



Dear Friends—

It has been some time since I last wrote with an update to the LTA policies and procedures related to COVID-19. Recent changes announced by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) have had a domino effect in states and cities across the country, and the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Alexandria are no different. Working with the new information and discussing the changes with the Alexandria Health Department, the Board of Governors have adopted some important changes. We anticipate that the situation will continue to evolve (presumably for the better), allowing us to further ease restrictions soon.

Who must wear facemasks at LTA?

At present, approximately 60 percent of eligible Virginians have been partially vaccinated. This is great progress. To be fully safe for theaters (places where people sit for long periods of time), the health department has strongly encouraged us to maintain facemask rules for some groups:

- All audience members are required to wear facemasks. If a patron removes his or her facemask, we will ask them to put it back on. If it happens a second time, we will stop the show and ask them to leave.
- All ushers, house managers, box office personnel, and those who deal directly with audience members must continue to wear facemasks.
- Children below the vaccination age limit (currently age 11 and below) and anyone working with them, whether vaccinated or not, must wear facemasks.
- Adults who are around children below the vaccination age limit must wear facemasks.
- Anyone vaccinated who is uncomfortable working without a facemask should continue to wear one.

Vaccination Requirements

After consulting with personnel at the City of Alexandria's ALX Promise Gold initiative (of which LTA is a part), LTA's legal counsel, and several theaters in the Northern Virginia area, the Board has approved a phased-in vaccination policy.

- IMMEDIATELY, all paid positions (i.e., full-time employees, teachers, and contractors) must be vaccinated.
- BEGINNING JULY 24, all actors, designers, stage crew (e.g., sound, lights, costumes, hair, make-up, set construction, set painting, production crew, etc.) must be vaccinated.
- BEGINNING AUGUST 17, all those who choose to volunteer at LTA, including ushers, house managers, and box office personnel must be vaccinated.

Put plainly, if you want to work at LTA after August 17, you must be vaccinated and be prepared to prove it.



Verifying Vaccination Status

LTA is permitted to confirm vaccination status by asking to see proof. Following the phased-in vaccination period outlined above, all those working in the building will be asked to show vaccination cards. For paid employees and contractors, copies of your vaccination status will be kept under lock-and-key to ensure that it is never shared. For volunteers, we recommend taking a picture of your vaccine card (hiding any confidential information) and showing it only when asked by someone authorized to verify your status.

All future audition announcements must indicate that vaccinations are required and verified.

All future requests for volunteers must indicate that vaccinations are required and verified.

Benefits of the New Rules

There are benefits of the new procedures:

- Anyone who has been vaccinated and is working at LTA by himself or herself (e.g. a lone painter, the rigger, someone working alone in the office) may choose to work without a facemask.
- Those working in small groups (e.g., painting crews, constructions crews, “sky lounge” crew, office employees) are permitted to work together without facemasks **IF ALL AGREE TO DO SO**.
- Vaccinated cast members (plus necessary vaccinated crew members) may rehearse and work on stage together without facemasks **IF ALL AGREE TO DO SO**.
- Fully vaccinated classes (teachers and students) are permitted to be in class together without facemasks, **IF ALL AGREE TO DO SO**.

Because audience members will be masked, the Alexandria Health Department agrees that our vaccinated actors on stage may perform unmasked. In short, we will be able to perform as we did prior to the pandemic. Hurrah!

The most important benefit, of course, is that everyone in the LTA community—employees, contractors, teachers, students, actors, designers and crew, and volunteers—can all be confident that working at LTA is safe!

Auditorium Seating

Since the beginning of “Small Theater for Unusual Times” in September 2020, LTA has been limited to 23 pairs of socially distanced seats (46 seats total). This is approximately 23 percent of capacity.

- Beginning with the June 16 performance of *Ripcord*, LTA will increase its capacity to 50 pairs of seats (100 seats total). This is slightly less than 50 percent of our auditorium’s capacity. Each pair of seats will be separated by two empty seats.
- Beginning with *Rumors*, the first show of the 2021-2022 season, and continuing through *A Christmas Carol*, LTA will increase its seating capacity to 71 pairs of seats (142 seats total). This is approximately 66 percent of our capacity. Each pair of seats will be separated by one empty seat.
- Beginning with *Bright Star*, our winter musical opening in January 2022, LTA will return to 100 percent capacity.



Education Programs and Vaccinations

Traditionally, LTA has divided its education program into two groups: children (those from kindergarten through high school) and adults (those beyond high school). Unfortunately, this division does not work well when talking about vaccinations. For purposes of discussing the Education programs, I will refer to three groups: children (below the age of 11); teens (ages 12-17); and adults (ages 18 and above). At present, teens and adults are eligible to be vaccinated, while children are not.

- Classes that include children (unvaccinated), either in full or in part, must remain socially distanced, and teachers, students, and counselors must all wear facemasks.
- Teachers who work with teens and adults and want only vaccinated students in their classes must advertise this on the LTA website. If all students confirm their vaccination status at the first meeting, then facemasks may be removed IF ALL AGREE TO DO SO.
- Teachers who work with teens and adults but are comfortable working with all students (vaccinated and nonvaccinated), may do so. However, both teachers and students must wear facemasks and adhere to existing social distancing rules.
- Teachers who teach online classes only and do not come to LTA are not required to be vaccinated.
- The Board strongly encourages adult and teen teachers with fully vaccinated classes to remain particularly vigilant when teaching skills that require projection (e.g., singing, yelling). Consider holding class outdoors or implementing social distancing.
- Classrooms (including the Academy rooms, classroom, rehearsal room, and Green Room) must be sanitized using the provided disinfecting spray before classes begin and after they end. This includes wiping down all high-touch areas. To do so will allow us to safely use a room multiple times each day.
- Additional specifications will be worked out among the teachers, the Governor for Education, and LTA's Safety Officers.

Not Changing

Some practices adopted during the pandemic will remain in place:

- LTA will continue to use enhanced air filtration in all spaces to ensure clean, filtered air is circulating throughout the building.
- LTA will continue to sanitize its public spaces—the auditorium, bathrooms, classrooms, and offices—daily.
- LTA will continue to stock PPE for those who need them and refill the cleaning caddies throughout both buildings.
- LTA will continue to require visitors to sign in at the front doors of our two buildings. The City of Alexandria has asked us to maintain these records for contact tracing purposes.
- LTA will continue to look for ways to ease these restrictions without compromising safety and health.

Additional Policies and Practices

- Multi-use rooms (including the classroom, rehearsal room, Academy rooms, and Green Room) must be sanitized before and after each use. This includes wiping down all high-touch areas. To do so will allow us to safely use a room multiple times each day.



- LTA hopes to re-instate opening night parties and other social gatherings by January 2022. Until then, only small gatherings of vaccinated participants may occur. (For example, the cast and crew might choose to toast the opening of a show in the Green Room without members of the public.)
- LTA hopes to re-instate intermission concessions by January 2022.
- Outside volunteer organizations (e.g., One Brick) are allowed to return to LTA, provided that their volunteers follow our vaccination policies listed above.
- LTA functions, such as classes and meetings, should be held outside or online when possible (and Mother Nature permitting).

There are a lot of changes here. However, these changes bring us significantly closer to where we were before the pandemic began. If we can assure our patrons that LTA is committed to providing entertainment like they remember it, do it in a way that is safe, and do it in a way that is comfortable, then we have the chance to rebuild our theater over the coming year. There might be specific situations that I have not covered here. If you have questions about specifics, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at AskLTA@thelittletheatre.com.

Many thanks to the committee who sifted through mountains of new rules, opinions, and news stories; reached out to other areas businesses; and attended training sessions provided by ALX Promise and the Alexandria Health Department: Stacey Becker (committee chair), Susan Boyd, Ken Brown, and Ira Forstater. This committee will continue to monitor the situation and make recommendations to the Board of Governors as warranted.

Regards,

Russell M. Wyland, LTA President