

Welcome to the Arcadia Players Annual Meeting for 2021. This is my first annual report, and I want to begin by recognizing my predecessor Carolyn Holstein, who continues to serve as Vice-President. I am pretty new to the Board and she has been invaluable in showing me the ropes and minimizing my blunders. Thank you, Carolyn.

When I became president last July we were facing an uncertain future, to say the least. The final concert of the 30th anniversary season had been cancelled due to the pandemic, we were just getting our search for a new Artistic Director into high gear, and we had no idea when we might get back to some kind of normal. It was a heck of a moment to take the reins – here you go, good luck!

As it did most arts organizations, the pandemic challenged us to work in new ways, to figure out how to sustain our operation and to remain flexible as we planned a path forward in an unpredictable environment. Yet those hurdles also offered opportunities, and I'm happy to report that we have kept our heads up, thought hard about where we are and what we need to do, and, during a time when we couldn't make a whole lot of music, made our way through in as good a mood as possible. This Board has worked hard to keep the organization healthy, to offer as much content as we could to as many folks as we could, to raise enough money to sustain operations and to press forward in our search for a new Artistic Director.

On the content front, we were thrilled to stream the video of 2019's *Messiah* which had been filmed at Our Lady of the Valley Parish in Easthampton. It was our first full-concert videocast, and a good lesson in the value of making recordings of our concerts and programs whenever possible. The pandemic environment has confirmed the importance of reaching out to audiences in any way we can, to communicate with new fans who don't know about us, or are too far away to attend our offerings. This is a new world for us, with a lot of possibilities.

In February, we collaborated with the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence for a streamed concert in the "Live from the Sanctuary" series, featuring Alice Robbins, Greg Hayes and Jane Hershey. This was another opportunity to get our name out and to attract new fans as well as to work in partnership with another local organization. It had a good audience, some new to us, and raised some money as well.

We launched an occasional series of profiles, "Meet the Arcadia Player," so far spotlighting Board members Greg Hayes and Arthur Kinney; a third installment with Alice Robbins is in progress. We have also been building out our online and social media platforms, refreshing the website and enriching our Facebook offerings. It's a start, but this area needs continued attention, as frequent updating is a must if we want folks to keep coming back.

Walter Denny and Alice Robbins each gave talks for the Renaissance Center via Zoom; Walter explored images of music and musicians in Renaissance and Baroque art, and Alice gave her talk on "What is Early Music?"; in both cases we cross-promoted with the Center via our website, email, and Facebook.

And on Palm Sunday of next year, we're looking forward to seeing all of you *in person* at our now-twice-rescheduled performance of Johann Theile's "St. Matthew Passion." We hope this gathering will mark our 'official' return to normal, or some version of normal, and it will be wonderful to be able to experience live music together again. Save the date!

Arcadia Players is close to the end of our Artistic Director search. After many months of virtual interviews, repertoire discussions and logistical planning, we are about to embark on a series of audition programs, each one designed and led by one of our finalists. We've done our best to create a level playing field: all three programs are using similar ensembles and many of the same players; they'll all be filmed in the same performance space and will be streamed as a group in the fall. It has been a lot of work so far and there's more to come, but I'm very optimistic about how this process is playing out...we have three exceptional musicians to work with, and I think we're going to have some terrific musicmaking as a result. I don't expect it will be easy to reach a decision, but I think that's a good thing for Arcadia Players. The next few months are going to be very busy!

It was clear from the start that we needed to raise enough money to support these projects, once they finally became possible. Expenses may have been lower than usual, but we knew that once things opened up, we would need the resources in hand to pull off what we hoped to do. I'm happy to say that we've done ok – our friends and audience members have responded generously to our appeals, and Board members have made a strong showing as well. We participated in Giving Tuesday in December with some success. The local cultural councils have recognized that schedules and plans have been upended – theirs were too -- and they've been flexible and supportive. Still, our usual income stream from ticket sales and advertising has pretty much dried up, so we'll need to keep working to identify sources of support moving ahead. The good news is that we will soon have actual music to offer: the upcoming online concerts are a start, and while streaming performances don't bring in as much revenue per person as live events, they do have the potential to reach more people than a standard concert.

Ah, more people – every organization's goal! Arcadia Players has many wonderful friends, and some of them have been friends for a long time. That's fabulous...loyalty is hard to earn, and loyal fans are at the heart of any organization's success. Still, the Board has put a priority on expanding our audience, to forge new partnerships, to be more vigorous in our outreach and marketing efforts, and to utilize every tool we have to bring our music to a wider public, and a wider public to our music. I know - we picked quite a time to get started on this! But as we rebuild our offerings, and with the help and imagination of a new Artistic Director, I think the future is bright.

Finally, I'd like to say something about the Arcadia Players Board. It's a group of volunteers – a real working Board – and over the past year we've gotten a lot accomplished, even though we've barely seen each other in person. We're all Zoom buddies, I guess...a strange bond. While we happily welcomed a new Treasurer, Denise Govoni, it has been a time of attrition overall...four of our loyal Board members resigned or went on leave for a variety of reasons, and the pandemic – there's that word again – has made it challenging to recruit. It's a priority,

though, and over the coming months we'll be working to find new members who can bring new energy, new skills, and new contacts to help the organization prosper in the future. For now, though, I want to recognize all the current Board members for their dedication and hard work, for picking up the slack and for helping me navigate this very unusual and challenging time.

Last year, my predecessor Carolyn Holstein wrote:

“So – the future. Will there be music from Arcadia Players in the near future? Or will there be another year of silence.? This will be a subject for much discussion at our Board meetings. But one thing is clear – there is no substitute for live music. When musicians are able to come together again in person, sharing collaborative artistry, the live performances will be magnificent.”

I'm sure she's right. And to all our friends and supporters in the community and to the musicians who make what we do possible: thanks – we'll see you soon.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Solins
President, Arcadia Players