Re: Call for support for freelance artists at Austrian theatres and concert halls

Dear Secretary of State

The current situation affects all sectors of economic and cultural life to the highest degree and, in addition to large enterprises, many freelance artists and small companies in particular, are fighting for their existence, and will be obliged to continue to do so even beyond the current crisis.

Austria has a strong network of publicly funded cultural institutions such as theatres, concert organizers and festivals, of which we are justly proud and that we, who know the very different conditions in many other countries very well, always appreciate.

Many of our artists, who in any event are not pampered in terms of financial security and planning ability, have concluded contracts with these institutions in which fees and the reimbursement of expenses were agreed. Due to current measures to contain the spread of the corona virus, many of their performances have been cancelled and, with reference to the Force Majeure clause, also the payment of fees and often even the reimbursement of expenses which have already been incurred. We do not have to spell out the catastrophic effect for the artists. We are aware of the necessity of the measures and accept of course that even publicly financed theatres and concert organisers suffer substantial difficulties due to the loss of revenue.

We are also aware that individual promoters who do wish to go against normal commercial practice may find that their hands are tied when trying to find an accommodating solution.

But there is already an example in Denmark, where the Royal Danish Opera House, thanks to a spontaneous commitment by the state of Denmark, will pay the guest singers' fees for the duration of the performance cancellation period as a gesture of goodwill.

For this reason, we appeal to you in this exceptional situation and in the name of the artists we represent, to find, together with Austrian publicly financed theatres and concert promoters, a quick and unbureaucratic goodwill solution for contractually fixed fees, which are at the heart of the planning of the life of the artists.

With our thanks and best wishes,

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