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OPERNHAUS
ZÜRICH

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WHY WE CAN NO LONGER PERFORM

The Swiss Federal Council's decision yesterday, which forbids events with more than 50 individuals, has had catastrophic consequences for the Opernhaus Zürich. In accordance with the Canton of Zurich, performance operations had to be suspended yesterday, effective immediately. Productions were canceled and artists were sent home.

We have invested a lot of energy and money in our protective measures and our performance model, which have proven their worth for audience members and employees alike since the start of the season in September. We are not aware of any Sars-CoV-2 virus infections in our auditorium. Our performance model – in which the chorus and orchestra are streamed live from a separate rehearsal room for performances – is the only of its kind in the world and has made it possible for us to once again make the magic of grand opera and ballet tangible. Audiences have reacted warmly and appreciatively to this model. Since the start of this season, we have held 38 events, 28 of which were opera or ballet performances on the main stage, including a three-day, worldwide live streaming event – all of which were realized under these conditions.

Yes, we want to perform. Yes, we want to be there for you.

As the largest employer in Switzerland's cultural sector, the Opernhaus Zürich is responsible for the livelihoods of 750 individuals. Limiting the number of audience members to 50 now presents us with an insurmountable challenge. Ticket sales revenue from performances are an existentially vital part of our financial planning. In the month of November alone, the revenue shortfall under these conditions would be some CHF 2 million. In order to secure all employees' jobs for the future, we have no choice but to suspend operations and to apply for short-time work (*Kurzarbeit*) for all employees, effective immediately.

As a part of society, we of course recognize our obligation to help contain the pandemic, and we respect the Federal Council's decision. Nevertheless, we sincerely hope that we'll be able to resume operations as soon as possible.