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Vocal Hygiene for Musical Theatre Performers

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Dr. Ron Scherer

Honors Project

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Title: Vocal Hygiene for Musical Theatre Performers

Introduction:

There have been numerous “do’s - and - don’t’s” vocal hygiene pamphlets made for voice users. What has not been made, however, is a guide to vocal hygiene for musical theatre performers. Musical theatre performers differ from other professional voice users, because in addition to singing, they also have the taxing responsibilities of acting and dancing. As a result, many musical theatre performers have questions and often seem confused about what proper vocal hygiene should be for them. The goal of this honors project was to create an advisory brochure on vocal hygiene specifically for musical theatre performers. This brochure is based upon information published by professionals from various disciplines such as medicine, speech-language pathology, music, and theatre. This brochure addresses a number of aspects that musical theatre performers should be aware of as a result of the many demands that are placed upon them. This resulted in the following categories for the creation of the brochure: preventing overuse, medical care, nutrition/hydration, environmental factors, and utilizing proper technique. The background information and sources for this project are found in the annotated bibliography at the end of this paper.

Methods:

Scholarly research articles from well-known and respected experts in the medical, speech-language pathology, music, and theatre worlds were used in the creation of this brochure. These sources were then brought to Dr. Ron Scherer, primary advisor, to be approved as being appropriate. Also suggestions were taken from him in terms of other sources that should be considered. After he approved all of the sources and recommended a few others, the literature was reviewed and appropriate sources were chosen.

Dr. Lesa Lockford, the secondary advisor for this project, also offered guidance on where to find additional research information and on areas regarding acting that had not yet been covered. Information was then filtered out of those sources and brought back to Dr. Scherer for approval.

After his approval, work was done to make sure that the statements were well-worded and categorized correctly. Several aspects of sentence construction were content, grammar, and redundancy. During the revisions of the brochure, the advisory statements were reconsidered and reconstructed a total of three times.

Amanda Kay Carter, tertiary advisor of this project, who does the marketing and advertising for the College of Health and Human Services, helped developed the visual aspects of the brochure from a marketing viewpoint. This allowed a learning opportunity in terms of marketing skills. She helped to ensure that the brochure was as effective and informative as it could possibly be from a visual point of view.

The final step was printing the brochure professionally and distributing it to musical theatre performers in the area so that this research could be shared with the population of interest.

Results: (see Appendix for brochure)

Results Subsection #1 Information Content:

Researching this subject pertinent to musical theatre resulted in the creation of the following categories: Category 1 [C1]: Preventing overuse; Category 2 [C2]: Medical care; Category 3 [C3]: Nutrition / Hydration; Category 4 [C4]: Environment; Category 5 [C5]: Technique. The following references were found during the research process of this project pertaining to these categories. The categories were grouped together based on similarity, and were ordered in the author's order of importance.

Benninger et al. [ref. 1] published a book to serve as a reference for anyone caring for a professional voice. Unlike some other sources used in this project, this book takes a broader approach, encompassing multiple topics instead of just one. This book contains a collection of topics that revolve around voice care and how to prevent professional voice disorders. One particular article in the text addresses vocal loudness in an environment with background noise (C1). The typical human tendency is to adjust and talk louder to compensate for the noise level. This is known as the "Lombard effect." Trained professionals, however, should become aware of how to deal with whatever noise level they are in, without becoming submissive to the Lombard effect (Benninger et al., p. 74). The same reference recommends that vocal folds need to be promptly examined by an

ENT (Ear Nose and Throat doctor, or otolaryngologist) when a professional voice user is experiencing hoarseness, breathiness, fatigue, volume disturbance, etc. (C2) (Benninger et al., p. 73).

Cazden [ref. 2] offers a website all about holistic health rehabilitation. She specializes in working with artists who have voice issues. Her website contains links to sign up for appointments/classes/workshops with her, as well as links to her articles/publications. An article of specific interest to this project that can be found on her website guides singers on which types of over-the-counter throat lozenges they should and should not use. Not only does it list the dos and don'ts, but it explains their impacts so that the voice user can extrapolate the effects of certain products on the laryngeal mechanism. Specifically, this article recommends avoiding cough drops that contain menthol, eucalyptus, or benzocaine prior to singing (C3). These substances are dangerous for the professional voice user, as they may numb the vocal tract to the point where it cannot feel soreness.

The National Center for Voice and Speech [ref. 3] maintains a website for vocal users who are considering or taking any type of medication. Information is provided on the effects of the medications on the user's vocal mechanism, functioning quite like a search-engine. This resource hones in on medication choices, an important aspect in voice care, emphasizing the need to consult health professionals to avoid detriment to the vocal mechanism (C2).

Devore and Cookman [ref. 4] published a professional voice user's self-help reference book. It includes topics such as vocal exercises and how to protect speaking

range and enhance voice tone. It also provides information about the anatomy and physiology of the vocal mechanism, and a large range of vocal health information. An entire chapter of this book is devoted to preventing injury of the vocal mechanism. Specifically, this chapter includes recommendations to not clear the throat, yell, scream, talk extensively, or sing without taking breaks (C1) (Devore & Cookman, p. 121). This chapter also includes the suggestion to consult with a health professional before utilizing excessive amounts of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (C2) (Devore & Cookman, p. 127).

Gaskill and Hetzel [ref. 5] authored an article to help actors and students of acting with the vocal challenges that they face. An entire section of this article is devoted to “The Undergraduate Musical Theatre Performer,” the target audience for the intended brochure. The authors recommend that musical theatre performers limit the amount of time that they sing each day by putting a “cap” on it (C1) (Gaskill & Hetzel). It is also recommended (specifically for college students who are prone to overconsumption) to limit the intake of caffeine and alcoholic beverages. This is important because of their drying effects on the vocal mechanism (C3) (Gaskill & Hetzel).

Lafontan et al. [ref. 6] provide expert insights for their “Hydration for Health” website. The website serves as a general guide for healthy hydration habits for people in differing geographical locations. The experts suggest that people hydrate adequately, consuming a minimum of 8, 8 oz glasses a day. They also suggest, however, that certain factors should be considered when determining the exact amount for personal consumption. These factors include temperature, altitude, body build, metabolism,

clothing, level of physical activity, and other environmental or physiological factors (C3) (Lafontan et al.).

Linklater [ref. 7] compiled knowledge from the well-known acting teacher, Iris Warren, and wrote a textbook informing actors of how to relax their vocal mechanism. This book includes exercises, anatomy, and overall suggestions to the performer for optimal vocal use. In Part 2 of the textbook, Linklater counters the more intuitive approach of resting the voice, and recommends that performers should instead hum on a strained voice. This humming provides a natural massage for the voice mechanism (Linklater, p. 267).

Mates [ref. 8] researched theatre history and compiled his insights into a comprehensive book. This book provides a history of United States musical theatre spanning from pre-revolutionary America to present. In this book, Mates acknowledges the fact that musical theatre performers are not only required to sing, but also have the taxing roles of acting and dancing (C1) (Mates, p. 4).

Phyland et al. [ref. 9] researched musical theatre performers performing at various levels of rigor and the impact of heavy vocal loads and provided their methodology and results in this journal article. Their research considers the scientific side of voice use as it relates to use by musical theatre performers. They discussed the importance of being well-rested and mentally prepared for a demanding schedule of performances, which could be up to eight shows a week (C5) (Phyland et al.).

Rootberg [ref. 10] facilitated a round table discussion which was ultimately published as an academic journal article regarding teaching breathing as it relates to vocal production. The participants were highly regarded voice teachers. The participants use the term “clavicular breathing” to describe the action when the shoulders are active causing the singer’s breath to be shallow. This can be a classic result of improper posture. Improper posture is discouraged in the vocal pedagogy field, as it is not the most efficient way to produce sound. Instead of using their shoulders, singers should utilize their diaphragms. Good posture and alignment optimizes vocal health, expression, and function (C5) (Rootberg).

Sataloff [ref. 11, 12] has compiled and edited multiple volumes regarding vocal health, two of which were utilized in this project. His books contain a collection of articles on a variety of vocal health topics written by well-known and respected experts in their respective fields, including himself. It is urged that professional voice users do not overschedule themselves, as that can lead to vocal exhaustion. The authors recommend that voice users are aware of their surroundings, as to not fall victim to the “Lombard effect” (C1). Other authors suggest receiving both voice and speech training. This way, the singer can easily navigate between speaking and singing. Both a voice teacher and a vocal coach can help with these tasks (C5). Singers are prescribed by the authors of this book to know their allergies. After they know their allergies, they should take proper steps and consume appropriate medications (C2). Authors suggest that stage performers consume more sodium, potassium, chloride, and magnesium than the average human in addition to an abundance of fluids. This is especially important if the performer will be under lights or wearing heavy costumes, as they are likely to overheat easily. It is urged

that professional voice users do not take meds, herbs, or supplements without consulting a health professional, since these products could have side effects that are detrimental to the vocal mechanism (C3). Finally, it is recommended to pay special attention to the use of pyrotechnics. These special effects can lead to respiratory/eye irritation, allergies, and long-term lung problems (C4) (Sataloff).

Scherer [ref. 13], a well-known voice scientist, was interviewed as part of the research process. Many of the statements Scherer made in the interview were reflective of the information found in many other sources throughout the research process. Highlights of the interview that were unique perspectives in the research included that of medical recommendations for touring performers and what professions are classified as professional voice users. Scherer commented that touring performers should always be aware of contact information for medical professionals in the cities that they are in. He also defined a professional voice user in many ways—everyone from a telemarketer to a teacher to an actor, and just about everyone in between whose livelihood depends on the health of their voice (C4) (Scherer).

Searl and Bailey [ref. 14] researched different forms of voice use and lifestyle behaviors that might impact the voices of actors and speech language pathologists. Because vocal health is paramount for actors, the Searl and Bailey academic journal article can enlighten actors of all ages. Due to heavy demands on the vocal folds from both singing and speaking, Searl and Bailey stress the importance of receiving certain types of training. In order to easily switch from speaking to singing, and vice versa, these

authors urge actors to train with both a voice teacher and a vocal coach (C5) (Searl & Bailey).

Stemple [ref. 15] authored his article for the inaugural issue of the *Voice and Speech Review*. In it, he compares voice disorders for actors to muscular and joint disorders for athletes. Unfortunately for actors, they do not generally feel that they can accommodate the proper amount of time to fully recover. He identifies the key participants of a voice care team (the otolaryngologist, the speech language pathologist, the voice trainer/coach, psychologists, singing voice specialists, and any other necessary medical specialists,) and also describes several causes of voice disorders. A primary concern of his is that actors should not use “the show must go on” mentality when the vocal folds may actually be damaged by continued use (C3) (Stemple).

In her journal article, Wilson [ref. 16] concludes that it would be beneficial if theatre educators eliminated the barriers between training in the areas of acting, singing, and speaking, while including support for the emotional aspect, as well. In this article, Wilson indicates that her research suggests that both singing and speaking have always been natural for humans. Neither came before the other, as they have both been around since the beginning of human verbal communication. She also details examples of activities that actors should avoid. Specifically, she recommends that actors must be cautious of any side jobs they work, to ensure that they are not too taxing on the vocal mechanism (C5) (Wilson).

Results Subsection #2 Pamphlet Creation:

The intended audience, an important factor in successful marketing [ref. 18], was taken into consideration during the creation of this brochure. This brochure is intended for musical theatre students and professionals of all ages. Therefore, since musical theatre performers tend to be very energetic (and are thus drawn to energetic-appearing advertisements), the colors and patterns were chosen to interest this audience. Images, often added to enhance the reading experience [ref. 18], were added to this brochure to make it both orthographic as well as pictorial. Thus, not only were readers reading the information, but they also had a visual to add to their comprehension. The most important information in a health brochure should be near the top or front [ref. 18]. Using this approach, the panels were chosen to be in the order that they are given in the brochure so that the reader sees the most pertinent information first. Bullet points make information easier to read and scan [ref. 18]. Due to this, bullet points were utilized in this brochure so that readers would be more likely to read and obtain more of the information than if it were written in paragraph form (which can appear overwhelming). Adequate space is important in marketing [ref. 18]. Although it was tempting to include a plethora of information in this brochure, restraint occurred in order to not overwhelm the reader. Since space is important in a brochure like this, only the most important details/recommendations could be included in the brochure. The rest of the information can be found in this paper.

Discussion:

This pamphlet is important because it is one of a kind. A brochure like this was needed because prior to the creation of this brochure, there were none for the sole benefit of musical theatre performers. Other professional voice user pamphlets do not take into account the taxing tasks of singing and dancing, or performing eight shows a week. The other brochures only tend to focus on the voice, and often do not take other theatrical effects into consideration. Thus, there was a need to create a brochure for musical theatre performers, and this project is just that. There are broad categories that needed to be brought to musical theatre performers' attention, and this brochure attempts to do that.

This project has the potential to help musical theatre performers better understand their bodies as an instrument, thus potentially resulting in the performers taking better care of their bodies. If they take better care of their bodies, they are more likely to be able to make it through eight shows a week, and ultimately, preserve their instrument for a longer period of time.

This project was disseminated to the freshmen musical theatre students in their Group Voice class on November 12, 2019 (Associate Professor Geoffrey Stephenson). Further plans are being made to disseminate the brochure to other Bowling Green State University musical theatre students, and to send it out to other local schools with musical theatre programs (such as the University of Toledo, University of Findlay, etc.), as well.

Further research could be done to improve this brochure. This would be done via finding more research articles that further justify and clarify vocal health advice, placing such advice within current evidence based practices.

Conclusion:

The purpose of this pamphlet is to act as an advisory vocal hygiene brochure for musical theatre performers. This is important because a brochure like this having an emphasis on musical theatre performers has not yet been published. The pamphlet was based upon supportive references to vocal hygiene as well as marketing approaches to health-related brochures.

References:

Honors Project Annotated Bibliography:

Vocal Hygiene for Musical Theatre Performers

1. Benninger, Michael S., et al. Vocal Arts Medicine: The Care and Prevention of Professional Voice Disorders. Thieme Medical Publishers, 1994.

Benninger, Jacobson, and Johnson have each done significant amounts of research on the topic of vocal arts medicine and are considered to be experts in the field.

Benninger has received his medical degree in Otolaryngology. Jacobson and Johnson have each earned a PhD in Speech-Language Sciences and Disorders. This book is intended for everyone who is concerned with the practice of professional voice care.

Unlike some other sources used in this project, this book takes a broader approach, encompassing multiple topics instead of just focusing on one. This expansive resource covers many topics involved in the care and prevention of professional voice disorders,

ranging all the way from the history of the study of the voice to when and how to seek help to how certain environments affect your voice.

2. Cazden, Joanna. "Singers' Guide to Throat Lozenges." Joanna Cazden's Voice

Therapy, Training, and Healing Services, www.joannacazden.com/a-vocalists-guide-to-throat-lozenges/.

After a life-long study of voice and theatre, Cazden ultimately received her MS in Speech Pathology. Because of her blend of experiences, she was offered and accepted a position as a speech pathologist in a newly-opened specialized voice clinic at Cedar-Sinai Medical Center. Her website is appealing to vocal artists with arising voice issues or concerns. As opposed to Benninger et al., Cazden's approach is more holistic, although both sources are helpful. The main focus of this article to guide singers on which types of over-the-counter throat lozenges they should and should not use. Not only does it list dos and don'ts, but it explains the ingredients and their impacts so that the voice user can extrapolate from that the effects of certain products on the voice mechanism.

3. "Check Your Meds: Do They Affect Your Voice?" The National Center for Voice and

Speech, 2015, www.ncvs.org/rx_all_meds.php.

Praised and recommended by both Kate DeVore and Starr Cookman, this website was created by and is maintained by The National Center of Voice and Speech (NCVS) and the University of Utah, which is the lead institution of the NCVS. An experienced pharmacist and voice scientist of the NCVS were consulted in its creation. The intended audience of this resource is any vocal user who is considering or taking any type of

medication and wants to see the effects of that medication on their vocal mechanism.

This resource differs from the other sources used in this project because it is more hands-on, functioning quite like a search-engine. Further, this resource specifically hones in on medication choices, which is an important aspect in voice care. This website specifically warns voice users which medications they should consult a health professional's advice on before use, to avoid detriment to the vocal mechanism.

4. DeVore, Kate, and Starr Cookman. *The Voice Book: Caring for, Protecting, and Improving Your Voice*. Chicago Review Press, 2009.

Both DeVore and Cookman have extensively studied, researched, and taught lessons about the voice. Their goal is to blend together both sides of the brain, allowing voice users to understand both the creative part of the voice and the scientific mechanisms involved in vocal production. This book was written for anyone who uses their voice speaking or singing on the job. Unlike other works cited in this project, this book combines both the artistic and scientific sides of the study of vocal use. This expansive resource provides a wealth of knowledge regarding vocal hygiene for voice users of all types. This book includes information ranging from how to avoid abuse of the vocal mechanism to what medications you should/should not take to protect your voice.

5. Gaskill, Chris, and Allison Hetzel. "Managing 'Vocal Dose' and the Acting Voice: How Much Is Too Much?" *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2017, pp. 262–278.

Gaskill teaches Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Montevallo. He received a degree in choral conduction and earned his PhD through a curriculum focused on vocology and the habilitation/rehabilitation of professional voices. Hetzel teaches Voice and Acting at the University of Alabama. She earned her Master of Fine Arts in acting and has a wide range of experience including the Stratford Festival in Canada and work in New York City. This article was written to help actors and students of acting with the vocal challenges that they face. Contrary to other works cited, this article is written specifically for actors and not just professional voice users in general. Encompassing practical advice such as which beverages to avoid and how much time should be spent singing each day, Gaskill and Hetzel warn actors of pitfalls that could lead to potential vocal damage.

6. Lafontan, M., et al. "Water and Hydration: Physiological Basis in Adults." Hydration for Health, 2012, www.h4hinitiative.com/hydration-science/hydrationlab/water-and-hydration-physiological-basis-adults/introduction.

The Hydration for Health organization utilizes a scientific committee comprised of five highly regarded experts that come from multiple countries, multiple disciplines, and all of whom promote healthy hydration and behavioral change. This website is created to educate the public about healthy hydration and to provide an understanding of good hydration habits. Similar to Cazden's website, which focuses on types of lozenges to use, this website also has a very specific focus, that being the necessary amounts of hydration. Unlike many of the other sources used in this project, this website was not created specifically for voice users. Rather, it was written as a general guide for healthy

hydration habits for the public. The information contained on this website guides everyone, including musical theatre performers, on a base hydration amount, identifying factors that should be taken into consideration when determining individual consumption amounts.

7. Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*. Drama, 2007.

Linklater is a world-renowned teacher of voice production in the acting world. She has worked with theatre groups around the world. This book is viewed by some as the leading textbook in its field and was written for actors and teachers of acting. Unlike many of the other sources used in this project, this book focuses on its subject matter solely from the viewpoint of acting. Ranging from how to free the voice from daily tensions, to what to do in case of voice loss, this book covers a wide variety of useful topics for actors in their daily and professional use of voice.

8. Mates, Julian. *America's Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre*. Praeger, 1987.

Mates has written a comprehensive history of United States musical theatre spanning from pre-revolutionary America to present. Due to his vast research and knowledge of theatre history, in addition to this book, Mates has written multiple other books on the history of theatre. Mates provides unique insights to students of musical theatre. Unlike other sources used in this project, this book has nothing to do with vocal health. Instead, it discusses the history of musical theatre and illuminates this topic by

explaining how musical theatre performers are not only required to sing, but also have the taxing roles of acting and dancing.

9. Phyland, Debra J., et al. "Perspectives on the Impact on Vocal Function of Heavy Vocal Load Among Working Professional Music Theater Performers." *Journal of Voice*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2013.

This academic article was written by a group of researchers who studied musical theatre performers performing at various levels of rigor and the impact of heavy vocal load. Their research included taking acoustical measurements, focus group interviews, and written surveys of the musical theatre performers. Enlightenment is provided not only for professional musical theatre performers, but also theatre teachers and health professionals. Similar to Sataloff, these researchers consider the scientific side of voice use for performers. Unlike Sataloff, this article is written specifically for musical theatre performers, as opposed to voice performers in general. The impact of heavy vocal load for musical theatre performers is addressed in this article.

10. Rootberg, Ruth. "Clavicular Breathing, Held Shoulders and Related Issues: A Round Table Discussion." *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2003, pp. 278–295., doi:10.1080/23268263.2003.10739415.

With Rootberg serving as the moderator, a panel of highly regarded voice teachers participated in a round table discussion following the culmination of a thorough study regarding teaching breathing. As an academic article in a journal, professors and students of voice and speech are the primary audience. Similar to Cazden's and the

Hydration for Health's websites, this article discusses only a very specific aspect of vocal health: breathing. This article ties in to this project's topic by focusing on the most efficient methods of breathing and posture for musical theatre performers, thereby supporting their optimal vocal health.

11. Sataloff, Robert T. *Professional Voice: The Science and Art of Clinical Care*. Vol. 2, Plural, 2005.

Holding both an MD and a DMA in voice performance, Sataloff is highly regarded in the vocal health field. He serves as both a professor and the chair of otolaryngology at Drexel University. This book is the second of three volumes in which he corroborated with other experts in the field. It is intended to be read by clinicians and students. As opposed to many of the sources that have been used in this project, this particular volume focuses on nonsurgical management and covers an entire gamut of topics regarding both the science and art of clinical care for the professional voice.

12. Sataloff, Robert T. *Vocal Health and Pedagogy: Advanced Assessment and Treatment*. Vol. 2, Plural Publishing, 2006.

Holding both an MD and a DMA in voice performance, Sataloff is highly regarded in the vocal health field. He serves as both a professor and the chair of otolaryngology at Drexel University. This book is the second volume in a set of books written as companion books to *Professional Voice: the Science and Art of Clinical Care*. In both of the books used in this project, Sataloff corroborated with other experts in the field. This book was intended to be used as a textbook by students of vocal pedagogy

and speech language pathology. This book is very similar to Sataloff's other work cited above, except it discusses different topics. The information in this book covers information ranging from coaching suggestions to recommended vitamin supplements to voice therapy.

13. Scherer, Ron. "Professional Voice Users Interview." 27 Feb. 2019.

Scherer earned his MA and PhD in Speech Pathology/Science. He currently teaches graduate courses at Bowling Green State University and assists students with their research projects. The intended audience of this interview was Anne Koziara, the interviewer. This source is drastically different from the other sources used in this project because the information is in interview format, where the questions served as prompts for the information. The interview related to this project because Scherer went into considerable detail about the medical precautions that performers should take if they are travelling regularly with a touring show.

14. Searl, Jeff, and Bailey, Erika. "Vocal Behaviors of Student Actors and Student Speech-Language Pathologists." *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2013, pp. 5–26.

Searl earned his MA and PhD in Speech Language Pathology. He has both research and teaching experience in the areas of vocal pathology diagnosis and treatment, as well as other speech/voice issues. Bailey earned a BA in Theatre and an MA in Voice Studies. She is currently teaching both voice and speech for an MFA Acting program, and also has done some work with Broadway performers. This article is intended for

academicians. Because this work is written jointly by experts in both fields, it is similar to the academic article written by Gaskill and Hetzel, as it combines both of the topics of speech pathology and acting into the article. It does, however, include different content than that of Gaskill and Hetzel. This article includes information such as how to take care of your voice by ensuring proper amounts and types of vocal training.

15. Stemple, Joseph C. "Column Issues of Vocal Health." *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2000, pp. 233–238.

Stemple earned his PhD in Speech Pathology and subsequently opened a clinic for people with voice disorders (which has since turned into the Blaine Block Institute for Voice Analysis and Rehabilitation). He is currently a speaker and lecturer on the subject of speech pathology with a specific emphasis on voice disorders. This article is useful for everyone, since that is who uses their voices in their everyday lives. Unlike many of the other sources used in this project, this article, although academic, is written for everyone who uses their voice in their everyday life. It speaks to the importance of giving the vocal mechanism a rest when needed.

16. Wilson, Pat H. "Act, Sing, Speak: Voice in the World of Theatre." *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2011, pp. 298–304.

Living her life as a singing teacher specializing in musical theatre, Wilson is also an actor, a singer, and a voice researcher. Due to the diversity of her experiences, Wilson has a vast knowledge of vocal hygiene when it comes to the topic of theatre. This article was written for academicians (including voice coaches, singing teachers, and spoken-

voice teachers) and performers who utilize the vocal mechanism. This work is similar to Searl and Bailey's article, as it combines singing onstage with vocal health. The journal explains the intense level of demand that is placed on professional performers, detailing considerations that should be made even as explicit as what side jobs these performers might take on and how those jobs could affect their voices.

Additional References:

17. "Americans for the Arts." *Americans for the Arts*, 27 June 2019,

www.americansforthearts.org/.

18. "CDC Clear Communication Index: A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, May 2013.

MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMERS, IN ADDITION TO SINGING, ALSO HAVE THE TAXING RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACTING AND DANCING.⁸



It is important for musical theatre performers to understand vocal hygiene to protect themselves.

Musical theatre performers are different from other professional voice users, and many precautions that should be taken due to those differences can be found in this brochure.

CITATIONS

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VOCAL HYGIENE FOR MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMERS

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VOCAL HYGIENE FOR MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMERS



PREVENTING OVERUSE

- Limit the amount of time singing.⁵
- Over-scheduling may be overtaxing.¹²
- Thinking "the show must go on" may lead to vocal overuse.¹⁵
- Clearing your throat, yelling, screaming, talking extensively, and singing without breaks may damage the vocal folds.⁴
- Talking loudly in noisy environments (known as the Lombard effect) can be dangerous to the vocal folds.^{1&11}



MEDICAL CARE

- Consult with a health professional before using excessive amounts of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, etc.), as they can have drying effects.^{3&4}
- Know your allergies and take appropriate medication.¹¹
- Consult an ENT when there is sudden onset of hoarseness, huskiness, etc.¹

NUTRITION/HYDRATION



- Hydrate adequately. Start with 8, 8 oz glasses a day, but base water needs more on temperature, altitude, body build, metabolism, clothing, physical activity, and other environmental or physiological factors.⁶
- Consume more sodium, potassium, chloride, and magnesium than the average human in addition to an abundance of fluids if dancing under hot lights and wearing heavy costumes.¹²
- Consult with a health professional regarding taking medicines, herbs, or supplements.¹¹
- Do not use teas or cough drops that contain menthol, eucalyptus, or benzocaine prior to singing; these products numb the vocal tract to the point where one cannot feel soreness.²
- Consuming caffeine and alcohol in excess may produce drying effects.⁵



ENVIRONMENTAL



- Do not ignore the effects of pyrotechnics; pyrotechnics can cause respiratory/eye irritation, allergies, and long term lung problems.¹¹
- Know the contact information for medical professionals in arts medicine in the cities you are in. See americansforthearts.org for references by location.¹³



TECHNIQUE

- Practice good posture and alignment to optimize vocal health, expression, and function.¹⁰
- Be prepared to perform up to 8 shows a week.⁹
- Choose part time jobs wisely--these jobs could be too taxing on the voice.¹⁶
- Receive both voice and speech training to easily switch between speaking and singing. Both a voice teacher and vocal coach can help with these tasks.^{11&12&14}