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Professor of Music Named to Advisory Board of COVID-19 Aerosol Study in the Performing Arts

July 27, 2020



Dr. Allen Henderson, professor of music at Georgia Southern University, was recently invited to join the advisory board of an important research study at Colorado State University. The study, *Reducing Bioaerosol Emissions and Exposure in the Performing Arts: A Scientific Roadmap for a Safe Return from Covid-19* aims to reduce the risk of human exposure and co-infection to SARS-COV-2 aerosol during performing arts activities. Only scant evidence exists to document the rate of aerosol release during performing arts activities and whether there are effective means to control such releases and reduce the risk for human exposure). This research seeks to enact a rigorous, data-driven approach to inform a safe return to activities for the performing arts community. “The research group will be testing approximately 100 singers and instrumentalists of varying age and gender, measuring the amount and size of bioaerosols emitted by them when undertaking various musical activities,” says Henderson. This study along with associated studies at the University of Colorado and University of Maryland hope to gather a strong data set to provide direction on the effectiveness of various control measures such as masks and room ventilation and filtration. “Each singer will go through a variety of singing exercises, speaking exercises, and will sing in a variety of styles so that we can provide guidance for those who sing music theater as well as pop styles in addition to classical literature. We will also be including singers of varying ages and who primarily sing non-classical styles in the study as well,” says Henderson.

Collectively, these studies will be the first of this magnitude in the United States to specifically measure the aerosols emitted by performers. A number of others studies have measured airflow but airflow studies conducted have not specifically measured aerosols which have been so often connected with the transmission of COVID-19. Henderson was invited due to his active work in the performing arts during the pandemic with

the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) (www.nats.org). He helped conceive and produce one of the most viewed webinars (<https://youtu.be/DFI3GsVzj6Q>) specifically on singing and COVID-19 which has been viewed on YouTube over 200,000 times since May 5th. He also helped produce a series of ten other events online to educate the singing community and provide training and resources to singers and teachers of singing. He and the staff and leadership of NATS converted a national conference slated to involve over 150 speakers and presenters into a virtual event in 8 weeks which drew record attendance and was lauded for its ability to bring the singing community together.

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