



# HIGH NOTES

A Contributor Newsletter  
October 2020

BRINGING MUSIC TO THE ADIRONDACKS SINCE 1915

## Pandemic Forces Season Cancellation But Creativity Ensures Success

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of the planned 2020 season of Seagle performances and in-person emerging artist training. A cancellation announcement was made to the artists, staff, Board and Guild members on April 26, and to patrons and the general public in the days that followed.

"Making the decision to cancel was one of the most difficult things the senior staff and I have ever had to do, but it was the right decision," says General Director Tony Kostecki. While there was great disappointment all around, support for the decision was widespread among all parties.

All 2020 ticket holders were offered the opportunity to either convert their purchase to a donation, hold their purchase on account, or receive a refund. About 85% chose to convert all or part of their purchase to a donation. Full Refunds were also offered to all emerging artists that had made tuition payments. As part of a revised budget, the Seagle board agreed to partial payments to all contracted 2020 faculty and staff members. The payments were calculated as a percentage of their 2020 contracted salaries with increasing percentages correlating to the number of years they have been a faculty or staff member.

Before the final cancellation decision, the full-time staff worked diligently to come up with creative ways to continue the Seagle mission. Thanks to modern technology, Seagle was able to offer nine weeks of virtual classes, one hour, three days a week to all the selected 2020 emerging artists. Topics for the classes included some of the typical career training topics covered in a Seagle summer, plus additional classes tailored specifically to the pandemic situation into which the opera and musical theater world has been thrown in 2020. Following the series of classes, many of the artists expressed their gratitude for the ability to learn from home, despite not being able to gain their expected performance experience in Schroon Lake. All the selected 2020 Seagle emerging artists have been invited to participate in the 2021 Seagle program.

The second major program put into place was organization and implementation of the 2020 Seagle Virtual Gala. With expert technical assistance from Seagle Director of Productions Richard Kagey's son Ian Kagey, a highly respected sound engineer, ten Gala Alumni Honorees and a host of other alumni produced a 90-minute live-streamed event on Saturday, August 1, 2020. The recorded performances were interspersed with fundraising messages from Kostecki and Artistic Director Darren Woods. Although the fundraising goal for the evening was originally \$75,000, thanks to many sponsors and an enthusiastic and generous viewing audience, the Virtual Gala raised over \$111,000.

### **Seagle Music Colony Mission Statement:**

To produce the highest quality opera and musical theater showcasing exceptionally talented emerging artists, while providing career development and performance opportunities to support the resiliency of the art form.

## Government Support Helps Seagle Navigate 2020

Alongside the strong support of our generous donors, several government programs have helped keep the Seagle financial position healthy during the 2020 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn.

During the first round of legislative pandemic relief, Seagle Music Colony applied for and received a loan through the Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP. The loan supported full-time staff salaries, employee benefits, utilities and office rent. Upon submission of proper paperwork, the loan can be completely forgiven—becoming a grant.

As part of the second round of pandemic relief, or the CARES Act, the National Endowment for the Arts was allocated funds to distribute to struggling arts organizations, again directed to employment support. Seagle Music Colony applied for and was awarded a grant of \$50,000 from this program—one of only 855 organizations nation-wide, and the only one in our region to receive this support.

The NEA also awarded SMC \$10,000 as part of its regular cycle of awards. While the grant was to support the world premiere of HARMONY, Seagle was able to request that the award be used in support of staff and guest presenters work during the 2020 emerging artists virtual classes.

These awards, along with our annual support from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Essex County Arts Council and the various local foundations that have supported Seagle for many years, (see list on reverse) are a critical portion of our annual income. The board and staff are so grateful to be awarded this funding.



Seagle senior staff Tony Kostecki, Darren Woods & Jim Koehnle in 'rehearsal' for the 2020 Seagle Virtual Gala.

The Shames Rehearsal Studio was transformed into a quasi TV studio for the live portion of the event.



Council on the Arts



Seagle Music Colony is supported in part by the following:

- The Community Fund for the Gore Mountain Region
- The International Paper Foundation
- The Pearsall Adirondack Foundation
- The Peckham Family Foundation
- Stewart's Shops
- The Tuba Family Foundation

Seagle Music Colony is grateful to the following local and regional foundations and organizations that have continued their generous support of our programs during this year.

### Seagle Foundation Supporters

Despite the challenges of 2020, the Seagle Music Colony Alumni Association has seen an uptick in participation and engagement of Alumni over the course of the year. The Association organized a well-attended Virtual Alumni Weekend July 31-August 2. Approximately 50 alumni participated—a record number.

### Seagle Alumni Association

Inspired by the national movement to discuss and put into action policies, procedures, and ideals that support diversity in the opera and musical theater fields as well as greater society, Seagle leadership, board, staff, and alumni have engaged in conversations and are working on implementing strategies for improvement in this area. As a first step, a small group of alumni succeeded in fundraising for the Fulton Fryar Scholarship, raising over \$5,500 to date. The Scholarship, named after the first Black singer to attend Seagle in the 1950's, will be given annually to a deserving Black artist. To make a gift to this fund, go to [seaglecolony.org](http://seaglecolony.org).

### Seagle and the work of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

### SMC News Notes



### Seagle Presents: Jack Swanson - Songs of Love & Loss

Don't miss this special live-streamed high-quality recital by Seagle Alum and rising opera star Jack Swanson

**Tickets are just \$25 per viewing device**

**Thurs. Nov 12 @ 7:30 pm  
Sun. Nov 15 @ 3:00 pm**

**Find out more: [seaglecolony.org](http://seaglecolony.org)**

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