

**Reopening with Choral Music:
Applying Scientific Data for Best Health Practices**

**An Open Letter to Elected Officials,
School Leaders, Health Departments & Districts,
and Organizational Administrators
December 16, 2020**



As communities in the Northwest work to stem and reverse the rising number of COVID-19 cases, many leaders are developing plans for keeping students and all people safe when we are able to safely begin reopening schools and organizations. As a result of scientific laboratory and public health studies, we have learned valuable information about coronavirus transmission since the first U.S. case was diagnosed on January 20, 2020. Due to a number of scientific studies undertaken at research universities, now professional education associations and music organizations have access to scientific data that can guide schools and choral organizations to develop practices that promote health and safety with singing. Scientists have significantly advanced our understanding of COVID-19 transmission: we have progressed far beyond the stage of nascent knowledge that we possessed at the time of the aerosol transmission event at the Skagit Valley Chorale rehearsal on March 10, 2020.

The Northwestern Region of the American Choral Directors Association strongly encourages leaders to utilize the most recent scientific data for reopening schools safely for choirs and music programs.

The Northwestern Region of the American Choral Directors Association (NW ACDA) is a professional organization of musicians, conductors, composers, and teachers devoted to supporting the work of more than a thousand members in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. While NW ACDA is not a scientific health organization, its 1,000 members are actively engaged with these professional studies in order to incorporate the most recent scientific data in order to keep singers safe. It is important for each school and organization to undertake a thorough study of the recommendations from these scientific studies: no two settings are exactly alike.

Several scientific studies provide guidance for how schools and organizations can reopen safely by following aerosol mitigation procedures for group singing. The [International Performing Arts Aerosol Study](#), led by the University of Colorado-Boulder and the University of Maryland and supported by 125 organizations, released its third round of data on November 13, 2020. The [written report](#) includes aerosol mitigation data for singing with a mask, ventilation and air exchange rates, outdoor and indoor settings, and spatial distancing.¹ The National Federation of State High School Associations summarizes these findings in its [press release](#). **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cite this resource in [Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19](#).** Schools and arts organizations should utilize this study in developing health and safety procedures appropriate to their facilities, demographics, and locations. Administrators should also consult with teachers and conductors on both the opportunities and inherent risks associated with in-person instruction as well as the degree of comfort for choral instructors.

¹ *International Coalition Performing Arts Aerosol Study*, University of Colorado-Boulder and University of Maryland. Nov 13, 2020.

[Study Report 3](#)

[National Federation of State High School Associations Press Release](#)

[Video Presentation of Results](#)

[Infographic Summarizing Recommendations](#)

Additional studies on aerosol transmission have been completed or are nearing completion, and the data from these research initiatives should be considered and incorporated. They include the University of Cincinnati Environmental & Public Health Sciences, which is particularly applicable to individual lessons.² Colorado State University is halfway through its test phase in its [Aerosol Emissions Study](#) and released [preliminary results](#) on August 17, 2020.³

We encourage elected officials, leaders of health departments and districts, teachers, choral conductors, and administrators to utilize these and forthcoming results for implementing safety procedures for singing in group settings.

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² *Characterization of Aerosols from Musical Performance & Risk Mitigation Related to COVID 19 Pandemic*, University of Cincinnati Environmental & Public Health Sciences. **Note:** HEPA Purifier effective rate begins at 37 minutes. [July 29, 2020 Results Presentation](#) (HEPA Purifiers). Website for research background: [U-Cincinnati Coronavirus Resources](#)

³ *Aerosol Emissions Study*, Colorado State University. [CSU Aerosol Emissions Study](#)

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