

LA BOITE

PERFORMING ARTS INDUSTRY FORUM COVID-19
17 MARCH, 2020



TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2020 4.00 - 5.15PM (AEST)

LA BOITE THEATRE COMPANY, 6-8 MUSK AVE KELVIN GROVE
[WATCH THE FULL FORUM](#)

ATTENDANCE OVERVIEW

100 People in attendance
400 viewed online stream
14.7K views as at 20/03/2020

FACILITATORS

Zohar Spatz, Executive Director, La Boite Theatre Company
Sandra Fields, Managing Director, FieldWorx
Charlie Cush, CEO, Brisbane Festival

SPEAKERS

Wendy Were, Executive Director, Strategic Development and Advocacy, Australia Arts Council
John Kotzas, CEO QPAC and Vice-President of LPA
Michelle Rae, MEAA, Director QLD Branch
Paul Dellit, President, Actors and Entertainer' Benevolent Fund
Tania Hall, Acting Executive Director, Policy and Programs, Arts Queensland

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PERFORMING ARTS INDUSTRY FORUM: COVID - 19

La Boite Theatre Company is committed to being advocates for organisations, individuals and artists in the Queensland arts and entertainment industry.

La Boite hosted a Performing Arts Industry Forum on Tuesday, March 17, specifically for independent artists and small to medium organisations to discuss the affects of the rapidly evolving situation caused by COVID-19. Updates were provided by MEAA, Arts Queensland, Live Performance Australia, Australia Council for the Arts, and the Actors' and Entertainers' Benevolent Fund Queensland.

From this important session, industry leaders and those in attendance or tuning-in via La Boite's Facebook livestream provided ideas in the form of solutions or suggestions, to overcome the devastating impacts and losses caused by COVID-19, both long and short-term.

La Boite has compiled ideas from the Performing Arts Industry, to provide those in the arts industry with clarity and an open channel for communication in this difficult time. Please find below links to support mechanisms and potential solutions for the Government to respond.

AUDIENCE OVERVIEW

The below statistics are based on data obtained from Facebook and Hootsuite insights - as at 23 March, 2020



35,783
People reached



7,324
Overall engagements
(Likes, shares,
comments, views)



36,413
Minutes viewed



**NATIONAL
COVERAGE**
Audiences watched the
forum throughout Australia,
with the bulk of viewers
based in QLD.

IDEAS & SOLUTIONS

Ideas and solutions are grouped into themes. These themes are then arranged into the group most responsible for considering and actioning these ideas and solutions.

- Providing resources and financial support
- Supporting sole traders
- Supporting charity organisations
- Supporting mental health
- Supporting diverse communities
- Digital approaches and alternatives

PROVIDING RESOURCES & FINANCIAL SUPPORT

For governments action

- Provide an urgent arts stimulus package that independent artists can access. The package should include support for the creation of new work and creative development. This means new product will be ready when the crisis is over.
- Consider Creative Recovery protocols and approaches, similar to physical disaster crisis plans and relief tactics.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to extend EMDG grants for this financial year to include 2 years of expenses and income rather than just one. This crisis is throwing export plans, and potential tour cancellations are impacting financial planning for the year, meaning expenses will not be able to be recouped as pre-planned.
- Providing a clear list of steps if people are required to lodge for financial help in the sector
- Bring forward payments for multi-year funding - that money is already budgeted by organisations and could make a huge difference to organisations missing box office revenue.
- Make a public commitment that doors are open for artists and producers to apply for project grants to apply to next year's work.
- Federal Government to make definitive calls regarding bans for health, to allow clarity within existing insurance clauses.
- Work with banks to freeze or cancel loan and bill repayments from individuals and small businesses. At a minimum, put a hold on accruing interest or penalties, and extend loan and bill repayment dates. Offer no-collateral, zero-interest or depreciating loans to individuals, small businesses, and non-profit enterprises in need. This ensures that we don't penalize people and businesses because of unforeseen circumstances.

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PROVIDING RESOURCES & FINANCIAL SUPPORT

For personal action

- For artists and casual / freelance workers losing employment during this time, use platforms that offer other routes to provide income, including other casual work – Arts Tasker and In Between.
- Keep your money local and purchase from nearby businesses, especially those smaller in size – even tip generously. Purchase gift cards and pre-pay for future services, and support people whose activities and events have been cancelled - through online purchases, subscriptions and patronage. Decline refunds or donate refunded money to an associated cause. Move your personal and company's money to a local credit union or community bank. This keeps money moving within our communities, and services operational.
- Increase your charitable giving and offer before people ask. Provide support to individuals, families and frontline social services, as well as those working to create a more equitable and resilient economic system. If you benefit from investment fluctuations, use the gains to finance your generosity, and donate stock to non-profits. This reduces the likelihood of people falling through the cracks.

SUPPORTING SOLE TRADERS / INDEPENDENT ARTISTS

For Governments action

- Ensure sole traders can access the Government's assistance package, that is currently only applicable for small to medium organisations and individuals.
- Provide sole traders cash support through the surplus, potentially based on their last yearly income, rather than numbers of employees as this does not apply to contractors.
- Federal Government to temporarily change the rules for social security payments, so that independent artists (sole traders) have subsistence support until venues re-open and opportunities become available again - particularly those who have lost paid work locally, nationally or internationally.
- Federal Government to allow sole traders to access their Superannuation for a limited time to alleviate current financial stress.

For industry bodies action

MEAA and LPA to lobby Government for financial assist, the sole trader provides:

- Provide a list of contracts that were in negotiation, approved and cancelled to influence Government regarding financial support plans. The engagement length, type, the partner and the income lost. For some this will be fees, for some this will be box office targets etc.
- An estimation of the other work they were proposing to secure - this relies on an artist legitimately costing out their future income, if COVID-19 had not happened.
- Their previous years' tax return, which will also help to indicate what type of business they run because of the ATO's categories.

PROVIDING RESOURCES & FINANCIAL SUPPORT

For property owners action

- Reduce rent for tenants and small businesses, rather than evicting. Delay rental payments and rent vacant properties, allowing everyone to maintain homes and businesses through the challenging times.

Relevant Links

- I Lost My Gig Australia: <https://ilostmygig.net.au>
- MEAA: <https://www.meaa.org>
- Live Performance Australia: <https://liveperformance.com.au>
- Arts Queensland, Individuals Fund: <https://www.arts.qld.gov.au>
- Example of rent relief (landlord offering financial aid):
<https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/south-portland-landlord-challenges-others-to-offer-financial-relief-due-to-coronavirus-concerns/97-bac48d89-43df-434a-93a6-4734445206dd>
- Example of supporting local business:
<https://ilsr.org/key-studies-why-local-matters/>
- Example of charitable giving (leaders increase their giving):
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nba/cavaliers/2020/03/12/coronavirus-key-in-love-donate-100-000-support-workers/5038892002/>

SUPPORTING CHARITY ORGANISATIONS

For Governments action

- Support charity organisations with tailored interest-free loans, that will in turn provide relief for artists and entertainers in the industry.

For organisations action

- Major arts organisations with fundraising and development expertise could provide support to Actors & Entertainers' Benevolent Fund and other charity funds, as they increase the scope of their work. This would mean the industry comes together to support those who need it most, rather than competing against each other for limited donations.

Relevant Links

- Actors & Entertainers' Benevolent Fund:
<https://abfqlld.com.au>

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

For industry bodies action

- Monitor and record the impact that cancelled performances have on the broader communities mental health. Helps provide an evidence base of the value of arts beyond economic value.

For organisations action

- Major arts organisations in QLD and nationally to provide very accessible links on their digital platforms that provide individuals with mental health support and hotlines, including Support Act Wellbeing Helpline.
- Support your employees and teams by providing or advocating for remote working opportunities (where possible); childcare support; paid sick leave; flexi-time; early and unplanned bonuses; and an employment guarantee for the coming months. Reduce the top-to-bottom salary ratio. Reject racism and have extra patience with inefficiencies, mistakes, stress and tension with your employees and colleagues. This provides people with security and a better ability to cope with work and family demands.

For individual action

- Volunteer virtually and in-person (where safe). Offer online support to non-profits and check in via phone or social media with people who might feel particularly alone. Where social distancing is possible, volunteer at your local food bank, shelter or other frontline service provider and pick up shopping, post mail, or offer childcare for people in need. Donate blood (if you're healthy). This gives everyone an opportunity to take action.

Relevant Links

- Queensland Health: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au>
- Queensland Government: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Support Act Wellbeing Helpline: Call 1800 959 500 OR visit <https://supportact.org.au/wellbeinghelpline/>
- Example of business' support to employees: https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/13/patagonia-is-closing-all-of-its-stores-because-of-the-coronavirus.html?_source=sharebar%7Ctwitter&par=sharebar

SUPPORTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

LGBTIQ+, CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE, D/DEAF AND DISABLED

For Governments to action

- Provide financial support for the Deaf and disabled artists, given they are just as impacted as non-disabled counterparts.

For industry / industry bodies action

- Developing an action plan for the disabled community for support with at-home entertainment and providing opportunities for this community.
- Developing a First Nations Led Approach to COVID-19 approach and relief for the arts and entertainment. BlakDance currently advocating for this, developing an Indigenous Impact Recourse, which will be made available shortly.

For individual action (everyone's responsibility)

- Be outstandingly generous to those impacted by considering your privilege and actively supporting communities that don't generally have an accumulation of resources, are discriminated against, or are overlooked: the elderly, sick or infirmed; healthcare workers; single parents; undocumented, underemployed, self-employed, contract, gig, low-wage or laid-off workers; Black, Indigenous and People of Colour; immigrants; the homeless and displaced; incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals; veterans; people with disability; and LGBTQ+ populations. This helps people understand who is most affected, helps us allocate resources more efficiently and helps to right systemic wrongs.

Relevant Links

- BlakDance: <https://www.blakdance.org.au>
- Gallang Place Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation: <https://www.gallangplace.org.au>
- QPASTT: <https://qpastt.org.au/>
- Queerspace for LGBTQ+ communities: <https://www.queerspace.org.au/>

DIGITAL APPROACHES AND ALTERNATIVES

For organisations actions

- Major arts organisations shift temporarily into the digital space and engage local independent artists to create online content. Those artists to be engaged through an open job application/pitching process rather than more nepotist methods.
- Investigate live-streaming options for intermediate period, and band together as an industry to support these digital mechanisms.
- Encourage your community to keep tickets to watch the show virtually or via different channels, to continue supporting the arts sector.
- Organise a digital hub for individuals in the theatre industry to keep in touch as things evolve and events move forward.

For individual action

- Volunteer virtually and in-person (where safe). Offer online support to non-profits and check in via phone or social media with people who might feel particularly alone. Where social distancing is possible, volunteer at your local food bank, shelter or other frontline service provider and pick up shopping, post mail, or offer childcare for people in need. Donate blood (if you're healthy). This gives everyone an opportunity to take action.

Relevant Links:

- Example of virtual volunteering:
<https://www.idealists.org/en/actions?actionType=VOLOP&isVirtual=YES&q=&search-Mode=true>

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS



Q&A SAMPLE

A sample of audience related questions and concerns raised at the forum.

“ For LPA, MEAA, AQ & AUSCO: Is there direct & clear advocacy about the position sole traders are in? They are not eligible for any stimulus, it is a lot of us.
- Fiona

“ Question for funding bodies: There is a number of us that have grants that require matched funding... We have lost funding and project partners - noting this will have an overall impact on our KPOs
- Katie

“ I am concerned about the impact to d/Deaf and disabled artists who have always had limited funding and professional opportunities anyway. With the sector struggling so much, the 'we don't have money for access' argument gets louder. What support is there for d/Deaf and disabled artists, given that we are just as impacted as our non-disabled counterparts?
- Maddie

“ WA has announced dole payments for artists/sole traders who have lost work. Is something QLD can look at?
- Nerida

“ As a Producer with a company could I auspice payment to artists and sole traders?
- Linda

“ Has anyone done any research or got ideas around how much audience desire to purchase changes after major situations like we are experiencing? We can postpone until after the threat has reduced, but I would have thought the audience demand would also reduced as everyone has much less security and money to spend for many months. This needs to be factored in when we look at lost income for everyone over time.
- Paul

Q&A SAMPLE

“ Advice for regional community Arts groups who hold regular rehearsals (ie. choral societies?) And those who are set to hold auditions/stage productions over the next few months?
- Rebecca

“ Will there be changes to time-frames for Arts Qld Organisations Fund? Due in early April.. A number of small orgs will be focusing on COVID responses currently
- Katie

“ QUESTION for Arts Qld - What has happened to the Chamber of Arts that was in development??
- Katie

“ I think sole traders are eligible for some Fed Govt \$? Can someone confirm/deny?
- Bridget

“ Maybe an idea could be that those with fundraising and development expertise from the majors could provide support to ABF and other charity funds as they increase the scope of their work? Everyone coming together to support those who need it most, rather than competing against each other for limited donations? :)
- Anna

“ Commitments from the DP to support regular casuals are very welcome, however we need some clear, specific and rapid assistance for sole traders. Our sector is dominated by independent contractors, most of whom are not large enough to be pty ltd. This is the gap for our sector that is not being met by assistance packages. Can the panel please comment on how their orgs are addressing this?
- Katie