The shows must go on!

Summer theatre continues with protections in place

By Kristi Niemeyer

For a rural state, Montana is uncommonly rich in performing arts and summer is one of the seasons when that wealth is on full display, with live theatre on stages and in parks from Birney to Bigfork. But with coronavirus loomed upon us, this season looks different than most.

Fort Peck: “Come in and put your troubles at the door”

On the other hand, several summer theatres stalwarts are opening this year, albeit a little later in the season. “I’m really happy to see a lot of Montanans companies are going ahead,” says Andy Meyers, artistic director of the Fort Peck Summer Theatre. “That’s simply not the case nationally.”

Meyers, who maintains an apartment in the cast quarters year-around, came back to quarantine in Fort Peck, “so I could be here to handle all the planning and loop-de-loops.”

He adds, “I’ve probably made 200 different game plans in the process of coming up with a restructured season.”

Blackfeet artist receives $30,000 mentor fellowship

Beaded Bag by Jackie Larson Bread

Bread has dedicated the past 50 years to practicing and developing her unique style of beadwork. She comes from a long line of artists to whom she carefully listened, absorbing the knowledge passed on to her from her relatives. Now, she is a respected culture bearer in her community and an accomplished artist nationwide. Bread creates utilitarian objects using a pictorial style of beadwork that features floral and geometric designs and vivid colors. Her work is deeply personal and a form of storytelling, often depicting family members and friends from her Blackfeet community.

No area of the state has been untouched by the pandemic, with events cancelled and venues closed. Coupled with the losses of outdoor festivals and related tourism, Montana’s economy will suffer long-term effects. In Montana, the creative industries:

• contribute over $1.5 billion to Montana’s economy
• represent 3.4% of the Total Gross State Product
• supply 15,666 jobs, generating $883 million in total compensation

Sixty percent of Montana’s artists and cultural workers are fully unemployed because of COVID-19. While the CARES Act expanded unemployment benefits, this group is reporting only a 36% success rate with Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. For this reason, MAC is dedicating the majority of CARES Act funding to support this sector.

The writer Christopher Buckley, a pretty good hand of the real-life Western character Luther Sage “Yellowstone” Kelly, a soldier, frontiersman, hunter and scout. Buckley was a writer’s writer, respected for his wry-smithing — and his irreverence and sardonic humor. For a time, he wrote columns for Forbes FYI magazine under the name “Coyote Jack.”

The writer Christopher Buckley, a pretty good hand at comic novels himself, was the editor at the magazine who commissioned columns from Bowen, and said he knew he had a winner when he read the first line of the real-life story. “Your troubles at the door”

Blackfeet artist Bread creates utilitarian objects using a pictorial style of beadwork that features floral and geometric designs and vivid colors. Her work is deeply personal and a form of storytelling, often depicting family members and friends from her Blackfeet community.

**Montana novelist Peter Bowen remembered as a writer’s writer**

By David McCumber

Reprinted with Permission from The Montana Standard, April 11

Peter Bowen, a novelist who found acclaim and literary success writing about the Montana he loved, died Wednesday, April 8, after a fall at his home in Livingston. He was 74.

Bowen was best-known for a series of 15 mystery novels set in the fictional Eastern Montana town of Toussaint, and featuring a Métis brand inspector named Gabriel Du Pré.

He also wrote a four-book series of historical novels set in Montana in the 19th and early 20th century that featured a fictionalized version of the real-life Western character Luther Sage “Yellowstone” Kelly, a soldier, frontiersman, hunter and scout.

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The writer Christopher Buckley, a pretty good hand at comic novels himself, was the editor at the magazine who commissioned columns from Bowen, and said he knew he had a winner when he read the first line of the real-life story. “Your troubles at the door”

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See Peter Bowen, page 17

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The arts help maintain community and raise morale.

The State of the Arts Summer issue generally includes extra pages to highlight the events that allow the arts to shine in the most hospitable season in Montana. The absence of the summer calendar is just one small indicator of how different our world is now.

While overwhelming, artists and organizations continue to create and share as a way to maintain community and raise morale, despite the uncertainty. I have faith in our creative spirit, although I worry about the stability of the support structure.

The arts sector contributes more than $1.5 billion annually to Montana’s economy. It may be years before we can adequately measure how the pandemic has changed the industry financially. The most comprehensive survey that I am following, by Americans for the Arts, has less than 75 arts organizations from Montana contributing data. Even at this point, the reported financial losses exceed $4 million.

Artists and independent businesses are even harder to track. Those contributing data to date report losses that exceed half of their annual income, and dependency on sales to individuals for most of that income.

Society has flooded to the arts in this time of crisis, and yet culture is a small part of the recovery strategy.

I’ve been reflecting on a distinction I heard years ago on diversity, equity and inclusion, often shorthanded as DEI. Simply stated, inclusion and diversity are listening and engaging. For those holding power, it is accountable to invite new voices to be at the table, but it often stops there.

The next big step feels much more dangerous, as it requires responding with a deliberate shift in power at all times through dismantling and rebuilding. MAC, as an agency of state government, holds power and must be equitable and transparent. Equity becomes a wicked problem when one that needs constant reevaluation as, through vigilance, we improve.

An opportunity for equity

The health of the economy will be a significant factor as we move into our new reality, which I see as an opportunity for equity. The arts sector is being laid on the ground for needing to ‘tighten our belts’ and ‘prioritize necessities,’ a slippery slope into reducing investments in the arts and humanities. I’m frustrated by the ways that reaction tactics have changed the cultural sector. The arts have demonstrated their worth in job creation, community revitalization, economic development, tourism, education, juvenile interventions, cultural preservation, healthcare, recovery from military service, elder care, mental health, and so on. Society has flooded to the arts in this time of crisis, and yet culture is a small part of the recovery strategy.

The impact of the virus on the arts community is grim. What is happening in the arts is reflective of what is happening across society. Uncertainty and desperation linked to the pandemic have made inequities unbearable on every level. And while many have raised a red flag about the arts, America has also voiced a profound cry for support from arts organizations. The arts have demonstrated a proven quote by artist Ben Pease, speaking about the anti-racism protests, asking, “How loud do you have to be before the person who claims they believe in equity has to act on it?”

We each hold power in different ways. I am certain, as a subscriber to this paper, that you share an appreciation for the value and necessity of the arts. I hope that you’ll join us as we push past inclusion and work for equity.

Every action can shift power.

Every action can be as simple as buying your next gift from a local artist. As community members, we can encourage every city council and school board meeting to understand whether the arts are present or absent. As citizens we can deliberate as a whole how we understand by listening to new voices with the purpose of understanding. As we practice empathy and make it the foundation of our new normal, I am hopeful for the world we can build.

The Montana Arts Council’s new program director, Brian Moody, looks forward to exploring how art can help build more resilient communities and better connect people to the places they call home.

“Drawing has been a lifelong daily practice and support to the public. He’ll also help several of the Montana Arts Council’s grant programs, provide training through classes, workshops and conferences, and offer service and technical assistance. He’ll also help evaluate programs and implement improvements when needed.

He asks that you share an appreciation for the value and necessity of the arts. I hope that you’ll join us, as a staff, think critically and support new voices to be at the table. I share them with my daughter.”

“MAC adds Program Director Brian Moody to roster.”

### CARES Act (from page 1)

Montana CARES Individuals will award up to $2,500 to those impacted by COVID-19. Professional artists can apply to Montana CARES Recovery to recoup losses from canceled opportunities, up to $1,000.

“I am proud of MAC’s bold response to prioritize those that fuel Montana’s creative economy with their talent,” said Agency Director Tatiana Gant.

“MAC took the time to examine the field-wide resource landscape to determine what would serve those most at risk. These investments ensure that we can weather this epidemic and maintain our culture. To date, the total financial impact of COVID-19 on cultural organizations in Montana is more than $4 million. In addition to assisting artists, Montana CARES Recovery provides up to $1,000 of matching funds for losses related to postponed and canceled arts programming for nonprofit organizations.

Through the third grant offered, Montana CARES Partners, recent grantees of the MAC Public Value Partnership, can receive up to $3,000 for their ongoing public services that add value to Montana communities.

“Montana has unique challenges with access to technology, aggravated by the closure of public libraries,” said Agency Deputy Director Kathy Burgoyne. “Staggered deadlines will allow us to meet immediate needs quickly while providing the time to share the opportunity through alternate channels.”

### About the CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided $2 trillion in federal economic relief to the nation, of which $75 million was allocated to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Of that amount, 40% was designated to be divided among the state arts agencies and regional arts organizations for distribution. The NEA has limited the use of funds to salaries, fees for artists and other contracted personnel, or facility costs.

MAC received $424,400 from the CARES Act through high and initial support for 100% recovery by the State of Montana will cover overhead and operations expenses and will be used toward additional grants. MAC anticipates making approximately 230 awards through the trio of Montana CARES grant programs.

### Additional Resources

- **American for the Arts,** www.americansforthearts.org, offers the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource and Response Center, a comprehensive source for arts organizations and individuals.

MAC beginning held information webinars June 12 that will remain available for viewing. Applications are available through the MAC website.

MAC anticipates announcing awards for the first round of grants in mid-July. Eligible and qualified applicants will remain in consideration until available funds are committed.

State of the Arts • Summer 2020
The fledgling filmmakers from Helena and Helena who received regional Emmy Awards from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (NATAS). During an online ceremony live-streamed from Seattle on Saturday, June 6, officials announced that both “Looking Forward From Yesterday” (Short Form Non-Fiction) and “EAST” (Short Form Fiction) had taken top honours in their respective categories. They now advance to the national competition, where they will vie for the Emmy’s top prize for student production work against high schools from predominantly larger markets. The films were created by students of the Montana-based MAPS Media Institute, and follow last year’s three regional production awards, and one highly coveted national award, from NATAS. Both films in the NATAS NW competition originated in MAPS Media Lab workshops. “EAST” was the result of a collaboration between MAPS and the Myrna Loy Center in Helena, where area students got a crash course in filmmaking from MAPS instructors in the spring of 2019. The film follows a day in the life of three Helena teenagers, and touches on themes of a sense of place, enduring adversity, and the bonds of friendship. “Looking Forward From Yesterday” was the third MAPS project undertaken by the students from north of Montana, as they helped to form their own production company, Milk River Productions. Helena High School is located just across the Milk River from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, which belongs to the people of the Aaníin (Great Vine) and Nakoda (Assiniboine) tribes. “Looking Forward From Yesterday” chronicles the challenges facing the tribes as they work to preserve and extend their culture in contemporary times. It’s a powerful and intimate story about a way of life that many feared was lost completely. Our tribes are doing some incredible work, and to have our own kids able to document that work means more than you can imagine,” says Craig Todd, the production company’s Helena High School advisor. Both films now move on to the national NATAS competition, winners of which will be announced in the fall.

Judy Erickson, award-winning professional potter and dedicated community volunteer, who was named the 2020 Paris Gibson Award Winner. Selected by previous award winners, Erickson meets the award criteria of providing significant impact and leadership for the community through volunteerism and taking welling action for the betterment of Great Falls, as exemplified by the city’s founder, Paris Gibson. Erickson moved to Great Falls from New York City in 1976, and married Robert, her husband from Minnesota in the 1980s. She became best known as an artist, crafting pieces that are both beautiful and functional. She often donates her work and teaching sessions for charities or auction or raffle, and shares her craft by teaching and mentoring students who are often working to overcome physical or mental challenges. She has taught classes at Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, an institution she was instrumental in creating. Her artwork has been recognized with the Governor’s Cultural Foundation Award, the YWCA Salute to Women Award, the Governor’s Arts Award for Service to the Arts and the We Stand Tall Award from the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce. Among her many community endeavors: she launched the YWCA’s Empty Bowls event, and single-handedly made 250 bowls a year during the fundraiser’s first eight years. As chair of the board of Gallery 16, a women’s artist co-op, has volunteered at the Cascade County Detention Center for two decades, as a member of the library program, and was manager of the Cascade Quartet for many years. As one of her nominators said, “Judy would be the last person to seek special recognition or speak highly of her own accomplishments. She simply moves through life listening to others, watching for ways to help others, encouraging others, standing up for others, and celebrating the accomplishments of others.”

Precious McKenzie, associate professor of English at Rocky Mountain College, who has received a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program Award in the Innovative Language Research Dissemination Program. Professor McKenzie will research at University College Cork, Ireland, as part of a project to study Irish folktales and legends.

Harlem students Mia Wing, Kiahna Cochran, Mitchrena Begay, Nellie King and Amelia Blackcrow with MAPS instructors Michela Workman and Dan Molloy on the set of “Looking Forward From Yesterday.”

“Worry, USA’: Dude Ranch Advertising Looks East, 1915-1945,” won the coveted Spa Award in the Best Western Short Non-fiction category from Western Writers of America, Inc. The article, which appeared in the Summer 2019 issue, looks at how working ranchers in the West shaped their own ideas of people who lived in the East as part of their campaign to woo customers and hunters and outdoormen to what were becoming “dude” ranches. Magazine contributor David Beyreis was a finalist for the Spa Award in the same category for his piece “You had Fought Bravely for Freedom and Were Vindicated,” which looked at the changing roles of Cheyenne women between 19th century Plains warfare. It was published in the magazine’s Spring 2019 Special Edition. His other article also won the Award for Short Non-fiction.

Missoula, which finished 10th on the Western States Arts Federation’s (WESTAF) roster of MostCreative Small Cities in America. WESTAF, a nonprofit arts service organization and leading provider of technology solutions for the arts, recently released its Creative Vitality Index, data-driven compilation that identifies and celebrates the arts, culture and creativity of America’s most vital and vibrant places and spaces. Using data from WESTAF’s CVIndex and other tools, the index measured and ranked the 100 creative economies of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations under 500,000. The index includes data sources from the census for nonprofit arts sectors with indicators in creative occupations, nonprofit revenues, and creative industry sales. “This is more proof that our artists, arts organizations, galleries and entertainment venues are essential to the economy and of great value to our community,” said Tom Bensen, executive director of Arts Missoula. “Such national recognition will no doubt benefit our community when we emerge from the current crisis.” Check out the whole list at cvsuite.org/the-100-most-creative-cities/top.

Livingston, which was named this year’s Film Friendly Community by the Montana Film Office for the community’s support of the filming of “Robert the Bruce.” The community was among the winners of the 2020 Montana Artists Awards, recognizing the significant contributions Montanans have made to the state’s tourism and recreation industries.

Seven Helena-area artists who recently were awarded $500 Grants to Artists Awards by The Myrna Loy. Recipients are ceramic artists Sara Catapano, Brenna Buettner, Susan MacFarland, photographer Steve Gibson; musician David Casey; pianist Charlotte Dike; and theatre artist Errol Koch. This batch of grants specifically targeted artists who are financially challenged by the COVID-19 shutdown of arts activities. “It’s not much,” says Myrna executive director Krys Holmes. “But supporting local artists is important to us.”

Welcome to Sarah Justice, who took the helm as executive director of Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls on Jan. 1. Justice has served The Square as the education director since 2017. She served as interim executive director through the last half of 2019. After an extensive nationwide search in November, the board agreed that she “was the best fit to move The Square forward with her vision and vitality.” Justice brings a unique perspective and experience to the position of executive director. She’s a working artist and has served as an educator and business owner for many years. Hailing from the southeastern U.S., she earned her BFA from George Mason University in Arlington and her MFA from the University of Montana in Missoula. She also holds a degree in interior design from Bauder College in Atlanta. Before returning to academia in 2010 she owned and operated Living with Art Studios, which specialized in decorative wall finishes, cabinet and furniture refinishing, and wall murals for residential and commercial spaces. “The Square is a huge asset for Great Falls and I will do everything I can in my tenure to grow the museum’s contemporary art exhibitions, presence, educational programming and outreach to the community,” she writes. "Contemporary art has great purpose of arts activities. It’s not much," says Myrna executive director Krys Holmes. “But supporting local artists is important to us.”

Transitions

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More Transitions on next page
Welcome and best wishes to internationally recognized conductor Norman Huynh, who has been appointed music director of the Bozeman Symphony. Huynh was selected out of six finalists following a year-long search during the 2019-20 concert season conducted by the Bozeman Symphony Board of Directors, an eight-person selection committee consisting of staff, musicians, and community participation. Huynh has held himself as a conductor with an ability to captivate an audience and maintain a high standard of musical genres. “Norman is an exceptional talent and we are fortunate to have someone of his level of expertise help forge the future of the Bozeman Symphony Society,” said board chair Stephen Schachman. Born in 1988, he is a first-generation Asian American and the first in his family to pursue classical music as a career. Along with his role as the Bozeman Symphony’s music director, he will continue as the hallmark and Arlene Schnitzer Associate Conductor of the Oregon Symphony. Recent conducting engagements include The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque, Arizona Opera, the East Coast Wind Ensemble, and the New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic with John Williams. Huynh has been at the forefront of moving orchestral music out of the traditional concert hall into venues where an orchestra is not conventionally found. In 2011, he co-founded the Occasional Symphony in Baltimore, which celebrated holidays by performing innovative concerts in distinct venues throughout the inner-city. As music director, he has commissioned new works by multiple composers. He received the 2015 Yale Distinguished Music Educator Award for his work with the Portland (Maine) Symphony Orchestra’s Musical Explorer’s Program. As the assistant conductor of the PSU from 2013-2016, Huynh visited and experienced over 60 schools across the state of Maine and co-founded Symphony & Spirits, a series of events for young professionals, to make the orchestra more accessible and engaging for a younger audience. “I look forward to expanding our collaborative efforts and partnering with other arts institutions in town,” says Huynh of his new post in Bozeman. “In the wake of current world events, I believe that the role of the symphony is to reconnect us with each other, to facilitate healing and forward momentum through the language of music.”

Welcome to Lauren Korn, the new director of the Montana Book Festival. Formerly the director of the Musical Explorer’s Program at Fact & Fiction, Korn is a native Montanan who graduated from the University of Montana with a bachelor’s degree in music. She is the director of content for The Adroit Journal, a reader for icehouse poetry and the special projects editor for CutBank. She recently received her master’s in English from the University of New Brunswick and looks forward to calling Missoula home again.

Norman Huynh
(Pho to by Stark Photography)

Montana Book Festival goes virtual for 2020
The Montana Book Festival announced its first virtual book festival, scheduled for Sept. 10-12. Of this year, the goal is to bring the annual celebration of the written word directly into the homes of readers across Montana and the region, around the country, and even the world. Missoula’s annual book festival pays tribute to the tradition of writing in the West by bringing together books and authors from across the state, the Rocky Mountain West, and the Pacific Northwest. Since 2015, the festival has been a grassroots organization relying on individual donations, grants, corporate sponsorships, a handful of dedicated locals, and the enduring support of the Montana literary community to survive.

“We have worked to build upon the event’s 30-year legacy while also reinvigorating the festival with new ideas and fresh perspectives,” says Missoula Public Library director and board member Honore Bray. “In 2020, we invite readers and writers everywhere to witness our annual showcase, to be a last part of our literary tradition.”

Festival events will be viewable from the Montana Book Festival website, www.montanabookfestival.com, as well as its YouTube channel and on Facebook.
Summer Theatre (from page 1)

Meyers thought of his parents – avid theatre-goers who are part of the aging demographic that is most susceptible to COVID complications – when crafting guidelines for the coming season. In addition to the new online ticket program, the opening date of nearly 75% of the shows was pushed back, many until July, to give the audience more assurance that the theatre would be able to open safely.

“God Help Us” starring Ed Asner with Jay Pyette and Kate Hagen, has a three-day run on the Fort Peck stage and travels to Whitefish July 24-25.

Across Montana: Humor, escape and reflection

After a stint in Fort Peck, mounting the season opener, “The Sunshine Boys,” the Fort Polon Players return to their home stage at the Theatre on the Lake. “We’ve selected the following titles to provide laughter, music and heartfelt sentiment to give much-needed escape and relaxation – especially considering the events of the past four months,” write producers Karen and Neil Lewing.

In keeping with state and federal guidelines, the theatre will seat no more than 60 patrons per show, with strict social distancing for the 1,000-seat venue. Those attending must wear masks and keep a safe distance in the lobby and theatre. The playhouse holds 432 people.

To help compensate for the loss in ticket revenue, the theatre applied for a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan to help meet payroll through the end of June, and has also sought grants to help weather the downturn.

For tickets, call 406-857-4886 or visit bigforksummerplayhouse.com.

Last year’s production of “Oklahoma!” in Bigfork.

The Virginia City Players once again grace the Open House stage in historic Virginia City. “This is the 71st consecutive season of the Players, so we are grateful we get the chance to open our doors this year, to keep that tradition alive,” says company manager Christina Koch. Instead of three shows this year, the company is mounting two: the fairy tale “Rumpelstiltskin,” adapted by Bill Koch, June 19-Aug. 2, and a classic mystery, “Seven Keys to Baldpate,” Aug. 4-Sept. 6.

The Virginia City Players mix comedy and melodrama.
The Pandemic & the Performing Arts
By Kristi Niemeyer

When the coronavirus swept into Montana in March, the resulting closures decimated concerts and theater productions and crippled the vibrant nonprofit arts community that supports them. As the state begins to reopen, here are some of the ways these groups are charting a path forward toward an uncertain future.

When the COVID-19 curtain descended, Coalescence Dance Project in Helena was forced to cancel its school residencies and outreach classes for students with developmental disabilities.

In response, the organization is creating an eight-class video series with an accompanying home dance and creative movement curriculum, which adults with physical disabilities who tend to be more restricted to their home, hospital or rehab environments.

“These two programs will allow us to reach new audiences and potentially offer expanded programming in the future,” says artistic director Tanya W. Call.

The studio cancelled its in-person technique classes but was able to shift those online via Zoom and even held an end-of-season pseudo recital that was well attended and well received for the small group of dancers who have returned with online classes,” says Call.

With Phase 2 of the state reopening in place, Colesision is offering summer camps, with an online option available. The Zoom sessions are apt to continue, since “we had participated January 30 from out of town and out of state.”

Although the company initially supplied a production of “Resonance,” a shorter outdoor performance in a works, “we know, now, all larger performances are on hold due to the possibility of COVID-19 or flare-ups in the future. All of these factors took a toll on revenue, which “will likely affect us for several months, if not years to come,” says Call. Grants, and a loan from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) have helped retain staff and keep the dance center open to other, additional contributions and grants support “peaceful and safe.”

Montana Ballet Company in Bozeman created an online Academy in March to provide classical ballet instruction to more than 200 students, ages 3 to adult.

“My daughter was so engaged, and participated so earnestly throughout class, that I ended up just sitting off to the side and watching her in sheer delight,” wrote one parent. “It was so clear that she was having a bit of expected normality in her day was just what she needed.”

MBC also continued its Adaptive Dance Program, offering recorded lessons to students with Down syndrome, and made May a month of “Celebration and Gratitude” with additional classes including a special class via Zoom with New York City Ballet Principal Dancer Daniel Ulbricht.

Cooperating with fellow companies and dancers across the country in this new livestream format has been a silver lining,” writes Artistic Executive Director Elizabeth DeFanti. “Through physically distant, we have not been socially distant.”

In light of the ongoing pandemic, and with the utmost concern for the safety of its audience, artists, volunteers and vendors,” the Albert Air Bair Theater in Billings has delayed its 2020-21 season indefinitely.

“The show must go on” with this difficult decision that the ABT board and staff,” said Ros Yates, president of the board of directors. “The board has voted to delay our mid-March to discuss how the newly renovated theater would operate under federal, state, local and entertainment-industry safety requirements.

“We have a terrific dedicated staff and a stunning newly-renovated theater in the heart of downtown Billings that will be on-time and on-budget later this summer,” Yates said. “We are hopeful that the pandemic made reopening in September untenable.

The outbreak of COVID-19 occurred as the ABT was finalizing dates for the January season. When the staff prepared models of socially distanced seating at a much-reduced capacity, with rigorous sanitation, “it became clear that our best laid plans for a Sept. 12 grand reopening were not attainable.”

With scheduling postponed through December, the ABT is working to get previously booked events rescheduled for 2021. Meanwhile, intermissions are being shortened to give patrons more time to wash hands, and “Most of our performances are national or international touring companies traveling from region through state, so the protocols in place,” says executive director Jan Dietrich.

In an email to patrons ends with this promise: “It will be worth the wait and quite the celebration when we are able to enjoy what we see often took for granted: gathering, listening to our family and friends for the best performance.”

For the first time in four decades, Missoula Children’s Theatre cancelled its second annual summer camp.

“For our 40th year, thousands of campers and staff members have spent their summer weeks on the shores of Flathead and Seeley lakes. To cancel camp for the first time ever is heartbreaking for us,” wrote MCT Executive Director Jennifer Zoltek. “We postponed campers will be welcomed at next year’s camps, if they choose to attend.

MCT’s popular home theatre program, “Playdate,” continues to offer a free step-by-step, day-by-day guide to “a low-drama but dramatically fun experience for your whole family cast.”

MCT is also developing a new program called MCT Playdate Create for presenting organizations, “not to replace the tour, but to engage further with clients we have not reached to the road and in the air to serve communities,” says International and Public Relations director Tery Elander.

Local day camps in Missoula resumed June 15 with modifications for group size, distancing, and other considerations. “Flexible days, and changes will be made as necessary,” add Elander.

Since March, MCT lost approximately 25% of the year’s revenue from cancellation or postponement of live shows. Grants have helped the organization keep staff employed, develop new programming, and purchase cleaning supplies.

Missoula Community Theatre’s season remains up in the air as surveys gauge patrons readiness to see live performances.

The good news? Despite Missoula Gives is in May, MCT raised a little over $53,000, and many patrons have donated back the cost of tickets to cancelled performances or tuition fees for children’s theatre. “We have a loving family of supporters and friends,” says Elander.

Alpine Theatre Project in Whitefish, which typically offers lavish summer theatrical productions, has postponed this year’s production of Jersey Boys” until 2021. A smaller outdoor shows is in the works for August, and the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center in Big Sky, which might allow artists to perform on stage, and potentially offer expanded local and online live events, is also looking at ways to stay afloat during these unsettled times.

The Myrna Loy in Helena cautiously re-opened for movies in May, and in June allowed audiences of up to 100 people (about 40% of capacity). “We are back to our roots as a movie theater for the summer,” says executive director Keys Holmes.

The summer series of live performances was cancelled due to uncertainty about the artists’ ability to travel and audiences’ willingness to gather indoors. However, an outdoor event party is in the works for August, and The Myrna is co-producing Stockfest in Helena, tentatively scheduled for Aug. 8.

The center is also exploring technologies that might allow hybrid events focused on small audiences, with the capacity for viewers to participate online too. A potential collaboration is with the Warner Miller Performing Arts Center in Big Sky, which might allow artists to perform on stage, and potentially offer expanded local and online live events, is also looking at ways to stay afloat during these unsettled times.

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“We have a terrific dedicated staff and a
The Cheyenne Story wins Western Heritage Award

Gerry Robinson, Northern Cheyenne, releases the first book in his trilogy about a devastating tribal saga.

Experience the large-scale sculptures of Blackfeet artist Jay Laber (1961-2019) in “Reborn Rez Wrecks,” on display through October at the Missoula Art Park.

Bison is part of Jay Laber’s “Reborn Rez Wrecks” at the Art Park.

Grants support Montana Indian Language Program

The Montana Department of Commerce has awarded a total of $712,500 through the Montana Indian Language Program to the eight tribal governments in Montana to support language revitalization efforts.

The Montana Indian Language Program works to protect American Indian cultural integrity by recognizing that languages spoken, written, or in the form of sign language are vital to the identities of tribal nations and the state.

“Encouraging efforts to protect tribal languages is an important part of respecting the cultures of tribal nations,” said Department of Commerce Director Tara Rice.

Each tribal government will receive $9,062.50 for the 2019-2020 biennium.

“On the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, the Montana Indian Language Program has brought together language and culture specialists from five Reservation districts,” said Dr. Richard Littlebear, president of Chief Dull Knife College.

“The MILP has provided opportunities for camaraderie for specialists who are passionate in their pursuit of teaching their own language and culture.”

Learn more at indiancountry.mt.gov.

Blackfeet artist (from page 1)

“By my work I’m very narrative,” the storyteller of family members and friends and the beauty that they shared with the world, she says. “This is the basis of my art, my storytelling.”

Many of the beaded portraits she creates are derived from vintage photos of people who blackfeet knew and father knew personally.

Bread draws from stories that were told by these individuals and is interested in the physical characteristics of the person in the photograph – their hair, their clothing, the beadwork, the quillwork, the sewing, the cultural meaning, and the way the individual sat for the photographer.

Bread has served as a consultant for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian on Blackfeet traditional art. She has provided dozens of training classes for adults and children focusing on Blackfeet beadwork, lectured in many venues about her art and Blackfeet material culture, and collaborated with artists throughout her career. During the past half century, she has remained fascinated by bead creation, the meaning, the color, the tactile property, and the familial connection of these beaded pieces.

For the 2020 Mentor Artist Fellowship, Bread and her apprentice, Dugan A. Coburn enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe and a descendent of Klamath, Pit River, will create a traditional Blackfeet men’s beaded outfit. These outfits are highly regarded in the Blackfeet community and will include a buckskin shirt, leggings, breechcloth, belt, moccasins, gauntlets and bags.

The Mentor Artist Fellowship is a structured 15-month program designed to empower artists and build capacity in Native communities for future generations. As part of the program, mentors and their apprentices will complete an art project that will benefit the art world during the Off-year to broaden Indigenous worldviews in both Native and non-Native communities. In addition to the monetary award, the fellows and their apprentices participated in a two-day virtual mentorship and professional development training May 26-27.

Learn more at nativeartsandscultures.org.

Jay Laber’s “Reborn Rez Wrecks” on display at Missoula Art Park

Gerry Robinson, Northern Cheyenne, releases the first book in his trilogy about a devastating tribal saga.

Bill Rowland and Little Wolf’s great-great nephew – believes “being able to tell our own story helps begin a long-overdue healing process.” He spent 16 years researching, traveling the country, and reaching back through time to reclaim his heritage. Robinson’s published historical writer and member of Western Writers of America, the reader comes to know and understand its meanings contextually with help from the glossary of Cheyenne words and phrases found at the back of the book.

Raised at the heart of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Robinson grew up hearing fragmented stories about his ancestors. He devoted nearly 20 years of his life to researching, traveling the country, and reaching back through time to reclaim his heritage. Robinson’s characteuses the Cheyenne language in their dialogue, and the reader comes to know and understand its meanings contextually with help from the glossary of Cheyenne words and phrases found at the back of the book.

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“The MILP has provided opportunities for camaraderie for specialists who are passionate in their pursuit of teaching their own language and culture.” Learn more at indiancountry.mt.gov.

The Cheyenne Story wins Western Heritage Award

Gerry Robinson’s powerful new historical fiction, **The Cheyenne Story: An Interpretation of Courage**, was awarded the National Cowboy Museum’s 2020 Western Heritage Award for the National Cowboy Museum’s honored artist whose iconic public tributes exemplify MAM’s strong commitment to diversifying representation.

**The Cheyenne Story: An Interpretation of Courage**

Raised at the heart of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, Robinson grew up hearing fragmented stories about his ancestors. He devoted nearly 20 years of his life to researching, traveling the country, and reaching back through time to reclaim his heritage. Robinson’s characters use the Cheyenne language in their dialogue, and the reader comes to know and understand its meanings contextually with help from the glossary of Cheyenne words and phrases found at the back of the book.

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**Montana musicians adapt to age of COVID-19**

By Brian D’Ambrosio

**For State of the Arts**

Dropped cold-turkey into the middle of the traumatic and dynamic COVID-19 pandemic, Montana musicians are adjusting to life in an age of social limitations. The State of the Arts newspaper caught up with a sampling of musicians to learn more about how they are navigating the turbulent waters of the time.

**John Floridis:** “Like everyone else I have had to adapt to something,” says Missoula guitarist and songwriter. “I had five performances in the six days leading up to the Monday where everything hit the fan. During the last few performances, things were getting super cautious, and as the week went on, there were questions about the gigs, and each succeeding day a little more concern about close contact, and it started having an effect on my gigging. … Businesses started adhering to policies to get ahead of the curve, and work disappeared. It was a strange sensation to see that happen.

Professional working musicians such as Floridis can’t stand removing performances dates off of their calendars, but in a time of national emergency he has made peace with the precautionary times.

“There is no sense in getting upset about it because it’s happened already. I have to look at this as a self-employed, there is the basic financial need that we are dealing with, and needing to meet that need.”

In the midst of this, Floridis is familiarizing himself with the modified role of music as a response to a critical moment.

“There is live streaming, and I’ll be going with that, sticking a virtual tip jar out there through Venmo and PayPal and relying on that. For someone who plays music consistently, it’s so much a part of your identity. To me, it’s needing to play music. So, even if it’s live streaming, at least I’m playing music at the end of the day.”

In addition to his regular Montana Public Radio show, “Musician’s Spotlight,” Floridis hosted a Montana PBS special, “Live From Home,” that first aired May 20 and features a host of Montana musicians playing from their homes, including Jack Gladstone, Tim Fain, Naomi Montana Siegel, John Dunning, Melissa Forrest, Philip Aberg, Almeda Bradshaw, and Erik von Kleist. Check it out at www.montanapbs.org/programs/live-from-home/.

**Christy Hayes:** Lately, this Butte singer-songwriter admires she’s in a funny, in-between place, addressing and confronting the ups and downs of existence.

“Now it has more of a feeling of going home,” Hayes says of Butte. “I can regroup and not be out on the bar scene or worrying about how successful I could be or couldn’t be. The writing is conducive here. It’s an exciting new phase.”

Reevaluating her own notion of self during the COVID-19 crisis, she has been pouring more time into the non-profit songwriter and music education program she recently wrote and produced. “It was a strange sensation to see that happen,” she says. “There will be gratefulness in music and friendships and even the ability to go in to work … Personally, I want to get back to the fundamentals, and keep creating. That’s something that will get a lot of people through.”

**Wylie Gustafson:** For the past 30 years, this Conrad native has reared and nurtured his own version of country-folk, writing, singing and celebrating songs primarily about the ranching and western lifestyles.

In the time of COVID-19, Gustafson has been working like crazy, but practically none of the labor involves music. “It has been catching up on fencing, farming, and renovating some pastures on my ranch,” says Gustafson. “The pandemic has been very hard on us as operators, speaking as we (Wylie & The Wild West) are primarily a festival band that relies heavily on our live performances. There has been little we can do to transition to a nine-month future of cancelled festivals and performances.”

With some cancelled shows rescheduled to next year, “there is a little bit of hope for us. There are a few private performances that we have not cancelled, so it is not a complete wash out.”

Gustafson did one virtual performance for the Kettle Valley Folk Festival – a video of him with his guitar singing “Big Sky Lullaby.” This summer, he plans to film videos to a couple of new late stage projects in order to fill the big void in his music. In this era of ambiguity, the waiting is indeed the hardest part.

“It will be interesting to see how the festivals and performances look when we start working again,” he says. “The world of musicians may never be the same again, but perseverance continues and music will continue somehow because we all need it like we need water.”

**Almeda Bradshaw:** Call the Huntley artist a traditionalist. You could even describe her as rural or folk. But just don’t label her “country.” Indeed, she is quick to note that there are a number of distinctions between average mainstream country and independent artist and the western performer she considers herself to be.

For the next decade and a half, and a dozen years into her career, Bradshaw has conscientiously worked within what she considers “a pretty small niche” of music, primarily performing at community centers and fairs along with a sprinkling of regional festivals. Her inspiration has been the clean, value-laden Gene Autry Western songs, the ones touting values, respect, hard work, and reverence for livestock.

While Bradshaw says that her sound and style won’t ever completely split from the western roots she holds close, she is unshakeable in her belief that the future of her music in the time of COVID-19 must and will develop. It won’t be drastic – she won’t be toning down and shedding musical gauze. She will, however, be adding a couple of different darts to her quiver.

“Fortunately, this pandemic has been an an an opportunity life presented to dig down deep and detect the positive silver linings in even the darkest of clouds.”

And now I’m getting back out doing live shows, so I’m digging that,” she says. “I think the main difference for my performance future is to stream more consistently from my home shows and work both live and online audiences at the same time.”

**Eve’s** first big tour furnished her a sense of well-rounded and hard-earned experience. With a mind chock-full of the vivid memories, the Billings, Montana musician is prepared to embark on a new excursion.

“Now that venues are starting to open up, I am so ready to play to a live audience again. They may not be able to dance or stand around and visit but the crowds have been incredible. They are being patient with the staff and following the rules set in place for us.”

Eve says she has felt and witnessed abundant kindness and patience from most of the listeners and supporters of the local music community.

“People have been great at supporting one another, both musically and in other ways. It is exciting. I’ve been cooking, renovating my house. I found this time to be a welcome break from performing.”

Helenia resident Brian D’Ambrosio is a member of Montana Entertainers: Famous and Almost Forgotten.

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State of the Arts • Summer 2020

John Floridis

Cowboy Poetry Gathering postponed

The board of directors of the Montana Cowboy Poetry and Western Music Gathering, held annually in August in Lewistown, has postponed this year’s gathering until Aug. 12-15, 2021. According to a press release, “The volatile uncertainties created by the coronovirus threat have made planning for this August’s Gathering impossible.” In order to avoid putting performers or fans “in harm’s way,” the board opted to reschedule the festival for next summer.

Since 1986, the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Western Music Rendezvous has celebrated the American Cowboy of the Upper Rocky Mountain West. Tickets already purchased for this year’s event will be honored next year. Visit Montana CowboyPoetryGathering.com.
Jackson Holte and the Highway Patrol: Last Rain of the Summer

This year’s Missoula four-piece, up-a-feather of a few of the Garden City’s greatest bar-band veterans got together back in 2017. Last Rain of the Summer is their first full-length album. Led by vocalist/songwriter Jackson Holte, who also plays guitar, harmonica, keyboards, and drums, and his fellow members, the fellas put out toe-tappin’ rock ‘n’ roll, blues and folk-in-spiced story songs and ballads. Holte credits David Olney and Levon Helm among others, as his influences, and his earthy, melodic pieces reflect that.

He’s joined by Tyson Gerhardt, guitar, vocals, and accordion, Marko Capoferri, bass, vocals, banjo, and Dobro; and Brian Tremper vocals and keys. Tremper has since left the band to pursue other opportunities. Holte wrote all but two of the pieces, and co-wrote “Something Had a Hold on Me” with the Capoferri. The traditional “John Henry’s Hammer” is reprised as a spri-well-temp rocker; Holte’s baritone voice, which can hit the high notes like a new rooster crow, as he wails and wails his heart out in the song. Shades of Jerry Reed!

His love song to the Big Easy, “New Orleans,” is a bouncy finge- rocker with a sprightly samba rhythm and an ‘80s rockabilly beat. It’s got infectious horns refrain and a light touch. Holte sings of leaving cold Montana for a warmer climate and the carfree life partylife. Accordions and banjos help out on this hit hopper.

The talking blues barnburner, “Fast Lane West,” starts with tractor chatter on the CBL, courtesy of Raina Wallace. Sung lickerly-split by Holte with an emotive, sandpiper delivery, it’s about a newbie trucker warned to hug the center line so two racing rags can zoom by! Wow.

Mercedes Carroll: She’s Pretty, Vol. 1

Livingston vocalist/guitarist Mercedes Carroll has a debut EP out, with five original songs and two written with Jennifer Schmitt (“Downriver” and “Old Man”). A legion of regional players provides a notch compliment to Carroll’s powerful voice.

On guitars are husband Isaac Carroll, Rick Wicking, David Dyas and Levi Nickelson. Show off also plays harmonica. Dyas and Main share harmony vocals, as do Alaina Gordon and Hannah Clemonson. Ethan Carroll has a debut EP out, with seven origi-nals, including three new songs that Carroll recently released. She’s Pretty, a second sev-en-song effort that includes the title song, a bitter sweet ballad.

Red Glow Buffalo: Sooner or Later

Bozeman rock outfit Red Glow Buffalo has its first recording out, a seven-song EP inspired by life experiences, its highs and lows, and what goes wrong in relationships. They balance that by having fun and not getting too serious.

The band began in 2014 when Leif Matthes, lead vocals/guitar, and Robert D Thacker, lead guitar and percussion vocals, started writing songs and performing. They later hooked up with drummer Rob Lehrkind and bassist Greg Sullivan, who sing, too.

Their Facebook page calls them “an absolute mix of pop, fusion, hip-hop, and rock, but there are other influential styles, too – outlaw folk and country, hip-hop, jam, funk and punk, and progressive rock. It all makes for straight-ahead rock, soul, alternative and blues.

The bluesy title song, “Sooner or Later,” finds drinking on the schedule, but with the awareness that it could lead to trouble. The toe-tapping hook is staccato and sing along: “If they don’t get it, if we don’t get me now, gonna catch us sooner or later.” Catchy!

Couch Potatoes,” a fast-paced dancer with revved up drums, is about the wandering younger generation, going from one job to another and looking for a safe haven. They go on to talk about the younger generation growing up and trying to make it. “Well, I packed my bags and headed for the city, but I couldn’t find work and it wasn’t lookin’ pretty,” go the lyrics.

The blues-infused rocker “Sweetest Girl” has X-rated lyrics and some dexterous whistling, and “Nothing Left to Give” is just as soulful a tune it is torn by loving someone who doesn’t give back. It’s got a boomy sound out and Yardbird-in-the-background vocals.
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ABOUT BOOKS

Non-fiction

American Zion: Cliven Bundy, God and Public Lands in the West

By Betsy Gyenes Quammen

What happens when members of an American religion – one built in the 19th century on idealism, rugged individualism and a commitment to the protection of the land – assert possession over western federal lands, armed with guns and a certainty that God wants them to go to war?

American Zion is the story of the Bundy family, famous for their armed conflicts over public lands in the West. With an antagonism that goes back to the very first Mormons who established the State of Deseret in 1849, the Bundys’ story is a cautionary tale about how political and religious belief can go hand in hand to coalesce around the idea of private property.

The author received a doctorate in environmental history from Montana State University in 2017, and has studied various religious traditions over the years, focusing in particular on how religion affects attention to how cultures view landscape and wildlife.

She lives in Bozeman with her husband, writer David Quammen.

Cheatgrass Dreams

By Theodore Waddell

The story of the Bundy family is told through the lens of the Bundy family’s crisis of conscience over public lands, wild species and American heritage. In this coming-of-age story, they grapple with the complex relationship between federal lands and their own personal history and world history, as the Nazis destroy Prague and lay waste to an entire village. The author is of German and Czech descent, his grandparent’s family having been seized by the state during their marriage.

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Forty Years a Forester

By Chris Warren

Ernest Hemingway in the Yellowstone High Country

By Carl Hovland

In the 1930s, iconic American author Ernest Hemingway spent five summers at a ranch on the edge of Yellowstone National Park, where he did some of his best writing. His experiences in the mountains are connected to 12 of his most famous works, including For Whom the Bell Tolls.

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Ernest Hemingway in the Yellowstone High Country

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Hemingway declared that the ranch near Cooke City was one of his favorite places to write in the world, on par with Paris and Madrid. Yet Chris Warren’s book makes clear this period has been thoroughly examined. After years of painstaking research, this book resident takes readers on an astonishing journey into one of the most important periods in the life of the Nobel Prize winner.

Warren examines what Hemingway did and wrote during those five summers, his experiences and the people he met shaped his life and work. His book portrays a Hemingway that few knew existed. It is a place that few scholars knew was so essential to his writing. In an appendix titled “From a ranch to ‘The Star is West,’” it also offers a list of places to stop on “a Hemingway pilgrimage to the area.”

Warren, who spent years researching Hemingway’s connection to the area, presented a paper on the author’s final short story, set in Cooke City, to the Hemingway Society in Paris in 2018. His research was instrumental in bringing the society’s biennial conference to Cooke City and Sheridan, WY in 2020.

A Wild Land Ethic: The Story of Wilderness in Montana
Edited by Dale Burk and Wayne Chamberlin
More than 40 writers – many of them hikers of the wilderness movement in Montana – and 32 photographers tell the story of wilderness preservation in Montana. Each of their words and images toward the collaborative efforts that inspired and fueled this collaborative effort.

Some of the most dedicated and influential wilderness advocates in the state contributed to the book, including Jim Posewitz, Hal Harper and Dr. John A. Volker. Of Helena, retired out- timer Arnold “Smoke” Elser of Missoula, Greg Schatz of Columbia Falls, Peter Bengeyfield of Dillon, Bill Cunningham of Great Warrior, Kenneth Buechner of Livingston, and Karen Stevenson of Terry. The contents are divided into five sections: Context, Perspectives, Places of Special Legacy, Voices For the Wild, and The Task Before Us. The appendix lists established and proposed preservation areas in Montana as well as wilderness-oriented conservation organizations in the state.

Dale Burk of Stevensville and Wayne Chamberlin of Helena served as co-editors of the book, and Burk also wrote its foreword. The Montana Conservation Elders, a nonprofit group based in Helena, helped develop the book in concert with Buck’s Stoney Press in Stevensville. The process took over three years to bring to fruition.

Roadside Geology of Montana
By Donald Hyndman and Robert Thomas, Illustrated by Chelsea Feeney
With summer stretching before us, what better time for a road trip armed with the latest version of Roadside Geology of Montana?

The Roadside Geology series originated in 1972 with Roadside Geology of the Northwestern Rockies, followed 14 years later with the white-yellow Roadside Geology of Montana. Now, nearly 50 years after the first book, Montana Press has released this completely revised full-color second edition. In the many many things in Montana, is big. The state brims with geological wonders, from the tops of the mountains of the Yellowstone caldera, the world's largest and most violent volcano, to fossils buried for millennia in Montana's sandstone, to the vestiges of ice-age floods that drained Glacial Lake Missoula.

Like its predecessor, this edition begins with a chapter encapsulating “The First Impressions of Montana,” and then a chapter each on the geology of each major highway in sections devoted to Northwestern Montana, Southwest Montana and Central and Eastern Montana (each with its own road guide). While the format is the same, the authors rewrite the text to appeal to both geologists and amateur enthusiasts, and updated maps and photos.

Written by two geologists, this guide offers an accessible and comprehensive tool for exploring the rocky underpinnings of our vast state.

The Father of Glacier National Park: Discoveries and Explorations in His Own Words
By George Bird Grinnell (compiled by Hugh Grinnell)

Grinnell was a prolific writer and record-keeper. After a long day's hunt or exploration, he diligently made time in camp for meticulous journal entries. He kept journals from 1885 to 1898 for publication in The Great West series. Together with associate editor of The Star is West, he also wrote the appendix titled “A Hemingway pilgrimage to the area.”

The great West that George Bird Grinnell first encountered in 1875 as a 21-year-old man was shortly to disappear before his eyes. Nobody was quicker to see the desecration or was more eloquent in crusading against the poachers, the hide-hunters, and the degenerated U.S. Congressmen who were ruthlessly exploiting Glacier National Park. His outdoor writings and explorations generated a national movement to create Glacier National Park.

In this book, distant cousin Hugh Grinnell compiles first-person narratives and expansive supporting material for the great outdoorsman's writings and travel journals, including his journals, letters, and drafts of his book on Bird Life and Wild Life.

The Story Tree – Year One
By S.A. Bergquist and illustrated by Jamie Carrier

Dylan loves his time at elementary school. Year one, he loves the mountains, the river, the wildlife and the adventures. Most of all though, Dylan loves spending time with his Papa, and especially hearing stories each night under the tree.

From Bartley the Bear’s incredible ich, to Theo the Fish’s scary first day at a new school, Dylan (and other young listeners) uncover timeless, entertaining stories, with lively, imaginative illustrations.

Author S.A. Bergquist has always been a storyteller. A master of the stage as an actor, producer, and director, she is known for the Emmy Award-winning series, The Great West. Her will be featured on the The Lucky Valentines.

Nominations Open for Montana Center for the Book Prize
The Montana Center for the Book (MCB), a program of Humanities Montana, is now accepting nominations for the fourth annual MCB Prize. The nomination deadline is July 15, 2020.

The Montana Center for the Book Prize will be awarded to up to five program recipients in Montana, including a community member or self-nominated in recognition of their efforts to promote literacy and literary programming. The prize recognizes programs that offer creative and wide-reaching literary and literacy programming. A list of past winners and more information about the nomination process is online at www.humanitiesmt.org/montana-center-for-the-book-prize.

Any organization or group with a literary program eligible, regardless of nonprofit status. In awarding the Prize, the Montana Center for the Book prioritizes geographic diversity with an emphasis on organizations that reach rural populations and youth.
The Pandemic & the Visual Arts

By Kristi Niemeyer

Museums and galleries across the state were abruptly forced to close in March and find innovative new ways to reach audiences with exhibits and educational offerings. Some have reopened, but with new safety protocols and an a more vigorous online presence. Here are some examples.

Billings & Beyond

For Jeremiah Young, owner of Stapleton Gallery in Billings – a circa 1913 historic building – home to both the gallery and Young’s interior design business – draped in red, white and blue hunting spurred the idea for a new show. “I have been percolating an idea for some time now, and that is inspired by the flag – meaning to stand up for, support or defend something or someone,” says Young, who watched a re-creation of the national anthem with Abigail Hornick. “We began reaching out to our artists more than a year ago, asking for works inspired by that concept – and of course with no idea the show would be opening in a time of pandemic and protests.”

The new exhibit, “Show the Flag,” opened June 4 with a virtual gallery tour via slideshows on the Stapleton Gallery website and the option of viewing by appointment. The show is populated with work by a dozen of the gallery’s artists, including Ben Pease, whose work is an integral part of the Chicago Field Museum exhibition “Apualsokse Women and Warriors” (closed abruptly in March due to COVID-19), and Governor’s Arts Award winner Kevin Red Star.

Three short films have also been uploaded: “Behind the Scenes at Stapleton Gallery,” which follows Young and Hornick as they unpack and hang the new exhibit, a video of artist Judd Thompson ‘grafitti-ing the gallery’ and a gallery conversation with Kevin Kooistra of the Western Heritage Center.

“When always intended to be meaningful on a variety of levels, ‘Show the Flag’ has gained unexpected importance from this time we’re living through,” says Young.

For the first time, the Yellowstone Art Museum and the Billings Symphony Orchestra and Chorale had planned to combine community events. Summerfair and Symphony in the Park, June 26-28 at Pioneer Park. However, the pandemic and social distancing delayed the event that was expected to include more than 100 artists and musicians and attract around 10,000 people over three days.

The YM election to move Summerfair from the park to the “cloud,” with an online event June 22-28 featuring both national and local artists, and keeping with the spirit of art, craft, food and fun, the YM also invited food trucks to park onsite at the YAM and partnered with the Billings Symphony to bring music to the Summerfair website.

“We look forward to our future collaboration next year, when we plan to celebrate these amazing events of visual and performing arts with you all once again at Pioneer Park,” wrote executive director Bryan W. Fly and Ignacio Marrero Villa in a joint press release.

While the Carbon County Arts Guild & Depot Gallery in Lodge recipe reopened June 13, the organization cancelled a major source of revenue, the annual Art in the Heartlands fundraiser (director Katrina Sasser noted “we are working diligently to find other sources of revenue,” which have included infusions from the State of Montana and several funding experiences and exhibition opportunities, loans from the Small Business Administration and a grant from Humanities Montana.

The #GivingTuesdayNow campaign brought in an additional $2,000 from local sources, which helped pay for daily operations and the new website. Meanwhile the staff took advantage of the two-month closure to clean, disinfect and paint the gallery and reinstall artwork.

Helen

After cancelling the annual Spring Art Walk on May 8, Downtown Helena came up with a Window Art Walk. Twenty-five artists adorned the windows of more than 20 downtown businesses with images that demonstrated social distancing. The community was invited to decide on Best of Show via Facebook. Voting ends June 19 and the winner will be announced on July 1.

The Montana Historical Society reopened to the public June 9, with rigorous cleaning and social distancing in place. A new request that visitors and volunteers limit socializing with staff.

The MHS also offers innovative online “Stay Connected” activities, including the “Corona Virus Challenge,” a riff on a Getty Museum effort. MHS is posting two-dozen photos of art from its collections and asking people to re-create them using family or common household items and then post their re-creations on the MHS Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest sites.

“We hope it would be a fun diversion for individuals and families who are spending a lot of time at home these days,” says Kirby Lumber, the MHS Outreach and Education Program manager. He added that if enough people participate, the re-creations could become its own exhibit in the future.

Coronavirus Quarantine Challenge at the Montana Historical Society: On the left is an untitled self-portrait by Robert De Niro Sr. from the MHS collection; on the right is a reproduction with Zane Talwani of Helena.

Missoula

The Missoula Art Museum reopened to the public June 4 with guidelines in place for increased cleaning, reduced building occupancy, and more.

“MAM was supported by the comfort of friends, members and donors who wrote encouraging notes and gave donations after the museum closed in mid-March,” writes Carey Powers, membership and marketing coordinator.

“MAM is a family,” says curator of exhibitions Jane Young. “We work together with artists, educators, art lovers and community members throughout the year. The pandemic has not changed that.”

MAM staff worked with visual artists from around Montana to organize a Summer Camp for Kids. The camp, June 29-July 31, was held online with around 100 students participating and 10 artists teaching.

“It is so important that children are able to express themselves in this time of isolation,” says MAM’s executive director, Jane Young. “It is our hope that these summer camps can continue to provide a bit of normalcy to children and their families.”

Missoula has more than 1,200 art organizations, which vary in scale and size. The Missoula Art Museum is the largest and serves as the anchor for the city’s vibrant arts scene. The museum asks the public to vote on Best of Show via Facebook, voting ends June 30.

Radius Gallery

Like all nonprofits, Sasser says her organization has taken a significant financial hit, compounded by the postponement of a major fundraiser originally slated for May. The support of the sponsors and the local and regional community ensured MRG can continue through this fall, “but it is unclear how we will make our way forward.”

Still, she sees some positives in the way the pandemic has evoked a sense of community and generosity. “I think during a time that can feel helpless and out of control, it can feel really good to identify where you can take action and feel useful for doing good in the world,” she writes.

The #GivingTuesdayNow campaign brought an additional $2,000 from local sources, which helped pay for daily operations and the new website. Meanwhile the staff took advantage of the two-month closure to clean, disinfect and paint the gallery and reinstall artwork.

The Native American Art Auction, originally slated for mid-March, has been postponed to fall. The support of the sponsors and the local and regional community ensured MRG can continue through this fall, “but it is unclear how we will make our way forward.”

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Always intended to be meaningful on a variety of levels, ‘Show the Flag’ has gained unexpected importance from this time we’re living through,” says Young.

For the first time, the Yellowstone Art Museum and the Billings Symphony Orchestra and Chorale had planned to combine community events. Summerfair and Symphony in the Park, June 26-28 at Pioneer Park. However, the pandemic and social distancing delayed the event that was expected to include more than 100 artists and musicians and attract around 10,000 people over three days.

The YM election to move Summerfair from the park to the “cloud,” with an online event June 22-28 featuring both national and local artists, and keeping with the spirit of art, craft, food and fun, the YM also invited food trucks to park onsite at the YAM and partnered with the Billings Symphony to bring music to the Summerfair website.

“We look forward to our future collaboration next year, when we plan to celebrate these amazing events of visual and performing arts with you all once again at Pioneer Park,” wrote executive director Bryan W. Fly and Ignacio Marrero Villa in a joint press release.

While the Carbon County Arts Guild & Depot Gallery in Lodge recipe reopened June 13, the organization cancelled a major source of revenue, the annual Art in the Heartlands fundraiser (director Katrina Sasser noted “we are working diligently to find other sources of revenue,” which have included infusions from the State of Montana and several funding experiences and exhibition opportunities, loans from the Small Business Administration and a grant from Humanities Montana.

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The Montana Historical Society reopened to the public June 9, with rigorous cleaning and social distancing in place. A new request that visitors and volunteers limit socializing with staff.

The MHS also offers innovative online “Stay Connected” activities, including the “Corona Virus Challenge,” a riff on a Getty Museum effort. MHS is posting two-dozen photos of art from its collections and asking people to re-create them using family or common household items and then post their re-creations on the MHS Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest sites.

“We hope it would be a fun diversion for individuals and families who are spending a lot of time at home these days,” says Kirby Lumber, the MHS Outreach and Education Program manager. He added that if enough people participate, the re-creations could become its own exhibit in the future.

Coronavirus Quarantine Challenge at the Montana Historical Society: On the left is an untitled self-portrait by Robert De Niro Sr. from the MHS collection; on the right is a reproduction with Zane Talwani of Helena.

Missoula

The Missoula Art Museum reopened to the public June 4 with guidelines in place for increased cleaning, reduced building occupancy, and more.

“MAM was supported by the comfort of friends, members and donors who wrote encouraging notes and gave donations after the museum closed in mid-March,” writes Carey Powers, membership and marketing coordinator.

“MAM is a family,” says curator of exhibitions Jane Young. “We work together with artists, educators, art lovers and community members throughout the year. The pandemic has not changed that.”

MAM staff worked with visual artists from around Montana to organize a Summer Camp for Kids. The camp, June 29-July 31, was held online with around 100 students participating and 10 artists teaching.

“It is so important that children are able to express themselves in this time of isolation,” says MAM’s executive director, Jane Young. “It is our hope that these summer camps can continue to provide a bit of normalcy to children and their families.”

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Carla Pagliaro: Chaos
June 26-Aug. 21 at the Green Door Gallery in Livingston
Artist's website: carlapagliaro.com
Livingston artist Carla Pagliaro pours her passion for space and color into a new body of work that embraces elements of everything she has done over the past 15 years.

Her approach is to first painstakingly paint realistic elements and then proceed to obliterate muscular brushstrokes that painted skies, mountains and trees until the forms, colors, and patterns present within the places I visit," he writes.

"Creating art gives me a sense of freedom I don't find anywhere else. … It's just me, my ideas, my paint and my brush," he writes.

Allez!
The team behind the newly resurrected 120 N. Higgins Ave. in Missoula has launched a new art program down the alleyway of this historical location. Called Allez!, and pronounced “Allay,” the new adventure creates an outdoor art gallery of mural artworks which will be rotated on a regular basis. The first installation of this ambitious project, which opened June 5 and continues through August, features large-scale prints of Missoula artist James G. Todd's jazz series. Todd's work was selected for the debut "because he is a true Missoula icon, but also because of the pure humanity that shines through his portraits, both the light and the dark," says program director Lillian Nelson. In the photo at left local jazz artists Beth Lo and David Horgan prepare to play. (Photo by Lillian Nelson)
Pandemic problem-solving, arts-ed style
Missoula Writing Collaborative supports kids and families

By Monica Grable
Arts Education Director

For artists and those art-centered individuals among us, there has always been a recognition of the power the arts hold to unite us, to draw attention to social ills and to provide ways to express ourselves. However, few of us — even those immersed in arts education — could have fathomed the degree to which arts experience would so profoundly factor into our health and wellbeing in the midst of isolation.

When the COVID-19 pandemic moved us all into quarantine, teachers and teaching artists alike were faced with a choice: opt out for a time or embrace the opportunity to re-imagine their work. These are the creative thinkers — innovators by nature — so naturally they chose the latter. With hardly a beat missed, the education teams of our state’s arts organizations immediately set to work to ensure they would be able to reach their arts learners and lead the way in reminding us all of the power of art.

The Missoula Writing Collaborative (MWC), a nonprofit in its 26th year of sending its writers into classrooms, began to address student needs with outreach. The moment Montana schools shut down, the staff of MWC contacted each of their partnering schools to see if they were online teaching or sending packets home.

If online, writers jumped into the creation of videos for their use or in some cases provided real-time online teaching; if sending packets, they responded in kind, quickly developing teaching packets to ensure that students were supported in their need to express themselves during isolation. Students from Lewis and Clark and Rattlesnake in Missoula, Potomac, Arlee, Dixon and Seeley Lake were the beneficiaries of their remarkable efforts.

Prior to quarantine, Aspen Decker shares Coyote Stories at Pablo Elementary. (Photo by Clara Moser)

Maybe we are louder than ever in our seclusion. Writing loves solitude.
– Mark Gibbons

The MWC did not stop there, however. They extended their work to holistically support families as well, through their creation of the “cabin fever guide.” Posted on the Missoula County Public Schools website, the packet provided activities to share together; these included such creative items as a parent/child collaborative prompt using the language of recipes applied to things and ideas. Recipe for a puppy? 1 cup of silky fur, 1 ounce of sour breath, 4 lumpy feet … 1 ounce of utter joy.

After a step further, MWC created community through their first-ever youth Zoom Poetry Reading (available for download via viewing on their website, missoulawritingcollaborative.org) and used Facebook and Instagram to engage student writers in an online poetry scavenger hunt that drew in students of all ages.

All of MWC’s writers adapted their teaching to reach students. Teaching artist Mark Gibbons reflected on the range of feeling that students were experiencing: “Of course students miss not being together in school and sharing everything, including their poetry. We all miss being present with one another and hearing those individual voices and stories, but even more so we miss telling them.”

On the need for expression through writing, Gibbons imparted: “We miss being heard, so when the world of pandemic or prejudice shuts us down, we need to write more than ever. The act of writing gives us the chance to cast ourselves, our voices, our stories out there for others to pick up and hear. Our poems beg a response, and the conversation begins. Maybe we are louder than ever in our seclusion. Writing loves solitude.”

Mother Earth
By Magnolia, grade 4

Mother earth has long leafy green hair and emerald green eyes. She smells of fresh dirt dug up from the garden. Her voice sounds like gentle waves hitting the shore of the ocean. Her face always has a warm welcoming smile on it. She glows like the moon at night. Mother earth is bigger than the biggest redwood tree and has her head up in the clouds. She is kind, gentle and forgiving. It is she who creates the weather. We all miss her.

But when she cries it starts to rain. And the snow, glorious snow. When she is happy and it is cold that is what happens. But when she is mad you can get caught in a snowstorm or worse, a thunderstorm! Mother earth has a pet cloud. Her clouds name is Ridge and sometimes she acts like a bridge when Mother earth needs a way to cross the rainbow.

And that’s all I know about Mother earth.
by Luke Walrath  
Chief Evangelist  
Alpine Theatre Project  

Eighteen students from across the Flathead Valley began rehearsal on Mel Brooks’ hilarious musical “Young Frankenstein,” on March 9. A week later, the world was forced into isolation.

With traditional rehearsal and performance now impossible, continuing on would have been crazy. Good thing we’re crazy. Armed with only their mobile phones and a pair of earbuds, these 18 students quickly changed gears to turn what was to be their live theater production into a movie where they were rehearsed and recorded entirely remotely and in isolation.

First, some background

When the “stay at home” order came from the State of Montana, we were faced with the very real prospect of cancelling the show. Director Beni Morrison started trying to come up with solutions, but it soon became clear that any in-person rehearsal and performance was not going to be possible. However, Beni was adamant that cancelling was not an option as it would send a definite message to both the students and our community. Frankly, that’s just not our style.

So, she decided that we would try to make a movie – albeit one that would have to be rehearsed and recorded in isolation. And, she was determined to do it all within the time-frame of the original production, which meant we had five weeks to rehearse, record, and edit the final product.

Her original concept was to have students perform “Brady Bunch Style” in boxes via Zoom conference calls and show green screens in the background. She ordered green screens and controlled their aspects from her laptop, streaming directly to the students’ homes, as well as costumes via Amazon and had them shipped. With traditional rehearsal and performance impossible, continuing on would have been crazy. However, that the discrepancy in timing between each student on Zoom was going to make that platform impossible to use for performance. We knew then that each student would have to record both audio and video separately and we would have to edit it all together.

Also, since the students were going to be in front of green screens, there wasn’t any need to keep them in boxed frames like we’d originally planned. We could – conceivably – create the illusion that they were in the same room together. We just had to figure out how to do it – and do it all in five weeks.

Workflow

Creating each scene was essentially a four-step process: (1) rehearse the music/sound/chorography; (2) create the audio files need-ed; (3) record and compile the video files; (4) edit the entire project scene by scene. To try and track progress, I created a giant spreadsheet in Google Drive with each musical, scene, student, etc., listed and then a vice versa screen helps me update the spreadsheet to track what had been completed.

(The photo from Alpine Theatre Project)

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Coronavirus jumpsstart the drive-in theater

By Allison Whitmer
Montana Film Commissioner

Five minutes ago was a dystopian scene of joy, drama, sadness, escape, and journeys to strange new worlds. They help us process strong emotions and envision environments that many filmmakers would never experience in person, from the ocean depths to space flight.

But in the middle of March, the engine of filmmaking, alerted to the spread of coronavirus worldwide, began to shut down. Within a week, not only had film and television production ceased globally, even here in Montana the production of films came to a halt. Governor Bullock had declared a state of emergency on March 12 to prepare the state to respond to the novel coronavirus.

Late in the evening on March 14, I stepped into Bozeman. The streetlights glowed as it attempted to snow, and the idle hum of generators, familiar on every set, was rumbling in the parking lot. Inside, the concentrated effort of more than 50 people was evident — the crew coming to the end of their workday.

And 48 hours later, after a number of hurried discussions with the city and planners, this set shut down, folded production into storage, and put the crew on planes for home.

In the United States alone, almost 2 million people in film and television were out of work overnight. Only News stations retained skeleton crews, and other shows scrambled to create home studios.

Similar stories came to me, of crews trapped in far-off countries, stranded by airline cancellations, restrictions and passport controls. Producers told of crews dropping their productions, planning holidays or making hasty plans before — for hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters.

Work in war-torn countries like Iraq, Syria and the Balkans has stopped before. Never, on this scale, has the film and television industry closed. Live theater, events and music were also halted. Movie theaters across the world were closed, allowing for a capacity of nearly 500 cars.

Rewind: MSU grad's redemptive film earns rave reviews

The day after his feature-length documentary “Rewind” debuted at 280 million households, with a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes and rave reviews from The New York Times, Montana State University film graduate Sasha Joseph Neulinger went fishing.

“Rewind” is the first day, the beginning of the next chapter for me, where child sexual abuse isn’t at the primary focus of my existence, said Neulinger, who was headed out to a rural Montana stream near his home rather than hopping on 34 airplanes for a six-week, 12-city speaker’s tour advocating for children’s victim rights.

Neulinger, 30, has worked for seven years, since he graduated from Montana State University’s School of Film and Photography, to bring his story of surviving childhood sexual abuse to life.

He also directed the film, which Esquire magazine called one of the best films of 2020 and a RogerEbert.com review predicted “will have a long-lasting impact on countless lives.”

But “Rewind” is not for children. The film follows Neulinger’s own harrowing story of sexual abuse and the angels, as well as the monsters, of his childhood.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic ended a speaking tour that was to build on the debut, Neulinger’s phone has been ringing off the hook since the film and its creators teamed online on Independent Lens. “Rewind” was available to view for free until June 10 on the national PBS website and is also available on several video-on-demand sites.

And while nearly all the film revisits his childhood growing up in suburban Philadelphia, the documentary, as well as its creator,came full-circle in Montana. Neulinger said “It is kind of incredible how supportive the film-making community has been.”

Neulinger said “… it is special that a film that is this personal and timely, and that has received so much praise internationally, was made here in Montana.”

“I was looking at film schools in bigger cities, but when I landed on the Montana State University website, I was really impressed by what they had to offer. I researched the program and thought there might be some answers in our community.”

Neulinger, who was looking at film schools in bigger cities, but when I landed on the Montana State University website, I was really impressed by what they had to offer. I researched the program and thought there might be some answers in our community.

Neulinger said "I quickly realized that this was going to be a film. Even though he did not have much money, Neulinger did have support from MSU friends and filmmakers, and eventually MSU film professor Dennis Aig introduced him to producer Cindy Meeth, who had produced “Buck” and “Unseen,” two successful documentaries that found wider audiences. She came on board in about 2017 "with a plethora of experience and resources and finally finish this film the way we wanted to finish it."

“Rewind” was accepted into the juried 2019 Tribeca Film Festival a little more than a year ago, resulting in positive reviews and interest by distributors.

“Ultimately we chose Independent Lens and PBS so the film could be seen by as many people as possible while being commercially viable,” Neulinger said. The film was subsequently picked up with Film Rise for video-on-demand rights.

The film can be streamed on Apple iTunes, Amazon, and Google Play, with free screenings available for 48 hours after purchase. The film is available for streaming through your radio.

The concession stand and projection booth, built by Jens Hansen for the Festival, is located near Deer Lodge from 1949-1973. The building was moved to its present location in 1977 by the current owners.

You can also take advantage of the concession stand and project booth to pick up the film on Monday evening by paying the $5 food permit, and both drive-ins broadcast the sound through your radio. Find them online at www.silverbowdrivein.com or on Facebook.

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Peter Bowen

Buckley considered Bowen one of his very best friends, even though they met in person only once during a correspondence that dated from 1982 to a few days before Bowen's death. Buckley said he has more than 1,000 letters from Bowen, and someday would like to compile their correspondence and publish it. "He was an American original," Buckley said, "and a dear friend. I always learned something with everything he wrote. There was always a story. His well of stories was deeper than the Mari- ans' Trench."

Peter Bowen was born May 22, 1943, in Detroit, Georgia, and was found immediately after his birth by Keith and Marie Bowen. Keith was an educator and in the first years of Peter’s life they lived in Colorado and Indiana while his father obtained his doctorate. Then, when Peter was 10, the family moved to Bozeman where his father became a professor — and wrestling coach — at Montana State College. His mother was one of the earliest volunteers at the Museum of the Rockies.

Bowen said in an autobiographical sketch that his newspaper route ended at a Bozeman bar called The Oaks, where he would linger and listen to the stories being told by old cowboys. "They were men in their eighties with spread collars and string ties and white mustaches. They often rode into town on horses or in open trucks. They could finger and listen to the stories being told by old cowboys. "They were men in their eighties with spread collars and string ties and white mustaches. They often rode into town on horses or in open trucks."

Like his character Yellowstone Kelly, Bowen himself was good at more than one thing. He learned the construction trade to put food in his mouth, and those skills would later serve him well as he fell in love with woodwork. He would also work as a cowboy, a folksinger and a fishing guide while he practiced the craft of writing. A big, gruff, shaggy man, he loved many dogs and a very few people. For years he lived by this river that ran through Montana, writing and fishing and enjoying his solitude.

When the first and second Du Pré novels, Coyote Wind and Specimen long, came out, they were greeted with critical fanfare — including a memorable New York Times t rave review headlined "Thoraeu in Montana."

There he discovered the folk music world that a coffee house campus, which he ended up managing for a time, bringing in acts like Tom Rush, Doc Watson and a young Joni Mitchell, who also fell in love with South Side Chicago blues.

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The 3 Rs at work in Montana

Public Value Partnerships

Public Value Partnerships grant between Montana nonprofit arts organizations and the Montana Arts Council champion the fact that the arts are of benefit to all the citizens of Montana and are worthy of state and federal investment.

Public Value Partnerships utilize tools we call “The Three Rs” to expand the public value of the work being done by Montana’s nonprofit arts organizations:

- Building relationships;
- Creating greater relevance and meaning; and
- Establishing return on investment (measured both as economic vitality and impact on people’s lives).

MAC believes that using “The Three Rs” strengthens participation, understanding and support from audiences, donors and funders. Here are some of the best examples of these stories:

Building Relationships

Hockaday Museum of Art, Kalispell:
The annual “A Timeless Legacy” exhibit and fundraiser was conceived as a way to showcase women painting in Glacier National Park, both historically and currently. Responding to requests by previous participating artists, in 2018 we expanded “A Timeless Legacy” to include male artists, and invited our Canadian neighbors to participate as well, revising the title to “A Timeless Legacy: Peace Park” to reflect this change.

Each “A Timeless Legacy” event includes several awards to artists in the show, including the “purchase award,” where a donor-funded account is used to purchase works for the Hockaday’s permanent collection. At the 2018 event, Canadian artist Doug Swinton and Billings artist Charles Fritz were each given the Van Kirke Nelson Hockaday Purchase Award. The deciding committee felt that purchasing one work from an artist on either side of the border exemplified the sentiment behind the exhibit, and represented the new opportunity to go beyond the border and witness the entire process as it unfolds. We intend to continue and expand this exposure and availability for our supporters.

Montana Repertory Theatre: The 2020 spring tour was “War of the Worlds,” a classic American story and legend presented with a fresh new approach and appeal.

The open rehearsal policy has created a completely new way for us to connect with our supporters. Many theatre-goers and local Rep patrons have cherished the opportunity to go behind the scenes and witness the entire process as it unfolds. We intend to continue and expand this exposure and availability for our supporters.

The annual gala fundraiser was entirely revamped this year. In previous years, the evening consisted of a performance of the touring production, with pre-show cocktails and post-show dinner. This year, in addition to food, drink and a live theatre experience, attendees received numerous announcements about the upcoming season and video messages from guest artists. Utilizing this time to unveil future projects and meet guest artists garnered a tremendously positive response.

Creating Relevance

Montana Repertory Theatre, Missoula: Montana Rep is expanding and diversifying its programming. We are beginning to offer a wider variety of productions, involving a more diverse company of artists. It is an essential part of our new mission to bring the most immediate and relevant theatre work into our community and state, while still appealing to an audience that prefers more traditional theatre.

The Rep’s production of “Go. Please. Go.,” was a world premiere from a young playwright just emerging on the national scene, while the 2020 spring tour was “War of the Worlds,” a classic American story and a purchase with an email or phone call to the artist and a personal thank-you to the purchaser.

We also work continuously to ensure our connection to those who can’t travel through a strong social media presence, our most important “specific technique” for building relationships is: we take the time to listen and work with our patrons and artists in old-fashioned one-on-one conversations.

Return On Investment

Carbon County Arts Guild, Red Lodge: Executive director Kim Kapalka reports that Beau Thiege’s Guitar exhibition from Montana Art Gallery Director’s Association (MAGDA) “captivated visitors because not only did the artist create interesting objects but the visitors enjoyed the fact they could touch the instruments and play them.”

In conjunction with the exhibition, which was on view at CCAG May 2 to June 23, 2019, the guild organized a special tour and activity with four rural schools: Lather, Fishtrail, Nye and Molt. The students from these “one-room” schools were invited to the Depot Gallery to tour the show, play the guitars, and then build a one-string guitar to take home. The largest school was Luther with 29 students, followed by Fishtrail (6), Nye (4) and Molt (2).

Tippett Rise Foundation provided funding for an instructor and supplies for the project. The guild invited Leroy Miller, a local musician and former member of the band Smash Mouth, to assist with the tour and instruct the activity. “It worked out great,” says Kapalka. “Leroy’s knowledge of music, guitars, and his ability to make a guitar from a cardboard box, bong bong handle, nuts, bolts and a guitar string was terrific.”

He discussed the blues, Bo Diddley and how to play on the one string-guitar before the students made their own “Diddley Bow” in a project that integrated the disciplines of art and music.

The following week, several parents came to the art guild to see what made their children so excited about music and art. A demo and closing reception were held June 21–22, which featured artist Beau Thiege, who visited and talked to guests.

Kapalka says this MAGDA-supported hands-on exhibit “has been the most popular show to date,” with more than 700 visitors. “It is wonderful to have MAGDA organize quality and affordable shows that can travel to smaller venues,” she adds.

Deadline Aug. 1 for Cultural Trust grants

Cultural Trust Guidelines are now posted on the Montana Arts Council’s website, art.mt.gov. The application deadline is Aug. 1, 2020, for the July 1, 2021-June 30, 2023 grant period.

In 1975, the Montana Legislature set aside a percentage of the Coal Tax to restore murals in the Capitol and support other cultural and aesthetic projects. This unique funding source forms the Cultural Trust, with grant money derived from interest allocated every two years.

The Cultural and Aesthetic Projects Advisory Committee has 16 members, half appointed by the Montana Arts Council and half by the Montana Historical Society. The committee reviews all grant proposals and makes funding recommendations to the Legislature, which determines who will receive grant funds. The Montana Arts Council administers the program for the Legislature.

Applications must be for cultural and aesthetic projects, including but not limited to the visual, performing, literary and media arts; history, archaeology, folklore, archives, collections, research, history, preservation and the construction or renovation of cultural facilities.

Applications are encouraged for applicants serving rural communities, racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, institutionalized populations, youth and the aging.

Applications must be made online. For information and guidelines, visit art.mt.gov.

Statewide arts service organizations

Montana has many arts-discipline-specific statewide service organizations. You can find a complete list here: art.mt.gov/arts_service_orgs

Montana Arts Council grants, awards & commissions

Visit the Montana Arts Council’s website for a complete listing of grants, awards and commissions:

Individuals: art.mt.gov/gac/ind
Organizations: art.mt.gov/gac/orgs
Schools: art.mt.gov/gac/schools
Programs and Services: art.mt.gov/ps

Montana Repertory Theatre: The 2020 spring tour was “War of the Worlds,” a classic American story and legend presented with a fresh new approach and appeal.

The annual gala fundraiser was entirely revamped this year. In previous years, the evening consisted of a performance of the touring production, with pre-show cocktails and post-show dinner. This year, in addition to food, drink and a live theatre experience, attendees received numerous announcements about the upcoming season and video messages from guest artists. Utilizing this time to unveil future projects and meet guest artists garnered a tremendously positive response.

The following week, several parents came to the art guild to see what made their children so excited about music and art. A demo and closing reception were held June 21–22, which featured artist Beau Thiege, who visited and talked to guests.

Kapalka says this MAGDA-supported hands-on exhibit “has been the most popular show to date,” with more than 700 visitors. “It is wonderful to have MAGDA organize quality and affordable shows that can travel to smaller venues,” she adds.
by Annie Allen Clark

The arts feel like a balm, a salve... perhaps a tincture during this year of evolution and change. I have turned to art to put aside worry, fears and sadness and lead us away from the pandemic and political atmosphere.

Some of the artists individually that I follow have participated in MAP (Montana Artrepreneur Program) — an art-centered business development program taught by working artists and offered through the Montana Arts Council. One of its key components is collaboration and connectivity with other artists.

As a coach for MAP, I was curious about the artists who have come through the program. How have they been affected and adapted to the present world turmoil? I decided to pose the following question to some of our MAP artists: “How has the world situation of pandemic and protests changed, evolved and/or halted your creativity and products?” The answers reveal how the world of MAP is like a warm reunion of great ideas and creative minds.

Annie Allen Clark, Freese’s Farm Art Studio, is a visual artist. While I sell the occasional original, most of my sales are in my children’s book, followed household products with my watercolor art... After much travel and many shows these past years, I decided to try renting a space in a business in downtown Miles City, alongside antique dealers, rescued/reclaimed vendors, other artists and artisans. I was fortunate I made sure and cut back drastically on the number of out-of-town shows I applied to. Things went really well financially since I made sure I was near my booth space, drawing and painting and answering questions from interested shoppers. On Fridays and Saturdays. From Feb 7-15, I easily covered my booth fee plus the 10 percent of sales reserved for the business owners, and made a respectable profit.

“The business shut its doors in mid-March and re-opened in late May. Though my income declined, I was made sure I was near my booth space, drawing and painting and answering questions from interested shoppers. I decided to try renting a space in a business in downtown Miles City, alongside antique dealers, rescued/reclaimed vendors, other artists and artisans. I was fortunate I made sure and cut back drastically on the number of out-of-town shows I applied to. Things went really well financially since I made sure I was near my booth space, drawing and painting and answering questions from interested shoppers. On Fridays and Saturdays. From Feb 7-15, I easily covered my booth fee plus the 10 percent of sales reserved for the business owners, and made a respectable profit.

“The busines...
Participants in the Verge Kids Improv class share a giggle during the end-of-class demonstration at the theater in Bozeman. Improv teaches resilience, improves interpersonal communication and reminds us to be playful.

( Photo by the late, beloved Tim Stiller)