

GHOST LIGHT STRATEGY

a response to COVID19 theatre shutdowns

DOCUMENT	GHOST LIGHT STRATEGY
DATED	14 April 2020
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DRAFT	Carolyn Chard
RELATED PLAN	WAO Strategic Plan 2019-2021
COVID19 DOCUMENTS	Communications Plan (March 2020) Engagement Plan (March 2020)

West Australian Opera (Strategic Plan 2019-2021)

The 2019-2021 strategic plan noted:

We will be challenged by all the changes happening in the world, new technology, new ways of working, the changing expectations of our audiences, different expectations from our funders and partners. There will be new competitors and we face new and increasing costs to be able to do all we want to do in the years covered by this plan. We recognise that this will demand patience and initiative while maintaining the ability to be nimble, responsive, and adaptable. We know we need courage to be creative and collaborative.

This three-year plan cannot answer every challenge nor is it designed to be a final blueprint; rather it is a beginning to a new stage in the lifecycle of a mature company. Much of the work that we need to undertake will be in flexing our creative muscle to explore and deliver in practical ways our new ideas. It will require close attention to further thinking and planning. The dream of a new journey for a fifty-year old state opera company has commenced and we look forward to creating the space and resources for further innovative thinking and planning.

The 2019-2021 strategic plan's dream states that 'we want to present opera that moves you, enchants you and makes you think about the magic of being alive in the world today'.

The six strategic issues identified in the 2019-2021 plan were:

1. **Communications:** Increasing our community presence, awareness and engagement, building on momentum that has been created in the past few years and trying new and exciting things.
2. **Audiences:** We must grow our audience in both numbers and diversity by collaborating with other groups and targeting new audiences. For regular attendees, the love of opera was triggered by a memorable experience as a young child. By leveraging the youth and young adult audience better, we can set them up for a lifetime of opera appreciation and regenerate our audience for years to come. We need to innovate in all aspects of the content and delivery of opera to make it more appealing and accessible to a broader audience
3. **Content:** It will involve some risk, but we need to innovate in terms of what we offer. From our repertoire and productions to locations and sets, there's a broad scope for branching out.
4. **Experience:** By offering attractive 'trimmings' to our core offering, we can provide more value and engagement to our attendees to drive acquisition and retention.
5. **Financial Sustainability:** We need to think creatively about increasing our revenue streams to innovate and explore new opera experiences and new markets.
6. **Innovation:** We need to be intentional about our future and the changing environment in which we. We need to not only think about the world as it is but the world as it will be and be consistently and continually adapting to the changes around us.

West Australian Opera Ghost Light

In early March 2020, the company immediately recognised that it must pivot in the COVID19 environment and must remain visible, relevant, innovative, and robust while recognising the key tenets of the Strategic Plan.

An immediate response to COVID19 was for the company to work away from the stage 'in the ghost light' working away from the stage until we can return. This response commenced with the rapid production of a suite of arias by four of Western Australia's best singers performing alone on a dark stage in an empty theatre with no audience lit only by the 'ghost light'. These were filmed on Monday 23 March immediately before the theatre was closed that day at midday under the State Emergency Act.

With the government directive preventing mass gatherings the arts sector lost the ability to present live work in theatres with audiences. This led to the cancellation of performances, opera seasons, school and community workshops, regional touring and all activity live and in person.

Live performances were cancelled from March through to July 2020; the theatre was closed from 13 March 2020 until Phase 5 was introduced in Western Australia on 18 July 2020.

1. Ghost Light Purpose

West Australian Opera created digital engagement initiatives all under the new banner of '**Ghost Light**'. This was a direct response to COVID19 where the company presented work as **West Australian Opera Ghost Light** while away from the live stage.

2. Ghost Light Goals

1. to remain connected with audiences
2. to create new content while adhering to COVID19 directives
3. to create digital content
4. to provide new employment opportunities for artists
5. to engage with stakeholders
6. to deliver on expectations and promises to funders, donors, partners, sponsors
7. to adhere to the core values of the strategic plan
8. to utilise new delivery channels (YouTube, social media, website, zoom)
9. to introduce efficiencies through TNews (to be used with the Tessitura platform)

3. Ghost Light Content

1. Ghost Light Opera (arias)
2. Wesfarmers Arts Virtual Singing Classes
3. Act-Belong-Commit Singing for Children
4. Lullabies for Babies
5. Podcast Series
6. Spotify Series
7. Cooking with Opera
8. Artist Quick Response Fund
9. Standing Room Only
10. The Telephone (Menotti)

4. Ghost Light Ambition

Closures and cancellations provide the opportunity for 'creative hibernation' and WAO is keen to commission work and to present work where possible.

1. to commission a new work (Noongar Language Project)
2. to present an online opera (The Telephone by Menotti)
3. to present digital content through the 'Ghost Light'

5. Ghost Light KPIs

Ghost Light KPIs include:

1. grow and retain the WAO audience through digital engagement
2. employ artists
3. employ creatives
4. deploy core staff to Ghost Light initiatives
5. engage with stakeholders in a meaningful way
6. deliver on partnership agreements via new engagement benefits
7. develop innovations that continue beyond necessity
8. demonstrate creativity, agility, responsiveness in a meaningful way
9. utilise new delivery channels
10. maintain high production values

6. Ghost Light Measurements

WAO will continue to use the services of Culture Counts to measure impact and outcomes of activities.

7. Ghost Light Support

West Australian Opera is grateful for the support offered to these initiatives which includes:

1. Principal Partner Wesfarmers Arts agreed to new support to enable the Wesfarmers Arts Commission for Guy Ghouse and Gina Williams
2. Ghost Light Opera was made possible through the support of DLGSC, Perth Theatre and His Majesty's Theatre who made the stage and crew available for the filming of Ghost Light Opera on 23 March 2020
3. Healthway agreed to variations to the leveraging plans for the 2020-2022 Agreement particularly for Year 1 (2020)
4. DLGSC considering variations to existing agreements including two cancelled 2020 initiatives *Star Navigator* and *Bran Nue Dae (Broome tour)*

8. Ghost Light Challenges

West Australian Opera was working from home (WFH) for 14 weeks from 17 March 2020 to 15 June 2020. The Ghost Light initiatives were planned, resourced, and implemented in isolation from each other as well as away from suppliers and artists.

West Australian Opera has been forced to cancel performances and artist contracts however as a funded company we have the financial resources to present Ghost Light initiatives in 2020 subject to the approvals.

9. Ghost Light Resources

The following resources were discussed and agreed at the 23 March 2020 board meeting:

1. Financial resources
 - approved Ghost Light budget repurposing existing funding and support
 - Further support offered or given by donors, partners, government
2. Physical resources
 - External resources via suppliers such as filming, editing, sound
 - software (eg Squadcast; TNew)
 - any props, costumes, makeup
3. Human resources
 - WAO staff (on salary)
 - Artists (new contracts; JobKeeper casuals)
 - Suppliers (as required)

10. Ghost Light summary

West Australian Opera had a full year of repertoire in the marketplace for 2020. Following COVID19 stoppages in March 2020 WAO produced a Ghost Light digital brochure for **Q2 (March – June)** and **Q3 (July – September)** before reverting to live performance in **Q4 (October-December)** and detail is in the brochure links:

WAO FULL ANNUAL BROCHURE 2020 <https://bit.ly/3dVHiUp>

GHOST LIGHT QUARTER 2 BROCHURE <https://bit.ly/38j29zr>

GHOST LIGHT QUARTER 3 BROCHURE <https://bit.ly/3qxSXdM>

11. Ghost Light future

Digital initiatives introduced during Ghost Light 2020 have been assessed and initiatives which have resonated with audiences will be continued for the state opera company.

12. Resources



AUSTRALIA COUNCIL COVID19 IMPACT SURVEY
<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/8042020-summary-of-covid-19-ar-5e8d010193a6c.pdf>



NEWGATE COMMUNITY ATTITUDES SURVEY
<http://www.newgatecomms.com.au/public-strongly-backs-governments-covid-19-response-optimism-growing-despite-tough-times-biting/>



HELP: THE CONNECTION PROJECT
<https://www.circuitwest.com.au/the-connection-project/>



ARTS WELLBEING COLLECTIVE
<https://www.artswellbeingcollective.com.au/>



SUPPORT ACT
<https://supportact.org.au/wellbeinghelpline/>



BLACKDOG
<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/workplace-mental-health-and-wellbeing/our-programs>



ATO INFORMATION
<https://www.ato.gov.au/General/Property/Your-home/Working-from-home/>



ARTSHUB MEDIA
<https://www.artshub.com.au/news-search/>



LPA RESOURCES
<https://liveperformance.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/LPA-Factsheet-Mental-Health-Initiatives-in-the-Performing-Arts.pdf>



LPA INDUSTRY PACKAGE SUMMARY
<https://liveperformance.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Targeted-Industry-Package-1April2020-FINAL.pdf>



ZOOM TIPS
<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/09/working-from-home-tips-to-meet-like-a-pro/>





















ALISON COVID19 INFORMATION
<https://alison.com/course/coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know>

WEST AUSTRALIAN OPERA COVID19

Q1 COMPLETED

Q2 and Q3 CANCELLED

Q4 EXPECTED TO GO AHEAD

	<i>Bran Nue Dae</i> (completed)
	<i>Hansel & Gretel</i> (completed)
	<i>Fidelio</i> (completed)
	Opera in the Mill (completed)
	<i>Star Navigator</i> (cancelled)
	Wesfarmers Arts Singing Classes (Q2 cancelled)
	Opera in the Pinnacles (cancelled)
	Opera in Geraldton (cancelled)
	<i>By Other Eyes</i> collaboration with Breaksea (cancelled)
	School and community classes (cancelled)
	<i>Elijah</i> (cancelled)
	<i>Cav & Pag</i> (cancelled)
	<i>Bran Nue Dae, Broome</i> (cancelled)
	<i>Nightingale</i> (October)
	<i>Così</i> (October)
	Wesfarmers Arts Singing Classes (Q3 live)
	Opera in the Valley of the Giants (monitoring)
	Opera in Albany (monitoring)

GHOST LIGHT PROJECTS PRESENTED IN Q2 AND Q3 2020

- Ghost Light Opera arias
- Ghost Light Podcasts
- Wesfarmers Arts Virtual Singing Classes (Q2 digital)
- Ghost Light Playlists
- Act-Belong-Committ Singing for Children
- Lullabies for Babies
- Menotti's *The Telephone* (filmed short opera for two singers)
- Wesfarmers Arts Commission
- Ghost Light Podcasts
- Cooking with Opera (City of Perth supported)
- Quick Response Fund (support for singers)
- 'Standing Room Only' (recital series at Government House Ballroom)