

**COLORADO CONSERVATORY OF DANCE
STATEMENT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MARCH 12, 2020**

Two weeks ago, I announced a series of protective measures designed to protect our community from the possible community spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19. We greatly appreciate how quickly everyone rallied to the cause of intensified cleaning and self-care protocols and believe that your willingness to participate (or encourage participation) in these procedures have provided a bulwark against not only this virus, but other pathogens making their way through our facility. On behalf of Artistic Director Julia Wilkinson Manley and all of us at CCD, I offer the following statement. I apologize for its length, but there is a lot of ground to cover to make sure everyone is up to speed and on the same proverbial page.

In my message to CCD families and other stakeholders, I also mentioned that the board, staff, and faculty would also be engaged in a comprehensive contingency planning process designed to allow the organization to continue its operations in the event it became either necessary or prudent to cancel classes & rehearsals for an extended time period and/or postpone performances and events. Unfortunately, over the last 48 hours the recommendations among the scientific community have been consistent and clear—organizations such as ours in which large numbers of people gather for such activities have a responsibility to do just that as a key component of helping to mitigate the community transmission of the virus. These recommendations have in the past few hours been heeded by educational, artistic, and sporting organizations across the country and CCD will follow suit in an endeavor to do our part.

From the outset, I want to stress that CCD exists primarily from a place of love—our students and their families have a deep passion for dance training, performance, and community engagement that is mirrored by that of the board, staff, and faculty. As such, we're asking for your help today. As a mid-sized nonprofit, the organization simply doesn't possess the deep operating financial reserves to simply shut its doors for a few months—such an act would likely result in our closure, the loss of one of the area's signature dance training and performance facilities, and also the unemployment of over two dozen individual professionals. To avoid this, Julia and I asked the staff to brainstorm ways that we could continue operating—albeit in a very different way—until this crisis abates. Innovative, thoughtful, and creative, they joined us in a series of discussions around this central idea over the past two weeks.

With this in mind, after hours of thoughtful consultation among the staff and faculty, we are announcing the following alterations to CCD's operations effective immediately (March 12, 2020):

GENERAL OPERATIONS

- The CCD facility will remain open, but only to essential staff and faculty, beginning Thursday, March 12.

- Staff have been instructed to work remotely whenever possible. With this in mind, we will still have a “virtual front desk” during normal business hours and will either answer directly or respond as soon as possible to phone calls and emails.
- In the event we discover that an infected person has been in the facility, we will close it entirely until a) the pandemic has passed and local health officials announce a loosening of this type of restriction and b) we have contracted a company to conduct a hospital-grade cleaning of the entire facility.
- At this time, we are planning to resume normal operations on April 6, and sooner if possible. Should we find it necessary to continue our modified operational structure beyond April 6, we will communicate this directly to you.

CLASSES AND REHEARSALS

- All CCD classes and rehearsals are canceled Thursday, March 12 through Sunday, March 15.
- Beginning on Monday, March 16, CCD faculty will be conducting all normally-meeting classes via a remote platform. This will enable faculty members to teach slightly adjusted curriculum either from their homes or the CCD studio (as long as it is open to essential personnel).
- We realize that temporarily moving to an online format has its limitations and challenges, but we feel strongly that it is far preferable to the alternative of simply canceling classes and rehearsals for an indefinite amount of time. Doing so would not only deprive students of the opportunity to do what they love, but frankly greatly reduce the tuition revenues necessary to continue our operations at all.
- The staff and faculty are working tirelessly to locate the ideal platform for this massive change in our instructional delivery, and once we have pinpointed this we will a) engage in intensive training for all those involved in instruction so they are comfortable and confident with making their classes or rehearsals available to students as readily as possible and b) distribute clear, accurate instructions to families in order to help you log in and participate in these virtual classes.
- We are not presumptuous enough to assume there will be no technical challenges associated with this delivery model, but we will do everything possible to mitigate or eliminate them so students can have a positive experience in their classes. In particular, we are concerned about the possible lag time involved in streaming given the need to synchronize movement with music. But I would beg your patience as we work through these, as we simply do not have a great deal of time to acquire, train in, and deploy the remote delivery method before next week.

- Obviously, some classes lend themselves more readily to this model than others; faculty members will be making adjustments to their teaching in order to maximize the student experience.
- Similarly, rehearsals for Gala or other performances will be particularly challenging to hold during this time as they depend upon. With that in mind, faculty will be continuing to try and find innovative solutions to this issue.
- Should we discover that this mode of delivery is proving ineffective, we will move to a video recording-based delivery model involving faculty members taping their classes and distributing to families.

PERFORMANCES

- The March 21 performances of Venture have been postponed until May 9, and will be relocated to Pinnacle Performing Arts Complex, with rehearsals at Pinnacle on May 8.
- The May 9 performances of Cinderella have been postponed until May 30 at Pinnacle, with tech/dress rehearsals on May 27 and 28 and the sensory-friendly performance on May 29.
- Gala performances will occur on May 31, and be moved from Pinnacle to CCD's performance studio. This will require a restructuring of those events, likely to be offered now in "blocks" based upon class level and consist of a number of shorter performances over the course of the day.
- Children's Ballet and Ballet Expressions gala performances will occur as scheduled at CCD.
- All current ticket holders' reservations will be honored, and those with tickets to Venture will be given similarly-tiered seats at Pinnacle. We will be working to roll out a ticketing and seating plan for Gala performances at CCD and will distribute this once it's fully fleshed out.
- Please understand that these rescheduled dates are based on our hope that large-scale gatherings will once again be permitted or prudent by that time. Of course, we will keep you informed as the situation evolves.

EVENTS

- Blossom Ball has been postponed until June 19, and will still be hosted at the Gate House at Lionsgate Event Center in Lafayette.

- All current ticket holders or table sponsors reservations will be honored.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- Our current community education programming (Move to Learn school partnerships and After-School Ballet) will continue as scheduled, but will be subject to postponement or cancellation depending upon school closures.

In the final analysis, this is not a simple challenge for CCD to overcome. The logistical and people-based elements are entangled, complex, and at times frustrating. However, I have great faith in this community. All of us who have a stake in the organization—board members, staff, faculty, and of course our families—have an opportunity to make the next weeks and months bearable if we stand together and hold tightly to one another (um, at a safe social distance, I guess). I am always available at rcowden@ccdance.org if you have questions or concerns, and on behalf of those of us working behind the scenes I thank you in advance from the bottoms of our hearts. We will get through this.

Rich Cowden
Executive Director