

An open letter to theatre and performance makers

This is a letter to self-employed and freelance theatre and performance makers in the UK. To the actors, playwrights, directors, choreographers, stage managers, designers, stage crews and set-builders to name just a few.

We really miss being with you during this period of lockdown. Making theatre and performance is a collaborative endeavour, so we are particularly affected by having to be apart from one another right now. We're not able to come together, in the same space, to share the experience of a live performance. We're not able to practise and enjoy our artform in its most basic form.

It's now looking increasingly likely that won't be possible for months to come, and we recognise that many freelancers face real uncertainty about if and how they will be able to continue to work in theatre. 70% of people who work in theatre and performance in the UK are freelance or self-employed, and it's for this workforce, in all its diversity and complexity, that the impact of the current situation is most acute.

During these past weeks we have had conversations with many of you to understand your needs and the ways you have been affected. We are writing to express our support for you, and to lay out some practical steps we are taking to improve the situation based on these conversations.

As well as exploring ways of producing work with freelancers during lockdown, and using this time to develop new projects with freelancers for the future, we are also working together to coordinate our response to the government, to articulate clearly what we can offer and what we need.

Most urgently, we are calling for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to be extended in line with furloughing, for all self-employed workers, and in the specific case of theatre and performance workers, until theatres are able to safely reopen. We also want to see criteria removed from the scheme which are stopping legitimate and much-needed claims.

Some of you are already involved in these conversations. We welcome your voices and need to hear from more of you in the conversations to come. Your unique networks, skillsets, perspectives, and ideas are vital to the entire sector, and we need to work with you in our response to this crisis.

Each of the organisations who've signed this letter are committed to reaching out to their family of self-employed and freelance theatre makers; listening to how this is affecting your work and lives, and to your needs and ideas for the future.

More than that, we want to facilitate the establishment of a national task force of self-employed theatre and performance makers. The purpose of the task force is to strengthen the influence of the self-employed theatre and performance community. It would create ongoing points of connection between freelancers and organisations, and amplify the voice of the self-employed in the conversations to come. To help establish the task force, each of the organisations signing this letter will support a freelancer to join the group, ensuring they are paid for their time.

We want to offer a message of hope and solidarity. Our well-practised ability to work together, to form connections, and build relationships will help us through this. One day, hopefully soon, we will all be able to meet together, as people have done for centuries, in a shared space, for a shared experience. In the meantime, we remain committed to working for you and with you towards a sustainable future for theatre and performance.

Signed,

Access All Areas
Action For Children's Arts
Actors Touring Company
Akademi
The Almeida Theatre
ArtsAdmin
Barbican Theatre Plymouth
Battersea Arts Centre
Belarus Free Theatre
Belgrade Theatre
Birmingham Repertory Theatre
Boundless Theatre
Brighton Festival
Bristol Old Vic
Brixton House
The Bush Theatre
Cast
Chichester Festival Theatre
China Plate
Chinese Arts Now
Citz Glasgow
Clean Break
The Cockpit
Company of Others
Complicite
Contact
Curatin Call Online
Curious Directive
Dance Base
Dance Umbrella
Derby Theatre
Diverse City
Doncopolitan
Donmar Warehouse
Eden Court Highlands
English Touring Theatre
Farnham Maltings
Fio
Frozen Light Theatre
Fuel
Gate Theatre
Graeae
Half of Cornwall
Headlong
Hijinx

HOME

Improbable

In Good Company

Jermyn Street Theatre

Jerwood Arts

Kiln Theatre

Knee High

Leeds Playhouse

Leicester Curve

Little Angel Theatre

Mercury Theatre

Miracle Theatre

National Dance Company Wales

The National Theatre

National Theatre of Scotland

National Theatre Wales

National Youth Theatre of Great Britain

The New Wolsey Theatre

Northern Stage

Nottingham Playhouse

One Dance UK

Oxford Playhouse

Paines Plough

Pleasance Theatre

Polka Theatre

Ramps on the Moon

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre

Rose Theatre Kingston

Royal & Derngate

The Royal Court Theatre

The Royal Shakespeare Company

Rubicon Dance

Sadler's Wells

Separate Doors

Shakespeare's Globe

Sheffield Theatres

Smart Entertainment

Soho Theatre

Spare Tyre

Spin Arts

Stellar Quines

Stephen Joseph Theatre

Studio Wayne McGregor

Taking Flight Theatre

Talawa Theatre Company

Tangled Feet

Tara Arts

Theatre Centre

Theatre Peckham
Theatre Royal Plymouth
Theatre Royal Stratford East
Tiata Fahodzi
Unfolding Theatre
Unicorn theatre
Unlimited
Wales Millennium Centre
Wassail Theatre
Wise Children
The Yard
Yellow Earth
1927