

Dancer Wellness Program provides en pointe health care

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Currently studying for her master of public health degree at the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Julia Silver is program coordinator for the Dancer Wellness Program, which offers monthly workshops highlighting different aspects of performers' health at Marigny Opera House. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Whether taking the stage or leading a secondline, New Orleans' dancers use their bodies to effortlessly meld art with athleticism. As they hone their craft, these performers are prone to aches, pains and injuries with every step. Since 2015, the [New Orleans Musicians' Clinic and Assistance Foundation \(NOMAF\)](#) has offered the [Dancer Wellness Program](#) to protect the health and safety of dancers— from ballerinas to Mardi Gras Indians —throughout the Greater New Orleans area.

The free program is produced in partnership with the [Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine \(TISM\)](#) and the [Performing Arts Medicine Association](#). Lindsay Gastright, a TISM assistant athletic trainer, directs the project.

The New Orleans Musicians' Clinic (3700 St. Charles Ave.) hosts the program from an office housed within the LSU Healthcare Network, providing services like education on injury prevention and specialized one-on-one treatment.

"Any professional dancer who works in New Orleans is eligible for the program," said Julia Silver, Dancer Wellness Program coordinator. "The program encourages dancers to speak up about injury. Performing artists are the soul of New Orleans, and we want people to know we're here to take care of them."

Silver is currently studying for her master of public health degree in epidemiology at the [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#).

As program coordinator, Silver also conducts needs assessments with a variety of professional dancers and analyzes data to look at relevant health disparities and barriers to accessing healthcare.

The program also offers monthly workshops highlighting different aspects of performers' health at [Marigny Opera House](#) (725 St. Ferdinand St.).

Focusing on the topic of mindfulness, the next workshop will be held on Monday (Nov. 21).

"We're tackling the mental health side of a dancer's wellness," said Silver.

The workshop aims to discuss tactics for how performers can cope with anxiety and improve their sleep regimens.

Appointments at the New Orleans Musicians' Clinic can be scheduled by calling (504) 412-1366.

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