

We are so grateful for your presence today -- and grateful for the outpouring of support we have been receiving from so many of you during these difficult days.

Around this time, every year, we would be gathering in the Hall of Springs – buoyed by the onset of Spring, reveling in reflections of the previous season -- and excitedly anticipating a line-up of amazing artists and performances just on the horizon.

Instead, we find ourselves here on the SPAC campus – alone. Our magnificent amphitheater – normally a frenetic hive of activity – is now shuttered. A whole summer season of spectacular programming, lovingly conceived and carefully crafted over the course of more than one year, evaporated into thin air as we announced the cancellation of our entire classical season.

The world around us has been forever altered -- fragile and riven by an eruption of historical pain and injustice. And at a time when we most need each other, hungry for that sense of interconnectedness, we are most bound together by our fear -- our uncertainty -- and our biology in the face of a global pandemic.

For 53 years, SPAC has been defined by the unparalleled artists and performances that have graced our stage – Balanchine, Beethoven, Belafonte, Baryshnikov. Many thousands of performances, literally millions of artists and audience members gathering in our park, on our lawn, on the stage, in the amphitheater -- for over half a century. The memories formed around those experiences of

shared joy, celebration and beauty are lodged deeply into the very bones, psyche and DNA of our community.

And so, who or what -- you might ask -- is SPAC -- in a Summer that seems to have gone silent? And who are we in a world of hurt that longs for healing?

Those of you with us today, by definition, are those whose generosity and interest make what SPAC does possible -- and we are so deeply appreciative of your steadfast support. But we also know that there are some out there who ask why support is necessary and critical -- particularly now, in a time when the stage of the amphitheater is dark.

As a passionate lover of plants and gardening, my mind always turns first to earth-based metaphors. And a gardener knows that if a plant does not flower one year, the answer is not to let it die. To the contrary, you tend it, you care for it, you refortify it so that, next Summer, it returns -- even stronger and more beautiful.

But let me shift from the poetic to the prosaic and give you a real overview of how SPAC operates and why your support is so necessary and appreciated. I want to start with the basics in what would now be called "normal times."

SPAC is a 501(c)3 charitable organization with an annual operating budget of roughly \$10 million. That \$10 million comes almost equally from earned and contributed income -- \$5 million in revenue from ticket sales, Live Nation rent and

other miscellaneous sources. The other \$5 million must be raised through charitable donations and corporate underwriting.

Now many people assume that since we are located in the Spa State Park, that we receive operating funds from Parks or the State. Though SPAC has recently been the recipient of significant and generous capital funds for infrastructure projects via Parks and the State, we receive no operating support from the City, the State, the County or the Federal government. Other than a few hundred thousand dollars received annually in foundation and NYSCA grants, every dollar of that \$5 million has to be raised through membership, donations and regional corporate underwriting – a massive amount of money to raise every single year in a City of 25,000 people.

Now why does SPAC need a budget of \$10 million to operate? Let's start with our flagship residencies – the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra. We have been fortunate to call ourselves the Summer home of two of the greatest performing arts companies in the world for 53 consecutive years. Ormandy and Balanchine are part of SPAC's past, its DNA – and its future. But let's be clear about what it takes to continue that important and essential tradition.

Every year, SPAC must budget for a shortfall of over \$2 million (or 20% of our overall budget) to sustain 4 weeks of classical amphitheater programming. The massive cost of the fees alone for companies of this caliber are in the millions of dollars, plus hundreds of thousands of dollars of production and marketing costs –

of which, ticket sales cover only a small percentage. These are simply the financial realities of a commitment to presenting world class companies at this level. The fact is that, due to these financial realities, only a handful of presenting organizations in North America still have the ability to make annual commitments like this: The Kennedy Center, which presents NYCB for one week every year – and the Bravo Vail Festival, presenting the Orchestra for one week every Summer.

Often, when I share these numbers, people ask me, well why don't you do more marketing? SPAC does a tremendous amount of marketing – but marketing is also expensive – and funds have to be allocated strategically and carefully to ensure maximum exposure over many different residencies and varied programs – to audiences of different ages, income brackets and tastes. Some of our ticket buyers get their information solely from print media/newspapers, some from radio and tv, many from online and social media sources – all of which are increasingly costly. And to put things in perspective, just that beautiful brochure you receive every Spring -- which by the way takes us close to six months to produce -- costs \$40K to print and mail.

The truth is that bringing in *new* audiences (which is the key to our long-term survival) cannot, for the most part, be achieved through marketing – which is largely aimed at people who are already interested in or pre-disposed towards particular art forms – be it jazz, world, or classical music -- ballet or contemporary dance. New audiences are brought in through long-term, strategic plans that involve community and outreach and education. This is something to which SPAC has been dedicating itself vigorously over the last 3 and ½ years.

Since Summer 2017, SPAC has been strategically distributing free tickets to Capital Region organizations whose members have not traditionally attended our performances. Last year, for example, in a partnership with the Agricultural Stewardship Association, SPAC distributed over a thousand tickets to regional farmers and their families. Through our Summer Nights at SPAC program last year, free transportation, meals and nearly 1,500 amphitheater tickets were provided to organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs of Albany and Schenectady, the Commission on Economic Opportunity, and Northern Rivers Family of Services to provide children and their families the opportunity to experience live performances at SPAC.

Bringing new people through the door to experience the magic of live world-class performances for the first time in their lives has been one of our most powerful tools for creating new audiences – and we know through the data and testimonials that this is working.

We have expanded our programming to bring in younger audiences, families and culturally diverse audiences through new initiatives such as our ground-breaking SPAC on Stage series, through our Live Sessions at the Jazz Bar, through Cinema evenings with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Caffè Lena at SPAC and so much more. We know that this is working too, as we see new people coming to SPAC for experiences outside of and beyond our traditional programming.

In addition to our devoted fans of the annual Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center residency, we brought in new chamber music audiences from all over the Capital Region through our winter concert series at Bethesda Church, which began in December of 2017 and has expanded over the last three years.

Even our Wine & Food Festival has been refashioned to bring in fresh new participants and attendees. Last year, our focus on local, sustainably produced food celebrated the cultural and culinary bounty of our region. It featured music curated by Caffe Lena, sculpture curated by the Hyde Collection – and highlighted chefs and programming inspired by an ethos of socially conscious cultivation and consumption.

Over the past three years, in an effort to expand our audiences, but also to strengthen the bonds of the cultural and not-for-profit community in the City and the Region, we have been creating and expanding partnerships – with organizations such as Caffe Lena, UPH, Skidmore College, Pitney Meadows Community Farm, The Egg, The Hyde Collection, MiSci, the National Museum of Dance, the Saratoga Automobile Museum, COESA and Opera Saratoga.

SPAC is an annual driver of over \$100 million in economic impact in the region. Taking our responsibility to the business community seriously, we doubled down on efforts to strengthen cultural tourism to Saratoga and the region and have been working tirelessly with our partners at the Saratoga County Chamber, Discover Saratoga, City Center, the City of Saratoga, NYRA and I LOVE NY to

spread the word about Saratoga as an incomparable *year-round* destination for world-class music, art, wellness and nature.

But more than anything, what SPAC has done over the last 3 and ½ years is grow its education program. No matter how much we invest, no matter how much we market, there will be no future for world-class performing arts in Saratoga without a new generation exposed to the joys and transformative experience of meaningful contact with the arts.

In the last three and ½ years, our education program has gone from serving 5,000 to serving 50,000 students annually throughout the Capital Region. Many of you have heard that stunning number before. But let me break it down a bit for you: In 2019 alone, SPAC's education team worked with more than 120 local schools and non-profit organizations to present more than 400 unique classes, events, performances, and presentations. Highlights include the expansion of our flagship Classical Kids education program, which now visits more than 50 schools throughout the region and provides more than 12,000 students each year with the opportunity to earn free admission to classical performances; a new annual "Ballet in Fifth" program, aimed to introduce every single fifth grader in Saratoga to New York City Ballet; a new partnership with Double H Ranch that took Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center to the camp for an exclusive performance for the children; the annual Adirondack Trust Company Festival of Young Artists which brings together hundreds and hundreds of young painters, poets, musicians and dancers to celebrate their achievements and their artistry on the SPAC stage.

When I first arrived at SPAC in Fall 2016, I already knew that both education and programming needed to go through tremendous growth and transformation in order to ensure a vital future for our organization. I am proud that we have achieved so much in those areas in such a short period of time – all accomplished with your help.

But the third area of serious concern and necessity only started dawning on me in Spring of 2017 as I began to see SPAC and the grounds awakening for the first time. I had the opportunity to tour every inch of our campus – from the Route 50 Gate to the Charlie Gate – from the back of the amphitheater to the porticos of the Hall of Springs – and I began to see crumbling limestone and broken windows and rusting metal – amphitheater ramps and bathrooms and concessions areas that were dysfunctional and far from being aesthetically in keeping with our beautiful park location and SPAC’s position as one of our country’s premiere Summer festivals.

I saw an existing infrastructure on course to deteriorate beyond repair. And as we began to grow our education and programming initiatives, I also began to experience our severe shortage of space - from storage space, to classroom space, rehearsal and event space.

And so, we began a campaign to restore and renew our campus – creating not only a physical infrastructure that significantly improves safety, security and functionality – but one that gives SPAC, for the first time in its history, year-round education and community gathering space right on our own campus.

Let me give you a run-down on all of our recent campus improvements:

In 2017, we built the new Charles R Wood stage – creating a second stage on our lawn with a beautiful acoustic and ample space – a stage which has become a game-changing centerpiece for Jazz Fest – as well as the site of numerous performances by student and local performers all throughout the Summer.

In 2019, thanks to a generous capital contribution from NY State Parks, we were able to replace the aging amphitheater ramps with beautiful glass and brushed steel, modern lighting and ADA-compliant handrails.

This year, 2020, with the tremendous generosity and co-operation of our partners at Parks, Empire State Development and Live Nation, we were meant to be unveiling a major new restoration construction project: The Pines @ SPAC – which includes a complete replacement and augmentation of bathrooms and concession areas, a new covered Pavilion for programming – and a 4,000 square foot indoor/outdoor, year-round education and community events space. As part of our commitment to restore the park-like feel of SPAC, we also opened up the original site lines – with clear open views all the way from the Route 50 gate to the Victoria Pool.

All these projects, along with a myriad of other safety and security measures that have been implemented over the last few years, have truly and finally

transformed our campus – giving us the infrastructure that befits a world class festival.

All of that, of course, happened before COVID.

So, let me talk to you now about what we have been doing since the middle of March. On March 16, our whole staff of 25 began working from home and have not been back to the office. Despite all that, SPAC pivoted quickly into the new “normal” – driven by the commitment to provide the same kind of uplifting, transformative and inspiring experiences that SPAC is known and loved for, through whatever outlets were and are available to us. And driven by our commitment to art, to artists and to our community.

Our education department, who were in the busiest time of our artists-in-the-schools program, had to call an immediate halt to all in-school activity. Without missing a beat, they turned to the creation of the SPAC Learning Library – quickly making creative, arts-based, on-line content for children and families during the most critical time of the pandemic. And, in an effort to keep money flowing into the hands of the many artists who would have been teaching in the schools, we reallocated those funds, paying artists to help us create content. The Learning Library continues to grow every week, filled with ever more amazing material promoting activity and creativity

On May 4, we were forced to announce the cancellation of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Freihofer’s Saratoga Jazz Festival. But literally the same day, we announced the Freihofer’s

Saratoga Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions, a virtual jazz festival which will take place on June 26, 27 and 28, featuring both national and local artists, produced in partnership with Caffè Lena.

Much more virtual programming is in the planning stages – including the Festival of Young Artists; Beethoven 2020; performances by Joshua Bell, Time for Three and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center– and much more to come.

Now, though the amphitheater is currently projected to remain dark all Summer, this does not mean that the SPAC campus will remain empty and silent. The one timely and valuable resource SPAC has plenty of is outdoor space. We have an amazing operations team who have been tirelessly working on COVID protocols and procedures – and an amazing and creative programming team who have been re-imagining SPAC on an intimate scale. We have a myriad of plans in place and are ready to walk through whatever doors may be open to us this Summer to provide art, inspiration and support for our community.

And what of 2021? Needless to say, no one knows for sure. And the notion of a complete return to “normalcy” is most likely an elusive if not mis-guided notion. But we are hopeful – and with dates already on the calendar for Jazz Fest, New York City Ballet, Philadelphia Orchestra and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center – we are focused on a full return next year.

However, the level of support SPAC receives now will be critical to that return.

The fact is that, due to the necessities of cancellations because of COVID19, in 2020 virtually all of our earned income -- or 50% of our budget -- will simply go away – with no chance of replenishment until sometime later in 2021.

Even though the stage is dark, SPAC needs your critical support now more than ever to continue its work and to ensure that the amphitheater lights go back on brightly in 2021. Even though we have already significantly reduced our expenses – and will continue to do so -- let me explain why we can't just shut down and wait until next year.

Presenting a season of world class programming is not an easy task and requires literally years of planning and hard work. Our programming department was already in planning stages for 2021 even prior to COVID – and will require the next 12 months to rebuild a new season. Our development team, now more than ever, needs to replenish the coffers that will allow us to make those multi-million-dollar commitments to programming next year -- and in the future.

Our education department must continue the important work they do year-round to bring arts education to tens of thousands of children – they are our future. Without our marketing and programming team, our virtual programming would not be possible. Without our operations team, all the beautiful buildings – both old & new – whose upkeep and maintenance are SPAC's contractual obligation – would be left unattended to. But more importantly, without our operations team, no amount of activity, however small and intimate, would be possible at SPAC this Summer.

To those who may ask why art is important during times like these, when even basic survival may be in question, remember this: art is not entertainment. Art is not a beautiful pastime. Art is a profound and essential expression of the human soul. Allowing us to see the world through other eyes, through other lenses -- taking us out of our own narrow individual slivers of human experience and into the large expansiveness of humanity – across continents, across cultures, across time. Beauty – both man-made and natural – opens our hearts -- and reminds us of our deep connection, our mutual responsibility -- to each other – and to the natural world that sustains us.

SPAC is so much more than just a presenter of programming on an amphitheater stage. We are educators, we are conveners of community, we are stewards of our place in this beautiful Park, we are creators and purveyors -- of possibility -- and of experiences that encourage and allow the human spirit to flourish – more needed now than ever.

We have been a continuous part of the history, the psyche and the DNA of this extraordinary City since our miraculous opening in 1966. Located here – at the perfect confluence of man-made and natural beauty -- SPAC is a refuge. SPAC is a beacon. SPAC is a beating heart that must never be allowed to stop.

We are so grateful for your support – your memberships, donations and corporate underwriting – the critical support which will allow SPAC to continue its

important work in the community now and set the stage for another miraculous amphitheater opening in Summer 2021.

Thank you. And be well.