

Paris,
15 mai 2025

STATEMENT

Abandoned by the City of Paris, La Gaîté Lyrique is in serious jeopardy

On May 14, the City of Paris finally gave us back the keys to La Gaîté Lyrique and the staff can at last return to the center. The facility will have been closed for more than five months. The loss of operating income from this closure, for which La Gaîté Lyrique SAS is in no way responsible, stands at nearly €3 million.

La Gaîté Lyrique have already worked to absorb a significant share of the financial losses. We have asked the City of Paris, the building owner, for support on an exceptional basis alongside our efforts. The Paris City Council has passed several affirmative resolutions on this issue.

Now we've been hung out to dry. In a reversal, the City of Paris is refusing to contribute to the facility's financial recovery. It's a baffling decision, considering the pledges made by the City, the cultural reach of La Gaîté Lyrique, and the immediate consequences for the 80 jobs that hang in the balance.

The partner organizations of La Gaîté Lyrique – Arty Farty, Arte France, makesense, SINGA and Actes Sud – condemn this serious breach of duty and will soon announce several initiatives to prevent the permanent closure of La Gaîté Lyrique.

This week, the staff, founding organizations, partners and residents at La Gaîté Lyrique were informed of the decision by the City of Paris – the building owner and municipal partner – not to provide financial support toward the reopening of the institution, despite having pledged to do so on multiple occasions, notably via remarks by Mayor Anne Hidalgo and Deputy Mayor for Culture Carine Rolland.

During the 100-day occupation of La Gaîté Lyrique, from December 2024 to March 2025, the staff and joint governance team – representing Arty Farty, Arte France, Singa and makesense – accepted a responsibility far outside their duties. They did so in the place of the competent authorities, so that the City of Paris would have the time needed to carry out its legitimate negotiations with the national government. Sadly, these negotiations failed and more than 400 young people were thrown out of the center without any housing solution. Most of those young people are still on the streets of Paris today – a situation acceptable to no one. But the penalty for this collective failure cannot, under any circumstance, be the sacrifice of this cultural institution and its 80 jobs.

At the last two city council meetings, in February and April 2025,* the City of Paris leadership took pains to put forward and secure the council members' approval for resolutions clearly indicating the City's determination to support La Gaîté Lyrique, its staff and its governance team, to *"resume the cultural public service provided by La Gaîté Lyrique as quickly as possible."*

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A pledge of support reiterated on many occasions

On September 14, 2023, at Paris City Hall, the Mayor of Paris reassured the La Gaîté Lyrique management of its unwavering support for the Factory of Our Times project, which was selected and backed by the municipality, during a meeting held specifically to mobilize institutions against the return to France and Europe of ill winds of obscurantism and waves of reactionary sentiment.

On March 18, 2025, the day on which La Gaîté Lyrique was evacuated by the police, on radio station France Inter the Mayor of Paris noted the *"exceptional"* nature of La Gaîté Lyrique and its project.

On April 9, 2025, Deputy Mayor for Culture Carine Rolland was crystal clear in her remarks before the Paris City Council – just as she had been to the La Gaîté Lyrique staff on February 17 at City Hall. She reiterated that the City of Paris supported and was aligned with the institution, stating that the staff at La Gaîté Lyrique *"acted responsibly and hospitably, as they always do."* She added: *"I would like to take this chance to restate our support for the artistic and cultural activity at Factory of Our Times, and to thank all the employees, who did everything in their ability during the entire period that the building was occupied – something for which, by its very nature, they were not prepared."* She continued: *"Obviously, we need to be able to support the facility so that it can reopen as soon as possible and welcome the public, who had been flocking to Factory of Our Times since its inception two years ago. To that end, Patrick Bloche, First Deputy Mayor of Paris, and I will be meeting very shortly – before the end of the month – with the Factory of Our Times collective. [...] We will uphold – I would like to be very clear on this point – the commitments made as part of our contract with Factory of Our Times, on the management and operation of the facility. We will continue the dialogue on management with the concession holder and provide for any form of compensation necessary."*

A dialogue initiated in December 2024 to plan for the resumption of operations

Pursuant to these statements, the City of Paris directed its Department of Cultural Affairs (DAC) to organize and plan, on a weekly basis, the funding methods needed to reopen the facility and save its jobs. This management dialogue, initiated in December 2024, enabled the parties to shed light on the severity of the losses, and to share the financial and employment risks. Estimated at over €3 million, these losses – both direct expenses stemming from the occupation and lost operating income for the concession holder and its artistic partners – require additional financial support to rebalance the center's financial model. In recent weeks, La Gaîté Lyrique has proposed various reopening scenarios and funding methods, all of which rejected by the City of Paris.

On May 9, the City of Paris transferred the annual funding due as part of the concession contract for normal operation of the institution. However, reneging on its prior commitments, the City of Paris informed the La Gaîté Lyrique SAS member organizations and management that no financial compensation would be provided to offset the exceptional loss of operating income.

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A reversal that poses an immediate threat to 80 jobs

This decision to abandon La Gaîté Lyrique poses a direct danger to the institution, which is financially drained as a direct result of the loss of operating income during the 100-day occupation. The institution is very close to entering a bankruptcy protection procedure for its 60 permanent salaried positions and live event professionals, as well the 20 service providers reporting directly to the facility (security and maintenance teams).

What justifies this reversal? What has La Gaîté Lyrique done to deserve having the financial discussions called off and the City of Paris categorically refusing to act, despite previous assurances otherwise?

Do the staff deserve this reversal – the same staff who made a “*remarkable effort*”^{*} for nearly 100 days, handling responsibilities outside their duties?

High stakes for democracy

This political and financial abandonment has thrown into serious jeopardy a collective, cultural and social project in the public interest, just as we are facing the tensest, most hazardous moment in our democratic life. There are financial and social consequences not just for the staff, but for all the partners, cultural actors, festivals and artists, especially in the Paris region. More broadly, this reversal deprives Paris of a space cherished by the public, as demonstrated daily by visitors and repeated on several occasions by Deputy Mayor for Culture Carine Rolland.

Some 4,000 artists, elected officials, members of parliament, cultural actors, and members of civil society lent their support to La Gaîté Lyrique, Factory of Our Times, by signing the open letter published in the culture magazine *Télérama* on February 27.

La Gaîté Lyrique urgently needs to reopen

The crucial effort towards La Gaîté Lyrique's financial recovery grows more difficult and costly with each passing day. It is now urgent for the municipality to respect its commitments by providing a financial framework and a clear schedule. This is what forced La Gaîté Lyrique to deliver a formal notification to the municipal authorities.

La Gaîté Lyrique SAS is not asking the City of Paris to solve the problem on its own. The staff and governance team are aware of the existing budgetary pressures and firmly support proper, efficient use of public funds. La Gaîté Lyrique has managed to fund nearly 70% of its own budget – a rarity for an institution of its size – and will resume doing so in 2026. Other public and private partners are willing to contribute to this urgently needed recovery sought by all parties. But the center is asking the City of Paris to uphold its commitment to help fund this financial recovery and protect the jobs of those who work daily to spread the institution's cultural impact.

La Gaîté Lyrique – Factory of Our Times must not close down, and will make every effort to continue its mission.

La Gaîté Lyrique – Factory of Our Times

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Paris City Council resolution, February 11, 2025: «Since December 10, 2024, the occupation of La Gaîté Lyrique has caused all its activities to be suspended and its programming canceled, which has weakened the cultural institution and placed a considerable burden on its staff.» [...] The resolution later underscores “the importance of reestablishing the cultural public service provided by La Gaîté Lyrique as quickly as possible for artistic teams and audiences, and the need to restore the facility’s place in the public eye, so as to maintain its 2024-2025 programming.”

Paris City Council resolution, April 8, 2025: “The stoppage of all activities (concerts, events, rentals, etc.) at La Gaîté Lyrique during the entirety of the occupation, along with additional security costs, having incurred substantial financial losses for the facility” and “considering the consortium, management and all employees’ desire to return La Gaîté Lyrique’s artistic and cultural project to a functional state after the remarkable effort they made during the entire period the building was occupied,” the resolution notes “that, in similar situations, the City of Paris has always fulfilled its contractual commitments and assumed its responsibilities to cultural facilities.” It concludes by stating that the City of Paris “is handling the refurbishment of La Gaîté Lyrique to facilitate the reopening of the site, reiterates its support for La Gaîté Lyrique’s artistic and cultural activity, is assisting the facility so that it can reopen to the public, and is continuing its dialogue and collaboration with the concession holder, including on financial considerations.”

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