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ADVANCING TRAUMA-INFORMED VOCAL PEDAGOGY: A PROPOSED APPROACH FOR VOICE TEACHERS IN A PRIVATE STUDIO SETTING

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This research project proposes a trauma-informed approach to voice lessons in a private studio setting in order to advance the development of trauma-informed practice in vocal pedagogy. Methods of research include review of recent literature regarding trauma-informed practices within educational and non-clinical settings. The resulting thesis was written in partial fulfillment of a Master of Arts in Music at Northeastern Illinois University. The symposium presentation will provide an overview of the key concepts, principles and domains which constitute the trauma-informed approach.

Since the adoption of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1980, the prevalence and impact of trauma on individuals and groups of people have become widely acknowledged. Increasingly, sectors are adopting trauma-informed approaches to better respond to clients and serve communities. Education is among these sectors which are most responsive to this shift in attitudes, policy, and practices regarding trauma. Few resources exist, however, which are specific to voice teachers, especially those who teach in a private studio. Due to the potential impacts of trauma on the human voice, body, and learning abilities, voice teachers will be better prepared to work with clients when they are aware and understanding of the needs of students who have experienced trauma, regardless of whether students ever disclose a history of trauma or not. This thesis seeks to fill that gap and to engage vocal pedagogues in the ongoing development of trauma-informed education practices.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has developed guidance for implementing trauma-informed practices within organizations and communities. Using the SAMHSA framework as a guide, and drawing on recent literature within educational and other non-clinical services, this thesis proposes the key assumptions, principles, and relevant domains which constitute a trauma-informed vocal pedagogy. Particular attention will be paid to professional boundaries and the development of teachers' resources in order to best support students' musical goals and to prevent secondary trauma and retraumatization.