

*The Influence of the Covid19 Pandemic
on the Operation and Digitalization of Nonprofit
Organizations in the Arts and Culture*

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Transformation of the Arts and Cultural Organizations

- The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the work of many arts and cultural institutions in the United States.
- Early in the pandemic, many nonprofit museums, theaters, concert halls were closed to the public and have had to develop new forms of activities to stay in business.
- While there is now a high rate of unemployment among artists and arts workers, it is not all bad news. With the development of new



Transformation of the Arts and Cultural Organizations

- There is now a high rate of unemployment among artists and arts workers, but it is not all bad news.
- With the development of new technologies, there have come new activities. Among these are:
 - online guided tours,
 - distance lectures,
 - zoom meetings with curators,
 - internet theater performances
 - live virtual concerts



New Approaches to Funding

- Traditional funding sources are being replaced or augmented with e-commerce and crowdfunding.
- In the United States such new approaches are meeting the challenges of COVID-19



Covid-19 and Museums

- The worldwide pandemic was declared in March of 2020.
- By July, museums across the United States had been affected.
- According to the American Alliance of Museums, most American museums reported extreme financial distress.



Covid-19 and Museums

- One third reported that they were not confident that they would be able to survive for sixteen months without additional financial relief,
- Sixteen percent of the responding museum directors indicated that their institution was at risk of permanent closure.
- Most of the museums had furloughed or laid off some portion of their staff. Many anticipated reopening under controlled circumstances with reduced staff.

(source) American Alliance of Museums, Research Reports "A Snapshot of US Museums' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," posted July 22, 2020.



Covid-19 and Re-Opening Museums

Key questions included:

- how to avoid crowds,
- how to regulate entrance,
- social distance in lines at exhibits.

A key issue in deciding to reopen was and is the rate of infection in a particular city or area.

Now, as of late September 2020, many museums have addressed the question of how to operate, and how to view exhibits



Covid-19 and Re-Opening Museums

- The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art announced furloughs for all full-time and some part-time employees on August 28th, 2020.
- On September 17th the museum announced a reopening beginning on October 1st for members and on October 4th for the general public.
- The museum has adopted a timed ticketing system and capacity will be limited to 25%.
- Other COVID-19 measures are also in place, including social distancing and masks required for all visitors ages 3 and up. Visitors are being encouraged to reserve an admission time to avoid being turned away.



Covid-19 and Museum Practice

- The isolation caused by the Covid19 pandemic is not over. As a result, many museums adapted and are serving their communities in new ways.
- New offerings include free online learning resources, access to their digital collections, virtual tours, and online exhibits—all invaluable opportunities to educate and connect people across the nation and across the world.
- The Smithsonian Institution is providing virtual gallery tours of its museums, educational resources, and webcasts.
- The Chicago Art Institute offers a virtual visit to most of the displayed collection.



Covid-19 and Museum Practice

- Google's "*Street View*" feature allows visitors to tour the Guggenheim's famous spiral staircase without ever leaving home and from there, they can view works of art from the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary eras. Such practice has become routine during the Covid19 era.

(Source) Institute of Museum and Library Services, "Facing Challenge with Resilience: How Museums are Responding During COVID-19," April 1, 2020, <https://www.imis.gov/blog/2020/04/facing-challenge-resilience-how-museums-are-responding-during-COVID>



Museums and Money

- Still, museums are facing considerable revenue challenges in the face of long closings, limited reopening, and the reluctance of many people to go into closed spaces.
- One of the major challenges is, clearly, fundraising.
- Museums are responding with many new fundraising offerings including *virtual* events, *online* lectures, and even a *virtual membership* category which provides interactive, content-rich ways to experience a museum remotely.
- Small museums have also reached out, homeschooling parents and teachers and strengthening their social media profiles and experimenting with new technology



Museums' Survival Now

- It is clear that the challenge of survival and meeting the needs of museumgoers is being met with imagination and determination
- For years, museums have been seeking to transform their missions for the digital age.
- The coronavirus pandemic has put that transformation front and center.



Museums' Survival Now

- When museums were forced to shut their physical doors this spring, they simultaneously enhanced their online offerings, creating new ways for the public to experience their collections and spaces virtually.
- In fact, say insiders and consultants, museums increasingly are behaving almost like media-production companies, seeking to tell the stories behind their collections.
- This will likely not change with the end of the pandemic.



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- For the performing arts during this crisis, the situation is more precarious.
- It is not possible to do timed admission for a theatre or a symphony performance.
- And, seating people, even at some distance in a closed facility does not guarantee safety



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- Across the country, artists and people who run performance spaces are pondering how a new normal might look.
- California based promoter, David Shaw, is considering such radical ideas as presenting live shows at drive-in movie theaters or shuttered minor league ball parks.
- It is unclear whether people will attend such performances, but what is clear is that during this time of the pandemic and most likely for some time afterwards, the performing arts will be different than in past.



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- So how have theatre and symphony orchestra managed to continue performances during the pandemic?
- The Actors Theatre of Louisville, a midsized company with an annual budget of around \$9 million, cancelled its annual new play, Human Festival of six plays and shifted instead to what they are calling a “transmedia approach.”
- This approach uses emergent technologies and digital platforms to reach audiences in new ways. Executive Artistic Director Barry Fleming reports, “We have radio plays, we have video-capture plays, and the genres range from classic work that might be even animated to work that includes concert-like musicals.”



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- The Goodman Theatre of Chicago cancelled most of its regular season, but is performing *Fannie Lou Hamer, Speak On It!* in public parks and other outdoor spaces where social distancing can be easily practiced. The company anticipates additional outdoor performances going into the Autumn -- so, a safe, non-digital approach to the challenges of the pandemic.
- *Playbill* and the *Broadway Podcast Network* have partnered on a full schedule of upcoming live stream events during the current global theatrical shutdown. In partnership, these two are producing a calendar of theatre events that are live streamed, presented on *Zoom*, or uploaded to *YouTube*.



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- The point here is that the American theatre has found ways to stay connected with audiences that are safe and utilize contemporary technology.
- As with museums, it seems unlikely that the American theatre will return to its previous pre-pandemic form when herd immunity is achieved through a vaccine.



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- Symphony Orchestras have also had to cancel performances and find alternative ways of reaching audiences.
- For example, when The New York Youth Symphony Orchestra, led by music director Michael Repper, had to cancel its concert at Carnegie Hall this spring, 71 members of the orchestra came together virtually from their isolation points across the country to perform an uplifting movement from Mahler's Symphony No. 1, "Titan".



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- The Minnesota Orchestra is actually performing on stage, with a smaller number of musicians distanced from each other.
- The orchestra is performing six Friday night concerts live onstage at Orchestra Hall without audiences this fall. These concerts began on Friday, October 2.
- The performances will be available as live public television broadcasts, live radio broadcasts on Classical Minnesota Public Radio, and livestreamed at minnesotaorchestra.org, bringing wide and easy access for classical music lovers.



The Pandemic and the Performing Arts

- An important issue that has made presenting live orchestral performances difficult is the lag time that occurs using virtual communication methods such as Zoom.
- There is a delay between the time music is transmitted and the time it is received. That delay makes performing in an ensemble in real time almost impossible.
- *Fortunately, there are now a number of easy to use, low-latency remote recording platforms in existence.*
- *Generally, they need to run in the Chrome web browser. Such software has made possible concerts such as the schedule being undertaken by the Minnesota Orchestra.*



Looking Forward

- Despite successes in both theatre and classical music, COVID-19 is continuing to grow across the United States.
- As a result, furloughs and permanent layoffs of theatre and music artists and staff continue to rise.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to envision the performing arts in the USA returning to previous normalcy in the near future.
- The Structure of the arts and cultural industries leaves working artists and performers and related staff particularly vulnerable to catastrophes such as the current pandemic.



Looking Forward

- As of May 4, an ongoing survey conducted by Americans for the Arts revealed that two thirds of American artists are having trouble sourcing materials and finding employment.
- It is already clear that arts venues will reopen later than most other businesses, because social distancing is difficult, as has already been observed here, for both performers and audiences.
- Broadway theatres have indicated that they will not reopen before January 2021, perhaps later.
- The result here is that the vast majority of performing artists have lost some of their income no to mention losing institutions that have, in past employed them.



Looking Forward

- It is clear that the coronavirus lockdown means people cannot participate in location-driven experiences, but consumer demand should rebound when things stabilize.
- Location-based entertainment providers have worked to increase resilience by connecting with consumers in new ways, staying connected, and giving people the promise of return.
- At the same time venues and performing arts institutions are using technology to reduce risk at their premises and improve the people's experience.



Conclusion

- The fundamental value proposition of location-based entertainment has not changed. For most industries, demand should return when the economy stabilizes, and people feel safe and comfortable interacting in public again.
- Those companies and institutions that stay engaged with consumers, provide compelling reasons for them to return, deploy technology to mitigate health risks and use data analytics to address customer needs will put themselves in the strongest position.
- The demand for live experiences will return—perhaps stronger than ever—when the nation and the world emerge from the Covid-19 crisis. Companies that plan now to mitigate health risks, sustain consumer engagement and invest prudently will increase their resilience and ability to best be able serve customers over the long term.



Conclusion

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- Companies that plan now to mitigate health risks, sustain consumer engagement, utilize technology, and invest prudently will increase their resilience and ability to best be able serve customers over the long term.

Thank You