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Sarasota arts organizations announce new indoor safety measures

#SafeArtsSarasota protocols revised for indoor events

Sarasota, FL—With indoor fall season performances and events beginning to take place in theaters and venues across the area, leaders from nine of Sarasota County’s major arts organizations have announced updated protocols as they prepare to welcome audiences back.

The arts and cultural organizations of Sarasota County comprise one of the three largest employment sectors of the community. An increasing number of patrons and artists are extremely uncomfortable participating without strong health and safety protocols in place. The failure to secure robust audiences or top artists puts these arts organizations in danger of once again closing their doors, jeopardizing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars that the arts infuse into the community each year.

In response to this situation and the current high community spread of the COVID-19 virus, leaders have been sharing experiences and research from their March 2021 initiative **#SafeArtsSarasota**, which helped enable local arts organizations to safely reopen to audiences after being shuttered through the pandemic. The group includes representatives from Asolo Repertory Theatre, Circus Arts Conservatory, Florida Studio Theatre, The Hermitage Artist Retreat, Sarasota Ballet, Sarasota Opera, Sarasota Orchestra, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, and Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe. These organizations will also work closely with the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County and will invite other local arts organizations to join this initiative.

The arts organizations listed below will uphold robust health and safety protocols for the protection of the community, patrons, artists and staff, and to maintain the economic stability of local arts institutions. Therefore, **effective Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021, the listed organizations will uniformly implement the following policy:**

- All patrons age 12 and older attending a performance indoors must show either:
 - A negative PCR COVID-19 test administered by a medical provider/official testing center no earlier than 72 hours before the time of their performance OR
 - A negative rapid antigen COVID-19 test administered by a medical provider/official testing center no earlier than 24 hours prior to the time of their performance. Home testing kit results will not be accepted for entry.
- Both physical and electronic presentation of documents will be accepted. Photo identification must accompany the presentation of all documents.
- If patrons prefer, CDC or other official vaccination record showing the patrons are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (at least 14 days since the final dose) may be voluntarily presented at the door as an acceptable alternative to negative COVID-19 test results.
- All patrons age 6 and up, regardless of vaccination or testing status, must wear masks over their nose and mouth at all times while inside the venue.

Protocols will be revisited and may be revised based on CDC guidance and the evolving circumstances of the pandemic, including use of additional screening protocols. Patrons should check the individual websites of the arts organizations for details of protocols and refund policies. Be assured the participating organizations are taking similar and additional pandemic precautions with artists, staff, crews and vendors.

In a joint statement, arts leaders said: “Performing arts organizations have faced unprecedented challenges in this pandemic. Our sector has been unable to operate normally since March 2020. Since the arts community is a major economic driver for the Suncoast, our organizations are working collaboratively to ensure that our patrons can continue to safely experience the joy of live performances, and we can keep our artists and our staff employed. Our economic and creative vitality depends on providing the safest possible environment for everyone.”

www.AsoloRep.org

www.CircusArts.org

www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org

www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org

www.SarasotaBallet.org

www.SarasotaOpera.org

www.SarasotaOrchestra.org

www.VanWezel.org

www.WestcoastBlackTheatre.org