The Realm of the Possible

by Peter Davis

June is the month when work begins in earnest to create the Dance Flurry Festival schedule for next February. This is when almost anything seems like it's in the realm of the possible.It's a time when I take into consideration some of the suggestions from the last Flurry's evaluations, such as:

* Can we really afford to put a wooden dance floor into Room D? (This is the number-one justified criticism. Does anyone out there want to underwrite the floor for $7000?)

* Is there a bigger space to replace the overcrowded Temple for "101" sessions?

* Is it cool to replace some performers who have been doing the same thing for 15 or 20 years and give someone else a chance? Or are those folks that make the Flurry so special?

* Can we find more dance venues close to the City Center?

* How can I get the dance instructors (swing, tango, etc.) to shorten their teaching time so there is more time to just dance?

* Should I book that expensive band from Louisiana, or use one of the great local zydeco bands from the Northeast? How about block booking with a Cajun/Zydeco club in New York or Boston? Can I trim that performer budget???

Each year since 2005 when I began doing this job, I get exhilarated in June thinking about the myriad of possibilities, and each September (which seems to come very, very soon) I'm jolted back to reality, so that most of the exciting brainstorms of June get put on the back burner again. A few make it into the schedule. Hopefully it improves a bit each year!

June is the month when I start contacting and am contacted by performers who want to perform at the Flurry. Some of them apply online (we still have our database for '07 and '08 performers too), and others I reach out to myself. Sometimes one of our performers suggests someone to me. Last week, Dave Ruch, a great folksinger and childrens' performer who did a great job for us last time, said that he knew a septuagenarian tradition-bearer Adirondack performer named Ermina Pincombe. Ermina comes from a longstanding Adirondack musical family. She's the Supervisor from the town of Benson and plays fiddle, mandolin, mandola, tenor banjo, and sings. She'll be entertaining us next February.

The current list of '09 performers is up on the DanceFlurry Web site and growing. We're going to be taking an idea from NOMAD's (Northeast Music, Art and Dance) Web site by putting a very short description of what each performer does—instead of just listing their names—and also linking to their Web sites.

I'm writing this on Friday the 13th of June. I'm excited this weekend, not only because I'll be playing at Ian and Rosalie's wedding (two great folks from the Flurry Planning Committee), but because this weekend is the 2nd annual Saratoga Arts Fest—an ambitious program of music, dance performance, art exhibits, literary events, and workshops all over town. They're using some venues that we haven't used for the Flurry before. I'm excited to walk around and see how these places work.

So there's a little slice of life of the program director in June. Please let me know if you have any suggestions or thoughts. By the end of September I'll have to have a pretty good mock-up of the schedule. Then Sue Mead and I tackle the nitty-gritty of turning that into something that works smoothly with no conflicts and with a humane gig schedule for each performer. One thing I've learned about this job: it moves inexorably each year from the Realm of Possibilities in June to the Realm of Reality in September.

Workshop for young musicians Flurry 2007
photo by Pat Connell