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{ ARTS & CULTURE }

Q&A

WITH MARTY CAMINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CENTER FOR THE ARTS, JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING

words by JENNY GRAHAM

Jackson Hole is a relatively small community and most famously known as a tourist and ski destination. What role does Center for the Arts (The Center) play in the Jackson Hole community?

MARTY: Jackson Hole has an incredibly vibrant arts community, particularly given its size and location, with several world-renowned arts organizations based here. The Center is fortunate to play a unique role in our arts community. Our campus provides a home for more than 20 independent nonprofits, everything from small volunteer-run organizations to major cultural institutions. Members of the community have the opportunity to participate in all artistic disciplines at our facility, whether they are just learning a new skill or highly trained in their craft. The Center Theater hosts events of all varieties throughout the year, from spoken word and film events to national-level performers of the highest caliber. There really is something for everyone here at The Center.

The Center has a unique model. Can you give us a little history on The Center and how it was started?

MARTY: In the late 1990s, many of the arts organizations in our community were working out of church basements or temporary spaces, and lacked the infrastructure to really serve the community in the way they wanted to. A group of founding visionaries came together and launched a capital campaign to build a dedicated arts campus in our community that would provide a permanent and affordable home for these organizations. That is the main reason we have so many independent organizations operating under a single roof today. The Arts & Education Pavilion was opened in 2005 and The Center Theater opened in 2007.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on art venues across the globe. How has The Center responded to the difficulties other venues are facing?

MARTY: Because of the shared nature of our campus,



ABOVE: The Jackson Hole Center for the Arts is a centerpiece of the local community.

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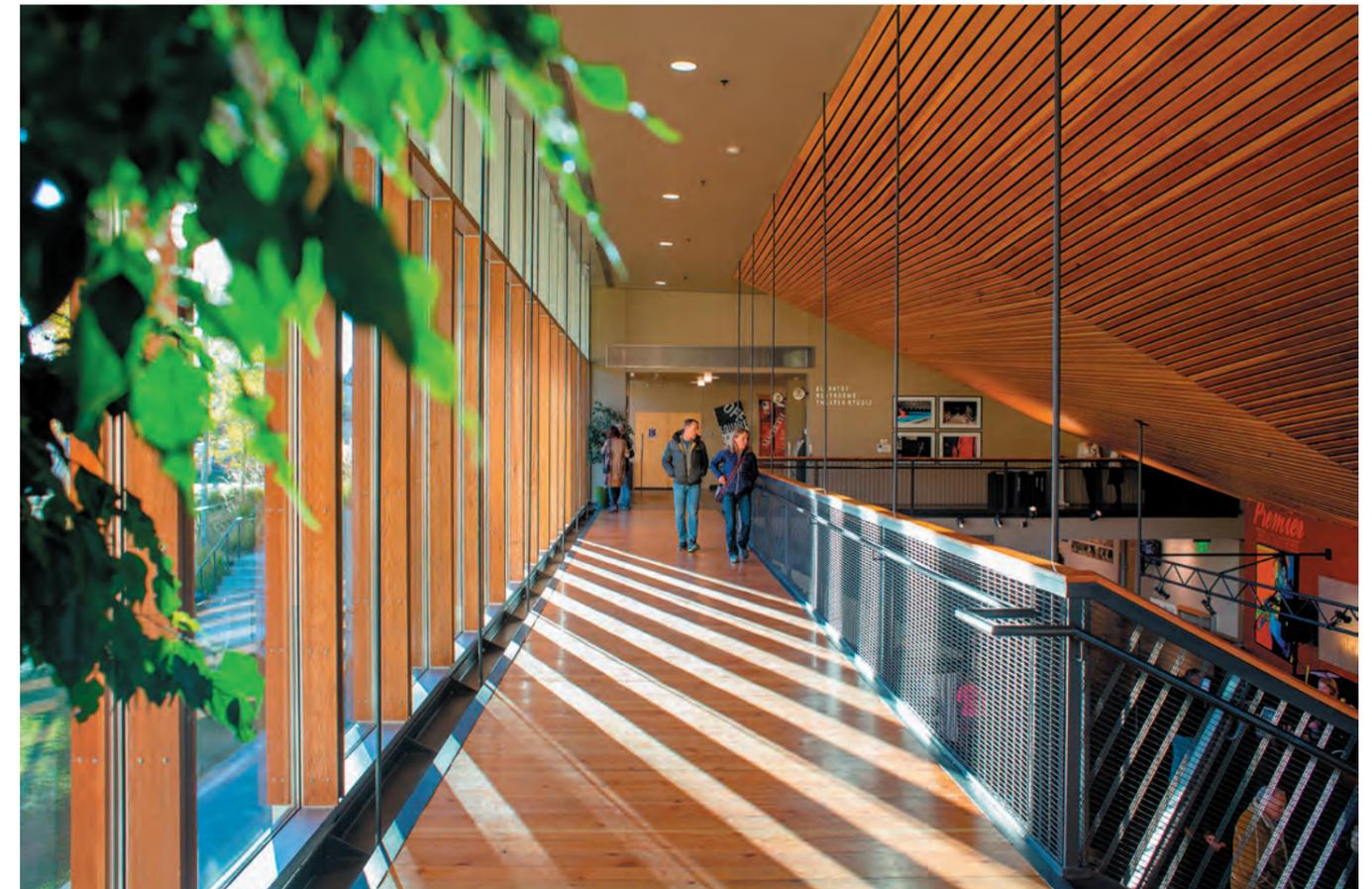
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we have had the opportunity to come together as a collective of arts organizations to work together through these challenging times. We raised money for shared rent relief that helped offset operating costs for all of us this year. On the programming side, we launched a virtual series and have presented over 35 events since March, many of them free to our patrons. Even though our theater is closed to the public right now, we are determined to continue serving our mission and connecting our cultural community.

You moved to a virtual platform. How has the response been and what kind of programming are you doing?

MARTY: We've all been bombarded with weighty news over the last several months, so we knew our role was to provide content that was light, engaging, and enjoyable. At the same time, we want to reach our patrons in a way that is inspiring, invigorat-

ing, and arouses their curiosity. People have really responded positively to our virtual offerings. It has given us a platform to feature local and regional artists, but also to present programs that are relevant to these times, such as a discussion on well-being and compassion.

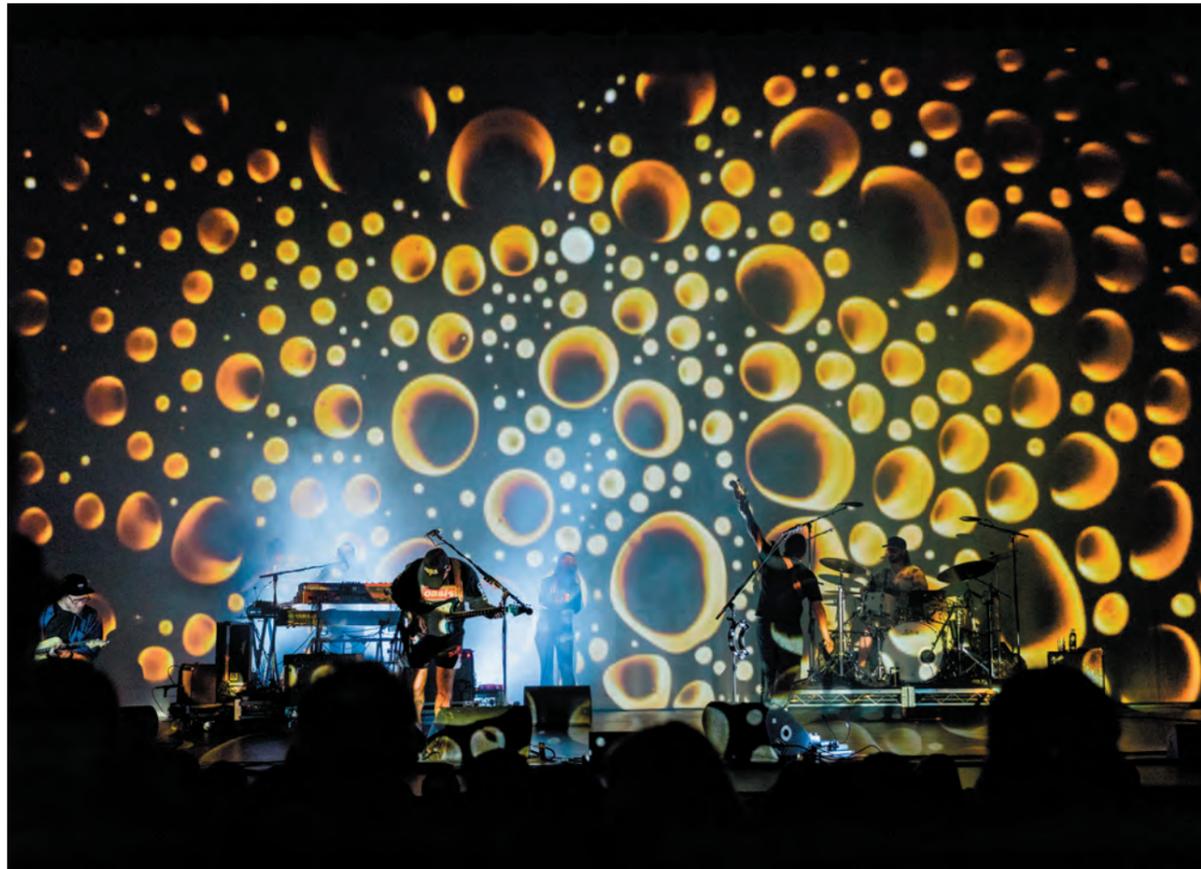
Other than the pandemic, what do you see as the biggest challenges facing arts organizations today?

MARTY: At this point, the pandemic will continue to impact arts organizations for the foreseeable future. We are seeing major cultural institutions across the nation cancel their seasons well into the 2021 calendar year, or even worse, close their doors for good. As a nonprofit, we depend on the generosity of our supporters and that has never been more important than today. Organizations like ours need support now to continue on through these difficult times, but will continue



needing that support as we get back on our feet and return to the critical role we play in providing cultural vibrancy to our society. I ask people what they want their communities to look like after this pandemic and if The Center, or similar arts institutions, are a part of that, then we need your support now.

ABOVE (top to bottom): The beautiful indoor space creates a welcoming gathering place for all members of the community. Center for the Arts, Jackson Hole's Executive Director, Marty Camino.



What do you see as the biggest opportunities for arts organizations moving forward?

MARTY: Virtual programming has provided a new way for us to reach audience members beyond the typical geographical boundaries or capacity limitations of in-person performances. We are learning so much right now, and I expect there will be aspects of this that inform how we deliver

on our mission well into the future. Arts organizations are also learning about the importance of collaboration, and how working together can provide a path to shared success for the arts. I am hopeful that arts organizations, both locally and nationally, are taking a renewed interest in how working more closely together can benefit the entire cultural sector as a whole.

Hopefully we will be able to return to normal life sometime next year. Ideally, where would you like to see The Center in December, 2021?

MARTY: I am eager for the day when our campus is bustling with activity once again. In a rural resort community, I want The Center to be a place that has something to offer every individual we come in contact with. For those who desire the cultural offerings of a big city, there will be a world-class program for you in our relatively intimate theater. If you want free or low-cost events for you and your family, there is a place here for that too. If you are picking up a musical instrument for the first time, taking a dance class, or you want to get back to participating in the creative outlet that shaped your younger years, I look forward to a time when all of that is once again available to you here at The Center. **31**

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 THE CENTER

CENTER FOR THE ARTS

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