

The Greenhouse C.I.C – Artistic Direction, 2021

This document sets out the Artistic Direction for The Greenhouse in 2021, outlining the qualities we are looking for in all of our artistic outputs. That means the shows that are a part of our programme, yes. But as an arts company, it means everything else as well – from the design of the venue itself to our events and workshops, from our marketing strategy to our funding applications. This is not designed to be used instead of *The Greenhouse's* brand, but rather to augment it, creating a specific mission, vision, and identity for this calendar year.

It doesn't need to be said again, but 2020 has been a whirlwind of a year. Bushfires, COVID, the US elections, and any number of other crises peppered in between. In contrast, 2020 seems to have been a positive year for the natural world. Wildlife returned and reclaimed places from which it had been forced out. There is a growing environmental consciousness amongst populations who have been turning to green spaces in these tumultuous times.

I say it *seems* to have been a positive year because we must see the wood for the trees. COVID has been an undeniable tragedy with a massive human cost. A cost that will only grow as innocents continue to be sacrificed at the altar of the economy. This is a fact that cannot, nor should not be avoided.

If 2020 was a time of tragedy, however, we must make 2021 a time of hope. Hope of overcoming this terrible disease, but hope beyond that too. As the gears of the capitalist machine have repeatedly ground to a halt over the last twelve months, we have caught a glimpse of the world beyond. A world where we don't have to spend four hours a day on buses and trains just to get to work. A world where we have time for the things and the people we truly care about. A world where community and compassion come first.

Rest assured, friends, the sudden re-appearance of care and love and hope was not a symptom of the virus. They are flowers that began to bud as we paused just briefly, giving ourselves a moment outside our seemingly endless cycle of growth. Imagine how they might flourish at any other time. Not surrounded by catastrophe, but rather when we decide to step aside, and let the sun come streaming in.

We have seen that the cycle is not endless – we have seen what happens when it ends. Far from falling in to catastrophe, we have lifted each other up. It is possible to live in a kinder, fairer world. Has it taken millions of deaths for us to realise it? Maybe. But it is now staring at us in the face. And we must not let those deaths be in vain. They can mean something. They can be for something. They can propel us to a better future for everyone. A future where it doesn't take a nation-wide lockdown for us to start saying 'hello' to our neighbours.

In setting our Artistic Direction for 2021, we aim to embody all this. We stand fast beside our roots in climate conscious theatre, and we add the knowledge that, compared to this time last year, everyone is viewing the world a little differently. There is potential for fear. There is potential to return to 'life as normal.' But there is also potential for a brighter future – a more connected, more active, more hopeful future. A future *The Greenhouse* will fight for. One performance at a time.

Hopeful

This is not 'happy-clappy-woodland-creatures-life-is-but-a-fairy-tale' kind of hopeful. We're not just looking for happy endings. The world can be bleak – the world has been bleak recently. But if we didn't genuinely believe things could be better, there wouldn't be much reason to get out of bed in the morning. In 2021, our programme will make our audience hopeful. It will help them realise the power they hold, and the role they can play in bringing about the future they want to see.

Underpinning everything we create and display is the idea that things can be different.

Active

Our work should not just sit back and wait for audiences to engage. There's already been enough waiting around this year. In 2021, work at *The Greenhouse* will seek new ways to connect with our audience. It will engage them in conversation and debate on topics they care about. Ultimately, it will inspire them, while giving them tools and knowledge to take action. So they don't just feel they want to build a better future – they can start taking steps to make that future a reality.

Work at *The Greenhouse* will make active partners out of passive spectators.

Connected

Let's face it, we've all been missing social interaction over the last year. And whilst we can't put that right with just one show, we certainly can try. In 2021, our work will feel particularly immediate, intimate, and human. It will build meaningful connections between audiences and performers that will last well after a show has ended. The theatre itself – and the work presented within it – will become a highly social space, and absolutely everyone will feel a sense of belonging there.

Visiting *The Greenhouse* will always bring a sense of togetherness and belonging.