Thoughts for Online Music Teaching

As many musicians are in the midst of transitioning to teaching online, we've gathered together some ideas and thoughts on what to consider when teaching music lessons remotely.

Platforms

- Zoom
    - A majority of musicians seem to be using Zoom for lessons and finding it a good option, there's also the possibility of recording lessons if students need this as a reference.
    - Free accounts can have a limit of 40 minutes on meetings, but if lessons are longer than this, you can schedule two meetings.
    - Zoom has the option to record meetings which could be useful for the student practicing.
    - You can also share screen with the student if you want to immediately show them an example.
    - You may need to edit settings to get the best sound, check out PLG Music's tips HERE. Briefly, you'll need to check your inputs and outputs to make sure they're output is going to your headphones rather than speakers, and that input is coming from the correct microphone. You'll also need to **disable** the settings that remove background noise.
- Skype can be useful in that many students will already have the programme and be familiar with it.
- Facetime. In the event that people are working off iPhones or iPads, Facetime can be quite good on immediacy, although the sound quality may not be as good as more adaptable services as above.

- [Microsoft Teams](#) or [Google Classroom](#) are good ones to look at for teaching classes, with options to create and mark assignments and keep track of a class's progress.
- [Smartmusic](#). This services for music schools offers a range of features for students, and could be particularly useful for theoretical lessons with assignments etc. Includes possibilities for sight-reading and built in metronomes amongst other features. They're offering subscriptions free until June 30th.

Set-up

- With some platforms as above, it's possible to hook in better microphones or cameras to your computer for a better quality transmission from your student. However, most people will be working with a computer or tablet's built in camera and microphone, and this can work absolutely fine with a bit of thought. For ideas on streaming in better quality, have a glance at our article on Budget Streaming & Recording.
- How are angles going to affect what you can see from the student? Can you send the student/parent an image/video/description in advance showing them the best way to place a camera, e.g. the correct height, where the student should be facing.
- Your set-up. A very simple starting point, but worth considering exactly how you will set up so that everything is to hand for the lesson, e.g.
  - How long are your headphone leads and will they impede you grabbing your instrument, music or other tools?
  - If you need a clear lesson plan visible for your own reference, where can you place it so that it's not distracting to the student?

Allowing for Differences from a face-to-face lesson

- If you normally accompany your students, this will usually be almost impossible by video conferencing because of delays - can you pre-record accompaniments and send them to your student to use during their lesson, or are their existing accompaniment tracks e.g. on Youtube, that they can use?
- Equally if you have a lot of interactive games that you play with younger students, things that involve simultaneous action, e.g. playing/clapping/singing together will likely be impossible - Can you find alternate games and methods in these weeks

that use a more call and response or imitative pattern? If you often clap along to ensure your student stays with a beat, can you make sure they have a metronome alongside that they can use during the lesson?

- Parents: If you're teaching kids and parents don't normally stay for the lesson, it can be valuable to ask them to sit in for these ones - they can assist you by moving the camera so that you can see different angles where necessary, and take notes for practice since you don't have a notebook to write in.

Following through

- Another solution when lacking copybooks to write practice down in, can you send an email to students or parents outlining how to practice for the given week?
- You may need extra resources to ensure students are practicing correctly, if it's more difficult to correct them in online lessons. Taking cues from online yoga/exercise videos, you could send example practice videos, or videos that allow students to 'practice along', highlighting the things they need to focus on. These can also be valuable for parents to check. While you might not like these strategies generally since it doesn't allow children to develop their own practice, it could be valuable for these weeks. Are there pre-existing videos on any platform that you can link them to?

Other Resources

- **IAYO:** http://www.iayo.ie/teacherandorganisertraining/online-internet-teaching-resources/
- **Future Learn:** Free online course on online teaching https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/teach-online
- **Erich Eidbreder on Platforms**. https://www.ericheidbreder.com/post/the-best-services-and-settings-for-remote-music-lessons-with-step-by-step-instructions
- **PLG on Zoom Settings:** https://plgmusic.com.au/news/2020/3/23/best-zoom-meeting-settings-for-remote-music-lessons
- **And a reminder from Any Good Thing that online teaching doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to keep things going:** https://anygoodthing.com/2020/03/12/please-do-a-bad-job-of-putting-your-courses-online/