

*from the President's iPad*



## What Comes Next? Looking ahead to a *happier* new year

What a year this has been—for our community, the nation and the world. And it's not over yet.

In the months since the pandemic hit, we've faced challenges and sacrifices few could have envisioned a year ago. And that makes me only prouder of what our corps of incredible volunteers has accomplished in this difficult time. Their creativity, hard work and determination were evidenced by a varied array of online programs week after week—gallery shows, Family Arts Kaleidoscope, Community Reads, Community Writes and the Roots & Shoots music series, as well as our signature events, Hidden Gardens and the Festival of Books.



Back Row: Gerald Seligman, David Highfill, Nick Van Alstine, Madaline Sparks, Eve Zatt, Cindy Atkins  
Front Row: Judith Choate, Kelly Kynion, Vivian Wachsberger, Jill Kalotay, Jo-Anne Williams Bilotti


If the Academy has been looking, well, spiffier, as you drive or walk by these days, it's not your imagination: We moved ahead with the restoration of our treasured 1847 home and I'm happy to report that this long-needed makeover will be completed by the Spring, thanks to your generosity and, most recently, an extraordinary gift from Sharon Grubin. (See story, page 2.) Work has been completed on the roof and windows, the exterior has been repainted from top to bottom, and we are now bringing our walkways and outside areas up to code.

At this juncture, there is no way of knowing when we'll be able to reopen our doors and resume "normal" programming. It goes without saying that that will happen only when it is safe. Until then, we'll continue to pursue our mission—to build community through the arts—with outstanding program-

ming throughout 2021, including a virtual Revels.

One of the benefits of operating virtually, of course, is that overhead is minimal, so that whatever proceeds we take in go straight to our bottom line. But the reality is that the pandemic has severely cut our revenue stream to a fraction of what it should be. Thus, while your support is always valued, this year it is more vital than ever. If you haven't already made your year-end tax-deductible gift, I hope you'll do so today and give as generously as possible.

Meanwhile, my warmest wishes to you and those you love for a happy, healthy and safe holiday season.

  
Nick Van Alstine



## Get Ready for Revels! Yes, it's on—and it will be great

Revels, the Academy's oldest fundraising benefit, will be different this winter. But it will still be Revels.

No, there will be no cocktail-and hors d'oeuvres reception at the Academy, no elegant dinners at the homes of our community's most gracious hosts. Instead, plan to stop by the Academy on February 13, 2021 (Valentine's Day Eve), to pick up a take-home bag of amazing cocktail snacks, a great dinner and a bubbly beverage—all to be savored in the comfort of your home while listening to a concert by blues musician and former Academy Board Member, Cathy Grier,

from her newly released album "I'm All Burn."

Throughout the event, the Academy will also raffle original works—paintings, ceramics and photography—by some of the community's most acclaimed gallery artists, including Leslie Gabosh, Barbara Willner, Pamela Dalton, Norma Cohen, Gerald Seligman, Patricia Gravett, Ellen Lynch, Ron Harrington, Stephanie Anderson, Barbara Lax, Mary Ann Davis (davistudio) and Neal Warshaw.

Stay tuned for more details about this year's very special Revels and how to purchase raffle tickets.

## Family Arts Kaleidoscope



### Dinosaurs, Drumming and Dance Family Arts Kaleidoscope goes virtual

Family Arts Kaleidoscope made its debut this year with a variety of virtual programs for kids and parents.

"With kids spending so much time at home, we wanted to offer the community a variety of free or low-cost options for engagement with the arts," says Kelly Kynion, chair of the Family Arts Kaleidoscope Committee.

In July, environmentalist and lifelong dinosaur fan Jason Sheldon conducted a virtual workshop where kids could design their own dinosaurs. The series continued in August with storyteller Tom Lee, and Elena Mosley teaching movement based on African-American and traditional Afro-Haitian

dance. In October, Greg Mosley led a program about African drumming and ventriloquist-composer-comedian Steve Charney appeared in a specially recorded program. November featured a recorded program of creative music play with the duo Raw Resonance, from the Netherlands.

The 2020 series winds up on Wednesday, Dec. 30 at 2PM with local artist/illustrator Jacqueline Rogers leading a workshop, "Drawing and Storytelling at the Holidays" (recommended for children ages 8 and up, and their families.)

Support for this series was provided by Hudson River Bank and Trust Foundation, Stewart's Shops, Metzwood Insurance and Kids Need Music.

## Building restoration

### A Mother's Gift The Academy auditorium is renamed in honor of Blanche H. Grubin



Immediately after buying her house in Spencertown in 1984, Sharon Grubin joined the Academy. "I attended many musical performances there and loved that you could be 'up close and personal' with the performers in that intimate second-floor space," she recalls.

Sharon inherited her passion for music from her mother. "She had a gorgeous operatic-type voice and could play the piano by ear," she says. A former litigator and federal judge, Sharon retired in 2012 as General Counsel of the Metropolitan Opera and became a full-time resident of Spencertown the following year.



Sharon Grubin

"I had long planned to make a major gift to the Academy," she says, "and the fact that the Academy was still trying to reach its goal for the restoration of the building led me to make the gift at this time." Indeed, it was Sharon's extraordinary gift that has enabled the Academy to meet its fundraising goal. And the second-floor space in which Sharon has attended so many performances will be named the Blanche H. Grubin Auditorium.

"My mother loved visiting me in Spencertown," says Sharon, "and I am thrilled to honor her and to thank her for instilling in me her love of music and the arts."



## Screen Gems The Academy is now on YouTube



If you missed any of this year's great programming at the Academy, including Amy Ryan and Richard Green's 2 Blue concert (left), Family Arts Kaleidoscope or the Festival of Book author appearances, it's all available on the Spencertown Academy's new YouTube channel.

## the Academy

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Madaline Sparks, Vice President  
Jo-Anne Bilotti, Treasurer  
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Cindy Atkins  
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David Highfill  
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Gerald Seligman  
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### MEMBERSHIP

Are you a current member of the Spencertown Academy?  
Visit our website to sign up or to renew your membership today!  
We thank you for your support.

### PLEASE VISIT

[spencertownacademy.org](http://spencertownacademy.org)  
for information on programs, artsVOYAGE, membership, and volunteer opportunities or to subscribe to our e-blast list.



## One for the Books Festival of Books, vol. 15, is an online hit



The Festival of Books, the Academy's annual end-of-summer celebration of all things literary, began this year, as always, on Labor Day weekend, but extended well into October. And while this was a different kind of Festival, the reviews were nothing short of stellar.

"Because the Festival took place entirely online, we were able to extend it far beyond our usual time and date schedules and engage authors who might otherwise have been unable to join us in person," says Jill Kalotay, who once again co-chaired the Festival with David Highfill.

### Book buyers' bonanza

The online book store featured a carefully curated selection of some 300 items—works of fiction and nonfiction, art books, signed editions and fascinating ephemera—put together by Wayne Greene and a team of volunteers. The varied program of events ranged from author presentations to activities for children, all taking place on Zoom.

Featured authors included Joyce Carol Oates, who discussed her latest novel, *Night. Sleep. Death. The Stars*; Robert Kolker, author of *Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American*

### Community Writes

## The Write Stuff A new series gives voice to a vibrant community of writers

Launched this summer in two installments, the Academy's Community Writes series drew original short works of fiction and nonfiction from some 33 writers.

"We've always known that the Academy's members and friends are a vibrant and talented community," says Kelly Kynion, board member and Community Writes coordinator. "Among them are many fine writers, and we wanted to celebrate their creativity."

The response to Community Writes was wonderful, says Kelly, and selected pieces are available to read on the Academy website. The team of reader-curators and prep volunteers included Lynda Araoz, David Cudaback, Allan Davidson,

*Family*; and local children's book author and illustrator Jacqueline Rogers, who read from her latest book, *Goblin Moon* and led two workshops for children. Other events included a discussion of *The Booksellers*, a documentary about antiquarian booksellers, with director D. W. Young and producers Dan Wechsler and Judith Mizrachy; Richard Gehr, author of *I Only Read It for the Cartoons: The New Yorker's Most Brilliantly Twisted Artists*, interviewing New Yorker cartoonists David Sipress and Emily Flake; and Ed Ward, author of an acclaimed two-volume history of rock & roll, in conversation with Academy board member Gerald Seligman.

### Community Reads

On September 22, historian Jill Lepore discussed her book, *This America: The Case for the Nation*, as part of the Academy Community Reads series. Earlier in the summer, author Wesley Brown and Chatham Public Library Director Julie DeLisle led a Community Reads discussion of the Tayari Jones novel *An American Marriage*.

If you missed any of the presentations, you can view them on the Spencertown Academy YouTube channel. Meanwhile, watch for updates on Festival of Books 2021, set to begin on Friday, September 3—online or in person. Either way, says David, "it's guaranteed to be a can't-miss event."



Barbara Deisroth, Vivian Drohan, Carol Essert, John Fiorillo, Kelly Kynion, Sara McWilliams, Maryann Wong and one reader who chose to be anonymous.

### Young writers shine

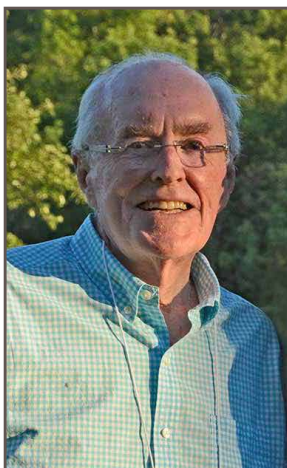
In addition, the 2020 Festival of Books Young Writers contest yielded some 30 fiction and nonfiction entries from high school students throughout Columbia and Berkshire Counties. Read the winning fiction and nonfiction entries—*The Boy in the Clouds* (by Taibat Ahmed, Taconic High School) and *If Walls Could Talk* (by Alyssa Mowris, Chatham High School) on the Academy website.

## Thank you, John

John Dunne, a long-time resident of Spencertown, passed away on November 1 at 90.

"The Spencertown Academy, and indeed the community, has lost a cherished neighbor, wonderful friend and great man," says Academy president Nick Van Alstine. "He was truly one of a kind – a loving husband and father, loyal, civic-minded and the very embodiment of decency."

John was a member of the New York State Senate from 1966 to 1989 and from 1990 to 1993 he served under president George H.W. Bush as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. John figured importantly in addressing prisoner reform issues; follow-



ing the 1971 Attica prison riots he helped found Prisoners' Legal Services of New York.

"Here in Spencertown, John was always ready to help," says Nick. "It was John and Denise Dunne who kick-started the Academy's capital campaign, and they were always there cheering us on to the finish line. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Denise and the entire wonderful Dunne family."

In lieu of flowers, gifts to honor John's legacy may be made to The John R. Dunne Fund of the New York Bar Foundation (1 Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207) which provides funding for legal services to the families and children of indigent prisoners.

*building community through the arts*

## *Music at the Academy*



### Intermission's Over! **Roots & Shoots** returns to the Academy

Good news for music lovers: The Roots & Shoots concert series—now Roots & Shoots Streams—resumed on November 21 with a live performance from the Academy auditorium by 2 Blue, a blues-rock offshoot of the Amy Ryan Band. The folk-rock sister duo, The Nields, followed up on December 14 with a live performance from their studio in the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts.

Amy Ryan and Richard Green began playing as a duo in 2016 and represented the Capital Region Blues



Network at the 33rd International Blues Challenge in Memphis that year. The Nields have released 17 albums and performed with The Band, James Taylor and the Indigo Girls among others. During the pandemic, they have been playing regular online performances from their studio and offered to share their Monday night Live Stream with the Academy audience, according to Mike Zdeb, a member of the Roots & Shoots committee. The music continues in 2021 with an Irish-themed concert by the Magdalens on March 13. Watch your email for time and details.

## *in the gallery*



### The Shows Must Go On! The Academy plans a varied gallery schedule

Pandemic or not, a varied schedule of gallery shows is planned for 2021 at the Academy—virtual, in person or a combination of the two. Here's what's on tap:



The Annual Photography Show will include the work of four invited photographers: Ellen Lynch, Neal Warshaw, Gerald Seligman and David Halliday.

Still Life: Flowers, Fruits & Foods in Repose will be the focus of the 2021 Botanical Show.

The Members' Show, as always, will feature the work of Academy members. Watch for details and submission deadlines.

The Fall Show is called "Whimsy" and will feature the lighthearted but sophisticated work of six local artists. Dates have yet to be set, but watch your email for details.

## Where Do You Get Your Local News?

### Help us publicize the Spencertown Academy!

We're updating the Academy's press list to get word out about our 2021 programming and would greatly value your help. Please tell us:

- What are your go-to media outlets for local cultural news—print and/or online newspapers, regional blogs, radio shows, Facebook, other?
- Who are the local arts reporters and/or critics that you follow?
- Do you have any favorite sources for event listings?

Please email any tips with the subject line "Academy Press List" to Gina at [ginahyams@gmail.com](mailto:ginahyams@gmail.com).

