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Gulfshore Playhouse cuts season short

With theater shuttered, it focuses on preparing for the future.

by: [Beth Luberecki](#) | Contributor

Gulfshore Playhouse in Naples recently had to lay off 21 employees, send its nine education interns home, and cancel the last two productions of its current season. Now a group of eight core staff members representing various departments at the theater are working from home at reduced pay to keep things afloat.

“It’s generally devastating to everyone,” says Kristen Coury, Gulfshore Playhouse’s founder and producing artistic director. “But if we’re going to act as if — and we are — we have to keep getting ready for next season at least, and potentially for our summer productions. So we’re having Zoom meetings like crazy and trying to plan for something in our future we have no control over right now.”

Coury, the theater’s board chair, and other leadership staff have been in constant communication to make these decisions. And some things were decided for them, like when the city of Naples closed the Norris Center, Gulfshore Playhouse’s city-owned performance venue.

Gulfshore Playhouse was in the middle of a fundraising campaign to help it construct a new home for the theater that it would own. Now as the organization works to cut as many expenses as possible, it hopes people will continue to financially support it, if only to help it survive.

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“We are certainly blessed by being in Naples, where there is a culture of philanthropy and people are so generous,” says Coury. “But the stock market taking a nosedive has impacted everyone’s ability to be generous.”

The theater will have to refund ticket purchases for the cancelled shows and is asking patrons to consider donating the value of their tickets or accept a credit for next season. “Anything we can do to encourage people not to get a refund is helpful to us,” says Coury.

Coury is hunkering down at home and encouraging her remaining staff to do the same. She’s also focusing on mental health.

“I’m trying to make lemonade from lemons,” she says. “I’m walking a lot more than I was before, and the Florida sunshine is a balm. I’m encouraging the current staff to really be easy with themselves and make sure they’re practicing self-care, because this could go on for a couple of months and could be really demoralizing.”

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