

Theatre Royal Plymouth begins redundancy consultations

Staff at Plymouth's Theatre Royal have been advised that over 100 jobs are at risk as a direct impact of the Covid-19 pandemic that has reduced the venue's income by over 90%.

Redundancy consultations involving the trade union BECTU began on Monday and could affect almost a third of the charity's staff.

TRP's CEO Adrian Vinken said: *"With the Government's furlough scheme finishing in October and no guarantee about when and how we can safely open our doors, our already depleted funds will be under increasing pressure in the coming months. This is compounded by research predicting a reduction in audience numbers when we do reopen, meaning that we'll have to weather a significant drop in revenue even then – a situation that could last for 12 months or more. Together these factors have led us to the very painful but unavoidable conclusion that we must reduce our workforce in order to try to protect TRP for the future."*

BECTU Official Kevin Carson said "Bectu has developed a positive working relationship with TRP in helping the company become a Real Living Wage employer last year. Although this announcement about potential redundancies is worrying news, we understand that TRP have similar concerns for their survival as do most other theatres across the country. We will work with TRP to ensure the long-term future for the organisation and our member's jobs."

91% of TRP's income has disappeared as the lockdown has forced it to cancel productions and refund customers since the middle of March.

But despite this big loss of revenue, the charity has supported all its staff and creative freelancers since lockdown, with most of the workforce currently furloughed.

Adrian Vinken said: *"We have done everything we could to protect the jobs and incomes of our loyal workforce for as long as possible. This includes continuing to pay our casual staff members when most companies terminated contracts back in March. We have also honoured all contracts with creative freelancers working on the shows that we were due to produce despite their cancellation."*

Whilst the venue has been shut it has undertaken support efforts including staff fundraisers and the launch of an Emergency Appeal to which hundreds of local people have and continue to contribute. It has also been actively lobbying government for additional sector support.

TRP's Chair of Trustees Nick Buckland said *"We continue to play a visible role in lobbying government for additional support for the creative sector to emphasise the very real challenges theatres like TRP face and the impact closure will have on local communities. Without ticket sales or the furlough scheme we will very quickly run out of money – it's why we've had to propose redundancies and plan to reduce activity in order to cut overheads and buy TRP a few more months of precious time."*

Recently, TRP's active staff members volunteered to reduce their salaries by 20% in a bid to support the charity. Paying tribute to TRP's staff, Adrian Vinken said *"The commitment of the whole organisation during this very challenging time has been exceptional particularly the moving gesture by those still working to volunteer a 20% reduction in pay. TRP's excellent reputation in the industry and the fierce level of public support it enjoys has been built over many years and is a testament to the quality of our people. It's heartbreaking that what was a thriving organisation worth £40+million annually to the local economy just weeks ago has been forced to implement redundancies to safeguard the future. It's a terribly sad outcome for such loyal and capable staff – but a regrettable and inevitable result of the ongoing crisis."*

Though an opening date for TRP has yet to be confirmed, productions in 2020 remain on sale including the Christmas pantomime, *Aladdin*.

TRP recently announced the cancellation of *The Phantom of The Opera* due to the pandemic but several new shows for 2021 are due to be announced in July, and new dates for *This Land* performances will be confirmed in due course.

Adrian Vinken said *"We're committed to maintaining the extensive relationships we have with theatre makers, artists and companies across the country and Europe, supporting the creation of new work wherever we can. However, our more substantial investment plans for producing new original stage work will now have to be reined back until we're in a financially secure position again."*

No final decision on redundancies will be made until the consultation process is complete. Companies looking to recruit staff are asked to contact TRP via info@theatreroyal.com with any available opportunities which will be circulated to all those effected.

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For further information please contact the Media and Communications team on mediaandcommunications@theatreroyal.com / 01752 230439

Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP) is a registered charity providing art, education and community engagement in Plymouth and across the region. It engages and inspires with the aim of touching lives as the South West's principal centre for performing arts. Theatre Royal Plymouth presents a year-round programme of world class productions on all scales.

Theatre Royal Plymouth works with partners to understand the challenges people face accessing the arts, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged people. It creates pathways that are genuinely accessible to those who might otherwise never get to engage with the arts and collaborates to co-create and co-author work that represents the community, creating the space needed for people to tell their story in their own way.

Theatre Royal Plymouth is the UK's largest regional producing theatre with a focus on embracing the vitality of new talent and supporting emerging and established artists. It collaborates with a range of partners to provide dynamic cultural leadership for the city of Plymouth.