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Living with Change

By Renee Lasher

As I approach my last day with SDC before leaving for a wonderful new opportunity, I've been thinking about change. Here at SDC, the average tenure of the current staff is about 9 years. That's a relatively long time in the working world, and it says something about SDC as an organization, and the staff's commitment to the membership and the industry. I have been with SDC since March of 2000, and though the mission and the commitment have remained constant, much has changed. Twelve years ago, SDC was SSDC, our color was blue, our office was smaller, Ted Pappas was President of the Executive Board, Facebook hadn't been invented, stream and tweet had entirely different meanings and blog and podcast weren't part of the lexicon.

The way we interact with one another and share information has undergone rapid and radical change over the last twelve years. Anyone under the age of twenty will never really have experienced a world without constant and instantaneous access and connection. And what is theatre about if not access and connection? Every aspect of theatre has been affected by the explosion of media - creation, content, capture, presentation, dissemination, review, funding, marketing, sales and licensing. For theatre artists, there are all kinds of challenges posed by this new world order. Maintaining the sanctity of the rehearsal process, finding ways to reach audiences whose attention is more fractured by the day, preserving the art form itself while adjusting to and capitalizing on new technologies. SDC has its challenges as well. How do we protect our members in this technological landscape? New scenarios seem to present themselves constantly - incorporating audience electronic participation into performances, live streaming rehearsal, capture and use of footage in every way imaginable and beyond. In bargaining cycles that are usually three or four years, we have to anticipate what the next developments or innovations or trends will be, and try to establish a framework for things that don't exist yet. But SDC and its members are up to the challenge. The tension between art and a changing world is nothing new, and theatre has always been a medium to address and reflect change, and to raise questions about how we live in the world with each other.

Change is hard, but it is healthy and necessary and unavoidable. I won't be here at SDC for whatever the future holds, but believe me, I'll stay connected.