

Global Voices in the Time of Coronavirus

Selected and edited by Benjamin Gillespie, Sarah Lucie, and Jennifer Joan Thompson

In March 2020, Frank Hentschker, director of the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at The Graduate Center, CUNY, in New York City, began his curated SEGAL TALKS series, hour-long daily conversations with theatre artists and cultural thinkers from around the globe. Hentschker's aim in conceiving "In the Time of Corona" has been to offer a platform for global voices to discuss the current challenges and sorrows, as well as hope for what he calls the new *Weltzustand*—the state of the world. This unique program has been made in collaboration with HowlRound Theatre Commons at Emerson College, Boston and is archived at HowlRound.com. The selections reproduced here, representing thirty artists and thinkers from twenty countries, feature edited excerpts from the conversations in April, May, and June 2020.

These passages confirm the devastation caused by the pandemic but also reaffirm a collective hope for a better future arising out of the unprecedented challenges we now face. Voices from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America offer reflections on the pandemic as well as manifestos for the present and future. With most of the world in various stages of lockdown, there is a palpable and universal feeling of uncertainty that pervades these ruminations. The divergent perspectives on the pandemic are shaped by vastly different governmental and institutional constraints, levels of precarity, and political conditions. Presented chronologically by month, they expose the rapidly changing circumstances of the pandemic on a global scale, and also make vivid how unknowns resulting from Covid-19 frame our present reality.

As the pandemic has slowed the world down, a sense of suspension, of contemplation, of boredom, of optimism and pessimism, and of anticipation color these talks. Some artists have embraced this forced pause as a time for rejuvenation, while for others, this period is seen as a time for action and immediate change.

Many ask: how will actions taken now impact what will become of our theatre, our world, and art? Opportunities provided by the virtual have emerged, and artists Toshiki Okada, Daniel Wetzel, and Gianina Cărbunariu, for example, consider experimental ways to use the medium to produce art. On the other hand, Tania Bruguera and Anne Bogart worry that haste with using virtual platforms might compromise the essence and artistic quality of the work. Jalila Baccar wonders what the long-term impact of physical distancing will be on the liveness, social ritual, sensory experience, and close contact that characterize the theatrical event. Others provide more pragmatic perspectives as they don't yet know if and how their theatres will survive the financial impact of the crisis. Milo Rau, Guillermo Calderón, and Annie-B Parson consider more philosophical and formal advancements that may occur once the pandemic has passed. The need to create new models of theatre, new aesthetics, and new spaces, both virtual and non-virtual, motivate many of the meditations included here. While we perceive an apprehension towards the unknown, there seems to also arise an accompanying sense of possibility and fascination with the new forms that will inevitably evolve beyond Covid-19.

In some countries, governments have come together to protect the common good, while in others, communities of everyday citizens have risen to help each other in crisis. Richard Schechner, Thomas Oberender, and Peter Sellars foreground the pandemic as a prelude to the even greater and more devastating challenges of climate change, suggesting the pandemic has brought about a much-needed pause in global production. Many voices express the importance of care in this time: for ourselves, for family and friends, for community, especially for those individuals and groups who remain vulnerable. Those in Chile, Cuba, Hong Kong, Germany, and Tunisia warn of the authoritarianism, nationalism, and xenophobia to which the pandemic has given license. As artists from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Haiti note, the pandemic has only added to the larger crises of hunger, natural disasters, disease, and war in their home countries. The political momentum and unrest of this period in the form of public protests and riots have further exposed the need to fight systemic racism, illuminated in particular by the increased visibility of Black Lives Matter and the attacks on foreigners, especially in the U.S. under the Trump administration, as expressed by Jonathan McCrory, Ngozi Anyanwu, and Woodie King, Jr. Artists from Poland, Romania, and Kosovo also point out that the pandemic has highlighted the need to address systemic inequalities and political issues in their home countries, sometimes spurring demonstrations in the fight for democracy.

Given such momentous shifts, these voices collectively ask: what will theatre look like after the pandemic and the convulsive political reckonings that have

accompanied it? What *should* it look like? Both now and in the future, hearing these voices marks a time of great heartbreak, of change, of contradiction, of rest and unrest. As the circumstances of the pandemic continue to unfold, we will continue to listen and engage even while apart.

APRIL

Toshiki Okada, director (Japan)

I think, always, reality and fiction are juxtaposed. Of course, now things are much clearer as to how reality seems to be stranger than fiction. The virus is invisible. So if we are afraid of the virus, it means that we have some fictional imagination. Otherwise, you can't see any virus around you. We have to manage the balance between reality and fiction. In other words, we have to have some imagination and we have to care how and what is taking our imagination. We have to care, we have to manage our way of using our imagination in a different way than in fear. Otherwise, my imagination is taken only by fear. We need to find alternative ways of engaging our own imaginations. I believe fiction is a very strong option. If you have some imagination, you can manage things. In these days, the age of coronavirus, it's good for everyone, including artists, to contemplate that kind of idea. I believe something new, a stronger idea, can appear due to this situation.

Unfortunately, I don't think of my government as an agent who can take responsibility, so I have to make my way by myself. And as an artist, I feel I have to make some fiction. For me, fiction can be an alternative reality, or fiction can be something that enables tension within reality. Fiction can work in a way that can illuminate reality. That kind of thinking came to me after the Fukushima incident. I am excited these days because now is a good chance to find new ways, to find a new theatre. Usually, the theatre is done in the theatre building, but I believe that kind of frame of thought can be realized in a different way. I want to find some new way of outputting the theatre, and if I have something to tell young artists, I recommend they think like this to find something new. (April 3)

Sahar Assaf, actor and director (Lebanon)

It has been a really hard year for theatre artists in my country. Before Covid-19, we had the October 17 Revolution. All theatres closed down in support of the revolution because our feeling was that we needed to be on the street. We didn't want people to come to the theatre, we wanted people to be on the street because that's where change was happening, that is where people needed to be. I was on the street as much as I could. I do theatre because it's a place where change can happen. Like Augusto Boal used to say, it is a rehearsal for revolution. So when a revolution is happening, you need to be in the revolution. Theatres closed down

for that reason. And then bit by bit they reopened again. Theatres started opening their doors so they could survive. Then Covid-19 arrived and we had to close down again. I find it hard to say, because never in my life have I imagined that theatre isn't important at the moment. I'm saying this now in the sense that, of course, it is going to help us tell stories, it is going to help us understand what we are living right now. But right now, people have basic needs. They need to be fed, they need to feel safe and secure. Once we can assure that people have this, we can talk about creating.

We will need theatre to tell these stories. How we will do this, and how it is going to change the form and the style only time will tell. I can't answer that question now. I think it is too much already to think about what stories we want to tell. There is so much going on, and at the moment, I think it is important to experience and to be present as much as possible, but even that is hard. I'm trying to be as present as possible, connecting to my roots as much as I can, trying to breathe as much as possible, and just staying sane for the moment. Reflection will happen later on. We need the distance to be able to reflect and make sense of things. (April 6)

Meredith Monk, composer, singer, interdisciplinary artist (U.S.)

We are always living in the unknown, we are always groundless and not knowing what's going to happen next. And yet, we are so busy that we're not aware of it. This time is just magnifying the truth of what our reality is. I think we need to use fear in a positive way, being more alert, being more careful, and not dwelling in it, but letting the fear come, acknowledging its energy and the way that it wakes you up a little bit. That is a natural response to what is happening. But try not to spin around in it because that energy is not useful right now. There is a possibility of change coming up in this time. My prayer would be that we don't go back to where we were before the pandemic. The boundaries between all of us on the whole planet are melting—and we are tiny, tiny specks on this earth. Just think in those terms, that we are truly connected to each other and the survival of the planet.

I would say to young artists in this period of isolation: work. Just try to work, be curious, and start with no expectations whatsoever, even in terms of creating something. Really dive in with no preconceived notions. A beginner's mind has all possibilities. An expert's mind means that you think that you know something, actually closing you off from new insights. But I believe that in essence we all don't know anything. We are all living in the unknown. We are all suspended. Moments of suspension are daunting and sometimes scary, but what an amazing thing that you can have in those moments, a gap, of not knowing anything, of

moving through your habitual responses, habitual patterns and behavior. What a great opportunity. Even those moments are worth it. (April 9)

Aristide Tarnagda, director and playwright (Burkina Faso)

For the majority of people, life is earned on a daily basis. So, with measures imposed to cease work and other activities, it is not clear how to live. As an artist, it is difficult because everything has stopped. We can't work anymore. I am used to working with people every day. It is a moment of doubt and of panic, to a degree. But it is also a moment for planting the roots of hope in people because it is the job of artists to lead people, citizens, to overcome this. Covid-19 reminds us that life is fragile, and of what is important: health, education, culture.

I ask myself, will humanity really learn a lesson? Will we definitively cut off ties with life based in greed, materiality, capitalism—life that drives us further away from the essential? I ask myself, what is the role of an artist in moments so difficult for humanity? What theatre should I write during and after Covid-19? As an artist, I am living a disrupted moment, which is a good thing, because an artist, in my point of view, should never be calm. It's an exceptional moment.

I ask myself a lot of questions about the measures taken by the government. For example, are the measures taken the right measures for everyone? Ouagadougou and other towns were placed in quarantine and the markets are closed. Some countries, like Senegal, decided to release millions to respond to the disease. And in some ways, that disgusts me. It disgusts me because Covid-19 is killing fewer than malaria, than measles. Why release millions to save lives now? For example, the measles killed three-hundred children, and no money was released for that disease, for which the vaccine exists. The world very often gets things backwards. So every day I wonder how to finally be conscious for all humanity living in a just world. As Achille Mbembe said, white people are just now becoming acquainted with death. What I see here on a daily basis is that the fear that people feel of dying is more about starvation than dying from this disease. Because if they cannot go outside to seek their daily bread, even if they don't have coronavirus, they will die of hunger. Challenges are important for us artists because in moments of uncertainty, of panic, of losing peace, artists are the ones who can work to return calm, joy, happiness, and above all, clarity. (April 10)

Annie-B Parson, choreographer and director (U.S.)

I hear a lot of choreographic language coming up in the public sphere around Covid-19: the simple awareness of the body and its proximities, spatial awareness, issues of presence. Maintaining six feet of distance between us, for instance; people are getting really good at judging this, and as a choreographer, I find

that interesting. Six feet of distance is one of my favorite proximities. I find it elegant: six feet of space. These choreographic ideas are issues now everyone deals with—and I do feel strange talking about this in such formal language, but that’s how I think.

People dodging each other—that dance is happening too. And the air is beautiful. No cars, no industry. I live in Brooklyn, and at 7:00 p.m., people come out of their doors to perform the most beautiful, unison, collaborative, spontaneous piece of theatre: the group clap. I don’t want to make dance right now. I need to be in a room. I need my dancers in the room. Right now, everything feels very liminal. (April 14)

Abhishek Majumdar, playwright and director; Anurupa Roy, director and puppeteer (India)

AR: I live on an arterial road of New Delhi. The day the lockdown was announced all of the daily wage earners who are essentially the service providers—carpenters, masons, lumber, delivery boys, a lot of people who basically run the city—literally fled the city because their key concerns were, “What will I eat tomorrow?” It was also almost the end of the month, so there was the question of paying rent to their landlords. I woke up in the morning to see thousands of people just walking. It is really one of the strangest things because you see it in movies, you see it in documentary films, but it really doesn’t strike you until you see it in person. It is people carrying children, animals, utensils, literally finishing a life in New Delhi where they had probably lived for many years, and leaving for their villages, very unsure of what the future holds. Some of them had been walking from Rajasthan. That’s 1000 kilometers. And they would be walking to Bihar, from northwest to northeast India, which could be between 1200 and 2000 kilometers. I live in a little community of apartments, and we set up a kitchen, and we were immediately cooking and handing over plates of food to people walking. Some would sit and eat, and some would take a packed lunch and keep walking because they didn’t want to lose time. Very unfortunately, the day after the borders were sealed a lot of these people were sent back. So then we received a whole reverse population because they were stranded. It was 600,000 people or more. Women and children, pregnant women. There were people who had not eaten in three days. The first two days of lockdown were literally just feeding this moving population. What was interesting was how people in New Delhi rose to the occasion. Kitchens popped up everywhere.

AM: I think there is something deeply disturbing about our society, which is revealing itself every day very tactically as one steps out and comes back. Because

at one level, we are saying this is a time of isolation, so anybody that is stepping out is potentially risking themselves and society. On the other hand, if we don't step out, there is a clear risk just as present. People are going to starve before they die of the virus. It really is that simple. Last night, I had a list of 1200 families around me in a three kilometer radius who would need food by tomorrow afternoon. And the other thing that it brings up is that we don't have a government anymore, we just have an administration. In its classical idea, you place your security in the hands of a government. But what many of the governments that are coming to power in the world are doing is protecting a certain class of people. I'm very worried about that. It moves me immensely. The image of the streets refuses to leave you because it is so stark. I don't even know how to represent it if I ever want to make something. I'm not thinking about representation anymore. There is always the explanation that somebody else deserves to be punished for our security. This is the premise big countries like India and America seem to be working on—that we have to be defended at somebody else's cost. This virus simply tells us that you are not special. It's that simple. (April 16)

Grzegorz Jarzyna, artistic director, TR Warszawa (Poland)

We are thinking about the future and, at the same time, thinking about the local society and local problems. As you know, the political and social situation is not very good in my country. We see our role and mission in speaking here about the values in this time when we slow down. That is what we are doing now as a team, as a company. Having more time to speak and listen to other people and recognize the problems and think about what we can deliver as a company. This pandemic has given us a very special meaning now in these difficult times. Honesty and truth are very important. It's not only concerning the politicians and the people who have a big influence on our lives, but it is most important that we can be honest with each other and avoid manipulating information and making false statements. The truth is valuable and most important now. Empathy is another value in order to imagine the situation of others. In Poland, it is very important to understand those people who are helping to build and rebuild our society, but who are not recognized by the government. There are many people who are not being taken care of because they are not Polish, and some groups do not have any privileges or rights. The parliament has passed very strict barbarian laws about pregnancy and abortion. It is horrible what's going on, an aberration that is uncontrollable. The purposeful movement of our government thinking only about their particular goals, not their society, is terrible. It is forbidden now to be together in Poland, so we are going around by car in the center of Warsaw to demonstrate and make our voices known so that the people in parliament can hear us. (April 17)

Milo Rau, writer and director (Switzerland)

I've been reading a lot in the last weeks. I was preparing *Antigone* and writing a text about *Oedipus*, so I was diving deep into the tragic mind, asking myself why we still do these plays today. I think because these are really tragic plays that show an antagonism that we can't solve, there is a problem that is not just dramatic, but somehow, unsolvable. There is a tragic problem. I think that we are at this very moment confronted with a situation that is tragic, and we have to rethink the system we are living in. It is not that we can make it a bit smoother and we can put a bit of green energy or whatever and it will go on. No. We have to stop the machine once and forever or we will be fucked. And we deserve it. But I think this time is now coming to an end. The time of waiting at home. It has to end. We have to act.

The very strange thing is that we are adapting to an architecture that was made in the nineteenth century. We are adapting to halls that were made and constructed a long time ago, or in the eighties or in the nineties during neoliberal times. But this is an architecture that is not working anymore. We must do theatre again as a real meeting, not just taking a ticket in beautiful dress, sitting down in the hall, watching from the black into the light, but really reinvent this meeting space of the theatre. Especially after a time when meeting was impossible. I am very happy, but I am extremely afraid that we will have the aestheticization of the distanced movements in the street, or the masks—that we will see all this on stage. We will have the aestheticization of everything. If this happens, we will just be introducing all this new knowledge in the old ways of making. We would do the same karaoke of the old canon we did before. Then we don't learn anything. The time we are living is not only dramatic, it is tragic. Tragic times are here. (April 20)

Richard Schechner, author and director (U.S.)

This virus is not the big thing. This virus is really the little wave. The big one is climate change. It's behind this virus. This is like one of those early tremors that seems to be big on the scale, but it's not. Thirty or forty or fifty years from now, but slowly, the large disruption will come. When New York will not have 250,000 cases and 15,000 deaths, but be under ten feet of water. When Amsterdam and London will have disappeared. When Bangladesh will be flooded out, and so on. You know that scenario. Now we are getting a kind of pre-taste in fast motion of what's coming at us in slow motion, and the astonishing thing is this pre-taste in fast motion has generated a response of two trillion dollars from the American congress, daily press briefings by the president. All this attention—nobody's paying attention to climate change. When the virus goes away and people go

back to normal, they'll still say, "Oh, it's not happening. Oh, forget about it." Compared to the amount of destruction that we're suffering now, what's coming is incalculably greater and just as inevitable: the amount of death, the amount of misery, the waves of people who will come from the Global South because of food destruction, drought, etc., is incalculably greater than what's happening now and just as inevitable.

If you want to talk about tragedy, if you want to talk about, you know, the Oracle—the Oracle has said to us, "this is coming and here is a little taste, and you can mobilize for this instant shock. Why can't you mobilize for the great thing that's coming?" And what do I mean by mobilize? First of all, of course, end oil, in fact, all global warming products—oil, coal, methane-emitting cattle, and so on. Get as quickly as we can off these. One of the good things, and maybe if there is a God, this God, she is telling us: Look how clean the air is in Delhi now. Look how clean the air is in New York. Why can't we only have mass transit and electric vehicles? Why can't we take climate change seriously and stop polluting the atmosphere? Take climate change seriously and make preparations for the times that we're going to have to go through. There is a warning. If we're in a social drama, there are two social dramas: the mini social drama of the Covid-19 pandemic and the larger drama that is unfolding in slower motion but with just as much, even more, horrific consequences down the road.

History is full of crises. If you think of the days in 1939, 1940, 1941, or 1942 when Hitler was about to rule the world, and the terrible Blitz of London—those were very dark and hard days. Or, during the Great Depression from 1931 through the '30s were hard days. The Spanish flu, the bubonic plague. In other words, human history is full of bad times and good times. Maybe we have gotten used to a fairly long stretch where the bad times are a little bit less, and not a whack on the face. Now we've got a whack on the face, and it's not the first one, and because of climate change, it is not going to be the last one. Hopefully, we learn from them. I would say to the younger people, you must do your work, and you must keep hope. But what is hope? Hope is not an idea; hope is an action. You know you are hopeful when you do something. You know you are in despair when you say, "I can't do anything." But you can, and you must, and you will. (April 21)

Guillermo Calderón, playwright and director (Chile)

I keep thinking about people wanting to go back to normal. But for us here, normal was a revolution. So when we say we want to go back to normal, we mean we want to go back to the normalcy of revolution. Because that revolution, as complicated and difficult and bloody as it was, it was a revolution about collective

action and a sense of future. And even optimism. Immediately after this revolution happened, the theatres closed. Theatre artists were paralyzed. There was a collective realization that it was impossible to do theatre in these circumstances. Not only because it was ethically complicated to drag people into this bourgeois activity, but also because the revolution had the effect of immediately challenging our way of doing theatre, our aesthetic, our subject matter—everything. And something really interesting happened. A lot of people my generation and younger, we were doing these political plays for a long time in Chile. We were sort of foreshadowing the revolution, to the point at which we were becoming boring. Because we were repeating this message: the sky is going to fall down on us. The system is completely unfair. We have no justice. We are under a dictatorship of another name. We would never shut up. And then this revolution happens. We were vindicated in a way, but the revolution immediately stole our thunder. Our theatre immediately became old. Once the revolution arrives, you can't see the future anymore. You become part of the past.

A feminist group from Valparaíso called Las Tesis created a performance called *Un violador en tu camino* [A rapist in your path]. They were preparing a play in which they were going to use a little choreography. But then since the revolution started they couldn't do it, so they took that choreography to the street. And it caught fire and was done by people all over the country and then all over the world. It had very strong political content because they are accusing men of actually being the rapists—and not only men, but also the State and the Police as being the actual rapists. Not only in the sense of actual rape but in the sense of raping society as a whole. This was done collectively. It is incredibly strong. It is incredibly catchy. It is incredibly beautiful. It is incredibly theatrical. Once we saw that, we saw the theatre of the future. This is it. This is what we were hoping for. This is here to save theatre. So I think I saw the future.

I tell my students two things: one, that we already experienced the death of theatre in Chile. After the coup happened in 1973, there was a curfew for years and theatre was basically killed. But for some reason theatre survived. Theatre came back and it did wonderful, beautiful things. Theatre has a way of surviving the most dire of situations. People in their early twenties are going through the death of theatre, and they are going to revive it themselves. They are going to be talking about the revolution and about the coronavirus for forty years in their theatre, and it is going to transform it completely, and it is going to be born from them. For me there is going to be a before and after this crisis, but for them, it is going to be the starting point. That theatre is going to look completely different. It is going to be awe-inspiring and beautiful. (April 24)

Daniel Wetzel, writer and director, Rimini Protokoll (Germany)

The debate hasn't started yet of whether culture is an essential element of education and social exchange, and whether it is an essential platform where you can deal with different concepts and experiences within society, other than on a political level. But I think this debate is very needed, because who knows what will be on the bill we are all going to pay for—all the tremendous amounts of money that have been thrown into the European market, as well as within every country, so that the thing keeps going. This is a bill we are going to have to pay, and there will surely be many debates about how essential the work has been that we have all been doing within the cultural sector. There is also a question of defending the freedom of art because as soon as a politician can explain what this piece was good for, it might be easier for him or her to explain why there was funding for it, which means it will be completely integrated in a pedagogical context. Arts, however, are not an extension of teaching. There must be a freedom, which has been protected at least here in Germany, but will have to be defended at some point soon.

There has been debate about media bubbles and social bubbles, about where we get our information, from whom, and about whom, and how we know who they are and what they think. I'm talking about a global audience that can also be a performer. Because globally, people are able to meet you at this level. I'm trying to encourage people and myself to get out of the box in a way and to make personal encounters that are independent from space, as we are normally very much dependent on where we are and with whom we speak and whose work we are watching. I think, in a way, it's a liberation of, or a flattening of, what the globe is, and where and with whom I speak. It just depends on time zones. This is a potential perhaps that can be explored more as we are traveling and moving less. There is a global notion that we all have the same problem because everyone has to defend against the potential infection and there has to be a solidarity with those that suffer a lot from it. And more nations other than Trump's—who is saying "us first." There's a counter-movement to this global notion that makes it even more important to cross borders on the level of one-to-one communication and small group communication with other strategies and exchanging other things than just "how are you?" (April 27)

Guy Régis, Jr., writer, artistic director of the Festival 4 Chemins (Haiti)

I feel completely scandalized by what's happening. I have the impression of living under an accepted dictatorship. It is very hard to live like this with the next generation. Not too long ago, young people protested to open our eyes, our ears, to the disastrous situation for the planet. This was a moment when we all

needed to get together to say “Stop everything!” We didn’t stop, because it was just young people. But now, we accept the dictatorship of a virus.

From September to November 2019, Haiti was in lockdown. We taught the world what “lockdown” was. This was not widely discussed in the rest of the world. It has been a long time since we have lived with this situation in Haiti. If it’s not political issues, it’s a hurricane. The last catastrophe occurred because of the United Nations contingent, after the earthquake of 2010. By November, we had cholera in the country. Total: 10,000 dead. The UN took a long time to admit this was brought by their workers.

Every year, I direct a festival in Haiti. This year, we were going to mark the tenth anniversary of the earthquake. I’ve been director of this festival for six years, and every year, I face the impossibility of doing it because of political situations and violence. For several years, we have been witnessing a high growth rate of violence with the proliferation of gangs and armed youth. How can a young man from a poor neighborhood find a weapon worth \$10,000? Haitian people are more afraid of being kidnapped than of having Covid-19. That’s what I want to say to the world, to those who produce these weapons: leave and let this country breathe.

I am afraid for the future. I am also afraid for the artists. In Haiti, officially, they don’t exist. For several years, we have had no theatres, which means that we have created remarkable shows in the streets. For us, “street theatre” doesn’t exist; it’s theatre in the street—theatre everywhere that exists. As an artist, what I am interested in doing is to criticize it all. Social distancing should be annihilated by theatre. We have never heard Brecht’s term of “distancing” used so often. I create theatre to touch people. We are going to think about this for a long time after this is over. No one will be able to sneeze in a theatre without being suspicious. We are in the process of transforming into something, but we need to fight for ourselves. (April 28)

Jalila Baccar, playwright and performer (Tunisia)

In the face of this terrible anguish that touches the whole world, we are forced to ask ourselves essential questions. We ask ourselves questions about human existence. In regards to theatre, we ask questions about the future of this art. There is no answer, no clear answer, no recipe; there’s nothing. That is why self-reflection is more important right now than writing or performing.

When Tunisia had curfew during the 2011 revolution, it didn’t feel the same as it does now. The anguish and fear were not the same. We closed our doors and remained in our houses, but we knew that the next day we would be able to leave.

I was not able to write a single line for a year then. There were artists who were able to follow the moment—photographers, filmmakers, poets—but for certain art forms, like theatre, there needed to be a certain distance to be able to create. It's different now because we don't know what tomorrow will be. No one can answer a single question. Maybe we'll need to find a new way to communicate, a new way to write. How will we find ourselves on stage again? The principal relationship is with the audience. If theatre becomes a virtual art, it doesn't look like theatre anymore. It is something else.

Human beings created art and theatre to help get through anxious moments. Theatre remains a place of freedom and expression, even more than other arts. Before the revolution, we were working against the political regime. We continued after the revolution, and I think we are going to try—I hope so—after this. Tunisian theatre has always been very influential in terms of free thinking. And there is a new generation rising now. There is a civil war in Libya, right at our border, and there are still other wars going on. Despite the pandemic—maybe thanks to the pandemic—we realize that if we don't know how to reinvent human relations, if there is not a desire of openness of all world cultures, if we don't take care, this pandemic will become the pretext to build new walls, to close more borders. We need to resist this—not just on a regional basis, but on an international level. That's the lesson to take away, to resist this to save the Earth and humanity—not the citizens of one region. The anguish that we share, like the pandemic, knows no boundaries: not gender, not race, not bank accounts, not passport colors. (April 29)

Peter Sellars, director (U.S.)

I think the message we've gotten from the virus is to be quiet—to stop. The world was running at a crazy pace, it was running out of control, and everyone was too busy to really notice anything. This incredible speed and acceleration that was ruining the planet, making the economies go crazy, making a whole series of injustices that no one had time to stop and say “this is wrong”—all these things happened with the accelerator on. What does it mean to say to the whole human race: just stop? We don't know how to do that because our metabolisms are so geared to this craziness. What does it mean to stop and turn the gaze inward and say: what are we doing? What are we doing to each other? What are we doing to the planet? What happened to those skills of taking care of each other, of recognizing that we are living in a really intricate ecosystem that is making life impossible?

What's powerful is being in a moment when entertainment is not the point, but creating a space of focus, concentration, meditation, and contemplation, where

the heartbeat is much slower and the thought process is much more intense and charged with another kind of emotional weight. I think that a lot of theatre responded to television and film, to get everything faster and not bore anyone. And, of course, now we are in that state where boredom is the only way we are going to learn anything, and the only way our thoughts open to other possibilities, and the only way we live with something and realize we should not be living with it—we should not accept a whole bunch of things that have happened over the past fifty years. We have to stop, turn the car around, walk back, and start over. People are rioting and are upset by the depth of tragedy now. Our line of work in the theatre is dealing in tragedy, not about pointless suffering, but to learn something. What is this tragedy trying to tell us? This is what's in front of us right now. We need artists to help make sense out of this tragedy. (April 30)

MAY

Anna Lengyel, artistic director, PanoDrama (Hungary)

Regardless of the government's overreach in all of this, I think Hungarian theatre is in a crisis artistically. In a way, we have lost our compass. There are some outstanding shows and some very exciting projects but not nearly as many as fifteen or twenty years ago. But I think the most important issue—if I have to pick one issue in Hungary—is education. If I had a choice to take back one thing from this government, it would be public education. What they are doing to the future generations, that is the scariest of all. Now we have only a small portion of university students and many fewer university applications than five years ago. This is what Orbán wants. He doesn't want smart, educated people around him. He doesn't want informed consent from people. He wants people to be uneducated and uninformed so they believe him and don't contradict him. Theatre can play a key part in this with the theatre in education projects happening and even theatre productions educating the public, in a way that is at the same time not didactic. That is one of our most important tasks these days.

I really applaud the director of Örkény theatre, Pál Mácsai. He gave an interview and said he must rethink the whole coming season's programming because what he was programming before is not valid anymore. Now he needs to have every show include as many actors from the permanent company as possible. We have a repertory system with permanent companies and not an *en suite* system like the U.S. or most English-speaking countries. It is key that he gives all of them work, not only so that they can make money, but also so that they can feel valuable again. (May 4)

Amir Nizar Zuabi, playwright and director (Palestine)

I tested positive for coronavirus and was isolated for almost seven weeks without seeing anyone. The misanthrope in me says it was gorgeous; the humanist in me says it was a nightmare. We always complain that we don't have time, but when we are gifted with time in that quantity, it is very hard to be creative. I also felt quite bad for the first week and a half. My symptoms were mild and I was mainly tired. And very, very alone. It sends you thinking. We're Palestinians. We grew up with strife. I think that one outlook that we have inherently is that the world was never safe for us. In the West, something about the fake relative safety of the world always existed until now, or at least since WWII. For me, the world being unsafe is not a new thing. Psychologically, I knew it to be a hostile place. It is ingrained in us because we grew up in conflict. But Covid-19 was different because inside this very isolated reality where you can't meet people, where you are asked to not be close to anyone, you suddenly confront yourself naked and it is not always a pretty sight. There was a lot of soul-searching on my end. At the same time, there was this sense that we are one on this planet. We're *Homo sapiens*. Regardless of the distances, the virus is putting us down to our knees in the same way everywhere. There are different reactions and different measures being taken, but at the same time, in complete isolation there was a weird unity—the unity of calamity. We are all interconnected in this.

In other places around the world, political theatre is looked down upon. But we've been doing political theatre always because everything you do in Palestine is a political act. Something we can share from our experience is how political theatre does not need to be reduced to political headlines. Political theatre is what I call "political poetica." It can be profound. Palestinian theatre has been experiencing political theatre that is not reductive. Since I've been through a couple rounds of conflict, I know that we shouldn't react too soon. When it's raining, it's raining and you don't start talking about the weather. Right now, we're still in coronavirus mode. It is too early for me to understand what this means in the long term. Because I grew up where I grew up, I know that we are very flexible. We stretch and then we go back to normal very quickly. That's one of the things that, for us, is quite obvious. Once this plague is over, life will fight to become normal again. We saw it happen time after time. Our tendency is to forget or to recover from trauma very quickly and seek life. We want to live. When it happens, it will be with more urgency now that the mask of Western civilization's safety has been partially removed. I think our need to regain normality will be faster than we expect right now.

These big theatre structures will come back. It might take them time, but in the meantime, if we have something to say, we will need to find the cracks in the

rock so we can express ourselves now. In Palestine, the rock is the reality. We are used to finding cracks, and the cracks can be anything. We did shows in car repair shops and in open fields. At the core, if what you are trying to say is honest, it is theatre. If there's one thing I can say, it is to not rely on the big structures and the funding in order to get back in. Living off art is going to be hard. But wasn't it always hard? We're like water and we find the cracks. There's something about the guerrilla approach of Palestinian theatre that more and more places will start to adopt. What happens when you have to do social distancing in a venue and there's not enough money to cover the venue? Get rid of the venue. Don't get rid of the production—just chuck the venue to the garbage. Do it in a parking lot, in a park, wherever you can. Do it radically. For us, living this radical situation has been our foundation. All I can say is: join the party. And the art does not need to suffer, it just needs honesty. (May 13)

Edouard Elvis Bvouma, playwright and director; Hermine Yollo, actor and director (Cameroon)

HY: It's kind of historical that the whole world has stopped for a certain time. It is the occasion to think about what we want as humans. Do we still want to live in a world where the human has been put aside and we are more focused on money, money, money? Or do we want to focus on our society and put the human being back at the center of everything? As a person, I am fine with the situation. We have to use it to really think. As an artist, it's a moment of introspection for me. If this situation has to last longer than what we may think, how am I going to do my work as an artist? I have to find a way to do something, to propose my work to an audience in a different way. I am questioning the real usefulness of my work as an artist to bring hope and strength to people right now. Many people are really afraid of this situation. I'm sure that one of the goals of my job is to raise hope. Before Covid-19, we were already facing very difficult situations in Cameroon—the war, for example. The Northwest and Southwest Anglophone regions of the country are fighting for independence. In the Far North province, we are fighting Boko Haram. Those two situations are much more serious for our country than Covid-19. For most Africans, it is usual to live with uncertainty. We never know what to expect. Maybe that is what the Western world in general doesn't get. They are not respectful of the fact that we don't have the same problems. We need them to respect that we have many situations here that don't have to do with their situations.

EEB: There are things that Africa needs. Africa functions according to the rhythm of the European countries that colonized us. The measures taken in those countries cannot be applied here. Here, people live from day-to-day. Africa needs to develop its own mode of functioning, its own mode of development that isn't

necessarily the mode of development, the mode of functioning, of Western countries that have other realities. It is the same thing in theatre. On every level, Africa needs to rethink things. (May 15)

Adham Darawsha, former president of the Council of Cultures of Palermo (Italy)

It is very interesting for someone like me, during these days and months, to be overseeing the cultural centers in Palermo, which is very difficult. Immigration contributed to the renaissance of Palermo. Culture for us, we have proved, is a very important instrument of social inclusion—of putting people together regardless of difference, even if they don't have anything in common. You can put people together with culture. We do a lot of cultural activity that addresses social questions. The work that Pamela Villosi has done with the Teatro Biondo addresses important social questions. That is our way of taking care of things. When we speak about a crisis like Covid-19, or any other crisis that the city has had, you will always see that we handle the situation using culture. You can speak of Covid-19 by health measurements, sanitary actions (and I'm a general practitioner myself). But for us, culture is not only a word. It is not only where you go to the theatre or cinema on Friday or Saturday for one or two hours. We decided that culture for us is the base of our action, and we are speaking about a city that takes care of everyone. It is very important not to have invisible areas in the city so that we can help poor people, or we can help people who are coming to our country after having a very long journey in Africa and then the Mediterranean Sea. We can help people that are facing difficult economic circumstances. Making people visible is very important because it is the only way you can assure that you have a secure city. Being culturally tolerant and involved is a very important instrument that makes a city secure. It is very important for a big city to have everyone involved. And there is nothing that will help people fit together more than culture in a crisis. (May 19)

Thomas Oberender, artistic director, Berliner Festspiele (Germany)

Nobody knows how we will be changed by this experience. For me, I can say that it's not normal anymore to fly to New York to meet in person for three hours. Impossible. I would say I am starting to rethink our system of making exhibitions. All these curators are traveling around the world to go shopping in institutions and bring something home that will be delivered in huge trunks by assistants, just to be presented in the showcase for eight weeks or three months. All this is a luxury behavior. I see it is necessary, of course, in the way institutions are working now—it is necessary for many artists to go on tour and to travel. But I think we now have a second to understand. We remember how bright the sky looks, especially if you remember the photographs of the satellites of Northern

Italy—you see the landscape and not the smog. So many things are possible that seemed to be impossible. This gives us some opportunity to think about an economy under the conditions of deceleration. I think there is a generation that will remember this break. The virus pressed the pause button. You see the fragility of civilization. The time of corona makes it clear that there is another world inside the modern Enlightened world. There is a world of different concepts of the world. There is another kind of philosophy of care, of healing, of different medicine—everything, that is not so appreciated by the established system, but is not so toxic as the established ways of our economy and our lifestyle. Resist going back to the things you know too early. (May 21)

Kris Verdonck, director (Belgium)

Kristof van Baarle and I were working with the philosopher Jean Paul Van Bendegeem, and we asked him, now that you're old enough, tell us what is changing in the world from your position. He offered the following idea: "We don't really change. It is the landscape that changes." We manipulate the landscape while we're living—by pollution, by doing good or doing bad, it doesn't really matter. It does *matter*, but we don't know what we are doing. We have an idea that we'll do it—we will fly, we want progress, we want to invent things, we will do it. That's the nature of humankind. We cannot invent nothing. We have to invent. But we don't know the consequences of what we do in our lifetime now, the consequences for our children and the generation after that. We inherited the world from our parents, we are always in delay. What we are doing the next generation will bear the consequences. And that is the law. We inherit the world we are born into and we manipulate it for the next generation. Environmentalists are having so much trouble trying to predict something because, actually, the damage is already done. It was done ten years, or twenty, thirty, forty years ago, and now we are seeing the consequences. And it is so extremely difficult to intervene now so that, in two generations, it will be better.

Humans are a very interesting specimen. It's the pretentiousness of thinking we know. That's a problem—to think that we will solve it, especially through machines and mechanics. Every invention has its dark side. The devastation of the electric car in the Congo, the production of batteries is just a horror. We are saying now that the electric car will save the world, however it will not. But suddenly we go in and we do it. And then we bear or don't bear the consequences. (May 25)

Anne Bogart, artistic director, SITI Company (U.S.)

I think social distancing is really a misnomer. Physical distancing is true. You and I are physically distanced. Socially we have never been hotter. There is so much

social interaction going on and so many people are reaching out. One thing I have found is that people have shown their true colors in a moment like this. It is in these moments of crisis—in the gap—that how you are and how you act and behave now matters. This is the moment when not only action but preparation for action matters. I was very impressed by the Italian director Eugenio Barba, whose question was, “What do all actors in the world share in common, even if they don’t speak the same language?” His answer was *sats* (Danish), or the quality of energy in the moment before you move or act. A lot of us are in a state of *sats* at the moment, and we share that around the world, and how we cultivate that *sats* will determine how we act when we can.

Right after the shutdown occurred, a lot of people got desperate and started what I would call self-expression online—coronavirus dances and endless readings. It was bothering me, and I found it solipsistic. But Tina Landau said to me that this is a form of mourning, and I think she is right. But it got me thinking about what is going on, whether it is display or something else. I started thinking of prisoners of war in Vietnam. They were put in cells and not allowed to speak to each other, and they developed a very elaborate and secret method of tapping on the pipe or on the wall. The importance of tapping was not just the content or information, but also the sense of keeping spirits together. I think it is a very different form of putting yourself online as a form of tapping. “Tap tap tap, are you out there?”

When we come out of this, it’s not going to be easy and there will be a lot of changes. The way we relate to each other has got to change and the way we make theatre will have to change, at least for a while. So it will behoove us to go back to what is fundamental to what we do, and one of the foundational aspects of theatre is that notion of tapping. The entire reason I am in the theatre is for the communication between the stage and audience and how that’s configured. Consequently, this is a time to develop a very strong *sats*. Waiting is an art, as is listening, and these are things we can cultivate for now. I am still dedicated to making theatre that has presence and force, and with it is a proposal of ways of being in the world together. After coronavirus, I think in the theatre we need to rework how we work. What we are going to have to look at is technique because we don’t have the techniques to handle the work we are about to walk into, and so we will need to invent them. We are going to have to experiment and innovate and be open to failure. Courage and intuition are the ingredients we need to cultivate. (May 27)

Hoi Fai Wu, artistic director, Pants Theatre Production (Hong Kong)

Everyone wore a mask as soon as there was an outbreak, and so the situation is getting under control sooner because people are very well disciplined, and sometimes a bit over-disciplined. That's why the situation is under control here. I will give the credit to Hong Kong people, not the government. We want to do some productions that will encourage the audience, when they walk out of the theatre, to think about issues related to our everyday life, to our society. I was attracted by documentary theatre because it creates a bridge between society and theatre. And I think it is a good way to find out the truth in a particular period of history. It helps me to understand the situation in Hong Kong, especially now when the situation is changing so quickly.

In general, I think in Hong Kong we all understand that without freedom, without an open environment, theatre won't survive or thrive. I'm not using the theatre to provoke a particular person or a particular governing body. Of course, I'm not using theatre to please them either. I think the theatre is a place for me to think. I use theatre to invite the audience to share in my thinking, and then to think with me. We try to find answers to particular questions. I don't like my theatre to be a tool to point a finger toward a particular person or particular body because it is very dangerous if you use theatre to just promote your own ideology. Tyranny, totalitarian government, will use theatre in this way, so it is a very dangerous position to take. I would rather have my theatre be a place to invite my audience to think together. (May 29)

JUNE

Jonathan McCrory, artistic director, National Black Theatre; Ngozi Anyanwu, actor and playwright (U.S.)

JM: How do I live throughout my days in the era of coronavirus? And also in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, in the wake of so many murders, and the unveiling that's happening in many different ways? I really have to pause. I take a lot of confidence in the wisdom housed in a person who I really look up to, James Baldwin, and in looking at how he was a great witnesser, and a witness through action—how he pinned down and voiced a lot of things he saw as an offering to future generations. So I ask myself in this moment, what is our offering to the future? How are we instilling the future to have a brighter spot in our present? What does the future actually look like birthed from the love and vibration of the present moment? What does a future look like not based on shame—another name for oppression—that actually creates the most powerful Afro-futuristic moment that we can possibly ever imagine? Because it is all there, it has all been positioned for us actually to be able to do it. So when I think

about my day-to-day action, it's about deep meditation, deep silence, but also about witnessing from a space of active participating. Active participating for me is running the National Black Theatre, making sure it is fortified and able to withstand this moment, making sure my colleagues are spiritually, mentally, even physically, fortified and ready for this moment. Our readiness is the thing that will ensure the love note we give to our future generations, the love note that I saw James Baldwin provide for future generations—something that they can live off of. Something that they can say they are proud to be a part of. Something that they can say, thank you, for tilling the ground, so I can plant new seeds.

NA: There are some people who are realizing, at this moment, that they have been living without purpose, that they have been out of tune with other people—that they have been in tune with only themselves. Actually, we are all connected. I can't walk out the door now without thinking about these other people who have been killed, and this is what other people have always been thinking. I can't walk out the door now without thinking about these black and brown people that have been killed—also during the coronavirus—the disproportionate killing of our people. People are waking up to the fact that they have been living for themselves when it's not just about them. What is their responsibility to the future, and to the world? That is a really overwhelming and awakening. And now you're really going to have to think: how does what I do affect others? (June 8)

Woodie King Jr., founding director, New Federal Theatre (U.S.)

I look at the response to George Floyd's murder as a family having lost a beloved son, and they are grieving, and that grieving is not unlike all these other killings. But we didn't have an instant reply on things like Emmett Till or the murder of Fred Hampton. The new technology has brought it into our living room. Before, there were these kinds of virtual talks and it was confined to the black community. You had no ears. Nobody could listen. They had to wait for the black newspaper that came out once a week or black radio, which is not listened to by white Americans. The change has not been like this, worldwide, ever.

The Black Theatre Movement, as far as I'm concerned, still exists. America has not done enough to support the Black Theatre Movement. To do a regular play on Broadway costs 1.5 million dollars. We don't have those kinds of investors in black theatre. America consists of black Americans, white Americans, and foundations. While \$10,000 would mean the world to me, it doesn't mean a thing to Lincoln Center. The pandemic is bringing a light to all of this. Now we are all in the same boat, the same situation, that we found ourselves in when the New Federal Theatre started up.

We need art. Art nourishes us. When you go to a play, we need to see ourselves somewhere reflected in the statement and the images projected on stage. We need *A Raisin in the Sun*. We need our sisters, like Ruby Dee, or brothers, like Sidney Poitier. We need a reaffirmation. Art reaffirms who we are. Affirmation is the key to existing here in America. If we don't have anything that reaffirms who we are, we will assume that "I'm out here alone," which is a terrible thing to do. Art solidifies one's identities. I read James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, and *Nobody Knows My Name*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and there is a reaffirmation in them. And that is what I try to do in my art. (June 12)

Tania Bruguera, performance artist (Cuba)

We need to make sure that we protect our rights. Not only the most evident ones, like free speech, but also that we protect the right to live off our work, and also the right to do art that is meaningful. Another thing that I have been seeing is that art is more popular than ever because, of course, people need entertainment, people need something that makes them go to another place in their mind. But I see people showing art that is not done with the depth of art. I understand immediacy and sometimes you can do an immediate reaction that is amazing and super complex, but I always defend, in these times of Trump, against oversimplification of feelings, oversimplification of subjects—the right for art to be done with as many layers of analysis and complexity as possible. It almost feels like there is an opportunity to change the form of art. I'm not saying that it is going to happen. Unfortunately, sometimes it seems that people forget what is painful very quickly, and all the lessons that you learn during that painful process are quickly substituted for something easier or something more satisfying. So I am not having a lot of hope, but I am thinking a lot about: what form can art have today? How can we do art, really, that talks to more people than ever?

It almost feels that we live in a moment where we need narratives. Not only gestures, not only images, but narratives. It almost feels that the battle we are living right now in society is how we rewrite narratives. There is a moment now where we need to be willing to have the answer to the question: are you willing to go all the way and risk everything for what you think is important, for what you think is just, for what you think is ethical, for what you think is truth? Or, are you going to keep saying it's too much trouble?

I do art because there are many things that I don't understand. For me, it's less a communicative tool than it is an analytical tool and a resource to understand things. To break the fake rigidity of life, to understand how certain currents go from one place to another even when they are invisible. That's how I use art. But why I use art and when I use art is when I see injustice. The only way I have

been able to express my anger, my fear, my stubbornness, my confidence, my desires, my hope, is when I see injustice happening. Then art, for me, is always the answer. I am enjoying the fact that we are living a social turbulence. Now we are in a moment that has been shaken so much that we can actually go into these cracks and maybe do something. We are living in the third world war. The third world war is not people with guns. It's people with resources. (June 17)

Eugenio Barba, artistic director, Odin Teatret (Denmark)

Throughout the whole history of our profession, theatre people were dependent on financial resources. From the very beginning, in Athens, it was the town that gave a lot of money and invented this strange expression called theatre in order to glorify the town's political system, which was unique at the time: democracy. To the point that the Athenian authorities were paying the citizens to go to theatre because they were losing their working day. So from the very beginning, there was a body who was paying for people to do theatre. In Europe, in the Middle Ages it was the church providing funds for the religious mysteries. But the great moment of freedom for us theatre people was when the first professional companies were created. When the first companies arrived they liberated themselves from the church, from the aristocracy, and they invented a territory of freedom—the market and the tickets—where the spectators were paying very little and therefore could begin to do what they wanted. But then, once again, the spectators demanded certain products, and therefore the actors had to conform. On one side, we need economic resources to do theatre; on the other side, we want to be independent. In the attempt to get a new freedom, nearing the end of the nineteenth century, something called the “art theatre” arose. This small theatre was no longer interested in complying with the taste of spectators. In the twentieth century, theatre was entertainment but could, at the same time, become a tool of ethical education, political awareness, and artistic experiments.

Each new generation steps into theatre. Why do people choose to do theatre? The question is not if theatre is necessary or important, but what theatre is for me as the person who has chosen this profession. Society doesn't need theatre. This is proved right now. Theatres stay closed. No one is protesting. But it was necessary for me, and so I did theatre. It was my necessity. I'm very optimistic: despite that the numbers show the theatres are diminishing, there will always be people who try to build their own island of freedom through theatre. I'm optimistic there will always be someone in a generation who wants to fight because a personal wound will make them join together with others in the theatre. Be proud of what you are and conquer your diversity and make it be respected and accepted through your personal way of behaving, your doings, your achievements. Start from tomorrow getting up one hour before today, and don't give up. Your worst

enemy is yourself because you have a tendency to be satisfied with the first result, to accept the norms of the others. You have to fight. (June 24)

Gianina Cărbunariu, director, playwright, artistic director of Teatrul Tineretului (Romania); Jeton Neziraj, playwright and artistic director of Qendra Multimedia (Kosovo)

GC: As theatre artists, it is very strange to shift our way of expression. I decided to do a visual essay and not to record an online reading. I really had to change my way of thinking. I took photographs of things during lockdown, such as when workers left Romania for Germany to work. In connection to East and West, we all know what happened afterwards. There are huge scandals now in Germany. Of course, these precarious working conditions already existed, but now it has become clear. I started documenting this situation five years ago. Working conditions were very bad. They also have no health insurance, so the moment something happens to them, they are really without help. I think this is a huge topic now in Europe, and not only about these conditions. To put it very directly, it is modern slavery. In this visual essay, I was trying to bring other creators and actors into it. I wanted to put together our personal and artistic journey somehow in the frame of tensions between East and West.

JN: I was able to catch the very last plane from Switzerland to Kosovo. It was in total lockdown. You could not go out at all. We were allowed to go out for ninety minutes at a specific time of day and eventually that grew to three hours. Somehow we were coping and learning, hoping it would pass. It was traumatic in the beginning, and I was not able to do any writing. In the middle of this pandemic, the government collapsed. They received a no-confidence vote. This was also a big social trauma because the new government had just come forward for fifty days or so, and then had to leave because of some international tensions between Europe and the U.S. The former Prime Minister, who was kicked out of office, was not willing to follow Trump's policy, who insisted on a fast peace deal between Kosovo and Serbia. Obviously, he wanted some diplomatic success for the U.S. election. The Prime Minister was not willing to do something fast and without real content, so they kicked him out and the new government came in. In the beginning, they promised some five million euros for the artistic scene, and we were all very enthusiastic that money would be coming, but it never arrived.

GC: This pandemic showed that access to art shouldn't be a luxury. The state should support artists and art. We see what's going on in the UK, for instance, where theatres are facing this danger to close down. In Romania and other countries in Europe, in the state institutions, we are still safe. We don't know for

how long, but for now we still have this support. We spend a lot of time together online to reimagine how we can communicate with audiences during this time.

JN: This pandemic created some sort of mirroring where you can clearly see who is really trying to help and who is cheating and wants to benefit. In that sense, I think people will understand, and that in new elections, they will make better choices. But it's hard to say how society will be shaped from this pandemic.

GC: In this global crisis, a global answer is needed. I think Romania could be worse, and also Hungary and Poland. International politics will have a huge impact. This could be a good change, not only for Romania, but for other countries in the East. We have to be able to imagine a future. It's time to just be reflective and not so productive. Exit this logic of productivity and competition—look around, it's important. (June 30)

Artist bios and video documentation of all the Segal Talks interviews are available on HowlRound at <https://howlround.com/series/segal-talks>.

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