

Remember the Healing Power of the Arts

Good morning Woodstock and surrounding towns. Week 10 will be remembered as the week the lid blew off the nation. If COVID-19 pulled back the curtain revealing the gross inequities in our society the most recent death of an unarmed black man at the hands of police tore it into shreds.

Our 15-year-old learned the term *Black Lives Matter*, when she was 8 years old attending Farm and Wilderness Camp in Plymouth, VT. F&W provides a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive environment for its staff and campers. She was able to hear other campers describe their own struggles of being a person of color in their communities and schools. She knows she will never endure similar struggles but having those conversations created empathy and now with the rest of us continued frustration with the lack of progress we have made as a nation in dealing with racial injustice.

Watching and listening to her grapple with the “whys and how” of racism, inequality, and the unanswerable question – “when will it stop”, takes me back to the 60s and 70s. While my father left when I was seven the constant father figure in our house, in addition to my three older brothers was Walter Cronkite and his delivery of the evening news, which our mother insisted we watch.

As I watch my daughter follow the protests on her phone and listen to her angrily read aloud the President’s tweets, I am reminded of the riots that followed Martin Luther King’s assassination, the invasion of Cambodia, the Kent State Killings, and our collective fear that our brothers would be drafted. Along with the fears I remember the music I played on our record player in the living room. From *WAR*, by Edwin Starr, to *All Around the Watchtower*, by Jimi Hendrix, and of course HAIR. I knew all the words to every song from HAIR though obviously was clueless to the meaning of most of them.

I wonder what music, verse, writings will emerge to chronicle this tragic confluence of events? In the years ahead what music, what songs will bring our kids back to this moment in time?

You may ask what does this have to do with Pentangle?

As we all process what is going on around us, those of us involved in the arts are reminded of our *inability* to bring the community together for shared experiences that can bring joy and laughter but also can address difficult topics from a variety of perspectives. It is especially difficult because it is often in the most difficult times that one can feel the healing powers of the arts. Processing our current experience in the absence of those gatherings can give us a sense of isolation and indeed helplessness.

I have seen stunning virtual performances by artists, actors, and dancers with whom we have worked in the past. I have enjoyed seeing remarkable choreography unfold in a small New York City apartment, and well-coordinated performances streamed by bands from their basements.

Having said that there is simply is nothing like being in an audience watching the connection between the audience and performer, or together watching a touching or funny moment in a movie.

I know as do my peers we will not return to our pre-March 2020 world. We will gradually emerge, bringing the arts and movies to audiences in perhaps different settings, allowing for the creative use of our venue for the community and for those talented artists who look forward to the day they can leave the apartment and return to the stage.

For now, we will wait patiently, observe the work of other organizations, reach out to discuss our mutual futures, and look forward to the day we can again bring the community together in safe and meaningful ways.