point however, the modern music that has achieved the most success in DS has been composed by one of its own members, Joel Mellin. Mellin wonders if DS should be more like a “rock band,” where new music is generated from within, not outsourced to professional composers who may not know the instrument as intimately as the players themselves. Having repertoire grow organically from its members could represent a new pressure on the group. Mellin was paid a nominal fee for his work, far less than a traditional commissioned work might fetch; perhaps other members of DS could be incentivized though.

Occasionally, DS is asked to perform at events where the entire gamelan complement would be excessive or unaffordable, such as weddings and receptions. Patrons may anticipate light background music from their hired musicians, for which the gamelan is ill

suited. In these cases, the executive director enlists smaller versions of the ensemble. They are called either gender wayang or batel groups. Members participating in these ensembles (usually its most seasoned players, and as few as two per gig) are paid a fee for servicing these special events. Acting as an agent for these side gigs, DS claims a percentage of the performance fee. Some players at large have expressed misgivings about these select members earning a stipend while performers at regular engagements remain uncompensated. Others found that when the small ensembles had side gigs, it could have an effect on the group as a whole, whether from loss of focus or reduced rehearsal time.

In an effort to increase communication with DS members, Lo Mellin developed an informal handbook for the performers in the summer of 2017.

She codified policies and procedures that had long remained unwritten, but further laid out how members could shape the organization through key decisions. Prospective members could also benefit from a new onboarding process that set expectations for the commitment to DS and clarified the responsibilities of its leadership. Lo Mellin also instituted occasional forums for dialogue to discuss the state of the organization, including the delicate subject of finances and compensation. The players and dancers have become increasingly aware of both the legacy of the art and the present historical moment. There continue to be serious questions internally and from audiences about the challenge of being a U.S.-based ensemble participating in a foreign cultural performing art. Some members feel imposter syndrome—that they don't really belong where they are when playing gamelan. It is a function of the question of authenticity with the practice and its reliance on tradition. Sensitive to the power of these feelings, Lo Mellin has tried to instill an environment of learning, inquiry, and artistic excellence. One constant for Dharma Swara has been its dedicated membership. The group can assemble

just about anywhere in the five boroughs of New York City—from the hills of Central Park and city sidewalks to elite concert venues—and display its unparalleled level of artistry of music and dance, whatever the inner thoughts of those involved.

Dress Up

As Dharma Swara continues to ponder its place in the fabric of American gamelan playing, one area of its identity that comes up regularly is the question of its performance attire. What is appropriate for DS concerts in many ways reflects what it wants to project as an ensemble. In the days at the Indonesian Consulate, the performers donned traditional costumes without hesitation. Many members of the group did not realize how important their attire

was until they arrived at the Bali Arts Festival. While they brought new costumes for the tour appearance, DS saw how other gamelan groups from the Balinese prefectures commissioned fashion designers to ensure a stunning display onstage. Being residents of a global fashion capital like New York, DS could have aimed higher for its image on tour. But at the time, the group was operating on a tight budget, and it still is.

In the years that followed the Bali trip, heritage garb continued to be the norm for attire. Many thought nothing of it, especially those who had been there the longest. One member reported that “putting on sarong [cloth wrap] felt like a baptism.” Dressing up for them was something done out of respect for the tradition, even if it might have felt like a costume at first. Other players—both amateurs and seasoned members—feared the perception of cultural appropriation when wearing the traditional clothing. As mainly white Americans dressed in conventional Balinese attire, they risked the charge of “ethno-drag,” cultural irreverence that encompassed “dressing up.” With heritage garments, males and females are assigned different

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outfits. Men wear tailored jackets (Jas) and headpieces (udeng) while women wear fitted lace dress known as a kebaya. Both wear sarong and slendang (a fabric belt) according to gender. One member of the ensemble, who identifies as nonbinary, was uncomfortable that the dress code forced a gender identity that was not always welcome.

Executive Director Victoria Lo Mellin was intrigued by a Boston-based gamelan group that abandoned traditional Balinese attire and began testing alternative concert dress. In 2012, DS itself began to experiment with new ideas for its look on stage, dictated by the type of venue. Players tried wearing all black, which invited a comparison to the conventional concert dress of contemporary chamber music ensembles. The group would occasionally try a splash of a particular color against black, but getting that color to match was impossible. These ideas tended to sell the image short. Members of a two-person gender ensemble recently tried wearing a mostly white outfit. The male wore white shirts, white jeans, and a black tie; the female, a long white kebaya. It was hard to imagine how this could scale to the group's 25 members. One easily scalable idea was custom T-shirts for group members. It would lower the high stakes of this issue and possibly be liberating for members, but T-shirts could also be too casual for the image it wants to project.

The players' physical comfort in performance must also be considered. In traditional Balinese gamelan, men are typically the only players in the orchestra and have to sit cross-legged on the floor for a long time wearing a loose fitting kain. Women would sing or dance. (There are also women's gamelan groups.) In the United States, groups are mixed, so there is no precedent for their attire in that arrangement. More than half of DS members identify as female, for example. Composer and DS member Joel Mellin summed up the quandary around concert dress: "We are in search of something that is appropriate for our identity, but is not culturally inappropriate, something that everyone can do, and does not upset people—something that brings the group together, not something that divides it." Being from the fashion capital of the world, DS figures it needs clothing that matches the quality of its playing and reflects its distinctive urban backdrop. The question of attire mimics the larger conversations the ensemble has been having about the future of DS. Victoria Lo Mellin wants to be true to the players who create these outstanding gamelan performances and audiences who are drawn to it, while maintaining reverence for the culture that sits at the heart of the tradition. It had reached a point where more than half of the members of Dharma Swara were uncomfortable wearing the traditional dress, and the executive director needed to act.

APPENDIX I

Community Gamelan in America: Identifying Best Practices in Ensemble Management

I. INTRODUCTION

The shimmering tones and dense textures of gamelan – the percussive ensembles of metallophones, drums, and gongs found in various forms across Indonesia – have long excited and influenced innovative Western composers, from Debussy and Bartok to Glass, Cage, and Reich. Gamelan’s influence can also be heard in modern electronic and pop music: Bjork commissioned the building of the gameleste, a hybrid between a celesta and a gamelan; and Beck invited Burat Wangi, a gamelan ensemble based at the California Institute of the Arts, to participate in his live version of David Bowie’s Sound and Vision.

The sounds of gamelan have never been more readily accessible to global listeners as they are today, and while gamelan maintains a vibrant standing in its original context, a strong culture of gamelan has proliferated outside the Indonesian archipelago. In the United States roughly 150 gamelan ensembles are currently active, and while the majority are university-affiliated groups that hew to classical repertoire – often under the tutelage of Indonesian instructors – a number of them seek to carve out unique musical identities that depart in varying degrees from the Javanese and Balinese traditions.¹

Gamelan Dharma Swara (DS), a New York City-based Balinese gamelan group, is one such ensemble that has undertaken this research study as part of a larger initiative to articulate an artistic and programmatic vision for the ensemble that embodies the maxim “think global, act local;” a vision that holds Balinese tradition as a touchstone but aims to break out of the “world music” silo and to engage more actively and collaboratively in the broader New York City cultural ecology. Undergirding this vision is the belief that the presence of gamelan – live, participatory, and in dialogue in its local context – is an originitive and enriching addition to American performing arts, and that cross-cultural pollination contributes meaningfully to the art form as it is practiced in Indonesia and around the world. It is through this lens that DS aims to be an influential New York City ensemble known for exhilarating experiential performances and regarded as a nexus of learning, creativity, collaboration, and dialogue among artists and audiences.

This study explores various models of ensemble management, identifies best practices, and offers ideas to support the realization of DS’s artistic objectives. Independent community gamelan ensembles such as DS lack the institutional and cultural infrastructures that support gamelan in Indonesia, and managing such an ensemble in the U.S. presents a unique set of challenges not addressed by existing resources on ensemble administration. The most salient of these challenges, which pose significant obstacles to achieving and maintaining the professional performance caliber implicit in the DS’s vision, are (1) recruiting, training, and retaining personnel; (2) securing viable and affordable rehearsal space; and (3) achieving financial sustainability and development in a volunteer model. These challenges are intertwined and cannot be addressed discretely. The profiles of gamelans and other community ensembles in this study are intended to share information and open dialogue. Observations and recommendations will be used to inform DS’s

¹ According to the American Gamelan Institute, which maintains a directory of gamelan ensembles, “As of 2012, approximately 60% of the listed groups are associated with a university, 20% are independent community groups, 10% are closed-membership bands, 10% are associated with K-12 programs, and about 5% are at Indonesian diplomatic missions or in museums.” “Directory of Gamelan Groups – United States.” American Gamelan Institute. Web. 15 Nov. 2015. http://www.gamelan.org/directories/directoryusa/us_quick-facts.html#Quantity

APPENDIX I cont'd

management and provide direction for the organization's long-term strategic planning and it is hoped they may be a helpful resource for gamelan peers and similar community ensembles more broadly.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study compares and analyzes the operating models of a select group of ensembles and makes recommendations for how DS and similar community ensembles can establish a model – encompassing policies, processes, and administrative structures – supportive of ambitious programming, despite challenges inherent to this type of ensemble. While certain challenges and suggestions are particular to gamelan, others may be more widely applicable to community ensembles at large.

The ensembles in this study were chosen based on one or more of the following characteristics:

- U.S.-based groups specializing in music/dance forms not widely represented in the American performing arts world
- Ensembles that rely heavily on unpaid volunteer staff, whether or not they are able to sustain a small paid administrative staff
- Community ensembles that train members from the general public
- Ensembles that have uniquely inherent specifications for rehearsals and performances

The groups profiled consist of six music and/or dance-based ensembles, and comprise a mixture of emerging and veteran ensembles that are exemplary in their respective fields. Each of these ensembles are representative along a spectrum in terms of size (eight to sixty), repertoire (traditional and contemporary), and presentation mode (multimedia, cross-disciplinary collaborations).

The research methodology began with a long-form survey, followed by in-depth interviews with artistic leaders, administrative staff, and/or representative members of each organization. The study gathers organizational, artistic, and management approaches; identifies particular challenges and the solutions undertaken; and pinpoints common practices shared across these organizations that contribute to engaging and motivating members. Recommendations draw on observations of these groups and on DS's own experience, and propose practical application of best practices in the context of DS's current scenario.

III. ARTICULATION OF CHALLENGES

Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Personnel

There exist in the U.S. no formal gamelan training programs. DS and other community gamelans draw members from the general public, and often must juggle onboarding beginners and developing their skills with continuously challenging and retaining veterans. In an ensemble that aspires to achieve and maintain consistent artistic excellence, these competing imperatives must be carefully balanced.

Balinese gamelan music is traditionally taught without notation. DS follows this pedagogy, memorizing the extended and intricate patterns through imitation and repetition. A first-time spectator of Balinese gamelan will be in awe of the music's lightning-fast tempi and interlocking rhythmic patterns. But virtuosity in Balinese

APPENDIX I cont'd

gamelan is not defined by the speed and technical prowess of individual players; the form prizes the group's ability to negotiate abrupt shifts in dynamics, tempo, and mood in perfect unison. This feat, achieved without a conductor, requires many hours of full-ensemble rehearsal.²

Javanese and Balinese gamelan instruments are built as a set, each unique in tuning and design, and they are collectively rather than individually owned. Without access to personal instruments, ensemble members have little opportunity to practice outside of group rehearsals. This, combined with the intensively cooperative nature of the music itself and the laborious process of learning in a group, necessitates long rehearsals and a high ratio of rehearsal-to-performance hours. Due to the demanding time commitment, member retention is a commonly-cited challenge for American gamelan ensembles. High turnover can hinder a group's ability to progress from year to year or carry out multi-year projects.

Rehearsal Space

Community gamelans that lack a formal institutional affiliation, like DS, need viable and affordable rehearsal and storage space. Gamelan instruments are too large and heavy to be transported to and from rehearsal and must be stored on site. Designed to be played outdoors, Balinese gamelan in particular is a disruptive neighbor when housed inside, making successful space-sharing arrangements contingent on appropriate soundproofing or a carefully negotiated schedule. In a shared rehearsal space, access to the instruments outside of group rehearsal times is often restricted, limiting individual members' ability to develop proficiency and the ensemble's ability to realize artistic goals. An alternative to space sharing is renting a dedicated rehearsal space, a prospect difficult to realize in a real estate market like New York City and, one that requires an adequate financial model.

Fiscal Sustainability and Development in a Volunteer Model

Though a core challenge, the lack of formally trained gamelan performers in the U.S. also creates artistic – and by extension financial – opportunities that allow community gamelans to operate in a professional sphere. Compared to community ensembles working in Western traditions, gamelan groups are more likely to engage with top-tier venues, producers, and collaborators. With little or no competition, community gamelan groups can command relatively high fees, appear in major venues, and collaborate with preeminent artists and ensembles. It follows that DS and similar gamelans occupy a unique space straddling volunteer-based and professional ensemble models.

The dual mission of training members and delivering professional-caliber performances carries through to financial considerations at all levels, including arrangements between members and the organization: should members make a financial contribution as beneficiaries of the educational program, should they receive compensation for their role in income-generating performances, or neither? Given unlimited financial resources, the decision to pay performing members would be a given. However, achieving the goal of professional-caliber performances requires ongoing investment in ensemble training, which may add significantly to the organization's operating budget. For many gamelans, this investment takes the form

² The requirements in a Javanese gamelan are somewhat different, but lead to similar challenges. Javanese ensembles in the U.S. commonly rely on cipher notation, and the slower tempo demand less technical proficiency from players than the Balinese style

APPENDIX 1 cont'd

of hiring Indonesian guest artists – whether from Indonesia or the U.S. – to introduce new repertoire, compose works, or appear as guest performers. Several leading American gamelans, including DS, have also used ensemble revenues to tour in Indonesia. Touring is an opportunity to bring new works to Indonesian audiences, observe contemporary gamelan practice, deepen members' understanding of the art form in its original context, collaborate with master performers, and, through these experiences, elevate the artistry of the touring group. Such activities demand significant expenditures and constitute an important investment in developing the ensemble.

Fundraising is a potential source of revenue, but groups that rely on volunteer administrators will have limited capacity to prepare proposals and report to funders, and equally to manage an individual donor program. Community ensembles of all types share these challenges, but gamelan ensembles face the added difficulty of finding support for their member-training activities. As institutional funders often prioritize project support and public visibility – especially at the easiest entry point to grant funding, the local government level – grants are not ideally suited to underwrite the labor-intensive processes involved in member training and long-term ensemble development. With membership turnover a perennial issue, the degree of advance planning necessitated by long grant cycles can pose additional barriers to accessing grant funding.

The size of the instruments and the related expense and labor involved in moving them pose further obstacles particular to gamelan ensembles; domestic touring is cost-prohibitive. Even without the expense of transporting instruments, a full ensemble performance depends on the availability of 20-30 non-professional players, making it difficult to schedule even local performances, let alone extended touring.

IV. BEST PRACTICES

While all ensembles encounter their own unique set of circumstances, there is great value in identifying common drivers of success. Several key themes emerge in analyzing ensemble-specific challenges and solutions deployed, suggesting their broader relevance in facilitating an optimal membership experience and organizational sustainability. What follows is a distillation of those best practices, which ultimately inform a repertoire of practical recommendations for DS, with potential application for other community ensembles, gamelan or otherwise.

Fully-Embedded Organizational Vision

A committed and engaged membership is essential to the vitality of all ensembles interviewed, yet it is a particular challenge for community-based groups to cultivate and retain talent and experience. Interviews suggest that by articulating a clear vision and embedding it throughout the membership experience, such ensembles can inspire a sense of purpose, loyalty, and focused energy among members. This is evidenced in the ensembles whose particular characteristics directly support their artistic and organizational goals. One of Gamelan Son Of Lion's (GSOL) mission - manifest in the model of a composer's collective - is to encourage the composition of new American gamelan music. Unlike many gamelan groups, GSOL learns under the artistic direction of a given composer. This is possible due in part to the limited use of traditionally difficult instruments that may otherwise require expert instruction. Together these practices – and the

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experience. GSOL is continuously reinvigorated through new membership, yet has also sustained a core group of veterans, indicating a successful balance between recruitment and retention that directly supports the group's vision.

Formed by community activists, PT has adhered to its goal of building community throughout its 21-year history by giving free or low-cost performances that align with their mission and forging strong relationships within the larger community. This quality, seen in the continued dedication and collaboration of the group's membership and in strong community support, is reportedly helping them weather structural transitions.

Gamelan Sekar Jaya's (GSJ) mission to foster artistic exchange between Bali and the U.S. is carried out through their close engagement with Bali's most distinguished and celebrated artists. Its membership experience includes study with resident Balinese artists and the opportunity to participate in the group's regular touring activities in Bali, ties that are further strengthened by a director who splits her time between the U.S. and Bali. Such activities contribute to GSJ's reputation as the preeminent Balinese gamelan ensemble in the U.S. for traditional repertoire. When there was a lapse in enforcement of recruitment policies that safeguard this standard, retention suffered; this outcome may be understood as stemming from a disparity between the artistic vision and the membership experience.

For a community group, ineffectual membership recruitment and low retention can hinder long-term stability and development. This is especially true for gamelan ensembles, which invest exhaustive hours in teaching basics of the art form while simultaneously aspiring towards maximum ensemble cohesion. Each example above illustrates how an organizational vision and mission can inform membership experience through repertoire selection, pedagogy, community building, and artistic collaboration. The Portland Taiko (PT) case indicates that a shared sense of purpose can continue to motivate member participation during times of organizational flux, while failure to deliver the promised experience can lead to member dissatisfaction and resignation as arose in GSJ.

The conclusion can be drawn that community ensembles will be strengthened by articulating a clear vision and ensuring that it is embodied in the membership experience. Doing so may ensure that ensemble leadership have a clear framework for prioritization, and new members are aligned with the group's goals and have clear expectations, which could in turn minimize turnover.

Volunteer Accountability

Four of the six groups interviewed are either comprised entirely of volunteers or have a small staff that depends on its volunteer members. These groups rely heavily on volunteers to keep the organization running, yet volunteer accountability is listed as a major challenge. Unpaid staff are inherently less accountable than paid staff but are necessary to organizations with limited resources. Invariably, volunteers have diverse levels of motivation and capacity, which can induce imbalances in the distribution of the responsibilities and contribution of time. However, even if drive and motivation exist among its volunteers, necessary expertise may be lacking. Member turnover can further impact the quality and consistency of the organization. Furthermore, volunteer accountability becomes more prominent the larger ensembles becomes, as it may be easier for members to count on others to shoulder responsibility.

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In cases where volunteerism is a major factor in its operations, successful strategies include implementing systems that tie administrative responsibilities are strategically delegated. GSJ inculcates its members early on with a sense of mutual accountability through its onboarding process, which includes a trial membership phase. Expectations related to attendance and volunteer work are communicated at the outset, and are key measures used by GSJ's Steering/Artistic committee (STAR) committee for evaluating the candidate at the conclusion of the trial phase. Those that demonstrate reliability and commitment are recommended by the committee and are put to vote by the GSJ general membership. Confirmation by peers again illustrates the central role accountability plays in the membership experience.

PT is one organization that has dedicated financial resources to hiring administrative staff, while fiercely preserving a culture of volunteerism. Further, it is clearly outlined which responsibilities are delegated to paid positions and which are reserved for volunteers. In the context of changing levels of financial resources in recent years, the hired executive director position has remained a constant, charged with functions that inarguably require expertise and dedicated continual time investment such as fundraising and cultivating donor relations. The administrative staff, recently reduced from three to one, assists in day-to-day operations. Volunteers are expected to lend a hand with respect to rehearsal and performance logistics, most of which are finite and task-related. Interestingly and of particular importance to be discussed later, since the organization has operated without an artistic director since 2014, artistic decisions are now made by volunteer leaders of the ensemble, with feedback from their peers.

It is also bears emphasizing that ensembles comprised of volunteers have to navigate complex dynamics related to teaching and learning. With limited rehearsal time, an efficient ensemble would avoid allocating significant time to re-teaching material, relying on members to practice diligently on their own. However, compelling members without financial incentive to dedicate this time in between rehearsals offers a perennial challenge, especially as daily lives present competing priorities.

To reinforce the value of accountability in the context of developing the ensemble for performance, GSJ designates proactive ensemble coordinators – members designated to work closely with their guest artists to monitor member attendance, progress, and quality control of the ensemble. Doing so establishes the terms of accountability more concretely, assigning a face and name to the commitment to do one's part. This ensemble coordinator has the trust of the guest artist to make ensemble decisions that are in the best interest of the programmatic vision and group development. For example, members who continue to struggle are encouraged to take paid private lessons with guest artists and to attend GSJ's public workshops. When these measures do not result in players learning their parts, members will be asked to sit out for pieces or move to different instruments.

PT makes accountability in ensemble development more personal through its feedback sessions. The sessions make it impossible for those who have fallen behind to hide behind their more prepared peers, compelling them to practice more, and ultimately encouraging members to take ownership over their preparation and performance. It is especially important for community ensembles to build mechanisms that imply and reinforce the importance of accountability as this mutual acknowledgement of responsibility has great implications for organizational administration and ensemble progression.

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While further research is warranted in understanding the possibilities, limitations, and growth potential for a volunteer organization, initial research suggests that a completely volunteer-represented organization cannot be sustainable if the organization has plans to expand in activities and grow in membership.

Flexibility

Ensembles with a high degree of flexibility will be resilient in the face of today's ever-evolving arts ecology. Those ensembles can recognize early on when systems and processes are no longer effective, are willing to try new approaches, and adapt efficiently to changing internal and external factors. In the process, the ensemble may have to make sacrifices. Regardless, for such adaptive change to be swift and successful, decisions must be guided by the organizational vision, and governance systems in place must support flexibility and adaptability. Each of the ensembles surveyed in this report demonstrated an aptitude for experimentation and weathering change in observance of its values and organizational vision.

PT is an example of an organization that has encountered financial constraints and was compelled to adjust its tiered ensemble model to accommodate only one group, while also reducing paid administrative staff. The resulting structure as an artist-collective still manages to emphasize the organization's tripartite mission of affirmation, inspiration, and creation. LBE's Baumbusch has had to navigate a complex set of logistical challenges in order to keep the ensemble active and able to adhere to an ambitious schedule of artistic output, including finding ideal rehearsal space that will also provide full time instrument storage, while reconciling a rehearsal schedule that accommodates active professional musicians with various time commitments outside of LBE participation. Baumbusch in response has offered various barter arrangements for space, and set up recurring sectional rehearsals outside of full ensemble rehearsal time to maximize practice opportunities while avoiding creating too much time burden on all LBE members.

Especially where increasing audience exposure is a key part of an ensemble's mission, flexibility can also facilitate a multi-faceted approach to outreach. Each of the groups surveyed has a larger membership, and most of the ensembles also have (or have had in the past) a smaller, core group of personnel who have multiple skill-sets and can be enlisted for select performances or productions. Of the ensembles that do not have a formalized system in place, many actively rely on the assistance of "subs," or a reserve pool of musicians/dancers, to fill in any necessary gaps in performance roles. Functioning much as a chamber ensemble would in the realm of classical music, these ensembles have demonstrated an ability to be artistically agile and adept in navigating a wide variety of venues and audiences.

GSJ takes a flexible approach and can often pull together a small or half-ensemble dependent on the performance; additionally, their smaller ensemble of *gendèr wayang* musicians are often booked to play private performances or events. Gamelan Galak Tika (GGT) pays a smaller core group of the gamelan when playing high-profile concerts with other professional ensembles. PT formerly existed as two-tiered community and professional touring ensemble. And although Calpulli Mexican Dance Company (Calpulli) has a professional company of dancers and musicians who actively tour, they also have student groups for children and adults who have opportunities to perform throughout NYC. With a mindset of incorporating flexibility throughout operation, ensembles with smaller core groups have been able to maximize the avenues for audience exposure, created opportunities for different segments of members to perform, and even provided new sources of revenue for the organization.

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V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Pedagogy

Like DS, many of the community ensembles profiled here juggle training new recruits while functioning as paid ensembles in the professional sphere. All but two of the ensembles draw membership from the general public and have little to no formal arts training prerequisites for joining. Interviews revealed a variety of pedagogical strategies used to ease the burden of a dual mission of education and professional performance.

Strategic pedagogical approaches are especially relevant in the community gamelan context, where member training leads to an extraordinarily high ratio of rehearsal-to-performance hours. A ten-minute piece may, for example, take a cumulative eight hours to learn, before run-throughs are even possible. Traditional Balinese gamelan pedagogy does not use notation. Instead, players learn aurally and visually by following a teacher's example and playing passages repeatedly until they are committed to memory. This process comes with relative ease to those who grow up in a gamelan sound environment. But for non-Balinese players who lack that depth of understanding, the approach can be punishingly difficult, especially for newer players. The non-gamelan community groups profiled report similar challenges instructing members of varied experience levels. DS could bridge the gap between new and advanced members through the adoption of a mentor program, ensuring that those with less experience receive equitable guidance and attention within a larger group setting. At the same time DS could facilitate the progression of members towards more advanced instruments by offering workshops and private lessons for its members.

The practice of rotational seating on various instruments, which is widespread in the U.S. but uncommon in Bali, contributes significantly to the time spent learning. The prevalence of this practice is due to the educational imperative and the fact that retaining members necessitates giving individuals a chance to try many instruments. DS does not currently have a formal policy in place to assign seating and tension can arise when members are disappointed with their instrument or question how parts assignments were made.

Rotational seating has its merits as a pedagogical tool, but may compromise the artistic level of the ensemble as precious hours are funneled towards teaching instead of refining technique and expression. In an effort to incorporate an educational framework, DS could consider a blended model, whereby seating for the season is mostly fixed, except on one specific piece of repertoire where changing is allowed. This encourages members to simultaneously deepen understanding and as well as develop expertise. DS could complement this practice by assigning partners for the season, which could create another layer of accountability, and facilitate practicing together. Lastly, DS could designate leaders for each section of the ensemble, who carry the responsibility of teaching and refining performance.

By employing some of the strategies above, DS could address some of the issues related to artistic quality, foster accountability to others, and optimize the development process.

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Decision-Making

The profiled ensembles vary widely in their approach to decision-making, from collective models to decision-making authority held exclusively by the founding member(s). Avenues for membership participation, as well as members' influence over programmatic and artistic decision-making in particular, are important as they can be regarded as benefits of membership.

For GSOL, collective deliberation is intrinsic to its identity. The administrative structure, primarily drawn from the membership, includes a lead administrator, an administrative team, a board of directors, and an advisory board, all of whom are expected to be involved in artistic and programmatic decisions. GSJ also involves the general membership in big-vision decisions at biannual meetings, while a smaller committee meets bi-weekly to decide on artistic matters. A board of directors holds final decision-making power on staffing, legal matters, and finances.

As a group undergoing a period of transition in both leadership and membership, DS is looking for best practices in management and decision-making. Involvement in artistic decisions often constitutes a key part of the membership experience, and, can improve overall member engagement. DS must carefully consider how, and the degree to which, members can participate in artistic and programmatic conversation.

More generally, DS should assess its general decision-making processes and communicate it clearly. DS has suffered from the perception of bureaucracy and a lack of transparency among the membership. Without clearly identifying which decisions are relegated to which parties and the steps by which final outcomes are reached, DS may create the impression that decision-making is arbitrarily considered; illustrating the responsibility lines may help clarify policies and dismantle these impressions.

Though this topic was not been explicitly addressed in most of the research interviews, it may be helpful to look to GSJ in understanding that inter-organizational dynamics can be actively addressed and worked through. Over the group's 36-year history, GSJ has experienced transitioning director posts, changes in staff and organizational leadership, and a growing and evolving membership. The group has held retreats and hired consultants to facilitate member-inclusive brainstorming about organizational structure, leadership, and maintaining community. GSJ circulates leadership meeting dates and agenda topics to the general membership prior to each meeting to invite member input; likewise, meeting minutes are distributed to keep the membership informed about the current organizational planning. When instated and maintained, these systems have proven effective in upholding organizational transparency and memory for this 60-member organization, and can act as a guiding point for DS.

More in-depth interviews are needed to provide more concrete conclusions, though initial research suggests a strong correlation between the level of communication transparency that is expected by members who belong to volunteer-based organizations versus non-volunteer organizations.

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Ensemble Models & Financial Implications

A tiered model whereby a smaller subset of musicians exists within a larger ensemble has been employed by several of the groups. This approach can accommodate a spectrum of member commitment and ability, offering varied opportunities to study, perform, and contribute.

Given its educational and performance goals, DS might consider such a model, which could manifest in a few ways. By introducing a student or community group, DS could incubate new talent to funnel into the group's core performing ensemble. New players would receive more attention and be relieved of the pressure to perform at a high caliber too soon. Inversely veteran players might also find the experience more rewarding, having spent less time teaching during rehearsal, and more time focused on elevating the ensemble's artistic caliber; the resulting core ensemble may be rendered more nimble, enabling DS to pursue accept more ambitious performance opportunities relevant to its vision. DS might consider the converse approach, putting more support behind smaller ensembles such as *gendèr wayang* and *batel*, which have been active to varying degrees within the umbrella organization. These ensembles create yet another avenue for DS to participate in projects of different style and scale.

Additional issues that must be carefully considered in adopting any of these models include defining the delineations and expected requirements among the different ensembles, how such transitions may affect the current membership, and what may constitute appropriate incentive models given each of the ensembles in the context of the whole. But especially as DS aspires to be more professionally oriented as an ensemble, it is worth contemplating the implications of membership dues and member compensation, and their roles within the membership experience. Community gamelans such as DS, GTT, and GSJ all require membership dues, which is at once a demonstration of member commitment as well as an acknowledgement of benefits received as perpetual students of gamelan. At the same time, these ensembles compensate members who may be involved in certain performance circumstances. Certainly in the case of DS, it has raised the questions of what constitutes appropriate occasion for compensation, especially when incremental performance participation is not the only contribution a member could make. It is also worth noting that DS had previously experimented with compensating members in general for performances, but given the level of administrative complexity, as well as the reduction of earned revenues back to the ensemble—and, thus, resources available for larger scale initiatives—the decision was collectively made to revert to the old model.

DS might consider adopting a hybrid membership model. Taking a cue from GSJ and PT, DS could impose a trial membership phase where dues are paid. This trial phase may be in line with participation in a beginner group, though it need not be. After a defined amount of time, a member is considered an earning member, whereby the member is entitled to a fair percentage of ensemble revenues based on number and types of gigs performed. The earnings are accrued over the course of a year, and at the end of the fiscal year, the member could choose to receive a full or partial payout, and donate the rest to the ensemble. The size of the payout could be based on individual decision, or could be determined based on a collective decision by the membership. Before any payouts are made, DS's Executive Committee and Artistic Director could propose to membership what long term projects could be pursued with the accrued revenues, painting a clear picture of possible investments. Members who did not participate in the full year would forfeit their revenue entitlement by default. Such a model could potentially have the following effects: members observe a clear avenue for

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everyone being compensated for their contributions, and at the same time, see it in the context for where collective investment could lead, and actively participate in the investment decision; turnover is mitigated because financial benefits to members are only realized over a longer term; administrative headache—as associated with the previous incarnation of compensation policy—is potentially reduced.

Space Arrangements & Partnering Institutions

As noted above, outreach activities are the primary way for ensembles to recruit members and these activities are enhanced through partnership arrangements that extend the ensembles' reach. Calpulli has partnered with community centers, libraries, and theater companies to host classes and collaborate on productions. All of the company's projects and productions have involved a partnership or collaborator. GSJ fostered a close relationship with UC Berkeley; the University's Music Department and Center for Southeast Asian Studies Department helped sponsor the group's guest artists and have engaged them as guest lecturers or educators.

Other groups are exploring extended residencies with institutions: Lightbulb Ensemble (LBE) is looking for such opportunities in universities and plans to offer a compositional program for students to write music for the ensemble in exchange for rehearsal space and instrument storage; upon the expiration of their lease, PT will seek a larger space that they could possibly share with other local taiko groups.

Partnering with other organizations, whether for programmatic collaboration or cost-sharing purposes, has helped these ensembles make substantial headway in audience-building, community engagement, and creating meaningful and lasting relationships. However, an institutional relationship may only offer a solution to a resource-constrained organization if the arrangement allows for the organization to steward its mission fully. The most ideal situation would be for the host institution to hold a complementary, if not closely-aligned, mission; otherwise, a relationship that possesses a lack of alignment may in fact create burden for the ensemble.

For the past three years, DS has benefited from the generosity of Queens College, CUNY (Flushing, NY), where it has been in residence at the Aaron Copland School of Music. Rehearsal space, instrument use, and storage are offered for a small fee and exchange of services. However, the arrangement has not always guaranteed space: multiple organizations utilize the space and some can afford rent at retail; it is easy to understand that, in the case of competing priorities, DS is not immune. Other trade-offs: rehearsals must occur during weekends, and the location is not conveniently accessed by public transportation, a major challenge for an NYC-based ensemble.

While DS certainly could not have pursued its ambitious goals without the space provided by Queens College, it has also acknowledged that insufficient accessibility—no matter how small the price—has hindered ensemble development. A Relocation Committee was created in 2014 to spearhead the search for a new space. Under consideration are cross-disciplinary educational programs and extended residencies at educational institutions, museums, and community centers. If DS is unable to secure an institutional partnership that allows for uninhibited pursuit of member and ensemble development, then paying rent may be the next best solution to ensuring space for such activity to occur on their own terms. DS could pursue this route in conjunction with instating a tiered model as recommended above, in order to build a revenue stream that could offset the rental expense.

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VII. CONCLUSION

Membership is inarguably the heart and soul of community ensembles, and therefore deserves an environment where it can be ultimately nourished. Community gamelans in America are unique in that member education is inherent to their models, which may inadvertently create impediments to the pursuit of ambitious goals. Having recently articulated its vision and mission that aspires to artistic and technical excellence while still encountering major challenges to development, DS embarked on an exploratory journey of community ensembles - gamelan and otherwise - to seek common threads and harvest solutions. The study offers strong evidence that in order to effectively bring about sustainability, DS would be well served to establish a stable rehearsal situation, effectively mitigate turnover, and prioritize technical and artistic progression. To that end, it is imperative that DS focus on the following key areas:

- Independence - invest in arrangements that limit external constraints on key activities and ensemble development
- Clarity in communication - provide clear documentation on operational policies and procedures to ensure alignment on expectations among membership; invite member deliberation and offer transparent guidance on decision-making
- Agility - introduce pedagogical models and programs that streamline learning and empower the ensemble to flex to various circumstances and opportunities

Financial sustainability, while crucial to DS's longevity, is a secondary issue that can only be attained after successfully stewarding the ensemble through the above three areas. While its spirit, aspirations and vulnerabilities may be altogether unique, DS - as do all community ensembles - seeks fundamentally to bring people together through music. With openness to the guidance above and a temperament for experimentation, may DS and likewise its peers be better positioned to serve its artists and audiences, no matter the times.



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