

#notinourhouse

For a safe and inclusive working space.

The extent of the #Metoo campaign has shown that sexual harassment is a pervasive social issue. #Stilleforopptak and #nårdansenstopper have unveiled alarming stories from the performing arts field in Norway. Black Box teater, BIT Teatergarasjen and Teaterhuset Avant Garden unreservedly support these campaigns and those who break the silence.

As programming theaters, we present in total more than 130 different productions a year in our venues in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim. Throughout our seasonal program, festivals and other events, thousands of different people go in and out of our doors. Everyone should feel safe and respected in our houses and at the events we host: visiting artists, technicians, front-of-house staff, bar employees, audience, lecturers, managers, administrative personnel, panelists and volunteers. We demand zero tolerance for sexual harassment, assault and discrimination.

Following the #metoo campaign, we are increasing our commitment to the pursuit of safe and respectful workspaces and will contribute actively to a change of culture. We will work to foster awareness, promote education about consent and responsible behaviors, and provide assistance and support to those who have experienced toxic behaviors. This work will be done both on an individual level within our organizations as well as collectively in cooperation with other organizations in the performing arts field, nationally and internationally.

The working conditions and organizational structures of the independent field present challenges and issues that are common to all performing arts practices. This requires a cross-disciplinary approach and collaboration between different institutions and stakeholders. Freelancers work on a project basis and the recent testimonials reveal that reporting harassment or assault is considered a great risk. Nobody should remain silent about harassment and abuse for fear of being viewed as difficult or jeopardizing future job opportunities. In cases of harassment or abuse within an independent company, there is no space where these cases can be properly dealt with. This puts victims in a difficult situation in which they doubt whether they are authorized to report the incident to the

theater or festival that has invited the company. Moreover it is difficult to clearly separate the borders between working situation and social context. The complexity of our environment should be taken into consideration when working on preventing and dealing with these cases.

A key component in combating abuse and sexual harassment is an active policy on gender equality. Black Box teater, BIT Teatergarasjen and Teaterhuset Avant Garden strive for equal gender representation and intersectionality in our seasonal programs and amongst our co-workers, administrations and boards. We frequently curate pieces that in different ways stretch or break boundaries regarding the representation of gender identities and power structures. The artistic program encompasses a discursive approach towards the arts, politics and society and aspires to expand definitions and encourage reflection on the mechanisms that shape us. Since we consider that how we do things is as important as what we do, we need to pay close attention to our daily practices.

We will work on short-term and long-term plans to establish better routines and procedures, in order to deal with cases of harassment and abuse. At this stage, we will include information about routines and policies in our contracts and implement report procedures. In close dialogue with the different stakeholders in the field and in collaboration with the Norwegian Actors Association, Norwegian Dance Artists and others, we will contribute to initiative that will improve working conditions in the field, for example by looking into the need for a dedicated structure with trained staff who could provide assistance, mediation and support in incidents of harassment and abuse. Furthermore, we will participate in developing a joint handbook for the theater and film field with tools for preventing and handling harassment. It is crucial to clarify the definitions of the various forms of harassment, in order to spread awareness about the rights of employees and freelancers, and not least establish routines for reporting incidents when they occurs. Knowledge and awareness will strengthen the position of those who are subjected to harassment and abuse, in addition to being preventive. The three theaters will also take part in joint actions to make structural and political changes to improve conditions for independent and freelance performing arts workers.

In this important moment, we need to work together and keep a close dialogue with all who are involved in this field about how we can implement changes. Next season we will host open meetings in our respective theaters to discuss how we can improve and help each other. By promoting increased awareness, knowledge, guidelines and procedures, we set out to implement the necessary changes to create a safe working environment in the performing arts.

BIT Teatergarasjen
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