

President's Address:

Welcome, everyone! This is the first in-person meeting of the board in a long time. It's good to be together again!

At this time last year, we were coming off a period of very little musical activity and we felt it was critically important that we get ourselves back on track, despite facing many uncertainties. Since then, we've been very busy.

Our first objective was to complete the Artistic Director search. After narrowing the field to three, we produced and presented YouTube concerts programmed and led by the finalists. They were a lot of work, especially adapting to online-only presentation, but we were able to offer three engaging programs to an audience of several hundred viewers, quite a few of whom were new to Arcadia Players. The board deliberated, performer evaluations were considered, and we selected Andrew Arceci to be Arcadia Players' 3rd Artistic Director. We're looking forward to working with him as we plan our upcoming season and our future.

We were determined to return to live, in-person concerts as soon as it was safe to do so, and on April 2nd Andrew led our first program with an audience since February of 2020. Attendance was good, but despite safety precautions some folks clearly were not yet ready to sit in an audience. Pursuing our goal to build up our online offerings, we recorded the concert and plan to make it available in the near future. Andrew also arranged a run-out performance in Winchendon, MA, which attracted a small but welcoming local crowd.

Not surprisingly, efforts to reach out to new audiences have been constrained by the pandemic, but we got a taste of what online presentation can offer, especially if we learn to make better use of marketing tools appropriate to the medium. We expect that in-person attendance will continue to fluctuate for the foreseeable future, and so we'll work to develop our online presence, including hybrid presentations, to reach as many music lovers as possible.

Fundraising to produce these programs and sustain operations was essential. Fortunately, friends and board members stepped up and provided the wherewithal for us to end the year in a secure financial position, supplemented by grants from the local and state Cultural Councils. Diversifying sources of support remains a key objective for the future.

So, a lot has been accomplished, but there's still plenty to do.

Foremost is finalizing plans for our 2022-23 concert season, which has been very challenging as COVID continues to impose delays and uncertainty for venues, performers and audiences. We're making good progress and should have a program announcement soon, including a performance of Handel's 'Messiah' in December. We remain committed to the safety of all involved, and recognize that, once again, we may have to be flexible if conditions change.

It's important that we promote our programs effectively on all relevant platforms, including developing new material for the website and adding content to the Arcadia Players YouTube channel. As we offer more live concerts and re-establish relationships with people we haven't seen in a while, we can't forget that many folks are still wary of going to concerts and have become more comfortable with new ways of accessing music. While online is no substitute for a live experience, there is opportunity for us in this space and we will continue to develop it.

As I stressed in my last annual message, this organization has made it through troubling times thanks to the hard work of our board, and this year we strengthened that body with two new members, Andrea Battle and Mark Wojcik. I also want to recognize our loyal business manager Linda Babcock, who keeps our books and handles our communications activities among many, many other tasks.

Sadly, in December we lost our fellow board member Arthur Kinney, founder of the UMASS Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies that bears his name. Although Arthur was already quite ill when I met him, his wisdom, modesty and wit made a strong impression on me and a lasting impact on Arcadia Players.

We've set aside some time after this presentation to share our thoughts and memories.

Finally, thanks again to all our fans and supporters. I'm optimistic about the year ahead and look forward to seeing you at our next Arcadia Players concert.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Solins

President, Arcadia Players