

**There is a legal duty of care as an Orchestral Group to each other and to the public.**

- 1 Do not come to rehearsal/performance if you are unwell**
- 2 Do not come to rehearsals if you are a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case**
- 3 Practice good hand hygiene.**
- 4 Minimise contacts.**
- 5 Maintain social distancing whenever possible.**
- 6 Wear a face mask in public spaces and at rehearsal/performance.**
- 7 Do not shake hands, high five or hug others.**

### ***Introduction***

A **hazard**, as defined by the 'is something that can cause harm', and a **risk** 'is the chance, high or low, that any **hazard** will actually cause somebody harm.

Without proper preparation and planning suspected/confirmed cases of Covid-19 can put orchestra members and public welfare at risk. Aside from the obvious health concerns there can be significant reputational damage. Before going back into rehearsals every orchestra group should complete a Covid-19 specific risk assessment to identify what measures will need to be implemented to control the risks associated with the transmission of Covid-19.

Risk Assessment covering exposure to Covid-19 will differ from one group to another. The purpose of this guide is to pose the questions that need to be asked so that appropriate risk assessments may be created specific to your place of assembly and include all group members and other third parties.

### **Context**

Before the risk assessment is undertaken, the assessor must first ask:

- who is doing what and how?
- where they are doing it and
- who is likely to be affected by these actions?

Understanding the tasks or activities is vital to assess exposure and to qualify any subsequent control decisions.

### **Risk Assessment Hazard**

The risk assessment must recognise the virus as a hazard. It should reflect that the virus is spread in minute water droplets and aerosolisation that are expelled from the body through;

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Talking, singing, breathing
- Wind instruments

The virus can be transferred to the hands and from there to surfaces. It can survive on surfaces for a period after transfer (depending on such things as the surface type, its moisture content and temperature). The risk assessment should conclude that if it is passed from one person to another, while many survive infection, some may die from the disease and so should be regarded as a high hazard.

### **Likelihood**

#### **Exposure**

Consideration must be given to how exposed people are to Covid-19. There are a list of questions to consider and this is not an exhaustive list, as your specific place of assembly will have specific considerations along with other factors to consider:

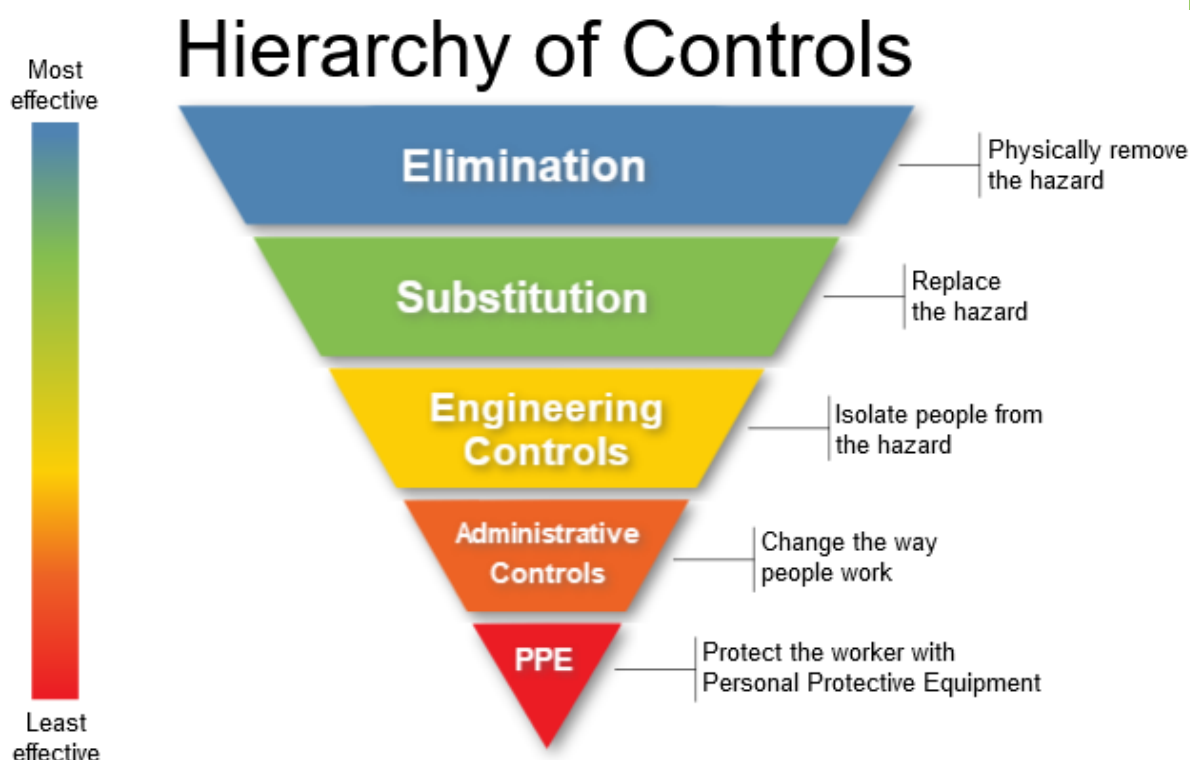
- 1 How might people come into contact with infected people, how frequently and for how long?
- 2 How do orchestra musicians travel to practice and does this expose them to public crowds?
- 3 Do you know who within the group are in the vulnerable groups, with underlying medical conditions which makes them more susceptible to the disease? How do you capture this information?
- 4 Do you know who have people in their household who may have increased exposure to the disease?
- 5 If someone in the orchestra's household must isolate, what will you require your member to do?
- 6 The increased risk of exposure where musicians meet people who may be carrying the virus?

Once the answers to the questions are understood, controls to mitigate them can be better considered and implemented.

### **Control**

The safety of hierarchy of control can serve you well in considering what can be done. Any mitigating controls devised and implemented must reduce the exposure of musicians, venue workers, contractors and members of the public.

Control considerations must include identification of those who may have the disease, preventative measures of and what to do if a group member or member of the public has contracted the disease. In other words, there may be elements of management systems design to think about. Decisions about what may be done must be realistic and reasonably practicable: achievable given the resources you have.



## Elimination

Elimination is the best form of control. Can we eliminate the virus? Rehearse at home.

## Substitution

Can practice of playing as a group be replaced for a period of time, where the group focuses on other requirements or moves its practice online as part of a blended learning approach?

## Engineering Controls

Engineering controls are things which place a physical barrier between the person and the hazard or provide mechanical reduction of the hazard.

Screens: Placing screens between people

Ventilation: Rehearse outdoors and if indoors ensure the space is suitable with proper ventilation and space (the larger a space the better!)

## Administrative Controls

Administrative Controls provide the best options for most musician groups. The risk assessment must consider how you will keep the assembly space and equipment clean, adjust your rehearsal practices and ensure people are safe.

Questions and Considerations about designing a safe workplace should include:

1. Can you redesign the rehearsal space to maintain social distancing?
2. Can you repurpose rooms to spread musicians and others out?
3. Do you need to consider reducing the number of musicians required to practice in an area? (e.g. musicians rehearse remotely from home)
4. Identify the places where people find it difficult to avoid one another (entrance/egress points, foyers/reception, security points, lifts, canteens toilets resource rooms, hot desks)?
5. What measure can you put in place to reduce busy points. (phased rehearsals, practice rotations, breaks, closures)?

6. Can you provide more handwashing or sterilisation facilities around the assembly space?
7. Identify the places where most people commonly touch (e.g. door handles, control panels, lift buttons, music stands, handrails, kettles etc)?

### ***Cleaning***

Cleaning is a vital control. Agree with the venue what is needed for rehearsal/performance and who will undertake the required cleaning with clear responsibility on returning to practice. Have you:

1. Considered how you keep commonly touched surfaces sterile and how much more frequently they need to be cleaned?
2. Are you using an effective strength cleaner to kill the virus?
3. Have you amended cleaning checklists to ensure all areas that need it, are being frequently cleaned?
4. Considered the impact on your cleaners or contract cleaners? Make sure people have what they need when cleaning as regards PPE etc.
5. Agreed a cleaning schedule with your rehearsal/performance space, pre and post rehearsals/performance. Can the venue leave materials there for the group to assist as part of the venues cleaning procedure?
6. As they clean the viral loading on cloths/ mops will increase, do they have enough to be able to change frequently?
7. Where and how do they dispose of contaminated cloths/ waste bins of tissues?

### ***Equipment***

Question and consideration about rehearsal/performance equipment

1. Can equipment be allocated to an individual rather than shared? e.g. own instruments, music stands etc.
2. Formation of condensation from the exhaled air in the instrument which can be regarded as other potential virus spreading material. It is recommended to avoid draining of condensation onto the floor and provide a container (drip tray) or absorbent blotting paper to collect the condensation, and disposed of in a closed bin.
3. If equipment must be shared, then how will it be cleaned between uses? (e.g. chairs, desks microphones, pianos/keyboards, instruments, music stands.
4. If someone falls ill with Covid-19, what deep cleaning process will be necessary on the equipment they have been using and the areas of the building they may have been in contact with?
5. What washing / hand sterilising facilities are available to group members and public, how frequently should they wash their hands to reduce potential viral load and spread on equipment and in the environment.

### **Wind Instrument Playing**

Is there an increased risk of droplets when playing wind instrument?

Research has shown that playing a wind instrument requires an intensive exchange of air in the lungs and airways with , at time high air pressures. The extent to which the viral load is reduced by the air's path through the instrument is currently unclear, and a medical research paper from [Hochschule Für Musik Freiburg](#) has reduced the social distancing for wind from the original distance of 3-5 meters to 2 meters as sufficient as a minimum distance, because no additional movement on indoor air was detected at his distance during their medical test. Therefore, the risk of droplet infection, if the social distancing protocol is being observed, can be classified as very low.

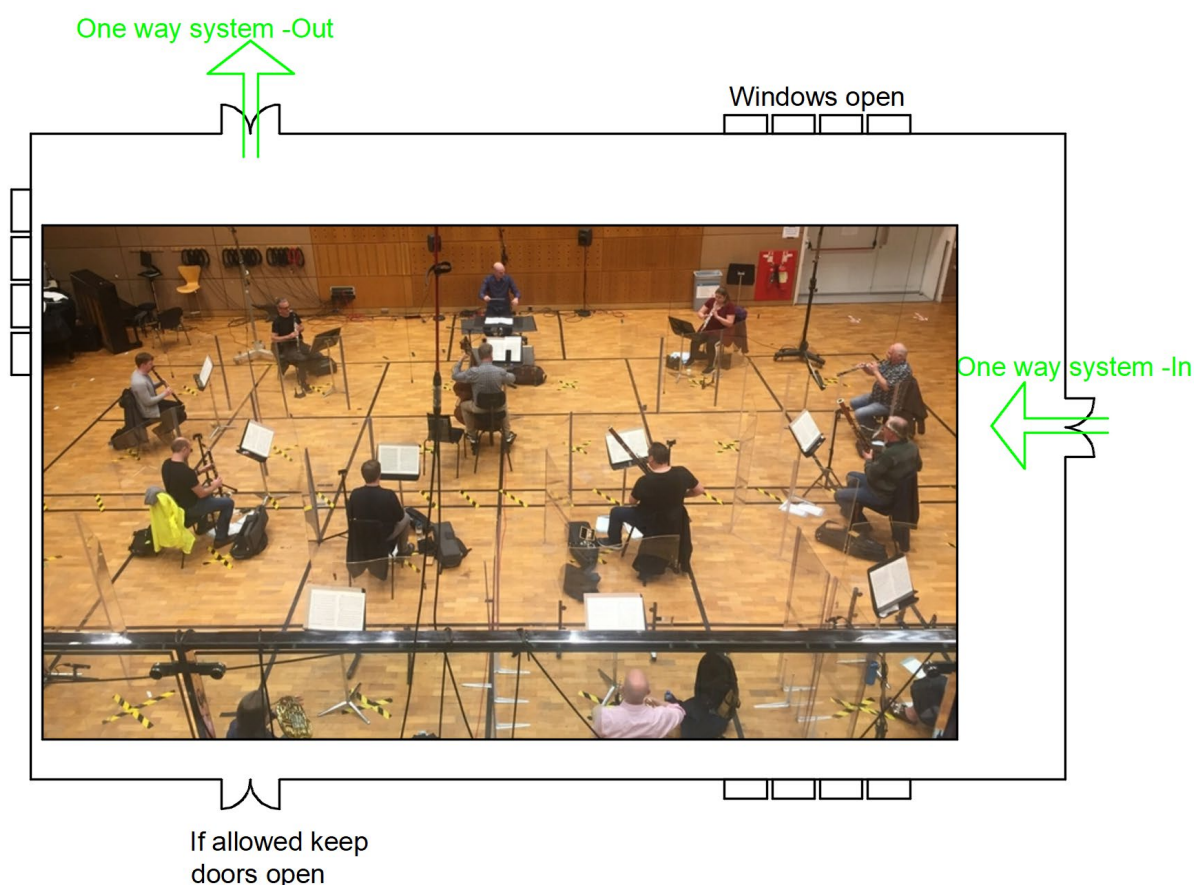
## Cleaning Instruments

- Wind Instruments should be not blown through to clean them. A sperate room should be provided for this cleaning of wind instruments.
- A strict protocol for instrument-cleaning and personal hygiene should the developed and communicated.

## Safe Systems of Orchestra Work

Question and consideration about Safe Systems of Orchestra practice.

1. Can group musicians work be reorganised to avoid musicians being in contact with each other? When this cannot be avoided, can the time they are in contact be minimised or can they perform facing away from one another?



2. Can you decrease exposure time through limiting actual playing time with regular air/ventilation breaks? And air breaks between groups sessions to ventilate and clean the room.
3. Rehearse outdoors.
4. What do your musicians need to know about the disease and who they might have contact with if going to and from practice, or from their household?
5. How will you deliver this knowledge?
6. How do you ensure orchestra members know what Covid-19 controls are required of them?
7. Do the musicians know how they can reduce exposure to the virus travelling to and from rehearsals/performances? Has advice been provided?
8. What process have you got for musicians to report possible infection or exposure, and what do you then require them to do?
9. Advice on Covid-19 is constantly changing, how will you keep current with advice and how will you update your Orchestra Group?

10. What do your orchestra managers/committees need to know to enable them to supervise effectively? How will this be communicated and how will they be held accountable for delivering this requirement?
11. Where visiting musicians are used, how will you ensure their compliance on applying Covid-19 controls? (what changes are necessary to your induction programme)?
12. Are musicians complying with the new control measures and if not, why not?
13. How do you manage people [at higher risk from coronavirus](#)?
14. All musicians are encouraged to download the HSE Covid-19 track and trace app.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the last resort in the hierarchy of risk control. It is considered the weakest control because it relies on people using it correctly. It introduces many possibilities for error.

Considerations include:

1. Wearing of face masks should be compulsory in the rehearsal rooms. (Wind/Brass players may remove the mask when playing). Monitor and review developing best practice, international study and evidence based approach.
2. If gloves are provided, the virus can still be transferred on the surface. If the wearer then touches their face, they could contract the disease. – Frequent hand washing, or sterilisation is a better option.
3. Consider the safe disposal of all PPE, either an available general waste bin (not recycling) or bring home for disposal.

### Risk Management

Finding answers to the questions posed will provide a list of possible controls that can be implemented. A risk assessment does NOT control risk in itself, it lists the control measures that need to be put in place. The successful delivery of a plan must be monitored, reviewed regularly and updated with new guidance documents when issued by the HSE, NPHET and Government.

Developing controls specific to your rehearsal space/venue circumstances is significantly devalued unless performance is monitored over time. Plans need to be in place to routinely review the effectiveness of the controls. It is vital to ensure that these controls are maintained and even improved as our knowledge about the virus, its transmission and its control develops.

Risk Assessment Procedure

1. What is the hazard
2. Who is at risk
3. What are the current control measures
4. What is the level of Risk (Likelihood x Impact)
5. The additional controls needed
6. Who has responsibility for implementing these measures
7. Date of assessment and when it was completed

Combined Risk			
Activity Assessment	Low risk activity	Moderate risk activity	High risk activity
Environment Assessment			
High risk environment	Medium	High	High
Moderate risk environment	Low	Medium	High
Low risk environment	Very low Risk	Low	Medium



## Sample Risk Assessment Form

Step 1: Identify Hazards	Step 2: Assessing the Risks			Step 3: Additional Control Measures (further actions needed)		
What are the hazards?	Who is at risk?	Current Controls (What are you already doing?)	Level of risk? (Your estimate of the remaining risk level, based on the current controls. For example High, Medium, or Low)	Additional Controls needed (Further action to reduce the remaining risk level to as low as possible)	Action by whom and by when?	Date Completed

Risk Assessment Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**RA Template Orchestra (from British Association of Performing arts. July 2020)**

General Information			
Name		Role	
Location/Area		Working Hrs	
Date of assessment		Review date	

Assessment Activity		
Consider whether activity is by an individual or more than one person for aerosol generation (wind/brass/singing), shared instrument or equipment and whether the activity can ensure social distancing		
Tick all appropriate boxes	√	Risk Level
Group work (orchestra, group singing)		High
Wind instrument with another in the room (rehearsal, lesson)		High
Instrument or equipment that cannot be readily cleaned (reeds)		High
Activity that does not allow for social distancing		High
Other shared instruments or equipment that can be readily cleaned (keyboards, percussion, strings)		Medium
Playing instruments (apart from wind) with another in the room		Medium
Individual practice (instrumental, lesson, rehearsal)		Low
Virtual lessons rehearsals		Low
Individual instrumental performance		Low
Activity assessment notes e.g. detail instruments, individual lesson, reduced orchestra rehearsal, full group rehearsal		

Assessment of Environment		
Consider whether the space has		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficient space to accommodate social Distancing in line with government guidance</li> <li>Natural or mechanical ventilation in good working order</li> <li>The duration of time spent in a shared space, allowing ventilation breaks</li> </ul>		
Tick all appropriate boxes:	√	Risk Level
Indoors: confined space with or without ventilation system, irrespective of time/duration		High
Indoors: sufficient space for social distancing but no natural or mechanical ventilation or monitoring of duration		Medium
Indoors: sufficient space for social distancing with natural or mechanical ventilation and monitoring of duration		Low
Outdoors		Low
Activity assessment notes e.g. detail instruments, individual lesson, reduced orchestra rehearsal, full group rehearsal		



Mitigation of Risk		
<i>Factors to consider</i>	What is in place at the moment?	Can anything more be done?
<b>Individual</b>		
Procedure if symptomatic (cough, fever, loss of smell/taste) close contact, contact tracing		
Wearing of face masks as per government guidance on public places and on public transport		
<b>Activity</b>		
Can the activity be done outdoors all the time or some of the time?		
What is the maximum amount of time a group of people should share a space while socially distancing? (e.g. 15 mins) Schedule ventilation breaks during and between rehearsals/performance		
Consider the position and formation of the activity, avoid face-to-face positions. Chose forward facing or back-to-back		
Are there facilities to clean shared equipment (e.g. keyboard, percussion) and hand hygiene before and after use?		
Avoid draining of condensation onto the floor Do not blow through instruments to clean them		
<b>Environment</b>		
Is there natural ventilation in the room or can it be adapted to allow natural ventilation		
Is there well-maintained mechanical ventilation (ventilation and air-conditioning systems, HAVC)		
Has the room been assessed and measured to determine the maximum occupants maintaining social distancing in-line with current government & HSE guidance. This might include reconfiguring of the space		
Consider other shared spaces (corridors, entrances, canteen, waiting areas, back stage, green rooms) and how social distancing is maintained and sanitisation is carried out.		




Type and level of group activity	Low occupancy				High occupancy		
	Outdoors and well ventilated	Indoors and well ventilated	Poorly ventilated		Outdoors and well ventilated	Indoors and well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
Wearing face coverings, contact for short time							
Silent	Low	Low	Low		Low	Low	Medium
Speaking	Low	Low	Low		Low	Low	Medium
Shouting, singing	Low	Low	Medium		Medium	Medium	High
Wearing face coverings, contact for prolonged time							
Silent	Low	Low	Medium		Low	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	*	Medium		*	Medium	High
Shouting, singing	Low	Medium	High		Medium	High	High
No face coverings, contact for short time							
Silent	Low	Low	Medium		Medium	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	Medium	Medium		Medium	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	Medium	High		High	High	High
No face coverings, contact for prolonged time							
Silent	Low	Medium	High		Medium	High	High
Speaking	Medium	Medium	High		High	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	High	High		High	High	High
<b>Risk of transmission</b>							
Low  Medium  High 							
* Borderline case that is highly dependent on quantitative definitions of distancing, number of individuals, and time of exposure							

Figure 1 [British Medical Journal – Risks of SARS-Cov-2 Transmission](#)

References (11th September 2020):

[NPHET guidance page 6](#)[Youth Workshops](#)[UK DCNS](#)[HSPC](#)[Return to Work Protocol](#)[Gov.ie – Public Health measure in place right now](#)