

How Can We Sing a Song to the LORD?

The latest research on singing and COVID-19 transmission, and its implications for Catholic liturgy

Opening Prayer

It is important that we acknowledge that we are grieving.

Playing music and singing together is more than our job, it is our ministry, our calling, our vocation.

And yet the experts are telling us that playing music and singing together is dangerous to our health and the health of those we love.

We mourn the failure of expectations.

We mourn the way things could have been.

We ask God to comfort us in our grief.

When in our Music God is Glorified

A Reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

What will separate us from the love of Christ?

Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly
through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities,
nor present things, nor future things,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor any other creature will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let us pray:

O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Forward With Christ

- ▣ May 18, 2020 – Music Ministry Guidelines
 - Go to Diocese of Cleveland website
 - ▣ <https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/>
 - Scroll down to “Forward With Christ”
 - Click “Worship Guidelines” on left
 - Click “Additional Information” left
 - Scroll down to “Music Ministry Guidelines”
 - Click “Download this resource”

Fr. Don Oleksiak Memo to Priests

May 17, 2020

“The provincial documents are called “directives” however, they do not have the force of particular law nor are you expected to implement each item listed in the 8+page document.

...In developing our respective guidelines, we rely on the good pastoral judgment of each pastor of each parish. You know your parishioners and parish facility better than I do. Therefore, I urge you to do what is best for your particular situation keeping in mind the current instructions/executive orders from the governor and state health officials.”

August 17, 2020 Singing @ Mass OFW Recommendations

- Masks for everyone – including all singers!
- No congregational singing
 - If done, severely limited (<30 minutes total time singing)
- Physically distanced (>6') cantor singing unfamiliar music for those Mass parts that may be relegated to a schola
- No choral/schola singing
 - If done, choir/schola should be masked, physically distanced from congregation, singers physically distanced >6' from one another, and singing severely limited (<30 minutes total time singing)
- Preference for string or percussion instruments
 - All instrumentalists masked!
- Limited use of physically distanced wind or brass instruments using PPE as described below
- Only 1 person should use the ambo/a cantor stand/a microphone for any given liturgy, with minimum 30 minutes between liturgies to allow for HVAC air changes

Where are you getting all this?

- ▣ US National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health 2020 July 2 article
“Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic: What We Know and What We Don’t”
- ▣ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7330568/>

Where are you getting all this?

- ▣ International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study, preliminary results
 - University of Colorado Boulder – Dr. Shelly Miller
 - University of Maryland – Dr. Jelena Srebric

- ▣ National Association of Teachers of Singing August 10 webinar, “Preliminary Study Results on the Safety of Singing”
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oWlrV3rCao
 - *Information presented was based on the Coalition Study preliminary results*
 - *When asked specifically about singing in churches, Dr. Srebric said she considered it “to be a high risk event.” (webinar ~51:00min-53:00min)*

Where are you getting all this?

- ▣ “‘A Smoking Gun’: Infectious Coronavirus Retrieved From Hospital Air,” NYTimes article, August 11, 2020, by Apoorva Mandavilli
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/11/health/coronavirus-aerosols-indoors.html>

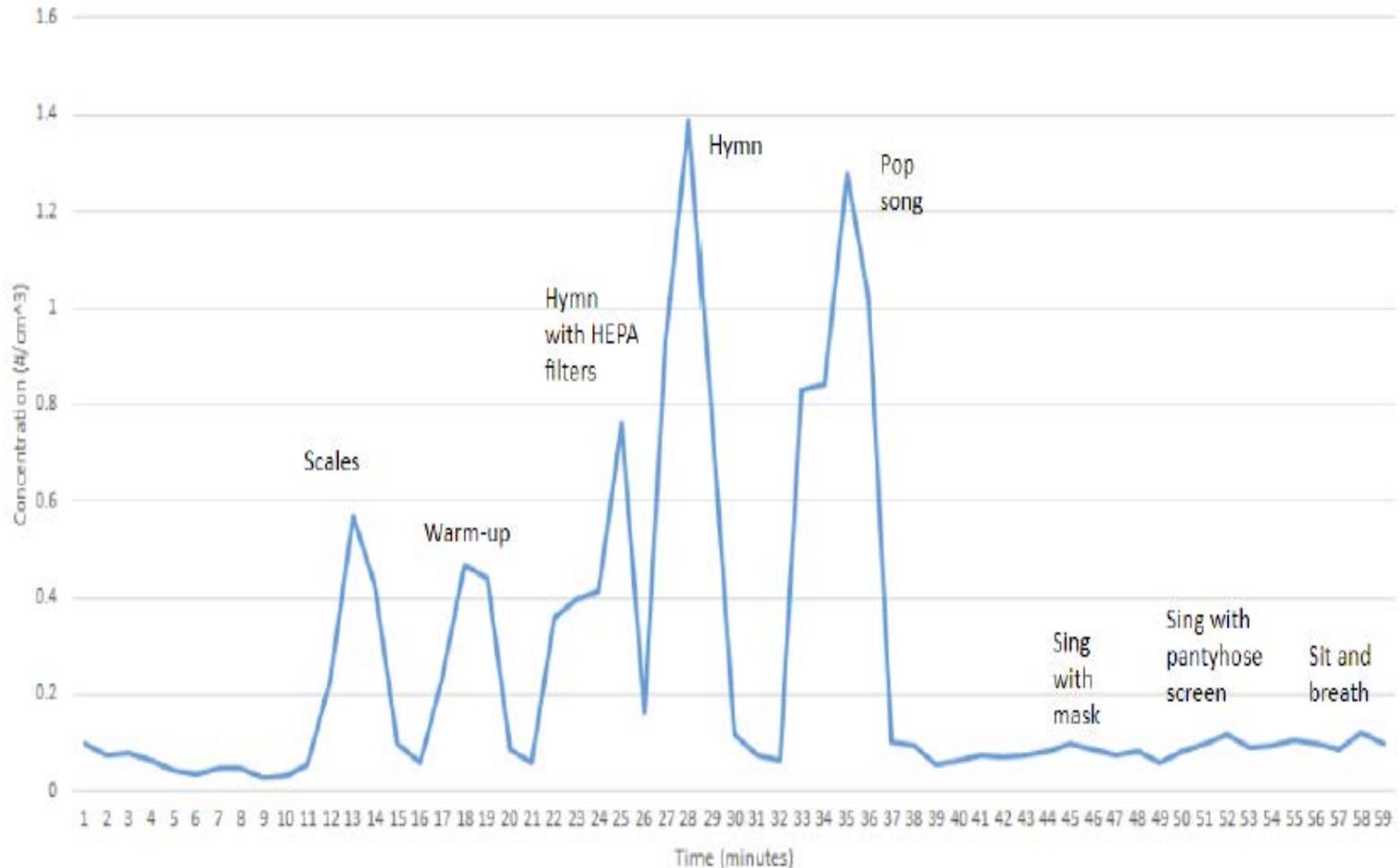
- ▣ National Association of Teachers of Singing August 12 webinar “Special NATS Chat: Returning to Singing Post COVID – What We Need to Know”
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xP2EkjuT7vg>

Where are you getting all this?

- ▣ “Low-cost measurement of facemask efficacy for filtering expelled droplets during speech,” *Science Advances*, August 7, 2020
 - <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/08/07/sciadv.abd3083>

Study Prelim: Singing Aerosols

Soprano Singing, APS: Total Concentration over Time



“‘A Smoking Gun’: Infectious Coronavirus Retrieved From Hospital Air,” NYTimes article,
August 11, 2020, by Apoorva Mandavilli

- ❑ “The team collected air samples from a room in a ward dedicated to Covid-19 patients at the University of Florida Health Shands Hospital. Neither patient in the room was subject to medical procedures known to generate aerosols...
- ❑ The team used two samplers, one about 7 feet from the patients and the other about 16 feet from them. The scientists were able to collect virus at both distances and then to show that the virus they had plucked from the air could infect cells in a lab dish.
- ❑ The genome sequence of the isolated virus was identical to that from a swab of a newly admitted symptomatic patient in the room.
- ❑ The room had six air changes per hour and was fitted with efficient filters, ultraviolet irradiation and other safety measures to inactivate the virus before the air was reintroduced into the room.

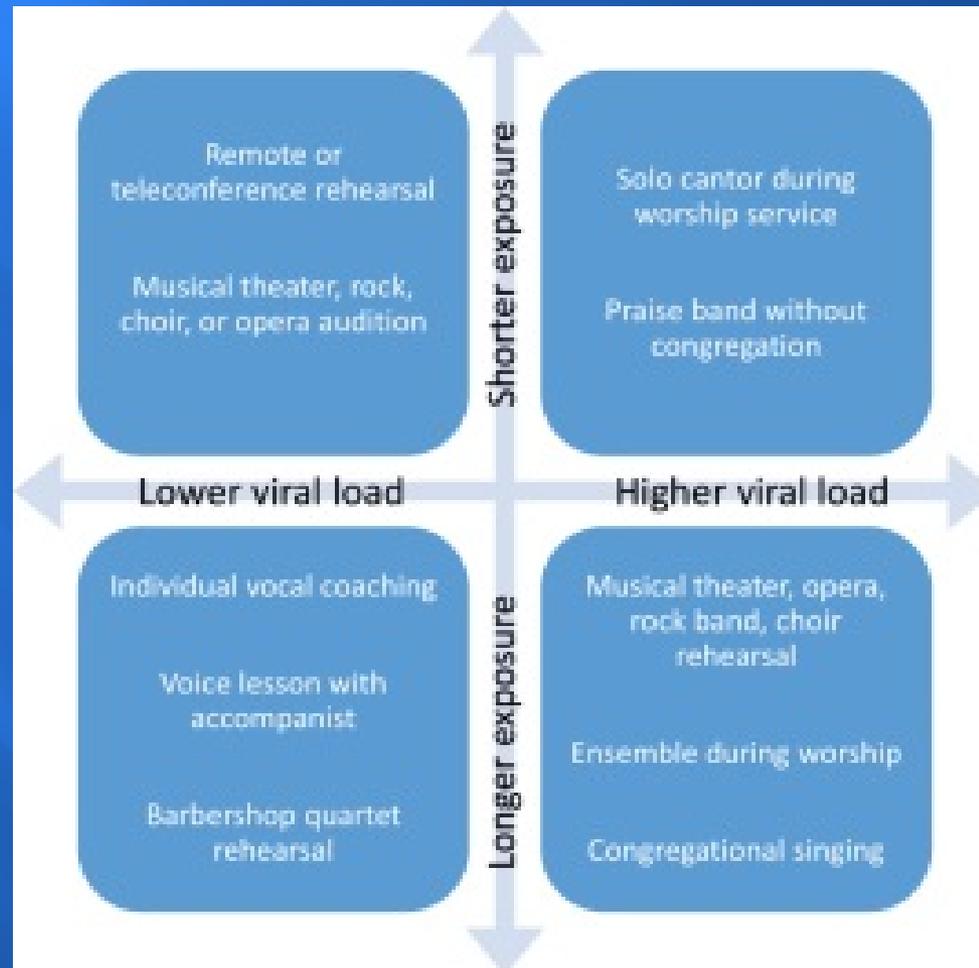
Risk Assessment Factors

- ▣ Ventilation
 - Incl. air purification strategies
- ▣ Physical distancing
- ▣ Time

Risk Assessment: NIH article “Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic

- ▣ COVID-19 is likely spread by respiratory particles
- ▣ Phonation produces droplets and aerosols
- ▣ Environment affects risk
- ▣ PPE helps prevent virus spread
- ▣ Age, race, income level, and health affect risk

Risk Assessment: NIH article “Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic



Risk Assessment: NIH article “Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic

- ❑ It cannot be overemphasized enough that the data we have about COVID-19 and the SARS-CoV-2 virus are still preliminary.
- ❑ It should be our goal to facilitate efforts for ever-increasing adoption of evidence-based practice in our field.
- ❑ It is incumbent on the voice and performing arts communities to consider how to incorporate available evidence and scientific consensus, albeit evolving, into practice.
- ❑ Choosing a correct path is difficult and requires balancing objective and dispassionate review of information against emotionally charged or inherently biased reactions or instincts.

What are JMM's inherent biases?

- ▣ “We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.”
 - (Catholic Social Teaching)

- ▣ "I am not allowed unnecessarily to jeopardize human life. It may happen that no harm results, but the acts are certainly dangerous and *the morally safer course must be chosen.*"
 - (Fagothey, Austin. *Right and Reason: Ethics in Theory and Practice*, 2nd edition, emphasis original, pgs. 214, 218)

Musician, know thyself...

<https://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/2122>

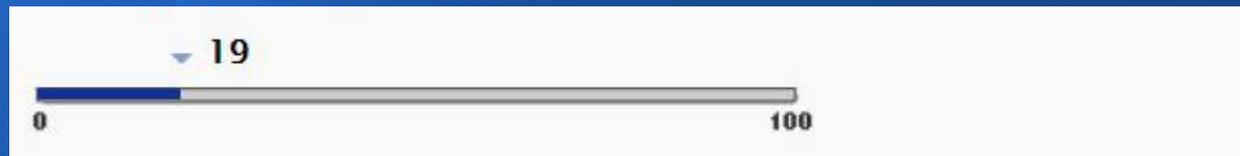
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100



JMM's score...



What about you?



<https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/>

The horizontal dotted lines with risk estimates are based on real-time COVID19 surveillance data. They represent estimates given the current reported incidence [C_1] (\square), 5 times the current incidence (\blacktriangle), and 10 times the current incidence (\bullet). These estimates help understand the effects of potential under-testing and reporting of COVID19 incidence.

Real-time data last updated at: 2020-08-16 17:07:31
Historic data last updated at: 2020-08-16 16:08:22

Limit prediction to state level?

Select state

OH

Event size:

140

DOWNLOAD PLOT

C_1 = Current reported incidence

Chance someone is COVID19 positive at C_1

(14,324): 11.5%

Chance someone is COVID19 positive at 5x C_1

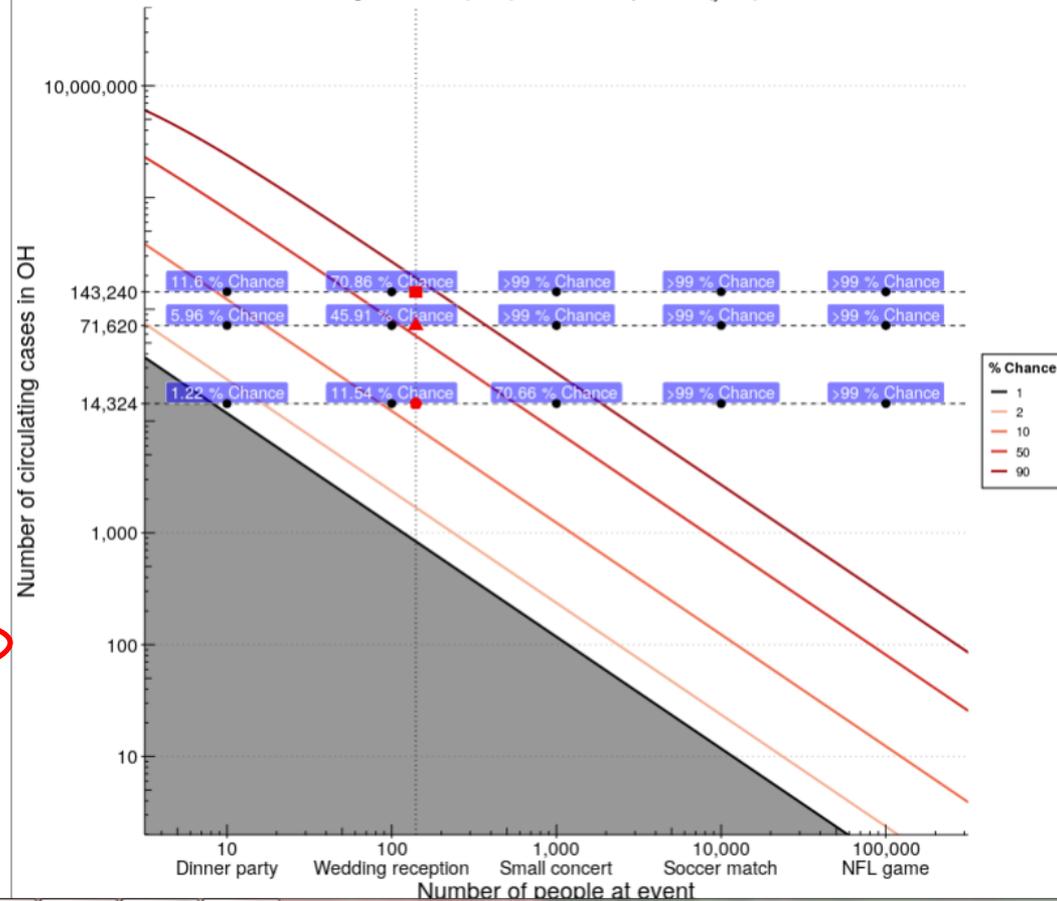
(71,620): 45.9%

Chance someone is COVID19 positive at 10x C_1

(143,240): 70.8%

COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planner - OH - 2020-08-17

Estimated chance that one or more individuals are COVID-19 positive at an event given event size (x-axis) and current case prevalence (y-axis)



Risk Mitigation

1. Ventilation

a.k.a. “Out with the bad air, in with the good air”

- Outdoors is best
 - If tented, no sides



Risk Mitigation

1. Ventilation

a.k.a. “Out with the bad air, in with the good air”

- Super complicated for indoor areas!
 - Direction of Airflow
 - Air Changes per Hour (ACH)
 - Air filtration measures (MERV 13+, HEPA)
 - Portable area air filtration devices for the conductor/director/teacher were recommended
 - Density of population vs volume of air in the space

Risk Mitigation

1. Ventilation

- Indoor mitigations include:

- Use of fans to bring outdoor “good air” inside to displace the “bad air”

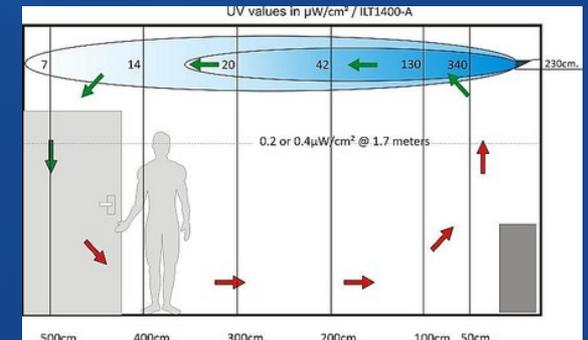


- Use of high-rated air filters (MERV 13+)



- Use of portable area air filters with HEPA filters

- Upper Room Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) air purification system installation



But, remember...

“‘A Smoking Gun’: Infectious Coronavirus Retrieved From Hospital Air,” NYTimes article

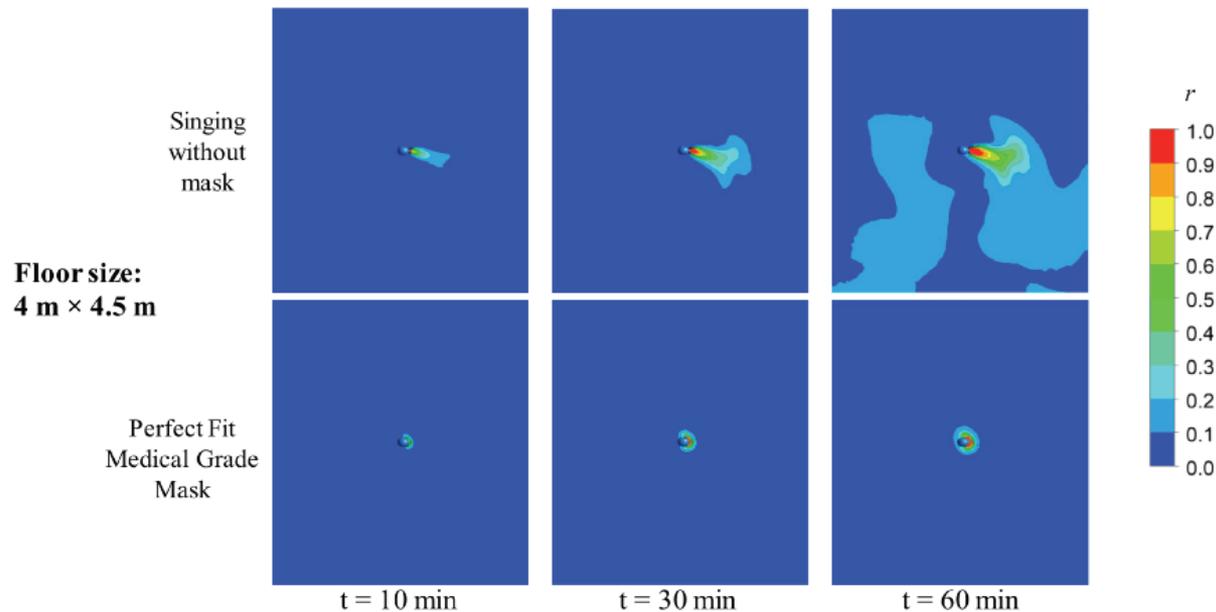
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Risk Mitigation

2. Masks with Physical Distancing
 - The “Spit Cloud”

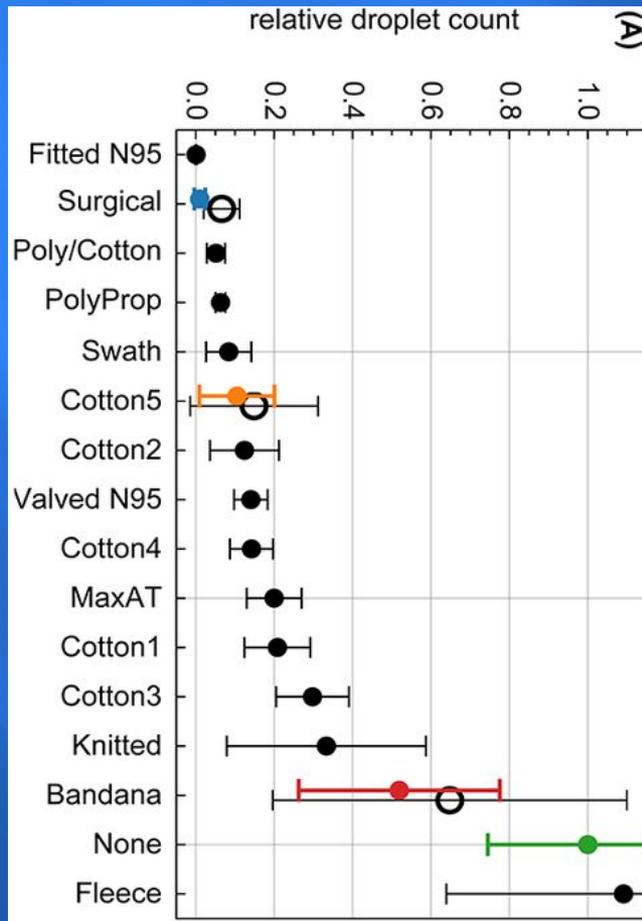
Indoor Case Study: Mask Impact on Infection Risk

Infection risk r by Wells-Riley equation at the height of mouth opening, with breathing rate of 8 L/min.

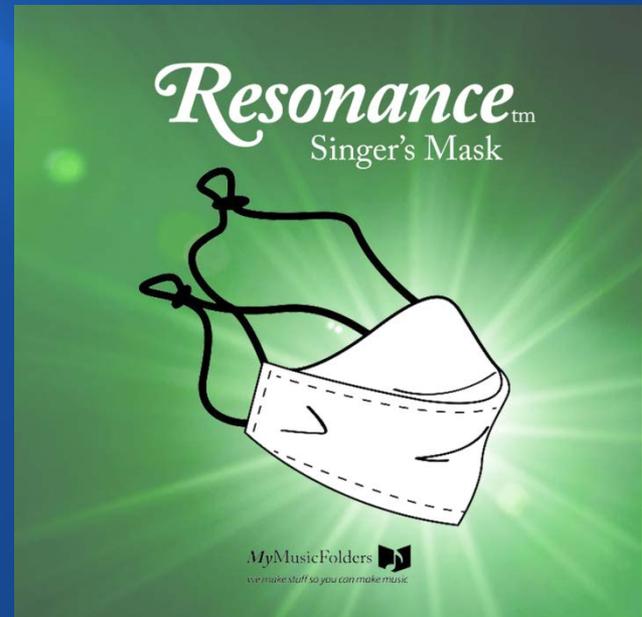


Masks

- “Low-cost measurement of facemask efficacy for filtering expelled droplets during speech,” *Science Advances*, August 7, 2020



These not tested...



At issue: “Perfectly Fitted” Masks

- ▣ Not everyone will be wearing a perfectly fitted mask, so the “Spit Cloud” reality will be something between “no mask” and the “perfect fit mask.”
 - *N.B. - This is a reason why I recommend no or severely limited congregational singing, and only one person using the ambo/cantor stand/mic*

- ▣ “There is no mask that can do what distance does.”
 - Dr. David Young, “Special NATS Chat: Returning to Singing Post COVID - What We Need to Know,” August 12, 2020 webinar

Wind/Brass Instrument PPE

- ▣ “Pantyhose will save us!”
 - Dr. Jelena Srebric, “Preliminary Study Results on the Safety of Singing” webinar August 10, 2020

- ▣ Player masked, hole cut for mouthpiece

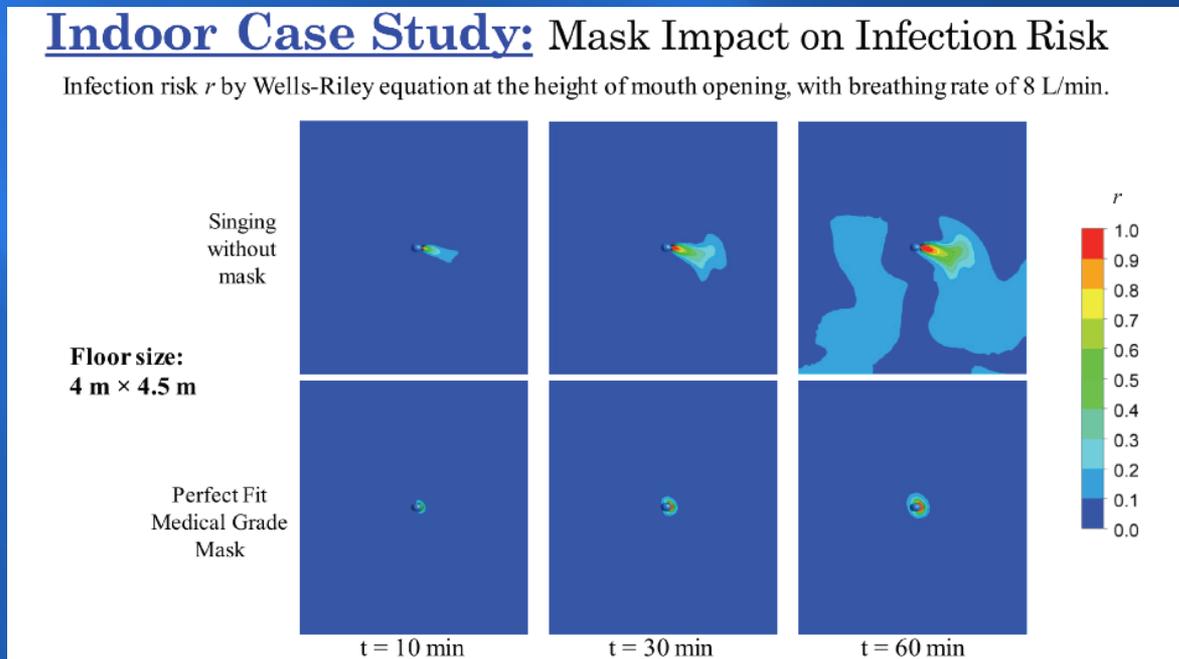
- ▣ Bell covered (*2-layer pantyhose screen seemed to work well*)

- ▣ Keys covered (*instrument bag, or somesuch*), **if possible**

Risk Mitigation

3. Time

- The study prelim recommendation is for 30 minute maximum singing experience (rehearsal, class, whatever) with a 30 minute break – leaving the room entirely empty to allow for air change...not all Masses fit that time frame.
- *N.B. This is a reason why I recommend no congregational singing.*



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So, what CAN we do?

OFW Suggestions

- See if parish seamstresses will make parish-branded well-fitted masks for cantors and/or choir
- Consider online hymn-sings for the choir and/or parish (a'la *Open Your Hymnal* <https://openyourhymnal.com/>)
- Consider using antiphons for Entrance, Prep, Communion...lots of free resources online
 - see Luke Massery's excellent primer video at <https://lmassery.wixsite.com/antiphon>
- Consider music you wouldn't normally use because it's too difficult for the congregation
- Consider if you have enough physically distanced space for a duet, trio, or quartet singing for high holy days

So, what CAN we do?

OFW Suggestions

- Check with your parish or parish school for apprentice string players, if you don't already have some
- Experiment with percussion instruments
- Limited use of physically distanced wind or brass instruments using PPE on high holy days
- Explore alternative cantor stands/locations around your worship space to avoid sharing a mic/stand/ambo.
- Etc...

Thank you!

- ▣ You are not only musicians, you are ministers, building bridges of trust and care with the congregations you serve. Thank you for your response to God's call, and for your creativity!

Shelter Me

by Fr. J. Michael Joncas, recorded by Spiritu



Refrain: O shelter me, O shelter me:
the way ahead is dark and difficult to see.
O shelter me, O shelter me:
all will be well if only you will shelter me.

Q & A

Q & A

- ▣ Do we have any idea if missalettes, or our yearly subscription Breaking Bread will be allowed back in the pews for parishioners to read from any time soon?