June 19, 2020
For Immediate release:

- Performance Spaces for the 21st Century, PS21 in Chatham, NY to Receive $25,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts
- PS21 Plans Phased Reopening

PS21 Plans Phased Reopening

Just a month ago, bringing live performances back to PS21 before the fall seemed like an impossible dream. But dreams sometimes come true. Thanks to our unique open-air Pavilion Theater situated on 100 acres of rolling hills and meadows, we will usher in an abridged summer season in mid-July.

This summer’s programs will include:

- **Live-streamed on-site performances**
- **Live performances for limited audiences** (up to 50 socially distanced spectators in the outdoor 350-seat Pavilion Theater)
- “Firefighters Select,” a film series chosen by members of local fire companies
- “Artists’ Choice,” cinematic works chosen by a variety of regional artists from various disciplines, that illustrate how movies have inspired their work
- A week-long celebration beginning August 3 called PS21/Chatham PATHWAYS: Blazing a Trail to a Sustainable Future to mark the opening of a new network of walking trails connecting PS21’s 100 acres of orchards and meadows with neighboring Crellin Community Park and the town center
- The New York State premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Luther Adams’s *Ten Thousand Birds*, performed during PATHWAYS by the much-lauded Alarm Will Sound
- **Artist residencies** and commissions
- **Educational programs**, including “Sharing Stories” for elderly residents of the Whittier Assisted Living facility in Ghent and “Follow me into the Field,” conducted for children and adults by musicians of Alarm Will Sound

At PS21, we are constantly monitoring the progress of New York’s phased reopening of businesses, schools, recreation areas, and nonprofits. We are mindful of the need to balance our commitment to the public and our obligation to keep artists and audiences safe.

When restrictions on gatherings begin to relax, the first performances in our rich calendar of on-site and streamed events will begin with Sandbox Percussion (July 15) and Calidore String Quartet (July 24). To enrich viewers’ experiences, we plan
to include talks with the artists, including real-time interactions with audience members.

In these uncertain times, we believe that people need the affirmation the arts provide more than ever. As Yannick Nézet-Séguin, music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra recently noted, art is “able to give comfort, to give hope, to give guidance, to give a moment to breathe.”

Thanks to recent technological advances, streaming has emerged as an indispensable means for artists to reach the public, but it rarely helps them to replace the income lost from cancelled performances and shuttered venues. In response to this precarious economic moment, PS21 is developing Works for Performing Artists (WPA).

Inspired by the New Deal’s Work Projects Administration programs for musicians and other artists, WPA will provide paid, short-term performance engagements and residencies for musicians whose livelihoods are threatened by closures and cancellations. Pianists Conrad Tao, Timo Andres, Conor Hanick, Adam Tendler, and violinist Miranda Cuckson are some of the talented young performers we have asked to take part in our Works for Performing Artists recitals and residencies, July through September 2020. Each program in this series will consist of a pair of short, stand-alone concerts, featuring works from rich, adventurous repertoires.

Additional artist residencies are already part of our season, including Edisa Weeks and her company, DELIRIOUS Dances, who will be developing 3 Rites, an interactive theatrical exploration of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in America and how these rights are manifested in the body.

Other Summer/Fall 2020 artists in residence: French director Pascal Rambert and Obie Award-winning Wooster Group actor Jim Fletcher will collaborate on a new theatre piece whose protagonist is a dog; Parsons Dance, whose exuberance “jolts the spirit and soothes the soul,” will make 45-minute-long pop-up appearances in the town center and other locations around Chatham, meeting and engaging audiences where they are.

PS21/Chatham PATHWAYS: Blazing Trails to a Sustainable Future, August 3–9, will celebrate our new network of walking trails (conceived and executed in collaboration with the town of Chatham and the Columbia Land Conservancy) and honor PS21 founder Judy Grunberg’s far-reaching vision as one of Columbia County’s most passionate conservationists. At a time when our public conservation areas are so overwhelmed with visitors that access is being restricted, this new trail system is needed more than ever.

To support our initiatives to engage the community in this new green infrastructure, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded PS21 a $25,000 OUR TOWN award. The grant will partially underwrite the New York State premiere of John Luther Adams’s Ten Thousand Birds, performed by Alarm Will Sound, and a specially commissioned site-specific public art installation, to be unveiled on the inaugural weekend.
This is one of 51 grants nationwide that the NEA has approved in the Our Town category, in support of projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities with the goal of strengthening communities.

“These awards demonstrate the resilience of the arts in America, showcasing not only creativity but the organizations’ agility in the face of a national health crisis,” said Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “We celebrate organizations like PS21 for providing opportunities for learning and engagement through the arts in these times.”

Pathways is also partnering with local artists on a series of children’s workshops focusing on the creation of art and performance, to offer children (and adults) a window into the creative process while addressing issues related to conservation and sustainability. For children and families, musicians of Alarm Will Sound will offer "Follow Me into the Field," a Free Program for the Whole Family.

PS21 has invited members of local fire companies to select films for our “Firefighters Select” film Festival, which will open on July 16 with “Catnip Nation,” a documentary about stray cats (selected by the Chatham Rescue Squad) and culminate with a screening of Milos Forman’s classic The Firemen’s Ball.

Bookending “Firefighters Select” will be “Artists’ Choice,” a film series of cinematic works chosen by a variety of regional artists from various disciplines, that illustrate how movies have inspired their work. Francine Prose, Ian Buruma, Nicole Ansari, Winsome Brown, and Joan Juliet Buck are among those who have selected films. All screenings will be in our Pavilion Theater (with modified seating), and first responders will be invited as honored guests.