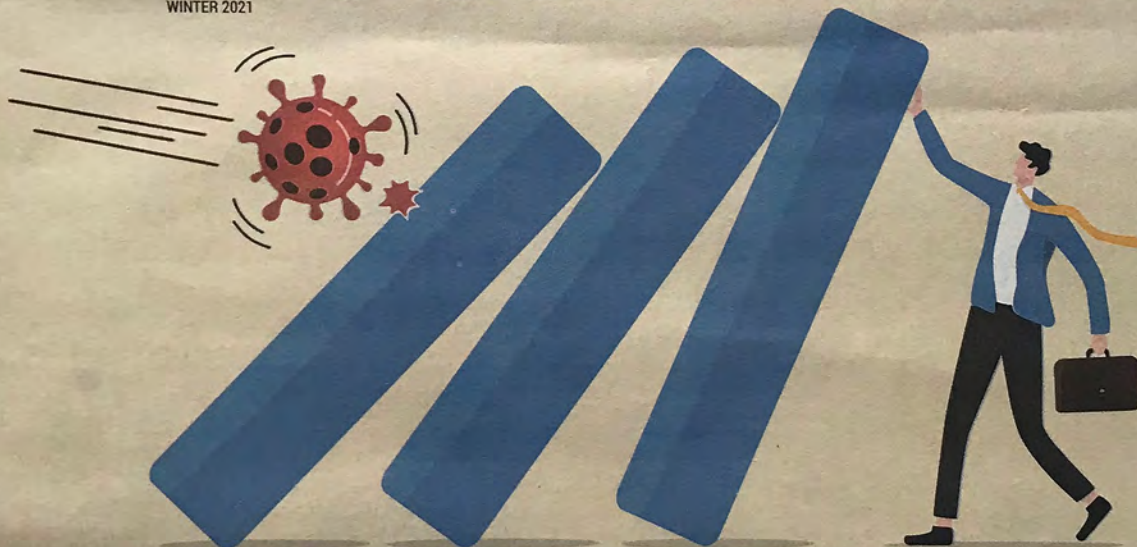


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NORTH OF BOSTON

# BUSINESS

WINTER 2021



## **Pandemic Pushback**

*Drive toward economic recovery gains momentum*

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A quarterly publication of *The Eagle-Tribune*, *The Salem News*, *The Daily News of Newburyport* and *the Gloucester Daily Times*

# Getting CREATIVE

## Organizations find ways to keep the arts alive while planning comebacks

By Terry Date

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From Cape Ann to Salem and Newburyport to Lawrence, art, history and performance venues eye better days even as they stay vigilant and acknowledge the grim realities of the lingering COVID-19 health crisis.

The state's cultural nonprofits have lost \$484 million in revenue during the crisis, according to the Mass Cultural Council, which promotes culture statewide by funding local programs.

Council surveys of 898 of these nonprofits found that 62% of them had to lay off or furlough workers or cut wages or hours, affecting 30,616 Massachusetts employees.

Still, many venues have kept the arts alive, presenting virtual programs; hosting events in the great outdoors; and adapting to mask, distancing and attendance requirements.

This year, the halls and stages and galleries will build on innovative programming as they hope for a return to live, unrestricted concerts, shows and exhibits once it's deemed safe to do so.

The Cape Ann Museum in Gloucester, with its new 4-acre green and Janet & William Ellery James Center, has a full slate of new exhibits and programs. Many are prepared to transition from virtual to socially distanced presentations, director Oliver Barker says.

A summer highlight will be the CAM Culture Cruise,

which drew a flotilla of 70 vessels on a journey through American art history when it was first held this past August in Gloucester Harbor.

"In one of the most highly attended events in the history of the Cape Ann Museum, we celebrated the stories of Fitz Henry Lane, Winslow Homer, Cecilia Beaux, Edward Hopper, Jane Peterson, Milton Avery, Mark Rothko and more," Barker says.

### Learning to adapt

Salem's Peabody Essex Museum is currently allowing a limited number of visitors to its galleries, including exhibits organized around history, fashion, design and nature.

Siddhartha Shah, curator of the South Asian art exhibit and head of the museum's civic engagement, has consulted with school, health and recreation leaders and everyday citizens to present a lecture series to help people cope with and understand our troubled times.

Two of the presentations, at 7 p.m. on Jan. 29 by Heather Goldstone and Feb. 26 by Dilshanie Perera, will explore connections between COVID-19, climate change and inequality.

And an exhibit called "Breath," by British painter Sarah Hussain, incorporates meditation with art and includes a virtual component built around what nature tells us is the optimum breath, 5.5 seconds.

Shah, a former yoga teacher, is bringing mindfulness to art viewing, pairing the intellect



ALAN JOSLIN/Courtesy photo

The Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport hopes to bring concerts back to its waterfront stage starting in late summer.



Courtesy photo

The Newburyport Choral Society had to cancel its 2020 performances due to the pandemic but is planning to present a winter concert this year.

and relaxation for a more balanced and healthful experience.

"Art viewing and art making are important ways to manage stress whether in a pandemic or not," he says.

The nonprofit Essex National Heritage Commission, headquartered in Salem, hosts and promotes cultural events in a region that, in a

typical year, draws 2.7 million visitors from 30 countries.

Anya Wilczynski, director of operations, says that outdoor venues succeeded the best at generating revenue in 2020.

"Organizations like Historic Beverly and The Trustees' Appleton Farms did a great job pivoting to continue offering programming that people

desired to attend while still keeping those attendees safe and distanced," Wilczynski says.

She expects that Essex Heritage's programming will remain virtual through June, at which point it hopes to resume in-person public tours to Bakers Island Light Station, as well as walking tours in downtown Salem.

Essex Heritage's hallmark Trails & Sails series will celebrate its 20th anniversary this fall. Last year, they adapted the series to include virtual do-it-yourself activities and limited in-person events.

In Lawrence, the local History Center will host a Public Safety Symposium on May 1 by virtual means. It will look at the Immigrant City's responses to crises in the past and more currently during the Merrimack Valley gas explosions and the pandemic, in an era of extreme health disparities based on race and income.

The center is conducting archival research by appointment and plans to reopen its museum when schools return to in-person classes, says its director, Susan Grabski.

### Setting the stage

Perhaps no cultural organizations have been hit harder than those that present live music and theater, leaving venues such as the Firehouse Center for the Arts in Newburyport and North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly largely silent but hoping to

## A helping hand

North of Boston recipients of grant assistance from the Mass Cultural Council's Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program include:

- ▶ **The Cabot in Beverly:** \$100,000
- ▶ **Firehouse Center for the Arts in Newburyport:** \$100,000
- ▶ **Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center:** \$100,000
- ▶ **Gloucester Stage Company:** \$100,000
- ▶ **Northeast Document**

**Conservation Center in Andover:** \$100,000

- ▶ **The House of the Seven Gables in Salem:** \$100,000
- ▶ **Newburyport Art Association:** \$88,000
- ▶ **History Alive in Salem:** \$65,000
- ▶ **Essex Historical Society & Shipbuilding Museum:** \$52,000
- ▶ **Methuen Festival of Trees:** \$49,000
- ▶ **Lawrence History Center's**

**Immigrant City Archives and Museum:** \$45,000

- ▶ **Feast of the Three Saints in Lawrence:** \$21,000
- ▶ **Friends of the Museum of Printing in Haverhill:** \$22,000
- ▶ **Proprietors of the Salem Athenaeum:** \$20,000
- ▶ **Marblehead Little Theatre:** \$11,000
- ▶ **Symphony by the Sea in Beverly:** \$9,000
- ▶ **Terezin: Children of the Holocaust, Amesbury:** \$1,000

entertain again in 2021.

Rockport Music's Shalin Liu Performance Center has been unable to present live entertainment for 10 months. It is planning for a return to in-person concerts in late summer, says Karen Herlitz, director of marketing.

Late-summer concerts expected include the Rockport Jazz Festival, featuring John Pizzarelli and Grace Kelly; the Rockport Celtic Festival, hosted by Brian O'Donovan; and the Rockport Chamber

Music Festival, to be held over four to five weeks.

The performance center has in the past hosted musical greats like trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Ma recorded a concert for virtual presentation on the seaside performance center's stage in September.

North of Boston choral groups have been silenced when it comes to what many of their members enjoy most — singing together under the same roof.

The Newburyport Choral Society has a team studying safety precautions and is hoping for a return to rehearsals in fall followed by a winter concert, says its president, Mary Ann Lachat.

In the meantime, starting Feb. 2, the chorus will host weekly sessions on Zoom for anyone interested in learning choral and singing techniques with its "How Can I Keep From Singing?" music series, Lachat says.

Spokespeople for cultural



The Peabody Essex Museum in Salem reopened in July with new guidelines and restrictions. It continues to offer a variety of virtual programs.

RYAN MCBRIDE/  
Staff photo

organizations say the arts generate meaning; intensify our sense of place; and promote vibrant experiences for creators, performers and audiences.

Also, arts and culture contribute more than \$800 billion annually to the U.S. economy, according to a report by the Department of Commerce and the National Endowment for the Arts.

A number of culture-minded organizations large and small have received help from governmental sources, including Paycheck Protection Program loans, which typically cover two to three months of employees' salaries.

State-administered grants from federal funding have also helped keep some venues and organizations afloat.

The Mass Cultural Council,

in partnership with the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development, recently announced COVID-19 relief funding for nonprofits through the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program.

In Massachusetts, 183 cultural organizations received nearly \$10 million to support their recovery from losses sustained by the COVID-19 pandemic.