



Creative Champions Network Webinar – February 22, 2021

When The ShiFt Hits The Fan

Speakers:

Jaclyn Rodrigues, Community Engagement Manager, Toronto Arts Foundation

Jini Stolk, Toronto Arts Foundation Research Fellow

Tim Jennings, Shaw Festival

Christine Moynihan, Board President, Moonhorse Dance

Claudia Moore, Artistic Director, Moonhorse Dance

Arkady Spivak, Artistic Producer, Talk is Free Theatre

Christina Loewen, Executive Director, Association of Opera in Canada

Transcribed through Otter.ai, edited by Alexandra Loewen

00:00:00 – 00:01:52	Jaclyn Rodrigues	<p>All right, everybody. Welcome, Happy Monday. My name is Jaclyn Rodrigues and I am the Community Engagement Manager with Toronto Arts Foundation. And, you know, on behalf of all of the staff, we're delighted that you're able to join us today for this webinar. I'll keep my remarks brief as my role here today is really to act as a moderator for our Q&A and to just help troubleshoot any technical issues alongside my colleague Alexandra. As some of you may know, the Foundation is hosting this webinar as part of our Creative Champions Network. Jini Stolk, our network director will give you a few little bullet points on the program and a few moments for those of you who might be new here or not have heard of it.</p> <p>And with that being said, we have been doing these webinars for about a year now, feels like a lot longer. And while we hope for some new session, technical issues can happen. And you know, we're very grateful for your patience as we troubleshoot them if they come up.</p> <p>Second on my list today is to set the proverbial stage for the webinar. After the introductory remarks. We'll proceed with today's presentation. If you have a question for any of our presenters, please use the Q&A function, not the chat function. We ask this because the chat tends to bury questions in the Q&A keeps them nice and organized. If your question is for a specific presenter, please try and identify them and your question to us. We'll be addressing questions you know, maybe as they come up, definitely at the end, and we're going to strive to get to as many questions as possible by the end of the presentation. Now while, no one has requested ASL interpretation for the session or additional supports, we are recording today's session, we will have the recording and the</p>
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		<p>transcription of the session available as soon as possible following the presentation. With that, I'll turn it over to Jini Stolk, our Creative Trust fellow and leader of Creative Champions Network to you, Jini.</p>
<p>00:01:53 – 00:07:56</p>	<p>Jini Stolk</p>	<p>Well, thank you so much, Jaclyn. And thanks, as always to you, Jaclyn, and Alex for the smooth running of the Creative Champions Network. It's really appreciated. And thanks to everyone for joining us today. From locations across the city and beyond. It's good to know that neither snow nor distance are keeping people from joining and participating in the Creative Champions Network. So, Toronto arts Foundation's network for arts board members, and we had many in person speaker sessions before COVID arrived. And as Jaclyn mentioned, this is now our seventh Network webinar since last March.</p> <p>So that I think that's enough background on the Creative Champions, you should definitely check out our website at Toronto Arts Foundation, for information on past sessions and for recordings of many of them and list of very extensive resources on topics of interest to board members. So, our session today what to do in The Shift Hits The Fan. I don't think there's any need to go into detail about the uncertainties, the disruptions, the changes, we've all been dealing with as board members, more about how these changes have been overturning our business models, and blowing up our standard ways of working. The twin pandemics that have hit us over the past year, not just COVID-19, but the recognition and confrontation around structural racism. They've definitely forced a thorough and a necessary reconsideration of who we are as a community who serve, why we're here and how we work.</p> <p>It's interesting to think about a year back, there were no easy answers for arts organizations on how to shift, adjust, pivot, evolve, and ultimately survive COVID-19 lock downs. From the start, although there was a tremendous amount of mutual support and sharing within the arts community. The reality was that each organization has to find their own way forward. I've been paying a lot of attention to communications and offerings of the arts organizations that I hear from and there's quite a few that I hear from and with all sympathy for the tremendous challenges and the differences in capacity that we all have. Some organizations have very clearly stood out in how they've adapted and reshaped how they create, produce and present their art.</p> <p>I would say that everyone on today's panel is notable for the vigor and the appeal and the surprising power of their responses. I'm happy to say that there are other companies also doing wonderful things that we could have been calling on for this panel. But I'm personally fascinated by the very different but similarly inspiring roads chosen by the companies whose leaders you're going to be hearing from today. Before I introduce and call on our speakers, I would like to invite us all to join together in acknowledging that the land we're living on a sacred land, that it's been the site of human activity for 15,000 years and the traditional territory of</p>

		<p>many Indigenous peoples. And I invite us all to be mindful that we're only the most recent peoples who've had the responsibility to care for and nurture this land. This year has been offering a great deal of time for reflection. And I think that calls on us not just to honour the wisdom of these First Peoples, but to join an act of solidarity with Indigenous women's and men's vital leadership in forging a more equitable future. Where broken promises made to Canada's First Nations will be redressed. And where violence aimed at Indigenous children, women and men, and violence and injustice against all Indigenous Black and other BIPOC individuals can finally end.</p> <p>That being said, I'm going to introduce our panelists for today. I'm not going to repeat their impressive career achievements because they were all detailed in the biographies we sent out, but I will say that we're honored and delighted to welcome Christina Loewen, who is the Executive Director of Opera in Canada, Claudia Moore, who is the Artistic Director, and Christine Moynihan, who is the Board President of Moonhorse Dance Theatre. Tim Jennings, who is the Executive Director and CEO of Shaw Festival, and Arkady Spivak, Artistic Producer of Talk is Free Theatre in Barrie, Ontario.</p> <p>Arkady, I would like to start with you, could you tell us about the most significant changes and initiatives you've made at Talk is Free in response to the pandemic? And would you also just share some of the thinking and analysis that led you to these specific actions, which, you know, I think honestly was sparked by really shocking and quick change, circumstances that caused us all to sit back and really rethink how to move forward.</p>
00:07:56 – 00:15:15	Arkady Spivak	<p>Of course, thank you Jini, and thank you so much for having me and hello to my fellow nominees or presenters [laughs]. You know, when they first started talking about pivoting, it was it was sort of a confusing word to me, because I felt like we always were, you know, starting a cutting edge theatre company in the city that is predominantly associated with sports activity, and that kind of stuff, although they've been great arts groups, were pivoting already. And I've also invented social distancing in a theater in the earlier days, so none of it was new developments.</p> <p>But the words of great Jane Marsland, what ringing in my mind all the time, and she would always talk about stretching your planning horizon. So, if today is not what you wanted, or if you cannot fit everything that you're looking for into today, all you do is just stretch your planning horizon because nobody said you have to achieve everything in one day, one season one year, etc. And no time was it more appropriate than during the pandemic for a year now. And in stretching the planning horizon, we made a promise that we are not interested in engaging with artists on Zoom beyond workshops, readings, and etc. But what we're wanting to do is build a support system or take this time to build a support system that might not be might not have been possible before. And that is both for an audience and for the arts community, the artists. So, for the</p>

audience, what we've announced actually, one of our latest initiatives were that was that for the next three years, our core programming in Barre only, will be free of charge to an audience. So, what will happen is folks can book the tickets, they have to give us a credit card. If they don't show up or cancel up to four hours before the performance or exchange, they get penalized. \$25 per ticket \$15 for students and that becomes the tax deductible donation. And the decision was both pragmatic and practical, pragmatic, is practical, pragmatic and altruistic, I should say, was that when we're doing our audit our charity audit plus, last year, I looked up at the draft statements from our audit firm, and I did not see box office anywhere. Now I should, I should also say that we are doing massive very large-scale programming and 100 seats or even less. So our organization has been built around not relying on the box office figure. Instead, we use the audience as a gateway to other support systems: donors, sponsors, volunteers, board members, it was always slow, historically was always less than 10% of the budget. 10% was like a marvelous year, and that was normal. So, but I couldn't find the box office figure. And so when I found them, they said, Oh, we have this internal policy, anything under 3% of the budget gets lumped into miscellaneous.

Also, my box office does not even get its own item on the financial statements. So, I asked them to separate because I have to report to CADAC and everything. So that made me thinking I'm thinking, Okay, so there was this giant obstacle to an audience of all kinds. And Barry, where we are, of course, is extremely evolving in terms of all sorts of in every consideration. So, we're setting up such a giant obstacle over 3% of the budget. So, we immediately had a board meeting where we said, where and also, I have to raise \$1,034 an hour on average, in fundraising, I don't have time to sell \$50 tickets or \$30 tickets. So that sort of created a problem. So, we had this planning session, and we said, you know, we're probably going to pick lost revenue and in sponsorship support from the local community. Because there is now no barrier to an audience. And, you know, we also did not want to separate it into specific, you know, categories you with under 30, or single people over 60, or that sort of thing, we believe that everyone, and this is the beauty and power of it, everyone has a right to, to access. We also think that we're going to make more money from people not showing up than those who did. But so now I can call anywhere and sell them a ticket, they don't have to go anywhere. So that's sort of our first initiative done. For the artists, and here's where, here's what I'd like to applaud the shore festival and in leadership that Tim both Tim's took in taking care of the artists where they were very quickly dispensed with across the country by protecting them, so totally, and completely, so Tim [blows kiss].

And so I was then thinking, Ookay, how can I do it on a smaller level, because we're probably, you know, 60% or 1/60 of the Shaw Festival budget. And long ago wanted to try and that came out of another project and study that we were involved with which I sort of shelved, that what we were wanting to do is, is create

		<p>almost like a token for an artist than any particular income. Three, an annual basic guarantee to artists over three years. What essentially means is we've promise 39 artists, we're probably going to admit three, or between three and six more, and minimum guarantee per year, average income \$10,000 Some are less, some are more depending on what it is. What it basically says is you will have contracts for whatever you would choose to do would agree that you need to do for artistic reasons, personal reasons. For the organization, this could be it could be acting according to directing, it could be personal renewal, it could be anything, but you will earn at least this amount or more. So really the way their organization is functioning right now, if you can imagine for one, there is an express lane, there is a collector's lane, there are 42 people sitting in an express lane, just as many as they're still engaging them on a normal thing. Nobody knows who will get to Ajax first. You know, those people who are on a guarantee, can in fact make less than those people who are not It all depends on batch of things. What we wanted to do more than anything is we wanted to give artists, particularly performing artists, actors in particular, because they're always looking behind some hope. And because they are working in the moment, that's the currency. And if the moment is not good, all sorts of existential things start happening. It's even not about money. It's about existentialism. And so that's where this idea came from. And I must say it's been a full 360 degree turn in their psyches right now. So that's all I want to say for now. Thank you so much.</p>
00:15:15 – 00:15:42	Jini Stolk	<p>Thank you Arkady and you haven't even mentioned the wonderful programming and discussion panels and things you've been doing along with all of this. So, moving on to Tim, you have gotten Tim national coverage for how the Shaw festival has reshaped itself and praise from Arkady and from me and from lots of people and reshaped itself. And its relationship to your company artists. And I think to your community as well during the pandemic. Could you tell us a little bit about what you've been doing and the thinking behind it?</p>
00:15:43 – 00:24:43	Tim Jennings	<p>Sure. It's Thank you, Arkady. And thanks for that, that comment. The Shaw Festival, as you guys probably know, is one of the five largest theatre companies in North America, the second largest in Canada and and that we Tim Caroll, I started with the company about five and a half years ago and we've been leading what we think is a is a change in the practice and the focus, which I think Arkady summed up pretty well. It's a philanthropic and altruistic approach. We see ourselves primarily as an arts charity, that art is a charitable endeavor and that the Civic Theatre movement, the not for profit theater movement was actually founded not as individual organizations but as a civic movement to improve society and that our namesake, Bernard Shaw was one of the first people to ever call for that is something that we now see both personally and institutionally as important to us. So, so like I say, we're one of these large theatre companies, in a normative year, the Shah is responsible for about \$220 million of the annual economic impact of arts tourism in Ontario. We're a big engine, we think, actually, we're the largest individual engine for arts tourism in the province. Our impact is actually larger than Stratford, who is almost double our size.</p>

Because people come down and spend weeks with us and end in a very nice town with very expensive hotels and beautiful restaurants and all sorts of wonderful things. 2019 was the best gross revenue year in our history. Eight days before the pandemic shut us down, we announced a \$34 million season in the previous year, we had increased attendance to over 325,000 people. We had, I inherited a theater company that was the opposite of our counties, it was 75% earned income. When I showed up at the door and 2019, we had made the strides to increase our philanthropic relationships that we were only dealing with 65% of our income coming from the box office. Only 6% of our income comes from any kind of government source at all, all the Arts Councils everything we get every year is less than 6% of our operating, which comparing that to say the opera, the ballet who get in the 30 to 40% range tells you kind of where we are. So, we who are similarly sized budgets, and about 35% of our attendance comes from the United States.

So, all that for background to give you some information about what we were doing when all of this hit us. Eight days after we announced those lovely results, we were suddenly shut down. And so the first thing that happened was a moment of optimism for the Shaw, because in 2015-16, when I first arrived, my CFO and I went through a process where I asked to review all of our risk areas, and one of those was insurance. And so I took out a pandemic insurance policy that has covered us for most of our losses on this year, that insurance policy certainly has given us a different kind of optimism than I think a lot of our fellows have gone through. And we realized also that we raised about \$9.5 to \$10 million a year from private sources. And if we could do that, again, we were still one of the largest theatre companies in the country, even just on the philanthropic model. So if we could match that, that insurance payout with that investment from our patrons, there was a real opportunity to do something that was going to keep all of our folks employed and go forward. So my board immediately when I went to them and said, Look, we're going to double down on the idea that we're going to protect all 550 of our full time employees and artists. And we're going to move forward together thinking this will end soon and hopefully we can get back to our stages. Obviously, the ending soon part didn't happen. But we maintained all 550 people on payroll using what then became the wage subsidy to move us forward and underwrite that so we should have found all of these different sources and kept everybody going through the summer through zoom rehearsals and other things.

When after six weeks of zoom rehearsals, it became clear we were going to lose most of the summer. We laid off all of our gig workers, all the contract employees: actors, musicians, designers, choreographers, etc. From their contracts. And two days later, we hired them as temporary Summer Works employees under a program we called education and community outreach specialists. So, this was a temporary employment position, we laid off 80 artists from their independent contractor work and hired them as employees. So now they were covered by the wage

subsidy, what I consistently called the best arts grant in Canadian history. And, in fact, hired another 15 more than that, who were folks who lived in the immediate area, and had worked with us either in the past season, or were intending to have in the upcoming season. So, we ended up with 95, full time artists working for us doing outreach and education work, and creating over 300 separate education and outreach digital content pieces as we move forward. What's interesting about this, I guess, from a board perspective, is the board was really behind us on this 100% for two reasons. One is we'd established this philanthropic relationship to our to our goals and this relationship to the idea that, that what we do was a necessary human need and needed to be fulfilled. And then secondarily, financially, we were in the right position, we've eliminated over that five-year period before this \$10 million of historical debt and deficiencies. There's a lot going on that that I think left the boards and I have four boards unusually, feeling like the fiscal aspects of the organization were in good shape. So, it was really about how did we deal with human management and art. And we continue to do those sorts of things. as we as we had the actors working on all that outreach, our technical staff moved to creating PPE for the Niagara Health System. And, and so gowns, hospital gowns for hospices, and health care workers, gloves, masks, all sorts of specialty equipment was donated labor, donated materials we had, we went through the process of asking our suppliers to donate cotton etc, to try to help with that process, and really double down on the civic relationship of the organization to its community.

And then I guess, as that happened, we also then used our board as a kind of remarkable sounding board for helping us with modeling, and to really dig into their expertises in context to be able to think through what the next steps would be. And through an end, I have to say, through their government context, to help us figure out how we could move things forward, and to gain intelligence that maybe some of our colleagues hadn't been able to access yet. And that's been something we've been sharing as much as we can, but it's also left us in good shape. So that by September, we were able to start running 16 weeks of concerts outdoor originally with our winery partners, hotel partners, all sorts of folks around the area to try to generate economic activity because again, \$220 million, a year of our economic impact had disappeared from Niagara-on-the-Lake 1000s of people were out of work because we weren't running. And so we felt an immediate responsibility to find a way to underwrite that and work with them, I was able to secure a partnership with the Federal Development Agency of Southern Ontario, who paid for these free concerts to happen for 16 weeks. As an economic development agent, not as a not as an arts brand. This was around economic activity. There's so much more I could talk about but ultimately, this has led us to continue to be optimistic and to try to drive forward. The kind of idea of, of we are a necessary, basic human need. And without us being on stage that need is not being fulfilled. So, it is the charitable purpose of our work and our mission, to be back on stage as soon as possible in a live way, I guess that's the only other thing I would say is all of this digital activity was not performance. It was all outreach and relationship building. It was not

		<p>about a performative aspect. We think that live performance is an important thing in and of itself and we double down on that so even if I can only perform for 15 people that is more important to us than a digital piece, from our point of view, that can be solved through other media that are better at it than we are from our pa again from our POV. I'm happy to answer questions after this is all over because we have a lot to talk about and feel free. My email address is timj@shawfest.com.</p>
00:24:44 – 00:25:07	Jini Stolk	<p>Thank you so much, Tim. Brilliant. I know what you're doing but to hear it all presented at one time is pretty astonishing. The only thing that makes me sad is that I think you're the last company in Canada who's going to be able to afford pandemic insurance?</p>
00:25:08 – 00:25:32	Tim Jennings	<p>Well, it's not it's not available anymore. Not shockingly, I'm still arguing that it should be covering us for 2021. But, but you know, there we are, that'll be my legal battle for the year. In actual fact, dozens of theatre companies had some version of this insurance, it's just that we were able to use it differently than most, so.</p>
00:25:33 – 00:26:10	Jini Stolk	<p>Okay, interesting. All right. So, let's move on. Claudia, and Christine. Moonhorse is a comparatively smaller dance company. But it seems to me from looking closely at what you've been doing, that you've grown much stronger, and that you have raised your impact and your prominence in the community during and possibly as a result of the shutdown. So, could you both kind of share telling us about that?</p>
00:26:11 – 00:34:25	Claudia Moore	<p>Yeah, I'd be very, very happy to and I thank you for including me in this great discussion. And I Moonhorse is definitely the little sister here in this panel, but I have great admiration for all the work that everyone has done. I'll just give a little bit of background. But when the pandemic hit, one of the very first things that I did, was to meet up with some of my dance colleagues in the park and dance. We dressed in red, we called ourselves the red warrior women. And we met once a week to, to dance six feet apart. This simple action of solidarity was empowering, and became a metaphor, I believe, for all of my future actions. We can move through this pandemic together. I believe we're strong, we're creative and resilient, we have the tools to face this challenge. They'll close the theaters and the studios, but somehow, we're going to find a way to continue to dance. My company Moonhorse Dance Theatre, as you said, is small and therefore nimble. We have no buildings, few employees. And because our annual event, Older and Reckless, takes place in the fall, we also have the luxury of time to pause and to reflect and to consider our plans in the face of COVID.</p> <p>All of my strategic decisions were thoroughly supported by Adina Herling, who is my part time manager and the Moonhorse board of directors, led by Christine Moynihan. Christine has played a major part in Moonhorse's evolution, she was administrator for 10 years while she directed the Dance Umbrella of Ontario and is now thankfully, our board chair. Our long relationship and her leadership skills and continued support are</p>

really invaluable to Moonhorse and its development. The two most impactful things that we did came from consideration of our senior community. Now this was easy for us because Moonhorse is concerned with seniors. Those who are in peril of falling off the edge. It is often the case with our elders and was more pronounced through the lens of the pandemic. We just nearly lost, literally, a whole generation.

The senior community, the artists and the public are at the heart of Moonhorse activities. And when the shit hit the fan, we realized that we had an opportunity and a great responsibility to make a difference. So, the first thing that we did was to shift our classes for seniors online. It sounds simple. But it wasn't an easy decision. We had no experience with this. But like many others, we learned on the go. And those classes have been life saving for the seniors who continue to live in isolation. The online classes also gave us a way to stay connected to the supportive community that makes up a large part of our of our older audience from one of our stellar movers, here's a quote some of us taking the classes are just loving the opportunity for creative expression and the physical pleasures of dancing. A great gift. Truly finding pleasure right now is huge. Dance is empowering in that way, especially in a situation where we have little or no control, at least when we guess we can feel joy and feel the sense of power in our individual beings.

The second thing that we did was to create an online program in celebration of the 20th anniversary of Older and Reckless. And I wrestled with that. How are we going to do that? You know, we have no experience. Live events, yes. TV shows no. So, we, you know, Older and Reckless is an annual event that happens at Harbourfront, there's an audience warm up at the beginning, there's a social gathering at the end. So, the audience has always been at the center of my work as a performer and for the work of Older and Reckless. I relied mainly on two things, to put this program together: instincts and hard work. Two things that are essential to the creative process, funnily enough. Also, I knew what I wasn't interested in. I wasn't interested in live streaming from the theater. But I was interested in dance film, and I felt that that genre was very appropriate right now. So, we commissioned four dance films that were made by extraordinary artists, intended to be seen online and I also had some good support from a communications expert who has always asked me the right questions in assembling our online program.

The resulting events was revelatory, and some of the dance films have won awards, due to artistry and invention, not big budgets. We had some wonderful testimonies from artists and from community movers who had performed at Older and Reckless over the years. And we added those in to speak to the value of the series. Our producer, Vicki Fagan did not have a lot of experience with putting an online program together. But she had the right skills. And she was a terrific collaborator and was willing to work on it with me. What made me most happy about the online event was the strong statement that it made for aging in the arts and for the essential role of the arts, in all our lives. I was happy that it featured the

		<p>senior artists in the community movers that we cherish, and that we were able to employ artists, about 35 of them, to engage in creative projects during lockdown. It was a difficult process, but we got through it. And it was an honor really to have the challenge. Artists are resilient. And we're used to the dark parts and the stress of creative process. We have problem solving skills. You've seen these in action already here from Tim and Arkady. And we have the we get we get a thrill from finding the right ending. So, I'm glad for the way it worked out. But I believe we were successful because we were prepared to fail. It was a big experiment. That was our mantra, we decided to go for it. And I'm so glad that we did.</p> <p>I had to write this down because I knew I would be nervous. There were so many other arts organizations in our position and I'm truly in awe of the many ways that these smaller entities have responded to the challenges of the times. We were also grateful for the focus on equity issues and appreciate the time and the collective movement to examine and act on them. Older and Reckless has always upheld an inclusive policy. But we strive to do better and we wish to deepen our relationship with senior artists and of all nations and backgrounds. This is part of our ongoing work and part of our future vision. So, despite the hardship and the trauma resulting from the pandemic, I am so grateful for the experience and for the lessons learned with open hearts imagination, creativity, and through working together we can survive just about anything. Thank you.</p>
00:34:06 – 00:34:26	Jini Stolk	<p>Claudia, such beautiful words and said beautiful results from your thinking and your actions. Really great. Christine, am I right in saying that you're going to join us for the next, do you have something right now that would like to add?</p>
00:34:27 – 00:38:25	Christine Moynihan	<p>[False Start] Okay, here we go. Let me know how much time I have. Basically, I wanted to give Claudia you know her platform because as a board member I would love to say that we had done so much. But in fact, all we did was support her. And I think it's important for, particularly for small organizations, and we are pretty tiny, frankly, to support the artists that you are working with. Because basically, they have all the ideas, which is true. The thing is a board member that I would like to say is, I am interested in how we move forward, that, you know, Moonhorse has always been a small organization, we have a fantastically supportive audience base and a donor base, quite tiny compared to almost everyone else.</p> <p>But what I'm looking at now is how do we move beyond our geographic area? And what are the things that we've learned from the pandemic? And from being online? And from doing all the things that Claudia has, has created in terms of how do we go? How do we go forward? And I think there's some really interesting stuff that we can look at in terms of, we can't necessarily tour but how do we reach out to other communities? How do we involve people from other places, if I can, just because, you know, some of the things that the people have been talking about, were</p>

		<p>really interesting, because we're small, and we have a very supportive board. And we, you know, we try to work hard to, you know, support the organization, but we don't have, we don't have the ear, or, you know, the ability to reach out to some of the movers and shakers in the government. So, I'm really interested in what Tim had said about things like an arts charity, because at the moment, from my understanding, the creation of art is not a charitable activity. It is around education. And yes, you know, when we can, we can. But there, there are other things around that, and so on, I'm interested in how the smaller organizations can work with help support and be in congruence with a different idea of how we approach governments about this, of how we approach organizations like this, we'll never have the people who can pick up a phone and talk to, you know, Justin, or whoever, that's never going to happen for us. But we have some ideas and some abilities to, to provide information and that sort of thing.</p> <p>Yeah, so that, you know, the whole idea of a charitable purpose is a lot of interest to me, also the idea of, does everyone need to be a charity? Can we have a different way of functioning in the world, that, you know, will mean, we need to, you know, talk to people at CRA and that sort of thing. So that's, and the other thing, I think, I will just end with this, because I love it is that failure is always an option. And it's not a bad thing, and that every board member needs to be supportive of that. And they're the people that they're supporting as board members.</p>
00:38:26 – 00:39:21	Jini Stolk	<p>We do indeed, thank you for all those really good questions about future action and future collaborative action for the community as a whole. I hope we can get back to some of those at the end of this discussion, once we hear from Christina Loewen. And thank you for all of your comments. Christina, you are running an art service organization. And I know that opera.ca, now Opera in Canada has been looking for national sector wide new ways of working. Now that everything is virtual. Now you've been a national arts organization. So, you probably were pretty used to a lot of virtual already. Could you please tell us about some of the a few of the major initiatives that you've launched, that have been come about during pandemic and a lot of deaths?</p>
00:39:22 – 00:48:20	Christina Loewen	<p>Yes, I'd be delighted to and thank you so much for inviting me here to speak. The pandemic has really been catastrophic for the opera sector, but especially for opera artists. And this is actually where we focused our strongest responses. We consider them to be our sector's essential workers. As some of my panelists, colleagues have mentioned already, this has also been a time of of great opportunity and renewal and even regeneration. And it's hard to see that because we're still in the middle of it, and we're in the world of rapid responses and short runways, everybody's under a lot of stress there's incredibly heavy workloads. And there's, there's sometimes it just seems like there's not a moment to catch our breath.</p> <p>I wanted to just provide a bit of contextual information about Association for Opera Canada, we're a small National Art service organization, we we</p>

had a budget of just under \$300,000, going into the pandemic, with one full time staff member in a number of outsourced contracts. And our board is mainly comprised of general directors or representatives of our member opera companies. So, thinking back to a year ago, almost to the day, just some of the things that happened in chronological order, because it's just been an incredible time for action. We, around this time, we were notified that we got a half million-dollar digital strategy grant, and a week later, the world went into lockdown. We struck a \$40,000 opera artists Emergency Relief Fund to help artists meet basic needs. This was before the CERB benefits began to flow. We added a new member category for artists and more importantly, are just as important new programs to serve their needs. We offer membership dues relief to anyone who needs it. So, if you can't pay your dues, but you need services, we're there for you. And we also spent our spare time rebranding, building a new website and even celebrated our 20th anniversary.

So, I wanted to talk about two of the things we did that involved a different way of thinking. Starting with our digital strategy grant, we had recently announced the Opera Civic Impact Framework. And this was our way of telling a collective story of the impact opera has in its communities across the country, through the work of its civic activities, the digital grant was to turn it into a tool to simplify data collection and reporting through a digital platform. And we got the grants on March 2. And then we all know what happened 10 days later on March 12. So, it was a moment of wonderful celebration, followed by just terrible, terrible sadness and what not knowing what to do. And we really took our time, we had something like three or four months to accept the grant. And I think we took every single day of that time. And we wanted to very carefully deliberate whether or not we should even accept this grant, the sector was closed. They weren't even producing opera, let alone civic impact communities and community events. But this was also the culmination of a five-year strategic arc. And we really felt strongly that we needed to see it through. And so we decided that if we were going to accept the grant, but it needed to be revised to reflect the new reality and the, you know, this new COVID-19 reality that we were only starting to understand at the time. And the shift that we made was ultimately an adding to the scope of the grant, we decided to add two additional COVID response frameworks. The first one was a recovery framework, which would track how the sector is doing against other industry aggregate data. And it would work by pulling in data from stats Canada and comparing it with performing arts data against these larger industry aggregates. And in that way, we'll paint a very clear picture of how our sector is recovering or lagging behind national numbers. And we thought this would be very important for advocacy as the sector started to recover.

And then the second framework we added is the resilience framework. And the resilience framework would be used to measure the progress of our new intentions as a sector. These intentions were not to return to normal when we reopen, because we recognize that normal actually

wasn't so great, and that we all had a collective need and desire and imperative to build back better during the reopening phase. And we had to make changes to become this better sector, this more equitable, sustainable, inclusive and resilient sector. And the resilience framework would be the way that we would measure our progress in that way. We pitched the idea to the board and then to the members, we got the buy-in we needed and we accepted the grant a little over three months later. And we've currently built out the Civic Impact Tool, the Digital Tool and the Recovery Dashboard. And we're in the process of building the Resilience Framework. Important to note that we have plans to scale this entire project beyond the opera sector to the broader arts community, and we'll be doing that in partnership with Mass Culture. So, stay tuned for more information there. You know, what was different in our thinking? I would say that, you know, we've heard about instincts and we've heard about hard work. I also want to add courage. So, this was very early in the pandemic, and it was a bit early to stand out there and say, you know what, we can't go back to normal, normal wasn't good, we've got some problems, we have to fix this, we have to do better. I'm not going to lie, it was tough. And it was pretty scary. And I was really afraid that it would be seen as you know, a bit of overkill or perhaps a bit heavy handed. But very rapidly after my presentation to the board and to the members. We had the murder of George Floyd, we had the rise of Black Lives Matter. And everyone really sat up straight and realized that that time for action was now.

The other thing I wanted to talk about really quickly, it's very similar to Tim's project is the Portfolio Artists Collective. In June, so three, four months into the pandemic, I was hiring a full-time position, it was our first one actually very exciting. But the search just wasn't working out. I wasn't finding what I was looking for. But along the way, I was finding really interesting people. And I was also finding a lot of out of work artists with diverse and interesting skill sets. And I just couldn't get this idea out of my head that I was trying to solve a new world problem with an old-world solution. And so, I took a leap of faith, there's that courage again. And instead of hiring one person, I hired seven. They worked for eight weeks, they were all on different sized contracts doing different jobs. And they were, it was almost entirely paid for by the wage subsidy program. The team worked remotely from cities across Canada, we had members in Toronto, Montreal and Kelowna. And they, the first activity they did was to name themselves. So they called themselves the Portfolio Artists Collective, it was a small scale experiment, I would say that it worked, I got the help I needed. One of the team wrote a successful grant for \$48,000, 5 out of 7 found employment afterwards. And it was a learning experience for all. And now it's a we're looking at it to be a model for a multiyear sector initiative project that we can possibly scale up with funding from ESDC sector initiatives program, and it's our hope that companies all across the country, opera companies will host their own artists collective and provide skills, development opportunities, that will help artists better position themselves for adjacent opportunities until they can return to live singing. So that's, uh, oh, so what was different about

		<p>the collective in terms of the thinking? it? It's experimental, right, it's like, I thought what was really nice about it was that I didn't have to make a forever decision, I could make an eight-week decision. I could see a problem, I could come up with an experiment and I could test the ways to address it. And I could monitor the success of that. And it could be a failure, and it could be a success. But no matter which one it is, there's always going to be learning. And this, this is no better time. There's no better time to experiment these days, because there's just there are so few barriers and resistance to change. And there are a lot of safety nets in the form of government subsidies. So, I would just say be bold and try something new.</p>
<p>00:48:21 – 00:50:28</p>	<p>Jini Stolk</p>	<p>Oh, my goodness. Thank you so much, Christina. And thank you, everybody. You know, when I first chose this group of people, I knew everybody was doing good things. And I was pretty sure that they were all thinking and planning and very smart boys. But I had no idea really, themes would be so consistent. Jaclyn, you're there because we've got some questions, but I just want to I just wanted people have talked about their boards. And it you talked about your boards because your boards appeared to have been there for you and behind you and supportive of what you do, which I think is probably a large part of why your organizations responded so very actively and positively. It I don't know that that's true of every board in the world.</p> <p>You know, I was part of many of us knew about the great Leadership Emergency Arts Network (LEAN) that brought together advisors and senior people from your community with companies that were having problems and needed advice. And before companies signed up, they were talking about their issues and their problems that they needed help with as involving finance programming, scenario planning, donor relations and boards. But in the final reports of this initiative, that lasted for six months, the number one thing that was mentioned more often than anything else, was concerns about boards of directors. That's what they really, really wound up talking to their advisors about. Do we have any further or additional thoughts about that? About that role of boards and about what we have wanted and needed from our boards, especially during the time? You know, great uncertainty, but presumably yes Tim, sure.</p>
<p>00:50:29 – 00:53:11</p>	<p>Tim Jennings</p>	<p>So I mean, I think one of the things we've spent the last five and a bit years doing is reorienting our boards to a kind of a more risk centric framework, and thinking about risk differently, that there are all sorts of measures of success and failure in everything. Financial being one of them, of course, but it's only one of them, especially from the point of view of it, you know, I'm a big believer that the arts is actually a core charitable activity. And it always has been the act of defining charity, originally in 1603, by Queen Elizabeth names art is one of the things that we're responsible to do. It's one of the five things named, so I feel like it's always been there. But sometimes we drift away from that, I think in our own space to remind people that that is what we're here for, that we all</p>

		<p>serve these basic human needs is, is something that I think helps the board recognize us in the same way they would, that you wouldn't back away from your need to read to deliver a program at a homeless shelter, or a library or a hospital or, or frankly, any other kind of civic institution, public education, etc. All of these things come from the same impetus. So, there's a, there's a need there to remind people that that good financial management is table stakes, we actually should all do that, that that and that good financial management does not mean no deficit, sometimes investment beyond our, our annual number is in fact important to our long term goals. So these things are around conversations and I think a long term education strategy with boards, we spend a lot of our board meetings talking through a process of, of educating people on our on our art form, but also on our whole business and I do on monthly or more than monthly update and situational piece out this probably, you know, five to 100 to 1000 words a month on us and where we are and kind of educating people on the things we should be looking at and talking about and asking the board's direct opinion for, you know, expertise for these things. I guess that's the only other thing I would say is and that we've hired our board members for their expertise is and their constituent understandings is a big thing, that we're not just hiring them because they have money. That's not actually why I want a board member, I can get a donor to give me money. And I know that varies by scale of organization. But I've run very small organizations and seemingly running a medium sized one now. But the framework of that is, you know, is not about why you have board members board members are there when a fiduciary relationship, but they're also there as your best cheerleaders. And so how do they balance those things out?</p>
00:53:12 – 00:54:00	Jini Stolk	<p>Okay, I know promised that we will do a session in the near future about this whole topic of reimagining governance because it's somehow, you know, in my mind anyway, runs through everything we do a Creative Champions, everything we do at Creative Champions is about educating boards, and coming to common understandings of what boards should be doing and how they should be doing it in order to have positive results on their organizations and on their communities. But I think you need to dive deeper into that.</p> <p>And now Jaclyn is waving frantically at me, because we've got a lot of questions, and we want to get to some of them before we have to close this really wonderful session, Jaclyn?</p>
00:54:01 – 00:54:23	Jaclyn Rodrigues	<p>All right. Great. So, one of our questions here and any panelists can respond. Is there any area where your boards might have supported the pandemic programming and approach where they didn't? or could they where could they have been more supportive, more understanding?</p>
00:54:24 – 00:54:41	Jini Stolk	<p>Not these lucky people [laugh]. I think we found from the LEAN responses that there were instances in our community without was very much the case. I don't know what the details were precisely.</p>

00:54:42 – 00:55:07	Jaclyn Rodrigues	Great, then we'll just move right on [laughs]. Okay, our second question. Did you feel that you had adequate information, science based, COVID specific for the Performing Arts, transmission risk depending on the type of arts dance opera, if so, which resources/sources that you rely on?
00:55:08 – 00:56:17	Tim Jennings	The ones that can give you quickly that you should reference are the McKinsey company does a regular update on pandemic response and modeling. They're the folks that the Public Health Canada and more specifically the CDC in the states uses their modeling organization. The New York Times does a daily update on vaccine preparation internationally, they're a very useful framework. I read The Lancet twice a week, probably, which is a medical publication that I mean, have read more now than most doctors do. But again, we were grabbing at every possible. I mean, my I see my job primarily is having been the guy who became the expert on modeling for this stuff. So, its sources were widely varied. We also were talking directly to direct sources here in Canada, I hired a board member on Dr. Glenn Bendiera, who's the Director of Research at the University of Toronto and director of emergency medicine for St. Michael's Hospital. He's also the chair of the National Medical Association. So, he had a lot of access that we used, and again, hire for expertise and hire for connection.
00:56:18 – 00:56:31	Jini Stolk	Right. And Christine has pointed out that the film and TV industry, which has generally speaking, found ways to continue filming, whereas we haven't all found, practically none of us have found ways to get people back into theaters. But we'll have to do that real soon. So, thank you, Tim, for those suggestions. And we'll, we'll have to as a community begin sharing all this information. Jaclyn, what's next?
00:56:32 – 00:56:59	Jaclyn Rodrigues	Okay, for Arkady, what were the conversations with your board members in order to support artists basic income as a model moving forward? And how does this impact your relationship with your artists?
00:57:00 – 00:59:01	Arkady Spivak	Very good question. They were completely on from the beginning unanimously. Financially, believe it or not, for us, we're committing to a three-year figure. What we wanted, what they wanted to look at is whether it was upsetting any employee/employer relationship, and an Employment Act, which Derrick Joy came in, and very quickly sorted everyone out. [Jini: The entertainment lawyer is very active within the theater world] That's right. Sorry about that. And, yeah, so they were they were instantly on board, they understood that it takes that it was a risky thing. But that's the risk they were prepared to take, and their organization can afford to what it changes with the artist is an even more more interesting question to me. And that is a significant paradigm shift, it's no longer about that artists securing their value to get a gig, it's about them feeling supported to make, to have an opinion and bring a point of view to the work, including the contracts, they don't want to be doing and still and not being financially persecuted for it. So, it's, it completely changes the paradigm and supports them because it's one thing for me to say, you know, your choice wasn't daring enough, you kind of stopped

		halfway, well, who is going to protect them if it doesn't work out? So, the point here is, they can mess up for the next three years. And as long as something comes out of it, we're good, you know, financially. So that changed quite a bit. Also, what changed is because our tickets are free, we don't have to announce anything until it's ready for public so I don't have to commit to a brochure and then hope it's going to work out. You know, I can literally announce We are now going we're doing away with a traditional season. We're just going to announce two months at a time, based on what's ready, based on when people are available. [inaudible]. You know, that's a different business model. That's a different model.
00:59:02 – 00:59:23	Jaclyn Rodrigues	[Jini: That's really very good. Okay, Jaclyn, one or two more?] One. Let's do one more, just since we are one minute past the hour here. So lastly, can any of the panelists comment on any reluctance that their artists might have experienced in shifting from live to digital performances? And how the artists are encouraged and supported to make the shift universally successful?
00:59:24 – 00:59:51	Tim Jennings	I think it's total nonsense. Nobody liked it. Yeah, I don't agree. We were sort of in this. I mean, we think it's a remarkably successful outreach activity. It is a terrible medium for delivering live performance from our pod. [Arkday:Yeah, so we did talk talks and discussions and internal play readings, those kinds of things, but never for an audience.]
00:59:52 – 01:00:19	Christine Moynihan	And unmute. Okay, but I'm interested Claudia in how particularly you know, Denise and William young fellas, their, the piece that they did for old and reckless has been highly lauded. It's won, you know, awards and that sort of thing. So how did they feel about doing that? As opposed to live? I mean, we all want live because it's a thing. But can you talk a little bit about that?
01:00:20 – 01:00:50	Claudia Moore	Yeah, sure. The thing about the dance film genre is that it's a completely different medium. We're not trying to replace live performance. In fact, I am I'm a diehard live performer and that's why I was not keen on the live stream from the theater because I, if you're going to be seeing a production that's onstage, you go to the stage, but dance film short, dance films, which are a different creative, challenge, and have a specific goal to be seen online. And on screen, that became a completely different issue. And it was, I think the artists were really excited about that challenge.
01:01:05 – 01:02:42	Jini Stolk	Yeah, agreed. Although I will say that Crystal Pite's screening of performance at the Paris Opera ballet still on for a few days, is fabulous and wonderful, but completely agree with everybody's feeling that their live is something so special and so important to our hearts and souls into our feeling of community that sitting in front of the screen does not make up for that. Well, I see that not only is our time, a little bit over, but there are a few people who have had to leave who came to us. And I would like to just take the remaining minute to say thank you so much to everybody. This was an amazingly interesting and rich discussion. And I'm grateful for everybody. And to those who've logged in and tuned in. I hope you



		<p>enjoyed it. I hope it inspired some thoughts of some perspectives and some ideas about how to continue to confront and create your future. And just to say that if you'd like to hear more from the Creative Champions Network, information and arts board members, please do fill in your evaluation forms so that we can hear from you and deliver the information and inspiration you need on the topics that you're most interested in and concerned about these days and into the future. So many thanks, gratitude, and I guess we're signing off now. Bye bye.</p>
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