

SOCIETY OF
**LONDON
THEATRE**

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**UK
THEATRE**

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How we supported our members during the pandemic

Society of London Theatre & UK Theatre

March 2020 - April 2022

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Introduction

When theatres had to close from 16 March 2020, few would have predicted what a long and painful road it would be to full reopening. The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) and UK Theatre were thrust into the spotlight to support our members and the wider sector as best we could, through an unprecedented time.

Following the end of official COVID-19 measures on 1 April 2022, this report sets out a timeline of events and details our responses to the numerous challenges of the pandemic, to ensure a record exists. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and of course there are things that we would have done differently and lessons that we have learnt, but as an organisation we are proud of the tireless work of the board and the executive. This document seeks to accurately record the successes and frustrations of this extraordinary period.

Over the past two years, we have:

- Produced a total of **227 newsletters** to members and non-members
- Organised **18 pandemic-specific webinars** for both members and non-members, plus **5** for freelancers
- Had **55 SOLT board meetings** and **54 UK Theatre board meetings**
- Had members and representatives from the SOLT & UK Theatre boards sit on **4 DCMS** (Department of Culture, Media and Sport) **working groups**

(Science, Audience Behaviour and Insights, Performers and Performing Companies and Touring) and **6 SOLT/UK Theatre working groups**

- Held **7** SOLT Executive Committee (Strategy & Finance) meetings and **5** UK Theatre FSC (Finance & Strategy Committee) meetings
- Generated **15+** surveys to support our lobbying
- Put out over **30** statements to press in reaction to government announcements
- Delivered our **#BackonStage** and **Love your local Theatre** campaigns to encourage audiences back to theatre and secured **£2.8 million** in partnership support
- Issued **427 daily press updates** for our boards and press representatives across the industry, and updated our media briefing notes frequently to reflect changes in government position
- Communicated our work on social media and increased our LinkedIn followers from 500 to **10,000+**
- Led by Sam Mendes, SOLT & UK Theatre created and administered the **Theatre Artists Fund**

Theatre is an ecosystem and we were aware that many, particularly in the

freelance sector, did not have access to information and would benefit from our updates, so we ensured that our webinars and newsletters reached as wide an audience as possible throughout the pandemic.

“None of our work during this period would have been possible without the members and their representatives who were so generous with their time, expertise and support.”

Our work ran parallel to other initiatives and advocacy groups such as We Make Events, Freelancers Make Theatre Work and Inc Arts. We also recognise the major impact made by the 14 charities under ACTING FOR OTHERS which distributed millions of pounds to those in need.

Greater collaboration is a major positive to have emerged from the pandemic, which we hope we can build on as we finally move towards recovery.



Sheila Atim, Michael Longhurst, Ivanno Jeremiah – taken onstage at the Vaudeville Theatre during Constellations's run

Pandemic Timeline

Government actions & global events

Our actions and responses

March 2020

Broadway announces shutdown

12

Emergency board meeting is held to discuss options. At this point theatre was seen as far less risky than large sports gatherings and the UK was pushing for herd immunity

4pm: Scottish government advises cancellation of events with more than **500** people

16

Following discussions with DCMS, SOLT & UK Theatre announce the **immediate closure** of all theatres

5.10pm: PM broadcasts to nation and urges people to avoid theatres but stops short of ordering closure

17

The Rose Street office and TKTS booth are closed with everyone who can working remotely

SOLT & UK Theatre engage with press about the potential impact of theatres having to close

18

SOLT & UK Theatre bring together leading theatrical charities as part of pan-industry COVID-19 support effort and **theatresupport.info** is created

Chancellor announces Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (Furlough)

20

With no clear end date and box offices inundated with refund requests, SOLT issues a **statement** to West End audiences that performances are suspended until 26 April. Productions continue to cancel on a rolling monthly basis until September. Lobbying commences regarding the 14 day refund policy and credit chargebacks.

Arts Council England announces £160 million emergency funding

24

Lobbying continues around 14 day refund policy and credit chargebacks

March 2020 (cont.)

Lockdown measures legally come into force

26

April 2020

DCMS committee launches inquiry into impact of pandemic on culture sector

8

Lockdown is extended for 'at least three weeks' and government sets out the five tests before restrictions will ease

16

Details of Self-Employment Income Support Scheme are announced

30

May 2020

5

SOLT & UK Theatre furlough or part furlough a total of **51** staff during the pandemic, but continue to maintain a comprehensive service to members against a background of significantly reduced income across 2020 and 2021

3

SOLT & Equity reach a deal to support performers while theatre productions remain suspended

14

Theatre means business.info is created as an online learning resource to support the sector with recovery planning and resilience. Fully developed in-house, it hosts **19** specially-created webinars and promoted **43** partner webinars – all available free of charge to members and non-members – fostering partnerships with consultants, agencies and members who kindly donated their time to help the sector

22

The Phantom of the Opera in South Korea opens with safety first protocols

23

Members survey shows **70%** will run out of cash by year end without government support. This data drives our lobbying. Our key asks are to protect the workforce (salaried and freelance), emergency funding for the sector and better tax relief schemes for future recovery

May 2020 (cont.)

PM announces conditional plans for the lifting of lockdown, and says that people who cannot work from home should return to work but avoid public transport

SEISS round one opens - this first grant is capped at **80%** average monthly trading profit up to a maximum of **£7,500**

10
15

We launch an industry wide press campaign highlighting the issues facing the sector which gains significant traction. We specifically target press outlets that are likely to be picked up by government and have significant support from **LBC** and the **Daily Telegraph**. We provide briefing notes for a wide range of industry spokespeople including James Graham on **Question Time** on 21 May

George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was murdered in Minneapolis by a 44-year-old white police officer, leading to a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement around the world

20

We start work with Kobna Holdbrook-Smith, Tali Pelman and Amanda Parker from Inc Arts which results in the award-winning **Speak - Listen - Reset - Heal** four-day anti-racism conference

Alongside other sectors, SOLT & UK Theatre give evidence to government to demonstrate the theatre industry's need for support

28

DCMS Entertainment and Events Working Group is formed

29

Julian Bird represents the sector on the following working groups: rehearsals and pre-production, operating venues safely and touring

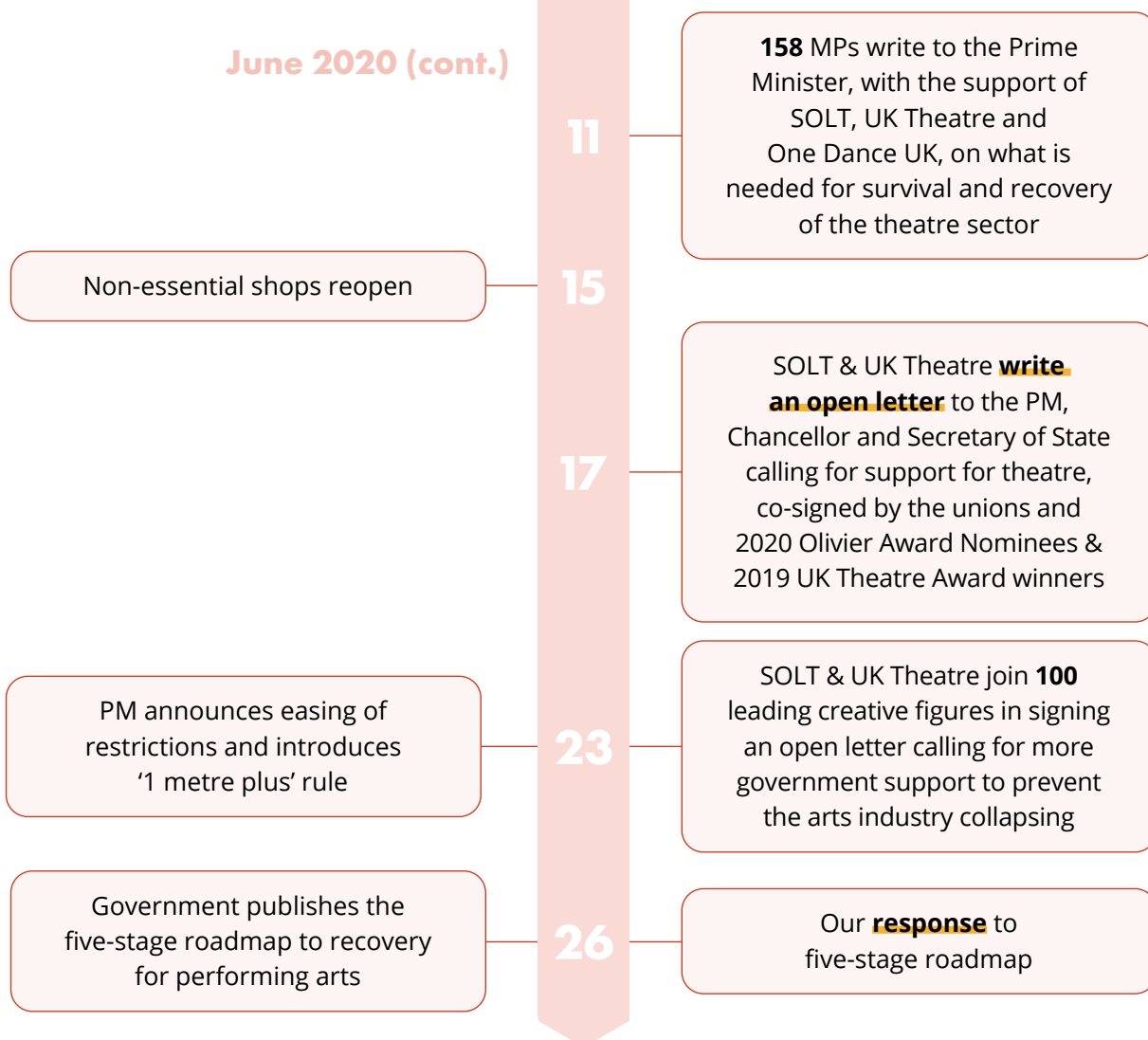
June 2020

DCMS Committee inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on DCMS sector. Oral evidence given for the industry by Julian Bird

4
9

Sam Mendes' **article in FT** calls on Netflix and Amazon to support the sector, followed by an interview with Andrew Marr. This leads to meetings with the Treasury and the creation of the **Theatre Artists Fund**

June 2020 (cont.)



Five-stage roadmap to recovery for the performing arts

Stage One

Rehearsal and training (no audiences and adhering to social distancing guidelines)

Stage Two

Performances for broadcast and recording purposes (adhering to social distancing guidelines)

Stage Three

Performances outdoors with an audience plus pilots for indoor performances with a limited distance audience from July 11. We will now also work with the sector to get small pilots started as soon as possible and will set out further details in due course

Stage Four

Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (but with a limited distanced audience indoors)

Stage Five

Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)

June 2020 (cont.)

30

Julian Bird gives oral evidence in House of Lords Communication and Digital Committee Session on impact to sector

July 2020

2

Oliver Dowden visits Palladium – new COVID-19 safety measures are demonstrated

3

Performing Arts Venue Relief Fund in Scotland is announced – a targeted **£10 million** fund to support Scotland’s performing arts venues is announced

4

Pubs and restaurants reopen, no date for theatres to reopen

5

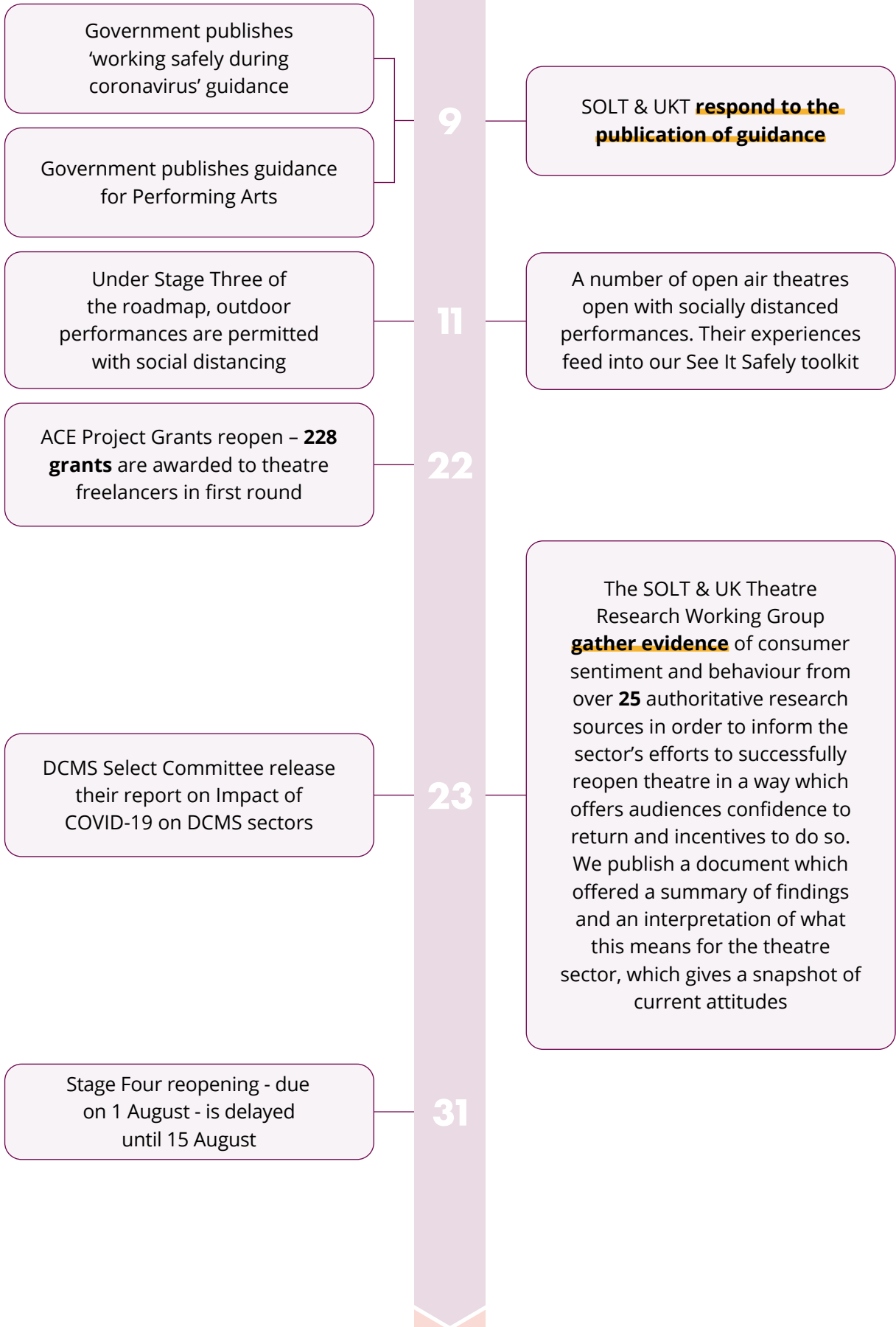
Government announces **£1.57bn** Culture Recovery Fund – 15 weeks after theatres close

Significant lobbying had gone on behind the scenes to secure the package of support. The Cultural Recovery fund is welcomed by the industry as it is seen as a lifeline for many, but concerns regarding support for freelancers continue to be raised

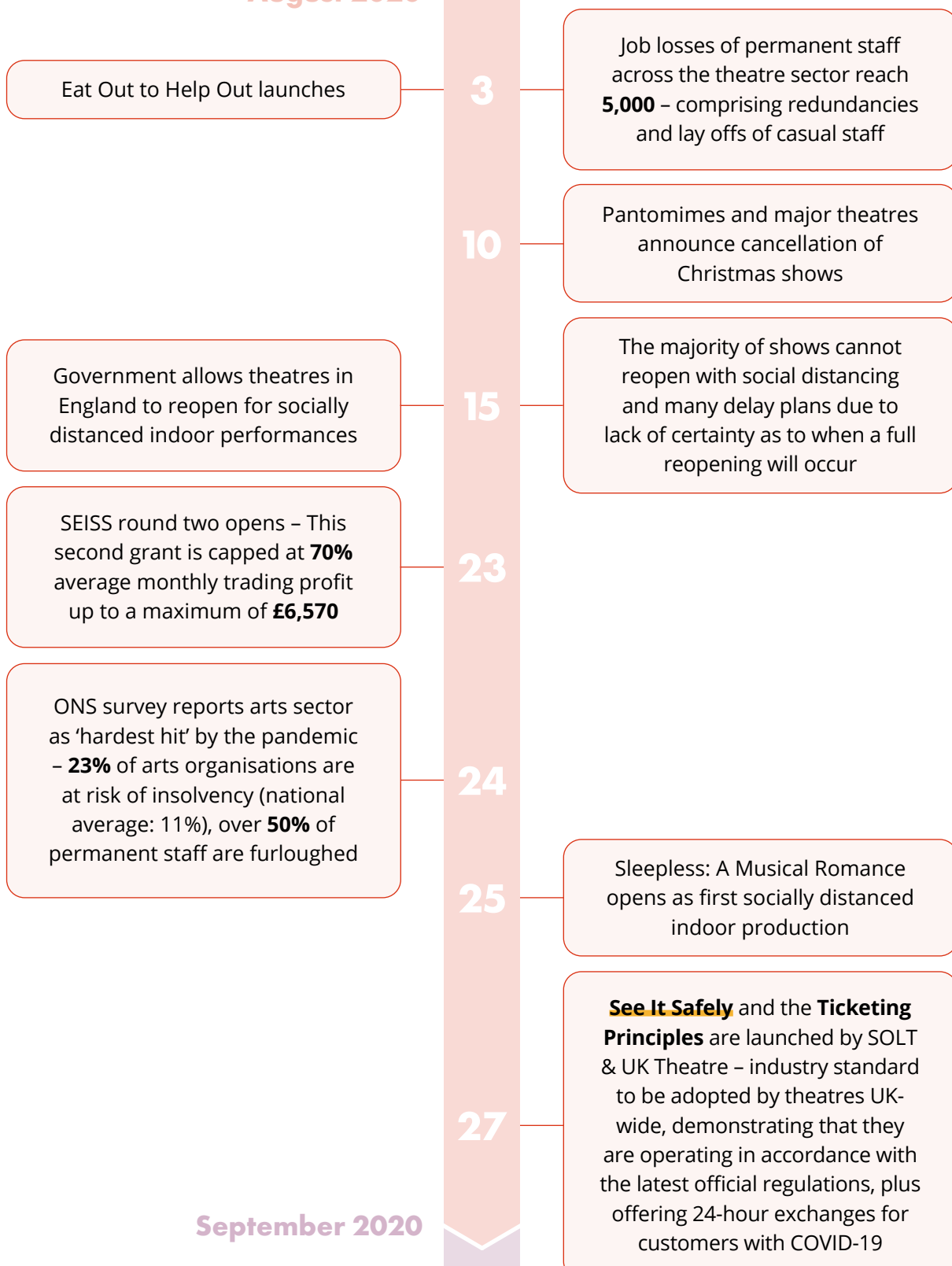
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Theatre Artists Fund is established by director Sam Mendes, SOLT & UK Theatre, administered by the Theatre Development Trust. The Fund goes on to award **£9.8m** in emergency grants to struggling theatre freelancers ineligible for government support

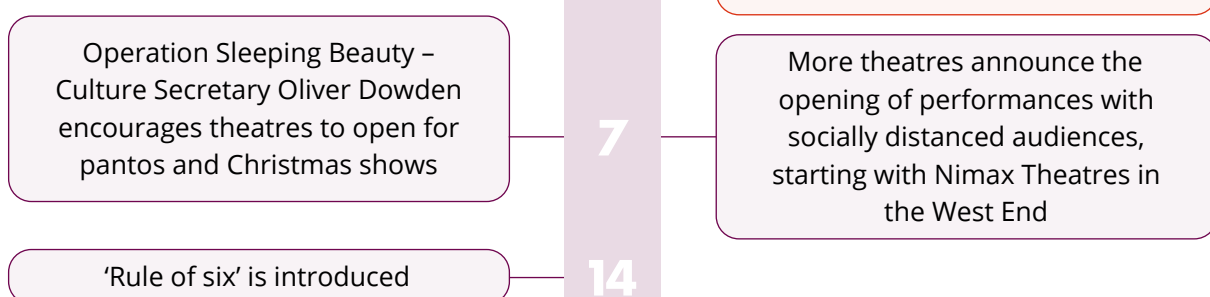
July 2020 (cont.)



August 2020



September 2020



September 2020 (cont.)

PM announces a return to restrictions including a return to working from home and a **10pm** hospitality curfew

Chancellor's Winter Economy Plan commits to back only 'viable' jobs and announces a third round of SEISS at **20%** of trading profits

Pubs forced to shut at **10pm**

22

SOLT & UK Theatre work closely with DCMS to lobby for government support on effective cancellation insurance in an uncertain climate. Data and evidence concerning how production plans would be impacted by a lack of insurance cover is collected and processed

24

The SOLT & UK Theatre Audience Research Working Group collaborates with Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM) on a UK-wide audience research initiative in partnership with **120** participating venues. The information gathered supports government lobbying & venue recovery planning

28

October 2020

£53m Welsh Cultural Recovery Fund is announced. **£7m** is available as direct funding to freelancers, followed by **£3.5m** in November and **£8.9m** in February 2021

First batch of CRF grants is announced **29** weeks after theatres closed and **14** weeks after the CRF was announced. Batches two and three follow over subsequent weeks

5

First Managing COVID Safely course to support theatre industry

8

12

SOLT & UK Theatre lobby government to achieve a temporary reduction in the rate of **VAT** charged on theatre tickets. We also research and disseminate solutions to our members to allow the potential for productions at culturally exempt venues to benefit from the reduction

29

29 Oct, 3 Nov, 10 Nov, 24 Nov: **Speak - Listen - Reset - Heal** conference takes place, bringing together **3,000** theatre industry leaders

November 2020

Round three of SEISS increases to **80%** - The Chancellor announces that round 3 of SEISS will increase from **55%** to **80%** capped at **£7,500**. No information is forthcoming about round four

5

The tier system overview

The following three statutory instruments establish this new three-tiered system:

Medium local alert level areas (tier 1)

- People must not socialise in groups of more than six (referred to as the 'rule of six').
- Bars, pubs and clubs will be closed between 10pm and 5am.

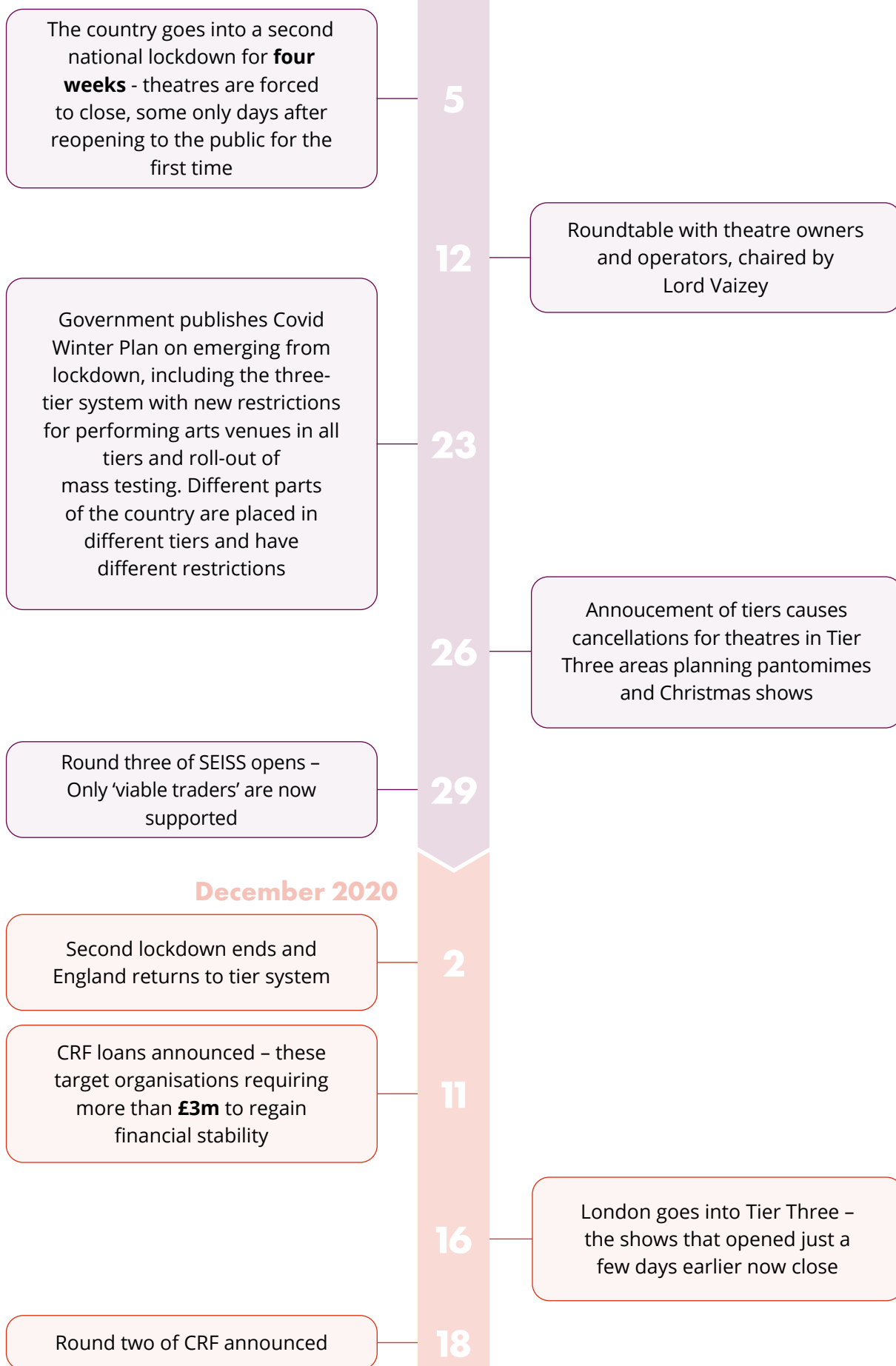
High local alert level areas (tier 2)

- People must not socialise with others outside their household or support bubble in an indoor setting.
- People must not socialise in groups of more than six when outside, including in gardens.
- As in medium alert level areas, bars, pubs and clubs will be closed between 10pm and 5am.

Very high local alert level areas (tier 3)

- In addition to the high-local level restrictions on socialising indoors, people must not socialise with others outside their household or support bubble either in private gardens or most outdoor venues. This includes outdoor hospitality venues and ticketed events.
- The 'rule of six' will continue to apply for meetings in other outdoor areas, such as parks, beaches or the countryside.
- Pubs and bars can only remain open if they operate as if they were a restaurant. They can only serve alcohol with a meal.
- People inside very-high local alert areas should avoid travelling outside these areas. Exceptions to this include if people are travelling for work, education, youth services or to meet caring responsibilities.
- People in very high alert level areas should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK.

Other requirements, including social distancing rules and wearing face coverings, continue to apply in all areas.



December 2020 (cont.)

19

London goes into a newly created Tier Four – plans for reopening in early 2021 begin to look unstable

30

Much of the country in Tier Four – Delta variant spreads around the country

More emergency funding is raised through the Theatre Artists Fund

January 2021

6

UK enters third national lockdown

22

ONS data reveals a disproportionate impact – a **44% drop** – in the employment of women of colour in the arts workforce

February 2021

2

Mental health warnings issued – three support organisations report increases in ‘mental health first aid’ calls

SOLT & UK Theatre open booking for a series of **10** affordable mental health and wellbeing webinars for the theatre industry, to run in April and May

22

PM announces new ‘**Roadmap**’ – ‘not before’ dates are published for resuming of live performance with and without social distancing

March 2021

3

Budget day – the Chancellor announces a range of measures and a **£65bn** package designed to steward the country through the next stage of the pandemic

10

Confirmation of Step Three of the roadmap will be on 17 May, allowing some theatres to prepare for reopening with social distancing

March 2021 (cont.)

16

A year after theatres closed their doors, a SOLT & UK Theatre **'One Year On' survey** of theatre businesses, venues and individuals reveals that at least **25%** of theatre freelancers have gone out of business, and **95%** of organizations are worse off since COVID-19

SOLT & UK Theatre launch **#FirstInLastOut** campaign to raise money and awareness for the Theatre Artists Fund to support freelance theatre workers in need – a social media and press campaign is backed by dozens of high-profile performers and creatives

29

Step One: Outdoor gatherings allowed, stay at home rule ends

31

SOLT & UK Theatre publish a **new inclusive recruitment guide**, to ensure that the workforce we hire to work in our theatres and organisations is diverse and represents the UK population

April 2021

12

Step Two: non-essential retail, outdoor venues and gyms reopen

17

17 April - 3 May: The World Snooker Championships at Sheffield Crucible are the first pilot in the government's 'Events Research Programme'

May 2021

Step Three: 30 people allowed to mix outdoors, 'rule of six' indoors. Theatres allowed to reopen with social distancing

17

A number of theatres reopen with social distancing

SOLT & UK Theatre release stats showing that theatres in the UK **save the NHS an annual £102m** by benefitting the physical and mental health of their surrounding communities

20

UK Theatre's Business Plan 2021-22 is published. Its aim is to support the sector in being relevant, resilient, proactive and innovative, and to help the industry rebuild during the pandemic

June 2021

PM confirms that Step Four will be **delayed until 19 July**

14

This causes significant challenges for shows planning to open to full audiences

Government announce third round of CRF funding

25

July 2021

SOLT & UK Theatre members meet with Arts Minister & urge government to introduce a testing regime as an alternative to full self-isolation for contacts of a positive COVID-19 case, predicting mass cancellations and closures as theatres are allowed to reopen fully

7

Remaining lockdown restrictions lift in England, meaning theatres can open to full audiences for the first time in **16 months**

19

SOLT & UK Theatre issue a **statement in response** to theatres finally being allowed to open. As predicted, the 'pingdemic' causes huge operational problems for shows that have opened

Theatres in Northern Ireland reopen for the first time since the pandemic began

27

July 2021 (cont.)

29

To ensure the learnings from the pandemic around flexible working weren't forgotten, SOLT & UK Theatre commission a **Remote Working Toolkit** from Parents and Carers in Performing Arts (PiPA)

August 2021

A government-backed insurance scheme is announced for live events

6

SOLT & UK Theatre **welcome the announcement**, but criticise it as unaffordable and not comprehensive

September 2021

PM unveils winter plan for **COVID-19: 'Plan B'**

14

October 2021

Chancellor unveils Autumn 2021 Budget, including an increase in Theatre Tax Relief, temporary Business Rates Relief and increased funding for the DCMS and Local Authorities

27

November 2021

In response to bullying, harassment and discrimination challenges faced by the industry, we publish a revised version of our **10 Principles** of standards for safeguarding in our working spaces, supported by **22 leading industry bodies**. We also represent the theatre sector on the DCMS/Creative UK's Cultural Sector Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination roundtable group

1

December 2021

1

Julian Bird announces he will be stepping down as SOLT & UK Theatre Chief Executive in May 2022

2

SOLT & UK Theatre ask audiences to play part in upholding **See It Safely** measures, including face coverings

8

PM announces move to 'Plan B'

10

Facemasks become mandatory in indoor venues

15

NHS COVID Pass App becomes mandatory in specific settings, such as nightclubs and large venues

16

The Working From Home directive is another barrier for audiences, but mandatory face coverings are welcomed by venues, staff and cast members

21

Chancellor announces **£30m** top-up to the Cultural Recovery Fund in response to the Christmas and New Year uncertainties faced by the cultural sector due to Omicron

23

SOLT & UK Theatre **issue a statement** amid mass show cancellations caused by cast and crew illness due to the rise of the Omicron variant

Donors including Arts Council England, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and Backstage Trust raise **£2m in 48 hours** for the Theatre Artists Fund to help support theatre workers affected by Omicron-related cancellations over the festive period

January 2022

19

Government announces end of Plan B measures in England, including end of mandatory home working, face coverings and COVID-19 passes

SOLT & UK Theatre **issue a statement** strongly encouraging continued wearing of face coverings inside theatres

February 2022

15

Launch of Publica report, **Securing the Future of London's Theatres**

Government & Lobbying

We kept Members of Parliament and Peers up to date on the impact of the pandemic on the sector and, when necessary, supported individual members with specific cases or issues that needed to be raised.

Our immediate response was to open direct and always-available channels of communication with senior officials in the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and other departments across government.

Through these channels, we provided evidence of the value of the theatre sector and, alongside colleagues from the broader cultural sector, were able to influence the government into delivering the **£1.57bn** Cultural Recovery Fund, a lifeline to many members. We also secured substantial fiscal interventions through sustained engagement and advocacy for the sector: VAT relief on tickets, business rates relief and a significant increase in the rate of Theatre Tax Relief to support the creation of new work.

SOLT & UK Theatre also chaired the DCMS working group on audience safety and regulations during the reopening of entertainment venues, leading the development of safety mitigations and policy to support performing arts venues in making their buildings safe for staff and audiences.

Alongside our direct input into the central government response, we responded to over a dozen parliamentary, devolved administration and government consultations and inquiries on issues

such as COVID-19 certification and how to promote the reopening of Britain as a tourism destination.

SOLT & UK Theatre kept Members of Parliament and Peers up to date on the impact of the pandemic on the sector and supported individual members with specific cases or issues that needed to be raised in parliament, in government or at a local authority level.

Throughout the pandemic, we maintained core activities and pre-existing priorities. We worked with DCMS and Department for Education (DfE) to bring sector expertise to the development of flexi-apprentices. We remain an active member of the DCMS EU Touring Working Group and have developed performing arts-specific language for the government guidance on working in the EU post-Brexit. We continue to champion the sector in parliament through the Theatre APPG and have developed close relationships with ministerial and opposition front bench teams.

As we emerge from the pandemic, there will naturally be a shift in focus and priority for our public affairs work, and we will be shortly sharing our new priorities for 2022 with the membership.

Press

We needed to enhance our lobbying with a strategic media campaign that was sensitive and reflective of ongoing discussions with the government, whilst being flexible and adaptable to a very fluid and changing landscape.

We adopted the following three core principles when delivering our press campaign:

1. Adopt a campaign mentality and agree a set of key messages, which was reiterated by all members in media and stakeholder conversations, ensuring the sector spoke with a unified public voice. Ensure SOLT & UK Theatre could act as a central resource to support members in their dealings with the press, providing briefing notes, training opportunities (for example a crisis comms webinar we organised in September 2021) and regular PR meetings to share good practice, circulate press requests and discuss relevant comms issues
2. Be seen to be challenging, whilst collaborative. Utilise the media to explain the realities and complexities of the theatre business, and the challenges we were facing as a sector balanced with practical and creative solutions.
3. Remain mindful of tone. Ensure messaging was respectful and understanding of the current situation, our asks were clearly rooted in the long-term social, economic and cultural importance

of the UK theatre industry, and that we adapted and finessed our message dependent on our success with government.

Our campaign was split into three phases:

Phase one: Immediate - Using the media to lobby the government with the clear message that it was neither practical nor economical to reopen our theatres whilst imposing strict social distancing.

Phase two: On-going - Sharing positive stories of how theatres were engaging with their communities and giving back during lockdown. Continually reiterating the importance of the theatre industry to the UK (economically, socially and culturally) and the value of our highly skilled workforce, both on and offstage, freelance and in-house, many of whom were facing huge uncertainty and in need of support.

Phase three: Rebuilding audience confidence - Creating an evidence-based press and marketing campaign to reassure audiences that it was safe to come back to our theatres, once we had a clear road map for reopening.

We identified a small diverse group of key spokespeople - who represented a broad cross section of the industry including commercial, subsidised and

independent theatres as well as the wider theatre ecology - that we put forward alongside, and to complement, Julian Bird. We ensured via the press group that everyone was fully briefed with our key asks of government and could share their specific experiences. It was vital that whilst the concerns of different areas of the industry varied, there was a cohesion to our messaging, to present a strong case

for support and survival. We continually updated and shared media briefing notes throughout the pandemic and focused on press outlets that would be likely to have the most traction with government to support our campaign. Due to a sympathetic press we are able to gain a lot of coverage which played a significant role in securing additional support for the sector.

Workforce & Working Culture

While our members faced insurmountable challenges, fighting to save their businesses, we needed to identify how we could give practical support both in the immediate and long term. We also tried to listen to the wider workforce and understand the economic and mental challenges they were facing.

Support for theatre workers and freelancers

In the early days of the pandemic, we created theatresupport.info, an online hub for the UK's leading theatrical charities. This meant that anyone needing support could easily find what services were available.

Theatre Artists Fund

In the Summer of 2020, led by Sam Mendes, SOLT & UK Theatre launched the [Theatre Artists Fund](#) with the aim of providing emergency support for theatre workers and freelance professionals across the UK. The fund was kickstarted with a generous donation of **£500,000** by Netflix and supported, amongst others, by Susie Sainsbury and the Arts Council.

So far over **£9.8m** has been fundraised and **9,964 grants** have been given out to those in need.

Theatre Helpline

We continue to support the [Theatre Helpline](#), a referral service for anyone who needs information and advice, and we are in the process of updating it with additional Live Chat functionality.

Diversity and inclusion

Following the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, there was a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Following consultation with Amanda Parker, we [released a statement](#) setting out our intentions to improve the way we worked, and committing to support the sector to eradicate racism. At the same

time, we **created a report** that outlined all the diversity and inclusion initiatives and resources we had provided over the last few years, to assist our members in their work in this area.

We also created an **online resource** outlining information and guidance available for any organisations wanting to improve their working practices around anti-racism, diversity and inclusion, and to date this has been accessed over **4,000** times. To guide our thinking and practice in this area we formed an Inclusion and Anti-Racism Working Group, which continues to meet regularly.

We worked closely with Kobna Holdbrook-Smith, Tali Pelman and Amanda Parker from Inc Arts in the development and delivery of Inc Arts' **Speak - Listen - Reset - Heal** anti-racism conference, attended by over **3,000** senior industry leaders over four sessions. The conference has recently won two Gold Anthem Awards. An evaluation report of the conference can be read **here**.

Anti-Racism Touring Rider

In Summer 2021, following the launch of the Anti-Racism Touring Rider, we joined the steering group committee and formed a working group so our membership could consult on the contents, and so that we could provide feedback from a venue perspective.

Board diversity and staff inclusivity

We began an **18-month** process to diversify our Boards. This included: monitoring the skills and demographics of our Boards (2021 survey results available **here**); publicly advertising Board co-opted places alongside our usual

elections; and forming a Board Recruitment Working Group to guide any decisions. Our new UK Theatre Board members were **announced on 7 December 2021**, and the SOLT Board's diversification work continues.

We have commissioned Tonic Theatre to undertake an audit of our internal working practices, with the aim of making our working culture more inclusive.

Mental health and wellbeing

We created a series of 10 mental health and wellbeing webinars on our learning platform **theatremeansbusiness.info**, half of which were for employers and the other half for workers. To date over **850** people have attended the live webinars or watched the recordings. We also updated our mental health and wellbeing **online resource**, which has been accessed over **4,500 times**.

Safeguarding

In Summer 2021, the issue of bullying, harassment and discrimination came to the fore across the creative industries, with many people talking about their experiences on social media. In response, DCMS formed a Safeguarding Working Group with Creative UK and representatives from all the creative industries. The group was tasked with eradicating bullying, harassment and discrimination. Through regular meetings, the need for an Independent Standards Authority emerged. SOLT & UK Theatre continue to be involved in these meetings, and will be holding a webinar in the coming months to provide further information on this area of work. We also formed a Safeguarding Working

Group to guide our thinking on this work.

In 2021 we relaunched the **10 Principles for Safe and Inclusive Workspaces**, following their initial launch in 2016 after the appearance of the #MeToo Movement. We provided a free poster and a supporting document in English and Welsh. This initiative had the support of **22** sector bodies, including membership organisations, trade unions and other workers' support bodies. We are now in the process of encouraging our members to publicly state their commitment to the **10 Principles** on our websites, and are looking for organisations to share their journey as they work through the implementation of these Principles.

Skills and development

Although our training and events programme was paused for two years, within the first few months of the pandemic we created an online learning resource **theatremeansbusiness.info**, partnering up with several trainers and support organisations to provide free webinars to assist our members with their recovery. To date the **19** webinars have had over **4,000** views, both in-person and from the recordings.

As with many organisations, we adjusted the way we worked so we could still operate, within government guidelines. This was perhaps best exemplified by the return of our careers fair **TheatreCraft**, which for the first time happened both online and in person at the Royal Opera House. Over **1,000** attendees engaged with over **60** exhibitors from around the country and attended **80** free online workshops providing practical advice about working offstage. The **7** panel talks that were live-streamed on the day are

available **here**. This digital offer provided a new framework to widen our reach; TheatreCraft North will be piloted in Manchester in late 2022.

Get Into Theatre is a website that helps people find all the information and opportunities they need to pursue a successful career in theatre in the UK. We had supported this initiative since its launch. In 2022, as it announced it was becoming a standalone charity, we were able to continue our support – both strategically and financially – through our charity, the Theatre Development Trust.

Recruitment and retention

As the sector began its slow steps to recovery in 2021 and began hiring staff again for venue reopenings on a massive scale, we produced two guides to help our members 'build back better'. Our **Inclusive Recruitment Guide** directed members to the best resources available to ensure best practice could be followed. This has been downloaded over **3,500** times since launch. In partnership with Parents & Carers In Performing Arts (PIPA), our **Remote Working Toolkit** was commissioned to ensure that we capitalised on the advantages of working flexibly and outside of traditional workspaces. This toolkit has been downloaded over **1,700** times since launch.

We also conducted a survey with both our members and the wider workforce to better understand how the pandemic affected recruitment. The results enabled us to remind our members about the many resources we provide to support their recruitment. A webinar was held on 7 April discussing the findings with our members and a summary report will be published soon.

Industrial Affairs

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, a holding agreement was developed with Equity, which covered SOLT & UK Theatre commercial shows, to assist members when dealing with the initial impact of existing shows shutting down. Guidance was issued on the application of the force majeure clauses that existed in the collective agreements.

As lockdown continued, a suspend and extend agreement was put in place to provide members with a framework for retaining their artists and agreeing extensions to their contracts so that they would be in place when theatres were in a position to reopen. Variation agreements were also put in place for the SOLT & UK Theatre/Equity Creative Agreements and the UK Theatre/Equity Subsidised Theatre Agreement to deal with failure to produce and cancellation situations caused by COVID-19. On the announcement of the furlough scheme, an agreement was reached with BECTU to allow BECTU staff to be placed on furlough and practical guidance was issued to members on how to utilise the scheme.

To assist theatres with reopening, the Employment Relations team and the negotiating committees met regularly with Equity, the MU and BECTU to draft, negotiate and finalise variation agreements, which provided for temporary modifications to the collective agreements. The aim was to help the industry during the period of government restrictions and beyond, while theatres were still recovering and dealing with economic instability and uncertainty.

The team hosted webinars to clarify some points within these agreements.

Once the variation agreements were put in place and theatres reopened, the team met regularly with our committees and the unions to monitor and review the terms of the variation agreements, to discuss how to deal with issues arising from changing circumstances over the course of the pandemic, and to monitor the operation of the revised terms in practice. The team has held regular meetings for general managers and producers, providing a forum to discuss progress on talks with the unions and other practical issues the industry has faced as a result of COVID-19.

In 2022, we have started discussions with the unions as to what will happen to the rates and terms when the variation agreements come to an end.

Throughout the pandemic, the Employment Relations team has responded to hundreds of member queries relating to the impact of COVID-19 on shows, the application of the variation agreements, self-isolation and sick pay requirements, the union position regarding vaccinations, the furlough scheme and the redundancy process, amongst others.

Legal Affairs

We have advised members one-to-one on **over 350** legal matters, covering areas including employment, consumer issues (ticketing and refunds), commercial contracts (including force majeure) and immigration.

During the pandemic, SOLT & UK Theatre have provided a wide range of legal support, handling legal queries from over **140** SOLT & UK Theatre members. The majority of these concerned the impact of the pandemic.

We drafted a standardised force majeure clause for members to use in venue agreements to make it easier to operate in COVID-19 circumstances and obtained Counsel's Opinion on a number

of questions relating to imposing COVID-19 related requirements on staff, providing members with summary guidance.

We issued guidance notes on the collective redundancy consultation procedure and on potential alternatives to redundancy. Throughout, the Legal Team have supported the Employment Relations team in dealing with questions and drafting on the collective agreements, the variation agreements and contracts.



Risk & Safety

Our support for members was based on official government guidance, which we used as the basis for our COVID-19 FAQs document on safe working practices.

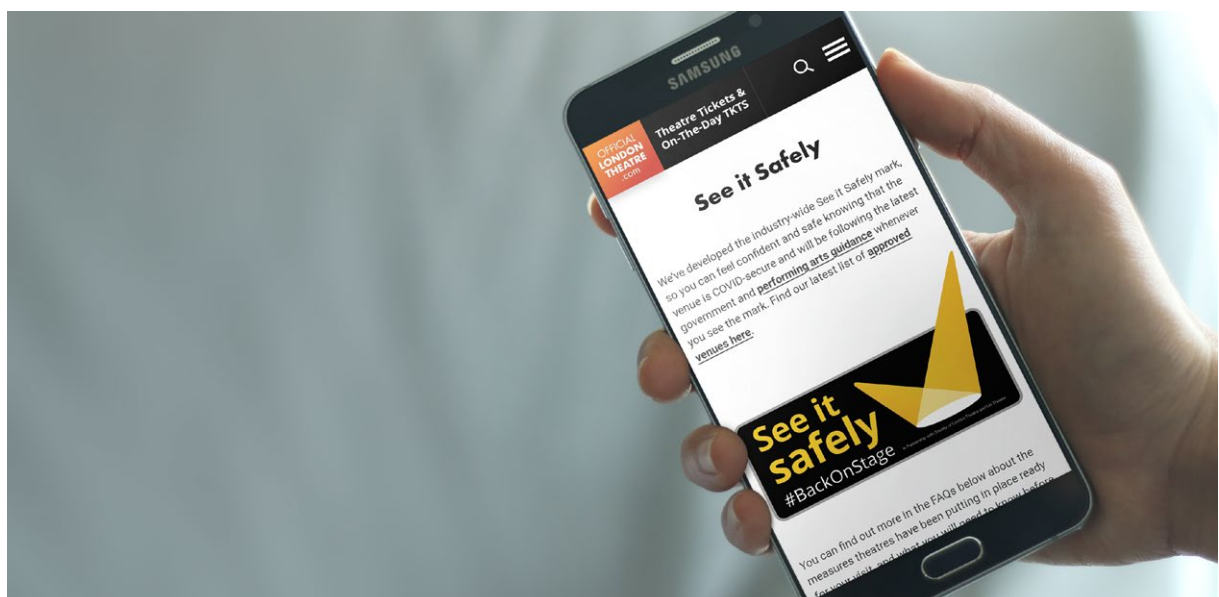
We made regular contributions to DCMS working parties (Science, Performers and Performing Companies and Touring, Venue Infrastructure, Audience Behaviour). We also supported Scottish Theatres during the crisis by being members of the Technical Advisory Group on Safer Systems (TAGSS).

Following the creation of the industry-wide **See It Safely standard** for venues and productions, we provided risk management support for applications to join the scheme. We also created a series of **Managing COVID-19 Safely courses**, running **49** sessions and training **over 700** people, including members, non-members, amateurs and unions from all four nations of the UK.

Alongside our COVID-19-specific work, we continued to supported members

on a range of Risk Management issues including security and counterterrorism, chairing the TOSCA security group for London and regional venues and the SOLT & UK Theatre Technical Committee, as well as active membership of the ABTT Safety Committee and the Standing Committee for Technical Standards.

Additionally, SOLT & UK Theatre are now active members of the Theatre Green Book Advisory Committee. The first two volumes of the book were published last year: Sustainable Productions and Sustainable Buildings. They were adopted throughout the industry, helping operators make theatre more sustainable. The third book, Sustainable Operations, was published in 2022.



Audience Engagement

Collaboration was key to delivering a long-term, unified, UK-wide campaign to rebuild audience confidence. The campaign had to be reactive and flexible, whilst working alongside shows' and theatres' individual marketing plans.

Collaboration was a key part of our planning. We formed a number of working groups including:

- **Ticketing Venue Group** with STAR
- **SOLT & UKT marcomms group and press group**
- **SOLT/UKT Audience Research Group** drawing on audience sentiment reports, collaborating with Morris Hargreaves and McIntyre (MHM) on a UK-wide audience research initiative in partnership with **120** participating venues.

Through a unique collaboration between Dewynters, AKA, Snow Creative, Litte Demon and Matt Hodges Design, we created the See It Safely mark and Ticketing Principles to reassure audiences. We also developed the **#BackOnStage** campaign to celebrate shows reopening and encourage the return of audiences.

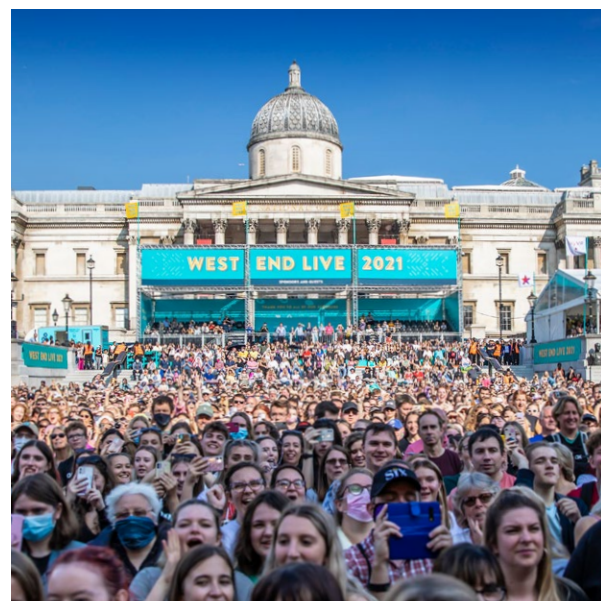
We worked closely with Visit Britain, linking in with their 'We're Good to Go' campaign for See It Safely approved venues, and we ensured that theatre was included in their Escape the Everyday campaign.

We were also invited to join the **London Tourism Recovery Board** to support the London & Partners Let's Do

London campaign. We contributed to this campaign and lobbied to ensure that theatre was featured. We are currently working with them on their international campaign which launches in May.

With a starting budget of £100k for the recovery campaign, we managed to secure a total of **£500k in free advertising** from Global Media, JC Decaux and Piccadilly Lights, plus **£120k from the Mayor's office** to support our Kids Week festival, Performance by Rankin and Show Time in Stations activation.

Through collaboration and partnerships, we raised **£2.8m** to support our members as they reopened and to continue to fly the flag for theatre.



Theatre Tokens

During the pandemic we added over **800** Sainsbury's and Waitrose stores to our already strong **1,160** Tesco and Morrisons sales locations. We also started negotiations with John Lewis, where we'll be launching in stores from July 2022.

We encouraged audiences to purchase Theatre Tokens as a way of supporting the industry while it was closed, using our **#IMissTheatre** campaign. In 2020, eGifts increased its contribution to **30%** of overall Theatre Tokens sales as customers further adopted the ease of digital gifting.

Since May 2021, we've partnered with O2 to offer their priority customers a match funded offer on Theatre Tokens up to **£10k** in value. The popularity of the scheme has meant we've sold **£220k** Tokens through the scheme within just the first **11 months**.

More than **90** of our member theatres and touring productions received free marketing support from us during the pandemic, reaching **3 million** Theatre Tokens subscribers with everything from fundraising campaigns to promotion of digital theatre streams.

Following the success of online redemption integration with Official London Theatre (with revenue growth of **8,500%***), we used the time when theatres were closed to finish integrations with many venues, who have been delighted with the results.

"We're absolutely delighted with the integration of online Theatre Token redemption on our website. Sales made using Theatre Tokens have doubled since we went live; customer contacts to our customer service team regarding redemption have all but disappeared; and the ease with which customers can redeem their Theatre Tokens has significantly improved. A great result!"

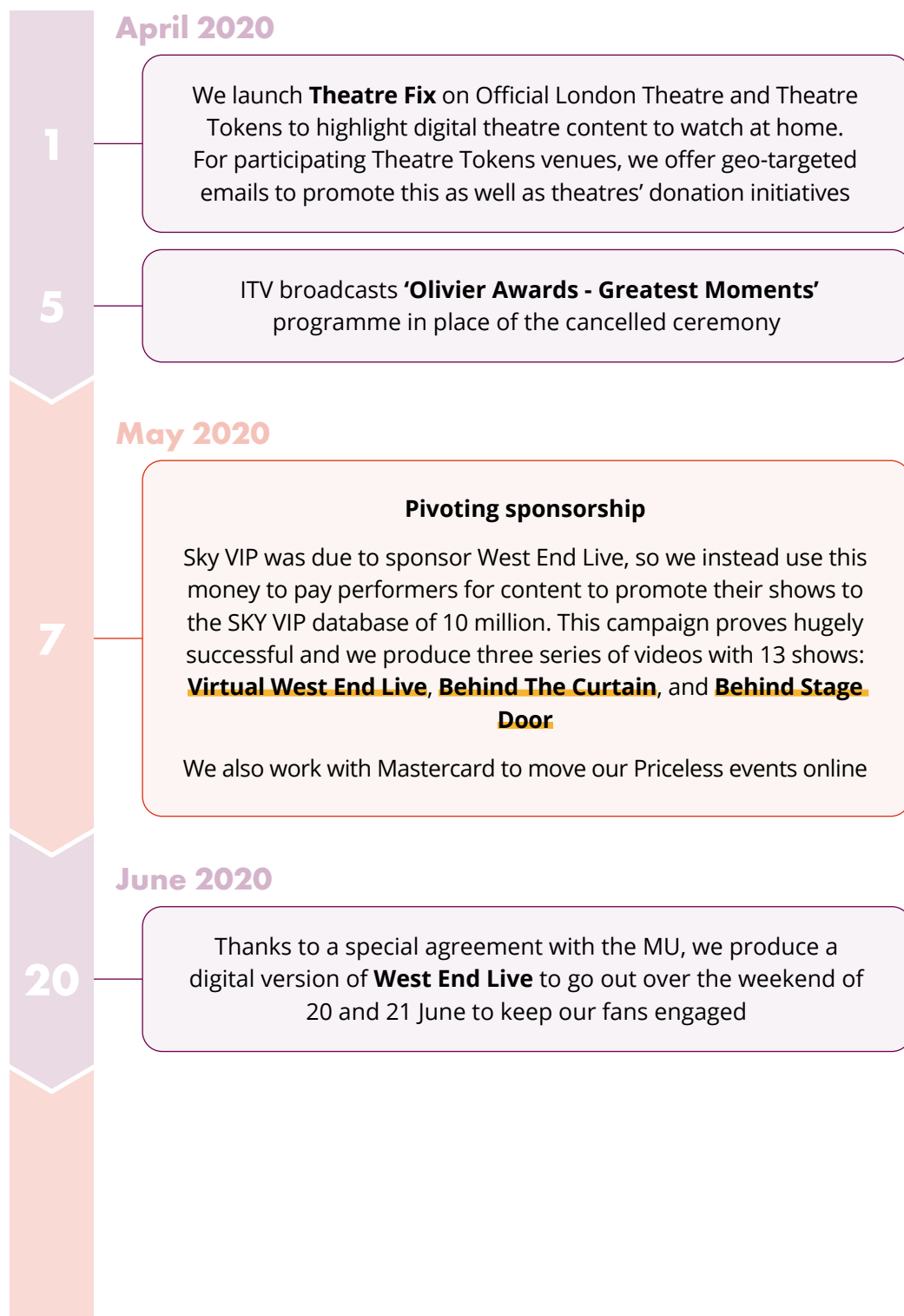
Paul Oxley, Head of Sales and Ticketing,
Delfont Mackintosh Theatres



*(Apr 20 – Oct 21 vs Apr 18 – Oct 19)

Timeline of B2C Activity

Staying connected to our audiences was a crucial part of our strategy. Official London Theatre's social channels have increased by over **200k** followers since March 2020 and ticket sales are currently on a par with 2019.



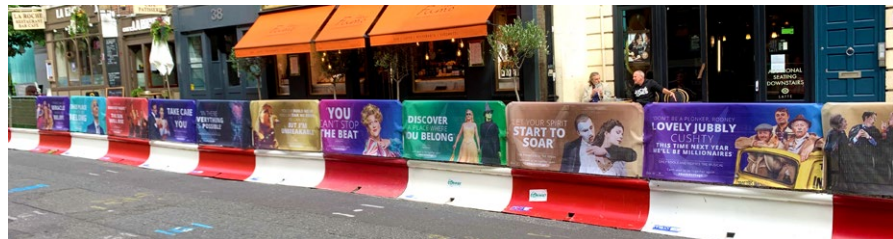
August 2020

20

Theatre Tokens partners with Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds to launch 'At Home With...' - a new online series which sees celebrity pairings in conversation with each other from their own homes

21

Working with Heart of London Business Alliance, we create barriers on St Martin's Lane when al fresco dining was introduced, featuring images from the West End's long-running shows

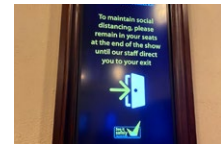


September 2020

1

We produce the **See It Safely** toolkit for venues to use as they reopen and offer to support with vox pops and social media

#BackOnStage campaign launches to compliment See It Safely and celebrate the shows as they reopen



October 2020

27

Olivier Awards 2020 winners are announced at a scaled-down event at the London Palladium, broadcast on ITV

Official London Theatre launches a digital version of the **London Theatre Guide** highlighting shows that are reopening

January 2021

14

Invited to join the **London Tourism Recovery Board** to support the **Let's Do London** campaign to encourage the domestic market back to London. We also work closely with **Visit Britain** on their **Escape the Every Day** campaign

20

Launch of **Theatre Chat Live**, a weekly live interview series on our Official London Theatre instagram

16

March 2021

One Year On Campaign

5

May 2021

Partnership with O2 offers their **11 million+** priority app customers £40 of **Theatre Tokens** for just £20, or £80 for just £40. This creates another way participating theatres can access customers ready and waiting to spend on theatre

#BackOnStage barriers are resurrected on St Martins Lane and Panton Street courtesy of Heart of London Business Alliance

Launch of outdoor advertising campaign with Global across Zones 1-2. **More than 40** London shows and theatres reopening over the summer and early autumn are featured. JCDecaux also offer us advertising on **135** London Rail D6 screens

Let's Do London campaign launches

TKTS online sales go live

17

June 2021

21

Special Summer edition of the **London Theatre Guide** launched

2

July 2021

Kids Week goes on sale, surpassing expectations with over **55,000** tickets sold on day one to **30** top West End shows. The campaign sold **119,383** tickets in total

August 2021

23

Kids Week Outdoor Festival, funded by the Mayor of London, offers free activities and events in Leicester Square Gardens to encourage families back to London. For **82%** of participants it was their first trip back to the capital

September 2021

1

Mastercard Thank You campaign offers customers a £20 thank you voucher to use towards their next theatre purchase when booking using their Mastercard on Official London Theatre

#BackOnStage Day once all nations finally reopen their theatres

18

West End LIVE returns for the first time since the pandemic began, with tens of thousands of theatre fans filling Trafalgar Square to watch free performances from nearly **50** shows and acts. In partnership with Westminster City Council with headline funding from Sky VIP secured by SOLT

24

SOLT's **TKTS ticket** booth reopens for in-person sales in a temporary location in Leicester Square Gardens whilst UKPN carry out work around the old booth

October 2021

1

Bauer Media activity: branded articles in Heat, Grazia and Closer, plus a regional radio and online women's magazine campaign featuring **12** shows

November 2021

7

Performance by Rankin, a landmark free exhibition featuring over **160** portraits of on and offstage theatre talent, opens at the **FUJIFILM House of Photography** in Covent Garden. The exhibition follows a 5-day shoot with Rankin co-organised by SOLT and involving representatives from **60** shows and venues, celebrating the reopening of London's theatre industry and funded by the Mayor

November 2021 (cont.)

23

Priority booking for **Official London Theatre's New Year Sale** opens for Mastercard holders, followed by public booking on 7 December

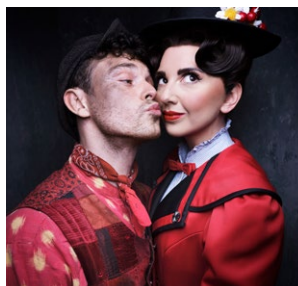
27

A book of the **Performance by Rankin** portraits launches, with all proceeds going to the Theatre Artists Fund and the Mayor of London's chosen youth homelessness charities

December 2021

7

Performance by Rankin images are featured on the Piccadilly Lights to launch the New Year Sale, with the Mayor of London, Rankin and West End performers



February 2022

1

UK Theatre launches its first ever UK wide promotional campaign - **Love Your Local Theatre** - in partnership with the **National Lottery**, who give **£2 million** to fund venues UK-wide to offer 2-for-1 tickets throughout March, encouraging people to support their local theatre. The campaign is negotiated and turned round in six weeks.

- **98** UK Theatre member theatres participate in the promotion, selling **84,000** 2-for-1 tickets in the first six weeks. These are subsidised by the National Lottery at a cost of over **£1m** for performances in March and April
- UK Theatre run the campaign, distributed the Lottery funds, and coordinated between all the theatres.
- Promotional website **LoveYourLocalTheatre.com** is created in-house.
- Campaign spokesperson Kimberley Walsh generates significant media coverage, culminating in an appearance on The One Show on primetime BBC1

February 2022 (cont.)

2

Tickets go on sale for the **Olivier Awards 2022 with Mastercard**, returning on Sunday 10 April at the Royal Albert Hall after a two-year pandemic hiatus

8

Official London Theatre launches **Show Time**, an extension of the New Year Sale offer supported by the Mayor of London's **Spring into London campaign**, rewarding audiences for returning to the theatre with discounted tickets on **40** West End shows until 31 March. Thanks to £20k of funding from the Mayor's office we are able to increase the reach of our **Don't Stop Me Now video** and deliver an activation with Network Rail

March 2022

6

Olivier Nominations are announced

April 2022

10

Olivier Awards 2022 with Mastercard are held at the Royal Albert Hall and broadcast on ITV and Magic Radio, as the first full ceremony for three years. Sustainability is a key focus with a Green Carpet and tree planting programme among other initiatives



Operational Adjustments

During the pandemic, all staff took a pay cut of up to 20% for a period of **14 months**. We prioritised retaining jobs over all else and kept additional expenditure to a minimum, with a number of office improvements and other projects being paused.

We were able to retain the majority of our pre-pandemic staff, however due to the extended closure of our ticketing operation at TKTS we sadly had to make our TKTS team and Head of Sales and Ticketing redundant.

We took full advantage of the furlough scheme, prioritising those staff with caring responsibilities where possible and those whose job, through no fault of their own, was not essential whilst our theatres and office remained closed. No member of staff suffered financially from being on furlough. We had a mixture of full-time and flexible furlough, with all but a handful of staff furloughed to some extent.

Furlough was challenging as its duration was unknown, making planning difficult, but we tried to keep staff as informed and engaged as possible with regular staff meetings.

A small number of staff moved on to new jobs during the pandemic. Although there was no recruitment freeze, we were able to save money as decisions on when to replace them were taken on a case-by-case basis dependent on the role and the circumstances.

The staff who worked full time during this period took on additional roles and responsibilities and worked long hours to ensure that the organisation could continue to serve the needs of our members and the wider industry.

In the interests of the safety of our staff we took a cautious approach to returning to the office and initially operated on a 50% maximum capacity to ensure teams could continue to operate while preventing the spread of COVID-19.

In December 2021 we had the added challenge of a minor fire in Rose Street which meant that we had to temporarily close the office. This coupled with the rise of the Omicron variant and the directive to work from home meant that the fragile recovery we had started to see in terms of sales and producer optimism wobbled.

The Theatre Tokens team faced a particularly challenging Christmas period due to a key supplier experiencing technical problems which had a direct impact on operations.



Conclusion

When the global pandemic hit the UK in March 2020, theatre in London and around the country was at a high – in ticket sales, in global presence, and in employment. Overnight this changed with no knowledge of when or how operations might return to normal.

SOLT & UK Theatre immediately moved into a different model of operating – starting with a major communications programme, initially to the members (theatre owners and operators, producers, production companies and general managers) which then rapidly expanded to include the broader theatre community. Often the information was patchy and unknown, but we aimed to always be clear in what was happening, what we were discussing with government, and what the range of outcomes might be.

Government moved to a new model of daily industry liaison, through umbrella and trade organisations for the different sectors of the economy. We are proud to have played a leading role in discussions with many parts of government, in convening and organizing the many working groups for DCMS on how to reopen safely, and our part in persuading government of the need for financial support. Some of this work was in private, some in public like the high-profile appearance in front of the DCMS Select Committee in June 2020 where

we were able to discuss the results of a rigorous survey of the theatre community which showed how perilous the situation was. The Cultural Recovery Fund that resulted in the months following has helped many survive.

One group that we still wish government had helped more is the large freelance community – the exclusion of a part of this group from all financial support during the pandemic was tragic. Our work with Sam Mendes to create the Theatre Artists Fund was designed to help those in the most extreme need – work that needs to continue even now.

We have huge admiration for anyone able to produce and open their theatres during this period. Not only were many theatres and producers struggling with the challenges of keeping shows and theatre buildings alive, but they also graciously gave up time to speak to press as part of our joint media campaign, lobbied their own contacts, supported the industry on working groups, replied to surveys, and shared information and insights. For

everyone's help, we are truly grateful.

Finally, we would not have been able to support our members and the wider industry without our boards and our staff – both those who worked relentlessly through this period, those on flexible furlough who had to adapt to an ever-changing situation, those who had to endure the uncertainty of full-time furlough, and those who we sadly made redundant which enabled us to survive this period and ensure that we are able to embrace the challenges ahead. Huge thanks goes to the SOLT & UK Theatre Presidents throughout this time: Eleanor Lloyd, Kenny Wax, Fiona Allan, and Stephanie Sirr.

The future is still uncertain and there are many lessons to learn and with hindsight there are of course things we would have done differently but it is important to have a record of what was achieved during this horrific period for live theatre and know that when we were able to collaborate with one voice, we were able to make a real difference.

We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all of the individuals and working groups who offered their time and expertise to help the industry through the pandemic. All of your contributions are deeply appreciated.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the partners who supported us through the pandemic.

For SOLT:

- Mastercard
- Sky VIP
- Global
- JCDecaux,
- O2
- The Mayor of London.

For UK Theatre:

- Ecclesiastical
- Spektrix,
- Theatre Tokens
- Tysers.

Our Boards - 2020

Society of London Theatre

Kenny Wax, President

Caro Newling OBE, Vice President

Nicholas Allott OBE

Nica Burns OBE

Jonathan Church OBE

Lucy Davies

Rupert Gavin

Nia Janis

Rebecca Kane Burton

Eleanor Lloyd

Catherine Mallyon

Jeremy Meadow

Robert Noble

André Ptaszynski*

Dafydd Rogers

Adam Speers

Dame Rosemary Squire DBE

Patrick Murphy

UK Theatre

Fiona Allan, President

Stephanie Sirr, Vice President

Andrew Bentley

Kris Bryce

Jon Gilchrist

Chris Glover

Robin Hawkes

Sarah Holmes

Claire Murray

Eleanor Lang

Janthi Mills-Ward

Julia Potts

Sebastian Warrack

Philip Bernays

Corey Reynolds

Dafydd Rogers

Adam McGinlay

Brenna Hobson

Karen Pimbley

Michèle Taylor MBE

*Former SOLT president and board member, André Ptaszynski, sadly died on 29 July 2020. He had been a huge advocate for the organisation and his experience and insight is very much missed by both members and the executive.

Our Boards - 2022

Society of London Theatre

Eleanor Lloyd, President

Kenny Wax, Vice President

Nicholas Allott OBE

Kash Bennett

Jonathan Church CBE

Lucy Davies

Rupert Gavin

Patrick Gracey

Stuart Griffiths

Nia Janis

Patrick Murphy

Dafydd Rogers

Ed Snape

Dame Rosemary Squire DBE

Kate Varah

Mark Wordsworth

UK Theatre

Stephanie Sirr, President

Jon Gilchrist, Joint President (2022)

Andrew Bentley

Samir Bhamra

Kris Bryce

Carolyn ML Forsyth

Robin Hawkes

Sarah Holmes

Tom de Keyser

Eleanor Lang

Conrad Lynch

Colin Marr

Adam McGinlay

Louise Miles-Payne

Janthi Mills-Ward

Dafydd Rogers

Michelle Rolfe

Michèle Taylor

Sebastian Warrack

Our Team - 2022

Rami Abdelal

Developer

George Davies

Customer Service Advisor, Operations

Damian Ball

Operations Manager

Kayley Donnelly

Events and Partnerships Manager

Tony Beckingham

Theatre Tokens Marketing Co-ordinator

Emma De Souza

Head of Marketing & Communications

Richard Bennison

Senior Commercial Manager

Charlotte Fisher

Employment Lawyer

Julian Bird

Chief Executive

Louise Goodman

Stage One Programme Manager

Latoya Brown

Finance Officer

Alex Head

TKTS Sales Advisor

Phill Brown

Head of Risk and Safety

Darcie Hicks

Theatre Tokens Administrator

June Brunskill

Human Resources Manager

Harriet Hughes

Listings Administrator

Sebastian Cater

Head of UK Theatre & Workforce Development

Claire Kehoe

Employment Relations Co-ordinator

Angela Clutton

Deputy Head of Employment Relations

Katie Kerry

Head of CEO Office/Awards General Manager

Viviana Cogo

TKTS Supervisor

Wayne Lee

Head of Employment Relations

Gemma Davies

Training & Events Executive

David Leigh-Pemberton

Political & Advocacy Consultant

Our Team - 2022

Robert Lewis

Junior Developer

Stewart Powell

Finance Manager

Eva Mason

Communications Officer

Lisa Radford

Legal & Employment Relations Administrator

Russell Morton

CEO Office & Production Co-ordinator

Megan Ross

Senior Marketing Manager

Steve Mothe

Theatre Tokens Operations Executive

Ricardo Ruiz

Software Developer

Nathan Naylor

Head of Theatre Tokens

Martin Scott

Chief Operating Officer

Gemma Nelson

Marketing & Membership Executive

Ruth Sherry

Operations Executive

Louise Norman

Head of Legal Affairs

Jamie Snelgrove

Business Development &
Relationship Manager

Elisa Pagani

CEO Office Administrator & Accounts Assistant

Duncan Sweetland

Online & Digital Manager

Eilidh Patterson

UK Theatre Teams & Events Administrator
(maternity cover)

Aemelia Taylor

Video Production Manager

Tess Pilgrim

Designer

Alex Tranda

Graphic Designer & Email Developer

Olivia Polglase

Stage One Marketing & Programme Co-ordinator

Kitty Underwood

Content Co-ordinator

Our Team - 2022

Chris Walker

Public Affairs Manager

Natalie Wood

Projects Manager (maternity cover)

Siobhan Walsh

Outreach Project Leader

Tracey Woolley

Executive Assistant to CEO & Awards Executive

Annie Waugh

Projects Manager

Jess Young

Social Media Manager

We would also like to thank the staff who worked with us during the pandemic and have now moved on to new jobs.

This report was conceived and delivered by Emma De Souza, edited by Kayley Donnelly and designed by Tess Pilgrim. We would also like to extend our thanks to everyone else who contributed to the writing and editing of this document.