From the Desk of the Editor
Jane Sheridan

While this is not the Newsletter I had expected to write in May, we wanted to take this opportunity to look back at the Season and to say thank you to Richard March, as he finishes his two-year term as President of the Friends.

We all owe him a debt of gratitude for what he has done for the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet.

You will get to read Richard March’s thoughts as he finishes his two-year term as President.

A Peek Behind the Curtain offers insight into the decision to cancel the remainder of this Season, and how The Ballet is supporting the dancers in these difficult times. We also have the chance to look forward to the 30th Anniversary Season with Iain Webb and Joseph Volpe.

Finally, you’ll have the chance to recognize the many volunteers whose time and effort support The Sarasota Ballet. They are more than just Friends!

I hope that you enjoy the summer and please stay safe. We have so much to look forward to.

From the Desk of the President
Richard March 941.343.7117
rjmhkm@aol.com

As we deal with a crisis none of us expected to see in our lifetime, I sincerely hope that you and your families are healthy and staying safe. The coronavirus curtailed what had been a wonderful Season for both The Sarasota Ballet and the Friends. Although our plans, like those of so many other organizations, have been set aside, I am confident in the bright future for The Ballet and look forward to next Season with great expectation.

We were very disappointed that we had to cancel our March and April luncheons and thank those who donated back their tickets. As you may know, donations help us provide financial support to The Ballet. We had planned to present a gift of $20,000 to Director Iain Webb at the March luncheon. Since the event did not take place, we subsequently presented him with a check in this amount, along with an additional $1,000 for The Sarasota Ballet Emergency Fund.

Iain sent a letter to the Friends in which he said, “Your love and generosity truly make a difference in our ability to bring world class dance to Sarasota.” Iain also said, “I cannot thank you enough for making my vision a reality and for helping out with the Emergency Fund at this time.”

The contribution made by our volunteers is even more important to The Ballet than our financial support. The myriad of jobs we do would otherwise require paid personnel. Through the end of March, our volunteers worked 4,800 hours. As you will see in the article “We Couldn’t Do It’ Without You” that appears later in the newsletter, this effort is valued at $115,000. My thanks go to all those who contributed their time and energy. I urge all who can to consider volunteering next Season.
It is time for me to say goodbye as President of the Friends. I am very pleased to tell you that **Pat Golemme** will be the new President starting June 1st. Pat is a long-time Friend and serves as **Vice-Chair of The Sarasota Ballet Board of Trustees**.

It has been a great honor for me to serve as your President during the past two years. Our membership has grown to over 400. The positive feedback from those who have come to our events and programs is very rewarding. As I take my leave, thank you for all your support.

I would also like to thank my fellow members of the FSB Board for their hard work, dedication and willingness to tackle the many challenges that inevitably arise. Without them, I could not have succeeded. See you next Season at the Ballet!

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**A Peek Behind the Curtain – An Interview with Director Iain Webb and Executive Director Joseph Volpe about The Sarasota Ballet’s COVID-19 Response**

Jane Sheridan

It was a Friday the 13th we will not forget. The announcement of the cancellation of *Romeo and Juliet* was the first step in what would become quick action by The Sarasota Ballet to protect our dancers and staff from the risks of the pandemic. I recently had the chance to talk with Iain and Joe about how the decisions were made and what The Ballet is doing going forward.

It’s hard to believe that as I write this article, March 13th was less than six weeks ago. It seems so much further back in time and experience. Sarasota Orchestra was scheduled to perform that night at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. The leaders of the opera, orchestra and ballet participated in a conference call with **Mary Benzel**, Executive Director of the Van Wezel, and **Tom Barwin**, Sarasota City Manager.

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**2020 - 2021 30th Anniversary Season**

Program 1
23 – 25 October 2020
FSU Center for the Performing Arts
George Balanchine’s Donizetti Variations
Ricardo Graziano’s Amorosa
Paul Taylor’s Company B

Program 2
20 – 21 November 2020
Sarasota Opera House
Sir Frederick Ashton’s Birthday Offering
Sir Frederick Ashton’s Dante Sonata
Sir David Bintley’s The Spider’s Feast

Program 3
18 – 19 December 2020
Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall
Sir Frederick Ashton’s Romeo & Juliet
Composed by Sergei Prokofiev

Program 4
26 February – 1 March 2021
FSU Center for the Performing Arts
Peter Darrell’s Othello
Will Tuckett’s Changing Light
Yet to be announced third ballet

Program 5
26 – 27 March 2021
Sarasota Opera House
George Balanchine’s Serenade
Mark Morris’ The Letter V
Sir Kenneth MacMillan’s Elite Syncopations

Program 6
9 – 10 April 2021
Sarasota Opera House
The Sarasota Ballet Presents
Mark Morris Dance Group

Program 7
30 April – 1 May 2021
Sarasota Opera House
Agnes de Mille’s Fall River Legend
Dame Ninette de Valois’ Checkmate
Bronislava Nijinska’s Les Biches

Season tickets to all performances are now on sale on the website at www.sarasotaballet.org or by calling the Box Office at 941.359.0099.
All were united in taking the necessary steps to protect their organizations. The orchestra’s performance that evening and all events scheduled through the end of March were immediately canceled.

“The health and safety of our dancers, patrons and staff came first.”

As Iain said, “the health and safety of our dancers, patrons and staff came first.” With this in mind, he and Joe continued to discuss the remainder of the Season. People were scheduled to fly into Sarasota to stage ballets. Would there be flights? The sets for *The Spider’s Feast* were ready to be loaded onto a ship in the U.K. Would the ship be able to dock or would it spend months at sea?

It didn’t take long for a decision to be made. Four days later, on March 17th, Iain informed the dancers that the Season was officially over. With the blessing of the Board of Trustees, the Company agreed to pay the dancers through the end of the contract period, April 30th. While some other companies followed suit, research suggests that The Sarasota Ballet was the first to do so.

Although the dancers were obviously disappointed that the remainder of the Season was canceled, they were thrilled to be working for a Company that put them first. They asked to be able to continue to take class. For a few days, three groups of 10 dancers each took class at a time. However, as health department regulations evolved, this was no longer possible.

“Iain, Margaret, and I, however, felt that without question we must continue to pay our dancers ...”

When Joe announced the cancellation of the Season to the public, he noted “Obviously this was not an easy decision. However, the health of our dancers, students, patrons, and staff is our highest priority. This will be a difficult time for The Sarasota Ballet; the financial implications are not to be taken lightly. Iain, Margaret, and I, however, felt that without question we must continue to pay our dancers regardless of the fact that there will be no further performances.” The estimated loss from the cancellation is approximately $800,000 of which $100,000 represents salary and benefits for the dancers.

Putting things into context, this all occurred the day after the CDC recommended the initial 15-day “safer at home” recommendation. The organization quickly established The Sarasota Ballet Emergency Fund to offset the costs of supporting the dancers, and asked ticket holders to donate their tickets to support the Company. The Emergency Fund is ongoing, and approximately 2/3 of tickets were donated back to the Ballet.

The role of the Fund has since been expanded. Visas for 16 dancers from overseas were expiring May 1st. Due to travel restrictions, many of them were unable to return home even if they wanted to leave. In addition, with scheduled performances this summer at Jacob’s Pillow and The Joyce Theater in New York (which have both since been cancelled), these dancers
would be needed in July. The decision was made to apply for visa extensions which allowed them to remain. As the Company was concerned that foreign nationals might not be eligible for unemployment benefits, the Ballet continues to support them by subsidizing their rent and health insurance.

As we look forward to next Season, I asked Iain and Joe where we go from here. Iain’s response was immediate. “We go forward strongly and positively.” He went on to say that “in a situation like we’re facing now, we all need something to look forward to.” The 2020-2021 program offers some exciting ballets. “When we sit in the audience, we will be transported into a world of beauty and magic that we always get from the Company.”

Joe noted that we must balance optimism with reality. “There are so many unknowns. When will the peak hit? Will people be comfortable leaving their homes and going to crowded places?” In his view, the theater industry — both live and movie — may be one of the hardest hit. He emphasized that we must “plan for both the best and the worst.” While planning for these magnificent ballets, we must also have backup plans.

In final thoughts, Iain said that he “hopes that Friends are all being sensible and looking after themselves.” He added how important it is for the dancers to have people who love them in the audience — especially the Friends. He can’t wait for the Company to get back on the stage to give us the dancing we enjoy so much. In the meantime, he said “please be healthy and I look forward to seeing you very soon.”

“What Friends have done and will continue to do in the future is essential.”

Joe shared his thoughts on the importance of the Friends to the Ballet. “I am really pleased that with Sara Robinson coming on board in a leadership role, the connection between Friends and the Ballet staff has continued to grow. What Friends have done and will continue to do in the future is essential. I thank everyone so much and believe that in the future, we will rely on you more and more.”

In closing, I’d like to share what Len Egert, National Executive Director for the American Guild of Musical Artists, recently said. “As I said during interviews with The New York Times and The New Yorker, Iain, Joe, and Margaret’s level of commitment to their dancers is to be greatly commended. Across the country, so many artists are being laid off, but The Sarasota Ballet stood by their artists in this time of need. AGMA sincerely thanks them.”

I am so proud that our wonderful Company is a leader in this effort. If possible, please consider donating to The Sarasota Ballet Emergency Fund. You can do so by going to www.sarasotaballet.org and clicking on the Support link or by emailing srobinson@sarasotaballet.org or lstroman@sarasotaballet.org.
We Couldn’t Do “It” Without You!

As Executive Director Joseph Volpe said in “A Peek Behind the Curtain,” “What Friends have done and will continue to do in the future is essential.” As a Friend, you may not even realize the extent of where and how we support The Ballet.

Did you know that from last June through March, volunteers worked 4,800 hours? On average, over 50 volunteers a month help out. This provides The Ballet with much-needed assistance, but it also is important for fundraising. When The Ballet submits a grant application, the volunteer hours are converted into a dollar equivalent. During this period, the value of these hours is worth over $115,000.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, many of our volunteer efforts came to a halt. With the cancellation of performances and government “safer at home” orders, outside activities have been limited. Nevertheless, the Friends Board and others continue to plan for next Season. We have been and will continue to work with The Ballet to provide whatever support we can.

Before acknowledging the many people who volunteered this Season, we would like to offer special thanks to Friends President Richard March who is completing his two-year term. Under Richard’s quiet leadership, our membership has increased by some 20%. This is a noteworthy feat in a short amount of time. In addition, he has fostered an amazing working relationship with Sara Robinson, Chad Morrison and Jason Ettore, among others. We won’t be losing him, as he will remain a member of the Friends Board as Immediate Past President!

For the first time, we would like to recognize as many of our volunteers as possible. We’ve tried to make this list complete. However, we apologize in advance if we inadvertently left someone out.

We couldn’t do “it” without you, and neither could The Ballet. The dancers, in particular, tell us how much they appreciate the almost 50 people who ensured they had “sustenance” before evening performances. On behalf of everyone, thank you so much for your time, financial support and efforts. We look forward to working with you all next Season.

Board Members of the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet
Richard March, President
Donna Maytham, Vice President & Chairperson of Events
Elaine Foster, Treasurer
Peggy Sweeney, Secretary & Chairperson of Dancers’ Suppers

Committee Chairs
Betty Ferguson, Membership ✧ Andi Lieberman and Carolou Marquet, Outreach
Barbara Fischer Long, Volunteers ✧ Laura Feder, Sponsorships ✧ Bruce Ensinger, Education
Melliss Swenson, Theater Support ✧ Phyllis Myers, Reservations

Additional Volunteers
Jane Sheridan, Communication & Newsletter ✧ Virginia Tashian, Information Desk
Lauren Walsh, Floral Arrangements ✧ Shirley Blair, Photography
Linda Glover and Pat Klugherz, Telephone Tree ✧ Katie Couchot, Special Mailings

Backstage Tours
Andi Lieberman ✧ Carolou Marquet ✧ Phyllis Schaen ✧ Virginia Tashian ✧ Pat Corson
Sharon Erickson ✧ Doug Endicott ✧ Karen Selwyn ✧ Laurie Hofheimer
**Box Office**
Carol Arscott ✦ Fannie Porter ✦ Jerry Genova ✦ Richard March ✦ Betty Ferguson
Phyllis Myers ✦ Lydia Landa ✦ Martha Gerrity

**Dancers’ Suppers**
Peggy Abt ✦ Merrill Kaegi ✦ Priscilla Adams ✦ Kay Aidlin ✦ Patty Kiegler
Carol Arscott ✦ Jocelyn Baskey ✦ Arline Breskin ✦ Judy Carlin ✦ Lynn Chancer
Jacqueline D’Alessio ✦ Diane DiBenedetto ✦ Bruce Ensinger ✦ Barbara Epperson
Sharon Erickson ✦ Sandy Fink ✦ Laurie Fitch ✦ Jackie Giddens ✦ Ellen Goldman ✦ Pat Golemme
Sue Gordon ✦ Martha Harrison ✦ Charlotte Hedge ✦ Laurie Hofheimer ✦ Barbara Jacob
Barbara Jacoby ✦ Carolyn Keidel ✦ Gail Landry ✦ Richard March ✦ Carolou Marquet
Marilyn Nordby ✦ Lenee Owens ✦ Jeannette Paladino ✦ Julie Planck ✦ Cherry Richards
Michi Sellman ✦ Jane Sheridan ✦ Dale Sprintz ✦ Barbara Staton ✦ Louise Stevens
Caroline Strongman ✦ Peggy Sweeney ✦ Melliss Swenson ✦ Virginia Tashian
Carol Tillotson ✦ Susan Valentine ✦ Gwen Watson ✦ Florence Wildner

**Dance - The Next Generation**
Carol Arscott ✦ Sandy Fink ✦ Barbara Jacob ✦ Ann Kenny ✦ Philippe Koenig
Raymond Morrissey ✦ Linda Neal ✦ Karen Vereb ✦ Elizabeth Wolfe

**Information Desk**
Virginia Tashian ✦ Doug Endicott ✦ Alison Jones ✦ Marita Renner ✦ Anna Critchfield
Sue Gordon ✦ Pat Klugherz ✦ Diana Cable ✦ Marianne Trulson ✦ Jacqui D’Alessio

**Meet Me at the Barre**
Mafalda Neikrug ✦ Niki Newell ✦ Florence Wildner ✦ Barbara Fischer Long ✦ Donna Maytham
Donna Cubit-Swoyer ✦ Elaine Foster ✦ Betty Ferguson ✦ Phyllis Myers
Michi Sellman ✦ Vielka Sheppard

**Special Events and Luncheons**
Donna Maytham ✦ Barbara Fischer Long ✦ Lauren Walsh ✦ Shirley Blair ✦ Niki Newell
Florence Wildner ✦ Gail Conway ✦ Marianne and Niels Trulson ✦ Marilyn Nordby
Donna Cubit-Swoyer ✦ Elaine Foster ✦ Betty Ferguson ✦ Phyllis Myers ✦ Virginia Tashian

**Studios**
Nicolla Newell ✦ Richard Prager ✦ Victoria Chester ✦ Liliana Scire ✦ Lark Baxter ✦ Laura Feder

**Will Call and Ambassador**
Michele Byrne ✦ Gail Conway ✦ Anna Critchfield ✦ Barbara Dubitsky ✦ Betty Ferguson
Kathryn Gibby ✦ Pat Golemme ✦ Carolyn Keidel ✦ Burt and Betty Morris ✦ Phyllis Myers
Anna Pasalaqua ✦ Katharine Pepper ✦ Michael Pepper ✦ Cherry Richards
Larry Sage ✦ Liliana Scire ✦ Melliss Swenson
Fundraising Update

Did you know you can support The Sarasota Ballet when you shop online at Amazon?
AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support The Ballet at no additional cost to you. You’ll have the same shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to The Sarasota Ballet. To get started, visit smile.amazon.com and select “Sarasota Ballet of Florida, Inc.” Continue your shopping as normal and the donation will be made at the time of your purchase!

Live Music Match Challenge
Thank you to everyone who participated in the Live Music Match Challenge in Memory of Helen March. We are pleased to announce that we exceeded our $15,000 goal, raising $19,644 through April 1, 2020. Including Richard March’s match, contributions to the fund total nearly $35,000. We are honored to be able to recognize Helen in this way and send our sincerest thanks to Richard March for this amazing tribute.

Generous Offer
At the February 2019 Showcase Luncheon Charlotte Hedge, a long-time member of the Friends of The Sarasota Ballet, made a special commitment to the ballet community. Any time her group, The Hedge Team, lists/sells a property and the client mentions the Ballet, the team will donate 10% of its commission to the Ballet upon closing.

It’s so simple and has the potential of being a great fundraising source. If you refer a friend or use their services yourself, say the “magic words” – “The Sarasota Ballet.” For further information, please contact Charlotte.hedge@premiersir.com.

Facemasks
It looks as though we will all be wearing facemasks for the foreseeable future. If you aren’t able to find them in the stores, Principal Dancer Danielle Brown is making them. Please check out her website www.raeboutique.com/women/masquerade if you are interested. They cost approximately $16 including shipping.

Factoids
Usually, this section is called “Fun Facts.” In view of what’s happening around us I’ve decided to call it “Factoids.” Let’s look back at some things about the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic that you may find interesting.

• The Spanish Flu did not start in Spain; the name is connected to WWII. The countries which were fighting did not want to disclose the impact of the virus on their populations. Because Spain was neutral, they released this information, leading some people to conclude that the disease was limited to Spain.
• For years, it was thought that the virus was a “super virus” because it was so deadly. While it may have been stronger, recent studies suggest that the spread was related to the close proximity of people in military camps and in major cities. Poor nutrition and sanitation related to the war also increased the impact.
• The pandemic did not receive widespread press coverage, as governments were concerned that it could negatively impact the war effort. So, limited information was released.
• In 2005, scientists were able to sequence the genes from this virus after discovering a body in permafrost in Alaska, as well as from samples from ill soldiers. When they conducted studies using the gene, they discovered that a so-called “cytokine storm,” an immune system overreaction, likely caused the deaths of otherwise healthy younger adults.
Fun Moments from Richard March’s Term as Friends President