

## Theater Guidelines during COVID-19

September 2020

- These guidelines for mitigation of the risk of theater groups and actors during COVID-19 are supplementary to any federal, state, local or institutional regulations.
- Regardless of the various phased reopening plans that states, provinces, and communities have in place, legal reopening or congregating is not equivalent to safely rehearsing or performing theater activities together in the same physical space.<sup>2</sup>
- These guidelines apply to any situation in which two or more actors or theatrical performers are in close proximity.
- These guidelines will be updated as new information becomes available.

### General recommendations

- Outdoor lessons/rehearsals/performances may pose a lower risk of disease transmission than indoor.
- Maintaining ventilation with the introduction of outdoor air in indoor lesson, rehearsal and performance spaces at or above 3 air exchanges per hour may reduce the risk of contagion. Consult with HVAC technicians for assistance.
- The use of UV light and HEPA filters (MERV 13 or higher) in indoor spaces may reduce the risk of contagion.
- Consider dividing large classes/casts into smaller groups to better allow for 6' social distancing.
- No loud talking. Leaders consider using a microphone to limit aerosol transmission.
- Participants should limit movement within the space to reduce aerosol transmission.
- Plan for safe social distancing as participants enter/leave the space.
- Rehearsal and performance spaces should undergo appropriate cleaning; SARS-CoV-2 can survive on some metal surfaces for 3 days or more, so simply letting metallic surfaces sit untouched overnight does not eliminate the virus.
- No sharing of scripts or other physical items.
- Conduct a Covid-19 risk assessment at each lesson/rehearsal/performance. All should complete a symptom checklist prior to each session

### Risk levels:

- **Blue:** no known increased risk over normal daily activities
- **Yellow:** probable increase in risk over normal daily activities
- **Red:** real world evidence of spread of disease associated with this activity

### Levels of evidence:

- Level 1: strong real world research showing benefit of the recommendation for musicians
- Level 2: laboratory research showing benefit of the recommendation for musicians
- Level 3: expert opinion based on current public health advice and medical expertise

**Acting** – risk level **yellow** due to the increase in aerosol particle production when speaking loudly enough to project one's voice

- Six feet between actors at all times.

- Actors, directors, and staff all wear a surgical face mask at all times. Exception: It is safe for a single actor on an outdoor stage to go maskless.
- Consider voice amplification.
- Consider limiting class/rehearsal/performance time based on the number of actors on stage. Sessions longer than 30 minutes before taking at least a “1 air exchange” break may allow dangerous concentrations of disease particles to collect.
- Evidence level: 2

If the production involves dancing or singing/playing instruments, please refer to those guidelines.

### References

1. University of Colorado-Boulder/University of Maryland Aerosol and Airflow Studies preliminary results (July/August 2020). Preliminary results can be found at:  
July 13 summary and slides - <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4029971/preliminary-recommendations-from-international-performing-arts-aerosol-study.pdf> and <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4029974/preliminary-testing-report-7-13-20.pdf>  
August 6 summary and slides - <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/second-round-of-performing-arts-aerosol-study-produces-encouraging-preliminary-results/> and <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4119369/aerosol-study-prelim-results-round-2-final-updated.pdf>
2. expert opinion based on current public health advice and medical expertise