

Masking Requirements

After careful consideration, following guidance provided by the Greene County Health Department and the Springfield Regional Arts Council (manager of The Creamery Arts Center) and following best practices in the dance industry, **all Springfield Ballet students, staff, and faculty will be required to wear masks at all times in shared spaces in The Creamery, including inside our dance studios and offices.** Students with pre-existing medical conditions that are advised to not wear masks by their physician will be an exception to this new requirement and faculty members will work with them in the studios on how to social distance.

This was not an easy decision and may change as time progresses and as we monitor upcoming enrollment.

Our main goal during the process of deciding what was best for our dancers and organization for our Fall semester was to keep class structure, offerings, etc. as close to our normal schedule and process as possible while being responsible and providing a safe environment. We know that there is more stress in our lives and that continuity for our dancers and families is best. With this in mind, and the support of our Board of Directors, **we decided to require masks for all until further notice.**

Wearing masks while dancing is now widely accepted across the dance world, but it does take time for dancers and their bodies to adjust. Classes will not be the same as we left them in March, but our faculty is adjusting our class instruction to help meet the needs and challenges that may come from wearing masks. Faculty will be monitoring students closely and dancers should communicate with their instructor during class if they need to change their mask or take a break. We do understand that it is uncomfortable at first, but just like wearing pointe shoes our bodies adjust over time!

We would also like to share these industry best practices guides:

- Pointe Magazine: <https://www.pointemagazine.com/how-to-dance-in-a-face-mask-2646374340.html?rebellitem=8#rebellitem8>
- National Dance Education Organization: <https://www.thedancedocs.com/episodes/dancing-in-a-mask>
- Dance USA: https://dance-usa.s3.amazonaws.com/page_uploads/COVID%20FAQ%20-%20MAY%202020.pdf

Main factors in making the decision to require masks in conjunction with guidance provided by the Greene County Health Department and City Clerk's Office were:

1. Class and Studio Capacities
 - a. Our normal class sizes do not allow us to keep 6 feet between each dancer, thus wearing a mask is required.
 - b. Limiting class sizes would not allow us to train our current student body without compromising available class options and quality of instruction.
 - c. As many of our students take multiple classes per week, in different studios with different instructors, requiring masks to be worn by everyone allows safe movement for each student going from one class to the next.

2. Faculty

- a. if faculty members are to instruct different groups of students in different spaces/studios, everyone involved must wear a mask.
- b. We could not offer enough classes to our students during the mask ordinance if only one teacher was allowed to teach one group a day.

3. Sustainability

- a. To sustain as an organization, over one third of our budget comes from tuition. Without our current offerings and student body size, we would not be able to provide productions, scholarships, and more.

This is an unprecedented time and we appreciate your patience as we navigate these changes to do what is best for our families, faculty, staff, and organization. We want to assure you that our staff and Board of Directors continue to monitor best practices and guidance from local authorities and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and should changes to our policies be needed, we will communicate those changes to you as soon as possible.

If you and/or your dancer would like further guidance on how to prepare for returning to the studios while wearing masks, please reach out to Andrew Parker, Artistic Director, at aparker@springfieldballet.org. Wearing a mask while dancing will take dancer's bodies a little time to acclimate, so our goal is to help guide them in this process.

If you have any concerns with your student taking classes while wearing a mask, please reach out to Mr. Andrew. Your understanding and support during this time as our staff and Board of Directors made decisions is appreciated. The love and expression of ballet will continue long-term through our hearts and minds, even if our bodies have to adjust in the short-term. Thank you for being a part of the impact your dancer provides to our community through the art of ballet.