



## Department of Music

# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR MUSIC STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF

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## **INTRODUCTION: HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR STUDENT MUSICIANS**

The Music Department of Southern Connecticut State University, in compliance with standards set forth by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) must communicate to students, faculty and staff, health and safety hazards inherent in vocal and instrumental practice, performance and aural listening, both in general and in specific areas of specialization. This would also include the handling of equipment, materials, and technology, as well as musculoskeletal health.

The Music Department strongly believes in maintaining healthy practice and performance habits, and making available to all individuals resources and guidelines for healthy physical and mental awareness.

The Music Department, and Southern Connecticut State University as a whole also include sexual, emotional, or physical harassment or abuse, as an important area of Health and Safety Information for students. Harassment or abuse is a serious issue, and the University continues its policy of zero tolerance and has established clear guidelines to aid any student who has been a victim of harassment or abuse. Contact information for these issues and information for the campus Counseling Center, open to all students, is also included below.

It is important to note that health and safety depend largely on personal decisions made by informed individuals. The Music Department at Southern Connecticut State University has health and safety responsibilities, but fulfillment of these responsibilities cannot and will not ensure any individual's health and safety. Individuals must also inform themselves and use best practices to maintain health and well-being.

Anyone who practices, rehearses or performs instrumental or vocal music has the potential to suffer injuries related to those activities. Instrumental musicians are at risk for repetitive motion injuries. Instrumental injuries often include carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and bursitis. Incorrect posture, excessive force, overuse, stress, and insufficient rest can contribute to chronic injuries.

Many organizations now exist that are dedicated to helping musicians maintain and protect health. NASM has collaborated with the [Performing Arts Medical Association](http://www.artsmed.org) (PAMA) to develop a number of useful documents concerning health for musicians. Music students are urged to visit the PAMA website at: <http://www.artsmed.org> to gain knowledge on health and safety issues pertaining to their profession. Information may also be found by visiting the NASM website on neuromuskuloskeletal and vocal health: <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/publications/brochures-advisories/nasm-pama-nms-vocal-health/>.

For the most comprehensive listing of national health and safety regulations and recommendations, please see The United States Department of Labor *Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)* at: <https://www.osha.gov/law-regs.html> .

## PERFORMANCE INJURIES

### **1. Protecting hearing and preventing noise-induced hearing loss**

When talking about hearing loss, music itself is not the issue. The issue lies with loudness and duration (and to a degree, timbre) of sound. Music plays an important part in hearing health, but hearing health is far larger than music.

Hearing health is essential to your life, and certainly to your lifelong success as a musician. Your hearing can be permanently damaged by loud sounds, including music. A good rule of thumb is to avoid noises that are "too loud" and "too close" or that last "too long." You should avoid overexposure to loud sounds, especially for long periods of time. Losing your hearing – to any degree – is based on a combination of sound loudness and duration.

Below are listed a few decibel (dB) levels of sound emitted by typical equipment, and the *recommended maximum daily exposure times* as established by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):

85 dB	Vacuum cleaner	8-hours
90 dB	Blender, hair dryer	2-hours
94 dB	mp3/iPhone/ear buds @ ½ volume	1-hour
100 dB	lawnmower, mp3/iPhone @ full volume	15-minutes
110 dB	rock concert, power tools	2-minutes
120 dB	jet plane taking off – no hearing protection	immediate

Here are some guidelines for good listening habits:

- Musicians are listening all the time – to a variety of music in a variety of ways. Just like overuse of your muscles can lead to injury, overuse without care to your hearing can also result in injury to your hearing mechanism. Be conscious! Be mindful!
- Certain behaviors (controlling volume levels, avoiding noisy environments) reduce the risk of hearing loss.
- Use earplugs (Sensaphonics, ProGuard, Sensorguard) or other auditory noise-suppression material.
- The closer you are to the source of a loud sound, the greater the risk of damage.
- Don't crank your amp to the highest volume and then stand in front of it just to get the full effect – you can damage your hearing. Loss of hearing in your later years can often be a result of lack of auditory care in your younger years
- When using headphones in labs or while recording, keep your monitoring levels low, or at least at a reasonable level. This will protect your hearing and maintain your essential ability to notice detail.
- Be kind to your hearing, and respectful of its vulnerability.
- If you experience ringing in the ear, muffled-sounds in one ear or both, bring it to the attention of an instructor, or the chairperson, and make an appointment to see a doctor.

Here are some resources with information on hearing, and hearing loss:

- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
  - <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/noise-induced-hearing-loss>
- Advisories of Hearing Health I / National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA)
  - [http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=NASM-PAMA\\_Hearing\\_Health](http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=NASM-PAMA_Hearing_Health)
- Noise and Hearing Loss: Oregon Symphony Players Association
  - <http://www.concertgoersguide.org/backstage/noises.php>
- Protect Your Hearing Every Day – Information and Recommendations for Student Musicians (full version)
  - [http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/PAMA-NASM\\_Advisories/4a\\_NASM\\_PAM...](http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/PAMA-NASM_Advisories/4a_NASM_PAM...)
- NASM-PAMA Advisories on Hearing Health
  - <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/publications/brochures-advisories/nasm-pama-hearing-health/>

## **2. Neuromusculoskeletal Health**

The neuromusculoskeletal system refers to the complete system of muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments and associated nerves and tissues that allow us to move, speak, and sing. The system also supports our body's structure. "Neuro" refers to our nervous system – brain, spinal cord, and billions of nerves – that coordinates the ways in which our bodies move and operate. Our nervous systems allow us to move, to act, and to sense in both conscious and unconscious ways. We are utilizing the neuromusculoskeletal system when we are listening to, enjoying, singing, or playing music.

Basic Protection Steps For All Musicians:

- Gain the information about the body that will help you move according to the body's design and structure. The parts of the human body most relevant to movement include the nervous system, the muscular system, and the skeletal system. Muscles move our bones at joints. There is nothing inherent in the design of our bodies that should cause pain, discomfort or injury.
- Learn what behaviors or situations put your neuromusculoskeletal health at risk and refrain from these behaviors, activities, and situations.
- Always warm up before you practice, rehearse, or perform. It takes about 10 minutes before muscles are ready to fire at full capacity.
- Monitor your practice and avoid strain and fatigue. This means taking breaks when needed, avoiding excessive repetition or practice time if you notice, strain, or discomfort.
- Use external support mechanisms when necessary such as neck straps, shoulder straps, proper bench or chair height.
- For the health of your body in all of its functions, drink plenty of water daily – at least 8 glasses of water a day, and limit your consumption of caffeine and alcohol.
- Avoid smoking cigarettes and tobacco products, as well as vape devices.
- Be aware that some medications (antihistamines and allergy pills for example) may have side effects and dry out your tissues. Be aware of side effects and consult your physician if you have questions or issues.
- Be conscious of maintaining good health in mind, body, and spirit.

*NOTE: The listing above has been adopted from the NASM-PAMA document on Musicians' Health and Safety.*

### **3. Instrumental and Vocal Health**

One of the most important aspects for both instrumental and vocal music students is an awareness of how the body is acting and reacting. Bad posture, muscle tension – conscious and unconscious – can lead to injury and strain. A singer can injure vocal chords through strain due to lack of proper breath support, and an instrumentalist can acquire tendonitis by repeated actions under tension and bad posture.

An evaluation of other activities in which we engage in our daily lives can have an effect on our lives as musical performers. For example, long hours typing at a computer without sound posture and arm and wrist height is an invitation to tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome, as well as neck and back injury and aggravation.

According to the Sonoma State University's Department of Music, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and the Canadian Network for Health in the Arts offers information on health and safety related to a musician's physical and mental well being, with the following (to paraphrase):

- Evaluate your technique and avoid fixed, tense positions.
- Always warm up. Warming up slowly and with total consciousness will create greater mental focus and also prevent injury. An athlete takes care to warm up his/her muscles and body before training. A performing musician has the same responsibilities.
- Take breaks to stretch and relax...and breathe!
- Pace yourself. Know when enough is enough, or when pushing yourself will offer no further advancement but instead may result in injury.
- Pay attention to your body. Recognize when something does not feel sound.
- Remember, breathing and being conscious of your breath is as important for a singer as it is for an instrumentalist.
- If pain develops, or persists, or if your neuromusculoskeletal system does not feel "right" do not hesitate to consult a doctor or specialist.

### **4. Equipment Safety**

Safe lifting and carrying techniques, has been adapted for this document from *Brookhaven National Laboratory, Safety Requirement for a Safe Workplace*.

Points to Emphasize:

- Carry heavy or awkward equipment as a team
- Lift with the strong leg muscles, not the weaker back muscles

Proper methods of lifting and handling protect against injury. You need to "think" about what you are going to do before bending to pick up an object. Over time, safe lifting technique should become a habit. Here are 9 Basic steps of safe lifting and handling heavy music equipment or instruments:

- 1) Size up the load and check overall conditions. Don't attempt to lift by yourself if the load appears to be too heavy or awkward. Check that there is enough space for movement, and that the footing is good.
- 2) Make sure your balance is good. Feet should be shoulder width apart, with one foot beside and the other foot behind the object that is to be lifted.

- 3) Bend the knees; don't stoop. Keep the back straight, but not vertical. (Hint: tucking in the chin straightens the back.)
- 4) Grip the load with the palms of your hands and your fingers. Tuck in the chin to make sure your back is straight before starting to lift.
- 5) Use your body weight to start the load moving, and then lift by pushing up with the legs. This makes full use of the strongest set of muscles.
- 6) Keep the arms and elbows close to the body while lifting.
- 7) Carry the load close to the body. Don't twist your body while carrying the load. To change direction, shift your foot position and turn your whole body.
- 8) Watch where you are going!
- 9) To lower the object, bend the knees. Don't stoop! Make sure your hands and feet are clear when placing the load.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Sexual harassment or abusive misconduct in any form will not be tolerated at Southern. Southern Connecticut State University has been dedicated as a Social Justice Campus, part of the CSU System. The best information on sexual harassment issues may be found at these websites:

- <http://www.southernct.edu/offices/diversity/policy-procedures-governing-sexual-harassment.html>.
- <http://www.southernct.edu/sexual-misconduct/sexual-harassment.html>

**S.A.R.T. (Support and Resource Team) is an important site dedicated to student access and information for any sexual or abusive misconduct.** Names, contact phone, and email addresses are provided for all important University staff. Our staff is dedicated to assisting those in need. Information may be found at this important web address: <https://southernct.edu/vpas/files/documents/sart%20members.pdf>

### **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS:**

Two phone numbers are connected to the S.A.R.T network for use in an emergency: **203-392-6946** (SART Office), and **203-687-1252** (Cellphone, available 24/7)

**In an emergency you may also contact the Campus Police at 203-392-5375.**

**Any student wishing to file a complaint should contact The Director, Office of Diversity and Equity Programs, Ms. Paula Rice, Buley Library room 226. Phone: (203) 392-5568.**

Information on procedures for discrimination and harassment may be found at this web address: <http://southernct.edu/offices/diversity/complaintprocedures/index.html>.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH**

The pressures of college life can often create stress and anxiety. Peer pressure, academic pressure, insecurity, and academic competitiveness can sometimes feel overwhelming. Some of us navigate those types of situations with greater ease than others. However, we

all come from our own complex individual experiences and situations in life, which also reflect the complex times in which we live. A sensitive person recognizes this and treats others with the dignity and respect they would want for themselves.

In addition to physical health as performing musicians, the Music Department and Southern Connecticut State University recognize psychological and emotional health as equal components within the general topic of Health and Safety.

As such, below we have provided written information and connections to resources in several areas as an aid to students, faculty and staff. Resources pertaining to the practice of Yoga, Meditation, and performance anxiety as well as information regarding the SCSU Counseling Center are discussed below.

## **YOGA, MEDITATION AND PERFORMANCE ANXIETY**

The practice of various types of Yoga and Meditation has become increasingly popular in our everyday society as healthy mind-body training and activity – particularly among athletes and musicians. Numerous studies have been written about the proven benefits of both yoga and meditation activities. The practice of yoga and/or meditation has also been proven to help performance anxiety-related issues. In several studies\*, these benefits have been related to issues of health and safety in both athletic activities *and* in the traditional workforce.

For both vocal and instrumental musicians, the benefits of yoga and meditation practices have also seen positive results in all facets of practice, rehearsal and performance, including issues associated with performance anxiety. Some of these benefits include:

- Better stress management, and often, less stress
- Greater mental focus and concentration on the (present) moment
- Better control of the body – muscles, joints and movement
- Increased energy
- Greater sense of emotional well-being
- Increased focus on breathing, providing greater relaxation and release of both physical and emotional stress
- Improved diet and better health
- Being more aware of the people with whom you are interacting (mindfulness)

\* <https://healthyliving.azcentral.com/health-benefits-yoga-meditation-13016.html>

Many performers and individuals in the arts recognize the benefits of different types of yoga and mindfulness meditation in their creative work. The popular singer-songwriter, Sting, legendary conductor and concert violinist, the late Lord Yehudi Menuhin, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, and comedian and television personality Jerry Seinfeld, are a but a few examples of those who regularly practice some type of yoga and/or meditation.

Not surprisingly, many athletes – who are in their own way performing artists – engage in the practice of yoga and meditation. According to stack.com ([www.stack.com/a/yoga-athletes](http://www.stack.com/a/yoga-athletes)), some of the most well-known professional athletes in different sports have regularly practiced yoga and meditation, including basketball luminaries Shaquille O’Neal, LeBron James and Kobe Bryant, football superstars Ray Lewis and Victor Cruz, and baseball star Evan Longoria. Legendary coach of the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers,

Phil Jackson, was well known for introducing meditation and mindfulness practice as a team activity, to increase mental clarity and focus.

Meditation and Yoga have been found to aid concentration in a more relaxed, and focused state of being. Yoga has been found to be instrumental in the practice of muscle and joint flexibility and mobility – something relevant for musicians as well as athletes. For a musician, a good analogy would be the understanding of slow, focused practice, using the practice of yoga and meditation, as opposed to simply repetitive and faster practice, repeating the same figures in an attempt to “get it right.”

In other words, yoga and meditation can allow us to better engage in and focus on the *process* of learning – being in the moment – which will yield better results in a finished product, compared to focusing primarily on the *finished* product, which may ultimately result in greater mind and muscle tension, and forced stress; thus increasing the chance for acquiring bad habits and injury for both instrumental and vocal performing artists.

### **Mindfulness Training at SCSU**

Beginning in 2018, Southern has offered six Mindful Life Coaching Workshops, open to the entire campus students and personnel, free of charge. Mindful Life Coaching is a featured menu option on the Counseling Services Coaching webpage. Each of the six sessions focuses on a different aspect of mindful meditation training. The sessions will continue to be offered again during the 2019 academic year. For more information, please visit the Counseling Services main webpage: <https://www.southernct.edu/counseling-services/> and click on the *Mindful Life Coaching at SCSU* link.

### **On-line Meditation Phone Apps**

There are numerous phone apps available to the public related to mindfulness and meditation, designed to help with stress release and mental focus. One such example is *Mindspace*, which is available as a download (<https://www.mindspace.org.uk>). *Mindspace* provides short, progressive programs of guided meditation, each session lasting only a few minutes. It is accessible to everyone, from a first-time beginner to a person who already practices meditation. Many of these types of apps are available as downloads.

Examples of two medical journals featuring articles and abstracts that discuss the health benefits of yoga and meditation:

- Journal of Alternatives and Complimentary Medicine
  - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20105062>
- Journal of American College Health
  - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22686356>

For those wanting a glimpse of what types of movements, stretching and exercises are involved in an actual yoga class, online videos abound and can be viewed by anyone. For an example of a short (23”) entry-level yoga session for at-home viewing and participation, see the link below (“Yoga with Adriene”):

- <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=yoga&view=detail&mid=CB0190B6B718FDD55992CB0190B6B718FDD55992&FORM=VIRE>

The Music Department will offer workshops during the academic year in the practice of yoga, free of charge, and open to all students, faculty and staff. Please visit the Music Department website ([www.southernct.edu/music](http://www.southernct.edu/music)) for details. The music department will also engage the campus representative for health and safety during the each fall semester, to present a workshop for students in the use of noise suppressant ear buds, and to provide information on various aspects of student health and safety.

## **COUNSELING SERVICES**

University Counseling Services, located in Engleman Hall room B219, offers a wide variety of resources to help students adjust to life on campus. The primary purpose of Counseling Services is to provide psychological support as students pursue academic and personal goals, and to enhance the quality of their educational experience at Southern Connecticut State University.

Students may come by during walk-in hours from 1-3 pm, or call to set up an initial consultation appointment.

The phone number for Counseling Services is: **203-392-5475**.

The Counseling Center is prepared to manage emergency services, as well as related services including:

- Alcohol and Other Drug Services
- Health Services
- Wellness Center
- Collegiate Recovery Program

Counseling Services is staffed by a team of compassionate, experienced, and dedicated health care professionals whose primary purpose is the mental health and well-being of our students. Students who may be suffering from anxiety or other related issues should feel confident and secure in contacting the Counseling center and making an appointment to speak with a member of the Counseling Services staff.

Students are encouraged to visit the Counseling Services website at:  
<https://www.southernct.edu/counseling-services/>

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