

## **Scenekunststrategien og utfordringer som følge av COVID-19**

*Rosendal Teater prepared this input partly on conversations with BIT, Black Box Oslo and Dansens Hus Oslo*

### **Impact of COVID-19 on production and presentation**

- Many of the planned international artists have been cancelled or postponed as a result of the restrictions.
- Bringing artists that need to be quarantined has presented high costs and extensive work for the theatre teams. Consequently – the programmes are currently largely restricted to presenting work by artists based in Norway.
- Works by Norwegian artists have also been postponed when they have been travelling from parts of the country that had high infection rates
- Restrictions also meant that certain co-produced national and international shows couldn't be rehearsed – resulting in their indefinite postponement. We don't know if and when they are going to happen.
- Artists were still paid. And different agreements were arrived at regarding either postponing or cancelling shows.
- The situation for independent artists in our field was already precarious for many. The COVID-19 situation has exasperated it enormously.
- For the coming seasons, there is now a thrombosis of productions waiting to be presented. This means there is less room for new work and the work of artists yet-to-be programmed.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on income**

Restrictions have resulted in:

- A massive hit to box office income
- A massive hit to hire events income
- Significant losses in the café

The economy is built on using these funding streams to fund a portion of the artistic budget. How much varies significantly from organisation to organisation. But in all cases, the income has diminished, but the costs have remained. Organisations need clarity that they can expect continued compensation to cover these losses – as well as clarity on what kind of support they can expect to reopen and bounce back. The alternative is 'organisations in retreat' – staff lay-offs and severe reduction in artistic activity.

### **Audiences**

It is largely a lost year for theatre's developing and growing their community relations and audiences. RT often reached audience capacity throughout 2020, but audience capacity was restricted. COVID-19 slowed down the progress for audience development and possibly even pushed it back. Those in society that are already the

most marginalised were in many cases also the ones that were most affected by COVID-19.

There will be a lot of work to do to restore broad-based audiences.

A lot of RT's work also involves working closely with marginalised and vulnerable community groups. This work was severely disrupted in 2020 and continues to be in 2021. There will need to be an emphasis and extra investment in restoring this activity.

### **Fall 2021/Spring 2022**

– The international activity of these houses has been significantly reduced up until now. For Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, all organisations are looking to resume international activity within the context of significant uncertainty. Different measures are being explored and implemented to enable this.

#### *Examples:*

- *Delegated activity. RT will have the work of international artists performed by local performers. This is a suitable short term solution and opens up interesting ways of thinking for the future, but it won't work in all cases.*
- *Digital dissemination. RT will organise digital disseminations of specific events*
- *Take work outside of the theatre building*
- *These examples offer interesting possible answers to the COVID-19 situation. They also offer answers to how to reach those that can't come to the theatre for other reasons, perhaps because they live too remotely, or because they are too sick. These formats should not, however, be seen as a replacement to in-house activity. It is of course no substitute to coming to the house, gathering with strangers in real life, and experiencing not only the show but the many different things that can happen around a show in a theatre building. The parties, conversations, live artist talks, hanging out in the bar, etc.*

### **The Future:**

#### **Secure institutions against future crises**

Speaking for RT, to be secured against future crises we needed to be funded more sustainably. The organisation is understaffed and under-resourced, so when the crisis hit it knocked the team sideways. They were already operating beyond full resource capacity – and all the extra work that COVID-19 demanded came on top of that. It has had a massive strain on the whole organisation, which we will carry with us for some time to come.

So to be secured against future crises, organisations need to be funded sufficiently and sustainably.