

STATE of RAAC: WINTER 2020-21

In a normal year, I'd be reporting on RAAC's standing-room-only talks at the library, sold-out community theater performances, first-run movies & fascinating film-talkback events, stimulating author readings, intimate *No Ordinary Person* stories, engaging Soup & Soul events, and square dancing with neighbors. But not so for 2020!

It's been 12 months since any in-person gathering and I yearn for these community events and connections inspired by the arts. Perhaps you do too. As you know by now, though, RAAC didn't shut down during the pandemic. To the contrary! Over the past year we've launched new initiatives to keep the arts alive, to engage our creative spirits, and to sustain community. Please have a look below.

New Ways to Share & Communicate

Art in the Time of Covid—a series of personal accounts showcasing Covid-inspired work of Rappahannock artists and non-artists whose creativity has been stirred by these times: visual, written, video, audio. Click [Art in the Time of Covid](#) to see recent email issues.

Look & Listen—frequent alerts identifying arts happenings in the County to be enjoyed virtually from your home: concerts, talks, gallery shows, radio interviews and local music. Click [Look & Listen](#) to see recent email issues.

New Children's Enrichment Programs

Summer Camp for Kids—RAAC joined with other local organizations (now known as the Rappahannock Kids Coalition) to give children a chance for fun and creative time at the County Park; RAAC awarded stipends for arts instructors and supplies.

School-Year Enrichment—RAAC supported our public school children and their families by providing artist stipends and supplies for the Wellness Wednesday program. And we just launched a free, Saturday Drama Club for 3rd to 7th graders in partnership with Headwaters.

New Visual Arts Programs

Virtual Art Exhibitions—series of monthly shows, May-October, highlighting Rappahannock artists and galleries; click [virtual exhibits](#) to tour any of the monthly shows in virtual gallery settings and feast your eyes!

Meet-the-Artists Events—monthly Zoom interviews with artists showing in the virtual exhibits; scratch your curiosity and learn more about Rappahannock artists and their creative processes by watching the recorded events [here](#).

Arts Expo—in lieu of the Fall Art Tour, we created the virtual [Arts Expo](#) in November, a rich online

compendium of artists and galleries who've participated in recent Art Tours. Our virtual art initiatives resulted in a 8-fold increase in unique visitors to our Fall Art Tour website.

Community Theatre Virtual Play—local thespians are overcoming Covid restrictions. They're rehearsing Anna Deavere Smith's documentary play, *Let Me Down Easy*, as I write this report. The performance will be filmed in the RAAC Theatre and made available to all for watching online this spring.

New Music Programs

Home Music Concerts—a special Mitchell Fund grant helped Kid Pan Alley launch a series of Sunday home concerts featuring Rappahannock musicians and others far and wide via Zoom. Kudos to Paul Reisler and Cheryl Toth for creating dozens of "*Because We Have Music*" performances.

RAAC—Rappahannock Radio Community Playlist—we partnered with Rappahannock Radio last month to bring you dozens of songs by local musicians. Thanks to Kiaya Abernathy, we can listen to some of our favorite local performers anytime by clicking on [Rappahannock Radio!](#)

Financial Assistance & Arts Grants

Artist Relief Fund—new program offering financial assistance to artists and musicians who've lost income due to the pandemic; 19 artists have received over \$17,000 in grants since July 1. Click [here](#) for details.

RAAC's Claudia Mitchell Arts Fund—we've given out over a quarter of a million dollars since the fund was established in 2012! About \$48,000 was awarded in 2020. Applications for 2021 grants are due March 15. Applications for 2021 grants are due March 15. Click [here](#) for information.

Looking Ahead

Although the first 9 months of 2021 look questionable for inside productions, RAAC is exploring ways to present some outdoor events that would feature movies, talks, and/or concerts. Last fall we collaborated successfully with the Stone Hill Theatrical Foundation for an outdoor film-talkback event, so we know it can be done! Stay tuned as the weather warms up. We are about to begin preparing for our largest event, the ever-popular Fall Art Tour in November. It requires a lot of advanced planning and we'll begin work on the hopeful assumption that it can happen.

Financial Status. For many years, RAAC has operated in the black and established a strong financial base. But last year was a bit different. We dipped into our reserves during 2020 to create new virtual programs and to offer increased financial support. We remain financially solid, but the importance of continued support from our many generous donors will be especially important in 2021. We'll be launching our annual spring fundraising drive in March, so keep your eye out for it.

Our Conviction. RAAC is energized and guided by our belief that a community infused with the arts is stronger, livelier, and more connected. This conviction has remained true since our founding 39 years ago. A core strength is our Board that is known for its creative energy, innovative vision, camaraderie, and thoughtfulness.

Our organization stands on three pillars: dedicated & talented volunteers, artists & participants who make our programs happen, and supporters who contribute to RAAC so generously. All of this underlies our mission to *Inspire Art and Build Community!*

Thank you!

Matthew Black, President

[Rappahannock Association for Arts and Community](#)

Inspire Art -- Build Community