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Dear VMT Family,

This is an unprecedented time; there is a ton of information flowing through the media about Coronavirus (COVID-19) and it can be overwhelming. Your Valley Musical Theatre Board of Directors is constantly monitoring the situation, reviewing our local and state Public Health Department requirements and consulting with physicians, as well as other regional and national theaters for appropriate measures that we can and should be taking.

While it may seem that things are evolving quickly, we want to reassure you that measures being taken in Kittitas County are preventative, and we caution against panic. We would like to outline the steps we are enacting immediately, as well as considerations that we will be considering over the coming weeks.

At this time, we are not cancelling rehearsals or performances for The Phantom Tollbooth Jr. or for Mamma Mia which starts auditions in a few weeks. Per the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) press release on [Thursday 3/12/20](#), our county is still in the minimizing risk stage (Green Zone).

PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH PARTICIPANTS:

Important for our Junior show participants (5th – 9th graders), as of 3/12 – KCPHD is still not recommending school closure, although school partners have already started planning for prolonged closures should they need to occur. “With the community spread that we are experiencing, ***we believe that school is one of the safest places for our children at this time,***” explains Dr. Larson. [emphasis added] “Data suggest that closing schools prematurely [before known contact to students] will only delay the spread of this disease, not prevent it.” While social distancing is not possible within schools, students remain at low risk within the school buildings.

Valley Musical Theater will be focusing on education, limiting exposure, and smart rehearsal procedures outlined below.

EDUCATION:

Upon recommendation of the doctors we consulted, we will be providing “demonstrations” to the kids of proper hygiene measures – including washing for 20 seconds+, not touching face, alternative ways to greet friends without handshakes or high fives. We have invited Dr. Elise Herman to attend the Phantom Tollbooth Jr. rehearsal on this coming Monday to do a brief teaching with the cast/crew/parents at 5:45 PM. Parents are encouraged to stay through the warmup period on Monday (5:30 – 6:00 pm) to hear the information along with your kids. It is also important to note that children are typically not considered a vulnerable population with this virus, unless they have an underlying health condition.

LIMIT EXPOSURE TO OTHERS:

- If you have a fever, stay home from rehearsal.
- If you have a chest or dry cough, feel sick, etc. stay home from rehearsal.

- If you have allergies, or an occasional cough, use smart measures. Cough/sneeze into your elbow, wash hands frequently, and keep a bit more distance from others.
- Face masks during rehearsal are appropriate, if you have symptoms, to protect other actors who are healthy. In general, face masks for healthy individuals are not recommended, because you are MORE likely to touch your face with it on.

REHEARSAL PROCEDURES:

- The Phantom Tollbooth is divided into sections of small groups of 6-10 people, and will be rehearsed in these smaller groups. This minimizes exposure. There will be limited times until we get closer to performance where everyone will be in the same space.
- We will have hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes at each of our rehearsal stations.
 - Surfaces we use will be wiped down before and after rehearsals
 - Performers/crew should take regular breaks every 20-30 min to wash hands or use hand sanitizer
 - Minimize touching where possible.

The Board of Directors is constantly monitoring the situation and will follow our state and local guidelines as they are updated. We are actively preparing contingency plans, including what we provide to the public during performances, limiting the number of seats per performance to keep within event guidelines (The EHS Little Theater seats 130 and is currently not affected by the events ban), changing procedures for how we offer concessions, and what we can do if we do end up needing to reschedule, postpone or cancel any of our upcoming productions. The play royalty company is exploring possibilities for streaming theater events as well – as you can imagine, the entire Theatre industry is being affected right now. We won't know about these options for several weeks.

If you have concerns about your child's involvement in The Phantom Tollbooth Jr., please reach out to the Producer, Adrienne Zimny at adzimny@hotmail.com or to me at valleymusicaltheatre@gmail.com or 509-972-6633.

To stay abreast of COVID-19 updates from the Kittitas County Public Health Department follow this link: <https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/response/202003-covid19/default.aspx>

We will get through this as a community, by staying calm, taking it seriously, and each doing our part to prevent viruses from being transmitted. We will try our best to still show a proactive plan, and help create a sense of normalcy for our children even when the rest of the world feels in chaos.

We thank each of you for your continued support throughout this time.

With care,



Jessica Solberg Black
VMT Executive Director