Instrumental Musician Guidelines during COVID-19
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- These guidelines for mitigation of the risk of playing musical instruments during COVID-19 are supplementary to any federal, state, local or institutional regulations.
- “Regardless of the various phased reopening plans that states, provinces, and communities have in place, legal reopening or congregating is not equivalent to safely singing together in the same physical space.”\(^2,4\) The same concern applies to instrumental musicians.\(^4\)
- These guidelines apply to any situation in which two or more musicians are in close proximity.
- These guidelines will be updated as new information becomes available.

General recommendations
- Outdoor lessons/rehearsals/performances may pose a lower risk of disease transmission than indoor.
- Maintaining indoor ventilation that brings in outdoor air in lesson, rehearsal and performance spaces at or above 3 air exchanges per hour may reduce the risk of contagion. Consult with HVAC technicians for assistance.
- The use of UV light and HEPA (MERV 13 or higher) filters in indoor spaces may reduce the risk of contagion.
- No instrument sharing should occur without appropriate cleaning; SARS-CoV-2 can survive on some metal surfaces for 3 days or more, so simply letting an instrument sit overnight does not eliminate the virus.
- No sharing of sheet music, supplies, food, or other physical items.
- Consider dividing large groups into smaller ensembles to better allow for 6’ social distancing.
- No talking among participants. No loud talking; directors should consider using a microphone.
- Performers in straight rows, not curved toward the director.
- Participants don’t move within the space during rehearsal to reduce aerosol transmission.
- Stop music 5 minutes before rehearsal ends to allow aerosols to dissipate.
- Plan for safe social distancing as performers enter/leave the space.
- Create a disinfecting protocol for the space. Provide sanitation products for participants and dispose of them safely.
- Communicate expectations of compliance with safety protocols to participants and parents.
- Conduct a Covid-19 risk assessment at each lesson/rehearsal/performance. All should complete a symptom checklist prior to each session.

Risk levels:
- **Blue:** no known increased risk over normal daily activities
- **Yellow:** probable increase in risk over normal daily activities
- **Red:** real world evidence of spread of disease associated with this activity

Levels of evidence:
- Level 1: strong real-world research showing benefit of the recommendation for musicians
- Level 2: laboratory research showing benefit of the recommendation for musicians
- Level 3: expert opinion based on current public health advice and medical expertise
Non-wind instruments (strings, percussion, keyboard) – risk level blue, evidence level 3
- Six feet between musicians at all times
- Musicians wear a face covering

Wind instruments (all brass and woodwinds) – risk level yellow, evidence level 2
- Six feet between musicians at all times, nine feet in front of trombones
- Musicians wear a slitted surgical face mask while playing (vs a non-slitted mask when not actively playing the instrument)
  - A Win-D-Fender is an acceptable alternative to a slitted face mask for the C flute.
- A multi-layer fabric covering is placed over the end/bell of the instrument.
  - The bell cover of a French horn may be slitted to allow the right hand to be in position.
- No mouthpiece sharing
- No forcible “blow out” to remove liquid from the instrument
- Liquid drainage from brass instruments is collected on an absorbent pad that is removed and safely disposed of at the end of the lesson/rehearsal/performance
- Drying cloths for woodwind instruments are kept in a container during the lesson/rehearsal/performance and safely laundered/cleaned after use
- Rehearsals should be no more than 30 minutes before taking at least a “1 air exchange” break (during which all musicians leave the room).
- Consider testing wind instrumentalists periodically.

References
- ¹University of Colorado-Boulder/University of Maryland Aerosol and Airflow Studies preliminary results (July/August 2020). Preliminary results can be found at:
- ²Covid-19 Interim Guidance for Choral Organizations (June 2020) by a partnership of National Association of Teachers of Singing, American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, and Barbershop Harmony Society
- ³American Choral Directors Association’s COVID-19 Response Committee Report (June 2020)
- ⁴expert opinion based on current public health advice and medical expertise