

As seen in the Vermont Standard – Jan. 7, 2021

Farewell 2020

So long, adios, Прощай, adieu, ciao 2020. We close out a difficult, challenging year though one with rays of hope and humanity. There were outpourings of support for local food shelves, neighbors shopping for those at higher levels of risk for getting the virus, communities supporting restaurants and businesses reinventing themselves with new safety protocols.

At the same time the pandemic brought to light the pervasive inequities and inequality in our society. Local and national support for Black Lives Matter, transformed some of those realizations into actions.

I for one hope we do not return to normal: we must learn from this experience and to find ways to level the playing field, to reward and acknowledge those folks whose tireless and often underpaid and underappreciated efforts contribute to the common good and keep all our “normal” lives possible. While there was widespread disruption, bank tellers, grocery store clerks, hospital workers, first responders, teachers, fast food workers continued to show up for work, many for less than a living wage, and many in environments where social distancing and other safety precautions were not in place or possible.

Rays of hope shone on Pentangle, as we were able to secure state and federal grants, support from the Town of Woodstock, and from our generous individual donors. We look forward to giving back as soon as we can safely bring the community together -whether it be for movies, concerts, live performances, workshops, or camps. Watch this space for news of spring and summer programming!!

While pre-COVID we were indeed on a trajectory to realize strong financial growth, expanded and diverse programmatic offerings, all was not lost in the months to follow.

With support from the community, high attendance at the movies, dance and performance camps, live performances, and concerts we were well prepared to weather the brunt of the storm.

Here are a few highlights from the year that was:

- Wassail Weekend 2019: Two nearly sold-out concerts, 800 plus participants on the 18th Annual Holiday House Tour, a nearly full house for Holiday Movies and Cookies with Santa, and the 28th Annual Messiah Sing.

- Sold out movies such as Parasite, Little Woman, and Knives Out.

- Well attended films as part of the Climate and Sustainability Film series in collaboration with Sustainable Woodstock. While the screenings of these powerful documentaries addressing climate change are currently remote, we hope to return to the big screen at some point in already scheduled 2021 season.

- Presentation of the one-woman performance of *Warrior's Don't Cry* based on Melba Pattillo Beal's searing memoir of the events around the integration of Central High School following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. The two performances were attended by 600 Woodstock Union High School and Middle Students in remembrance of Martin Luther King Jr.

- Performance of Mr. Chris and Friends in collaboration with Vermont PBS and Let Kid's Grow.

- Screening of WBCN and the American Revolution, attended by a full eager to revisit the birth of an iconic radio station, the protests, and the music of the 1960s.

- Ironically, our last Youth in Arts live musical presentation was *Wilma Jean and the Worry Machine*, a performance based on the book by Julia Cook that deals with the problem of anxiety in a way that relates to children of all ages. Since March 2020 we've all faced varying degrees of anxiety!

On March 14th we closed the doors and abided by the stay home, stay safe order.

Spring and Summer cancellations included:

- Screening of *Fantastic Fungi*, and an Evening with Frances Moore Lappe in collaboration with Sustainable Woodstock

- St. Patrick's Day Celebration Concert featuring *The Fretless*

- Zack's Place Players production of the *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*

- Woodstock Elementary School's annual talent contest *Show Your Stuff*

- Fall production of the “Listen Up Project”

- Wassail Weekend activities including, the 19th Annual Holiday House Tour (our largest fundraiser), Holiday Movies, Cookies with Santa, two live concerts, and the 38th annual Messiah Sing.

- Classical concerts, including the Lamartine Quartet, The VSO Summer Festival Tour in collaboration with the Woodstock Inn and Resort, and the Central Vermont Chamber Orchestra Festival

- All spring and summer Youth in Arts Dance and Performance Camps

- All weekend movie screenings

- Bachelorette Party (rental)

- Rehearsal Dinner Party and Screening (rental)

- Four *Music By the River* concerts

We were down but not out. In June we peaked our heads out and found safe ways to bring the community together.

We were thrilled to participate in the 2020 WUHS Graduation parade, by providing music on the green featuring Pete's Posse, and handing out candy to the graduates.

With the support of the North Chapel, we rebooted our Summer *Music By the River Concerts* Series, with five at capacity concerts featuring all Vermont artists.

Using COVID related federal funds we purchased an outdoor screen and projector and rebooted the movie operation with a combination of popular features, and two documentaries, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*, and *I Am Not Your Negro*, based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript *Remember this House*.

Working those summer nights gave me a sense of normalcy as I welcomed new patrons, dear friends, and acquaintances as they made their way to safely distanced pods with their respective and quite appetizing picnics. After the second concert folks knew the drill; reservations, masks and social distancing required!

I am now sitting in my office at 31 The Green, listening to the snow fall off the roof, profoundly grateful to have this job I love, working in a building I cherish, and for a community that values and supports our mission. A Very Happy New Year to All.