Thoughts from your fans at SPCPA…

During this sudden shift in our behavior and focus, and in the midst of our collective concern about the health of ourselves and those around us, it is easy for us to dwell on the things we suddenly CAN’T do. I would encourage everyone to instead make a detailed list of all the things you CAN do. While so much of our daily routine, interests, careers, and responsibilities have been halted, what we now have is time: time to support the workers in our family by keeping the home clean and the siblings fed, time to do the things at home you always wanted to do but never had the time to do, time to engage in deep, meaningful self-care so that you can be the healthiest version of yourself that you can be, both physically and mentally. As artists, especially, many of us are so wired to go-go-go and create at a fast pace, but the artist must also create personal balance and find rejuvenation in moments of stillness. Moreover, artists are the great connectors in our society; the storytellers, the poets, the dancers, the painters, the sculptors - the MENTAL and EMOTIONAL healthcare workers of the human race - and when obstacles and roadblocks to connection are put in the artist's path, the artist does the necessary, brave, and important work of finding a path forward.

My brother-in-law David Bagby (the IT point person for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s College of Fine Arts) recently had this to say on the subject: "The arts are physical experiences as well as mental preparation. Art is mind and body, hands and feet and eyes; teeth, tongue, lungs and lips. Art is heart and spirit in all senses of these words. In-spiration - breathing life into being. How do we learn, train, grow and express all these in the face of separation? Finding and creating meaning and connection has always been artists' work. We're up to this." We are indeed up to this. Fellow artists, this is not merely an obstacle to our art; rather, this is the very challenge we have been training for all this time. Artists are among the hardest hit by this sudden shutdown, but we are also among the most equipped to invent and create new ways of connection. While scientists and healthcare providers are the true heroes on the front lines of addressing the pandemic, artists are meanwhile doing the work of figuring out how to help people stay truly connected in this period of distancing. Now, as we start to wrap our hearts and minds around that puzzle, we must keep ourselves energized and sustained. We must maintain our own strength so that we may share it with others, even if only remotely via the internet for now.

In my kitchen, I have a list of daily healthy habits I turn to each day:

1) Drink lots of water
2) Exercise and/or go for a long walk around the neighborhood every day
3) Wash your hands and don't touch your face, but also take showers and baths regularly
4) Connect with at least one friend each day who might be lonely
5) Get plenty of sleep
6) Cuddle with your real and/or stuffed animals often.

We will all learn a great deal of valuable information about ourselves through this process, as people and as artists. I encourage you to keep a diary and write about your experience and observations. In your journal, write down things that happened that were both good and bad, and also write down a goal you have for tomorrow. Then, when you wake up tomorrow, attack that goal. Keep creating, now more than ever. We're up to this.

Paul Coate (Theatre, Musical Theatre)

Yumminess from your fans at SPCPA…

Chunky Granola (thanks to Ms. Sekelsky)

1/2 c. oil (grapeseed, canola, etc.)
1/2 c. liquid sweetener (honey, maple syrup, agave)
1 tsp. seasoning (cinnamon, vanilla, almond extract)
6 c. old-fashioned oats
1-2 c. nuts, dried fruits, ginger, coconut, etc. (1-2 cups total, not each)

This is a forgiving recipe that allows you to use what you have on hand. Preheat your oven to 300 degrees and line a sheet pan with parchment paper. Heat the oil with the sweetener until warm. Stir until combined and add the seasoning of your choice. Put the oats in a big bowl, pour the oil mixture over and stir together until evenly coated. Gently mix in your other ingredients (except dried fruit, which you may want to add after baking). Spread thickly on the prepared sheet pan. Bake for about 50 minutes, until golden. Here’s the key for chunky granola: don’t stir. Remove from the oven and let cool at least 30 minutes, then break into pieces before storing. My favorite combination is equal parts honey and maple syrup for the sweetener, cinnamon, chopped pecans, pumpkin seeds, unsweetened coconut flakes, and chopped crystallized ginger.

Per Albert Einstein, “Adversity introduces a man to himself.”

The Extrovert Edition

For extroverts (those that recharge their batteries around others), Einstein’s comment may have added resonance in this period of social distancing. Unlike peers with self-charging introvert tendencies (who may actually be reveling in the abundance of alone time) extroverts need to create ways to stay connected – send real letters, host virtual get-togethers/group texts/watch parties with friends, add talking time to their daily schedules, etc. – to stay sane and that’s ok! Reading (fiction and non-fiction) and creative writing can also be a great escape for extroverts. All those lives to dive deeply into! Because extroverts tend to pack their schedules with commitments – YES, more people time! – disengaging may be unsettling. In the end, forced separation provides a unique advantage to introverts – time for reflection and self-discovery!
Thoughts from author Gretchen Rubin continued...

9. Catch up on books, podcasts, movies, or TV shows. Is there something ambitious you’ve been wanting to tackle? Maybe instead of the *Summer of Woolf* I should have the *Spring of Woolf*. Maybe you loved the *Game of Thrones* TV show; now you can read the books (more great lines from Tyrion)! Maybe you’ve always wanted to read the six volumes of Karl Ove Knausgaard’s *My Struggle* (I highly recommend). These activities will give you a sense of accomplishment, and keep your mind engaged and active, and they’ll also distract you from anxiety. In the long run, it’s very helpful to give ourselves mental breaks.

10. **Continue or create comforting rituals.** You may already have rituals that help you feel grounded throughout the day. These might be helpful now—but it might also be true that you’ll have to adapt now, if your usual comforting ritual is disrupted. Find ways to have pleasant patterns through your day that make you feel grounded and calm. It might be meditation, it might be a cup of your favorite tea, it might be a bedtime story with your children. For my next book (brilliant title TK), I’m researching the power of repetition, and boy it’s powerful.

11. **Reach out with love.** The last item on my "20 for 2020" list is to "Reach out with love." What does it mean? It means many things...and it applies in this situation. The whole world is reeling under the weight of events. I hope that this experience, as terrible as it is, can be an event that reminds us all that we’re united in our common human hope for good health and peaceful prosperity, not something that drives us apart. Let’s keep our clean hands to ourselves, and our loving hearts open to others.

I keep thinking of one of my favorite aphorisms, from the Roman poet Ovid: “Be patient and tough; one day this pain will be useful to you.” None of us want to experience this lesson, but we can learn from it, if we will.