



COVID-19 Transitioning – Standards for Musicians and Orchestras

Version 3.0
Effective from 26th April 2021

The following standards are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence.

Standards to be observed by musicians and orchestras

All orchestras, bands, musical ensembles and groups of musicians shall:

- a) advise musicians not to attend for rehearsals or performances if they are experiencing any potential COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with any known cases of COVID-19.
- b) keep records of the contact information (name and a phone number) of individuals attending rehearsals/performances for 28 days after the rehearsal/performance.
- c) provide adequate and easily accessible hand sanitisers with an appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub on entry into the area where the rehearsal/performance is being held and ensure that all persons sanitise their hands on entering.
- d) ensure that musicians maintain social distancing throughout rehearsals and performances, whenever possible not playing face-to-face with not more than one (1) musician per four (4) square metres floor area, a distance of at least **two (2) metres from each other (two and a half (2.5) metres in case of woodwind and brass instruments)**, and a distance of at least **four (4) metres from the audience**.
- e) ensure that musicians avoid physical contact with each other, frequently sanitise their hands and musical instruments, practice respiratory etiquette and avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- f) where possible, practise and perform outdoors.
- g) when practising or performing indoors, spaces utilised must be well-ventilated with fresh air.
- h) ensure that musicians do not share musical equipment, microphones, scores or other documents.
- i) ensure that premises used for rehearsals and performances are regularly and thoroughly cleaned.
- j) ensure that masks or visors are worn by musicians, audience and any other persons in the premises, with the understanding that musicians playing woodwind or brass instruments are exempt from this requirement while playing their instrument (they should still abide by the mask/visor requirement the rest of the time).
- k) ensure the hygiene of their instruments.

Once performances in the presence of an audience are authorised, the following additional standards shall apply:

- l) ensure that any events shall adhere to the Standards for Gatherings and events and relevant legislation, including Organised Public Mass Events Regulations 2021 and all subsequent amendments to said Regulations.
- m) ensure that masks or visors are worn by the audience. Where tolerated, masks (or masks together with visors) are preferred to visors.



How COVID-19 spreads

The virus which causes COVID-19 disease can be spread through droplets from a sick person or on contact (by touch). COVID-19 disease often presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Cases may present with other symptoms or none at all. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables, machinery, equipment, floors, walls, clothes or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Being less than two metres away from person with COVID-19, one has a higher risk of catching the infection by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them.

In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. The most common symptoms of coronavirus include cough, fever, shortness of breath, tiredness, sore throat, runny / blocked nose, headache, muscle pain, loss of smell, loss of taste, diarrhoea or vomiting. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

Persons who develop these symptoms, are to stay at home, contact their doctor and contact the Public Health team on 111 (or +356 21324086 if calling from a foreign number) for further advice and guidance. For more information, seek guidance on www.covid19health.gov.mt

These guidelines provide considerations that orchestras and musical ensembles must take into account when deciding on control measures such as adaptations of rehearsals and performances to allow for social distancing, the adequacy of facilities for proper personal and public hygiene, cleaning arrangements, and other changes that may affect the health and safety of performers.

Please note that if an orchestra/musical ensemble includes singers, additional precautions are applicable as detailed in the Standards for Choirs.

Enabling contact tracing

Orchestra/musical ensembles are required to collect the contact details (name and a phone number) of those attending rehearsals and performances and keep a record of this information for 28 days (including musicians and crew where applicable), explaining that these will only be divulged to an authorised officer in case contact tracing is required. This will enable contact tracing to be carried out should a positive case result among musicians or other persons involved in rehearsals/performances.

COVID Alert Malta

All musicians and crew are encouraged to download the COVID Alert Malta application to help facilitate the contact tracing process in case they develop COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19. Instructions for downloading the application can be found at <https://covidalert.gov.mt>



COVID Vaccination

All choir organisers, musicians and crew are encouraged to register online for vaccination via the link at [MALTA – COVID-19 VACCINATION \(gov.mt\)](https://gov.mt), according to the current age-groups / cohorts being invited.

Social/physical distancing

Social distancing refers to the requirement that people physically distance themselves from others. Musicians and crew are all required to practice social distancing and should avoid physical contact as much as possible. Minimum possible numbers of musicians, crew should participate, with not more than one (1) person for every four (4) square metres floor area during both rehearsals and performances.

Musicians are advised to maintain a distance of at least **two (2) metres from each other** (two and a half (2.5) metres in the case of woodwind instruments) and a distance of at least **four (4) metres from the audience** whenever practising or performing. This may mean that fewer musicians than usual can be present on-stage. Care should be taken to ensure performers also maintain social distancing while taking and leaving their position during rehearsals and performances. In the interest of reducing the duration of activities, particularly activities in closed spaces, the duration of rehearsals should be minimised to the extent possible. Physical barriers (e.g. clear acrylic or tempered glass screens) are also recommended around musicians playing woodwind and brass instruments to prevent droplet spread.

Guidance on the use of medical or cloth masks or visors for musicians and orchestras

Legal Notice 402 of 2020 prescribes that persons shall wear a mask or visor in a proper manner covering the nose, mouth and chin of the person outside their residence, both when going to an indoor place and outdoors.

The mandatory use of medical or cloth masks or visors applies to musicians, orchestras and musical ensembles. Medical or cloth masks or visors are to be worn at all times by conductors and musicians in whatever musical ensemble formation they are performing including soloists, duos, trios, quartets, etc. up to full orchestras.

Where tolerated, masks (or masks together with visors) are preferred to visors alone.

The temporary removal of medical or cloth masks or visors shall be permissible

- during musical performances when musicians playing woodwind or brass instruments are playing their instrument (they should still abide by the mask or visor requirement the rest of the time).
- during singing or choral performances, where all the standards applicable to choirs are to be observed.

While ideally conductors should wear a mask, if this is impairing interaction with the orchestra, the conductor can wear a visor and in addition deploy one of the following alternatives:

- The conductor maintains a distance of at least two and a half (2.5) metres from all other musicians, and a distance of at least four (4) metres from the audience.
- The conductor stands behind a clear acrylic or tempered glass cubicle (three sides of clear acrylic or tempered glass between the conductor and musicians that are higher than the height of the conductor and his/her dias combined)

At all other times except when conducting, conductors should abide by mask requirements.

Musicians with severe cognitive, physical, mental or respiratory impairments who have difficulties tolerating a mask as certified by a licensed medical practitioner are exempt from the requirement to wear a medical or cloth mask or visor. They should carry their exemption certificate on their person at all times in case of enforcement checks.

Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

Musicians and crew (where relevant) should sanitise their hands with soap and water or a 70% alcohol hand-rub on arriving at the rehearsal/performance space and frequently thereafter, including:

- After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing.
- After touching surfaces within the rehearsal/performance space.
- After using the toilet.

Musicians and crew should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands and follow the principles of respiratory etiquette, namely:

- Covering their nose and mouth with a tissue or inner side of flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- Making sure NOT to sneeze or cough into their hands to avoid contaminating objects or people that they touch; if this cannot be avoided hands should be washed immediately afterwards.
- Disposing of used tissues immediately in lined and closed bins and washing their hands afterwards - tissues should not be left running around.
- Not attending rehearsals/performances if experiencing any respiratory symptoms or other potential symptoms of coronavirus infection.

Those present at rehearsals/performances should avoid hugs, handshakes and other forms of physical contact. Non-contact greetings such as waving, bowing and nodding can be used instead.

Hygiene facilities and ventilation

Organisers must ensure adequate and accessible facilities to achieve good hygiene in the locations used by the orchestra/ensemble for practice or performances. Facilities should be adequate, accessible, equipped with disposable hand wipes, soap and sanitizers, in good working order, clean and safe.

They should be thoroughly and regularly cleaned (see further details in section on 'Cleaning and Disinfection' below). Bathroom doors and windows should be kept open to allow for better ventilation. Hand dryers should not be used as these can potentially disperse viral particles into the air.

Where feasible, outdoor locations are preferred for rehearsals and performances as outdoor spaces have better ventilation, reducing COVID-19 transmission risk. If rehearsals/ performances are being carried out indoors, premises must be kept well-ventilated with fresh air, such as by keeping windows and doors open. Air conditioning and ventilation systems shall comply with guidance on air conditioning and ventilation systems as applicable to the particular venue. Guidance is available on [covid19health.gov.mt](https://www.covid19health.gov.mt). In cases where the orchestra/ensemble rents/uses a space for rehearsals/performances which is not under their ownership, they should liaise with operators of the space to see that these requirements are being met.



Considerations for musicians and crew

Musicians should ideally set up their own microphones and dress themselves for performances. Microphones should not be shared. Wardrobe hygiene must also be considered when costumes are in storage. If outfits cannot be cleaned, they must be kept in storage for 72 hours before being reused by a different person. If performers will not be applying their own make-up and hair styling, the makeup designer and hairdresser doing so should have the necessary protective wear, and the musicians and presenters as well as anyone else requiring make-up for the performance should bring their own make up kits, brushes and hair styling products to reduce the risk of contamination. The processes should be kept as short as possible and less than 15 minutes. Make-up equipment should not be shared between performers. Each performer should have a dedicated space for their personal belongings (pens, glasses, clothing etc), which should not be kept 'floating around' the backstage area/rehearsal space. Digital copies of scores and other documents should be used whenever possible. If paper copies must be used, musicians should have their own copies and copies should not be shared between users. Items such as water bottles and glasses should not be shared.

Workstations and equipment used by more than one person need to be cleaned between users. Backstage and 'back of house' areas should be kept well-ventilated.

Adapting performances

In the interest of reducing the duration of activities in a closed space and opportunities for face-to-face interactions between attendees, organisers should consider omitting intermissions when the orchestra/ensemble is giving a performance. The duration of the event should be minimised as much as feasible.

Cleaning and disinfecting measures

Orchestra/ensemble organisers should ensure that any premises used for rehearsing or performances are regularly and thoroughly cleaned. Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, e.g. music stands, door handles, seating, bathroom and other sanitary facilities, including bathroom fixtures like taps and flushing handles (if available at the rehearsal/performance space). Further guidance regarding cleaning and disinfecting is available in the relevant section of the guidelines for Indoor Theatres and Cinemas ¹.

How to stay informed: www.covid19health.gov.mt

¹Available at: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards For Indoor Cinemas And Theatres.pdf>