

Music and Art Sector in Pandemic. Croatian Example

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Abstract: *Putting in context conditions in which art, especially music and performing arts, exists in the time of pandemic, proportions and a possibility of achieving the goals from the New European Agenda for Culture will be analysed. Aiming to harness the full potential of culture to help build a more inclusive and fairer EU, supporting innovation, creativity and sustainable jobs and growth, increased cultural participation and building cohesive societies the role of music and performing arts will be highlighted. According to the GESAC study „Rebuilding Europe. The cultural and creative economy before and after the COVID-19 crisis“ (January 2021), the performing arts are the most affected areas within the cultural and creative industries. For that reason, the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media has adopted several measures which aim to help the cultural sector, particularly performing artists, during the Covid-19 crisis. During the 2 months, digital platforms have served as the only place of activity and sharing of cultural content, so Ministry has decided to open the Call for online activities as an additional source of financing. By reviewing the effectiveness of adopted measures it will be shown which new models of communication and cooperation have the potential to become a new cultural value in the future, as a consequence of the crisis. The new models in the form of distributed online content in the field of music and performing arts sector will be questioned in the context of cultural politics. An example of good practice in adapting the cultural sector to new circumstances, the project of students of Production at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb, who designed the review of student plays in a completely new innovative format, the so-called KRADU 24, will be presented.*

Key words: *art; pandemic; Croatian Ministry of culture and Media; cultural and creative industries; new cultural models.*

The whole world faced the pandemic in 2020, whose consequences still have a destructive impact at humanity in general. Performing arts sector, including music, has suffered great losses. The activity, which has an imminent contact with the audience and the vitality of public performance, has been severely affected by the pandemic crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus. If we follow the traces of performing arts and theatre from the first empires and small democratic cities-states through feudal kingdoms to multiply connected and with the information flow, capital and market submitted „global village“ (Senker 2010, 15-16) it is obvious that there is a



close connection between art and audience. We could refer to the theatrical process, as stated by Brecht and Weiss, its dialectical character, in constant move and dependence with previous or outside happenings (Pavis 2004, 173) and compare it with current situation in observing the changes theatre and performing arts, in general, are going through. If we have in mind that, according to Fischer-Lichte, theatre finds its basis and the condition of its existence in *conditio humana* – when someone as an actor stands in front of somebody else as the audience (Fischer-Lichte 2010,11) situations that we experienced are in direct contradiction to the purpose of its existence. Same stands for music as art form which can only be appropriate if it is performed in front of the audience. Apart from the music understood as an art form, it had, through centuries, its important social value, starting with its role in antique times, through connection with rites to its development through forms of opera in theatres and concert halls (*Hrvatska enciklopedija* s.v. glazba). The pioneer in the field of Music Sociology, Max Weber, looks, in this process, at music in terms of social behaviour and emphasizes the need to explain the consequences of the process itself (Weber 1921). Kurt Blaukopf stated that the musical praxis consists of the terms “musical behaviour”, “musical ways of behaviour” and “musical expectations of behaviour”, which means that Music Sociology is group of all, for musical practice, relevant social facts, the order of those facts according to their significance for musical practice and their understanding for change of those practices (Blaukopf 1982, 18). Also, musical expressions of members of a society witnessed diversity and encouraged homogenization communities in a holistic sense (Hraste-Sočo 2013, 27).

Music and musical works can't be separated from their recipients; they can be designated as a subject of production and reception (Zimmermann 2002, 27). Music as an art that knows no language barriers at the time of the pandemic was, also, moved down by the circumstances in which it was found. Change in turnover 2019-2020 for music sector was drastic – 76%, but also for all cultural and creative industries sector, as is evident in the study *Rebuilding Europe. The cultural and creative economy before and after the COVID -19 crisis* through three chapters:

1. Before Covid - 19 – The full power of culture and creation
2. Because of Covid - 19 – The sharp fall
3. After Covid – 19 – Rebuilding Europe.

In the first chapter, *Before Covid - 19 – The full power of culture and creation*, it is indicated, that at the end of 2019, the cultural and creative economy was a European heavyweight: it represented 4.4% of EU GDP with a turnover of €643 billion and a total added value of €253 billion in 2019; the economic contribution of CCIs was even greater than that of telecommunications, high technology, pharmaceuticals or the automotive industry. Also, at the end of 2019, CCIs employed more than 7.6 million people in the EU, and they have added approximately 700,000 (+10%) jobs, including authors, performers and other creative workers, since 2013 (GESAC, 2021, 2).



In the second chapter, *Because of Covid - 19 – The sharp fall*, it is stated that in 2020, the cultural and creative economy lost approximately 31% of its revenues and that the total turnover of CCIs in the EU- 28 is reduced to €444 billion in 2020, which is a net drop of €199 billion from 2019. This means that with a loss of 31% of its turnover, the cultural and creative economy is one of the most affected in Europe, among it performing arts (-90% between 2019 and 2020) and music (-76%) are the most impacted (GESAC, 2021, 4).

Finally, in the third chapter, *After Covid – 19 – Rebuilding Europe*, the challenges were highlighted as priorities for the recovery and growth of the creative economy: “Finance” - Providing massive public funding and promoting private investment in cultural and creative businesses, organizations, entrepreneurs and creators – two indispensable levers to support and accelerate their recovery and transformation; “Empower” – promote the EU’s diversified cultural offering by ensuring a solid legal framework to allow the development of private investment in production and distribution, providing the necessary conditions for an adequate return on investment for businesses and guaranteeing appropriate income for creators; “Leverage” – use the CCIs as a major accelerator of social, societal and environmental transitions in Europe (GESAC, 2021, 5).

The study finishes with a conclusion that the COVID-19 crisis will have a massive and lasting impact on the entire CCI value chain.

Because of the situation, Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media, as ministries in the most of the EU countries, has adopted several measures which aim to help cultural sector, particularly performing artists, during the Covid-19 crisis. The intention was to include all the artists and cultural actors who lost a possibility of further activity and who’s social and economic status was endangered (Pregled mjera za kulturni sektor, s.a.).

So, at the beginning of March 2020, the Ministry started adopting measures with the aim of effectively responding to the crisis due to the COVID-19 epidemic and to protect cultural values and all stakeholders who act and create in the field of culture. The Ministry has taken measures that cover all artists and cultural workers who have lost the opportunity to work and whose social and economic status was fundamentally endangered. As part of the revised budget, the Ministry ensured 6.300.000,00 Euro for the Crisis Fund to help the cultural and media sector.

Also, during Croatian Presidency of the Council of EU on 8th April ministers of culture discussed measures aimed at assisting the cultural and creative sector and the Declaration by the Ministers of Culture and Media on culture in times of COVID – 19 crisis was adopted.



First package of measures adopted in the period of suspension of all cultural activities (March/April 2020) and that entered into force immediately after the announcement of restrictive measures are:

- The decision on the postponement of the execution of the contracted programs of public needs in culture and the conditions of payment for approved programs in special circumstances; that allowed a maximum of flexibility for contracted programs with the Ministry;
- The decision on the suspension of the revision of freelance artists to the payment of contributions for pension and health insurance from the state budget for a period of six months;
- First package of measures for job preservation implemented by the Croatian Employment Bureau, including artists and cultural workers;
- Public call to support artists who professionally perform independent artistic activity and whose contributions are paid from the budget of the Republic of Croatia;
- Special fund for independent professionals who do not have a regulated status, are not in the register of taxpayers, do not pay contributions or have not acquired the right to pay contributions from the state budget.

Relaxation of measures took place after April 2020 and a series of recommendations for the realisation of artistic activities, which contributed to the production, distribution and use of cultural content are issued.

The second package of measures aimed to encourage and restart cultural life as well as the production and distribution of cultural and artistic content are issued in the period from May till October 2020:

- the calls Art and Culture Online (3.300.000,00 euros) and Entrepreneurship in Cultural and Creative Industries (1.050.000,00 euros);
- launching the loan guarantee program for entrepreneurs (SMEs) active in the field of culture and creative industries;
- adjusted version of the Call for submitting programs of public needs in culture.

The third package of measures consists of new support programmes (from autumn 2020 until January/February 2021):

- Public call for partial compensation of performance costs in theatre, dance and music (classical and jazz music) with the aim of stimulating further activity in performing arts, within the current circumstances of reduced spatial capacities and the consequent inability to meet all performance costs;
- Public call for digital adjustment programs and the creation of new cultural and educational content;



- Call for proposals for concert programs (with the Croatian Musicians Union) – financial help for musicians and independent workers in the music industry (670.000 euro);
- a new Public call to support artists who professionally perform independent artistic activity and whose contributions are paid from the budget of the Republic of Croatia;
- Public call for independent professionals who do not have a regulated status, are not in the register of taxpayers, do not pay contributions or have not acquired the right to pay contributions from the state budget.

As it is noted, a number of measures are undertaken to help the cultural and creative sector, including music sector, to minimize the adverse effects of the COVID- 19 pandemic. As it was announced, Ministry will continue to create new measures to help cultural professionals in these difficult times.

The music sector, according to GESAC study, was the sector that endured greatest loss in year 2020 with the loss of 90% in its turnover. Therefore, the Ministry issued, as stated above, special Open calls for music sector, including all kinds of musical genres, to help cultural professionals to overcome this period. This helped a great many musicians to perform and keep their work and to overcome severe circumstances during the pandemic.

As a reaction to the situation, the new models of communication and cooperation in the form of distributed online content in the field of music and performing arts sector were developed as a possible cultural value in creating cultural politics. For that reason, the Ministry of Culture and Media issued special Call for Art and Culture Online which arouse great interest among the cultural professionals. Nevertheless, the online content provided by the cultural institutions helped public in general, especially concert and theatre audience, to ease the overcoming of difficult situation caused by global lockdown. At the same time, although it was important to have the opportunity to get access to any cultural content, it couldn't replace the non existing interaction with audience, something that performing arts have in their nature. However, the situation in which the whole cultural sector found itself, originated new forms of cultural products. A good example in adapting the cultural sector to new circumstances was the project of students of Production at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb, who designed the review of student plays in a completely new innovative format, the so-called KRADU 24.

KRADU is a revue of students of theatre departments at the Academy, which is organized by students of the 2nd year of undergraduate studies in Production (under the mentorship of Assist. Prof. Iva Hraste-Sočo, PhD). The initiative arose in the mid-1990s from ADA students to show their work outside the regular educational process and has hosted a variety of art students from abroad, but produced a number of premiere titles as well. The review is of a non-competitive nature, and its goal is to create a



platform through which students will be able to present their work, exchange experiences and meet new artistic expressions. In year 2020, while preventive measures and rules were changing from day to day all over the world, the 12th in a row KRADU set up its own rules.

After being forced to adapt the concept of KRADU due to the new situation, the organizing team of the year's 2020 revue decided to adapt the program from five days to only 24 hours, but proportionately even more intensive. Six teams made six short plays in only 24 hours, from beginning to the end. Students and professors from the departments of Theatre Directing, Dramaturgy and Acting participated in the creation of the programme and the entire production began just 24 hours before the premieres.

The work process began on Friday night with the assignment of the theme, after which 6 writers went to the Academy premises, where they wrote 6 original dramatic texts on the given topic. On Saturday morning, 6 teams (1 director, 1 writer and 3 actors in each team) were randomly formed, received their text and started working on the play at the Academy. The author teams had 10 hours to make their performances based on the text, with the assigned scenography, props and costumes. After a full day and night of work, at 8 p.m., 6 premieres were performed (each lasting 10 to 15 minutes). The revue brought together 31 students and professors who wrote, directed and performed six short premieres in one day. On that day, the audience followed the development of the preparations via social networks, and at 8 pm, the performances were performed in front of the audience. The program visited 45 viewers, and the engagement of over 200 people was reached through social networks. The newly conceived format provoked a large number of positive reactions from the audience, participants and the organizing team.

Photographs of 12th KRADU:





Photographs: Lara Varat

From the KRADU 24 project, which arose as a kind of response to the situation in which the performing arts sector found itself, especially students who had to fulfil their student study obligations, a whole new project emerged, called DANKA: 24-hour manifestation of intensive theatre productions, which is planned to be conducted at the Academy every year. The format of the event requires participants to produce a complete short theatrical premiere within one day; from text writing to performance. DANKA is attended by 5 writers, 5 theatre directors and 15 actors, both students and professors who apply to participate. In creating their performances, author teams have several conditions, for example, they are assigned to use 3 costume elements, 3 props, and a simple set design.

The 24 hour plan for DANKA is conceived:

- 19:00 writers get a universal theme / situation according to which they have to write a short dramatic text overnight (about 10 pages)
- 20:00-8:00 writers write their plays overnight
- 8:00 participants are randomly divided into teams and receive their texts (5 teams; 1 team = 1 writer + 1 director + 3 actors)
- 8:30-14:00 rehearsals for the preparation of the play in 5 separate rooms
- 14:00-15:00 lunch break
- 15:00-19:00 team rehearsals in the performance hall
- 19:30-21:00 performance of 5 premieres in front of the audience (developed by Katarina Grgić, Performing arts Production student)

As stated, the pandemic that hit the whole world and that no one could expect, has shown its severe side to the arts sector in particular. Although public bodies reacted to



the situation, the consequences will be long lasting and the cultural sector will need a lot of time to come back to the level where it was in 2019. Having in mind what the music and arts sector in general faced in the last two years, the expectations in the public documents, such as, New European Agenda for Culture will have to be revised and adapted to the reality. Nevertheless, it is obvious that human kind is trying to find its own way to overcome the consequences and, young generation specially, is inspirational in this process.

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