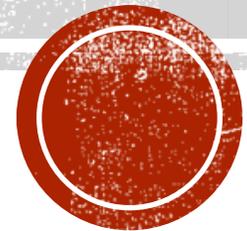


BEYOND ARTISTIC PRACTICE: CANADIAN SCENOGRAPHERS IN TIMES OF COVID -19



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CHANGES OCCURRED DURING PANDEMIC:

KEY POINTS:

- New Sense of Solidarity Among Designers
- Socio- Political Changes within Associated Designers of Canada (ADC)
- Structural Reorganization of Associated Designers of Canada (ADC)



INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 ON DESIGNER'S WORK AND LIFE

- Cancellation of theatre sessions

At the outset of the pandemic, in-person performances in Canada were cancelled for an indefinite period, with September 2021 indicated as the earliest potential date for the reopening of performance venues.

- Loss of design work for 18 months or more

As a result of these measures, most Canadian scenographers are currently out of work, relying on limited government relief funding and personal savings.

- Relocation of designers due to high living expenses in Canadian cultural centers

Another result is a growing impulse among designers and other artists to relocate outside major cultural centers such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal in order to reduce living expenses.

- Temporarily or permanent change of careers

A survey conducted among ADC designers in early summer of 2020 indicated that 50% to 60% of our membership is considering a temporary or permanent career change, with some designers examining options to continue their education or seek design work in the film and TV industry.

- Exploration of digital and on-line media

COVID-19 created a fertile opportunity to explore how performing arts translate into digital presentations and new technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Canadian scenographers who explored these medias before the pandemic became the most sought-out designers during these times, with theaters and drama schools struggling to re-invent the form and create engaging digital content.





**Associated
Designers of
Canada**

- National Arts Service Organization established in 1965.
- Represents the interests of set, costume, lighting, sound, and projection designers.
- There are currently approximately 250 members, or 75% of Canadian scenographers.
- Ours is a member- driven organization governed by elected Board of Directors.

ADC objectives:

Advocate for and represent the professional interests of theatrical designers all stages of their careers

Promote theatrical design as an art form and an artistic profession in Canada

Raise professional and public awareness of theatrical design and its role in Canadian theatre



ADC Activities Before the Pandemic:

Creating variety of robust contracts to serve as a template for negotiation between designers and producers, with the aim to establish professional standards and secure better working conditions for designers.

Establishing minimum fees to be respected by all Canadian Theatres.

Taking on the role of advocate in conflicts that jeopardize scenographers' rights and ability to work.

Acted as producers of the Canadian Professional and Student Exhibitions at Prague Quadrennial.



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MAJOR CHANGES THAT OCCURRED DURING PANDEMIC:

SOLIDARITY:

- A major change that occurred during the pandemic was the manner in which online platforms enabled easier communication among the membership. However, Canada covers ten million square kilometers and has six time zones, which, along with members' busy and at times unconventional personal schedules, makes establishing communication among designers challenging.
- The situation called for frequent meetings and communication with fellow designers. We discussed the state of the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic, financial health of members, and what the association can expect in the future. Following these conversations the ADC Board organized numerous meetings to discuss potential partnerships with other arts organizations. These meetings finally resulted in the majority of the membership voting for affiliation with the International Association of Theatre Stage Employees (IATSE). These meetings and the affiliation with IATSE contributed to a significant surge in membership numbers.
- Throughout the pandemic, ADC organized complementary professional development workshops open to all Canadian theatre artists. In addition, bi-weekly social events and wellness check-ups were inaugurated, allowing scenographers across the country to get to know each other better.
- During this moment of hardship, a fundraiser was organized among the ADC membership to monetarily assist colleagues in need. The funds went towards ADC membership fees for all designers who needed financial assistance.

MAJOR CHANGES THAT OCCURRED DURING PANDEMIC:

SOCIO- POLITICAL CHANGES :

As a reaction to the latest, robust incarnation of the Black Lives Matter movement, ADC is now seeking to undertake concrete steps to create safe and welcoming spaces within the design community for all Canadian Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (IBPOC) designers. These steps include:

- The election of two BIPOC Board Members, who will take part in making major decisions within the association.
- The creation of a BIPOC Designer Circle within the ADC. The aim of the group is to form a space within the ADC that will support BIPOC designers across the country, and in turn help unify all designers within ADC's membership. The BIPOC Designer Circle aims to represent designers from different design disciplines across the country in efforts to decolonize design in Canada.
- Workshops focused on best design and working practices when collaborating with BIPOC theatre professionals. The focus of these workshops is addressing systemic racism, raising awareness among all theatre practitioners and creating safe environments for all artists.
- Support and mentorship for designers from less privileged backgrounds.

MAJOR CHANGES THAT OCCURRED DURING PANDEMIC:

STRUCTURAL REORGANIZATION OF ADC:

- Affiliation of ADC with International Association of Theatre Stage Employees (IATSE) and creation of IATSE Local ADC 659.
- On October 1, 2020 the ADC membership voted overwhelmingly in favor of affiliation of ADC with IATSE- international trade union, representing workers employed in the entertainment and trade show industries throughout Canada. Following this decision, on January 1, 2021 ADC will officially become part of the union by creating IATSE ADC Local 659. All current ADC members will become members of this sister organization by July 1, 2021 at the latest.

MAJOR CHANGES THAT OCCURRED DURING PANDEMIC:

STRUCTURAL REORGANIZATION OF ADC:

Major Terms of Agreement between ADC and IATSE:

- The ADC will keep its non-profit corporate and National Service Organization Status (NASO).
- The Local ADC 659 shell possess the autonomous right of self-governance, including ability to establish its own criteria for membership, its own bargaining priorities and its own unique culture.
- IATSE shall provide assistance to the ADC/Local ADC 659 in any negotiation of the terms and conditions of employment of any designers within the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) or any independent theatres.
- IATSE will waive all IATSE application and initiation fees to all ADC members who join ADC Local 659 prior to July 2021.
- IATSE shall work with Local ADC 659 to facilitate working opportunities for ADC members with sister locals operating in the film and stage industry.
- IATSE shall work with Local ADC 659 to cultivate relationships with existing Local USA829 unions of USA stage designers and scenographers.

MAJOR CHANGES THAT OCCURRED DURING PANDEMIC:

STRUCTURAL REORGANIZATION OF ADC:

Major Terms of Agreement between ADC and IATSE:

- Members of Local ADC659 will have access to all of IATSE's plans and programs, including:
 - a. Canadian Entertainment Industry Retirement Plan
 - b. IATSE Canadian National Health Plan
 - c. IATSE Local Education Assistance Plan
 - d. IATSE Training Trust
 - e. IATSE Safety Online

- Local ADC 659 and IATSE International commit to one another to help improve Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in both organizations and the sector with guidance from joint communication between ADC's BIPOC Designers Circle and IATSE's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

Other ADC Activities During Pandemic:

The conducting of various surveys to better understand the current situation of Canadian designers and how best to assist them.

Keeping the association financially viable without major sources of revenue (such as contract-filling fees) during the pandemic.

Lobbying for designers and theatre workers in government organizations.

Creating guidelines for broadcasting (streaming) of design work.

Planning for WSD2020 in Calgary, and PQ2023.



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