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MELBOURNE
YOUTH
ORCHESTRAS

Report: COVID-19 protection strategy

Melbourne Youth Orchestras

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1 Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused Melbourne Youth Orchestras (MYO) to cancel its face-to-face rehearsal and concert programs.

While children appear to get infected less frequently than adults, have milder symptoms and seem to play a very small role in the spread of this virus, the policy of the Victorian Government has been to strongly encourage school children to stay at home.

Before the imposition of Stage 4 lockdown in August 2020, these requirements were being slowly relaxed, however there were recommendations against activities that involved children congregating together, especially where those activities involved contact between students from different schools. When restrictions begin to ease again, it is likely that this advice will remain.

While MYO should not act contrary to State Government advice to schools and to open its face-to-face programs at present, it is appropriate that it plans and develops a suitable protection strategy for when it feels it can restart these programs.

Broadleaf has used a simple vulnerability analysis to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 protection strategy for students and staff when MYO does decide to restart its face-to-face programs. This is quite conservative because some of the normal applied social distancing and protection measures are impractical for an orchestra or ensemble.

The suggested strategy involves requirements to:

- Create a *cordon sanitaire* for the areas for the Melbourne University Southbank campus that MYO controls, restrict entry into that and require hand sanitisation at all entry points;
- Sanitise those controlled areas thoroughly and any common equipment etc. before use and any floor areas that may be contaminated, after use;
- Exclude those who might be infected;
- Adhere to social distancing protocols;
- Set up track and trace arrangements if someone does become infected;
- Provide advice on minimising the risk of infection on public transport;
- Establish effective arrangements for communication and information;
- Obtain and maintain suitable contingency actions and supplies;
- Set up effective monitoring arrangements for all elements of the strategy.

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All the elements of the protection strategy are important and will work in concert. We would advise against omitting or diluting any particular measures.

2 This report

The world and Australia are currently suffering considerable disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ordinarily, every Saturday during school terms Melbourne Youth Orchestras (MYO) brings over 500 young musicians together to rehearse and explore music in nine ensembles. These comprise symphony orchestras, string orchestras and symphonic bands. Students enter the program from the age of 8 and can progress through a structured, ensemble program which culminates in participation in the Melbourne Youth Orchestra.

The ensembles and orchestras also present a program of public concerts throughout the year.

Since March 2020 and because of the pandemic, MYO has suspended all face to face ensemble rehearsals and concerts. Currently it is offering an online program called MYO *UNLIMITED* – that “brings the best elements of our Ensemble Program to our participants at home”. While this is clearly beneficial, it cannot replicate the normal in-person program which MYO provides. MYO is now looking into how it can ‘re-open’ and the appropriate protection strategies it should adopt.

This report summarises the present and future short-term context for MYO and presents an analysis of its vulnerability to COVID infections and their spread, if it resumes a ‘normal’ rehearsal program.

Based on that analysis, this report suggests a suitable protection that could be deployed in keeping with Victorian legal requirements, State medical advice and the precautions being adopted by other similar organisations and activities.

One of the current challenges for Australian organisations such as MYO is to understand the many conflicting and inconsistent requirements and recommendations for mass-gatherings and school children. These requirements change frequently, as scientific knowledge of COVID-19 advances and advice on precautions is adapted.

3 Context

3.1 Internal context

MYO uses the premises of the Melbourne University Southbank campus in St Kilda Road, Melbourne for its rehearsal program. Concerts are normally held in the nearby Melbourne Recital Centre or the ABC Iwaki Auditorium.

The Southbank campus is part of the University of Melbourne and is used by their staff and students during the week and to a lesser extent at weekends.

The MYO Ensemble Program uses a number of rooms at the Melbourne University Southbank campus. The building can be entered through several doors. MYO participants use the bathrooms and also the coffee bar. Other people including teachers/conductors, parents, MYO admin staff and others using the campus can also be present in the building and can interact with MYO students and staff.

Some of the normally-applied COVID-19 social distancing precautions are clearly impractical for an ensemble or orchestra. For example, maintaining a 1.5m separation between performers is impossible given the MYO ensemble sizes and the limitations of the rooms available and, in most cases, it is impractical to wear a face mask.

While some participants are conveyed to Southbank by family car, many use public transport. Some travel down to Melbourne from regional areas to attend the rehearsals.

If wind instruments are played by people infected by the virus it is possible that vapour emitted from the instrument may contain viruses. With brass instruments, expectorant and condensation from breath is normally vented onto the floor at regular intervals.

MYO participants can be aged 8 up to over 25. They attend many different schools and some will have even commenced tertiary education.

3.2 External context

Infection data

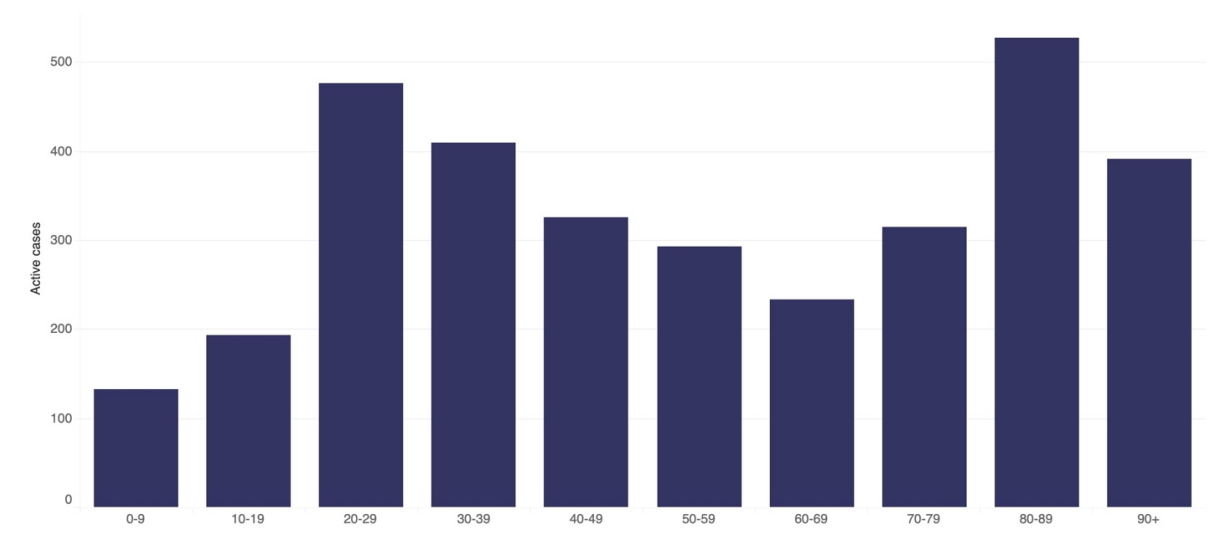
As of 26 August 2020, Victoria is in Stage 4 Restrictions due to elevated numbers of infections including to community transmission. Stage 4 restrictions are in place until at least 13 September 2020.

Currently, in Victoria, there are 3651 active cases and 438 people have died.

The State is providing a wide-scale testing program with over 2 million tests so far.

The current analysis of cases by age group and sex are shown in Figure 1. From this it can be seen that only a small proportion of infections are in people under 20 years of age. The large increase for 20-24 year olds is relevant to MYO.

Figure 1: Victorian cases by age group (28 August 2020)



Victorian school protection requirements

During most of Term 2, 2020 most children in Victoria learned remotely, limiting the number of people moving around the State every day, to help slow the spread of the virus.

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After a staged return to normal school attendance, a number of Victorian schools recorded cases of COVID-19 and were closed for cleaning.

The July school holiday period was extended by a week which the Government and the Chief Health Officer assess whether schools would re-open during the six-week Melbourne lockdown.

Schools implemented staggered, drop-off systems to reduce the number of adults congregating outside the school at any one time, as well as staggered break times to manage the number of students mixing across year levels.

Schools also implemented social distancing measures for all adults.

However, during Stage 4 lockdown which was implemented on 5 August 2020, Victorian schools have reverted to online learning for all students for the duration of the lockdown.

When schools re-opened during Term 2, the Victorian Department of Education and Training issued advice on extra-curricular activities. It can be likely that similar advice will be circulated when schools are able to open again:

Art and music

Strict hand hygiene should be followed before and after use of shared equipment in art and music classes. There is no requirement to clean every shared item between use.

Where practical, high touch shared items can be cleaned with soapy water or wiped down with a detergent/disinfectant wipe.

Interschool music activities should not take place.

Specific considerations

Sharing of musical instruments that are placed in the mouth, such as brass or woodwind instruments, should be avoided. Where used, these must be cleaned and disinfected between use.

Choir and other group music practice, including orchestra, is safe to continue, noting that reducing mixing between classes or year levels is recommended.

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Victorian tertiary education protection requirements

Tertiary education institutions are conducting a small number of classes on campus where necessary, following all of the physical distancing requirements.

If remote or online learning is not possible, physical distancing measures are being followed by staff and students undertaking face-to-face learning.

Students are being advised that if classes are available online, they should carefully consider whether they need to physically attend the campus. They are told to avoid spending time in shared facilities such as libraries and campus study areas. They are being told that collaborative assignments and team study projects should be done using online tools.

Melbourne University now provides all lectures, tutorials, and interactive seminars online and through its Learning Management System (LMS).

All physical attendance requirements have been waived.

Any return to the Melbourne campus, including the Melbourne University Southbank campus will be gradual, phased and carefully implemented. It is likely that students may be able to return to campus for all or part of Semester 2 including access to buildings and libraries.

Victorian requirements for places of mass gatherings

All concert halls, theatres and cinemas in Victoria remain closed. Further information on the reopening of these venues will be issued once the Stage 4 lockdown has concluded.

3.3 Wider context

Children make up a small proportion of diagnosed cases of COVID-19, which suggests they're getting infected with the virus much less frequently than adults. Generally when they get the disease, young children appear to have mild or no symptoms.

It is not clear if children are less infectious than adults. A German study¹ has found that viral load, or how much of the virus infected people have, didn't vary

¹ https://zoonosen.charite.de/fileadmin/user_upload/microsites/m_cc05/virologie-ccm/dateien_upload/Weitere_Dateien/analysis-of-SARS-CoV-2-viral-load-by-patient-age.pdf

that much between different age groups. The consensus is that if a child gets infected, there's a chance they could infect another individual.

However, children appear to be playing a very small role in the spread of this virus. A new Australian study² seems to show that in less than 10 per cent of cases a child actually brought a virus home and initiated clusters of cases in households. Other countries have re-opened their schools before Australia, and, for example³, in 22 European countries this has not led to any significant increase in COVID-19 infections among children, parents or staff.

4 Vulnerability analysis

People generally encounter little difficulty in recognising the potential for things to change. However, they often struggle to recognise their organisation's vulnerability to changes and the potential for the resulting disruption that can affect the achievement of their objectives.

Business continuity management (BCM) was an early attempt to address this issue. The focus of BCM is often on elaborate arrangements aimed at returning an organisation to its pre-disruption state. However, rarely does this approach focus on:

- The opportunity, when making decisions, to lessen vulnerability to change;
- Seeking and exploiting the opportunities that can result from disruption.

Traditional BCM often leads to narrow thinking about vulnerability and responding to disruption. It also tends to focus only on a list of 'events' that the organisation considers 'credible'.

If organisations, people and communities only focus on lists of what they deem credible events, and not on their general vulnerability to disruption, they are likely to be quite unprepared when something unpredictable occurs. They are likely to be far better prepared and to have appropriate protection strategies in place if they start by identifying their vulnerability to disruption and why they might be vulnerable as part of normal decision making, rather than undertaking a periodic activity that starts with lists of events.

Many of the processes organisations (and nations) can use to understand such threats and the disruptions they can cause, are intricate and can be very

² <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.26.20044826v1>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/french-minister-tells-of-risks-of-missing-school-as-more-pupils-return-covid-19>

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complex. However, forming an appreciation of vulnerability is quite simple and involves just asking two questions: ‘Vulnerable to what?’ and ‘How?’.

In this case we conducted a desk-based vulnerability analysis. The *vulnerable to what* aspect of the analysis considered the situation of a resumed MYO face-to-face rehearsal program.

The *how* aspect involved two considerations:

- The ways in which MYO is vulnerable;
- The effect of that vulnerability in terms of MYO’s purpose.

The results of this analysis are in Appendix A, at Section 7 of this report.

5 Suggested protection strategy

The vulnerability analysis has been used to derive a protection and prevention strategy that MYO can adopt if and when it decides to commence its face-to-face rehearsal program. At present, that does not seem likely until at least Term 4 of the 2020 school year.

Table 1: Suggested protection strategy

Element	Requirement
General infection control and contamination prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Install hand sanitiser stations at the entrance to all rooms used by MYO with signs requiring their use by everyone.• Install hand sanitisers at the entrance to the MYO controlled area of the Melbourne University Southbank campus.• Direct all students and staff to wash or sanitise their hands on entering the MYO controlled area of the campus.• Ensure soap and disposable towels/air driers are provided in bathrooms.• Require all MYO students and staff to not attend a rehearsal program if they exhibit any (even mild) symptoms. They then can only attend by presenting a certificate that shows a negative COVID-19 test.• Agree with Melbourne University a sanitisation program for rooms that MYO will use, including bathrooms. Ensure this includes all surfaces (door handles, for example) and chairs.• By agreement with Melbourne University, share the cost of cleaning as required at the commencement of, and throughout, each teaching day.• Identify any equipment (e.g. music stands) used by MYO, either owned by it or the Melbourne University, and arrange for this to be sanitised before use.• Avoid using difficult to sanitise equipment or instruments – e.g. pianos.• Ensure that all staff and students maintain social distancing in accordance with government guidelines, currently one person per 4 square metres with a minimum 1.5 metre spacing.• Require players of wind instruments to provide their own paper pad to capture any liquids released from their instruments and to pick these up and take them home for washing or disposal after the rehearsal.• Prohibit the use of shared MYO loan instruments.

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Element	Requirement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement protective measures at the MYO administration desk including distanced seating and Perspex screen.• Provide a staff room of a suitable size to allow the maximum number of staff on a break at any one time to take suitably-distanced breaks.• Induct all staff and MYO families using modules as provided by the University of Melbourne.• Prohibit the movement of furniture and equipment between rooms.• Implement staggered start and finish times for all rehearsals.• Reduce duration of rehearsals and eliminate break times.
Access control at Melbourne University Southbank campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a <i>cordon sanitaire</i> within the campus that prevents the movement of MYO people to other parts of the campus and precludes others from the MYO-used area.• Establish only one entrance point into, and one egress point out of, the MYO controlled area of the campus.• Exclude all parents, visitors or others from entering MYO controlled areas of the campus .• Minimise the MYO staff deployed at the campus.• Ensure that enrolment records are up-to-date and the attendance roll is completed at the commencement of every rehearsal.• Try to isolate a set of bathrooms at the campus for MYO's exclusive use.• Prevent or actively discourage MYO people accessing common facilities at campus.• Establish a check-in point outside the main entrance with socially-distanced queuing in place.
Avoiding infection from using public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly advise MYO participants against the use of public transport to and from the program.• Provide MYO participants who have to use public transport with advice (from Yarra Trams etc.) on suitable protection.• Provide MYO participants who have to use public transport with a small bottle of hand sanitiser to use when leaving public transport.
Awareness and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep all MYO students, families and staff informed of the expected opening date for the MYO program.• Inform all MYO students, families and staff of MYO's COVID-19 protection strategy and their obligations.

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Element	Requirement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require all students and parents to sign an agreement on their expected behaviour in line with this protection strategy.• Encourage feedback and questions from students and staff – provide a contact person to answer questions by phone, if required.• Hold periodic Zoom sessions with parents and students to explain MYO’s protection strategy and their obligations.• Communicate the MYO protection strategy to Melbourne University management and seek its agreement to cooperate in implementing it.• Inform Melbourne University management the Department of Education and Training if a participant in an MYO program tests positive for COVID-19.• Communicate the MYO protection strategy to the Department of Education and Training and seek its agreement to resume in-person rehearsals.
Contingency actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly encourage all program participants to use the COVID-Safe app.• Require all program participants to notify MYO if they or a family member is infected and tests positive.• Develop a procedure that MYO can swiftly implement if it becomes aware that a student or staff member has become infected. This procedure should involve contacting the DHSS for advice as a matter of urgency.• Monitor participants for coughs and obvious symptoms during sessions and require them to leave the building as soon as these are detected.• Measure the temperature of everyone entering the MYO controlled area of the campus. Prevent anyone entering with a fever.
Contingency resources	Obtain and maintain: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand sanitiser bottles and stations.• Paper towels or air driers in bathrooms.• Soap in bathrooms.• Infra-red, handheld thermometer and spare batteries.• Sanitising liquids and cloths for equipment, furniture etc.• Suitable disinfectant and mops etc. for wet areas of floors.• A supply of disposable paper towels etc. to absorb liquids from wind instruments if students forget to bring their own.• Perspex screen for administration desk• 3m x 3m marquee for outdoors check-in

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Element	Requirement
Monitoring and active review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="517 434 1453 499">• Actively monitor for changes in State Government recommendations for schools, universities and other places of mass gathering.<li data-bbox="517 528 1453 593">• Develop a program for monitoring all elements of this protection strategy. Include spot checks and observations of behaviours and conditions.<li data-bbox="517 622 1453 645">• Monitor supplies of contingency resources.<li data-bbox="517 674 1453 768">• After each session require feedback on conditions found and any variances detected in behaviours or conditions. Decide on preventative actions in response to each variance detected.

6 Conclusions

We are fortunate in Australia that, excluding the present outbreak in Victoria, we have been able to significantly suppress the COVID-19 pandemic and this has led to a relatively small number of infections and fatalities. This suppression has been achieved through a swiftly implemented 'lock-down' that has caused MYO to curtail its normal face-to-face rehearsal and concert programs.

The world is still trying to understand the virus, how infections occur and how best to prevent the disease spreading in communities. In Victoria, there are still 'clusters' of infection occurring each day with significant community transmission.

Children appear to be playing a very small role in the spread of this virus. They seem to be getting infected with the virus much less frequently than adults and, when they do get the disease, younger children appear to have mild or no symptoms.

Nevertheless, until now, the policy of the Victorian Government has been to strongly encourage school children to stay at home.

Before schools closed for the Stage 4 lockdown, there were still strong recommendations against activities that involved children congregating together, especially where those activities involved contact between students from different schools.

While it would clearly be inadvisable for MYO to restart its face-to-face programs right now, it is important that it plans the protection strategy it will adopt when that does occur. The signal for this would seem to be when the State Government allows activities that involve contact between students from different schools and indoor public gatherings of up to 100 people, and specifically interschool music activities.

We have conducted a simple vulnerability analysis of MYO's rehearsal programs and used that to develop a suitable protection strategy for when the programs re-open. That strategy includes some more conservative measures. It is also sufficiently conservative so that MYO could make a case to parents and others to open earlier, if required.

The elements of the protection strategy are designed to work in concert and, as such, we would advise that separate measures should not be applied in

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isolation or omitted. We would expect implementation of the whole strategy would be more effective than the sum of its parts.

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7 Appendix A – vulnerability analysis

MYO's purpose is: "Enriching young lives through the power of music"

#	Vulnerable to what?	How are we vulnerable?	How can we change our vulnerability?	Notes
1	Students or staff with infection infect others at an MYO rehearsal. Students infected at MYO transfer that to others at their school or home.	Students work closely together in a room. MYO staff meet all students before the start of rehearsals and help set up room etc. Infected people might be asymptomatic. Students infected at a rehearsal may infect others at home or at school.	Students/staff with symptoms, even minor, are asked not to attend rehearsals. Students/staff with symptoms are advised to be tested and not to attend rehearsals until they receive a negative result.	This would be voluntary.
2	Students, MYO staff or others pick up virus from contaminated surfaces at Melbourne University Southbank campus and pass it on to others.	Many students could become infected and could pass the infection on to others. MYO would have to cancel the program. MYO might be prosecuted or sued.	Hand sanitisation or hand washing program. Surfaces in the campus such as in bathrooms, doors and chairs sanitised before use.	Is there equipment or shared instruments that is difficult to sanitise?

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#	Vulnerable to what?	How are we vulnerable?	How can we change our vulnerability?	Notes
3	Other users of the Melbourne University Southbank campus either infect students or vice versa.	People attending a rehearsal can meet other people using the campus. For example in the coffee bar.	Seek exclusive access to the campus or set up a <i>cordon sanitaire</i> within the college that excludes others entering and students leaving during the session.	Will involve limiting access or egress to one door. May not be possible to limit access only to MYO used rooms and areas. For example, the bathrooms might be for common use.
4	Wholesale cancellation by students if infection is communicated to others in a MYO ensemble or orchestra.	Parents may withdraw their children from the program and require the return of fees. They may not return.	Demonstrate effective protection strategies and communicate these to families.	Communication is a vital element of the protection strategy
5	Students become infected travelling on public transport to or from Melbourne University Southbank campus.	If they then attend a rehearsal, they could infect others and MYO would have to cancel the program etc. If they take the virus home and they and others become infected, MYO would need to show that the infection did not occur at the rehearsal.	Advise against the use of public transport, if possible.	
6	University of Melbourne does not allow MYO to restart using the Melbourne University Southbank campus for its rehearsal program.	The University may not allow mass gatherings at the Southbank campus. The University may prevent this because of the additional costs this may involve	Communicate with the Dean so that MYO is aware of any changes in University of Melbourne COVID-19 requirements.	MYO may have to contribute to additional cleaning costs.

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#	Vulnerable to what?	How are we vulnerable?	How can we change our vulnerability?	Notes
7	Students and families form a false impression of the COVID-19 risk they face from participation in MYO program	Confusing and pessimistic media messaging. Unclear or inconsistent Government requirements for schools on precautions.	Explain clearly the risks students face and the rationale for MYO's protection strategy. Monitor for changes in State Government recommendations for schools, Universities and other places of mass gathering.	Realistically, MYO cannot re-start its rehearsal program until similar events are allowed in schools. It cannot start its concert programs until concerts are allowed in the Melbourne Recital Centre and ABC Iwaki Auditorium.

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