Arcadia players Annual Report from the president June 2023

Friends,

Welcome to our annual meeting -- a chance to review what we've accomplished in the past year and to look ahead to the future. One thing we know...change is constant, and so any organization that hopes to thrive has to be adaptable and responsive to a fluid environment.

With that in mind, we approached this past season with optimism, but also with uncertainty. Would the pandemic continue to ease? Was our audience ready to return to live concerts? How would economic strains influence our musicians, our supporters, and our budget?

There were reasons for optimism, though. Above all, the Arcadia Players community has always been faithful and supportive. Second, we had our new Artistic Director, Andrew Arceci, in place at last. Third, concert attendance was beginning to revive throughout the region. Finally, the local and state cultural councils had received generous funding from the Commonwealth and from Federal COVID programs. Within that environment, we felt confident that we could present an engaging concert season, and that people would join us to experience it.

The opening program, featuring flutist Andrea LeBlanc, had us wondering if we had been too sunny in our expectations. Musically, it was quite rewarding, but the audience was smaller than we had hoped. We certainly heard that some folks weren't ready to sit in an audience, even with masks, and those who did come sat far apart from each other. As the year went on, though, people got more accustomed to showing up in person, and enjoyed taking part in the live music experience once again.

In November, Andrew and soprano Elizabeth Hungerford packed the Renaissance Center for a song recital, and in December, we had an enthusiastic crowd for *'Messiah'* at Abbey Chapel, reinforced by our performing partners, Illuminati Vocal Arts Ensemble.

Arcadia Viols presented a fascinating program in February, including a contemporary composition for viol consort which was especially warmly received. And, in the season finale, we were finally able to complete a major project begun years ago and interrupted by the pandemic: Johann Theile's "St. Matthew Passion." A western New England premiere, this was also our first performance at the Bombyx Center in Florence. Thanks to Gregory Hayes and the ensemble for bringing this moving program to life after years of delay. It was worth the wait.

Those money uncertainties I mentioned had led us to budget quite conservatively, but our concerns were calmed as the Arcadia Players Board, friends, and local councils came through with sufficient donations and grants to give us confidence in our financial stability. Later, we received an extra infusion from the Massachusetts Cultural Council COVID relief program, which guaranteed a healthy income picture for the year and a positive balance going forward into the coming season. Thanks to everyone who helped make that outcome a reality.

All told, then, it has been a good year for Arcadia Players, despite our concerns going in. However, as the season came to an end, we began a series of conversations with our Artistic Director Andrew Arceci which led to the decision that he will leave us at the end of the 2023-24 concert season. Andrew's personal and professional circumstances have changed significantly since he joined us, his family has relocated to Europe, and it became clear both to him and to the Board that it would be better for all of us to part ways amicably once this year's programs have concluded. The Board thanks Andrew for everything he has done for Arcadia Players and we wish him all the best.

While that is difficult news, Andrew will still be with us this year, and we have an attractive and varied concert season in the works. Highlights include a program featuring virtuoso trumpeter Robinson Pyle, Charpentier's festive *Messe de Minuit pour Noël* in December, and concerts with fortepianist Monica Jakuc Leverett, soprano Hailey Fuqua and more. We'll have details soon.

Looking ahead, we will certainly be focusing on finding a new Artistic Director -- fortunately we have some time to discuss our options and launch the process. Meanwhile, we will be busy preparing for the coming concert season, and the pleasure of listening to live music with you again.

Thanks to the Board, to Andrew, to all our friends and to the musicians who help bring our aspirations to life.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Solins

President, Arcadia Players