

Newsletter 1 - 2020



Contents:

- ◆ The Artistic and Cultural Scene in the Framework of Corona Pandemic
- ◆ PPAN's Activities During Corona Pandemic
- ◆ PPAN's Meetings and Participations

The Artistic and Cultural Scene in the Framework of Corona Pandemic

The chaos caused by the spread of Coronavirus was reflected in all aspects of life all over the world. It hasn't affected health and economic fields only, but spread wider to include cultural and artistic activities that were scheduled everywhere and were subject to cancellation or postponement since March 2020. The pandemic caused the direct contact between the artists and their audience, who used to go to theaters and art galleries, to be disconnected and pursued face to face. This gap did not last long as long as creativity had no limits; it is not restricted by time or place, especially in the context of culture and art. Therefore, artists and culture activists found alternative creative ideas to keep in touch with their audiences, and were able to create artistic cultural platforms through social media, that were accessible for various categories and everywhere around the world. Even people who are not accustomed to following up with arts and culture news before Corona, have begun to communicate and learn more about culture and artistic productions through these platforms. These platforms have been able to bring together artists of the same nationalities, or from different nationalities, to come up with various artistic and creative works and new ideas during the past months. The quarantine period had invented new patterns of creativity and new methods of cultural communication, whether at the national, regional or international level.

When talking about the cultural and artistic movement in Palestine and the world during the outbreak of the epidemic, we note many creative ideas that were born, whether in the visual arts or performing arts fields: Organizing visual arts exhibitions through the virtual world, working on new musical productions, and theatre performances; including puppet shows and stories. In addition to cultural meetings, brainstorming, and artistic training and workshops. Also, there were live musical performances by musicians from their balconies in different countries, as well as small carnivals, dance and circus performances that passed through the empty streets to entertain children in their homes during periods of quarantine.

PPAN's Activities During Corona Pandemic

As for PPAN's activities since the beginning of the pandemic period, it has been working with various means to continue the workflow and follow up with the cultural and artistic movement during quarantine. PPAN's office has been communicating continuously with the member institutions to see all updates related to the creative cultural and artistic initiatives and ideas that are currently being implemented on all social media and other means that are credited with the interconnectedness of the cultural and artistic sector work, and keeping the cultural scene as effective as possible. During the first home quarantine period, the network launched a hashtag entitled #Performing_Arts_in_the_Time_of_Coronavirus, through which news about the activities and initiatives of PPAN's member institutions (every day about an institution) was published on PPAN's Facebook and Instagram pages. This initiative aimed at publishing the member institutions productions and the Palestinian performing arts in general, and making them available to everyone, especially to people who are not accustomed to following the artistic and cultural scene. All PPAN member institutions social media pages (the 15 institutions) have been active with their initiatives, activities, trainings, and news that have not stopped since the beginning of the home quarantine period. Among the most prominent of these activities: broadcasting PPAN's theatre institutions for their theatrical productions and publishing storytelling shows through their Facebook pages, and the continuation of dance institutions (dabka) in communicating with their students by publishing the students' videos practicing dabka from their homes. Also, music institutions that published videos for their students' continued playing from their homes, as well as organize musical evenings through the virtual world.

PPAN's Meetings and Participations

During the first half of the current year 2020, PPAN held some networking meetings and meetings with official and non-official parties, also had some participations which included:

- As a member of the national team responsible for the completion of the periodic report on monitoring cultural practices of the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), PPAN participated in two sessions held during January and February 2020 to discuss the general framework of the report and the work of the members. Work had been largely disrupted during March and April due to the Corona virus pandemic.

- The networking meeting that was held between PPAN and Rozana Association/ Birzeit on February 1, 2020, at the network's office. The meeting aimed to build partnerships and future cooperation between the two parties, and the Rozana Association presented its plan for the Heritage Festival in Birzeit, which was supposed to be organized during July 2020.

- On May 20, 2020, the network held an informal meeting (via Zoom app) in which its member institutions participated. The meeting aimed to come up with the challenges that PPAN and its member institutions have faced since the beginning of the global crisis due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Each institution from the attendees gave a summary of its activities that had been implemented through the virtual world during the past period, in addition to mentioning the obstacles that each institution faced when trying to implement alternative activities. The attending institutions also discussed some near and far future plans.

- On June 11, 2020, PPAN participated in a brainstorming session for the cultural sector: its role in economic empowerment in the post-corona phase. The meeting was held in First Ramallah Group "Sareyyet Ramallah" and was attended by representatives of cultural institutions from various fields. This session was a continuation of the brainstorming session organized by Taawon Association through Zoom Technology on May 7, 2020. The attendees left the session with a set of recommendations and solutions, and a committee was formed - PPAN is a member of it - whose responsibilities are to follow up on the recommendations and develop an action plan to accomplish the required tasks.

- On June 16, 2020, PPAN held a meeting with the Minister of Culture, Dr. Atef Abu Seif. The meeting aimed to complete the discussion on some important issues, among which are: the issue of taxes imposed on cultural/ artistic institutions and artists/ s, as PPAN demanded that the cultural sector institutions be exempted from income tax for the year 2020 due to the pandemic. Also, the issue of reducing the tax value from 10% to 5%, like all other professions, starting from 2021. Dr. Abu Seif recommended writing a letter to the Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh about the issue of taxes, and he himself will follow up. PPAN also called the government for pressure on the European Union to cancel the political conditional funding for the cultural institutions and civil society institutions, explaining that these conditions will pose a risk that threatens many institutions to be closed. Accordingly, Dr. Abu Seif promised to follow up with the conditional funding issue with the EU parties. Finally, during the meeting, the issue of the ministry's support for artistic and cultural institutions was discussed.