

Arlington Arts in 2020: Meeting the Moment

For Arlington Arts, 2020 began with optimism and excitement. Having just completed some of our most successful and best attended events ever, we were in the final planning stages of a full lineup of programs for 2020. Then, the world changed..., and so did Arlington Arts.

COVID-19 has had a profound effect on arts programming and artists who were forced to reimagine activities to align with current public health restrictions. Our resilient arts community, presenting partners and staff delivered programming to help our audiences cope and find a bit of joy and whimsy during this difficult time. Here is a small sampling of highlights...

From CostumeLab to Covid-19 Mask Making

Sewing resources from Arlington Arts' dormant CostumeLab were transformed by staff and over 100 volunteer makers who produced more than 3,500 fabric face coverings for County health and social services departments and nonprofits. The program continues with a small crew of volunteers.

Synetic Theater's *The Decameron*

Their first virtual production, *The Decameron* is based on Giovanni Boccaccio's collection of stories written in response to the Black Death. Over 30 artists from across the globe contributed short video adaptations of the stories found in *The Decameron*.

New Public Art

Accessible to all even during a pandemic, several new works were added to Arlington's internationally-acclaimed collection of contemporary public art. *Luminous Bodies* by Cliff Garten, the four monumental 26' foot, LED lit sculptures that now distinguish one of the main gateways into Arlington at Key Bridge is just one example of new and pending works.

Words To Art

In collaboration with community artist Sushmita Mazumdar and four other Arlington Artists, thousands participated in Arlington Arts' invitation to suggest ONE WORD expressing your feelings about the #COVID19 quarantine. The selected words were then transformed into art!

Virtual Classes and Activations

From online performances to movement classes to residents confined to their homes by the quarantine, ensembles like Jane Franklin Dance, Synetic Theater, Encore Stage and Studio, WSC Avant Bard and others met the moment and persevered by sharing their artistry virtually.

WERA 96.7 FM Partnerships

Making the difficult decision to cancel both the popular concerts at Lubber Run Amphitheater and the most exciting Columbia Pike Blues Festival lineup to date, Arlington Arts brought together Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO) with Arlington's community radio station WERA 96.7 FM, encouraging people to put their speakers in the window and bring the festival to their own yards and living rooms.

The Arlington Players

Based on our broadcasting successes in the summer, Arlington Arts connected The Arlington Players with WERA 96.7 FM, to create a special Halloween performance of Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds."

Arlington Art Truck

The acclaimed Arlington Art Truck began its third season "on the road" with more than 20 activations that reached a total of 4,000 patrons of all ages.

Arts Grant Support

The annual Arts Grants program supported 21 organizations and two individual artists in FY 2020 with a total funding amount of \$215,810.

Arlington Poet Laureate

Arlington Arts continues to manage this important program in 2020, which saw Holly Karapetkova selected as the County's second Poet Laureate. The season was capped with *Visual Verse*, in which artist Robin Bell projected the work of four national and regional poets laureate (including our own) on large edifices throughout Arlington in December.

Amid the unprecedented challenges of 2020, one thing was made clear: the arts remain a valued part of Arlington life not only in the best of times, but especially amid our greatest challenges. The Arlington cultural community is among our region's most resourceful and Arlington Cultural Affairs/Arlington Arts stands steadfast in readiness to assist artists in navigating and overcoming the challenges of the last year, and to be prepared for a new day.

Michelle Isabelle-Stark