

How the National Theatre tackled the COVID-19 challenge

In our last episode of the #DynamicUK webinar series, the British High Commission in Cyprus talks to Flo Buckeridge, Senior Producer for National Theatre Live. The webinar focuses on the National Theatre's creative response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how they continue to innovate on their engagement with their audience, bringing theatre closer to the people around the globe.

Flo Buckeridge, talked to Meropi Moyses, an experienced local journalist covering the field of culture, about the immediate response of the National Theatre, National Theatre Live and National Theatre at Home, the streaming platform which launched in December.

Throughout this insightful talk, Flo Buckeridge, discusses what's happened since NT closed down because of the pandemic, the importance of sharing their work and world-known productions, as well as the value of engaging with their audience. Moreover, the NT's Senior Producer, discusses National Theatre at Home, the availability of the National Theatre Collection, how NT Live returns to cinemas and the filming of *Olivier in the Round* and *Romeo and Juliet*, produced by NT.

Commenting on how the National Theatre responded to the pandemic, Buckeridge states:

Well, I think like everyone in the world, we didn't know how long this was going to last for, and we didn't know if we were closing for just a few weeks or whether it was going to be much longer than that. I think we all thought that it was much more likely to be a shorter period than it has been, so we've kind of had to think quickly, I guess about ways in which we continued to engage with audiences.

Because everything we did, from our cinema screenings, to our touring internationally, to being in the West End in London, and then of course, our Southbank theatre, had to be closed. And we were very-very fortunate with having done NT Live, having a back catalogue of high quality recordings that we thought we wanted to make available to audiences in the broadest way that we could and the fastest way that we could.

So very quickly, we created what we called "National Theatre at Home" and it started in April. We made a recording of "One Man, Two Guvnors", available on YouTube for free, it had a premiere moment at 7 o'clock (GMT) on a Thursday, which was in keeping with the NT Live performance time, which is always at 7 o'clock on a Thursday, and we made it available for audiences to watch around the world

from their homes.

The online streaming was thought to last for about four weeks, but it turned out to be much longer than expected, as the pandemic is still on the rise and the whole world is on lockdown. Eventually 16 productions were made available to the public and the whole program ran for 16 weeks. Through this initiative, the National Theatre was able to keep engaging with its audiences, and they reached a total global audience of 15 million people that watched those recordings.

For NT Live, we are very sure that what we are filming isn't a film of 'One Man, Two Guvnors'... When we know that we are going to film a production for NT Live, we don't ask the directors, or the creative teams to change anything about the production for the broadcast. We would come in and film around what exists and we would make it work.

There are challenging things from a filming perspective – that's kind of our challenge to resolve with the director. And, whereas we are still making something for television, when you know that the output it's only going to be seen that way, there isn't going to be a live audience, that's quite a shift in thinking and planning, and allows you to approach it in a different way."

Having worked at the National Theatre since 2013, Flo has produced many broadcasts working across National Theatre productions but also regularly with partner theatres across the UK. Flo has responsibility for ensuring projects maximise their financial contribution and increase audience reach. Flo oversees the production of the broadcasts including from production through to budget, rights and contracts and the distribution of NT Live into cinemas globally.

Discover more and gain insights on National Theatre Live and National Theatre at Home, by watching the entire webinar in the video below.

[#DynamicUK – Flo Buckeridge, National Theatre](#)

The British High Commission opened up an invitation to six highly innovative British professionals from various industries to share their knowledge and expertise on how the current pandemic affected their fields.

Check out our YouTube channel for all of the exciting discussions that took place in this webinar series.