

Wirtz Center Covid-19 Performing Arts Practice Protocols

IN-PERSON PERFORMANCE WORK PROTOCOLS

Fall 2021

Introduction

The Wirtz Center is committed to prioritizing the health and safety of all students, staff, faculty, and audiences. Our goal is to provide the safest working environment possible while maximizing educational opportunities for all students. This document seeks to clarify best practices related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student work includes vocal projection, movement, dance, and singing, all of which occur in two parallel tracks at the Wirtz Center: as curricular activity in the classroom and through extracurricular productions produced by the Wirtz Center, the American Music Theatre Project, and StuCo, the student-run theatre community.

All Northwestern students, faculty, and staff must follow [University health and safety guidelines](#) regarding vaccinations, masking, and testing. As local, state, and federal guidelines evolve, we will alter our policies accordingly.

Organizational Strategies

Season Planning

The Wirtz 21/22 season's productions will be in person and in front of audiences, and it will include some limited virtual offerings. Specific rehearsal/practice protocols are outlined below for these productions.

Communication

- Wirtz safety protocols will be shared and reviewed with each production team on or before the first rehearsal.
- Wirtz Production Managers will field questions or address concerns from the production team. Where applicable, they will redirect questions to the appropriate source: Wirtz Managing Director, the Theatre Department Chair, the School of Communication, or Risk Management.

PPE and Supplies

Wirtz will provide the following PPE and disinfectant/cleaning items:

- Disposable masks are available in kiosks in the main lobby and the dance lobby
- Clean dust mops for dance floors in dance studio spaces
- Disinfectant wipes for tables, chairs and high-touch surfaces

Social/behavioral reinforcement

Wirtz will post signs in rehearsal spaces and classrooms to define safe working spacing and procedures.

- Wirtz will install signage to remind and reinforce personal hygiene practices
- Wirtz will install signage to remind and reinforce University policy on wiping down high-touch surfaces
- Wirtz Production Management must approve all room use related to production work through 25Live
- In dance studios, students will be spaced out in minimum 10-foot distances from colleagues whenever possible
- In acting studios, students will be spaced out in minimum 10-foot distances to accommodate movement, slight physical exertion, or vocal projection whenever possible

Pre-Rehearsal Preparation and Strategy

Strategic Scheduling

- All individual users must reserve and receive advanced approval for a room via 25Live
- Room schedules will account for a minimum 20-minute break between rehearsals, gatherings, classes, or practice sessions whenever possible
- Production teams will create rehearsal plans that utilize staggered calls for the fewest possible people in the room at a time
- Production teams are encouraged to book more than one room when possible, to increase distance and lower density. Participants should not shift rooms during that rehearsal period.

Before Arrival

- **Stay home if you have any symptoms at all**, even if it seems questionable. Err on the side of caution and consideration for your colleagues.
 - Follow protocols on [Northwestern's website](#) if you're experiencing COVID-19 symptoms of any kind
 - You must be symptom and fever-free for 24 hours and have received a negative COVID-19 test before returning
- Fill out and submit the [Symptom Tracker](#) survey before coming to campus; be prepared to show your **green** badge. **Do not** come to campus if your Symptom Tracker badge is red or yellow.

Room Preparation

- Windows should be opened for ventilation, weather permitting.
- Participants must sanitize the following high-touch areas in the rehearsal space with a disinfectant wipe: door handles, light switches, cabinet handles, trash can touch-points/lids, handrails, tables, and chairs

Rehearsal Protocols

All persons involved in production must wear masks in indoor shared public spaces. Masks are required at all times for the crew. Actors may remove masks during scene work, rehearsals, and performances ONLY when actively performing. Confirmation of a **green** Symptom Tracker of everyone in the cast and crew is required.

First rehearsal introductions, production meetings, and/or table work should take place via Zoom whenever possible.

Entering the room

- Arrive ready to go, wearing rehearsal clothing—avoid changing clothing on the premises.
- Keep all personal items in one place.

Hygiene

- Under University policy, participants must [wear masks](#) at all times (exceptions are noted above)
 - Participants should bring multiple masks
 - Masks must be changed if they become damp or saturated
- Participants must engage in frequent hand washing or sanitizing if running water is not available
 - Wash or sanitize before using the space or after coughing, sneezing, using the restroom, or touching your face
 - Sanitize hands before and after handling props
- Participants should avoid touching their faces
- Practice good cough and sneeze protocols
 - Use a tissue; cover the mouth with an elbow or shoulder
 - Wash hands afterward

Documentation

- Participant/production must have confirmed room use through 25Live with name, date, and time accurately documented
- The stage manager, or a designated member of the production team, must maintain a list of all individuals participating in an in-person work session, including date and time
- Stage managers, actor deputy or Covid Compliance Officer will check Symptom Tracker surveys at the top of each rehearsal; be prepared to show your **green** badge

Additional Guidance

- No food or drinks in the space, besides water
- Participants must bring their water bottle
- When possible, participants must take their breaks outside
- Singing should be avoided if not required by the production

- High-energy physical activities that increase breathing should be avoided when not necessary.
- Physical distancing protocols are recommended to remain in effect both “onstage” and off; theatrical blocking, spacing, and staging should reflect the 6-foot minimum
- Choreographed close-range fight scenes and intimacy scenes will not be allowed in Wirtz Productions until further notice.

Exiting the Space

- Participants must wipe down all props, chairs, tables, high-touch areas
- Close the door behind you when you leave

Voice Lessons: Voice lessons will take place in person in their usual venues. Currently, there are no minimum distancing guidelines or capacity limitations, reduced class lengths, or periods defined between activities for air circulation. Students must wear a mask during lessons whenever possible, but students are allowed to remove their masks during lessons as required to sing and replace them once lessons conclude. For added protection, faculty/instructors and accompanists must continue wearing masks. Confirmation of a **green** Symptom Tracker of everyone in the studio is required.

Performance Protocols

- Cast and crew must complete the Symptom Tracker each day of performance/rehearsal
- Cast and crew must remain masked at all times backstage
- Cast members may remove their masks only when they are actively on stage performing
- The cast should maintain a 6-foot distance in dressing and makeup rooms whenever possible

Testing

- All cast and crew members will need to complete a COVID-19 test at least 72 hours before the first technical rehearsal and again 72 hours before the brush-up rehearsal during the second week of the run
- In the event of a positive test, the stage manager and production manager should be notified, and all [NU quarantine and health monitoring policies](#) must be followed

Conclusion

This document is a living document; as information develops, these protocols may be adjusted to reflect the most contemporary knowledge and best practices.

Sources

Wirtz Center guidelines are sourced from the [Northwestern University COVID Safety guidelines](#) and the Theatre Production & Theatre Patron – CCO Certificate & COVID Safety Training provided by [Arts & Science](#).

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