

THE FESTIVAL CASTELL DE PERALADA CANCELS THE 2020 EDITION BECAUSE OF THE CORONAVIRUS

The 34th edition of the festival, which was to be held between 2 July and 15 August 2020, has been cancelled due to the health crisis brought about by COVID-19.

The wish to preserve the health of the festival audiences, artists and team, as well as the unknowns and uncertainties caused by the lockdown measures to the arts sector in the coming months, are the main reasons that have led to the organisers taking this decision.

The Festival will be looking into offering a small-format streamed programme this summer.

Peralada, 6 May 2020._ The Festival Castell de Peralada, which is organised by the Castell de Peralada Foundation, and which features the private patronage of the Suqué-Mateu family and the support of over 50 companies, has informed that the edition planned for 2020 cannot be staged because of the COVID-19 crisis.

The edition was to raise the curtain on the evening of 2 July with the North American dance company, Houston Ballet, which has also cancelled its European tour marking its 50th anniversary, which it had planned to culminate with its participation in the Festival.

Isabel Suqué, president of the Castell de Peralada Foundation, has appealed to responsibility: *“We are deeply sad to have to inform that the 2020 Festival will not be held this summer. My siblings and I are especially concerned with the safety and wellbeing of the Festival workers, a concern that also includes our audiences and the artists who visit us. We have to be completely certain that we can fulfil health guarantees that prevent the spread or a second wave of the coronavirus, and in these times of so much uncertainty, we believe that this is not possible. However, the unknowns that remain today about how to celebrate our activity, the more than likely absence of international flights, the limitations on the number of people attending, and the difficulties or impossibility of staging the performances themselves on our stages, means that it is not feasible to raise the curtain this summer.”*

In taking this decision, it is the global situation of the pandemic and solidarity with the victims and society as a whole that have taken precedence. Similarly, the cancellation of some of the leading European opera and arts festivals that have preceded us in

recent days have made the impossibility of staging our model and our schedule evident.

However, over the past few days, we have closely studied the measures announced by the competent authorities, as well as all the possible alternatives, before taking this final decision. The conclusion we have reached is that it is not feasible to hold the 2020 edition with every guarantee regarding not only health, but also the organisation and setting-up. The information about the limitation of capacity is still very uncertain in terms of the calendar, and the possibility of a second wave would see a return to the lockdown phase. In the best case scenario, travel between different places will not be allowed for some weeks to come, with all that that means for the mobility of audiences, and therefore the feasibility of the event itself.

The present situation, with new work and rehearsal protocols, hinder or prevent the work of dance companies, creative teams and some of the artists who were scheduled to appear. This reality is further heightened in a production festival such as ours, which requires a great deal of work in advance to be able to raise the curtain on newly-created shows, especially in the fields of creating stage designs and costumes.

Despite the cancellation, in their desire to maintain a commitment to the arts, as of today, the organisers will be looking into the possibility of being able to offer cultural content, preferably streamed, adapted to the circumstances of this summer if the health authorities will permit this.

The Festival Castell de Peralada, which had already presented part of the programme, but which was still awaiting presentation of the full programme in late April, will refund tickets from today and over the coming days. The cost of all the tickets bought in advance on the Festival website and through the other official channels will be repaid in full. For any clarification or further information, please contact the Festival box office by email at taquilla@festivalperalada.com.

An international festival:

The 2020 edition was to have had its highlight on the evenings of 5 and 7 August with the première of a new festival opera production: Verdi's *Aida*, with stage direction by Paco Azorín, brought together some of the best voices on the international opera scene, such as Sondra Radvanovsky, Anita Rachvelishvili, Carlos Álvarez and the world début of Piotr Beczala as Radames. The Peralada lyric week would also be strongly affected if the absence of international flights in the summer were to be announced, as apart from the artists, nearly 40% of the tickets sold for *Aida* and the Jonas Kaufmann concert are for an international audience.

The festival director, Oriol Aguilà, stated: *"The Peralada Aida was, without any shadow of a doubt, the summer's most ambitious project. The Festival is working to postpone it to future editions and be able to première it, as far as is possible, with the same cast. The Castell de Peralada Festival will return in the 2021 edition, and it will return the*

only way it knows how: as a unique and singular project with a programme that aims to contribute to the cultural enrichment of the country through new commissions and new productions, but also programming companies and artists of international renown, all through the private initiative with a public vocation of the family that makes it possible year after year."

With its gaze set on 2021

The marked seasonality of the festival has forced the organisers to cancel it rather than postpone it, a decision that has not been at all easy to take. *"The fact of having to cancel the next edition makes us extremely sad,"* stated Isabel Suqué. *"We know that this decision affects the festival's direct workers, both those who work on it all year round and the ones who join the Peralada family during the summer months, the artists and our loyal audiences who will not be able to enjoy their festival, and the tourist industry in our region. Throughout 33 editions, the festival curtain has raised without fail in July and August, and even though it will not be possible this year, we are already working and focusing all our efforts on next year."*

The organisers would like to thank the artists, creators, festival team, audiences, media, public administrations, town of Peralada and, especially, the patrons and sponsors for their support and understanding. Over these days, we have seen how culture has found endless ways of entering people's homes and has been reinforced as an essential cornerstone of our society that we must all protect. We at the Castell de Peralada Foundation will continue to work so that culture does not stop and we call on you all to meet up with us again in 2021, at the Festival Castell de Peralada.

Thank you very much.