

HOW TO OPEN- REIMAGINING “NORMAL”

Presentation to LHAT Membership

June 2020

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Highlights

- Objectives
- Pandemics
- Context – consumer intentions
- Health & Safety in Theatres
- Baby Steps....
- Opportunities
- Communications



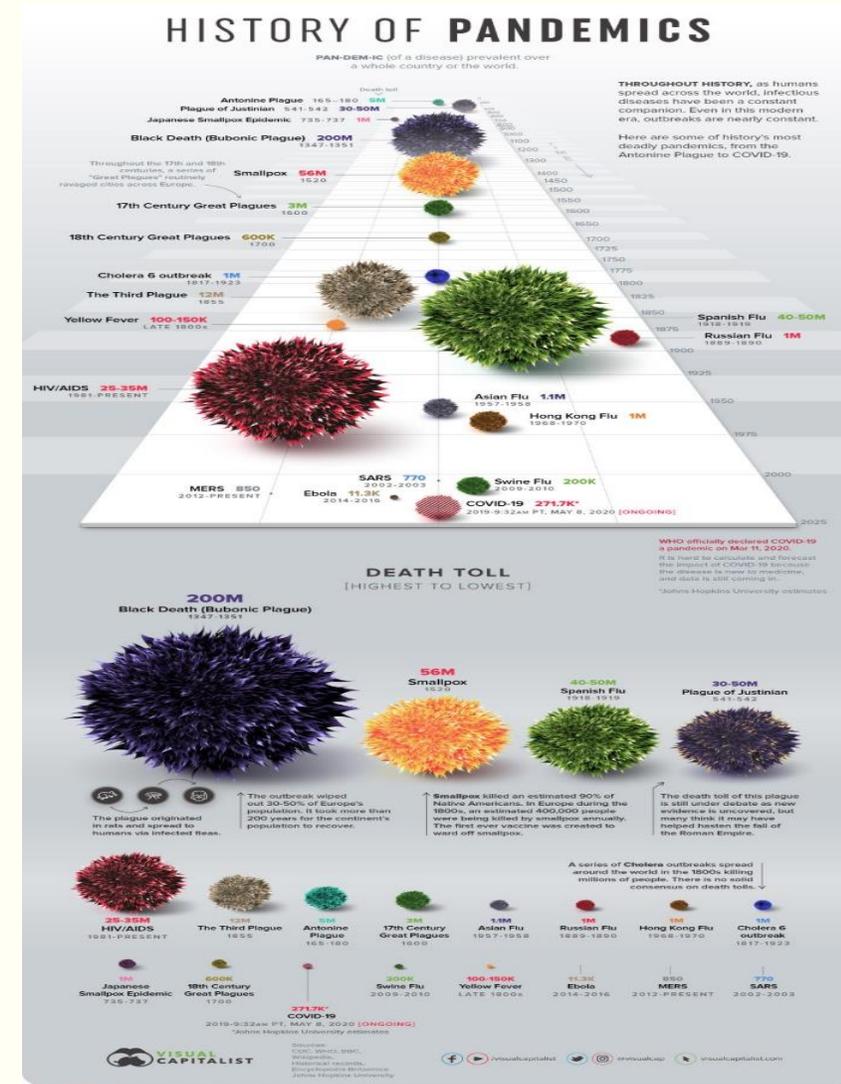
Re-opening Objectives

- To open our theatres in a safe, measured way that builds artist, worker and consumer confidence and trust
- To support long term venue relationships by enabling key producers to program, when permitted to do so
- To re-introduce revenue-generating activities in a responsible manner, in new ways
- To help our communities thrive through these times

Pandemics over Time (selected)

- 1350 Black Death, bubonic killed one third of the world
- 1492 Columbian Exchange – smallpox, measles, bubonic
- 1665 Great Plague of London
- 1817 First of seven cholera pandemics over 150 years
- 1855 Third bubonic plague, active until 1960
- 1889 Russian Flu, first significant flu pandemic
- 1918 Spanish Flu, H1N1 virus, avian born flu killed 50 million
- 1957 Asian flu, H2N2 virus, a vaccine was developed
- 1968 Hong Kong flu, H3N2 virus, no vaccine
- 1981 AIDS/HIV, new virus, no vaccine
- 2003 SARS CoV, Southern China, Toronto in Canada, Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Singapore, and Hanoi – no vaccine
- 2019 CoVID-19, started in China, went global in first wave.

June 23, 2020



Covid 19



- This isn't the first pandemic and it won't be the last.
- The virus is spread through respiratory droplets.
- During incubation a person can be infectious but asymptomatic.
- It is the first disease to widely close theatres since the Spanish Flu in 1918.
- The best ever theatre and poetry was written in the thirty years that theatre was closed 40% of the time due to plagues.

Context – Consumer intentions

- Colleendilen.com
 - People intend to fully return to their more usual attendance behaviours within 3 months; ongoing protests could influence this negatively
 - Interest in returning to enclosed theatre spaces remains soft in the mid term
 - Top confidence builders: availability of a vaccine, see other people attend, wearing of face masks and lifting of restrictions by government
 - Members/subscribers who know you are really important starting point (Trust, interest)
 - High income groups tend to trust cultural organizations

Protecting Artists, Workers and Patrons

*** MASKS/FACE COVERINGS FOR EVERYONE! ***

- Distance benchmarks in line ups
- No contact billing machines
- Plexiglass barriers between customers and customer service
- Clean masks required; provide disposables (consider branding)
- Hand sanitizing stations in lobbies, backstage and behind opera boxes
- Provide gloves for staff requiring them
- Enhanced theatre cleaning on an ongoing basis with viral disinfectant

Priorities

- Keep our artists, workers and volunteers healthy
- Create theatre environments where patrons feel comfortable to return

This will require a “social contract”, where all parties agree to take precautions (physical distancing, masks/face coverings etc.) to protect each other.

Reliable Information Sources

Consult local public health requirements

- We know that spending time indoors together spreads the virus
- Some areas with fewer cases will be able to reopen sooner than others

▪ Evaluate your Information Sources

- Ensure you are referring to credible sources. They should be:
 - Current
 - Local
 - Relevant

▪ CAUTION:

- Studies are being published quickly, often without peer review
- Watch out for “magical thinking” and unreliable online sources

Risk Assessment – Hierarchy of Controls

Elimination

- Stay home

Substitution - not applicable

Engineering Controls

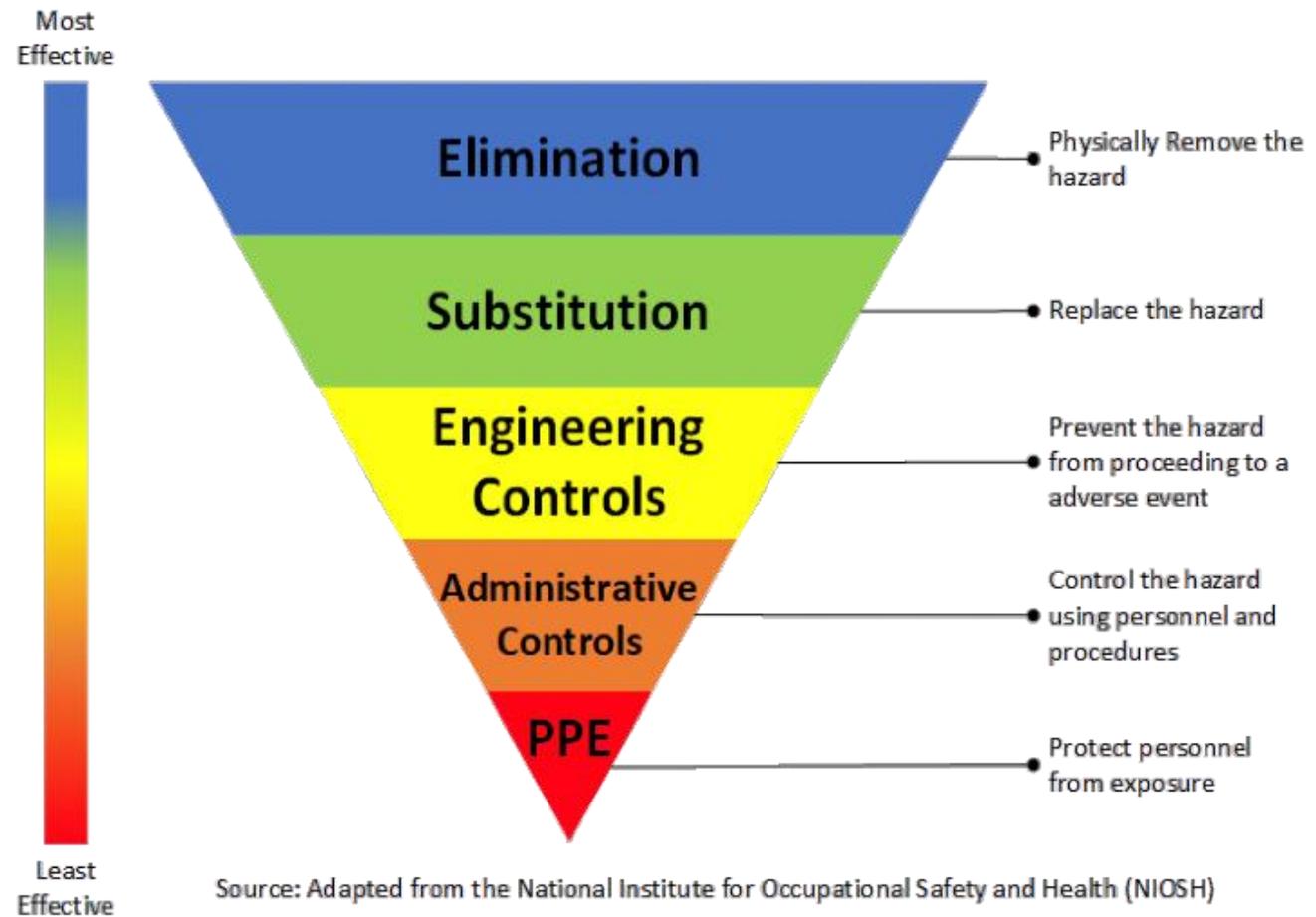
- Physical barriers such as a glass panel

Administrative Controls

- Policies/ procedures
- Handwashing
- Limited gathering sizes
- Physical distancing

Personal Protective Equipment

- Masks/Face Coverings etc.



Clients (Producers, Licensees, Renters)

- Review client and venue contracts (Force majeure, “laws of the land” clauses)
- Clarify who is responsible for which tasks related to health and safety
- In new agreements, include new responsibilities and the authority to carry out and enforce them
 - The client wants the venue to be clean
 - The venue wants to know the client won’t bring unreasonable risk to their premises
 - Both parties have a vested interest in keeping people healthy

Workers

- Recognize your health and safety duties as an Employer/Engager to provide a safe workplace
- Expand your current Risk Assessments for departments and productions and extend them to include infection mitigation
- Consult with all your worker groups, associations and unions; what do they need to feel safe to return?
- Develop precautions for each activity
- Identify how precautions will affect your schedule, staffing and budget (time, people, money)
- Plan for communication and training

Workers

- Arrange staff for additional duties such as screening, cleaning etc.
- Review:
 - Cleaning and disinfecting
 - Screening – health questions, temperature checks (as applicable),
 - Masks, face coverings
 - Physical distancing – from entering to exiting the building, throughout the day
- Human Resources:
 - Stay home when sick (paid sick leave?); ensure there is no penalty for reporting illness
 - Consider workers and volunteers (ushers, etc.) who may be vulnerable due to age, underlying health conditions

Workers

- Agree to implementation and how to enforce compliance
 - Workers must read and agree to follow guidance
 - Supervisors must enforce compliance
 - Consequences for non-compliance must be established in advance
- Start gradually
 - Return to the office
 - Add small numbers of people in other departments
 - Make sure new procedures are effective before adding artists and patrons
 - Plan for productions you can reasonably accomplish safely

Artists (actors, singers, dancers, musicians, SMs)

- Consider every activity during the artist's daily journey:
 - Auditions
 - Rehearsals
 - Warmups, classes
 - Fittings
 - Performances
 - Understudies/swings
 - Breaks and green rooms
 - Dressing rooms and washrooms
 - Media interviews
 - Education and donor gatherings
 - Touring, including travel and accommodation

Artists (actors, singers, dancers, musicians, SMs)

- Physical and vocal exertion make the droplets that carry the virus spread further than talking
- Physical distancing of 6' apart will not be sufficient for most actors, singers, dancers and musicians (especially those who play wind and brass instruments)
- Plan for artists to be distanced from the audience
- Additional research needed; in the meantime, be cautious (remember “social contract”)

Artists (actors, singers, dancers, musicians, SMs)

- Actors' Equity Announces Core Principles Needed to Support Safe and Healthy Theatre Productions (May 26, 2020, Actors' Equity Association, U.S.)
<https://www.actorsequity.org/news/PR/DrMichaelsMemo/>
- The principles include:
 - **The epidemic must be under control**, with effective testing, few new cases in the area and contact tracing.
 - **Individuals who may be infectious can be readily identified and isolated**, with frequent, regular and accurate testing with speedy results.
 - **The way we audition, rehearse, perform and stage manage may need to change** and the venues we work in may need to undergo changes in order to reduce the risk.
 - **Efforts to control COVID-19 exposure must be collaborative**, involving Equity members, employers, the union and all others involved in the production of theatre. There must be collective buy-in and ongoing evaluation and improvement of health and safety practices.

Stagehands and Production Staff

- Consider every activity during their daily journey:
 - Construction – costumes, hair and makeup, props, scenic construction, scenic art
 - Technical work – lighting, sound, projections, rigging, automation
 - Truck loading and deliveries, load-in, set-up
 - Rehearsals and performances – onstage, backstage, crew room, green room
 - Strike, load-out
- The Safe Way Forward (June 12, 2020) A Joint Report of the DGA, SAG-AFTRA, IATSE and Teamsters' Committees for COVID-19 Safety Guidelines <https://www.sagaftra.org/'-safe-way-forward'-joint-report-dga-sag-aftra-iatse-and-teamsters-covid-19-safety-guidelines>
- IATSE Stagecraft Guidelines – under development

Patrons

- Physical distancing must be considered throughout the patron journey
- Audience capacity will be a fixed number based on
 - Locally permitted maximum gathering size and
 - Physical distancing requirements
 - The lower of these numbers is the audience capacity
- Examples:
 - Permitted gathering is 100 people; venue has 1,000 seats; **audience capacity is 100 people**
 - Permitted gathering is 100 people; venue has 250 seats; physical distancing allows 50 people; **audience capacity is 50 people**
- The only way to gather more people together is to put them in more space

Patrons

- Reduce touch points
 - Ticket scanning (turnstiles?, ushers do not touch mobile phones); Box Office
 - Automatic doors, remove doors to larger, multi-staff washrooms
 - Self serve options (high end vending machines)
 - No open drinks (cans, bottles, RTDs), food
 - Credit/debit card only
 - Re-consider how programs are shared and distributed (online app, other tools)
- Address bottle necks
 - Front door entry (timed entry, open front doors earlier)
 - Bars and concessions (app to facilitate pre-ordering, order-from-seat)
 - Washrooms (ushers to crowd control)
 - Exit similar to airplane seats, closest to the exits. Remain in seats until usher signal)

Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide (May 11, 2020)

1. Planning When to Reopen
2. Patron Education
3. Worker Health and Hygiene
4. Sanitizing the Venue
5. Ingress and Egress
6. FOH Circulation, Food and Beverage and Merchandise
7. Production Issues
8. Legal Issues
9. Resources for further reading



Guide to Reopening Theatrical Venues

Performing Arts Center Consortium (May 15, 2020)

- Guiding Principles and Practices
- Communication Strategies
- Reopening Phasing
- Mitigation Principles
- Risk Assessments – Exposure level, Potential Mitigating Controls and Impact
 - Guest
 - Visiting Company and BOH Staff
 - FOH Staff
 - Office Staff



- Additional Resources
 - Facilities/Custodial - CDC Guidance, PACC Housekeeping MOP Example
 - Health Screening / Contact Tracing

Baby steps...

- Plan for a small event to test your procedures
- Hold a post-event review with staff – evaluate what went well and what needs improvement
- Survey artists, workers and patrons to understand whether they felt safe
- Make changes, as needed
- Watch what's happening in other places
- Adjust if cases increase and be prepared to pivot and shut down, if needed
- Get it right the first time, or the whole industry will be affected

Our new normal...

- Physical distancing is likely to be needed for months, perhaps years
- Be very obvious about health precautions
- Consider what permanent changes need to be made to protect theatres against the second wave of cases, seasonal flu and the next pandemic
 - Programming
 - Operations
 - Venues
- There may be an increased role for event medical and security people to assist with screening, and for health and safety people to assist with procedures and training
- Touchless operations (ticket taking, auto doors, pre-order/order from seat apps)
- Mask wearing

Opportunities

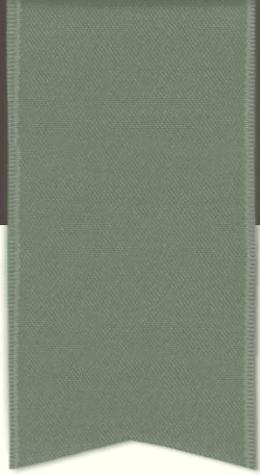
- Review and update your vision, mission and values.
- Review operations for efficiencies (short & long term)
- Update manuals, policies, procedures
- Innovate re pre-vaccine programming: hybrid events with live streaming (comedy, concerts, small-scale productions); exhibits
- Monetize online content (see NAC Nanos research)
- Partner, share the risk
- Figure out collectively how to find, support and deliver the work of artists who can help us understand our feelings about ourselves and our world.

Communications

- Build confidence in your health and safety measures; Show how you are adhering to the recommended H&S precautions.
- Be clear about refund policies (and be flexible in pre-vaccine period)
- Explain what to expect
- Engage online influencers and media
- Strengthen online personality and engagement; Utilize your new content development skills
- Document this story – its part of your history!

Summary

- Be realistic about your ability to resume operations safely
- Theatre will return, but it will take time and we'll need to adapt
- Collaborate with other venues to plan cohesive requirements
- As a theatre community, creativity and problem-solving are our **super-powers**, and they're needed now more than ever
- “There is no task so urgent that it cannot be completed safely”
- Remember, we need to
 - Keep our artists, workers and volunteers healthy
 - Create theatre environments where audiences feel comfortable to return



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