



February 25, 2021

Dear Stefan Grybauskas:

I write on behalf of our union that represents over 19,000 actors and stage managers in the NY entertainment industry. Actors' Equity Association is the national labor union that represents stage actors and stage managers in live performance. Our members work on Broadway, off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway throughout New York City. For over 100 years, Actors' Equity has fought to secure important workplace protections for actors who work on stage.

We are excited about the Open Culture Program and what it will mean as we look toward reopening of the arts, and are grateful for the opportunity to submit comment about the program. The Open Culture Program as established by the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management will allow eligible arts and cultural institutions to use open performance spaces for artistic and cultural events.

As you work to launch the Open Culture Program, there are important safety considerations that should be taken into account to protect the participants, regardless of whether they are union members or not. Strong safety protocols now will protect the reputation of the entire industry from a theater becoming a vector for an outbreak, which would damage the reputation of the industry as we collectively all consider reopening.

For example, the city should require that all productions approved for the program have proof of workers compensation insurance, in addition to other insurance requirements.

With the industry largely shut down for nearly a year, the city should ensure and prioritize those programs that are paying their performers a living wage. Providing a living wage and union contracts will mean those who participate in the program not only can earn a living, but have the protections of Equity's safety protocols, which includes testing requirements that have kept workers safe in New York City and around the country.

We urge the Mayor's office to prioritize making sure the performers are paid a living wage and incorporate these concerns into the eligibility and use guidelines for the Open Culture Program. Actors' Equity Association stands ready to collaborate on safety protocols that will keep everyone associated with the program safe and protected moving forward.

Sincerely,

Brandon Lorenz
National Director of Communications and Public Policy
Actors' Equity Association