



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

# University of North Texas College of Music

Doctoral Lecture | Tuesday, February 27, 2024 | 6:30 pm | Recital Hall

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## **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROBLEMS OF VIOLISTS: AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY**

This research is the first known large-scale, instrument-specific, epidemiological study on violists' occupational health problems. An online survey was developed based on a biopsychosocial framework to assess demographics, pain, musculoskeletal and non-musculoskeletal problems, music performance anxiety, and musician identity. Additionally, this is the first study known to investigate violists' perceptions and attitudes regarding viola jokes and negative stereotypes associated with viola players and their effects on violists' occupational health. Validated tools used to measure violists' health problems included the short-form McGill Pain Questionnaire (SF-MPQ) and the Musician's Identity Measurement Scale (MIMS). Violists were recruited via email, social media, and through QR codes distributed by business cards and flyers hung at viola conferences. Results: This survey yielded a cohort  $N = 324$  that was diverse in age, education, and professional involvement. The overall prevalence for violists who experienced musculoskeletal pain in the past year was 79%. For violists in pain, 51% reported being reluctant to inform others of their playing-related pain. In the past year, 89% of violists experienced music performance anxiety. Regarding viola jokes, 49% of violists reported having negative thoughts about viola jokes, with 23% indicating they experience music performance anxiety because of viola jokes. The prevalence rates for non-musculoskeletal problems, perceived factors that influence pain, and the influence of viola jokes suggest that high levels of biopsychosocial stressors are often associated with the classical music genre and playing the viola. The results from this research can be used to enhance music teacher-training programs, inform performance practice and viola pedagogy, and educate clinicians about the health risks of playing the viola.

*Five hundred seventeenth program of the 2023–2024 season  
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