

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

August 5, 2020

Dear Music Students,

On behalf of the entire Music Department, I look forward to welcoming you to the Fall 2020 semester. Whether you are joining us on campus or from elsewhere, this will be a semester unlike anything we've experienced before, with the challenge of the novel coronavirus affecting almost every aspect of our department. We will do everything we can to keep our students, faculty, and staff safe—and we will do it in a way that also preserves our musical values and educational goals. As we face the pandemic, a worldwide recommittment to racial equality and social justice, and a national election of unprecedented consequence, music will continue to be one of the most important ways we shape and express our shared humanity. In all our activities this year I hope this central fact will inform everything we do.

I'm writing today as the incoming chair of the Music Department to share with you the plan for music courses and department activities that we have developed in the last few months. All of our faculty have been involved in crafting this plan, and I'm enormously grateful for their expertise. The plan has been approved by the Dean of Harpur College and by Binghamton University's Public Health Advisory Group, and it will function as a supplement to the Restarting Binghamton plan that has been adopted by the university as a whole (see: <https://www.binghamton.edu/restarting-binghamton/index.html>). The full Music Department document follows this letter, but I want to make some general remarks here about the thinking that has gone into it:

**I. The Science** (see information from the World Health Organization, <https://bit.ly/2Dh70X8>).

**How the virus is transmitted:** There are three general vectors for transmission of the coronavirus: first, through respiratory **droplets** emitted during coughing, sneezing, speaking, singing, playing wind instruments, etc.; second, through touching **surfaces** on which droplets have settled and then touching one's nose, mouth, eyes, etc.; and third, via **aerosols**, respiratory particles smaller than droplets that remain airborne. While scientists do not have complete evidence of the prevalence of each type of transmission, it is generally agreed that droplet transmission is of greatest concern, since it can carry large concentrations of active virus. Aerosol transmission is less well understood, but is still of concern. Infected persons can transmit the virus even when they are not symptomatic, though the risk of infection increases when people are showing symptoms

**How transmission can be reduced:** General measures to be taken include minimizing travel, self-quarantining after travel from viral hotspots, widespread testing, and contact tracing for those who test positive. The university is implementing all of these measures as part of the Restarting Binghamton plan. The Music Department Plan address specific ways to reduce routes of transmission:

**Droplet** transmission can be greatly reduced by physical distancing, since under normal circumstances droplets fall to the ground within six feet of emission. Using a cloth mask is effective at stopping droplets when distancing is difficult to maintain, and as a general principle distancing and masking, used together, are highly effective at preventing droplet transmission. All Music Department activities will require these measures, with specific exceptions that are compensated for by additional measures of other kinds.

**Surface** transmission can be prevented by frequent hand washing or sanitizing, cleaning high-touch surfaces like doorknobs or piano keyboards, and avoiding sharing items like books, computers, or musical instruments. The Music Department's plan seeks to facilitate hand and surface cleaning, and to minimize sharing high-touch surfaces.

**Aerosol** transmission is of special concern for music making that includes singing or wind-instruments, since some evidence suggests that these activities may increase the emission of aerosols. Using masks and increased physical distancing may help reduce these emissions (and should be used as much as possible), but additional measures to reduce the accumulation of aerosols in the air can also be taken, including using larger rooms for activities, limiting the size of groups, limiting the duration of rehearsals or other activities, allowing rooms to remain vacant for a time after use to allow ventilation, opening doors and windows when possible, and working outdoors when possible. The Music Department plan includes all of these measures to mitigate the potential increased risk of singing and playing wind instruments.

## II. Music Department Classes

**Classrooms, technology, and online teaching:** like most Binghamton classes, some of our teaching this fall will be done online. This is necessary for three reasons: first, to accommodate students and faculty who for health or other reasons need to minimize personal contacts; second, because there are not enough classrooms on campus to accommodate every class with the necessary physical distancing; and third, because in some courses (especially in music) online teaching may be more effective than in-person teaching with the mask use, distancing, and other precautions that would be required.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Course Schedule currently online does *not yet include* all of the changes to Music Department Courses that are being implemented. These changes should be reflected in the Course Schedule within the next week or two.

**Academic Music (MUS) Courses:** Among academic music courses, the following will be **fully online**:

MUS 110 Music Cultures: Western Classical  
 MUS 112 Music Cultures: Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas  
 MUS 113 Jazz in American Music  
 MUS 115 Pop, Rock, and Soul Musics  
 MUS 215 Music Theory I  
 MUS 216 Musicianship I  
 MUS 302 History of Western Music II  
 MUS 315 Music Theory III  
 MUS 316 Musicianship III

All other MUS courses will include in-person teaching, often in a different room than originally planned, and often with some online component. The BingFlex option for students taking all classes online will be available for most classes.

**Music Performance (MUSP) Courses:** More detailed descriptions of the procedures and practices for MUSP courses are included in the attached Music Department Plan, but here is a summary of the basic principles:

**ENSEMBLES:** All ensemble courses will operate very differently this year. Ensembles will be subdivided into groups of 12 students or fewer, and will perform appropriate smaller-scale repertoire. Rehearsals will be limited to 40 minutes, and will be held in rooms large enough to allow distancing of 6 feet for non-winds instruments, 12 feet for singers (masked), and 15 feet for wind instruments (unmasked only when actually playing). Rooms will be left vacant for at least 40 minutes after each rehearsal to allow for additional ventilation. Rooms used by ensembles will include FA 111, Casadesus Recital Hall, FA 27, FA 21, FA 24, and the Anderson Center Chamber Hall. For example, a Monday evening Orchestra rehearsal might involve up to five small groups, rehearsing as follows:

	FA 111	Casadesus	Chamber Hall
7:00-7:40	Group 1	Group 2	(vacant)
7:50-8:30	(vacant)	(vacant)	Group 3
8:40-9:20	Group 4	Group 5	(vacant)

(sample only – exact rooms and times TBD by instructor)

Additionally, different groups might rehearse on Wednesdays, and some students might participate in more than one small group. Similar rehearsal schedules will be used for all the choral and instrumental ensembles. The exact schedule will depend on the number of students enrolled in each ensemble and the distribution of voices and instruments available. For students who prefer to take ensemble courses online, alternative activities will be available, which may include skill-building work, preparatory work on future repertoire, or listening and score-study assignments.

**AUDITIONS:** In general, students who have previously been in an ensemble or studio lessons will not need to re-audition. Students should contact their instructors to indicate their interest in continuing. For new students auditioning for ensembles or studio lessons, auditions will be held as usual during the first week or so of classes, either online or in person (in a large theater with distancing and other precautions). Please contact the appropriate area coordinator for information about auditions in your field:

Choirs: William Culverhouse, [wculver@binghamton.edu](mailto:wculver@binghamton.edu)  
Instrumental Ensembles: Paul McShee, [pmshee@binghamton.edu](mailto:pmshee@binghamton.edu)  
Voice & Opera: Thomas Goodheart, [tgoodhea@binghamton.edu](mailto:tgoodhea@binghamton.edu)  
Jazz Ensembles: Michael Carbone, [mcabone@binghamton.edu](mailto:mcabone@binghamton.edu)  
Piano & Piano Ensemble: Michael Salmirs, [msalmirs@binghamton.edu](mailto:msalmirs@binghamton.edu)

**STUDIO LESSONS & OTHER CLASSES:** Many studio teachers will be giving lessons online, and most studio classes will be held online or cancelled for this semester. Other MUSP courses like Lyric Diction, Secondary Piano, African Music Ensemble, etc., will be offered in person with some modifications; contact your instructor if you are planning to take these classes. For information about your studio teacher's lessons, contact them directly, or contact the appropriate area coordinator from the list above.

**PERFORMANCES:** Public performances with live audiences will not take place this fall. Instead, we will offer online presentations of recorded or live-streamed performances by students, ensembles, and faculty. Recordings will generally be made during regular rehearsal times, and released on the Music Department Website, YouTube channel, and Facebook page at least once each week. We hope this will be an effective way to broaden our reach in the community and beyond, and to build audiences for live performances when we are able to offer them again.

**And finally:** watch the conductor for changing dynamics and new tempos! Like any plan in our unpredictable era, things may need to change as new public health advice emerges, University plans shift, or as we in the Music Department find more effective ways to teach and to bring music to our world. We will rely on your flexibility, good sense, and cooperation as we begin this historic semester in a few weeks.

My very best wishes,



Paul Schleuse  
Music Department Chair  
Associate Professor of Musicology  
Binghamton University (SUNY)  
[schleuse@binghamton.edu](mailto:schleuse@binghamton.edu)

## **Binghamton University Guidelines for music classes, Fall 2020**

This plan outlines a plan for addressing the special challenges of teaching music performance courses at Binghamton University during the Covid-19 pandemic. These challenges include logistical issues involved in implementing the University's general policies on social distancing, face coverings, and hygiene, and also the factors unique to certain music making activities, such as singing, performance on wind instruments, and the close interactions typical of music teaching, both in person and online.

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### **I. General Principles**

#### **A. Restarting Binghamton**

All of the measures in this plan add to the requirements of the Restarting Binghamton plan. It is assumed that all campus-wide safety protocols are to be observed, except in cases specifically described. Where normal guidelines cannot be followed in music classes, alternate safety protocols are indicated.

*Before reading this plan, it is important to read the Restarting Binghamton Plan:*

<https://www.binghamton.edu/restarting-binghamton/restarting-binghamton-plan.html>,

*and to be familiar with the associated FAQ:*

<https://www.binghamton.edu/restarting-binghamton/frequently-asked-questions.html>

#### **B. Music-making and Risk**

All in-person activities in the context of the pandemic entail risk. Some music-making activities entail additional risks, few of which are fully understood or quantifiable at this time. This plan describes the various measures to be taken to reduce risks, but it cannot reduce risk to zero. These measures are similar to (and largely based on) those proposed by experts in epidemiology and public health who have developed such plans for other universities, schools, and performing-arts organizations. In particular, it draws on principles described in the Johns Hopkins/Peabody Institute of Music's "Guidance for Applied Instruction" (<https://peabody.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Return-to-Campus-Applied-Studies-Policies-1.pdf> – NB: due to rising new-case rates in Baltimore, Peabody has elected to go fully online for fall 2020; this was not due to any lack of confidence in their plan). Other plans consulted include those of the Eastman School of Music (<https://www.esm.rochester.edu/restart/>) and Manhattan School of Music (<https://www.msmanyc.edu/about/fall-2020-reopening/>). These are all major conservatories of music that face a somewhat different set of challenges, with more music students and less available space per capita, but the general principles for making music activities safer are similar: reduced numbers, greater distancing, mask use (except where impossible with wind instruments), special hygiene measures, and enhanced use of technology.

#### **C. Online vs In-Person Music Performance (MUSP) Courses**

In accordance with university-wide guidelines, no instructor or student will be required to take in-person courses to complete degree requirements. Online options will be available for any student

who needs to take a course for music major, music minor, or GenEd A credit to ensure on-time graduation. Some auditioned music performance (MUSP) courses will accept fewer students for in-person participation, but online alternatives will be available for students who qualify by audition and need the course for credit towards on-time graduation.

#### **D. Low-Latency Online Teaching Technology**

The Music Department is exploring the use of low-latency technology, which allows two rooms in Fine Arts (or other ethernet-wired spaces on or off campus) to interact online with minimized lag, allowing real-time musical interaction between musicians. Students using specially equipped studio spaces on campus could work safely (i.e., without masks) with faculty off-campus or elsewhere on-campus. Cleaning protocols and vacant time between users to allow for ventilation in these studios will be strictly required.

While the practical usefulness of low-latency technology in some teaching situations is difficult to assess, enhanced technology will at minimum provide a significantly better quality of interaction for music teaching than is possible with Zoom, Facetime, or other technologies that were used in the spring semester.

#### **E. Ventilation**

All music performance courses should be taught in rooms supplied with MERV13 filtration or better (already installed throughout Fine Arts), and should provide at least 4 air changes per hour (ACH), and preferably 8, which is the standard for theaters. Doors and windows should be kept open whenever practical to increase airflow. When weather, pedagogical needs, and space permit, MUSP courses are encouraged to meet outdoors.

#### **F. Cleaning**

Spaces used for higher-risk activities (singing, wind playing, use of shared instruments) should be disinfected frequently by Building Maintenance staff. Students and instructors should clean high-touch surfaces (keyboards, music stands, doorknobs, etc.) before and after use.

### **II. Studio Instruction (one-on-one lessons)**

#### **A. Strings**

*The string faculty have elected to conduct all lessons online; the Music Department will work to provide space for students learning online where necessary, with protocols for ventilation, room vacancy, etc.*

#### **B. Winds**

*Most of the brass and woodwind faculty have elected to conduct all lessons online; the Music Department will work to provide space for students learning online where necessary, with protocols for ventilation, room vacancy, etc. The following guidelines will apply to those teaching in person:*

**Distancing:** minimum 15-foot distancing in large rooms (e.g., FA 21, FA 27, FA 117, FA 111)

**Masking:** teacher at all times; students should unmask only when actually playing.

**Time:** lessons should not exceed 30 minutes, with 30 minutes of room vacancy between lessons. As schedules allow, teachers may alternate between two adjacent rooms, teaching in one while the other is vacant.

**Hygiene:** instruments, reeds, and mouthpieces should not be shared. If teachers need to adjust students' instruments, it should be done outside of the lesson setting, observing hand hygiene.

**Other issues:** —Up-close teaching and demonstration should not be used.

—When playing, instrument bells should not be pointed towards other people.

- When practical, bell covers and other safety equipment (such as the Win-D-Fender on flutes) should be used. The Department should provide such equipment to students who need it.
- Water keys and valves should be covered, and drainage should be collected in a towel and disposed of safely.

### **C. Percussion**

Distancing: minimum 6-foot distancing, in large rehearsal room (FA 111)

Masking: student and teacher, at all times

Time: lessons should not exceed 60 minutes.

Hygiene: sharing drumsticks and mallets should be minimized or eliminated; care should be taken with all shared instruments, both when playing and when moving instruments.

Other issues: up-close teaching and demonstration should be minimized.

### **D. Piano and Organ**

*Most of the keyboard faculty have elected to conduct all lessons online; the Music Department will work to provide space for students learning online where necessary, with protocols for ventilation, room vacancy, etc. The following guidelines will apply to those teaching in person:*

Distancing: side-by-side keyboards do not allow 6-foot distancing, so must be used with a clear barrier between the instruments. Instruments may also be repositioned to allow distancing.

Masking: student and teacher, at all times

Time: lessons should not exceed 60 minutes.

Hygiene: students and teachers are responsible for sanitizing keyboards before use.

Other issues: up-close teaching and demonstration should be minimized.

### **E. Voice & Vocal Coaching**

*Online teaching is strongly recommended. For lessons and coachings with pianists, a low-latency system may be preferable, with the coach or teacher and pianist (both masked) in one room, and the singer (unmasked) alone in another. The following guidelines will apply to those teaching in person:*

Distancing: maximum distancing (20+ feet) between student, pianist, and teacher, in theater spaces (Casadesus Recital Hall or Anderson Chamber Hall)

Masking: Students should unmask only when actually singing. Teachers and pianists should remain masked at all times, including when singing for demonstration.

Time: lessons should not exceed 30 minutes, with 30 minutes of room vacancy between lessons. As schedules allow, teachers may alternate between two adjacent rooms, teaching in one while the other is vacant.

Hygiene: pianists are responsible for sanitizing keyboards before use.

Other issues: up-close teaching and demonstration should not be used.

## **III. Ensemble Classes & Performances**

### **A. General Principles**

Large Ensembles (Orchestra, Wind Symphony, Jazz Ensemble, Studio Jazz Band, Piano Ensemble, Choirs) will not meet in their traditional forms in Fall 2020. As a general approach, these ensembles will be split up into small groups of 3-12 players (as available space allows) to perform suitable repertoire. Directors may choose to keep these groups together throughout the semester or to reform and recombine students for different projects as the semester progresses. In order to facilitate contact tracing of any people infected with coronavirus, ensemble directors should provide the Department Office with detailed rosters of each group's planned personnel, meeting places, and times, updating these rosters if groups are reorganized during the semester.

### **B. Auditions and Participation**

Generally, placement auditions will be waived for returning students who have participated in ensembles in the past; only new students will be required to audition. Auditions should be held in a concert space (Casadesus Recital Hall or Chamber Hall) with only 1-2 department staff present to coordinate the process and run A/V equipment; other faculty will observe the auditions via live-stream. If instruments are loaned to students for auditions, the instruments should be isolated for 5 days before and after such loans. Ensemble directors should take care to balance the competing needs to form balanced groups, keep the total number of students and small groups manageable, and prioritize music majors and minors for whom ensembles are required (note: music minors need 2 semesters of ensembles; BA Music majors need 4 semesters, and BMus Performance majors need 8). For Fall 2020 only, the department's usual priority of maximizing opportunities for as many qualified students as possible is reduced.

### **C. Registration and Scheduling**

Ensemble classes will meet within their normally scheduled time. Individual groups may rehearse for no more than 40 minutes, with room vacancy of at least 40 minutes between rehearsals. By alternating between multiple rooms, this will allow two rehearsal slots in an 85-minute class period, and three rehearsal slots within a 2-hour class period. When enough rooms are available, multiple groups may rehearse simultaneously. To maximize participation, directors may also schedule groups to rehearse once per week instead of twice.

### **D. Spacing**

For all ensemble activities the following spacing guidelines must be followed:

Singers: minimum 12-foot spacing; masks worn at all times (including while singing).

Wind Instruments: 15-foot spacing, masks worn except when actually playing.

Non-wind Instruments: 6-foot spacing, masks worn at all times.

### **E. Rooms**

Ensembles will generally have the use of the following spaces during their scheduled times (but allowing vacancy times as described above):

Harpur Chorale: FA 27, FA 21, Chamber Hall

Treble Chorus: FA 27, FA 21

Chamber Singers: FA 27, Chamber Hall

Orchestra and Wind Symphony: FA 111, Casadesus, Chamber Hall

Jazz Ensemble, Studio Jazz Band: FA 24, FA 21

Piano Ensemble: Piano teaching studios, with clear barriers between pianos

Other Music Department spaces may be used as size and scheduling allow. Vocal and wind-instrument groups in particular are encouraged to rehearse outdoors as possible.

### **F. Online Activities**

Students who are not participating in ensembles in person will be given alternative ways to complete the course in ways similar to (or improving upon) methods used in spring 2020. Students who do not need the course to fulfill a graduation requirement (or who could delay it until a future semester) can be asked to consider dropping the course (or not enrolling to begin with), but an online option will be available for qualified students (based on auditions) who need or want it.

### **G. Performances**

There will be no public performances this fall. Ensembles, students, and faculty are encouraged to produce content for online delivery in lieu of public concerts. These may be audio-only or video, live-streamed or pre-recorded. Directors and students are encouraged to think creatively about how

to engage online audiences with high-quality performances. The Department hopes to release content online weekly or more often beginning by mid-September, featuring student ensembles and performances by individual students and faculty.

#### **IV. Other Performance Classes**

##### **A. Chamber Music & Single-Instrument Ensembles**

In most cases these classes will not run, and some of their activities will be rolled into Large Ensemble activities. Adjunct faculty who normally use some of their contracted hours to work with these kinds of groups may work with the Large-Ensemble “breakout groups” instead, in coordination with the ensemble directors, or offer online studio classes.

##### **B. Opera Workshop**

Opera Workshop will meet online, with some in-person coachings with single students or small groups taking place in the Chamber Hall at its scheduled time, following the guidelines for choral groups or voice lessons, respectively.

##### **C. Studio Classes, Vocal Literature, Diction, Beginning Voice (MUS 143), etc.**

These classes can be held if rooms are available of sufficient size (Casadesus and the Chamber Hall are the best candidates), but alternative formats (BU’s rotating-student or A/B models) may be necessary. All music making should follow the appropriate guidelines for ensembles described above.

##### **D. Group Piano Classes**

Beginning piano (MUS 141) and Secondary Piano (MUSP 258A & 258C) will be taught as usual in FA 168, with only half (6 of 12) of the pianos. Beginning Piano will be taught on a Student Rotation model to accommodate this; Secondary Piano is normally capped at 6 in any case. Students and instructors are responsible for sanitizing pianos and other surfaces before use.

#### **V. Instruments**

##### **A. Instrument Rentals, Lockers**

Instrument rentals and lockers will be available. Students must not share instruments or access to lockers for any purpose. Students are encouraged to bring their own instruments to campus if possible.

##### **B. Student’s Instruments**

In teaching settings, teachers should avoid touching a student’s instrument to make adjustments or check function (e.g., sticking keys, reed adjustments, tuning) unless absolutely necessary; for wind instruments, such adjustments should be made outside of the lesson setting. Hand sanitizer should be used after such activities.

##### **D. Shared Departmental Instruments and other equipment**

Shared department-owned instruments (pianos, organs, harpsichords, percussion) and other equipment (music stands, rehearsal chairs, amplifiers, microphones, recording equipment, etc.) that will need to be touched by multiple people must be diligently sanitized before and after use. Access to such instruments and equipment should be carefully controlled, and users and instructors should consider whether such access is absolutely necessary.

#### **VI. Practice Rooms**

Access to practice rooms will be on a strict schedule that allows ample vacant time between users in each room, during which doors should be left open to increase ventilation. Access will be limited to those enrolled in ensembles or studio lessons. Cleaning supplies for high-touch surface should be provided in every practice room, including disinfectants safe for use on pianos. Students should be encouraged to find alternative spaces to practice, including outdoors when possible. Instructors should be understanding about students' limited access to practice rooms.