



Guidelines for COVID Safe Auditions, Rehearsals and Performances

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed restrictions on the ability for performing arts organisations and venues to operate. These restrictions are gradually being eased across the country, meaning theatres and other live performance venues may reopen, when government restrictions allow. For productions to get back on stage, it is important producers and promoters understand how to do so safely, and how to mitigate risks.

There is the potential for further outbreaks of COVID-19 and therefore, the resumption of audition, rehearsal and performance activities may not be linear. Increasing control measures to mitigate COVID-19 risks may be required in response to fluctuating numbers of COVID-19 cases. Companies need to be flexible to accommodate and respond to changes in community transmission rates and the associated changes in advice from public health authorities.

2. About these guidelines

2.1 PURPOSE

This document aims to provide clear guidelines to assist organisations to develop COVID Safe plans and to safely resume live performances and associated activities such as auditions and rehearsals.

2.2 SCOPE

These guidelines are intended to apply:

- To activities associated with undertaking auditions, rehearsals or performances of live productions.
- Broadly across all types of artforms. There may be additional considerations depending upon the artform and these should be considered in more detail when developing COVID Safe plans.
- Professional live productions. The measures outlined in this document may not be appropriate for amateur productions.

These guidelines expire when public health authorities advise COVID Safe policies are no longer deemed necessary.

These guidelines have been developed in consultation with performing arts companies, commercial producers, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance and specialist medical advisors.

2.3 WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

Employers have a duty to provide a healthy and safe workplace for all workers (including contractors and volunteers) and visitors to the workplace. This includes:

- assessing and managing risks;
- maintaining the workplace and facilities (e.g. regular cleaning);
- providing appropriate information, training, instruction and supervision; and
- consulting with workers or their representative on any matters that affect them.

These guidelines should complement existing work health and safety processes and procedures. Implementing control measures outlined in this document must not cause other unsafe working

conditions for any worker. Where these guidelines introduce new health and safety risks, or impede existing protocols, these risks should be assessed and managed accordingly.

3. Definitions

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Isolation | Separates people who are unwell and who are confirmed with or have been tested for a contagious disease (such as COVID-19) from people who are healthy. |
| Personal protective equipment (PPE) | <p>PPE refers to anything used or worn to minimise risk to workers' health and safety. This may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boots • ear plugs • face masks • gloves • goggles • hard hats • high visibility clothing • respirators • safety harnesses • safety shoes • sunscreen. |
| Quarantine | Separates and restricts the movement of people who are well but may have been exposed to a contagious disease (such as COVID-19) to see if they become unwell. The quarantine period for COVID-19 is at least 14 days. |

4. National guiding principles

The COVID Safe guidelines for auditions, rehearsals and performances have been developed with the following principles in mind:

- Reduce risk of community transmission in the general public.
- Safeguard the safety and wellbeing of everyone on-site – audiences, performers, artists, musicians, crew, staff, contractors and volunteers.
- Implement measures that are consistent with Safe Work guidelines and public health directives.
- Continuously manage risks associated with the delivery of public performances, adapting to new information, restrictions or requirements.
- Deliver a positive customer experience and contribute to Australia's economic, social, and cultural wellbeing emerging from COVID-19.
- Ensure the ongoing sustainability of the live performance industry (including venues, theatres, producers, promoters and service providers).

5. About COVID-19

5.1 COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

Common COVID-19 symptoms include:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness / fatigue

Other symptoms include:

- Aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Diarrhoea
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache
- Loss of taste or sense of smell
- Skin rash
- Discolouration of fingers or toes

5.2 TRANSMISSION

COVID-19 spreads via human to human transmission through:

- Droplets e.g. from coughing or sneezing; or
- Contact with surfaces an infected person has touched, coughed or sneezed over, and deposited the virus on.

There is also some evidence of airborne transmission and intestinal infection through faecal transmission.

6. Guidelines & protocols

6.1 GENERAL

Physical distancing

- As far as reasonably practicable, workers should maintain physical distancing within the workplace.
- Where physical distancing cannot be maintained, implement appropriate control measures.
- Limit the number of workers in indoor spaces according to applicable density rules.

Hygiene

- All workers should be encouraged to practise good hygiene including cough and sneeze etiquette – i.e. regular handwashing; cough or sneeze into a tissue and then dispose of tissue safely; cough or sneeze into the inside of elbow; wash hands after coughing, sneezing or blowing nose.
- Set up hygiene stations (with either hand soap and water in wet areas such as bathrooms and kitchens or sanitiser in public areas) in prominent locations throughout the building.

Health monitoring

- Advise workers not to attend work if they are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms.

- Consider implementing screening measures such as:
 - temperature checking (noting that a normal temperature does not mean the worker is COVID-19 negative and that this requirement is not currently mandated by government);
 - completing a self-assessment questionnaire (such as the [healthdirect Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Symptom Checker](#) (or other self-assessment tool) prior to coming to work; or
 - COVID-19 testing (noting that a negative test does not mean the worker is COVID-19 negative) prior to commencing work and on an ongoing basis.
- Advise workers to get tested if they develop any COVID-19 symptoms.

Cleaning

- Develop and implement a cleaning schedule of frequently used areas (e.g. audition room, rehearsal room, kitchen, bathrooms) and high touch surfaces (e.g. door handles).
- Develop a schedule to clean and sanitise equipment (e.g. microphones), props, sets and costumes.

Training

- All workers upon commencement of work (including cast, crew, creatives, contractors) should receive a briefing in COVID safe practices and policies, including the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Regularly remind workers of COVID Safe practices and policies.

Compliance

- Management to regularly consult, revise and update COVID safe practices and policies, as required, in response to changes in government regulatory frameworks governing the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic for as long as they remain in force.

6.2 AUDITIONS

- Consider conducting online or recorded auditions for preliminary auditions.
- Make auditionees aware of the COVIDSafe app.
- For live auditions, where reasonably practicable:
 - require auditionees, creatives and other workers to complete the [healthdirect Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Symptom Checker](#) (or other self-assessment tool) prior to arriving or on arrival at the audition;
 - undertake auditions in large, well-ventilated areas;
 - auditionees, creatives and other workers should wash/sanitise hands before entering the audition room;
 - auditions (including in the audition and waiting rooms) should be conducted in line with physical distancing and density rules applicable in the state/territory;
 - limit the number of people participating in group auditions to ensure physical distancing is maintained;
 - where physical distancing is not possible, implement appropriate control measures such as use of PPE, face shields, screens; and

- consider ways to limit use of shared items between auditionees (e.g. single use script extracts) and clean shared items between uses.
- Prior to the audition, where reasonably practicable:
 - provide auditionees with a copy of the company's COVID Safe policy/plan or display for view at registration desk;
 - provide auditionees with information to complete the healthdirect Coronavirus (COVID-19) Symptom Checker (or other self-assessment tool);
 - confirm whether auditionees will be required to undergo temperature checking upon arrival;
 - confirm whether close contact with other auditionees will be required and what control measures will be implemented;
 - ask auditionees to bring items (such as pen, notebook, water bottle, towel) for personal use during the audition;
 - ask auditionees to be dressed ready for the audition prior to arrival; and
 - remind auditionees to stay home if feeling unwell.
- Where reasonably practicable, provide details about scenes requiring close contact or intimacy in casting briefs as part of the auditioning process.
- Maintain records of participants during the auditions, including contact details and date(s) of audition.

6.3 REHEARSALS

General

- Develop a schedule to clean and disinfect the rehearsal room and communal areas (e.g. kitchen, bathrooms), particularly frequently touched surfaces.
- Where reasonably practicable, schedule rehearsals to minimise the number of participants and to allow for cleaning between rehearsal calls.
- Where reasonably practicable, undertake rehearsals in large, well-ventilated areas.
- Maintain records of workers' attendance at rehearsals.
- Where it is not reasonably practicable to maintain physical distancing between workers, implement appropriate control measures such as use of PPE, face shields, screens.
- Where performers are required to participate in intimate scenes or be in close contact with other workers, this will be articulated in writing. Performers are required to provide written consent. Performers may also be asked to limit interactions with people outside of the production to reduce risks to the broader community.

Pre-rehearsal

- Provide a copy of the company's COVID Safe policy/plan to performers, musicians, creatives and crew.
- Performers, musicians, creatives and crew may be asked to:

- complete the healthdirect Coronavirus (COVID-19) Symptom Checker (or other self-assessment tool);
- get tested for COVID-19 prior to commencing and throughout rehearsals; or
- bring items (such as pen, notebook, water bottle, mug, towel) for personal use during rehearsals.
- Map out scenes involving close contact or intimacy (including the control measures that may be implemented).

During rehearsals

- The permitted number of people in the rehearsal room will comply with the applicable density rules.
- Where reasonably practicable, limit the number of people in the rehearsal room to essential personnel only. Performers and creatives who are not required in the rehearsal room or whose rehearsals have finished for the day shall be released and asked to leave.
- Wash/sanitise hands upon entering rehearsal space.
- On the first day of rehearsal, conduct toolbox talk to discuss COVID protocols. Regularly remind workers of COVID protocols.

Blocking

- Where reasonably practicable, blocking should be conducted, to the extent possible, while maintaining physical distancing.
- Where physical distancing is not possible:
 - implement appropriate control measures such as use of PPE, face shields, screens.
 - workers may be asked to limit interactions with people outside of the production to reduce risks to the broader community.
 - upon commencement it will be discussed and agreed with all parties (noting that agreement between the parties must not contradict anything in these guidelines).
- As far as practicable, minimise time spent in close proximity to other performers.

Outside the rehearsal room

- Maintain physical distancing outside the rehearsal room (e.g. in the green room, kitchen).

6.4 PRE-PRODUCTION & PERFORMANCES

General

- Provide induction/briefing about the venue's COVID health and safety policies to performers, musicians, creatives, crew and other workers.

Back of house

- Maintain physical distancing while backstage (e.g. in the green room, dressing room).
- Where reasonably practicable, implement one-way traffic flow.

Sound and technical equipment

- Where reasonably practicable, allocate technical equipment to individuals (e.g. headsets, radio mics) to minimise sharing.
- Clean and sanitise equipment after use.
- Additional time at the end of the day may be required for cleaning and sanitisation of equipment used.
- Consider colour coding equipment (with tape/stickers) to identify when equipment has been used and needs to be cleaned before next use.
- Where reasonably practicable, encourage performers to apply and remove their own radio mic, after instruction by sound department. Where assistance is required, audio assistants should sanitise their hands between assisting performers and wear appropriate PPE (i.e. surgical face mask, masks made in accordance with published health guidelines).

Props

- Where reasonably practicable, allocate props to individuals to minimise sharing.
- For high touch props, clean and sanitise after each performance, where reasonably practicable. Additional time at the end of the day may be required to ensure cleaning and sanitisation of high touch props used.
- Regularly clean other props (e.g. weekly).

Sets

- Regularly clean high touch surfaces.
- Additional time at the end of the day may be required for cleaning and sanitisation of sets.

Hair & Makeup

- Where reasonably practicable, provide cast and performers with the option to do their own hair and makeup (including touch-ups and removal), including through virtual tutorials with hair and makeup personnel.
- Wash or sanitise hands prior to beginning any work on a performer, during as needed, and immediately after.
- For hair and makeup assistants, wear appropriate PPE (i.e. surgical face mask, masks made in accordance with published health guidelines) when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Encourage performers (or other worker) to sanitise hair and makeup kits regularly.
- Where performer's own supplies are not being used, ensure makeup applicators and removal supplies are single use, are stored in covered containers and disposed of safely.
- Where reasonably practicable, encourage performers to touch up and remove their own makeup.
- Hair and makeup supplies should only be handled by hair and makeup assistants or the individual performer (if using own supplies).
- If possible, allocate hair items to individual performers to minimise sharing.
- Regularly wash and clean wigs and hair extensions.

- Maintain at least 1.5m distance between hair and makeup stations unless suitable measures can be implemented such as wearing PPE.
- Wipe down makeup chairs and surrounding surfaces and equipment with disinfectant wipes between uses by different performers.
- If safe to do so, provide hygiene station near the entrance of the makeup area.

Wardrobe & Costume

- If timelines allow, provide additional time after casting for online purchases, delivery and separate individual fittings.
- Where reasonably practicable, limit those in attendance at costume fitting.
- Clean and sanitise high-touch surfaces between fittings.
- Costume fitters and performers should wash or sanitise hands before/after fitting or dressing cast and wear appropriate PPE (i.e. surgical face mask, masks made in accordance with published health guidelines) if physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Equip each individual with their own supply of an alcohol-based disinfectant and hand sanitiser.
- Where reasonably practicable, prevent the sharing of costume pieces.
- Regularly clean costumes.

Orchestra / Musicians

- Consider sneeze screens or mute shields between musicians and maintain physical distancing where orchestra pit allows.
- Allow suitable distance (e.g. 3-4 metres) between musicians/orchestra pit/performers and audience.
- Where reasonably practicable, consider reduced numbers of musicians and/or staggered arrival and departure.
- Musicians to wipe down or spray music stands with disinfectant prior to each performance.
- Clean and disinfect floors following each performance.

Performers – actors, dancers, singers, opera, choirs

- Encourage performers to perform own props checks, where possible.
- Encourage performers to dress themselves, where possible.
- Provide performers with bagged clean towels and laundry bags for used costume items.
- Require anyone interacting with performers at close range to wear appropriate PPE (including dressers, hair and makeup and costume/wigs).
- Blocking should be considered to prevent fast changes which require assistance.
- Set up dressing rooms and green room to facilitate physical distancing.
- Prohibit sharing of comfort items such as hot water bottles, jackets and slippers.
- Allow for greater distancing between singers, if possible.

6.5 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk assessment and mitigation

- Undertake a risk assessment and identify measures to mitigate risks.
- Consider teams, swings and understudies to fill roles if a cast or crew member is unwell. However, it should be noted that if a cast or crew member is confirmed as having COVID-19, all those in close contact with the confirmed case will need to quarantine in line with public health directives, possibly resulting in more than one cast or crew member needing to be replaced.
- Workers may be asked to limit interactions with people outside of the production.

Managing suspected cases

If a cast, crew, creative, musicians or other team member is feeling unwell or presents with COVID-19 symptoms during rehearsals or the season:

- Isolate the worker in the sick room (or other designated area) and supply them with a surgical mask (if available).
- Assess whether this worker represents a risk to others in the workplace.
- Ensure the worker has transport to safely return home or visit a doctor or medical facility.
- Advise the worker to get tested for COVID-19, as per government advice and follow instructions regarding isolation.
- The worker cannot return to the workplace until symptoms are no longer present and receives clearance from public health authorities or a medical practitioner (depending on the circumstances, clearance may constitute a negative COVID-19 test result).

Managing confirmed cases

If a cast, crew, creative, musician or other team member tests positive for COVID-19:

- The worker with COVID-19 will be required to isolate. This worker will not be able to return to work until they have received clearance from health authorities or treating medical practitioner.
- Those cast, crew, creatives, musicians or other team members who are identified by public health authorities to have had close contact with the confirmed case will be:
 - informed about the confirmed case within the company.
 - required to quarantine.
 - encouraged to get tested or may be required to get tested if directed by public health authorities.
- The company will follow advice and instructions from health authorities.
- If required, notify and submit an incident notification to the WorkSafe Authority in the relevant state and/or territory (different notification requirements apply in each state. See appendix 8.2).

Contact Tracing & Tracking

- Maintain up-to-date worker contact details and attendance (at rehearsals and at the venue).
- Inform workers their contact details may be shared with health authorities.
- Make workers aware of the COVIDSafe app.

Production shutdown

- The company may be required to cancel performances or the entire production, in order to comply with government directions.
- If a cast, crew, creative, musician or other team member has tested positive for COVID-19, each company will need to assess the risks and ascertain whether it is feasible to continue performances.

7. Acknowledgements

The following organisations were integral to the development of these guidelines for COVID Safe auditions, rehearsals and performances:

CAST companies

- Bell Shakespeare
- Belvoir
- Black Swan
- Malthouse
- Melbourne Theatre Company
- Queensland Theatre
- South Australia Theatre Company
- Sydney Theatre Company

Producers

- CDP
- Disney
- Global Creatures
- Gordon Frost Organisation
- GWB Entertainment
- Louise Withers and Associates
- Luckiest Productions
- Michael Cassel Group
- Newtheatricals
- StoreyBoard Entertainment
- Tinderbox Productions

Opera companies

- South Australian Opera
- Victorian Opera
- West Australian Opera

Orchestras

- Western Australian Symphony Orchestra

Ballet/Dance

- The Australian Ballet

In consultation with:

- Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA)

8. Appendices

8.1 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Safe Work Australia

- Resource kit: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/collection/COVID-19-resource-kit>
- SafeWork Authority notification requirements: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/incident-notification-covid-19>

Creative Victoria

- Arts and Culture Guidelines for coronavirus (COVID-19) – Return-to-Business: https://creative.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/441308/Arts-and-Cultural-Sector-Guidelines-3-June-2020-2.pdf

Australia Council for the Arts

- Reactivate: Beyond step three: <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/re-activate-report-beyond-step-5f03d8d34777a.pdf>

Australian Screen Sector Taskforce

- Australian Screen Production Industry, COVID-Safe Guidelines, 28 May 2020, version 1

8.2 PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVES

- **ACT:** <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/resources/public-health-directions>
- **NSW:** <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/COVID-19/Pages/public-health-orders.aspx>
- **NT:** <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers>
- **QLD:** <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers>
- **SA:** <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/Web/Information/CV19/CV19.aspx>
- **TAS:** <https://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/resources>
- **WA:** <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/COVID-19-coronavirus-state-of-emergency-declarations>
- **VIC:** <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-COVID-19>

8.3 MEDICAL ENDORSEMENT



Regarding Guidelines for COVID Safe Auditions, Rehearsals and Performances 28 July 2020

To whom it may concern

Live Performance Australia has prepared a guideline document (*Guidelines for COVID Safe Auditions, Rehearsals and Performances*) to provide clear guidelines to assist organisations to develop COVID Safe plans and to safely resume live performances and associated activities such as auditions and rehearsals. In my opinion, *Guidelines for COVID Safe Auditions, Rehearsals and Performances* provide a framework which will assist in developing plans that meet Australian state and territory public health orders, restrictions, and guidelines to facilitate gradual and adaptive return of auditions, rehearsals and performances in Australia within its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T G Henning Lijeqvist'.

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