



Press Release for 2/1/21

## Bridge the Gap: 42 Day \$100K Challenge

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Ben Hart &

Brandon James

The Board of Trustees of the Seacoast Repertory Theatre announced on Monday a “Bridge the Gap” fundraiser to allow the theater to continue operations while they await forthcoming federal grants through “Save Our Stages” and the continued deployment of the vaccine. The board received an anonymous \$100,000 challenge pledge from two supporters of the arts and unanimously committed to raising \$100,000 for a dollar-for-dollar match to meet the total fundraising need of \$200,000. These funds are needed by March 14th to support the continued operation of this iconic downtown theatre. Jonathan Day, Board President said “Our patrons love the theatre, we have remained open, and employed our incredible artistic staff since COVID-19 shut the country down in March 2020. We are thrilled to offer this challenge to support our operations in this crucial time. It will build a bridge to sustainability and a strong future.”

We have 42 days to meet this need. Ben Hart and Brandon James, co-artistic directors said “We are incredibly grateful for this matching challenge. It is imperative that we bridge this gap. On the other side of this pandemic is financial health and growth. We are primed to be an important player in American theater, and we will assuredly continue to be a gem in the crown of the vibrant Portsmouth arts scene.”

Seacoast Rep was very important to the Portsmouth area in 2019. Prior to COVID-19 devastating the arts industry, the Rep had an annual budget of \$1.9M, produced over 300 performances a year with 150 performers and designers with 81% of budget going to programming, artists, and producers. The Rep provided \$20,000 in scholarships for the Portsmouth Academy of the Performing Arts (PAPA) to teach the next generation of theatre professionals and \$30,000 of in-kind ticket donations to area nonprofits including Kremple Center, The Chase Home for Children, Gather, Cross Roads House, Haven, senior living facilities, and front line/essential workers. In 2019, long term debt was paid down by over \$400,000. For every dollar spent at the Theatre, the Rep added four dollars to the local economy and the Seacoast Rep represented almost 10% of the total economic contribution to the arts in Portsmouth in 2019.

COVID-19 hit hard March 13, 2020. Amazingly the artistic directors and staff pivoted almost overnight to an innovative livestream model – an incredibly difficult task. The staff committed to quarantine together. They established musical cabarets on Friday nights, found smaller shows that could be done with fewer performers, and provided remote learning opportunities for children stuck at home. They established new COVID

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and Educational Organization

protocols that became best practice from the Attorney General's office, and found a way to hold the summer PAPA camps at a venue that provided ample social distance. Although people from around the country loved the shows, classes, and musicians, ticket revenues were drastically impacted in a livestream environment.

As Alyssa Dumas, assistant artistic director and actress sang in the *Marvelous Wonderettes* this summer "I am strong. I am invincible." Indeed, the *New York Times* recognized Seacoast Rep in a half page article May 24th, noting it was perhaps the only theatre in the country who took this kind of creative approach to providing live performance during this challenging time. The artistic directors have been consulted by other theatres across the country to share how they successfully converted to a live stream model. As former executive director Kathleen Cavalaro said, "We indeed are strong and I am proud of this artistic staff who stuck together to provide plays, classes, musical cabarets, and PAPA programming during this challenging year."

Now, in 2021, the theatre needs everyone's help to meet this challenge. The Rep has debuted the Sol Series curated by Najee Brown to share and uplift the stories of BIPOC. Additionally, the Rep has an ambitious program schedule that includes shows like *The Fantastiks*, *Fun Home*, *Godspell*, *Pippin*, *Peter Pan*, *Cabaret*, and *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Later this year, after this challenge is met, the capital campaign will complete its 3 year construction project with a new insulated roof and walls, new HVAC, more lighting, and a new bar. The capital campaign has \$71,375 of NHCDFA tax credits available for FY22 which can be pledged now and is funded separately from the operating budget. With the theatre reopening in a reduced capacity, Bob and Sue Thoresen, co-chairs, noted "the new bathrooms are ready, the new box office is open, the concession stand is ready and the lobby floor is new - all work done during 2020."

Here is how you can help us "Bridge the Gap" and meet our \$100,000 challenge: send a check to Seacoast Rep, 125 Bow Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801 or send your donation to us on Venmo at @SeacoastRep. It can be anonymous, but we'd love to thank you. You can buy tickets or email [Zane.Lucier@seacostrep.org](mailto:Zane.Lucier@seacostrep.org), the box office manager.

Please direct any questions regarding the challenge to [Jonathan.Day@seacoastrep.org](mailto:Jonathan.Day@seacoastrep.org).