

## **Theatre industry warns of devastating consequences for post-Brexit touring in letter to Government**

A letter has been delivered today from the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) for Theatre, Classical Music, Music Education, Opera, Music and Dance, urging the Government for clarification on post-Brexit performing arts touring provisions, and warning of the wider impact these will have on the performing arts sector.

The UK's world-leading performing arts are a major global export, contributing £10.8bn a year to the economy and £2.8bn to the Treasury. They also contribute to the country's soft power (currently second largest in the world), and the international exchange of human capital, ideas, culture and language.

The letter, supported by UK Theatre, Society of London Theatre (SOLT), the Association of British Orchestras (ABO), One Dance UK, the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) and UK Music, highlights the severe consequences of the current lack of clarity, and offers possible solutions to issues around movement of people and goods between the UK and the EU as part of international live tours.

Since Brexit, different visa and work permit rules now apply across each of the 27 EU member states, causing huge uncertainty. It is suggested that the Government urgently reviews short-term visitor routes into the UK, and comes to an agreement with the EU exempting touring performers, creative teams and crews from entry requirements or restrictions on short-term work for up to 90 days.

In addition, new rules on transporting physical production, set, props, musical instruments and other items will create additional costs, delays and increased journey times for performing arts companies. To avoid this, the UK Government must secure an exemption for these goods.

The letter urges the Government to work with the performing arts industry on resolving these issues, and asks for financial support to mitigate additional costs and lost work - like the £100m already committed to UK fisheries (which contribute £1.4bn a year to the economy, much less than performing arts).

The international standing and economic success of the whole industry, from hit West End shows such as *War Horse*, *Matilda The Musical* and *Harry Potter And The Cursed Child*, to globally renowned UK orchestras and dance companies, depends on the relationship with European venues, promoters and audiences, and on the flow of talent.

Giles Watling MP, Co-Chair of the Theatre APPG, said:

‘As someone who worked in Europe in a life before politics, I know that there are significant opportunities for the performing arts on the continent, and we need to ensure that our domestic talent can access those. As we set out in this letter, and even with a Brexit deal, significant obstacles have emerged that threaten our world-leading performing arts exports and imports, which also puts their economic, social and cultural contributions at risk. Working with other concerned APPGs, it is my hope that the Government will recognise the importance of acting swiftly to address the issues we have raised, and I look forward to receiving their response.’

Julian Bird, Chief Executive of SOLT and UK Theatre, said:

‘Now that the free trade agreement has been concluded with the EU and we are starting to understand its implications, we want to work with Government and our EU counterparts on other mechanisms that will maintain the UK’s longstanding international reputation for critically acclaimed, high quality and financially successful theatre exports, whilst continuing to encourage EU colleagues to collaborate with us here. Although the sector is largely still focussed on resilience under COVID-19, it takes months to plan productions and we already have early evidence of tours being re-routed and cancelled from EU dates, and profits and jobs leaving the UK and going to Europe.’

**\*\*ENDS\*\***

The full letter is available to read under the Correspondence section on the Theatre APPG webpage: [uktheatre.org/theatreappg](http://uktheatre.org/theatreappg)

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

[The All-Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) for Theatre](#) was founded in July 2019 to support the resilience and relevance of theatre in the UK for audiences, its workforce and society.

The APPG’s Statement of Purpose is to support the resilience and relevance of theatre in the UK for audiences, society and the industry; identify and debate potential opportunities and issues for theatre in the UK; and support parliamentarians’ understanding of theatre and the performing arts industry at a national and local level.

UK Theatre and SOLT are the secretariat of the APPG for Theatre, providing organisational, staff time and strategic support.

[Society of London Theatre \(SOLT\)](#) represents approximately 230 London-based producers, theatre owners and managers, including all the major subsidised theatrical organisations in London.

[UK Theatre](#) represents approximately 240 theatres, concert halls, dance companies, producers and arts centres throughout the UK. UK Theatre also operates as a professional

association, supporting over 1,400 individuals working professionally in theatre and the performing arts in the UK.