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## SPAC's Board of Directors Report on Upcoming 2018 Season and Vision for the Future

### Saratoga Spa State Park to Fund \$1.75 Million for Facility and Capital Improvements at Saratoga Performing Arts Center

Saratoga Springs, NY (May 16, 2018) – Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) and the Saratoga Spa State Park announced at SPAC's Annual Meeting that the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has approved \$1.75 million to rehabilitate and upgrade SPAC's amphitheater ramps, lighting and other high priority infrastructure as part of the recently approved 2018 New York State budget. The funds will be used to rejuvenate SPAC's facilities for future generations.

"We celebrated SPAC's landmark 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016 and now, as we embark on our vision for the next 50 years, we are committed to enhancing SPAC's historic venue for 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences," said Elizabeth Sobol, president & CEO of Saratoga Performing Arts Center. "We are grateful to our Parks partners including Commissioner Rose Harvey and Regional Director Alane Chinian, for their incredible advocacy to improve our facility -- a cultural cornerstone for arts lovers throughout the region."

The new project is slated to be completed in advance of the 2019 season and will address the venue's four balcony ramps. As part of the renovation, the ramps will be resurfaced and will include new panels and railings. Additionally, the lighting will be more energy efficient, while preserving the character of SPAC's signature globe light fixtures. The pledged \$1.75 million reaffirms the State of New York's commitment to preserving SPAC's facilities.

#### **Partnerships and Collaborations:**

Continuing to expand its role as both a cultural and community cornerstone in 2018, Saratoga Performing Arts Center announced at the meeting that it is once again partnering with several artistic organizations such as Caffè Lena to present free concerts on SPAC's newly constructed Charles R. Wood Stage. In addition, SPAC is collaborating with Skidmore College to present National Ballet of Cuba, slated to perform for three performances as one of just four U.S. locations on June 6, 7 & 8. In advance of the appearance, the National Museum of Dance will be hosting a reception and "Alicia Alonso's Giselle" photo exhibition with dance critic, historian and author Octavio Roca on May 22.

Sobol added that SPAC will also collaborate with SaratogaArtsFest and Saratoga Shakespeare Company to present "Shakespeare in the Pines" on July 20. The "festival within a festival" will feature a one-hour musical adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet*, directed by Folger Theatre actor, Louis Butelli in advance of New York City Ballet's presentation later that evening.

In August, SPAC is partnering with miSci, the Museum of Science and Innovation in Schenectady, to present the "Out of this World Festival" – an exploration of the nexus between art and the cosmos. The festival of special events will take place throughout the month of August, taking off with The Philadelphia Orchestra's performance of Holsts' *The Planets* - *An HD Odyssey* on August 3 -- combining spectacular NASA space footage with Holst's musical imagining of the cosmos – and *Star Wars: A New Hope* In Concert on August 11. Audiences will be invited to star gaze at telescopes around the

reflecting pool and attend a host of events for adults and children, including a new speaker series featuring thinkers engaged in arts and sciences.

“The partnerships that we launched in 2017 with our beloved local artistic institutions like Caffè Lena, Skidmore College and SaratogaArtsFest have exceeded our expectations and affirmed the power and potential of the right collaborations,” said Ms. Sobol. “Looking ahead to this summer, we are excited to continue to build upon that success with a renewed commitment to partnerships with our cultural community and an expansion into new relationships with local businesses.”

### **Local Business Community Strategy:**

In addition to fostering local artistic partnerships, SPAC announced its plans to collaborate with the business community.

“For the past 18 months our strategy has centered on outreach to the local artistic community. While these collaborations will continue to be a major thrust of our efforts, the next 18 months will be focused on building new partnerships with the local business communities,” said Sobol. “Our new Freihofer’s Jazz Fest Friday initiative with the Saratoga County Chamber is one example of our expanded vision to collaborate with local businesses in an effort to bring more cultural tourists to the region.”

At the meeting, Sobol discussed SPAC’s plans for Freihofer’s Jazz Fest Friday, a community initiative to welcome locals and visitors with scores of live jazz events, themed dining, social dancing and more, to be held in venues across the city – from Beekman Street to Broadway to Saratoga Lake – as the kick-off to the festival weekend on Friday, June 22.

“The breadth of jazz music to be discovered in Saratoga Springs is incredible, adding to the rich tapestry of music and cultural experiences to be enjoyed in our city. Providing our incredibly talented local jazz musicians with the opportunity to join the weekend festival – in addition to our roster of jazz superstars like Herbie Hancock, Chris Botti, Mavis Staples and Jon Batiste -- is part of our expanded mission to further engage the arts and business community in the Capital Region,” said Ms. Sobol. “The cultural tourist spends 60% more than the average leisure tourist. Jazz Fest Friday is a strategic initiative to proactively connect the arts with local businesses.”

### **Cultural Tourism:**

As part of SPAC’s mission to promote the city of Saratoga Springs as a worldwide cultural destination, Ms. Sobol shared the recently announced news that the City of Saratoga Springs has supported the Center with a \$14,000 economic development award. This initiative, which launched this spring, is expected to continue in future years to spur economic development by promoting the City as a thriving arts community to journalists and media beyond the Capital Region.

### **Programming Initiatives:**

As part of the Center’s expanding artistic collaboration with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Sobol announced a new partnership with the Orchestra, public radio stations WMHT and WRTI in Philadelphia. The initiative will include the recording of four of the orchestra’s performances from Saratoga’s 2018 season and will see these recordings broadcast on WMHT and WRTI, respectively, before being added to the “on-demand” portal of The Philadelphia Orchestra’s website. This new series is part of a reciprocal agreement between WRTI and WMHT and marks the first time in the Orchestra’s storied 52-year residency that SPAC concerts have been broadcast on the WRTI airwaves in Philadelphia and the first time that WMHT has dedicated a series to SPAC performances.

Ms. Sobol also reported that in 2017, new programming initiatives such as “SPAC on Stage” and the Orchestra of St. Luke’s at Bethesda Church, consistently attracted over 30% first-time ticket buyers to SPAC.

Sobol shared that the successful “Freihofer’s Live at the Jazz Bar” initiative, which revitalized a unique space in the Hall of Springs, will return for eight events this summer following a new “winter series” which brought 200-300 people for social dancing and live music in the Hall of Springs. She added that the winter “Freihofer’s Live at the Jazz Bar” was part of SPAC’s vision to host year-round programming at the venue.

Sobol noted that early ticket sales for the 2018 season indicate that the “SPAC on Stage” series will once again sell-out all performances.

### **Educational Programming & Community Outreach:**

Expanding upon the success of 2017, SPAC’s free education programs in 2018 are slated to reach more than 30,000 young individuals, will offer more than 175 classes, presentations, performances, and events, and will partner with more than 80 schools and non-profit organizations across the greater Capital Region.

In addition to SPAC’s flagship educational programming such as Classical Kids, the Performance Project and Summer Nights at SPAC, the Center will hold the first Festival of Young Artists, on June 3 from 2-5pm on SPAC’s grounds. Free to the community, the festival will celebrate the achievements of 450 young dancers, musicians, singers, poets and visual poets from all over the Capital Region with an afternoon of events including a poetry slam, student art show, pop-up performances, and large-scale concert featuring Empire State Youth Orchestra, the Capital District Youth Chorale and Northeast Ballet Company. The festival will also feature the dedication of the Charles R. Wood Discovery Stage.

### **New Website and Branding:**

At the meeting, Sobol reported on SPAC’s new branding and marketing direction, which was established to better reflect the Center’s place within the Spa State Park and the Saratoga Springs community. In January 2018, SPAC launched a completely new website designed to be more user-friendly and showcase the depth of the SPAC experience in addition to marketing that is more evocative and experiential.

### **Audience Development and Pricing:**

As part of SPAC’s approach to invite new audiences who have not yet had the SPAC experience – and encouraging guests to return who haven’t attended a performance in recent years -- Sobol cited that SPAC will continue to make ticket affordability a cornerstone of the Center’s vision for the future with discounts for students, seniors and multiple ticket buyers.

In 2017, SPAC introduced a reduced \$30 amphitheater ticket and the results showed that 50% of the purchasers at that level were also first-time SPAC ticket buyers.

### **SPAC Board Member News:**

The board welcomed **David Jersen** as a new member of SPAC’s board of directors. The CEO of Jersen Construction Group located in the Capital Region, Mr. Jersen oversees the construction and development company, which has an annual revenue of approximately \$75,000,000. In 2010, Jersen Construction Group participated in the renovation of the SPAC Façade and donated the Patron’s Terrace from construction to completion. David and his wife, Traci, have been strong SPAC supporters of the classical season and have chaired many fundraising events such as the annual Saratoga Wine and Food Festival. Traci is also a past president of the Action Council and is the co-chair of this year’s Ballet Gala. Ms. Sobol praised Mr. Jersen, noting that “Dave and Traci have been incredible supporters of SPAC for many decades. With his passion for the arts, impressive professional accomplishments and leadership record, he has a perspective that will be invaluable as SPAC pursues its vision for 2018.”

Former board member **John Nigro** was also named a trustee of counsel at the meeting. Mr. Nigro joined the board in 2005 and has served as treasurer and facilities chair, in addition to serving as a philanthropic leader. “SPAC’s continued success is tied directly to John’s tireless efforts and commitment of his time and treasure to the Center’s mission and its goals. We are fortunate and grateful that he will continue to bring his voice and insights to SPAC as we chart a course forward,” said Ms. Sobol.

