

Protocols for returning to work - Rehearsal and Production.

These protocols concern rehearsal and performance of live theatre indoors and out in the United Kingdom.

Recommendations are to be read in conjunction with regulations imposed by competent authorities which may vary depending on workplace location.

Additionally ABTT Guidance Notes GN 101-103 relating to venues and resident staff should be taken into account.

Abbreviations used in this document:

ABTT	Association of British Theatre Technicians
CITA	Costume In Theatre Association
CM	Company Manager/Management
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
FFP2	Filtering Face Piece (Mask) type 2
FOH	Front Of House
HSAW	Health and Safety at Work
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
MS	Method Statement
PM	Production Manager/Management
RA	Risk Assessment
ROH	Rear of House
RPE	Respiratory Protection Equipment.
SM	Stage Manager/Management

Our goal is to provide advice that ABTT members and others can follow and promote to help preserve the health of all those working in our theatres.

'Post Covid' are words that do not apply. We will be working with Covid19 present for a long time

For our purposes the word Company is taken to mean performers, creative teams, wardrobe supervisors and managers, stage & company management, production managers, chaperones and specialist technicians associated with a production but not resident at a venue.

It is commonly assumed that for the present a Company will operate in one or more cohorts which will comprise specific groups who work closely together – there will be interaction between cohorts but a company divided into groups may enable easier management of Covid Risk

Should Covid 19 infection find its way into a Company there may be insufficient numbers of alternates/understudies to support continuing performance and the production may have to close or be suspended. Therefore precautions will be stringent and will remain in place longer.

The core principles that apply are

- protecting the Company community by limiting exposure to sources of infection
- recognising that Company Members share responsibility for working safely and must not do something something that compromises health and safety or fail to take necessary precautions
- following the simple precautions that protect health as set out in government guidance
- understanding that Covid19 precautions operate in addition to the existing health and safety regime

It is likely that Companies will return to work indoors in three situations:

- A. Audiences distanced with other infection controls. Rear of house teams distanced (stage four)
- B. Audiences unrestricted but with other infection controls. Rear of house teams distanced.
- C. Audiences and Rear of house teams unrestricted

Even when C applies there will still be risk of infection and protocols to protect health should continue.

Arrangements for admitting audiences, giving them access to toilets, supplying them with food and beverages and turning round the auditorium between shows are not our direct concern but will affect working times, show preparation times, warmup call times.

We are concerned with interaction between Company members and with the general public in five phases

- Planning and preparation
- Rehearsal in rehearsal rooms (including auditions)
- Production period that follows in the venue
- Running period from end of above
- Transfer to other venues, e.g, London transfers or Tours.

Necessary arrangements that apply during all phases include

- Checking whether company members are shielding or extremely vulnerable and, if so, taking appropriate measures to support them.
- Following Government guidance on social distancing, contact reduction and hygiene.
- Tailoring protocols to show-specific circumstance
- Briefing all involved of protocols and current legal requirements
- Monitoring compliance by all involved to encourage safe working
- Updating protocols to reflect changing circumstances and circulating the revisions
- Forecasting additional and/or show-specific risk factors and seeking to eliminate them

From the earliest possible date a suitable person or suitable persons should be appointed to be involved in planning and in monitoring social distancing, hygiene and protocols.

Preferred title for this job is Covid Monitor. Existing production companies, particularly the smaller ones might be better served by the creation of a in house team made up of experienced people who will share the role. Throughout this document 'Covid Monitor' refers, according to context, to a person or persons, team or committee taking the role as described.

It is essential to understand that the Covid Monitor is there as much to help solve problems as to point them out.

Training and suitability for the Covid Monitor role is discussed in the appendices below.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Company members will be concerned about working in Covid Risk circumstances. It is important that early in the process they be made aware of the measures in place to reduce risks to their health. This can be achieved by telephone conversation, video conference and 'welcome pack' documents. Communication is key to reassuring company members that their safety is being addressed.

Traditionally performers and creatives rely on the Company, Stage and Production Management team for information and trust them to monitor their safety in the workplace. Those team members function as interpreters of the 'rules'. In the future it will be advisable that those people receive training in safe working practice relating to Covid 19.

Early, effective communication between producer, creative teams and CM/SM/PM teams plus Wardrobe department is essential to achieving risk reduction. The practice of hiring team members at a late stage should cease.

It is to be expected that the Health and Safety Executive will be in contact with productions more frequently in the future. It is possible that HSE regulations and procedures will change in the near future. Such matters should be kept under review.

Creative teams' work processes have changed and the following are to be taken account of

- Designers are obliged to ensure their designs comply with their duties under CDM regulations so they have responsibility to take account of covid precautions in their designs.
- Directors and equivalent have similar responsibilities imposed by Health and Safety legislation.
- Designers and Directors should be aware that there will be significant input from CM/SM/PM/Covid Monitor and Wardrobe teams.
- Creative team members have individual responsibility for contributing to safe planning and documentation.

There should be a written plan that addresses risks to health and shows how such risks will be controlled. The responsibility for providing this falls to the producer of the show. An aspect of that

plan is a properly developed Risk Assessment. The Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that risk assessments are in place at an early stage but they must have input from all relevant personnel. The assessment should be reviewed when such consultation is possible.

Common experience is that it is rare for a performer to have any notion of what a risk assessment is or how it is used. It is recommended that risk assessments use plain language so that all company members can understand the contents, particularly control measures.

Risk assessments should take account of close contact by performers in the action of the show. Director input to this aspect of things is critical. It may be that methods of staging will differ from past practice. Concerns in this area can be reduced by initiating good contact between Director and Covid Monitor early in the planning phase.

Typically risk assessments will be written in consultation with heads of teams whose experience will be important in framing plans for the show. Common experience is that the Production Manager or a specialist appointed by the PM takes on the task of collating information from heads of departments and organises distribution of the document. If possible the PM is the channel for feedback and revision. Failing that, the CM would handle feedback and revision. Although this is not 'new business' it is clear that in future their workload will be increased.

Risk Assessments are of questionable value if they do not lead to safe practice. In other industries they support the creation of Method Statements which traditionally are unusual in most areas of theatre practice. MS's are important and should be treated as part of the Protocols.

Planning and production meetings should take place by video conferencing.

Company and Stage Management and Costume Professionals support the appointment of a Covid Monitor who will be present from the beginning of planning and stay through rehearsal and production. Ideally the monitor will remain with the company throughout the performance period too, particularly where transfers occur.

Company, Stage Management and Costume professionals have expressed significant concern that were they to be responsible for monitoring compliance with safe practice they would not be able to perform either their normal duties or that monitoring effectively. It is clear that a typical management team undertaking their routine tasks cannot hope to monitor the whole workplace environment.

No member of a company should feel unable to draw attention to non compliance with protocols nor should anyone feel at risk of discipline or dismissal if they report such things.

Non compliance with protocols may be noticed by company members and there should be a clear reporting routine set up and announced in the initial company briefing (welcome pack).

It is clear that the necessary preparations will require early contract start dates for many of the company. Important in this connection is eliminating the risk of unacceptably high workloads.

In arranging auditions there are a number of precautions to put in place:

- If a performer's work is known to a director or choreographer that person should be considered for immediate placement on a short list rather than being called for the first round of auditions.

- IT systems should be used as far as possible to replace close contact. Performers' self-tapes are faster to process than live first round calls. Accessibility of self-tape methods allows for a wider range of performers to be 'seen'.
- It is often the case that live auditions of a short list are essential. There is so much in a live audition that does not show up on tape. Those present should be limited to essential personnel even to the extent of using prerecorded music rather than a pianist, although the musical director may need be present.
- Call times should be arranged to enable travel outside busy periods.
- Safe spaces are essential and should be chosen having regard to effective ventilation, access routes, hygiene and overall size.
- DCMS guidance includes a suggestion that outdoor locations are preferred.

For rehearsal and related activities precautions should include:

Company members should self certify as having been being free of symptoms for seven days prior to joining the company.

The Company should be briefed on what working circumstances will be in place and how protocols will protect them. Ideally the briefing will take place well before the beginning of rehearsal, remotely, and be repeated at the workplace. Topics to be covered will include

- residence and travel to work
- entry to workplace (temperature checks, swab tests, checklists),
- welfare services (toilets, refreshments, showers),
- hygiene (hand cleansing, effective face coverings, sanitising),
- bubble or cohort make up,
- minimising contact (distancing, one way systems, exclusion of unnecessary persons).
- information on timetabling (reflecting longer days and more time needed to set up the room),
- sanitising of equipment, props, furniture,
- use of misting.
- encouragement to highlight matters of concern

DCMS guidance includes a suggestion that outdoor locations are preferred.

If Company members are aware of what routines they will encounter there will be less anxiety.

If the producer intends to establish a mandatory testing regime the company should be told at time of contract that it is required and how frequently it will happen. Due consideration should be given to the possible effects of such testing on performers' voices.

Temperature checks cannot be relied on to detect infection nor does a positive antibody test provide reliable evidence of immunity.

- Effective face coverings should fit well. The overall purpose is the prevention of droplets in exhaled air passing through them. Coverings that have a method of shaping to the bridge of the nose are preferred. Disposable surgical masks tend to have that feature. Stretch fabric reusable coverings are effective in this sense only if they achieve a good fit.

- Reducing contact outside the Company may require provision of dedicated transport, group bookings in hotels where workplace is distant from residence and providing FFP2 RPE/visors/alcohol gels for those who travel using public or shared transport. FFP2 respirators protect the wearer's health. Face coverings do not.
- Hand washing or sanitising on arrival at the workplace is essential.
- Those that plan rehearsal should arrange calls limited to essential personnel. Sessions should be staggered and arranged so that no person works so long a day that tiredness leads to lack of vigilance. Sessions to have time set aside for sanitising & diligent hand washing. Costume & wig fittings should be scheduled in separate sessions and separate locations and operate under close contact protocols.
- It should be the rule that once a company member is present at the rehearsal venue he or she may not leave the workplace until no longer needed that day. Company members should bring with them food and drinks needed for the day. Additional or improved welfare facilities may be required. Nobody should leave food in the rehearsal room. This 'Once In, Stay In' approach will reduce the risk of importing the virus.
- Those that plan rehearsal should provide workplaces with excellent ventilation, either natural or by extraction (recirculated systems are not acceptable). Guidance for Gyms and dance Studios (link below) has proposals for minimum airflow which should be followed. Nonetheless, effective airflow does not remove the need to comply with other health protection protocols.
- Much more space will be needed than was the case in the past.

It is inevitable that in future the overall duration of rehearsal, length of working week and reduced productivity will lead to significant extra cost.

Planning should take place well in advance and outcomes should be communicated to all involved in a timely manner that allows people to **ask questions and get answers**.

It is important that due consideration is given to when and how Items are sent or taken to the rehearsal location and venue. The rule that applies is to treat everything as a presenting risk of contact infection. Therefore props and furniture should be held in quarantine for 72 hours before being introduced to the production's environment. This rule may also apply to scenery and hired equipment which may not have been adequately sanitised. For certainty these items should be held undisturbed on truck or trailer for 72 hours before delivery.

IN REHEARSAL BUT NOT YET ON STAGE

To help protect company health it is recommended that at least the production, stage and wardrobe managers receive training in safe working practices prior to the company coming together for rehearsal. There is good argument that similar training be provided to creative team members.

Company members should be given full information on how their health will be protected before they join the company.

It may be that producers will require testing of company members before allowing them to enter the workplace. Company Members' confidence in arrangements that protect their health may well be increased by testing in advance and daily.

Government guidance states that testing 'will not allow any relaxation of other control measures'.

The use of visors, RPE and gloves cannot be relied on as the only preventative measure for Covid-19.

Should a situation arise where a company member develops covid symptoms it is important that there is a readily available line of communication to the producer or the producer's appointed deputy so that decisions concerning continuing rehearsal are taken at high level.

Where the understudy arrangements so permit they should form their own cohort/bubble/team which will work separately from the principal cast and potentially be allocated its own associate director and stage management personnel, none of whom would interact or share workspace with principal rehearsals.

Essential precautions in this phase include

- Until Government advice states it is not necessary face coverings should be worn. Examples of good practice in rehearsal venues, including all indoor areas leading to same, is that FC would only be removed by performers actually speaking lines in the rehearsal room itself and only when properly distanced. FC should be worn when not in a scene. If company members prefer to wear visors that should be permitted and the equipment should be provided by the producer.
- Face coverings to be worn from the very moment of entry to the building.
- To support those with hearing difficulties or other relevant disabilities face coverings with clear panels may be required.
- Company members to respect distancing guidelines at all times
- Documented workplace entry checks and detailed attendance records
- Daily self certification by Company members saying they have no symptoms
- Live daily safety briefing, highlighting changes to protocols previously published.
- Setting up the room in a safe manner and making the workplace safe
- Signposting access and circulation routes
- Equipment should not be shared.
- Monitoring personal items brought to workplace by company members.
- Monitoring safe handling of delivered items, quarantining in most cases for 72 hours, recording details of same
- Utilising IT methods where possible to replace processes that might compromise safety.
- The elimination of unnecessary documents, although eliminating paper scripts is not practical nor do documents and accessories pose significant risk if they are not shared
- Frequent effective cleaning of the workplace and its contents, particularly after contractor or maintenance visits. See links below to PHE information
- Misting before use of workplace and at appropriate intervals.
- Working with external doors and windows open so that ventilation improves.
- Avoiding situations where items are handled by more than one person
- Sanitising at frequent intervals anything used by more than one person eg light switches, entry keypads, kettles, fridges, props, furniture.
- Company members to provide and maintain the hygiene of their own mugs, refreshment supplies, water bottles (disposable ones are preferred) and similar items. It is important to keep in mind that items like coffee, milk, sugar and tea containers can be virus vectors. Company members owe each other a duty of care. Good hygiene discipline is important and that extends to not leaving food or food debris, abandoned mugs around the place.
- The standard practice of a first day read-through attended by all or most company members may no longer be appropriate. Alternatives should be considered so that the very first gathering is not an immediate high risk event. If a read-through is unavoidable attendance should be limited to essential personnel and distancing be enforced plus the use of visors, face coverings and sanitising gels.
- Choice of props and furniture and costume should reflect need to protect health.
- It should **not** become the norm that cleaning and room sanitising is done by the SM team. They will be busy enough attending to hygiene of props and equipment. Their role is that of skilled workers not cleaners.

- Simple methods of checking distancing between company members should be readily available. Current practice for shows in rehearsal is to have to hand light dowel rods cut to 2m length for general spacing checks and 3m for spacing singers.
- A 2m grid should be marked on the rehearsal and associated room floors.
- It should be standard procedure that performers are not placed facing each other unless that is essential. The decision that such placing is essential is not one to be taken lightly..
- Hours of duty will inevitably be extended by the protocols. As will be length of the overall schedule because it will simply take longer to arrive at a properly rehearsed production. There may be a case for concurrent rehearsals to take place, conducted by a director in one room and an assistant director in another.
- Used face coverings, gloves, wipes, paper towels, empty bottles and other disposable items including mop heads should be placed in a no-touch bin which has a strong bag liner ('bin bag'). When the bag is three quarters full it should be removed, tied and disposed of as hazardous waste or placed in a second bag which will also be tied and the resulting bundle set aside in a place which has controlled access for 72 hours prior to disposal as regular waste.
- Greenrooms should be closed. Similarly it will be inadvisable to continue use of locker rooms and similar.
- Company members should not enter crew rooms or similar spaces at the rehearsal venue without specific permission from the company manager or covid monitor.
- If a testing regime is to be instigated, a separate room used solely for those tests should be provided, located close to the access point to the building. A dedicated waiting area will be needed too.
- Company members should change into working clothes on arrival, those clothes to be kept at the rehearsal venue in zipped and sanitised (suit) bags. They should change back on departure each day. 'Street' clothes should not spend any significant time in the rehearsal space and should be bagged when not being worn.
- Work clothes should be washed at high temperature (60C) at regular intervals. They should be handled with caution. The laundering of those items will require extra work and therefore more resources will be needed for the wardrobe team or an arrangement with an external contractor.
- Vissors, face coverings, reusable protection equipment, scripts, work clothes, clothing bags and similar should be clearly marked with the user's name.
- Elimination of practical (to be eaten) food and drink props should be the goal. Good planning may arrive at alternative methods of staging these elements of a production but actual consumption should not occur.
- Ideally each performer will have his or her separate prop table or at minimum a partitioned sector of a shared table. Performers should be encouraged to look after their own props and sanitise them before **and** after each use cycle. 'Personal' props should not go to dressing rooms but be picked up on stage so that access to dressing rooms is reduced. A prop that is touched by more than one person is a contact infection risk and should be treated as such. Comments on sanitising are to be found below.
- Company members should not bring personal items into the rehearsal venue. Smartphones, tablets and similar provide high risk of contact infection.
- Contractors who supply hire items should be required to sanitise them before loading out of their premises and again once installed. Examples include sound effect systems, pianos, practice microphones, music stands, floor vinyl, stand-in rehearsal scenery.
- Attendance of a covid monitor throughout rehearsal brings significant benefits to the process and enables checking compliance with distancing rules and other protocols. An important aspect of the job is to help all concerned in rehearsal avoid compromising safe working practices. Equally important is the assistance the CM can give the cast and director in working out ways to stage the show within the necessary protocols.
- Close contact between performers is obviously to be avoided. Totally essential close contact should follow additional protocols including short duration, involved artists in mini cohort, swab testing, quarantine. Close contact should become part of the production only after an assessment of risk has been made and acted on. Performers may not be obliged to engage in close contact, nor should they be put into a situation where they fear sanctions may arise from their reluctance.

The arrangement or timetabling of rehearsal will be challenging. There have been suggestions that a suspension of all rehearsal from time to time could provide opportunities to arrange wardrobe and wig fittings and allow new physical elements to be introduced into rehearsals in a safe, orderly and planned manner. Directors and managers might care to investigate that and other radical changes to standard routines for solutions to what at first glance appear to be major problems.

TRANSFER TO STAGE

This is when the Company merges workplaces with venue staff. And the virus transmission risk increases.

The ABTT has set out safe working practices for the venues and their staff, practices which will necessarily interact with Company protocols.

The Musicians' Union has procedural plans too and those plans may impinge on 'our' protocols when musicians work on stage and in planning rehearsal schedules.

All of the precautions that were taken in the earlier rehearsal stage will stay in place.

At an early date a conference should occur at which venue staff will explain their procedures and protocols and the company will detail theirs, both highlighting identified risks. The compliance monitor would be involved. The Intention is that each side has an opportunity to assess whether risks will increase by the others' actions.

It is inevitable that the sort of timetabling that applied in the past is no longer viable. Examples of this are allowing much longer for lighting power up and rig check. Time must be allowed to permit fault correction in a way that does not compromise cohort working or mix company members with technical teams. Microphone checks may require additional time. The working day will become quite complicated.

Company members should attend a comprehensive briefing by CSM, Covid Monitor and Venue Staff. The briefing should be focussed on building confidence and highlighting elements of the protocols that have come into effect now they are in the venue itself, including 'local rules'. The usual timing of briefings of this nature is immediately prior to the first session of technical rehearsal. It is important that this session allows an opportunity for company members to practice ways of moving round the workplace in a socially distanced way. It is likely that this procedure will reduce the time available for show rehearsal in the first session.

Adequate time should be allowed for deep cleaning of stage, wardrobe, dressing rooms and common areas before occupation by company/show. The venue has responsibility for this. The CM/SM/PM/Covid Monitor/Wardrobe team should evaluate effectiveness.

The production schedule should be agreed in good time. It is reasonable to expect that every process on stage will take longer than in the past. That will affect certain individuals' duty time. Care should be taken not to overwork those whose continuous presence is required.

As was the case in rehearsal rooms, the wearing of face coverings should continue with additional precautions in cases of close proximity.

Where people congregate (wings, corridors, annexes leading to stage etc) a 2m gridline should be marked out.

Narrow crossovers should be used by one person at a time. Wide ones should have flow marks.

Greenrooms, locker rooms and similar should not be used.

Communications equipment should receive careful sanitising attention. Headsets, belt packs, walkie talkies should never be shared. Nor should radio mic packs and heads, handheld mics, trailing cables. All such items should be marked with users' names.

Typically, fitups are led by PM and/or CSM. Their continuous presence may compromise health because they move between house staff cohorts. Consideration should be given to splitting their work over two or more leaders linked to separate cohorts, eg one supervising lighting rigging, another to work separately in a different session driving scenic installation.

Workstations in the auditorium should be minimised, socially distanced and accessible via different seating rows. Provision of face coverings and sanitising gels is essential. Once more, only essential personnel may be present. PA's, runners and assistants are not essential personnel. Designers ideally will watch production rehearsal from a different level, particularly costume designers who may need to go backstage to work with wardrobe staff and therefore should be segregated from people in other levels to reduce vector risks. Movement between auditorium and stage should be severely limited. Ideally there will be not be any. Auditoria are potentially 'dirty' compared to backstage where access control is better.

Creative team workstations should be linked by effective communications equipment. IT solutions could enable stress free contact between production desks, design team members and the like.

Communications equipment, visors, masks etc used at the workstations should never be shared and should be labelled with users' names.

Wardrobe and wig staff inevitably work close in. Face coverings and visors will be needed. Some workers may prefer to use FFP2 respirators. By prudent earlier planning quick costume changes will be reduced to a minimum, ideally eliminated. Hooks and rails in varied locations are to be preferred for simple costume changes over the use of quickchange rooms where close contact or touch contact risk is increased. The arrangements proposed by CITA are linked to below.

Costumes and similar to be antiviral spray, steam or heat treated before and after each use cycle. Items in contact with the face will require close attention.

Props tables should be capable of frequent cleaning. Materials that deactivate viral bodies include soap, bleach, ethanol and isopropyl alcohol. Of those, the last two are very convenient when used in trigger sprays and are readily available at modest cost. Bleach can adversely affect the skin and soap is often inconvenient on stage.

Misting of the stage at appropriate frequency is recommended subject to use of materials that do not irritate the company members' airways thus increasing coughing and sneezing, a strong infection vector.

Furniture should be handled with caution, only by delegated persons and never used casually in the wings. Seating provided for performers or others for use between entrances and cues should be labelled to show who may use it and should be distanced. Steam sanitising may well be appropriate after each cycle of use.

Clearly marked sturdy hand gel tables are recommended in wing and corridor locations.

Hot water and soap should be available in dressing rooms, using hygienic dispensing and paper towels with disposal bins.

Better wing lighting than usual is to be preferred to help maintain distancing

Consideration of lane and grid marking to promote distancing in venues with good wing space is recommended.

Company members may only go to the stage when called or with prior permission of the production's stage manager.

Working with good ventilation is essential. If possible auditorium extract systems should run at all times the stage is in use. Dock doors and grid vents ('Lantern') should be opened to aid ventilation.

Access between stage and auditorium should be severely limited. Company members may not go to the auditorium to watch parts of the show.

Company members are obliged to remain in dressing rooms or offices for significant periods. To protect them it is necessary to limit visits by others. Directors' notes cannot be delivered there; previously sanitised radio microphones should be either self-fitted or fitted in a dedicated room by a technician taking close contact precautions (visor, face coverings). Dressers stay outside as far as possible. Venue cleaners should adhere to robust anti-infection procedures. Guests are absolutely banned.

Care should be taken to eliminate other intrusions into dressing rooms.

Wigs should to be self fitted or fitted in a dedicated room at a specific call time by a wig fitter taking close contact precautions. Performers should have their own zipped bag of hair grips, adhesives and stocking caps which they should look after and bring to wig fitting calls every day.

Dressing rooms and stage management rooms should be supplied with sanitising materials.

Risk assessments to be reviewed as the show develops.

Time pressures in technical and dress rehearsal cannot be allowed to compromise all the good work done up to that stage.

The 'Once In, Stay In' principal continues to apply.

No personal items should be brought to the stage. This is particularly important in respect of mobile phones which bring a high risk of contact infection. Personal items brought into dressing rooms and similar should be sanitised on arrival and frequently thereafter. Particular care should be taken to eliminate sharing anything. A can of hairspray can carry the virus for three days.

Distancing in dressing rooms is essential. If the venue has limited dressing room accommodation some shows may not be able to play there

Consideration should be given to how 'Director's Notes' are delivered after a work session and where. Common practice of locating that activity in the auditorium might compromise precautions there. On stage is another option but timing should be set to allow other stage activities to occur with reasonable ease. Delivering notes by visiting dressing rooms will not be possible. A good number of these considerations can be addressed by giving notes virtually, meaning directors writing up and emailing performers and team members. On occasions where a more direct connection is necessary it will be wise to make use of a properly prepared and dedicated room where director and performer(s) involved would follow existing rehearsal room protocols.

And again, attendance of Covid Monitor at all times the company is present is very strongly recommended.

RUNNING AND TRANSFER

Once again it is important that established precautions continue to apply.

A daily update should be delivered to Company members . This would be in the form of an extended “parish notices” session typically presented by the Stage or Company manager who should be able to call on others for support.

Protocols should be reviewed as the show develops. Company members should be briefed on changes straight away.

Daily self declarations, entry checks perhaps including swab tests, documentation and ‘Once In Stay In’ routines continue

Procedures for understudy and replacement calls plus related costume fittings will require hygiene vigilance at no lower a standard than was in effect for the original rehearsals. It should also be recognised that company members are potential infection vectors between venues.

Early consultation with transfer venues should include Covid procedures and planning for backstage room allocations.

A separate, location-specific Risk Assessment and Method Statement should be prepared for each transfer venue. It is advisable that copies of those documents are sent to the venues they are written for and that those documents arrive in good time. Six weeks is considered to be best practice for technical riders, hanging plots and the like. RAs and MSs should arrive just as early.

In return, transfer venues should respond with their risk own assessments and notes on in house protocols so that the Company can be reassured about how the venues will protect their health. Any conflicts can be resolved in good time.

On arrival at a new venue the company’s continued precautions will apply. There will be a need for checking local circumstances and their efficacy. The aim is to provide as safe a workplace at the new venue as was developed at the old.

It is clear that production costs will rise and may include provision of

- safe travel methods between venues as an alternative to using public transport
- safe accommodation, potentially block booked hotels or self catering rooms
- support to find safe places to eat

It is likely that company members’ exposure to the general public will have to be limited, almost certainly extending to curtailment of social activities outside the cohort. It may become standard practice to follow a version of current Film and TV practice in that company members self isolate for several days prior to their call. Promoting full and early understanding of the importance of the protocols will help understand the need for those limitations.

Appendices

PRODUCERS INPUT

Company members should be mindful that they have legal responsibility to act in ways that promote and maintain a safe working environment. It is suggested that producers remind them of that by the issuing contract riders that all members sign to say they will comply at all times with regulations and protocols.

Because they bear overall responsibility for the work done on their behalf by designers, directors and others they appoint it would be wise for producers to develop a closer connection to risk assessment and detailed planning for shows than has sometimes been the case in the past.

Obligations under HSAW legislation include the provision of adequate resources to support their employees' health and safety. Resources in this sense include time, money and people.

Producers should appoint a suitable person or persons as Covid Monitor to assist them in managing health risks, assess safety and hygiene at workplaces and provide input on safe procedures as rehearsals proceed.

NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

It should be the case that non professional productions follow the protocols for professional ones. Given the typically longer rehearsal periods and frequent presence of supportive group members, the risk of exposure to infection is higher. Cohort/Bubble working is unlikely to be practical. Particular care should be taken to quarantine items introduced to the rehearsal and performance venues. In typical circumstances the producer role referred to above would fall to the 'committee' of the relevant society. It is recommended that all the protocols mentioned herein should be adopted.

Many professionals UK theatre work alongside non-professionals. Government guidance issued on 13th August stated that both Professionals and Non-professionals may now engage in performance related activities and that the guidance applies equally to both. Equally, ABTT guidance can be applied to all performance scenarios but it should be noted that additional restrictions on social distancing for non-professionals may apply and current Government guidance should be consulted as appropriate. Non-professionals should be encouraged to limit their social activities outside the production environment.

WORK IN AUDITORIA

We are affected by auditorium and foyer arrangements when company members and venue staff work in public areas front of house. Efforts should be made to separate those workers from the audience and FOH staff. Where that is impossible, for example in the case of sound desk operation, the worker involved should not come into contact with Company members.

Workers exposed to contact outside the production cohort should take close contact precautions (FFP2 RPE, visor, gloves).

Company members should not occupy auditorium seats when there is an audience. They will work from booths, accessed via a protected route.

FILLING THE COVID MONITOR ROLE

To be effective as a covid monitor it is important that persons so tasked have a good understanding of the protocols of best practice and the current guidelines/regulations imposed by competent authorities. When training becomes available even if it is relatively basic it should be undertaken. should be accompanied with a high level of understanding of the creative process and with being present during the planning phase, throughout rehearsal, production and, ideally subsequent shakedown periods plus transfers.

In a limited number of organisations there will be members of an existing health and safety team who fit the first set of requirements but they may not have the essential understanding and experience of the rehearsal/creative process. Nor is their continual attendance at rehearsal and production locations likely to be compatible with their other duties.

In some cases it may well be possible to engage the services of freelance health and safety consultants. But extensive personal attendance could be expensive and the current knowledge of production processes might be minimal.

It is likely that the gap in personnel can be filled by recruiting and if necessary training people with direct experience of managing the creative process and to that end time-served members of the company, production and senior stage management sector could be engaged as supernumeraries to the regular teams. Those people are accustomed to being booked show-by-show and to being part of the system that solves problems and balances practical considerations with artistic aims.

LINKS TO FURTHER READING

Link to Government advice on working safely during Covid 19...

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>

Link to ABTT covid info.. <https://www.abtt.org.uk/resources-guidance/covid19/back-to-work-working-safely>

Link to CITA covid info.. <https://www.costumeintheatre.com>

Link to Equity covid info.. <https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2020/july/returning-to-outdoor-work-in-live-performance-guidance-for-equity-members/>

Link to Musicians' Union Covid information... <https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/coronavirus>

Link to Health and safety legislation...

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/3242/contents/made>

Link to PHE info on cleaning... <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Link to Gov.UK info on sports and leisure (e.g. gyms and dance studios) including airflow standards... <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/providers-of-grassroots-sport-and-gym-leisure-facilities>.

Link to HSE information on RPE... <https://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/what-is-rpe.htm>

Link to HSE advice on face coverings.... <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/face-coverings-and-face-masks.htm#face-coverings>

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