WEBINAR
Performing Arts Deconfinement
Initiatives Around The World

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Introduction
A word from NASSIB EL-HUSSEINI,  
CINARS’ Chairman of the Board & Les 7 doigts de la Main CEO:

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

It is heartwarming to meet with you though virtually. We at CINARS are grateful to you all for joining this session and especially to our speakers for taking the time to share their experiences.

“The Times they are a Changin” goes the song. Protectionism is on the rise, separating walls are rising due to the Pandemic but they were there before and the Performing Arts that unite us has long been a bridge builder between people cross cultures. How to resist protectionism and keep the river flowing is on our mind at CINARS and am confident on yours.

I leave the virtual floor to my colleague Gilles Doré who will MC the Webinar.
Bonjour, good morning, good afternoon and good night everybody from all over the world.

This webinar aim to bring altogether international network of performing arts, either presenters, artists and cultural institutions.

It was important to represent all disciplines of the performing arts and also including different sizes of organizations. Speakers from Theatre, Dance, Circus, Music and multidisciplinary arts scene.

We wanted to hear many professionals around the world, shortly, offering, sharing some initiatives in a positive way.

These projects are either to reach the public, keep alive performing arts, offering solidarity, even survive, trying the best we can in this confine period in which we all hope to get over soon.

Also we ask to some professional to talk about what is the meaning of National & International touring & Territories.

At the end of this, we will discover a crazy project call “96 Solutions and Anti-solutions for a Pandemic Theater”

Again, we hope this webinar will help you to find any solution in this difficult period.

Thank you!

GILLES DORÉ
International Development Director
CINARS
Canada
cinars.org

All of your initiatives here and there in the world are wonderful and courageous. It is like a travelogue or letters from all over the world.

In June 2020....

Seeing solidarity, trying new ways to connect with publics.

...and not forgetting that performing arts need to be live on a stage with people all around...

Thank you everyone.
1. Deconfinement Initiatives In The World
In time of lockdown we realized how much the performing arts system is based on events: the visibility, legitimation, sustainability of an initiative too often depends on being linked to a live event. We became more aware of the value of the invisible practices which contribute to push the progression of live arts forward, to support research and creativity, to engage citizens and develop experiences in alternative contexts.

When the lockdown invested our territory, we developed new and enriching dialogues with dance artists, exploring how the limits could offer new possibilities, looking at the digital space as a dance floor of co-imagination. We considered how the physical isolation would bring several traumas, how the availability of time might offer the possibility to explore artistry and creativity, and how people needed to be and stay socially connected.

Masako Matsushita, for example, started Diary of a Move, an invitation to people to keep a diary where, every day, they would write, draw, video/audio-record movements. Participants kept the diaries during the lockdown period and engaged beyond expectations. Masako guided them in their individual process and is now facilitating exchanges in small groups. The diaries will become a collection of movements, a publication, which will be donated to the Civic Museum of Bassano del Grappa (the first collection of movements made by citizens becoming part of the artistic heritage held at our museum) and Masako will perform a live dance work inspired by the diaries as part of our summer Festival.

We engaged some international artists (Yasmeen Godder and Nora Chipaumire) in the digital creation and transmission of choreographies to Italian dancers, these creative processes started in the digital space, with rehearsals via zoom.

Our Festival will take place mainly in outdoors venues, artists on stage can have physical contact. We will present live works performed by artists based in Italy.

Our Bmotion programme (20–23 August) will combine live performances, digital creations, online activities, they will include panel discussions, in-depth conversations, Q&A with choreographers, physical practices and connect the local context to the wider international field of dance.

The format will follow what explored by Aerowaves/SpringBackonline festival, where the work of many young career artists was exposed to the international field. In collaboration with Aerowaves we have commissioned 8 digital works to those artists who had an interest in exploring the digital space and in collaborating with film and visual artists.
Le 140 is an interdisciplinary venue in Brussels. We present international and national shows in theater, dance, music, circus and humor. Since 2018, we have been developing projects around literature.

COVID-19 crisis in Belgium:
Following the shut down of cultural venues in Belgium in mid-March, we had to cancel or postpone nine projects. However, we were able to maintain two proposals in another form: a writing workshop given on zoom and a poetic performance which planned fee will be used by the author to publish a book.

We paid the fees for all projects to support the already fragile situation of certain artists. Following more than two mouth of unanswered questions from subsidizing powers concerning the recovery plan for the cultural sector, we have imagined, with the team and the artists, an alternative programming for each proposal. As our government was not proposing any concrete measure for artists, it was urgent for us to maintain a season to ensure, not only a financial return to the companies but also, an emphasis on the fundamental role of culture within the society.

We are ALIVE, an alternative season:
Among these adaptations, we plan to transform a project into a walk performance. The audience enters every 15 minutes in groups of 15 people and first stands on stage before walking through the different spaces of the theater and meeting the protagonists of the project, offering them each time a “private” performance.

We are also planning to move a slam concert outdoors. We want the location chosen to be linked to social emergencies and homelessness, also denied by our government. Slammers will appear in different places to avoid the statistical gathering of the audience. To avoid technical constraints, coupled with health ones, participants will not be equipped with microphones but each will have a megaphone.

We will also propose to adapt a meeting with an author. Rather than a single long meeting around a theme, we suggest that three groups of 35 people sit on stage, respecting social distancing, and discuss with the author around three previously communicated themes.

The performing arts are in essence alive and we absolutely wanted to offer a face-to-face alternative to our audience.
I bring greetings from the Finnish circus scene and I would like to present three examples of small scale live performances by mostly young companies outside funding structures and institutions. They are all independent artist lead companies and collectives with flexibility to adapt to changing situations fast.

Recover Laboratory with immersive and site-specific Evening Walk in Helsinki is an art walk for adults in public space. The participants walk alone through a route, where the performances happen around them.

Circus artist Milla Jarko with 365 solos hanging upside down at home and public spaces. Spontaneous and playful one minute long videos commenting on present time.

Company New World with a hybrid of an art installation and labyrinth for one person at a time at the gallery space. Hazmat Hole is an interdisciplinary hybrid of an art installation, a gamifying labyrinth and a close-up live ballet performance, for one person at a time.

They have all looked at the role of the artist to take part in bringing people together during this time of crisis and felt responsible to bring art to this moment.

Quote from Recover Laboratory: “We want to give people some joy, hope, distant contact and art, during this time of crisis. We believe that this humane connection, that our art provides, is very much needed in the current situation. This is why they see it as their duty to bring art to this time, and not only during times of happiness and peace of mind.”

Photos and videos of the projet 365 solos hanging upside down:

Milla Jarko’s Instagram Account
Minne Mieleni Tekevi’s Instagram Account
Video Number 84/21st May 2020/Helsinki (FI)
Video Number 54/3rd March 2020/Lapua (FI)
In April 2020, Sylvain Émard Danse organized a project to bring together amateur dancers, from all over the world, during confinement. This initiative is an online adaptation of the company’s large-scale exterior participatory dance project, Le Grand Continental.

Le Grand Continental is a mix of line dancing and contemporary dance, that has featured to date, up to 220 local amateur dancers of all ages when on tour. The cast performs a contagious 30-minute choreography surrounded by audience members. Since its premiere at the Festival TransAmériques in 2009, it has been presented more than 20 times, at home and across four continents. While strongly community-based, the concept creates international connectivity. Le Grand Continental transcends borders and the family grows from one edition to another.

When confinement and lockdown became the new reality, we rapidly felt the need to reach out to dancers we had built relationships with. We wished to offer an activity to undertake at home, fostering community connection and support; an initiative to help the participants to get through this hard period and bring joy. Moreover, we had always wished to unite Le Grand Continental communities through an international project, but had not found the appropriate opportunity or format yet.

In the context of confinement, the most immediate and fitting response was to go online. We saw it as an experiment, hoping it could have a positive impact during these difficult times. To broaden our reach, we asked our international partners to share the information with their communities. The support received and the enthusiasm shown by festivals such as Santiago a Mil, Luminato and Potsdamer Tanztage was essential and uplifting.

For Le Grand Continental – Living room style we organized 2 weeks of virtual rehearsals on Facebook Live, free and open to everyone, so people could learn the finale of Le Super Méga Continental (2017), a 5-minute choreographic section on music by Montreal DJ, Poirier. Hundreds of participants from everywhere tuned in to every rehearsal. And as a performance, we invited these participants to film themselves dancing live on Facebook on April 26th at noon. It was a great way to contaminate the Web with dance and joyfulness.

We collected some 200 videos from all over Canada, the United States, Mexico, Chile, Egypt, New Zealand, France, Austria, Germany, Panama, Peru and more! And with the footage we created this video and shared it with all. We were overwhelmed by the number of messages that expressed delight and gratitude for having been able to participate in this project.

For more information on the company and/or the project, please contact: Pascale Joubert, International development manager at pjoubert@sylvainemard.com
Unprecedented pandemic heavily affected cultural sector in Korea without exception but we have had relatively moderate restrictions compared to the strict lockdowns implemented in many other countries. (More precisely, we have never really had lockdown: work-from-home was not mandatory, and artists could/can rehearse and perform without distancing.) In the case of public theaters, they had been open for a while after one-month-long closure in March even if they lately closed again on May 30 due to the recent increase in the number of new cases. They will remain closed until June 14 unless the situation changes dramatically. Meanwhile, privately-owned theaters could/can choose to open according to their own judgement. Many, of course, canceled or postponed the program because of the risk of public gathering itself and a sharp decrease in the audience number, but some have remained open adopting precautionary measures including social distancing seating, temperature checkup, etc.

Along with the theaters still open to the public, live streaming of performances—Here I would like to take the specific cases of simultaneous streaming of live dance performances—has got in the mainstream considerably fast in Korea as a solution to a limited audience in the early stage but now also as an opportunity to meet bigger audience. For example, a showcase of a dance company was live-streamed in high quality and its post-edited video was later available to watch in the movie theaters. And a dance festival held last month broadcasted their full program with limited audience on-site and one of their evening programs had about 13000 accumulated viewers in one hour. Both were broadcasted via Naver TV, which is Korea’s biggest web portal’s broadcast network, and the service had been already quite active broadcasting K-POP stars’ live shows.

There are, however, concerns and criticism that the aesthetic qualities of dance pieces are being compromised in live streaming partly because of technical reasons, and partly because of the nature of an artwork. Before the breakout of COVID-19, most of the dance-related videos produced in Korea were either a simple recording of a performance for archival purpose or dance film as visual art. There are only a handful of video production professionals experienced in the live streaming of performances.

1. Governmental emergency grants are also aimed at helping artists to realize projects with public presentation (online or offline or both), such as, supporting venue hire cost up to 90% within the limit of appx. 25000 USD and the creation of artworks that should be finally presented as online content or offline performances. Each project will be granted up to appx. 16800 USD.
dance pieces; their knowledge and necessary technical equipment are not easily accessible. And most of the pieces created so far are not meant to be broadcasted via the eyes of cameras, either.

Facing the situation, SIDance(Seoul International Dance Festival) is trying to figure out ways to fully share the liveness with the audience at the very performing place, which is the fundamental quality of performing arts, but at the same time we are also considering live streaming of selected programs. In order not to risk the aesthetic of pieces, enough dialogue between choreographers and video directors would be needed, and workshops will be offered to the artists prior to the festival so that they can understand better how it works.
In France, the lockdown began mid-March and lasted 2 months. Cinemas are due to open on June 22. The situation for the performing arts is more complex with still unclear procedures. Like everywhere, during the lockdown, artists and cultural organisations shared, online, a lot of initiatives between them and with the public.

The content was at the same time an outlet for anxiety, a way to keep connecting the audience and - but more rarely - a source of inspiration.

**Going Online:** The Ministry of Culture created a new website ([culturecheznous.gouv.fr](http://culturecheznous.gouv.fr)), so that the cultural organizations could share their initiatives. The artists went on the main platforms and social networks. All the main local authorities did the same. For the main national institutions, it has been an opportunity to invest largely into new ways to produce online content.

For institutions like symphony orchestras, the main challenge was technical. An arrangement of Ravel’s Bolero, recorded but the musicians of Orchestre National de France, each of them being at home, have been seen more than 3 million times. It definitely brought new audiences. For some artists, being online has been a real way to challenge artistic creation.

The first 2 or 3 weeks of lockdown have seen an explosion of content, shared on dedicated websites, but mainly on the main platforms and social networks (youtube, FB, etc). After this first moment, it slowed down.

**Staying silent:** Some institutions and artists decided to stay silent, preferring to use the moment to think about their work, their role in society in such a period (and more generally) and preparing the next step, when the lockdown will be over.

**Staying live:** Aside from the online content, some forms of live interactions have been proposed as well. For neighbors, in buildings, from balcony to balcony. It has been a way to (re)discover Art at its most simple expression, reacting against the online stream.

**Building new collective dynamics:** On a more professional side, the period has created a very impressive movement of online thinking. Confronted to such a unique period, new groups, new networks, new think tanks.

**And after...** : Now, a new phase is open, not yet fully operational. Artists and institutions are proposing a wide range of small acts in public spaces and in venues, during the Summer, to reach the people who won’t have the chance to go to vacations. The real big issue is : what have we really learned from this lockdown? Will it change (and what) the way we, the cultural sector, think about creation, about mediation, about the ways to reach and to address the audiences?
I’m the artistic director of Los Endebles Company and La Capilla Theater, based in México City. When we closed the theater I felt isolated so I decided to start a series of online activities. First, from March to April I did twenty five Facebook live readings of french, canadian and mexican plays, most of them I have translated, directed and published. I asked all my playwrights friends from many parts of the world and the all gave me permission to do it free by solidarity. I was surprised to have so many wonderful interactions and messages from old fiends I hadn’t spoken with in years and many other unknown people all around the world.

Then, I decided to go into the Zoom experience, first giving a free conference about theatre direction for eighty people professional actors confined. And I gave a free acting workshop for forty actors from all around Mexico and other countries, from New York to Argentina. I had the chance of teaching and learning a new way of acting theatrical scenes and monologues, by that way.

In may, I realized that we couldn’t/shouldn’t have all our online activities for free. So, I organized an online season presenting five of the most recent works of my company, to support actors economy and the theatre salaries. The price of the tickets was $5 and $10 dollars (understanding people are broken here). We had all cast members of the plays at their own places home, playing their parts. I made a few rehearsal to adapt each play to that new form. We had up to eighty persons connected to each online performance. After all shows, we had a wonderful sessions between the viewers and the performers of the five plays. We had public from all around the country and different parts of the world: Canada, Thailand, Australia. Very emotive to switch lights at the end and see the people, as in the theatre. Everybody commenting this unique experience.

Now, we are organizing online performances of other shows and companies who were in our schedule at the moment of closing. And we are working on the last details of a new project: an online festival, of 37 Mexican Independent Theatres from the whole country, which includes shows, workshops and conferences.

First I was a bit reluctant to this new form of theater activities, but now I’m very enthusiastic about these new tools and ways of working in theatre, with my people, for the people. Finding new ways to create, and reaching new publics that would never have seen my shows in the theatre.
#CanadaPerforms: Emergency Relief Fund (March 19 – May 31, 2020):
#CanadaPerforms was initially launched by the National Arts Centre as a short-term relief fund to help ease the financial strain for professional Canadian performing artists and authors impacted by the closure of performance venues across Canada related to COVID-19, and to lift the spirits of Canadians during the crisis.

#CanadaPerforms was launched on March 19, less than a week after the closure of the National Arts Centre and most performing arts centres across Canada.

It was a $700,000 relief fund designed to get money into the hands of Canadian professional artists as quickly as possible.

The Emergency Relief Fund continued through until May 31 and hosted 696 performances from across Canada in Theatre, Dance, Opera, Comedy, Book launches and readings, workshops, culinary displays, and all genres of music on Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook.

#CanadaPerforms by The Numbers:
We received over 6500 applications. 17% were from francophone artists and companies, 83% were English. The livestreams have been viewed over 4.75 million times from audience around the world.

Social Media Reach:
The NAC witnessed tremendous growth in our social media through #CanadaPerforms. Keeping in mind that 4–6% is considered average growth in one year for social platforms, you will see in this slide that we are vastly exceeding averages with engagement, reach, views, and impressions all exceeding 1300% increases. We also saw a 31% increase to our Instagram page. It’s important to note that during this phase of CanadaPerforms, the NAC didn’t actually host any of the content – we were the amplifiers of the content. All content originated and exists with the artists giving them full control of what goes up, how long it stays up, and complete control to remove their stream.

NAC-cna.ca:
We used our website to aggregate information about upcoming livestreams, changing our listings pages from what was upcoming at the NAC to livestreams that were a part of CanadaPerforms. This also changed the tenor of the page from being a series of cancelled show notifications to event announcements. CanadaPerforms changed our website from a local site to a nationally visited source of information on livestreaming in Canada.
Media Reach:
#CanadaPerforms was a newstory, receiving over 1300 news mentions across Canada and garnering over 395 million impressions in print and online. This doesn’t include our story in the New York Times as we do not have that data to include.

#CanadaPerforms in the Future:
So now what? Now we will explore the future of livestreaming with Canadian artists as a dissemination tool, a creation sharing platform, an audience development opportunity, and much more.

#CanadaPerforms is a livestreaming exploration that will be directed and developed by artists and their interest in creating and exploring livestreaming as a new platform.

#CanadaPerforms is a social media program, not a website project nor a recording project. Facebook has invested an additional $500,000 to help fund this two-year exploration. We will be adding additional sponsors to this program in the future.
I am Christine, the General Manager from Shanghai Children’s Art Theatre (SHCAT). Thank you for the invitation. I am honored to join in this panel discussion. I would like to share about our practices of living arts during the pandemic.

Due to COVID-19, our theatre has been closed down since this February. Over the past months, we managed to outreach our kids and families through live stream performances. There are quite a number of live stream channels in China. We used Tencent, the most popular platform. Live stream shows in our theatre could be divided into two categories by the financial model, one is free to public, and the other is tailored for private corporate.

The free shows are presented to engage audiences at home. The programs are two productions called A La Luna and Invisible. We bought their copyrights from the Spanish company Voila! Productions and adapted them into Chinese versions. Both Chinese versions were completed before the pandemic and they are well received. Also, the actors of both shows are our full time staff. So we are able to organize live stream performance at our theatre smoothly.

The tailored shows are designed for corporate clients. We charge them some fees to cover the costs of performance and generate some revenue. Our marketing department has been reaching out to the potential corporates. The program is a gala performance composed of several opera parts. We discuss with client to adjust the contents. For instance, on June 1, the Children’s Day in China, we made a live stream show for a financial institution. Though the performance going on in our theatre space, the corporate staff audiences are at home. We incorporated video recorded by the corporate staff and Q&A session in the performance intermission to enhance the interactive elements. It works well.

The live stream performances are doing well, but when we try to charge fees, we encounter problems. First, lots of theatre are doing same thing; second, the parents are concerned about kids over exposed to electronic devices, which may harm kids’ eyesight. It points out a problem of sustainability of live stream show. So there are lots of uncertainties. We keep exploring the new possibilities. Anyway, as a famous Chinese saying goes, crossing the river by touching the stones. I Hope SHCAT’s practices are meaningful for the performing arts community worldwide. Thank you.
It is not only our primary mission and obligation as a public theatre but also our heartfelt wish to get back on stage. Besides the planning for the next season, which starts in September, we’ve made a outdoor-planning to play on our courtyard in the last weeks of this season till end of June. We asked our ensemble for any kind of ideas, pieces from our repertoire, songs, scenes, whatever – and have now invented a varied programme for our audience (entitled “Theater in the courtyard”), which is absolutely grateful for this offer (the tickets for first week was “sold out” after 10 minutes – tickets are for free, they have to be pre-ordered online). The measures are less tight when we play outside, we just have to check the distances between the individuals. It’s allowed for 50 visitors at once.

For our next season we had to change the plans several times in the last weeks, but I am happy that we have finally discovered creative and playful ways with our actors and artistic teams to deal with the regulations in the coming season with an indeed extraordinary seating plan. We have normally around 700 seats in our auditorium. Due to the Corona restrictions we will have around 200 seats left for our reopening according to our current plans. The seats were removed in the last ten days for three reasons: On the one hand, we try to come up with creative solutions for the current Corona regulations. The auditorium now looks like an installation, it is not just empty rows. By removing the seats, the remaining ones are easier to access. This allows us to follow the rules of social, or the way we like to put it, the rules of physical distancing. On the other hand, we will use the removal for a renovation of the historic seats. Our second venue is newly build and due to this construction work which we forced, opening is scheduled for October, seats will be reduced to 60 instead of 180. We should definitely keep in mind that the seats are removed temporarily. We are all longing for normality.
I am positive that this will allow actors and audience to connect in a different way with the perspective of creating a new intimacy between the auditorium and the stage. We plan our reopening for September after our regular summer break, the first premiere is on September 4th.

We do hope that in January, when our new production of The Threepenny Opera, directed by Barrie Kosky will have its opening night in the theatre that housed its world premiere, there will be a full house again.

The past months have been crowded with feelings of uncertainty; hard decisions had to be made. We had to reschedule our plans and shift bigger productions to the following seasons. Here in Berlin, we were glad to engage in the active dialogue between politics and the cultural scene of the city to find answers to the questions raised by the pandemic. A great number of tours were cancelled or delayed which induces a massive organisational, financial, and artistic challenge for a house of our size. Financially the German theatre system provides us with 75% subsidies of our budget (17 millions plus 4,4 millions by ticket sale and touring). “Short-time allowance is another important financial medium to make it over the crisis.

We also started various additional online projects, which are subsumed under the title “BE at home”, among others (sorry, there are no English translations available):

- **BE on demand**: Streaming of a repertoire performance (among old classics like “Mother Courage and her children” directed by Bertolt Brecht), which changes weekly.

- **Monologue series** “Voices out of an orphaned theater” (berliner-ensemble.de/stimmen-aus-einem-leeren-theater)

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**Set-up of the Theater in the courtyard**

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OLIVER REESE
Artistic Director
BERLINER ENSEMBLE
Germany
berliner-ensemble.de
I’m Zach Blackwood, speaking for FringeArts from the Mid-Atlantic region of the US. Here in Pennsylvania, we’re presently allowed to gather in groups of 25 or fewer. Of course that limits the scale of audience capacity we’re able to work with, so we’re trying to lean into that and use the solitary feeling foregrounded presently in the public imagination as material to kick off of as we rethink intimacy across distance, difference, and frankly, fear. We’re trying to use the commonality of those factors as material to both audit and lampoon.

We’re seeing a preponderance of outdoor performances, in private backyards as well as in public space. One project we’re currently developing is a cabaret caravan, traveling from neighborhood to neighborhood, folding from the back of a large truck. The work seeks to build on the tradition of the traveling circus, while foregrounding equity and inclusion. We’re also working to develop material for solo audiences, including a transmedial walking tour with binaural, geolocated content produced by nationally-renowned authors. The stories are sited on Philadelphia’s public trails and performed by over 50 theatrical performers from the Philadelphia region. It’s a way to both reconnect with nature and the performers we so deeply miss seeing in our cramped, but familiar theatrical venues across the city.

Like many of our colleagues, one of our greatest assets at this moment is our archive of past performances. In trying to separate ourselves from our colleagues in the presentation of this material, we’re presently developing a drive-in for performance archival footage that builds on a rich tradition of American Drive-In Cinema. Pennsylvania is the Drive-In Capital of the United States, and we present a summer outdoor film series each year. This opportunity seemed particularly vital to us in its familiarity as well as its capacity to render social distancing measures as a conceit of the program rather than a limitation.

One project I’m particularly proud of at this time is the adaptation of our theater space into a soundstage for local artists as they work to record material for this period. We’ve been working with artists to redesign some works originally conceived for theatrical production as interactive digital media and video projects. The recalibration of this space represented a capital investment for us, but gives us a new capacity to further our mission by investing in a shared resource for the independent artists in our community.

We’re seeing a lot of success so far in the development of these works, but are still struggling to ensure that access to these works is foregrounded even as our ticketable inventory is diminished. Happy to share resources around our successes and points of challenge with the broader group offline.
2. National & International, Touring Territories
Kudos to all of my colleagues for these inspiring initiatives that will help us—performers, agents, and those responsible for arts and culture venues and festivals all over the world—to ensure artistic creations are seen and heard, but also to preserve the vital link with live audiences that we are currently deprived of. Because touring, whether nationally or internationally, boils down to this: in-person encounters between artists and audiences, all over the planet.

And as we multiply initiatives, mostly digital, to stay in touch with our audiences, in so doing gaining access to a new, virtual and global amphitheatre while we await the so-called new normal, we are all seeing how, conversely, the centrifugal force of our actions is weakening: our exchanges with international performing arts networks are restricted, even forbidden. And over the long term, the collective imaginations that we hope to nurture by encouraging those encounters of artists and audiences will necessarily be affected. So much so that during this long intermission imposed by the pandemic, we are all being asked—forced, even—to redefine our new “territories,” predetermined according to our geographical locations.

At Place des Arts, where in any given year we normally host more than 1,000 events, including many international productions, in our six halls and public spaces, we know that before long, our audiences will greatly miss the enriching experience of attending performances by artists and troupes from abroad, even though the entertainment available online has never been richer than right now (not to mention free of charge, most of the time).

We’re all familiar with the axiom “Resilience, Readiness, Recovery, Restarting,” which aptly encapsulates the massive task that awaits us in our sector. After acting mindfully and promptly to ensure the safety of artists and our audiences in the earliest stages of the pandemic, Place des Arts rapidly shifted focus to our local driving forces, lending support as they faced a tidal wave of cancellations and postponements—but at the same time, we have not stopped nurturing our international relationships. Indeed, it appears essential that we should keep our networks alive and active so as to prepare for the “restart” phase, which will be vital to recovery. This is all the more important because, after the creeping anxiety that the virus provoked in us all, a certain fear of “the Other” has necessarily taken hold. None of us wants to go backward, to succumb to an isolationist culture. We all need to welcome artists and cultures from all over, as much as we need to share our own. The free flow of art and artists is like the blood that pumps through the veins and to the beating heart: and as cultural institutions and workers, we unquestionably have a responsibility to ensure that flow.
Australia is a big country that’s far away. This is our great strength and also our weakness. We have been able to control the spread of COVID by closing our borders. We can’t leave so we have no international touring markets. And these are at the core of Circa’s business model.

COVID has meant that business as usual is impossible. We are doing business as unusual. We looked at digital platforms but decided our work excels in the extreme live encounter of performance. We have used our digital voice for lobbying, entertainment and connection, but not large scale creation. It doesn’t work for us.

Last week we were granted an exemption from health restrictions allowing acrobats can now rehearse together. We currently have 5 creations in development - new shows and projects.

We are pioneering new models of engagement including Cube Studies that brings together Circa creatives, a globally renowned public art and design firm and performers together. Its first iteration will take place on an empty Opera House stage in mid-July in Austria. We have just created a position of film-maker in residence and we are working to bring two of our new creations straight to feature film. In July we will present live a series of the solo and small works we have been creating in isolation called in two local theatres.

We are focussing on building touring markets in Australia and New Zealand. These are lower yield markets with modest fees but they have high margins for us. We are taking this time to dream and plan a range of strategic initiatives including completely reworking our training, participation, engagement and inclusion programs as well as our First Nations approached. We are working on major collaborations with opera companies, architects and animation companies.

We have retained all our staff including our full ensemble of artists. They are being paid and they are working.

I don’t want it to sound rosy. The arts are in trouble everywhere and in Australia many companies, large and small and of course the independent artists and arts workers are in deep trouble. If things were normal we could make shows and tour them. But they aren’t and we can’t. So we will continue to innovate, to look for the light of opportunity in the darkness. And of course to make sure we are ready to jump on tour just as soon as we can.
The Festival Internacional Cervantino was created with the mission to annually summon the best and the most avant-garde of the national and international artistic expressions, a diversity of artistic disciplines and academic activities with the purpose to offer a wide programming spectrum for audiences of all ages who attend the festival.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a sudden and substantial impact on the arts sector. The global health crisis and the uncertainty resulting from it, affected organizations, operations as well as individuals and artists. We all have experienced that many events were cancelled, we were the first to close and will be the last ones to open as well. This situation had led to a global trend of hiring local artists by programming them on festivals and events in order to support them. We at the Festival Internacional Cervantino are also putting the national programming first, not forgetting that we are an international festival.

Regarding the importance of international programming, I believe that festivals are great opportunities to seek out what is new, risky work, not only at a national level, but internationally. As an audience member, people have the opportunity to dive into unique works while knowing that each piece has been carefully chosen to fit the festival’s criteria. During festivals, new audiences are created, and existing ones get more adventurous, and the way to achieve this is definitely international programming.

For the Festival Internacional Cervantino, international programming is a part of our essence. Since 2001, we have had a country that is guest of honor as a way to promote and to have a greater visibility of its cultural highlights, these have given us the opportunity to learn more from a different culture every year plus the other performances we have from around 36 countries.

Globally, we are facing waves of racism, rage, fearing “the other”, the stranger, as the cause of our problems, international festivals are key events acting as catalyst for interactions and exchanges. Artists are formulating their visions of the world, sharing among each other and creating new frameworks for cultural dialogues and encounters in spite of new frontiers.

Through the arts, we can fight for justice, the value of solidarity, understanding, pacifism, but this can only happen when different cultures come together. By bringing together world artists we can go beyond all cultural, linguistic, physical, sexual and gender conventions, and festivals become an important platform to promote these voices.

International programming is not only about cultural diplomacy, it is about connecting cultures for better understanding.
Good morning everyone and greetings from Vancouver! So nice to see, and be with you in this forum.

Many who observe and comment on the geopolitical state of the world will tell you that globalization has arguably been in a state of retreat since The Great Recession of 2008. The current COVID-19 pandemic has not only illustrated this to be true, but it has also acted as a catalyst to accelerate the rate at which nationalism is dominating the global state of affairs.

With this as a backdrop to the notion of territories, a moment of pause in the international performing arts touring world is required to consider how the sector will adjust to these changes. The pandemic we are currently living through forces this pause upon us. It also creates great uncertainty as to how international touring can be undertaken in the short term.

In looking at the short term, it is clear only those artistic players with the highest tolerance for risk, both financial and moral, will be quick to step back into the fray. Financial risk, as it relates to banking on plans that are likely to undergo serious revision and a high chance of cancellation, resulting in the loss of funds invested in securing personnel and planning. And moral costs as it relates to potentially putting personnel in harm’s way as they travel through various national and regional jurisdictions with different and changing restrictions and bans.

Needless to say the existential angst of the moment is overwhelming. Add the ever-growing pressure of green mobility, and one senses that a perfect storm is upon us.

Consequently, I am advising the artists I work with to consider how to keep their creative muscles flexed and active while working at a local and/or national level in terms of their own productions. This will allow for the passing of time to better reveal the future and for the emergence of a solid footing on which future touring can resume. Hopefully this will be within the next 18 to 24 months.

An option for artists working in the international sphere is to consider taking on a commission with an international company, where everyone else is working in a local environment, except for possibly the creative team who is parachuted in to undertake the creative act. While this comes with potential limitations, specifically not having ownership over the final production, it allows for the creation of work to continue, potentially on a different scale and scope, while limiting the exposure to the challenges of trying to navigate moving around a full company of personal into what is currently a fraught situation.
The importance of continuing cultural exchange with live performances in front of an audience

It is no hyperbole to say that the world of the performing arts has been turned upside down and ravaged by the COVID-19 crisis. In a very short period we went from our normal touring routine to a complete shut down, both in terms of the venues and festivals and national and international travel. This has left many of us - artists, programmers, producers and agents - wondering when and even if it will be possible to get back on our feet and resume our work and activities, which basically means enabling artists to perform live in front of an audience.

As a temporary measure we have seen many virtual performances being made available and streamed via the internet, which is laudable and it certainly keeps the audiences connected to the performing arts during these challenging times. However, I want to stress the fact that this is not the same as attending live performances, and that virtual performances could never replace the experience of sitting in a dark room with strangers, while watching music, theatre, dance, circus or opera performances taking place in front of your eyes.

I would hope that the pandemic does not lead to a structural shift in our appreciation of the live arts. Realizing that it may take some time before we are able to present work to an audience of a financially viable capacity and also before national and international borders will re-open and make touring and travelling possible without too many restrictions, I strongly believe that we should continue to plan for the future and keep collaborating on the promotion of our artists. Not only to safeguard all our livelihoods but also to maintain cultural exchange, on both a national and international level.

Particularly from a Canadian perspective, limiting artists to local presentations is not viable - we just don’t have the population base to sustain artists and their companies. Also on a cultural level, we need the various cultural entities and regions to stay in touch and learn from each other by attending live performances from other parts of the country. This has always been an important mandate for cultural institutions, including the Canada Council for the Arts.

On an international level, I believe that cultural and in some way ‘political’ exchange is even more important in these turbulent times. The pandemic shows us that we now live in a interconnected world where everyone is affected by a crisis, and it seems backward to now retreat and close off our countries, provinces and regions for good – even though it is very understandable as a temporary measure. Now is not the time to give up on exchange of ideas and personal encounters with practitioners from other parts of the world, we need this communication and experience more than ever.
I admit that there are many challenges to overcome over the next year or two, it will not be easy. We will face many financial hurdles and practical and logistical problems – reduced income and government support, travel and transportation, insurance etc. We also need to further adjust our practices to do our share concerning climate change and limiting the use of fossil fuels.

But if there is one industry which is used to dealing with these issues and still succeed in making things happen, it’s the performing arts world.

Everyone stay healthy and safe, and I hope to see you in a theatre or performing arts venue somewhere near you very soon.
3. 96 Solutions and Anti-Solutions for a Pandemic Theater
I am Julien from Switzerland. I am here representing an independent artists collective with whom I have worked since 6 years now, creating unconventional projects in whole Europe. During the corona period, we were supposed to have multiples residencies. Instead we decided to work online and this brought us to question collectively today’s theatre in its broader sense. Out of the lively discussions we had, we decided to take concrete action and to publish an artistic document in order to create online debates around the questions of: “how can we do theatre during and after crisis?”

This one and the ones to come!

So let me introduce “96 Solutions and Anti-solutions for a pandemic theater”. In this document we have put 96 theater forms that could result from the confinement, its creativity and its sanitary measures. The ones we dream about, the crazy ones, the shocking ones. We thought to act through an online document in order to give food for thoughts to the international community of arts and culture. Online publishing was also a way to create debates on the social networks, with us included or not. This document was published in French on the 21st of May and has had since then more than 3000 views.

We are pleased to announce that this document has also been the starting point of a collaboration with Swiss company Ici’Bas and festival Le Castrum. Starting from now and during the whole summer, we will hold a long-term research laboratory around the question of tomorrow’s theater. We will research it in its many different aspects, including of course the sanitary questions, but also all the economic, ecological, social and artistic questions related to its way of existing. As the last part of this research process we will have the chance to take over an industrial place in the city of Yverdon and to make it a public platform for artistic tryouts, conferences, collaborations with local associations and artists. This during a whole month!

2 minutes is very short to present you all the complexity of this project, that’s why we would love to invite you to read our 96 Solutions and Anti-Solutions and their english translation on the following webpage as well as to attend the zoom debate that we will host on the 24th of June. All useful information and registration on the same internet webpage.

Thanks for hearing us and hope to have the chance to continue this conversation with you next week!
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And of course, thank you to all participants and panellists!