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Russian Theater's Solution to Virus: An Audience of One

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By AFP

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The Perm Opera was founded in 1870. **DVS / Wiki Commons**

One of Russia's most distinguished opera and ballet companies has an innovative solution to prohibitions on public gatherings over the coronavirus: playing to an audience of one.

The Perm Opera and Ballet Theater, a Urals city company famed for its cutting-edge projects, said it would be launching the "One on One" performances from the end of March.

"A full-fledged performance cannot happen without the participation of an audience," the company said in a statement.

Each audience member will be chosen by lottery and will have to undergo a medical check before attending a performance, which will also be broadcast online.

Principal stage director Marat Gatsalov called the project "without precedent in the history of theater" and said the company felt it was important to continue to play to an audience, even if consists of only one person.

"In the grand scheme of things, one spectator is the same as a full house," he said in the statement.

The Perm Opera and Ballet Theater is one of the most audacious cultural projects in post-Soviet Russia.

Teodor Currentzis, one of the world's mostly highly regarded conductors, worked in Perm between 2011 and 2019.

The theater traces its history to the 1870s when it was built with donations from wealthy businessmen who included the grandfather of ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev.

Governments around the world have ordered the closing of concert halls and theaters to try to contain the coronavirus pandemic and many venues have turned to streaming.

Russia has recorded 253 cases of the coronavirus, including three in the Perm region, according to the most recent official figures published Friday.

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