

NOTES Higher Music Education Meeting

April 30, 2020 – 15:00 CET by ZOOM

Classical:NEXT is the annual, global networking and exchange hub dedicated exclusively to classical and art music, for all professionals – artists, managers, presenters, orchestras, labels, educators, press, media, publishers and more. Classical:NEXT consists of an interactive conference, project pitches, showcase concerts, expo, innovation award and networking. As this year cannot take place as usual in person, we have developed online content to ensure that the international art music community stays connected, inspired and exchanging year round. We start today with this session dedicated to the High Education new challenges.

This Session is divided in two parts. A first part led by **John Kieser**, executive vice president and provost, **New World Symphony**, on “*Distance Learning*” with a presentation by **Justin Trieger**, director of new media and distance education, **New World Symphony**, followed by Q&A. A second part lead by **Deborah Kelleher**, director, **Royal Irish Academy of Music**, on “*Opportunities arising out the crisis and emerging methodologies*”, an open forum to exchange ideas and share experiences.

John Kieser explains that this session will focus on global solutions that can be initiated in any country. New World Symphony has been working over the past decade with colleague institutions in Europe and China in creating best practices for distance learning. This new way of learning can make education more accessible to those with lower budgets, geographic challenges, or looking to decrease their carbon foot print. Justin Trieger explained some technological solutions in his presentation. A deeper dive into Low Latency (via Internet2/GÉANT) will be presented by Ann Doyle on Monday, 18th, 10am EST/4pm CET. To register for that presentation, please use this link - <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tz0tdu-grj4vG9ZLlfYsDe8tnQ6arz7uMY94>

A typical approach is to start with thinking about the technology, but the desired outcome is more important. First think about what is to be achieved and then make decisions about the activity and the most appropriate technology.

Some of the tools NWS uses are based on Internet2 which Ann Doyle will introduce in a different session soon. There exists two high-quality and low latency software solutions: [Ultragrid](#) and [LoLa](#). Both require Internet2 or point to point fibre optic cable connections. If the activity requires a great resolution of visuals; make use of Ultragrid. If the goal is to reduce latency, use LoLa.

If you don't have Internet2, then there are various other tools one can use. The most often asked question is “Which is the best?” There is no one answer - it depends on what you want to achieve. The qualities you may want to consider before making a decision are ease of use, quality, latency and accessibility.

Here is a link to the presentation: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7kuky6>

Justin's Personal Preferences:

[Zoom](#) - good tool that offers extended audio features that, in the right set up, can have a nice acoustic quality and has useful extras such as recording. Very accessible. Handles point-to-point and multipoint very well

[Skype](#) - has great point-to-point call quality. It is supported in any device, free and everyone has used it. However it doesn't offer a great audio quality.

[WebRTC](#) – is not an app but a system integrated in an app. It uses a better audio quality for music and easy to integrate with other Google Apps. Handles multipoint very well.

Additional specialised tools:

[jamkazam](#) – for activity within the same geographic area and with internet (but not Wi-Fi). It has very low latency, even better than LoLa

[doozzoo](#) - has many extended tools specific for music education such as shared metronome (latency gets adjusted) but is a paid service

[SoundJack](#) – low latency if you use it locally

[Jamulus](#) - It is less used and it is a shared video and audio tool with low latency

Best practices for any tool:

- use Ethernet whenever possible (Wi-Fi is terrible for videoconferencing)
- wear headphones to mitigate echoes and compression which helps dynamics of instruments
- if you have an external mic, it is recommended to use it – better quality than built-in mics
- be conscious of camera framing to capture critical physical elements
- do not point cameras at light sources
- early is on-time and on-time is late – the frustration of an online empty room is greater than in a classroom
- keep sessions to 45 minutes or less – Royal Danish Academy of Music studied online teaching fatigue and recommends session maximums of 45 minutes for music teaching
- language can be a barrier, so it is good to check-in to see if you are being understood

Pedagogy tips:

- The purpose of a synchronous session (not recorded session) should be reserved for interactive teaching. To review documents or watch videos, it is better to send it than set up a meeting.
- Do not attempt to recreate the classroom experience.
- Learning to use the tools is an important skill development exercise. The teacher should be ready to address difficulties with the tool.
- Although the familiarity with the tool is needed, using different tools for different purposes can help accomplish your goals.

Questions:

1. What are music academies doing to prepare for starting up again as governments start to soften the lock-down rules? We are finding in Europe that this is the next very urgent question on everyone's plate.

John Kieser: It is at the top of our minds. Although we are preparing for a future virus flare up, we are keeping these tools at the forefront because we want to be able to go quickly online.

2. On the topic of assessment (which would be an outcome, as Justin described): ELIA just presented a webinar on best practices in online teaching. A story from the School of Art and Design in Hertfordshire (UK) stressed the discovery of flexibility in assessment in this forced situation. They indeed focused on the end result and then tweaked how they could get there when first, they had feared that their assessment framework would not allow this. They are calling that a major take-away for the future. I wonder if this is something that colleagues in music would recognise - can you still assess?

Justin Triege: Absolutely in terms on assessment. Everything is measurable if we can define well what we want to measure. In Hertfordshire they have much experience. It is important to define achievable goals and outcomes.

3. Are tools like LoLa, Internet 2, and Ultragrid only available at institutions, or is this level of technology possible in the homes of students? What kind of cost would be associated with that?

Justin Triege: LoLa and Ultragrid run on modern computers with a good camera, so the cost of entry is low. We can only use it in institutions because of the internet connectivity. These tools need bandwidth that are not restricted by typical security measures on commercial internet. They are trying to make it possible from home, but the use is still limited to institutions at the moment.

The Royal Irish Academy of Music, explains Deborah Kelleher, is also seeing positives in the situation in the sense of trying online tools and retaining them for the future.

Stefan Gies, CEO of the Association of European Conservatoires, explains that our sector is strongly based on one-to-one lessons. This makes it much more difficult in this situation. We also use and recommend the aforementioned tools and specially LoLa. Most institutions have many tools already implemented (such as a LoLa studio) as they are a “good to have”. But probably only 5% of the performance teachers have ever used it and probably 70% of the professors do not even know this tool exists. Now they are needing to use them. Many started with commercial tools such as Skype because they were familiar with them but suffered because of the latency. This new interest for LoLa will facilitate its improvement and maybe in two or three years a new Lola will be implemented for use at home, 10 times better as usual videoconference tools. So this crisis could be an opportunity for online teaching. There are still crucial topics that need to be solved: (the already mentioned) big challenges in online learning; the accessibility to these tools by all students; many students lost their incomes or funding; and the big challenge of the examinations.

Sarah Sew, Head of Strings and Chamber Music at the Royal Irish Academy of Music Dublin, explained how they are managing to maintain peer elements, which are often the favourite way of learning. Here she includes not only official peer learning, but also other peer elements that normally happen in an informal conversation on the hall or in a small group in a rehearsal room. They run the classes in two ways: real time and virtual performance class. For the virtual performance class they combine the typical performance, the feedback and the discussion out of it. They send the musical score and sometimes a recording in advance and use the recording function during the class so students can evaluate their own performance afterwards. They also focus some classes on reviewing other Institutions’ articles or online resources such as ‘Musaic’ amongst a range of different sources. In RIAM they also found that students share their own experiences or articles and help each other in more self-directed learning. They included constructive written feedback and are willing to keep this into the future.

Marc Ernesti, from Crane School of Music, State University of New York, points out that in this new need for technology solutions, we have to be prepared for new learning environments. We have to try to guide them in this new scenario of self-directed and self-organised learning and grow their engagement. He also highlighted the opportunity we have to strengthen our connections with other departments or institutions as it is easier to join a zoom class than in the usual programmes.

Deborah agrees that we are here in fact meeting each other as we never did before and adds that actually digital competences have risen to the top of skills students need to have. She also mentions some initiatives coming up like the ‘Network Music Festival 2020’ which has an open call at the moment.

Maria Hansen, director of European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) in Amsterdam, held a session recently about graduation shows and exhibitions. ELIA learned that this is one of the topics about which their members were most concerned. How to make the conclusion of their studies special and a celebration? Maria Hansen related a solution by one of their members, Zurich University of the Arts, who used an empty building (empty because of the lock down), to dedicate all the equipment (Zoom, LoLa and more) for graduations. This will make the graduation very special as the building is a connection point for the students.

Deborah Kelleher explained how conservatories in some countries are starting to plan the return to their buildings but so many questions are open. It is still not clear how to conduct lessons or orchestra rehearsals. Is it going to be with plastic barriers? Limited numbers? Protocols in libraries? What are we going to keep from the great ideas of online learning?

John Kieser explained a new way to audition that NWS has developed already last spring. They did so because of travel or health restrictions. They will continue using this method as it is more accessible (as travelling to audition sites is no longer a barrier) and it is far more economical. They separated the interview from the performance part. This way the interview can be longer, and the applicant does not need to split their focus. It will take more time to review all the videos.

The comments collected during the session showed a sense of relief to see that we are all swimming in the same waters and finding many ways and solutions to stay afloat with energy enough to continue swimming!