Virtual Music, Performance, or Movement Experiential Courses

On Friday, April 24, 2020, 30 members of the UMN teaching community convened to discuss approaches to teaching music, dance, and theater in an online environment. Ideas and effective practices generated during that discussion are documented here. Contact cei@umn.edu to suggest an addition to this resource.

Session Recording
- YouTube video of the session

Facilitators and panelists (if applicable):
- Mary Jetter, CEI (facilitator)
- Keith Brown, ATSS (facilitator)
- Maggie Bergeron, Dance, UM-Twin Cities
- Rebecca Katz Harwood, Dance, UM-Duluth
- Siobhan Bremer, Theatre, UM-Morris
- George French, Music, UM-Crookston
- Theodore (TJ) Chapman, Music, UM-Crookston

Remote Classroom Practices

Individual and Small Group Instruction Rather Than Ensemble

- Provide individual instruction either using real-time video (via phone, webcam, laptop) or recording of video. The instructor can watch the video (real-time or recorded) of the individual student and provide feedback (real-time or recorded). The instructor can also record themself to demonstrate the feedback.
- Work with students on a different scale - not feedback/instruction to 26 students at once (too difficult in Zoom) and not all feedback/instruction to 26 individual students (too much time). Try feedback and instruction that is a combination of individual and small groups (3-4 students). Consider FaceTime and Google Hangout in addition to Zoom.

Check-in with Students and Use Technology They Already Know

- Check in with students - ask them what works for them (technology access, live sessions, recorded sessions, feedback, etc.).

- Use Canvas as students already know Canvas from other courses.

Innovative Approaches

Reframe Group/Ensemble Teaching into Smaller Units

- Choir - adapt group or section performance assignments to individual sing alongs (for example, take YouTube clips of Handel's Messiah and ask students to listen to each section and then sing along with that section).
- Dance - instructor can record themself doing a warm-up or section of a dance, send it/post it to Canvas, have students watch it, watch it together and talk through it.
- Ensemble music - instructor records the music, sends to students, students record their parts, and send back to instructor for feedback (similar to dance feedback).
- Ensemble music - instructor conducts to background music but provides cues (as if in-person) and annotates the parts for different sections (woodwinds, horns, etc.).

Integrate Skills, Concepts, and Principles Through Other Types of Activities/Assignments

- Dance - include somatic studies (studying, thinking, writing, commenting, discussing how others are dancing) - could be a recording of professional performers (YouTube and other sources) or could be a recording of other students performing.
- Dance - the physical requirements of dance (such as get your heart rates up) can be accomplished (run around the block, do the stairs for 7 minutes, etc.)
- Dance - When students travel through space they develop balance and stability, how can you have students develop balance and stability without the large space of the dance studio?
- Choir - shift performance assignments to listening assignments, choir appreciation assignments (for example watch a performance on YouTube such as Concordia Choir or Tabernacle Choir and present ideas for improvement).
- Musical Theatre - ask students to write program notes for productions available on YouTube (instructors can make a list of shows available on YouTube that best meet the student learning outcomes). Perhaps as a replacement for students who will graduate and miss productions that are cancelled.
- Provide guidelines for writing program notes such as address historical, cultural significance of the composer and arranger (if applicable). Students turn in program notes for instructor feedback but also share their program notes with the class for discussion.

Use Cameras and Video for the Close-Up, Pause, and Replay Functions

- Beginning actors tend to overuse their body instead of facial expression and voice, so in this case, acting for the screen helps students focus on facial expression and voice.
- Teach tap dance to your students with 2 cameras (one camera near your feet and the other camera for a full shot).
- Even with a synchronous online session, a dance instructor cannot dance with students. The dance instructor can either dance (demonstrate) or watch students dance. But recordings of demonstrations and student dance may be watched, paused, zoomed, and rewatched.

Acknowledge Limitations

- **No interaction** between dancers, performers, musicians. Students cannot dance with each other. Actors cannot respond to each other. Musicians cannot respond to conductor and other musicians. Composition, choreography, ensemble performance and productions are compromised or missing.
- **Lag in real-time video**, so even if there are 4 bodies dancing in Zoom, they are not synchronized.
- **Essential training and experiences are deferred**. Theatre productions, dance performances, choir performances, etc., are cancelled for now.
- **Some student learning outcomes will not be met**. For example, Music Theory is most difficult to teach online (some things will be missed).
- **Asynchronous online teaching** is needed for students who are in different time zones and/or have poor internet access. The very nature of all performance is synchronous.

Resources

For teaching dance online

- DancingAloneTogether.org a digital dance resource (classes, videos, prompts).
- Jacob's Pillow - Virtual Pillow site includes digital archives, live events, discussions and more.

For teaching music online

- Acapella app synchronizes tracks of music with fairly high sound quality and can synchronize multiple instruments and multiple parts.
- Soundslice takes music and syncs it with a recording (works better than synchronous Zoom session).

For teaching theatre/acting online

- [Association for Theatre in Higher Education (Resources for Teaching Online)](#) - scroll down for other resources.
- [Playscripts](#) offers plays (for fee) including [10 Ways to Survive Life in Quarantine](#) (play designed to be performed online) or search LiveScreen Theatre Collection for other plays designed to be performed online.
- [SceneStudyEmergencyPack.com](#) created by Kitt Lavoie, Theatre and Dance, Southeast Missouri State University offers short plays adapted for scene study in a remote learning environment.