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Big Top Chautauqua Prepares for a Long Intermission

Future uncertainty regarding COVID-19 prompts Big Top Board to cancel 2020 Summer Season

May 4, 2020 — WASHBURN, WI With what would be Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua's 34th year of operating as a nonprofit performing arts organization, the decision was made last week to cancel all traditional programs at the tent for the 2020 season. The evolving health crisis and the uncertainty surrounding the safety of large gatherings, led to the board's very difficult decision. "We are deeply saddened to have to cancel the Big Top summer season but due to the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic and variability of what to expect this summer, we felt it was the ethical and right thing to do" said Kim Ogle, President of the Big Top Board of Directors and a physician at Essentia Health, Ashland Clinic.

After weighing countless scenarios, the Board unanimously felt that this was the only viable and responsible path forward in the wake of this pandemic and the uncertainty that it creates. "We are heartbroken to have to make this decision. Our musicians and crew rely on income from our summer shows and the greater Ashland/Bayfield area relies on the economic impact of our events. Our patrons rely on us to find inspiration, entertainment and fellowship. We are painfully aware of the ripples that will proceed from not being able to produce our season" said Terry Matier, Big Top's Executive Director. Matier says that the entire live events industry has been gravely impacted by the pandemic, with many touring artists cancelling their summer tours.

But even with no concerts under the tent, Big Top's Blue Canvas Orchestra musicians will continue to create new material for 2021 as well as produce a new online program, Tiny Tent Show, which can be found on Facebook and YouTube. Fans gather on Friday evenings at 7PM to be together until the tent can open its flaps to the public again. And as always, one can relive summer nights under the Big Top via Tent Show Radio, broadcast on WPR and other stations.

All ticket holders will receive an email in the coming week which states the option to make a tax-deductible contribution to the nonprofit performing arts organization, apply their money toward future Big Top Chautauqua shows, or receive a refund. Information regarding this process can be found at www.bigtop.org.

"We are beyond grateful to our generous donors, dedicated volunteers and long-time patrons. Their support is deeply appreciated during this challenging time. As our stage may sit empty through the summer, we recognize even more now the value and power of experiencing music together. We are calling this a 'Long Intermission' until we can gather again. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to Bayfield under the Big Blue Tent," said Kate Barido, Advancement Director.

Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua provides entertaining and educational cultural activities with an emphasis on performances that celebrate history and the environment. For more information about Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua, a nonprofit performing arts organization since 1986, visit www.bigtop.org or email info@bigtop.org.

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