



# Creative Closure for Arts and Culture During Covid-19

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The outbreak of Covid-19 might be preventing arts and cultural organisations from opening their doors and engaging with their audience members on site, but over the past number of months we've seen bursts of creativity and cultural output from members of the Ticketsolve Community.

This paper covers a few examples of how organisations are propelling themselves forward and sustaining relationships with audiences, supporters and artists during this period of closure.



# Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused upheaval in all areas of society. The arts and cultural sector has been particularly hard-hit, impacting both artists and the organisations that work with them. Venue closures and event cancellations have also been difficult on patrons. Many people see the arts as a lifeline and a way to connect to their community; the closures have had consequences on them as well.

But closures don't have to mean an end to creativity and engagement. Many arts organisations are doing what they can to support artists and their audiences during this very difficult and unprecedented time. We'd like to share those ideas and stories here.

We understand that many organisations - for many varied reasons - cannot replicate some of the initiatives presented here - that is of course perfectly okay. Our hope is that by sharing some of these stories you are inspired by the amazing arts community we have here and be hopeful about the future.

The organisations that we spoke with have tackled the challenges of Covid-19 closures in a variety of ways. Predominantly, organisations have moved as much content online as possible and have tried to directly support artists where they can.

## Civic Theatre Tallaght

[The Civic](#), opened in March 1999, is a visionary project by South Dublin County Council (with grant aided by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands). To date The Civic has produced and co-produced 26 plays, mostly involving new Irish writing. Offering a broad range of productions, events, workshops, showcases, summer camps and conferences across drama, comedy, music, family, schools, dance and multicultural offerings! Civic's mission is to enrich the lives of all of the people in South Dublin County and beyond, by crafting and staging a range of shared cultural experiences that invite and provoke a meaningful journey of transformation.

## Supporting Artists Directly

Civic Theatre in Tallaght kicked off an [Artist Go Fund Me](#) in the early weeks of the health crisis. To date, they have raised 45k from 780 donors and have distributed this to 90 artists as bursaries. Their aim is to reach 50k in donations for artists.

IRELAND

# ARTIST EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

SUPPORTING THE ARTS COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19



## Connecting Artists and Schools

Civic also began the Tenderfoot Writing Programme virtually. The focus of the program is to have playwrights work directly with transition year students across secondary schools in South Dublin.

Working remotely through email, the students are given writing prompts via email. Between 9–10 students work with a single playwright where they receive detailed feedback from the playwright on their written work. The work began in March with the aim to have the plays completed by the end of May. This will then lead to an intensive week-long writing programme during the summer, which the Civic are hopeful will go ahead as planned. The playwrights participating in the programme this year include: Amy Conroy, Dylan Coburn-Gray, Veronica Coburn, Michelle Reed, Fionn Foyle and Sian Ni Mhiuriu.



## Commissioning Shows Early

With funding from Arts Council and South Dublin, Civic have commissioned Early Years children's shows, aimed at 0–12 year olds. These works are in the R&D phase, so they are able to utilise online mentorship and collaboration to make the shows and keep momentum going. The hope is that these shows will be presented once Civic is back operational.

## Collaborating Virtually

Working together over the last three years, Civic and Co-Producer Anna Newell's Theatre Adventures Company, have been producing shows for young children with complex needs.

In an effort to continue to support these audiences, they have begun an online creative collaboration with 30 families, getting qualitative feedback on different ideas to understand what children respond to best, especially during this unique and challenging time. The team consists of a composer, individual designer, set designer, costume designer, and also includes family feedback.

## Fundraising Using Online Shows

Civic has now added a new online shows section to their site, where a variety of shows will be added for audiences. The intention is to add live recordings of high-quality work to try and drive donations and fundraising. 2001's *The Matchmaker* (Gaiety Theatre) is already on the site courtesy of The City Theatre Dublin, as well as *The Bloody Irish* (Bloody Irish Productions for PBS in the States), which was filmed in the Helix.

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### APRIL 2020

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Available from 15th April // 2020

#### **THE MATCHMAKER LIVE RECORDING (2001)**

**REMIND ME ABOUT THIS EVENT**

City Theatre Dublin's Production of John B.Keane's *THE MATCHMAKER*  
Starring Anna Manahan and Des Keogh Directed by Michael Scott Setting by  
Michael McCaffery Costumes by...

**FIND OUT MORE**

**WATCH ONLINE**

## Hawk's Well Theatre

The Hawk's Well is a 340 seat theatre in Sligo, North West Ireland. They host a diverse programme of arts and entertainments including professional and amateur drama, a wide range of music from traditional and jazz to opera, plus dance, pantomime, children's theatre and comedy.

## Communicating with Artists

A priority - especially at the initial stages of the pandemic - was to give artists a sense of security. Prior to confirmation of financial assistance from the government, Hawk's Well communicated directly with all short residency artists, to reassure them the residency budget was still in place.

## Music Everyday

Using music to connect and engage with audiences, Hawk's Well implemented a number of online music events.

Singalong with Cathy Jordan: An online song a day with Cathy Jordan, where she sings a song everyday.

The graphic is a promotional poster for an online event. It features a central photograph of Cathy Jordan singing into a microphone. To the left of the photo is a white box containing the event title and schedule: 'HAWK'S WELL THEATRE & ROSCOMMON ARTS CENTRE PRESENT', 'SONGBIRDS', 'ONLINE SING-ALONG WITH CATHY JORDAN', and 'EVERY DAY @ 5PM'. Below this is a Facebook Live logo. At the bottom left are logos for Roscommon Arts Centre and Hawk's Well Theatre. To the right of the photo is a teal box with the text: 'Hawk's Well Theatre & Roscommon Arts Centre', 'Lockdown Songbirds Singalong with Cathy Jordan', 'FACEBOOK LIVE', and 'every day at 5pm'.

[Trad Tunes with Oisin MacDiarmada](#): Traditional tunes with Oisin MacDiarmada at 5pm each day and a “Trad Tune at Lunch” at 1pm each day. Mr. MacDiarmada also plays slowly if the audience wants to learn the tune.



[Pop Up Choir Online](#): “Sing for the Hell of It”, was transferred online. Loss of community is a big issue during quarantine. Moving their choir online has helped to maintain a sense of community. For example, 60 people recorded themselves for the choir. Hawk's Well then paid an artist to pull the piece together.

All three ideas - a song a day, trad tunes and the pop up choir are wonderful ways to build and maintain community through this crisis.

### Ten for Ten Collaboration

As a way to keep artists connected with each other, Hawk's Well, organised to have [10 theatre artists collaborate with 10 musical artists](#) and create a piece of content for audiences. This type of collaboration is really wonderful for artists participating, creating connections, sparking creativity and creating new work.

## Connecting to the Most Vulnerable

Pre Covid-19 Hawk's Well's [Cultural Companion Scheme](#) centred on creating a community and connecting older people interested in theatre. Being amongst the most vulnerable to Covid-19, Hawk's Well wanted to ensure that this community was not left behind, so they reimagined the Cultural Companion Scheme to respond to the new needs of the older community.

Now, the scheme connects five artists from theatre and music to older people in the scheme. The objective is for the artist to get to know the person they are connected with, create a peice and perform that piece in the senior's home.

Ultimately, Hawk's Well hopes to bring everyone together and solidify relationships between artists and the people they work with during this time, creating a much stronger community.





## Princes Theatre

[Princes Theatre](#) sits within Clacton Town Hall, a stunning grade II listed building. Staging over 130 shows, seminars, exhibitions, and events before closure each year, the theatre is a thriving hub of entertainment for the local community.

## Reaching the Socially Isolated

The council wanted to focus on the socially isolated, those that have been advised to remain at home. A big issue for this group is that they likely have no one that can shop for them, and may find online shopping complex and confusing - not to mention the wait times for online shopping at the moment.

Using a subdomain, [the council created an easy to use platform for people to buy what they needed](#). After carefully vetting people, a link was sent out to people so they could access the platform.



£22.00

### Package 1 - Basic Staples

Loaf of wholemeal Bread, Cereal (based on box of 500g cornflakes or Weetabix), 4pt Semi Skimmed Milk, Butter, Eggs x 6, Pasta 500g, Rice 500g, Tin Soup (Tomato &/or Chicken), Tin Tomatoes, Tin Sweetcorn, Tin Peas, Tin Carrots, Tin Fruit, Tin Tuna, Tin Corned Beef/Ham, Tin Baked Beans, Biscuits (variety pack includes Bourbon/Nice/Custard Cream/Malted Milk), Tea (80 teabags), Coffee (200g), [hide](#)



£32.00

### Package 2 - Basic Staples (Fresh)

Loaf of wholemeal Bread, Cereal (based on box of 500g cornflakes or Weetabix), 4pt Semi Skimmed Milk, Butter, Eggs x 6, Potatoes (2.5kg bag), Carrots (1kg bag), Broccoli, Tomatoes (6 pack), Cucumber, Lettuce, Apples (6 pack), Bananas (5 pack), Chicken (300g 2xbreasts), Beef Mince (500g), Pork Sausages (8 pack), Pasta 500g, Rice 500g, Tin Soup (Tomato &/or Chicken), Tin Tomatoes, Tin Baked Beans, Biscuits (variety pack includes Bourbon/Nice/Custard Cream/Malted Milk), Tea (80 teabags), Coffee (200g). [hide](#)



£39.00

### Package 3 - Gluten Free

White Bread - 550g or Brown Bread - 550g, Bran Flakes - 300g, Pasta - 500g, Digestive Biscuits, Pasta Sauce, Long Grain Rice - 1kg, White potatoes, Carrots, Broccoli, Milk - 4 pints, Butter - salted 250g, Cheese, Ham, 6 Large Eggs, Beans, Type of meat, Type of fish, Gluten free soup, Bananas. [show more](#)

## Pound Arts

[Pound Arts Centre](#), based in Corsham, UK, has a 100-seat auditorium, and exhibition space, cafe and bar. The centre also includes rehearsal and workshop spaces, studios housing three resident visual artists and a community workshop. Their Creative Learning department delivers education and outreach projects across the region, working to connect people through the arts. In addition Pound Arts runs two annual festivals and the Rural Arts touring programme, which comprises the rural touring schemes for Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire.

Their vision and mission is to connect people through creativity and for the communities in our region to be engaged with breathtaking artistic experiences regardless of their background or circumstances. They aim to be a creative catalyst and a place of refuge, discovery and nourishment for the public and artists alike and maintain and grow a sustainable flagship arts provision across the region that acts as a model for excellent work that engages the soul, stimulates the mind and entertains the spirit of our communities.

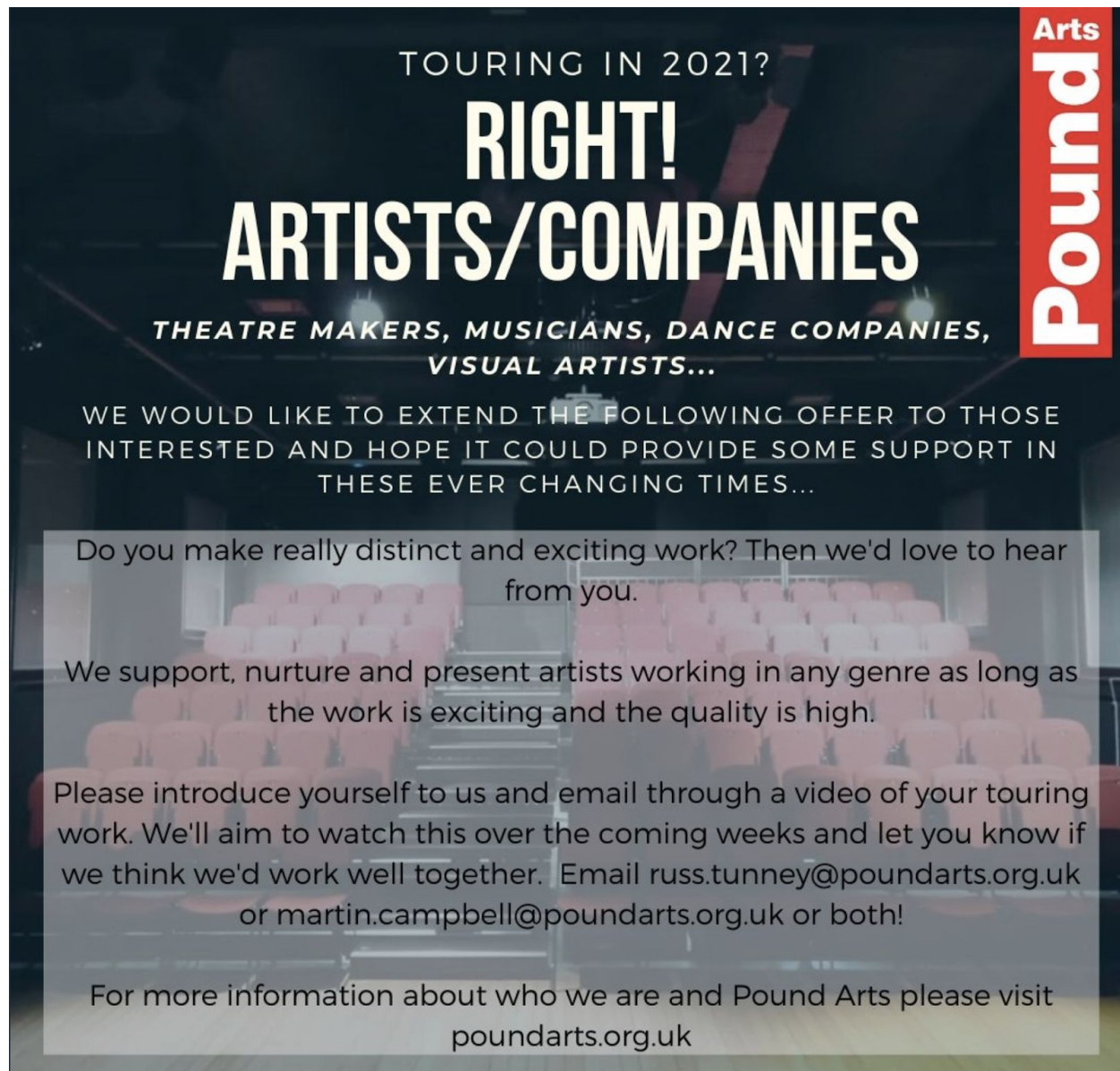
Typically, Pound Arts works with 15 artists and installations throughout the course of the year. The split for Pound Arts is 50% presenting artists work, and 50% artist development. They realised that they needed to focus on whatever would be most useful to artists. Their thinking is if artists are forgotten this would have a knock on effect of no installations for months down the road.

## Mentoring and Advice

While Pound Arts has always provided artists mentoring and advice, they decided to ramp up efforts during this time in order to show strong commitment to artists. This is especially important as many artists are concerned about September and October timings as well as current closures.

Normally, Pound Arts spends August meeting artists. Festivals such as Fringe Fest are particularly good for meeting artists, however, with the current situation giving no ability to network and meet artists, Pound Arts changed tack.

They recognised that many artists would be worried about not being able to meet and build relationships with organisations since there was no opportunity to network. So while in the past, Pound Arts never invited artists to showcase their work to them, [they put a call out to artists to meet digitally and encourage continued creativity.](#)



**Arts**  
**Pound**

TOURING IN 2021?  
**RIGHT!**  
**ARTISTS/COMPANIES**

*THEATRE MAKERS, MUSICIANS, DANCE COMPANIES,  
VISUAL ARTISTS...*

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND THE FOLLOWING OFFER TO THOSE INTERESTED AND HOPE IT COULD PROVIDE SOME SUPPORT IN THESE EVER CHANGING TIMES...

Do you make really distinct and exciting work? Then we'd love to hear from you.

We support, nurture and present artists working in any genre as long as the work is exciting and the quality is high.

Please introduce yourself to us and email through a video of your touring work. We'll aim to watch this over the coming weeks and let you know if we think we'd work well together. Email [russ.tunney@poundarts.org.uk](mailto:russ.tunney@poundarts.org.uk) or [martin.campbell@poundarts.org.uk](mailto:martin.campbell@poundarts.org.uk) or both!

For more information about who we are and Pound Arts please visit [poundarts.org.uk](http://poundarts.org.uk)

### Helping Non-NPO Artists

Pound Arts has also begun working with the [North Star project](#). The project works with artists who are not NPO - any artist or company that has not had funding from The Arts Council previously. To date, 40 organisations have joined this project to help support artists.

## Backstage Theatre

**Backstage Theatre** opened its doors in April 1995 and is a purpose built state of the art theatre located in Co. Longford, Ireland. Backstage was from the outset a community driven project with its main advocates being Slashers GAA Club and Backstage Theatre Group.

They are committed to their central role as a regional theatre which is accessible, participatory and enhances the cultural infrastructures of the region. Their mission is to promote the development of the arts regionally by presenting a high quality, diverse and innovative program of arts activities. Valued by and engaging the community we serve and which provides a platform and resource for artists and companies to present their work.

Over the years a growing audience at Backstage has been treated to a dynamic program of exciting and inspiring theatre. Whether a fancy top quality drama, breathtaking dance, belly chortling comedy or live music we have something to suit all tastes.

### #StayHome **What's On Guide** and #AtHomewithBackstage

Backstage is helping audiences stay connected with their What's On(line) Guide. Backstage now showcases any events and performances that audiences can stream live or watch a recording of. This promotes both engagement and in some cases where possible, donations for artists work.

**Your #StayHome What's On(line) Guide**  
from Backstage Theatre

**backstage**  
theatre & centre for the arts

TUES 14TH	WED 15TH	THURS 16TH	FRI 17TH	SAT 18TH
<p><b>MUSIC</b> AOIFE SCOTT is due to perform in Backstage on 4th June. Catch her live on her fb page today at 3:30pm</p> <p><b>THEATRE</b> The New Theatre present FIGHT BACK FESTIVAL, an online theatre festival for Irish audiences to discover short plays written in response to these unprecedented times</p>	<p><b>CHILDREN'S FUN</b> We can't wait to have Jess back in our studio but until then be sure to join her every Wed at 11am on FB for MUD BUGS Lockdown Life</p> <p><b>MAGIC!</b> Spread a bit of magic with KEITH BARRY as he gives kids magic lessons on FB every Mon/Wed/Fri at 12.30pm in aid of ISPCA</p>	<p><b>THEATRE</b> Phoebe Waller-Bridge &amp; The National Theatre are streaming FLEABAG Live on Soho Theatre throughout April for charity</p> <p><b>MUSIC</b> Check out MUSIC NETWORK's Butterfly Sessions where 24 musicians and composers will premiere newly-commissioned pieces</p>	<p><b>WEST END</b> As part of a WEST END LOCKDOWN LIVE series Irish actor/singer Caroline Kay will be performing live for charity</p> <p><b>DANCE</b> CoisCeim's luscious production of THE WOLF &amp; PETER will be broadcasting from Sydney Opera House digital platforms</p>	<p><b>MUSIC</b> DEREK RYAN is scheduled to perform in Backstage on Sun 7th June in the meantime you can check out his #derekduets series on his FB page</p> <p><b>LITERATURE</b> MOLI Museum of Literature bring Bright Sparks #CreativeBursts – writing inspo for children with Sarah Webb</p>

Check out relevant social media for details of streaming

In addition, they have also moved their excellent [#BackstageAtBackstage](#) series online. [#BackstageAtBackstage](#) is a series of interviews with current and upcoming artists, producers and directors showcasing upcoming events. Backstage Theatre have moved all of these online and begun [#AtHomewithBackstage](#), a series where they continue to interview artists and theatre makers from the community but now [online](#).



## National Gallery

Based in Dublin Ireland, the [National Gallery](#)'s mission is to care for, interpret, develop and showcase art in a way that makes the National Gallery of Ireland an exciting place to encounter art. They aim to provide an outstanding experience that inspires an interest in and an appreciation of art for all. They are dedicated to bringing people and their art together.

As part of their commitment to the community, National Gallery created [virtual tours](#) of their gallery and exhibition spaces allowing them to continue to engage with their audiences.

As families are a key audience for them, they have also created a [cheat sheet of all of their education resources for homeschooling](#) to help caregivers keep art alive for children during quarantine.

In addition, realising the mental health toll that isolation and quarantine can bring, they created a wonderful [mindfulness project](#) using artwork in the Gallery for anyone needing some relief.

## Conway Hall

[Conway Hall](#) is owned by the charity [Conway Hall Ethical Society](#) and was first opened in 1929. The name was chosen in honour of Moncure Daniel Conway (1832 – 1907), anti-slavery advocate, out-spoken supporter of free thought and biographer of Thomas Paine.

The Hall now hosts a wide variety of lectures, classes, performances, community and social events. It is renowned as a hub for free speech and independent thought.

The Library holds the Ethical Society's collection, which is the largest and most comprehensive Humanist Research resource of its kind in the United Kingdom.

In order to ensure continued access of their work, Conway Hall moved a lot of their programme online: <https://conwayhall.ticketsolve.com/shows>

## The Ark

[The Ark](#) is a dedicated cultural centre for children. They create opportunities for children, along with their families and friends or with their school, to discover and love art. Through their work with leading Irish and international artists children can enjoy performances in their unique child-sized theatre, view engaging exhibitions or participate in creative workshops.

In an effort to support families and children during quarantine, The Ark created an entire section - [The Ark At Home](#) - for online performances, workshops, art activities for kids, resources etc.

## Komedia Brighton

**Komedia** is Brighton's premier live entertainment venue presenting one of the largest, most diverse arts and entertainment programmes in the UK.

With over 700 performances of comedy, music, cabaret and children's theatre, the programme features the very best of international and national performers and includes Komedia's all conquering resident comedy shows: [Krater Comedy Club](#), [Comic Boom](#) and [Bent Double](#).

Focusing on their comedy club events, Komedia Live! is streaming live laughs to audiences' living rooms from Krater Comedy Club. Hosted by their resident MC Stephen Grant they are presenting some of the best hand-picked acts from the comedy circuit.

Audiences can watch via YouTube at [youtube.com/komedialive](https://youtube.com/komedialive)

## Draíocht

Over two decades ago a small group of people united together with one vision – to create Ireland's largest ever purpose built arts centre. Today this vision is a reality.

Draíocht is a multi-purpose arts & entertainment centre in the heart of Dublin's Blanchardstown. Audiences can choose from comedy, theatre, music, film, dance, family events, exhibitions & more. Draíocht welcomes over 50,000 people a year with a mission of Excellence, Access and Participation.

The purpose of Draíocht is to be a centre of excellence for performance and visual arts: to encourage a greater understanding of both traditional and innovative arts practice: to promote participation in all aspects of performance and visual arts: to embrace the local, extended, national and international community.

Being very community focused, Draíocht moved as much as possible online. In addition to [a number of online activities and events](#), Draíocht, are sending audiences newsletters packed with updates and activities under #CreateAtHome and are providing plenty of suggestions on their blog

<https://www.draiocht.ie/blog/category/createathome>.

## Final Thoughts

These are just a few examples of things that the arts sector is doing right now. There are many, many more examples out there of things that arts and cultural organisations are doing for their audiences and artists. But if you cannot implement these sorts of ideas - that is okay. We hope though it provides you with some inspiration and maybe sparks an idea for something that is doable for your organisation.

