



50th year anniversary CoMeT

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“ Can They Sing or Teach It? If They Can’t Hear It? ”

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Singers rely on their hearing to interpret and perform music. Voice teachers are paid for their ability to discern subtle aberrations in pitch, tone, technique, nuance and emotion in their students’ voices. Once hearing is damaged, there is no treatment to reverse it. Therefore, protection and prevention are essential!

Singers are exposed to a wide variety of noise levels during a normal working day and many voice teachers and students complain about auditory symptoms such as tinnitus and subjective loss of hearing. While Hu et al has documented hearing loss in singers presenting with vocal complaints, no formal study has looked at this issue in a generally healthy population. Our study on hearing loss in generally healthy voice students and voice teachers showed that 51.7% of teachers (7.5% voice students) had hearing loss of 30dB or greater at one or more frequencies from 1kHz -8Khz and 43.1% of teachers (5.7% voice students) had high frequency sensorineural hearing loss (4kHz, 6 kHz, 8Khz) and voice teachers developed HFSNHL and had progression of hearing loss faster than predicted by aging alone.

We additionally evaluated high noise exposure in studios and rehearsal venues with teachers wearing shirt pocket level dosimeters and dosimeters measuring noise levels at the external auditory meatus. This small qualitative study suggests several situations that may predispose voice teachers to hearing loss. Noise exposure levels as they relate to the profession of singing and risks associated with studio, rehearsal and performance venues will be presented.

Hearing protection