

2020-2021

# Department of Performing Arts COVID Handbook

# COVID Handbook for the Methodist University

## Department of Performing Arts

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The faculty and staff have been hard at work all spring and summer to prepare for the performance-specific needs of the students in our department. Whether this is your first year or you are a returning student, we welcome you to the Department of Performing Arts for what is sure to be a different kind of experience! Notice I said *different*, not bad, negative, or 'less than.' For this faculty, different means that we are facing new challenges through which we intend to thrive and grow as we provide you with the best possible educational experience. Many things will not be the same—classes, lessons, ensembles, performances, and rehearsals will all be modified—but this unfortunate pandemic has forced us all to step outside of our comfort zones to find new and exciting ways to help you achieve your goals.

If you have been around for a while, you are likely aware that I am just completing my first year as Department Chair. It has truly been a whirlwind – I've seen a new administration, the 'marriage' of two fine departments, music and theatre, into one powerhouse, and a pandemic of unequalled proportion in at least a century. Through it all, I have been amazed at the commitment and dedication of this faculty – they have spent hundreds of hours researching aerosol dispersion and best practices for performers, and thousands more preparing to meet the challenges of this extraordinary year. We are all committed to persevering with positive attitudes and grace toward others. I hope you will join us and do the same.

Dr. Susan Durham-Lozaw  
Department of Performing Arts Chair

## OBJECTIVES

Through significant modifications, the Department of Performing Arts intends:

- a. To provide the safest possible environment for all students, faculty, and staff
- b. To provide the best possible performing arts education for all students

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## ACADEMIC CLASSES

Students and faculty are required to wear face masks over both their mouths and noses from building entry, throughout each class, and through building exit. Social distancing will be in place in all classroom environments. Some classes will operate as hybrids, splitting time between in-class activity and on-online activity; other classes will be taught in-class in their entirety. Classroom materials, such as pens, pencils, computers, text books, etc. should not be shared at any time.

All students will be expected to assist in disinfecting classrooms after each use. Students will help with chairs, desks, and tables, while the professors will responsibly clean podiums, pianos, light switches, etc. (Professors are encouraged to bring their own dry erase markers to each class meeting.) Sprays will also be used. Windows should be opened when practical to do so.

## PERFORMANCE CLASSES

Every effort is being made to ensure that in-class performance opportunities continue to be engaging and rewarding. Students and faculty are required to wear face masks over both their mouths and noses from building entry, throughout each class, and through building exit. Social distancing will be in place in all classroom environments. Classroom materials, such as pens, pencils, computers, text books, etc. should not be shared at any time.

All students will be expected to assist in disinfecting classrooms after each use. Students will help with surfaces touched, while the professors will responsibly clean the remaining areas. Sprays will also be used. Windows should be opened when practical to do so.

### Acting/Theatre/Directing Classes

Because masks are to be worn at all times and social distancing is to be practiced with consistency, students are encouraged to view these as shaping influences on staging and performance. Masks may be included as part of costume design decisions. Movement may include negative space between performers. Platforms such as Zoom may support production concepts.

The following is planned:

- ✓ Auditions and early stages of rehearsal done on Zoom with Faculty as administrator of the session.
- ✓ Staging and performance to maintain masks and social distancing until North Carolina moves from phase 2 to phase 3.

### Instrumental Ensembles

#### *Concert and Athletic Bands*

- ✓ Seating –
  - Only portions of the ensemble will be rehearsed in an alternating schedule.
  - Seating will be adjusted so that performers are forward facing only.

- The band will rehearse and perform outside when possible.
- ✓ Personal Protective Equipment –
  - All persons will be required to wear a mask when entering/exiting the rehearsal space.
  - All persons will be required to wear a mask when observing extending rests or when not playing aerophones.
  - All persons will be asked to wear masks with a mouthpiece access slit when playing aerophones. This is only a request due to our ability to conform to the 6 feet recommendation and the lack of these items being widely available. It will become more mandatory as we near performing together.
  - Brass players will also be asked to cover the bell of their instruments with a double-layer nylon covering. This is only a request due to our ability to conform to the 6 feet recommendation and the lack of these items being widely available. It will become more mandatory as we near performing together.
  - Woodwind players will also be asked to cover the joint segments of their instruments with a double-layer nylon covering. This is only a request due to our ability to conform to the 6 feet recommendation and the lack of these items being widely available. It will become more mandatory as we near performing together.
- ✓ Sanitation –
  - A volunteer will check the temperature of all persons entering the rehearsal space.
  - All persons will be asked to sanitize their hands before entering the rehearsal space.
  - Brass will be expected to clear water valves onto an absorbent disposable pad. This expectation extends to anyone else that may need it.
  - All performers will be expected to secure and maintain their own (personal) music folders.

### *Chamber Orchestra*

- ✓ **Masks:** Masks will be required at all rehearsals. This, in addition to 6ft social distancing, is the best we can offer for a “normal” ensemble experience. Guidelines include the following:
  - Must cover your nose and mouth and be secured under your chin
  - Must fit snugly against the sides of your face and be secured with ear loops or secured around your head
  - Must be at least two-ply (consist of at least two layers) - MU masks meet this guideline!
- ✓ The following is NOT permitted in rehearsal:
  - Wearing a mask in a way that does not cover your nose and mouth
  - Face coverings with exhalation valves
  - Face coverings that are not secured with ear loops or secured around your head
  - Face coverings that include mesh material or holes of any kind
  - Costume masks or veils.
- ✓ **Materials (music, etc.):** For this academic year, no materials will be handled by the director. We will comply with copyright law and make sure the correct amount of materials are in the choral library. However, all music will be distributed digitally through Dropbox or Google Drive. Students may choose to print their music, or use iPads/tablets to read music.

## Choral Ensembles

- ✓ **Masks:** Masks will be required at all rehearsals. To assist with that requirement, the choral program purchased **Resonance Masks**, of which each member will reimburse the program 1/2 of the cost or \$16. These masks are specifically designed for singers. They allow people to breathe more freely and comfortably while remaining compliant with current safety requirements. There is a “dart” structure that allows for easier singing, has a very high thread-count cotton outer shell, and is naturally anti-microbial and anti-bacterial. This, in addition to 6ft social distancing, is the best we can offer for a “normal” choral experience.
- ✓ Guidelines include the following:
  - Must cover your nose and mouth and be secured under your chin
  - Must fit snugly against the sides of your face and be secured with ear loops or secured around your head
  - Must be at least two-ply (consist of at least two layers) - MU masks meet this guideline!
- ✓ The following is NOT permitted in rehearsal:
  - Wearing a mask in a way that does not cover your nose and mouth
  - Face coverings with exhalation valves
  - Face coverings that are not secured with ear loops or secured around your head
  - Face coverings that include mesh material or holes of any kind
  - Costume masks or veils.

*Students without masks, or wearing anything other than an approved mask, will be asked to leave rehearsal.*

- ✓ **Materials (music, etc.):** For this academic year, no materials will be handled by the director. We will comply with copyright law and make sure the correct amount of materials are in the choral library. However, all music will be distributed digitally through Dropbox or Google Drive. Students may choose to print their music, or use iPads/tablets to read music.

## APPLIED LESSONS

Every effort is being made to ensure that private lessons continue to be engaging and rewarding, while safe for both the student and his/her professor. For some, lessons will take place in a new location (one better suited for the challenges of the pandemic) this semester. Students and faculty are required to wear face masks over both their mouths and noses from building entry, throughout each class, and through building exit. When a student is performing in his/her lesson with a blowing instrument, the mask may be removed, as other precautions are in place. *Mask removal is only allowed during lessons for blowing instruments; all other performers should remain masked at all times.* Social distancing and or barriers will be in place at all times.

At the culmination of each lesson, students will be expected to assist in disinfecting the studio/classroom space. Students will help with music stands, chairs, instruments played (to include pianos and keyboards), surfaces touched, and the student-facing sides of any plexiglass barriers, while the professors will responsibly

clean the rest of the space, including pianos used for accompanying, surfaces touched, and the faculty-facing sides of any plexiglass barriers. Sprays will also be used. Windows should be opened when practical to do so.

## PRACTICE ROOMS

Practice rooms present a unique challenge for COVID protection, as they are small, enclosed, and lack proper ventilation. Students, however, are still expected to practice daily. Several new policies are in place:

- ✓ All practice rooms require the student to sign up for practice times up to an hour. These times are staggered so that entries and exits will not happen concurrently. Students are expected to use the same practice room during the same hour on any given week day for the duration for the semester. It is not necessary to use the same practice room every day, but if you sign up to be in one room on Monday from 8-9 am, that room will be reserved for you every Monday morning. There will be a thirty (30) minute 'downtime' between lessons to allow for aerosol dispersal.
- ✓ Only one person may be in a practice room at any given time.
- ✓ Masks must be worn in the practice rooms, unless you play a blowing instrument that prevents it.
- ✓ Students may not release spit onto the floor or in the practice spaces. Go outside. It's inconvenient, but necessary.
- ✓ Students must thoroughly clean the practice rooms both before and after each practice session. It may seem like overkill, but without ventilation, these measures are necessary to ensure safety. Wipe all surfaces and spray the air.

## STUDENT LOUNGE

The student lounge will be closed until gathering is deemed safe by the government and the university administration.

## BATHROOMS

As the bathrooms downstairs are small, students are encouraged to use these facilities one at a time. Be aware; be alert. Wash your hands! The bathrooms located on the MMC side of the upstairs are spacious, therefore social distancing should not present a problem.

## HALLWAYS AND CORRIDORS

Reeves Fine Arts Center does not always provide the necessary hallway and stairwell width for proper social distancing. Students are encouraged to move quickly from one space to another, leaving all corridors as free from standing traffic as possible. Be aware; be alert. Step to the side when it is safe to do so. Enter doorways and stairwells one at the time.

## COPY/MAILROOM

Students should only enter the copy room when requested to do so from a faculty member. When copies are needed, the student should first disinfect his/her hands, swiftly make the copies, and then wipe down all surfaces touched before exiting. Only one person is permitted to be in the room at a time.

## MUSIC AND SCRIPTS

In order to reduce the touching of shared surfaces, students are encouraged to purchase or print their own copies, sharing digital files with professors and accompanists, who can then make their own copies, in the event a hard copy is needed. Students should not share music, books, or scripts. Any borrowed materials should be returned thoroughly disinfected.

## BULLETIN BOARDS AND SIGN-UP SHEETS

Before a student touches any of the bulletin boards or sign-up sheets in the building, he/she should sanitize his/her hands. Each student should use his/her own writing utensil to add his/her name to a list.

## PERFORMANCES

As of the opening of the academic year, the campus remains open only to current students, faculty, and staff. Even so, the department is working hard to create enriching performance opportunities for all.

### Recitals

- ✓ We anticipate that student recitals will be held in their traditional way, yet performances will be significantly limited, and only campus community members may be eligible to attend.
- ✓ We anticipate that degree recitals will be held in their traditional way, yet performances will be significantly limited, and only campus community members may be eligible to attend. Proper licensing for live streaming is under consideration and, if approved, recitals can also be live streamed.

### Theatre Performances

- ✓ We anticipate that directing projects scheduled for November will be held in the usual way, but live audiences will be significantly limited, and only campus community members may be eligible to attend. Performances may be taped for class usage only; however, if the script selected is in public domain, it may be recorded for wider distribution. If the script is subject to royalty and not licensed for recording, no additional taping is allowed. We have no plans for live streaming at this point.
- ✓ We expect to use restrictions as assets, not liabilities, which may result in unconventional stagings.

## Music Ensembles

### *Concert Band*

- ✓ We will explore virtual and live streaming experiences
- ✓ When available and appropriate, outside live performances will be implemented.

### *Athletic Band*

- ✓ As athletic events have been postponed until the spring semester, it is necessary to learn the bulk of the literature to be performed in the fall, as practice will be limited in the spring. With basketball, football, and a host of other sports, it will be a very busy spring for the band.
- ✓ When available and appropriate, outside live performances and/or pep rallies will be implemented.

### *Orchestra and Choirs*

- ✓ We will explore virtual and live streaming experiences
- ✓ When available and appropriate, outside live performances will be implemented.
- ✓ Any and all performances or “rehearsal moments” will be used to increase our social media presence