

Letter to the editor: A message from the Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance

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Letters

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Ailey II, co-presented with Nolte Academy at the Englert Theatre on Nov. 4. — Zak Neumann/Little Village

The impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus escalates across the nation and threatens our community. We in the arts have seen this plot countless times before on stage and on screen.

We recognize the moment of crisis that demands an extra ounce of strength to overcome the odds. For the Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance, that moment is now.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens our very being. We are community gathering places and connection points. On most days we offer respite from the storm of our daily lives, but now we are in the eye of the storm. We must put our community health ahead of our own financial well-being.

The Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance is a collective of non-profit arts organizations that contribute to the vitality of our downtown district — The Englert Theatre, FilmScene, Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature, Iowa Writers' House, PromptPress, Public Space One, Riverside Theatre, and Summer of the Arts.

Together our nonprofit arts organizations have an incredible annual impact. We host more than 900 events, nine multi-day festivals and 53 residencies and exhibitions serving 320,000 attendees. We employ 116 people, work with dozens of interns and offer paid opportunities to over 1,000 artists. We are open 365 days each year and create over \$8 million in activity for the surrounding local economy.

Now we go dark.

How we emerge from this nadir is the true test of our collective mettle. Thankfully, in Iowa City, our band of heroes is not limited to those of us working in the arts — this entire community will help us overcome this ordeal.

We may feel powerless in the face of such a crisis, but there are choices we can continue to make that will ensure the longevity of the necessary place of the arts in our community. Bolster your memberships. Consider applying the cost of tickets for missed shows into donations. Make plans to return to the audience. Lend your voice as an advocate for the arts in Iowa City.

We need you in this moment, Iowa City, to ensure the survival of the greatest small city for the arts.

During this uncertain time we will innovate our practices to share the power of artistic expression beyond our usual screens, stages, and spaces. That is our job: to adapt and find new ways to inspire our community. And when we emerge from this ordeal, we will again be the place where we laugh and cry together, where we experience a collective dream.

The arts will help us heal.

We stand in solidarity with all of the working artists, our arts and culture partners at the University of Iowa and all other locally-based arts efforts not currently represented in this group.

Coffee, bagel, Little Village.

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Thank you,
Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance

The Englert Theatre

Jessica Egli, Andre Perry, Katie Roche, John Schickedanz, Sarah Shonrock

FilmScene

Rebecca Fons, Ross Meyer, Emily Salmonson, Andrew Sherburne

Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature

Rachael Carlson, John Kenyon

Iowa Writers' House

Alisha Jeddelloh, Andrea Wilson

PromptPress

Jennifer Colville, Nina Lohman, Elizabeth Munger, Kalmia Strong

Public Space One

John Engelbrecht, Emily Jalinsky, Kalmia Strong

Riverside Theatre

Adam Knight, Kate Markham, Irena Sarić

Summer of the Arts

Lisa Barnes, Terri Reeve, Andrea Truitt

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