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Citing Safety and Taste, Groups Cancel Shows and Exhibitions

By JESSE MCKINLEY

Faced with anxiety in the audience and myriad logistical hurdles, cultural institutions around the city have been forced to cancel and postpone dozens of performances and exhibits because of concerns over safety or subject matter after last week's terrorist attacks.

Perhaps hardest hit has been Quebec New York 2001, the elaborate monthlong festival of Québécois culture which was to have kicked off with a wide range of exhibits and theater productions last weekend. Since last Tuesday's attack, the festival, which was to have been largely based in the heavily damaged World Financial Center, has had to cancel about 75 percent of its planned events, including "Zulu Time," the highly anticipated collaboration between the Canadian director Robert LePage and Peter Gabriel, the rock musician.

Remy Charest, the festival's public relations director, said the decision to cancel "Zulu Time," which was to have begun performances at the Roseland Ballroom beginning on Friday, was related to the subject matter. The piece, which takes its title from the military designation for Greenwich Mean Time, is set in an airport, and features a terrorist character and two scenes involving a plane crash.

"As far as the subject matter was concerned, we thought that it was sensitive and

Festivals of Québécois arts and Rachmaninoff lose many events.

not very appropriate to do it at this time," Mr. Charest said yesterday from Montreal. "Safety of our performers was critical, too, but the subject matter was the clincher."

Also facing mass cancellations is Lincoln Center's Rachmaninoff Revisited festival, which lost five major events over the weekend, including performances by London's Philharmonia Orchestra and the St. Petersburg Chamber Choir. Yesterday Lincoln Center said additional performances by Mikhail Pletnev, a pianist, would be canceled because Mr. Pletnev was stranded in Europe.

Indeed, while many cancellations were made out of respect for victims and the rescue effort, more mundane concerns were also snagging plans, including the difficulty some performers faced obtaining visas because of closed consulates in foreign countries.

Discussions of safety and sensitivity to

depictions of violence have been going on in administrative offices of arts groups all over the city. Last week, in fact, the Roundabout Theater Company canceled a planned Broadway production of the Stephen Sondheim musical "Assassins," which includes references to an aerial attack on the White House.

Another major cancellation was announced yesterday when word came that a planned tribute to John Lennon on Thursday at Radio City Music Hall, featuring performances by Beck, Alanis Morissette and Lou Reed, would be postponed.

Still other groups were making the decision to press ahead. At the Kitchen on West 19th Street yesterday, plans were to proceed with a production of "Logic of the Birds," conceived by Shirin Neshat and Sussan Deyhim, two Iranian artists living in the United States, despite "serious concerns" from company members that the piece might be a target for backlash because of the current media focus on Middle Eastern terrorist activities.

"The artists of the Kitchen strongly believe that performing their deeply humanistic work is a very important part of the healing process," the company said in a statement. "In this time of mounting ignorance and prejudice, it is particularly important to support these artists whose work represents their own culture."

At the Drama Dept. in Greenwich Village, meanwhile, discussion yesterday focused on whether to change a scene at the end of "Rude Entertainment," three short plays by Paul Rudnick, in which characters point handguns at the audience.

In the end, Mr. Rudnick said he had opted not to second-guess the audience's reaction, though a slide projection of the Trade Center used for a transition will be eliminated.

"The plays are all about how people deal with tragedy," Mr. Rudnick said. "We're going to see how it plays."

Uncertainty also surrounded the attacks' economic impact. Many downtown venues, like the Knitting Factory, remain closed.

Mr. Charest, of the Quebec festival, said he was uncertain what the total loss for the \$9 million festival would be. The list of canceled performances included Par B.L. Eux Company, a leading avant-garde troupe; a dance performance by the Compagnie Marie Chouinard at the Joyce Theater; and several visual art installations planned for the Kitchen. Several large-scale installations showing off Quebec's tourism and technology are also believed to have been destroyed at the financial center.

All of which, Mr. Charest said, was secondary to the safety of the festival's participants; as many as 140 of the festival's staff and artists were staying in hotels and apartments in the financial district, but all are accounted for. "It's a huge disappointment," he said. "But in the end, it's all just a footnote to what happened."