

# Parents comfortable with safety measures at Adell's School of Dance

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Its founder, owner and head instructor, Adell Hoover-Manarino, will be the first one to tell you the world of academics felt more like an alternate universe for her growing up. Instead of social studies or science, she turned her attention to dance. Finding it a better fit, she used her talents to travel the country and perform, before returning home and starting her own wildly successful business.

Dance – and teaching in particular – has been Adell's life for two-plus decades. She's used it as a means to help youth find their passion, raise money for community projects, and stay out of trouble after the school day ends.

One can only imagine, then, what it was like when "New York State on PAUSE" began and Adell had to close her studio doors.

"I went through a really, really, really hard time," she said. "You don't know if everything you've worked for is going to crumble."

In was mid-March, and "I was teaching class on Thursday," Adell said. "We started hearing the news. Saturday morning, we held classes. We had our huge basket auction that we were supposed to have on Sunday. We had to cancel that. And that was it," Adell said. "I hadn't been back until probably two months ago – once I felt comfortable enough."

"We had to transition over to Zoom classes, which I would say, out of everything, probably for me, was the hardest task. I can dance in front of 1,000 people – thousands of people – but you put me in front of a camera by myself ... it just felt – it made me realize the true dynamic of teaching dance is being face to face; and the energy that you get, and the laughter, and the love, and the jokes, and the hard work, and the sweat. From a camera perspective, it's very different, and was very out of my box, and very overwhelming for me."



"I have two little girls, they were home. (I was) trying to learn Zoom classes for them and making sure they were online and doing homework. And it was just – it just threw everybody, I think, in a totally different realm."

At a time of year when the Military Road conservatory normally would've been buzzing with activity – dancers locking into their steps, instructors working out kinks in the routines, parents preparing outfits for performances while filling raffle baskets – the rooms were empty and the lights were out.

Adell explained, "The studio, this would have been our 13th season. We didn't have a show. I opted out. I just didn't feel comfortable with the choreography, socially distanced with the kids, and as far as doing it in a manner that I could assure nobody would get sick, and

all the protocols on things."

Still, Adell tried to accommodate her roughly 250 students.

"We did some Zoom classes right after, right in the initial hit of it," she said. "I had some parents that wanted a lot of Zoom. And then a lot of parents were just overwhelmed. And it just wasn't (practical). And then to get comfortable with it as a staff, and making sure that all staff had the correct internet and all the right equipment – it was just a very hard thing for us to tackle."

When in-person classes began again in July, "It was wonderful," Adell said. "Everything went really good."

Adell made it a point to go above and beyond state safety requirements. She eliminated gathering spaces, purchased new mats, invested in an advanced air-filtration system, and even doubled the now-well-known social distance circle. Adell taped off 6-foot boxes on her studio floors. But instead of stacking dancer squares, she kept every other space empty. Students were guided to their spots by a trail of "ASD" stickers.

"I think everybody's so excited to be back that nobody cares if there's protocols. They don't care if they have to, 'Make sure you do that.' They're willing to do whatever they have to do, as long as they can dance. And I am, too. If I've got to wear a mask, I'll wear a mask. If I got to teach in a box, I'll teach in a box. If I have to learn completely different methods, (it's OK)."

Speaking of masks, "I'm learning to smile with my eyes more," Adell said, laughing. "But the kids are pretty good. Like, the kids are really receptive to it. I have a very potent or strong voice, so it's not something that I'm soft-spoken in the first place. I think they understand, and, if they don't understand it, if they look at me, I make sure that anything now – everything I usually do is through a mirror. So now I try to face them so that they can see it a little bit more."

"I think it all boils down to everybody's so grateful to be back, that it doesn't matter," she added. "Whatever we need to do to have some normalcy is what we're going to do."

The 13th season would've included camps, a trip to nationals, performances at events including the Peach Festival, and a recital.

All of that was scrapped.

When students return to Adell's School of Dance over the next two weeks, "We're kind of calling it like the 13.5 edition of ASD, because it's kind of we're picking up where we left off, finishing it out, training the kids."

Moreover, "We shortened classes a little bit, so that we were able to have time in between for all the cleaning necessary between classes, as well as adding another additional class in, because we only have a certain amount of kids that are allowed in certain rooms here for the social distance numbers," Adell said. "So, if a class was larger, it now requires three spots in our schedule."

"My staff has been great. They have been super-supportive, willing to do Zoom classes, figuring out different techniques for everybody. ... The staff has worked together as a team and a family to get through it together."

And parents will be happy to know Adell plans to roll over aspects of last season into next year's showcase.

"I wanted to kind of keep what we've worked on so that we have the opportunity to perform it and show it off the way it should be shown off. Parents, too, they purchased all these costumes. And the kids never even got to wear them," she said. "I just want to make sure that we have the opportunity to utilize what they've already spent, versus them always having to spend a whole new season again – with uncertainty. And we're still uncertain."

If Western New York is required to revert back to the spring "PAUSE" model, "We are prepared to (Zoom) this year," Adell said. "They have their schedules. Once we get rolling, every class will get their own meeting ID and password, just in case if we're thrown back in quarantine again. Now we're way more prepared for all of that."

"I mean, who knew, technically, about Zoom before quarantine hit? I am sure huge corporations utilize the program, but it was a whole new (experience). How do you get them in classrooms? How do you invite them the right way? But we're ready for it now so that, if by chance, each teacher will be required to teach their normal class times via Zoom."

"I've taken classes over the summer, how to utilize the program, how to teach via Zoom. I've taken courses on socially distanced games, how to utilize their boxes, the classroom."

To paraphrase the old saying, Adell's preparation is kid-tested, parent-approved.

When ASD went dark, "We had no idea when or if our daughters, Kyla (10) and Quinn (9), would be able to resume taking classes in the studio," Mark and Kristi Yerger said. "In late spring, Adell sent out a questionnaire to parents to get our input as to how the studio could protect our children should they be allowed to reopen for classes."

"Utilizing this questionnaire, Adell held a virtual parent meeting to have a discussion regarding the reopening needs and process. After this information, we felt confident that the studio had the safety of our students and their staff first and foremost. Understanding that the floors in the spacious studios have been marked clearly to ensure social distancing for dancers, sanitizing and cleaning frequently, and the air conditioning units being upgraded to accommodate high-grade filters allowed us to feel as though there has been so much thought and concern put into our children's well-being."

"With a reopening plan in place, our daughters were able to attend small group lessons late summer. We felt that Adell and the ASD staff have given clear instructions for parents and students as to what the studio and classes would look like."

They added, "While the environment is certainly different from what they have known for the last seven years, they really enjoyed getting back to doing their favorite activity and felt safe doing so. ..."

"We are thankful for the time and effort that Adell and her staff have put into the reopening plan and studio changes. The reopening process has not been easy for many businesses. For a dance studio business owner to be able to comply with the reopening requirements to the highest standards has been a testament to the commitment Adell has to her dancers, dancers' families and the community."

Diana Guerrucci noted, "Adell's School of Dance opening for summer classes was a godsend for my daughter. She was so excited to get back to her home away from home! And I was confident that she'd be safe, because Miss Adell and her staff always does everything to its fullest."

"When I dropped my daughter off at the door, I had to stay outside and wait for my daughter to sanitize her hands and get her temperature taken and be asked how she was feeling and if she knew if she'd been in contact with anyone with COVID symptoms or anyone with a confirmed case of COVID. Then I'd get the thumbs up that it was OK to leave her. My daughter said, once in the studio with her mask on, they danced in social-distanced squares, 6 feet apart. She said it wasn't difficult dancing with her mask on. She was just thrilled to be back to the place she loves, with the people she loves, doing what she loves!"

Adell's School of Dance is located at 2420 Military Road, Niagara Falls. Visit <http://dancewithadell.com/>.

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