

# Art in the Time of Covid

Sept 26, 2020

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## Wendi Sirat

*"My pandemic summer has been a bit out of the ordinary. While my day job (as an estate/landscape gardener) continues mostly as usual, my musical life has changed completely. Normally, this time of year is full of rehearsals and performances with Mandalele, Ukulele Ladies and A Thousand Faces masked theater. Many summer weekends are typically filled with music festivals up and down the east coast. All of my live performances this year have been cancelled and music festivals are non-existent. Instead, Rob & I have been enjoying hiking, biking, canoeing, camping, and visiting with friends and family outside.*



*RAAC invited me to lead kids in playing ukuleles & drums at the "Summer in the Park" program at the Rappahannock County Park. I was nervous about it as it's challenging enough to teach kids. To do this while keeping us all safe seemed daunting. I decided that since it would be outside I'd give it a go, so I had to figure out some specific logistics. I picked a spot in the park that had the layout of a natural mini amphitheater. I spaced all of the chairs 10 feet apart so we could sing. I plugged in my amp and used my wireless microphone so I could speak softly and still be heard.*

*On the first day, I realized that the kids (ages 8-12) had attention spans that were shorter than I expected. I figured that spending the last 3+ months at home was probably a factor. So I adjusted my program into lots of 10 minute activities in an attempt to keep them engaged. I also realized that they weren't very interested in singing. Normally, I would have been encouraging them to sing but because of the pandemic, I threw the singing aside. This allowed us to then be spaced 6 feet apart. I instead focused on playing the instruments and having fun.*



*Though it seemed really hard at times, I learned a lot, made new friends and was glad to be a part of the summer camp. Playing music with kids makes me really happy, and I think they enjoyed it too."*

**Note: Since camp has ended, Wendi got a RAAC Mitchell Fund grant to continue lessons with two students who fell in love with the ukulele!**



*"My students funded by the Mitchell Fund had our first ukulele lesson on Monday. It went REALLY well! The sun was nice and warm and using the edge of the pavilion was perfect. We covered a lot of musical areas ... different ways to strum, new chords and how to use their chord chart, several songs, simple picking exercises and a simple duet. They both did a great job and hung in there for the full hour. It made me very happy!"*

## Barbara Sharp

*"I've been following the Art in the Time of COVID stories, but I was afraid it was for "real artists" only. But I decided to take a chance when I read your note encouraging people to participate. So, despite my feelings of fear of judgment, ridicule, and rejection, I decided to do just that.*

*I am a self-taught artist living in Rappahannock. I create art of every genre -- papier mache, photography, bas-relief, floor cloths, textile art, and more. I started painting with watercolors when Covid-19 reared up. This was a new medium for me, and I fell in love with it. Experimenting with watercolors saved my sanity, relieving the constant undercurrent of anxiety I had felt.*

*"I watched YouTube videos on watercolors for beginners and off I went. I haven't stopped since. I'm filling my house!"*



*I know my watercolors aren't going to win any prizes, but I was happy with some of them. So, I thought, why not send them to RAAC?"*





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