

4 May 2020

Chichester Festival Theatre cancels Festival 2020 productions

Chichester Festival Theatre announces today that due to the unpredictable ongoing nature of Covid-19, it has made the very difficult decision to cancel all scheduled Festival 2020 productions. The Theatre had been due to reopen in July with *South Pacific* and *The Unfriend*, both of which we intend to reschedule to 2021.

Kathy Bourne and Daniel Evans, Executive and Artistic Director respectively, said:

'We are devastated that for the only time in Chichester Festival Theatre's history, no Festival performances will take place this year. We had been hoping to be able to produce at least some Festival 2020 shows in the summer and autumn; but all the indications from government point to social distancing being in place for many months to come, as the country continues its vital fight against coronavirus while protecting the NHS. At this unprecedented time, with the full support of the Trustees, we feel this is the most responsible course of action we can take in order to ensure the future resilience of our organisation as well as protecting our staff, artists and audiences.

'We are currently considering a revised shorter programme of work from Autumn 2020, including *Pinocchio* over the Christmas period, and are working on a new schedule for 2021 which we hope will include some of the planned Festival 2020 shows, in addition to *South Pacific* and *The Unfriend*. All ticket holders will be contacted by our Box Office with the option of exchanges, credits, refunds or donations in good time.

'We are determined to stay connected to our audiences through our Learning, Education and Participation activities and online streaming, and to continue the initiatives we have implemented which support our community (such as our partnership with the Chichester Scrub Hub, lending our accommodation to the NHS and helping UK Harvest with food deliveries). We are immensely grateful to our supporters and sponsors who have stayed with us during this hugely challenging period; and to the many people who have sent us good wishes and donations. We are living for the moment we can reopen our doors, gather together and make some theatre.'

Sir William Castell, Chairman of the Theatre, added: 'First of all, Chichester Festival Theatre is safe. This year we will concentrate on extending our virtual LEAP activities, supporting the

community and, whenever we can, our carers, nurses and doctors. Our team is in good spirits. The Board of Trustees has been working alongside the Executive to arrive at these decisions; we fully support them and are proud of the entire Theatre team for rising to the challenge. They are absolutely focused on doing all we can to support our community through this ordeal. We will maintain our team for a full reopening with Festival 2021, as we approach our 59th year of being at the heart of the Chichester community.'

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For further press enquiries, please contact Lucinda Morrison, Head of Press, on lucinda.morrison@cft.org.uk. Photos can be downloaded from www.cft.org.uk/pressimages, password: festivalpress.