

Journal

Vol. 1/1/March 78

News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project

Projects Thrive in Five Boroughs

More than eighty CCF/CETA projects throughout the five boroughs are in full swing.

Visual, theatre, and literary artists are bringing their skills into scores of community organizations ranging from museums and senior citizen centers to hospitals and prisons. Dance companies, theatre groups, a classical orchestra, and Latin and jazz bands are planning schedules of public performances, while individual members will also be conducting lectures, workshops, and classes.

The response of community organizations to the CCF/CETA Project has been so swift and enthusiastic that the first placements were being made two weeks after the program officially started; by the first week of February over eighty projects had been launched throughout the five boroughs.

"These placements contribute significantly to the strong start this federal jobs program has made around the city," says Rochelle Slovin, CCF/CETA Artists Project director. "The overwhelming response shows that the need for artists to work out in the community is a very real one."

Both the projects themselves and the specific jobs involved are so varied that it is difficult to divide them into neat categories. However, one generalization can be made: Although there are many teaching and workshop positions, especially among the seventeen literary artists, these do not comprise a majority of the total assignments.

Far from being merely aesthetic embellishments within the communities, many of the projects involve a commitment to serious and urgent social issues. In Manhattan, for example, performing artists Susan Sandler, Raynor Scheine, and Deborah Genninger will help the organization, New York Women Against Rape to develop a major new city-wide campaign to dispel myths and rumors about rape. The artists will use live and video-taped dramatizations of rape situations to provide a general consciousness raising about the subject.

In Queens the Queensboro Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year. Photographer Stanford Golob and graphic

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Deborah Newmark.

New Role Offered Artists

By GROVER AMEN

With a fraction of the returns in, the CCF/CETA Artists program is being swamped by requests for service in the community. The demand is so outweighing the supply that there may very well be occasions during the coming year when worthy applications may have to be turned down.

This overwhelming need for artists being expressed by New York communities should mean that the more subtle and ambitious potentials of the program will have a strong chance of being fulfilled, of being put to the concrete test out in the field. For it isn't the financial rewards of the program that matter most (one of the speakers during Orientation Week pointed out that the CETA salaries of \$10,000 a year are roughly equivalent to the \$1,100 paid by the WPA during the 1930's). The beauty of the program lies in the chance it provides for exploring theories of the artist's changing role in modern industrial society—theories that were emphasized by Bauhaus artists in the 1920's and by the WPA artists in the 1930's. Describing the first Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in 1919, Moholy-Nagy wrote:

...the old concept and content of "school" was discarded, and a community of work established. The powers latent in each individual were to be welded into a free collective body. Also the pattern of a community of students who learn "not for school, but for life" had to be worked out and converted into a cross-section of full, organic, and adaptable living.

While not forgetting that we were taken on primarily because we were unemployed, not because we were artists, we can still view the program as a chance to enjoy certain rights that artists have seldom taken for granted, though steel workers have. It's become a commonplace that, unless we are teachers, we have to earn our living at "something else." Painters make mechanicals, writers do copy-editing, and musicians and actors drive taxi cabs. (With the modern bullet- or at least knife-proof partitions, cab driving has become as isolated from humanity as composing epic poetry.)

Blaise Tobia
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Verse

Self-Portraits From A Teaching Journal

More fish-like than human
purple ears
green tongues where they could only taste
leaves yellowing outside the window

Patti sits like the moon
radiant, ignorant of her own form
smoking a cantaloupe crayon
Eddie rocks by her side
Quietly rowing the unexplored lake
of the room, littered with newspapers
and clay spouts

Betty laughs
as I touch her hair and face
and she touches my breast
then hers and laughs
that we are the same. . . the same
though she cannot say why
or what binds us together
as Eddie could never tell
what he sees as he skims
the cracks in the corridor floor

—MADELEINE KELLER

telephone booth number 905½

woke up this morning
feeling excellent,
picked up the telephone
dialed the number of
my equal opportunity employer
to inform him I will not
be into work today
“Are you feeling sick?”
the boss asked me
“No Sir” I replied:
I am feeling too good
to report to work today,
if I feel sick tomorrow
I will come in early

—PEDRO PIETRI

Wen Cheng-Ming

With the rain
My thoughts merge into the stream rushing
From the mountain pass passing
A village on the way to sea
To rest a moment in the placid lake

The fishermen can hear me
as they mend their nets
Or ghostly float on their flat bottom boats

The mirrored sun sinks
Does it feed the center of the earth with fire?

Wen Chen - Ming writes:
“The branches sweep the lonely night
like brooms”

The Loon's harsh cry
The stars fall into place

—HERMAN CHERRY



Ladj Camara.

Sarah Wells



Cathryn Willams.

Sarah Wells



Jazzmobile Rehearsal

Sarah Wells

Waiting for the Dough

By LYNDA SCHOR

My lips are puckered from sealing envelopes, my resumes are enclosed. In the past two months I've sent out over three thousand, only three of which have been responded to thus far. I decided to be more distinctive by printing my resume on colored stock. I chose an elegant light brown. As soon as I saw my resume on it, the brown suddenly resembled something not so elegant. It isn't that I don't have a wonderful resume, with numerous published works, teaching positions and lectures. It's just that for the present job market it's totally useless.

I get my mail with elation. Someone has responded. I open it excitedly: “We're sorry to inform you that while your qualifications are excellent, you have no samples of one line descriptions of ski hats for our ski hat brochures. We've hired, instead, someone who has had direct ski hat experience. Regretfully, J.C. Penney, Inc.”

On the bulletin board near the mailbox is a sign which says, “What we've worked for so hard is coming! Five hundred CETA jobs for artists! Watch the newspaper for information about applying.” Somehow it's too vast, too abstract and doesn't really register as a possibility. Especially if I have to depend on myself finding the right information at the right time in the right newspaper. Actually, the thought of the competition overwhelms me. Only five hundred jobs for the entire city. Only fifty literary openings! And I'm a writer.

My other letter is a rejection letter from a magazine: “Just love your work. Am a real fan. Unfortunately I like your work that's already published better than any of the stories you sent me. But I've heard you're an excellent lunch companion. How about lunch soon?”

“Laura, can't you get me a job as a reader where you work, “I ask my friend. “Well, you know they only start you at ten thousand.” “Laura,” I say, “I have nothing now. I'd love ten thousand. Besides, it was okay for you to start at ten thousand.” “Oh me,” she says, “I'm not a writer. I didn't even go to college.” “Laura, don't you think I can do the job?” I ask, suspicious. “You know I can read.” “Well, you don't have ‘reading’ in your resume. Besides Bill would never hire someone with hair like yours.”

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Managing Editor

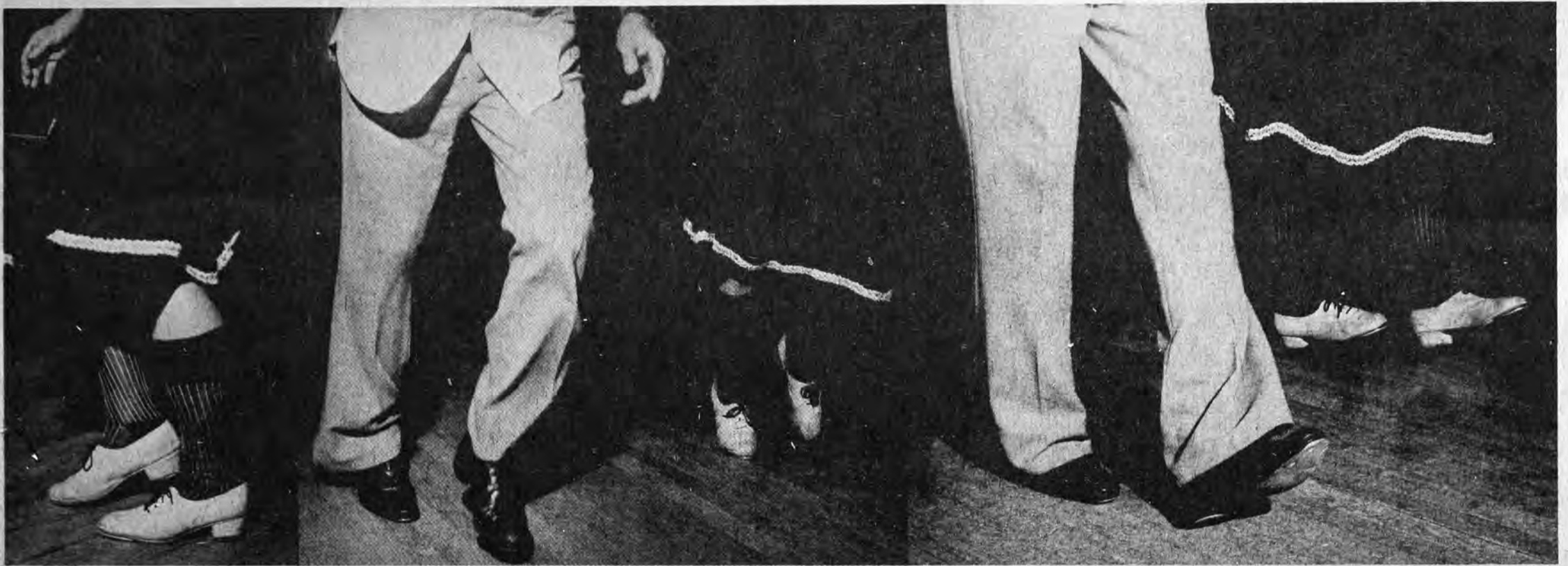
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The Eloquent Feet of Tapdancers Charles Cook and Jane Goldberg.

Sarah Wells

Waiting...

I dream that my children are birds. They sit in a nest, their soft pinfeathers trembling over their hundred and ten per minute heartbeats. Their mouths are wide open. I fly over them with ease despite my clogs, and stuff something down their throats that is green and crackles. It's money. They cry for more.

At the Foundation for the Community of Artists, where I'm picking up my CETA job application, Peter Leggieri says, "We do the work (the artist), but someone else makes the profit. The artist is so used to getting nothing that he doesn't realize that art is big business. We want some of that money for the artist!" He removes a folded application form from an enormous pile and hands it to me. I picture a pile of thousands of artists, one artist in place of each application. "We have to start small," he says. "But we'll get there."

The application reminds me of the many grant applications I fill out assiduously all year with the job applications, letters, and resumes, which leaves me no time to write. I resent filling out another. The information about myself leaves me catatonic with boredom. I have the same hopes I had when I applied for other jobs, wedded to the same doubts which warn me not to hope.

At nine-fifteen at the Manpower Center where I have my first interview, there's already a line at the receptionist. Inside a large windowless room are ten or so desks and interviewers, and many seats already filled with people waiting. The receptionist gives me a number when I sign in, which, when it's my turn, will have to be placed on a large hook on the wall. I look around at the multitudes, no more an abstraction, but real people. And plenty of them. I don't want to look too closely. After all, we're all competing. Do they look like artists? I wonder. This room reminds me of a welfare center. Recalling welfare, I glance with trepidation at the desks, questions being asked, information filled in. I feel my number with the hole in it on top. I'll just pretend I'm at Cake Masters on a Sunday morning, I think.

The next day I receive the letter for my first interview, from Hospital Audiences. I'm dying to call my friend Ruth but she hasn't called me. I feel funny telling her I have an interview if she hasn't got one. On the twenty-fourth I hear from The American Jewish Congress and The Cultural Council Foundation. All the letters are vague as to

exactly what we'll be doing. I want to do it anyway, I think.

At Hospital Audiences there's a crowd waiting to be interviewed, but the staff is cheery and apologetic and there's coffee and cake. The writers are seated while the actors do improvisations until they've weeded out everyone but the finest. Ruth comes in. "Since you didn't call me, I didn't want to call you," she says. "Same here." We wait a long time. Singly, we go into an anteroom where we are warned, "Five people are in that room. They're going to ask you questions. Don't be nervous." In the room they introduce themselves and I shake their hands. Then one of them asks me, "How would you teach a fiction workshop to a group of retarded children who can't even read, concentrate, or manage to write one letter?"

I wait for Ruth and ask her what she thinks. "Are they crazy?" she says. "Ten two-hour workshops a week, two a day for seven weeks and then an entire new set of seven different places. The morning could be Brooklyn and the afternoon Rikers Island! I wanted to tell them they have to be crazy." "I know," I said. "I asked her what happens after seven weeks. No more workshops for those particular groups. What's the benefit of a tiny taste of something good. Then they want us to fill out survey reports on who needs workshops. It's inhuman to us and to the people we serve." "God," said someone who was listening to us, "I didn't realize the need was so great. Hundreds of us should be hired, and the retarded, aged, sick and imprisoned should have workshops all the time." "I was watching those performing artists," said an elderly black man, "and I had a flash. I thought I was just having a problem making money, getting a job, being out of place in society, not getting paid for what I do best. But here for the first time I saw I wasn't alone. There are hundreds of us! Thousands! That man's directed six plays and he's poor. That person published two books and had three plays produced and his family's on welfare. I've had three books of poems published and I hate to tell you what I got paid! I'm not just a lone poor misfit," he shrieks, dancing out. "I'm a social phenomenon!"

It's snowing and cold as I enter the elegant parlor of the American Jewish Congress. I'm a bit early but in need of shelter. Expecting some kind of waiting room, I throw my coat over an already full coatrack and sit on one step of a huge staircase. More and more people are arriving. We

wait, filling the huge parlor and the curved staircase. We are under the impression that interviews are going on somewhere but we find they haven't begun yet. We realize that all our appointments are for eleven-thirty, and none of the panels have arrived yet. A large man wearing a suit walks regally down the stairs. It's the President of the American Jewish Congress, and the uncle of my first husband. I'd like to say, "Hi, do you remember me, Uncle Willie? I used to be married to David," but I can't because he's sweeping us away, shouting, "Don't block the stairs—it's a fire hazard." Someone apologizes for being so disorganized. They thought it would be easier if we all came at once. "And by the way," he says, looking around at all seventy-five of us, "we're hiring one poet, one fiction writer, one non-fiction, and one playwright."

"Did you?" "Did you?" "Yes," says Ruth, "I was hired by the Cultural Council Foundation." "So was I." We're on line at our last interview, our financial review. There is one intake secretary and a line of artists twenty-four feet long. But this is only the beginning of a long process and many lines. We fill out forms, and wait more. The interviewers want to be able to divide our one shot free-lance fees for our work into weekly and hourly wages, and that's frustrating. "I'm glad I got the Cultural Council job," says Ruth. "I was interviewed by seven people, and I was so nervous it was all a giant blur. But everyone there was so nice. They only kept me waiting a few minutes, and when we spoke to each other, I had the feeling for the first time that my work and I were really respected." I agree and peer out to see how far the line has moved. This still reminds me of Welfare, I think. But I'll just pretend I'm on line to see "Close Encounters of The Third Kind."

"Hi Laura, I got it. I can't believe it. Only fifty writers and I got a job! The pay is ten thousand. Will they take out taxes? Of course. They also pay for a health plan for us, but I have to pay an extra forty dollars a month for my children." "How can they tax a government grant?" asks Laura. "It's not a grant, it's a job," I say. "I've got a time sheet to prove it." "Well," Laura reminds me, "Barbara got just as much from the National Endowment to stay home and do her own work. Oh, by the way," she continues, "I just got a new job. I'll be earning forty thousand dollars a year at Lorimar Film Enterprises to hunt for and buy "properties" from publishers and writers that can be made into T.V. shows and movies."

Projects...

artist Jimmy Wright will document the history of the group and create a traveling photography exhibit that will tour New York.

One of the most ambitious construction programs in the city is the Bronx River Restoration Project. There, sculptor Raphael Gribetz and graphic artist Edward Hee will design and build a three-dimensional scale model of the twenty-mile river corridor; photographer Robert Gurbo will document the entire stretch of the river as it now exists.

Many of the placements involve working directly with museums—to help plan new exhibits and expand community services. On Staten Island, sculptor James Biederman and mixed media artist Kenn Stepman will be in charge of designing and constructing a major new exhibition area at the Museum of Archeology; photographer John Gruen will document the museum's collection.

At the New Muse-Community Museum of Brooklyn artists will assist museum personnel to install both temporary and permanent art exhibits on black history and culture. At BACA (Brooklyn Arts and Culture Association), artists will create photography and painting exhibits on historic sites throughout Brooklyn. Altogether, BACA is assigning 22 visual artists to various community projects.

Calendar of Events

Starting with the next issue, the Journal will publish a calendar of events, listing solo and group art exhibits, poetry readings, recitals, theatrical performances, lectures, and workshops. These listings will not be limited to CCF/CETA activities. The calendar in the April issue will cover the period from April 10 through May 15.

The deadline for submitting listings will be March 17. Entries should be brought or mailed to Grover Amen, Managing Editor, Journal, CCF/CETA Artists' Project, 326 West 42 St., N.Y.C. 10036.

New Role...

For all its probable bureaucratic limitations, CETA should provide a chance to see if we can feel comfortable out there in the community, if there is something concretely and humanly satisfying about it beyond the utopian vision. The first step is simply to see the artists not as an isolated loner, a wounded victim of a hostile environment, but as an organic member of society. To quote Moholy-Nagy again:

We are faced today with nothing less than the reconquest of the biological bases of human life . . . Only if it is clear to man that he has to realize his place as a productive unit in the community of mankind, will he come closer to a true understanding of the meaning of technical progress.

In any case, however the cake is cut, it's no longer an abstract question of *the* isolated artist. It's a specific case of thousands of isolated artists in New York alone, of which the 300 accepted in this program are a small fraction. There is something abysmally depressing about these statistics beyond their mere quantity. As Francis O'Connor, the foremost historian of the WPA period, remarked during Orientation Week, comparing the mood of the thirties to that of the seventies, "I didn't see any of the thousands of artists rejected by CETA picketing on the street outside the auditorium." It certainly would have been a sobering gesture if one rejected artist, maybe a jazz musician, had been playing outside the auditorium as we left—a reminder not of our gain but of our loss.

Economically, most of us would have survived, one way or another, if CETA had never come along. But the idea of working *together* out there in the community, particularly in interdisciplinary groups, sharing our experiences, has a perennially fresh and dynamic appeal. It has the added virtue of stressing *process* in art as opposed to *product*.

It's possible that we may not be able to share our experiences as often or as deeply as we might wish. There will be meetings once a month of the 155 members of the Cultural Council Foundation's pool and at least four times a year of all 300 participants in this program. But for communica-

tions beyond that, the CETA artists themselves must take the initiative; for it may be that the sharing of our experience in the community will turn out to be more rewarding than the experience itself.

On the other hand, this visionary approach can become too much of a good thing. There's a benign impulse beyond all these considerations that says, "To hell with all that. I simply want to do my own thing and survive." A soothing thought. But we are a political force, and we might as well exercise it. The whole CETA project, after all, is an unlikely event in the karma of contemporary America. A strange conjunction. And between the Public Art and the Private Vision, it should not be a matter of choice. It should be possible, rather, to worship at the temples of both the gods.

Working With Us

If you are a not-for-profit New York City-based arts or social service organization, you may apply to the Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project to become a community sponsor. CCF/CETA will try to match your proposed community project to the interests and skills of one or more of our participating artists.

For further information send a self-addressed manila envelope affixed with 24¢ in postage to: Cultural Council Foundation/CETA Artists Project, 326 West 42 St., 26th floor, New York, NY 10036. **Do not call us for information;** the packet we will send you is self-explanatory, containing both program details and our application forms.

In filling out the application you may have questions about the optimum presentation of your project proposal. Once again, don't call us, and don't worry. At a point in our processing of your application one of our staff coordinators will contact you to help develop the best possible project description. We look forward to working with you. The deadline for applications for the summer quarter is May 15.

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