

Quarantine Chronicles

Good Day Woodstock. And so, week six begins. Four inches of snow on the deck. Should have picked all the daffodils yesterday! Sloppy walk with the dog. Home office has migrated from the kitchen counter to a desk in the bedroom. The distance away from the fridge is helpful until the dog takes advantage of the empty kitchen and finds items to chew. Snap. She just ate my daughter's prized banana bread.

Dog is now in her crate. I return to the bedroom office to get on with my column.

Yesterday while exercising the projector, I stood in the empty theatre and imagined it full of people watching a movie happily eating popcorn, candy and such. While this moment is surreal, and the future uncertain I am confident the historic space will again be open for movies, and live performances. Granted that the path from now until then may take some twists and innovative turns.

Friends and family ask me, "what work could you possibly have to do at this time?" My response is and will continue to be "planning for the future."

Like my peers in other organizations I along with the Board of Trustees are considering multiple operating and financial scenarios from best case to worse case. Our goal is to be open minded, and come up with innovative ways in which we can deliver programming, remain true to our mission and remain connected to the community while public gatherings remain limited.

Who knows? Perhaps we could see a gradual opening of the theatre with limited and appropriately distanced seating for live shows and movies. Staff could include safety officers on site to ensure the theatre, foyer, restrooms etc. meet all appropriate health and safety requirements. And that maple butter popcorn...mm who knows. I can, however, foresee sneeze screens at the concession stand and box office. I could also see the possibility of limited outdoor concerts, and perhaps outdoor movie screenings this summer. Of course, one never knows when audiences will be ready to gather even in small groups.

We will soon turn an eye toward the Fall/Winter 2020-2021 season, especially for our Youth in Arts programs, should schools remain closed, with students doing remote learning.

There is also the work of raising funds to cover existing expenses not connected to programming, such as insurance, and utilities. Additionally, we need to be financially prepared to bring staff back on and re-boot our programming even if we are not fully operational.

Happily, for the arts community in Vermont the Vermont Arts Council has set up a Cultural Relief Grant Program for arts organizations, and a Rapid Response Artist Fund for individual artists. I certainly will continue to apply for grants as they come online, and will seek support from the community at an appropriate time in the future.

In the meantime, please continue to send us your COVID 19 creations! Poetry, artwork, creative movement vides, and songs. Remember, it is thought some of Shakespeare's greatest works such as King Lear were written while he was in quarantine during the Black Plague. *'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind. Do as I bid thee. Or rather, do thy pleasure. Above the rest, be gone. King Lear Act 4*

Finally, we send our thoughts and prayers to Ching-Wen Taylor, and her family for the recent loss of her husband of 50 years, Carl Taylor Jr. Carl and Ching-Wen have over the years been huge supporters of Pentangle Arts both as volunteers and as generous donors. I always look forward to seeing them at our classical concerts, especially when they and their many friends come to see their niece, Elizabeth Chang perform with the Lamartine Quartet each May. This is the first year since I began this job in 2014 that we have had to cancel the concert. Until next May!

Be safe. Be well.