

Covid Culture



The current year of 2020 has been quite challenging for many spheres of human activity due to the pandemic of covid-19. Concerning culture, these circumstances have been affecting not only spectators and visitors, who were used to frequenting various cultural events but especially artists themselves. They have been able to neither perform nor rehearse. Thus, many of them lost their sources of income. In the spring, many hoped for a faster return to the old paths, but unfortunately, the season was cut too short as the second wave of covid-19 arrived in the autumn. Everyone dealt with it in their own way and when necessary they were not afraid to replace their occupations with another, one that was perhaps more important at that time. Some of them went to the supermarkets to work as shop assistants, others delivered food or mail and some even helped in hospitals. Certainly, it has not been easy for them, but it was better than doing nothing.

What piques my interest is how unusually the *Cirk La Putyka* fights with the crisis. This theatrical ensemble is dedicated to a mixture of acrobatics, dance, music, and theatre. The members are financially dependent on revenues from admission tickets, so this year left them practically without any income. Despite the current situation and their own problems, the performers of the *Cirk La Putyka* did not want to lose contact with their audience, so they decided to continue performing, but in an adjusted way. They posted the recordings of their performances on the internet. Both live broadcasts in front of an empty auditorium and recordings of performances, interviews, and documents about them. They started to perform on the streets, parking lots and literally in people's yards, but also in front of hospitals and retirement homes. All this in the name of #kulturunezastavis, a movement uniting artists and performers all around the Czech Republic. Their motto became the conviction that if people could not attend any culture events then they will bring culture to them. This is how they spread joy in these difficult times.





In the autumn, they launched another project, where the spectator can see what is happening at the *Cirk La Putyka* at any time thanks to a live stream. What is more, they also started a project called ‘Call centre’ (*Ústředna*). Anyone can phone in and the members are prepared to sing, dance (even though there

are some selected entries streamed too), and read stories out loud for them, or even just say hello. The latest idea of the *Cirk La Putyka* is the so-called ‘Pick-up window’ (*Výdejní okno*). There, they do not serve food as one might expect or hand-out mail deliveries, but rather what they ‘serve’ is culture. This means that people coming in (the limit is 2–4 spectators at one time) will be able to see first-hand a short scene performance through a sort of ‘pick-up’ window as a way of upholding all health precautions.

As I have already mentioned once before, the members of the *Cirk La Putyka* decided to also help in other ways than just through their art. They volunteered in hospitals and nursing homes, where every hand is a helping hand. This course of actions seems rather admirable and charitable as it is necessary.

It would not be right to forget to bring attention to other performers, art group, and various museums and galleries that chose the same path as the *Cirk La Putyka*. Many of these organizations decided to enable their fans and visitors to get the experience of what they offer regardless of the common situation. For instance, museums all over our country allowed their exhibitions to be broadcasted online.

Granted, there are public sectors these days that are far more essential than culture, but a world without culture is a sad and empty one. People need to smile, have fun, and remember to enjoy themselves after stressful days – all things that culture provides us with. We can only hope that soon we will be able to come together again and share our experiences and joy, and not only through culture.