

Online Musical Collaboration for High School String Students

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to observe how high school string players, from an existing chamber group, view online musical collaboration.



Rationale

Chamber Groups: being part of a small ensemble encourages responsibility, advanced skills, ownership, independence, and confidence

Online collaboration: generally people like 'communicating' online, and there is a variety of software/websites that have been created for musical experiences, but they all appear out of date now (many no longer exist)

Changes to education: communities of place vs. communities of interest, learner choice, possible shift in teacher authority in classroom, ubiquitous learning (paradigm shift for learning transformed by Internet and mobile computing)

"What is needed is for the music education profession to begin to take more seriously the need to go beyond performance, to reconstitute ensembles around ubiquitous opportunities, and to adjust practices to better connect with more generous conceptions of music, musician, and audience." ~Dr. Matthew Thibeault, 2012, Ubiquitous Music Learning in a Postperformance World

Please see abstract for full references.



Participants

Four students from a high school Chamber Orchestra:

"Athena" – Female, sophomore, playing cello for 6 years, also in a string trio

"Charites" – Female, senior, playing cello for 11 years, also in a string quartet with Nereus

"Iris" – Female, junior, playing viola since she was in 4th grade, also plays with Suzuki chamber group

"Nereus" – Male, sophomore, playing violin since he was 5, also in a string quartet with Charites

Data Sources

Participating students were given these directions:

- Collaborate musically online at least twice a week for four weeks
- "Collaboration" means there are at least 2 people from your chamber group involved
- After you collaborate, fill out the online journal (through SurveyMonkey) to share what you did online and what you thought about it
- By the end of the project, please try at least two sites from the "synchronous" list and two from the "asynchronous" list

We met as a group for a pre-study interview and direction session.

We met again as a group for a mid-study interview (2 weeks after the first interview).

Finally, we met for post-study individual interviews (5 weeks after the first interview).



Play music live with your friends online

Sample of Suggested Online Sites

Synchronous: Chrome Jam, NINJAM, Soundjack, Google Hangout, Google Chat

Asynchronous: Noteflight, Spotify, Soundcloud, YouTube, Chromatik, Twitter, Facebook

Full list and descriptions available at:

LindsayFulcher.com/onlinemusic



Findings

Facebook and Spotify are by far the most used resources for online musical collaboration

"I love how much music is readily available (for free!) on Spotify, and making, editing, and sharing playlists is much easier than on Youtube." ~Charites, journal in week 2

In general, asynchronous collaboration/communication is more familiar to the students and is their preference

"Well, a lot of times I feel like it's just easier to meet face-to-face and not have to worry about technology and lag time and stuff like that." ~Charites, post-study interview

At my prompting, several students did try Skype and Google Hangout but did not enjoy these synchronous sites because of lag time and a hard-to-describe difference in "feel" compared to live rehearsal

"I think [live] music is really hard to do online. I know Skype always has some lag. Pretty much everything has lag. It's also not as good at sound quality and you can't really, like, if you're in an ensemble you can't look around and see what the other person's doing so it's hard to cue I guess." ~Iris, mid-study interview

Mentioned/used consistently through the study: Facebook, Spotify, YouTube

Mentioned/used a few times during study: Skype, Google Hangout, Chrome Jam, Chromatik, Soundjack

Used before the study in music and non-music classes (mentioned in interviews): Google Drive/Docs, Soundcloud, Prezi, Dropbox



Potential Implications

I have learned that these high school students use what they know and are not inclined to try new forms of online musical collaboration without prompting and guidance. However, they are already using Facebook and Spotify in some very productive, musical ways. My hope is to share these findings with other music teachers to help them understand how much students enjoy collaborating musically online, outside the classroom, and how best to facilitate additional positive experiences.

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Online Musical Collaboration for High School String Students

As a string player and orchestra teacher, I am interested in how string students who already collaborate in person might view using technology to collaborate musically (not in the same physical place). Which environments do they enjoy using and why? Do they enjoy collaborating synchronously or asynchronously and why? Most importantly, do string students from existing chamber groups find it worthwhile to participate in online musical communities, communities of interest? The purpose of this study is to observe how high school string players, from an existing chamber group, view online music collaboration. The students will collaborate online, outside of class, and share their opinions through journals and interviews.

My four participants collaborated online for five weeks. These students gravitate to asynchronous, familiar, collaboration online. They frequent Facebook and Spotify and are very excited about the features these services offer. They also use these websites regularly and are familiar with them. They were not as excited about the synchronous options based on prior experiences with lag time and technological glitches. Getting them to try unfamiliar websites took prompting and additional instruction.

With this information I hope to inform K-12 string teachers and help them encourage their students to continue the musical experience online, outside of class. There are many free resources available, some of which students are already using, and teachers should take advantage of this opportunity to have students collaborating in many different ways. Please see the back for the list of websites suggested for online musical collaboration.

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Suggested websites for online musical collaboration

All of these links, with more complete descriptions, are available on my website, LindsayFulcher.com/onlinemusic:



Chrome Jam – play online instruments with friends <http://www.jamwithchrome.com/>

NINJAM – audio connector to reduce lag time <http://www.cockos.com/ninjam/>

Llcon – audio connector to reduce lag time <http://llcon.sourceforge.net/index.html#About>

Soundjack – audio connector to reduce lag time <http://www.carot.de/soundjack/>

Google Hangout – videoconferencing <http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/>

Skype – videoconferencing <http://beta.skype.com/en/>

FaceTime – videoconferencing for Apple products

Google Chat – instant messenger <http://www.google.com/talk/intl/en-GB/about.html>

Messages/iChat – instant messenger for Apple products

Facebook – www.facebook.com

Twitter – www.twitter.com

YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com/>

Noteflight – composition <http://www.noteflight.com>

Spotify – free music listening/sharing <http://www.spotify.com/us/>

Soundcloud – free music sharing, mostly homemade music <https://soundcloud.com/>

Chromatik – upload & share sheet music <http://chromatik.com/>

Kompoz – work together on musical projects <http://www.kompoz.com>

Google Drive – upload & share documents and much more <http://www.drive.google.com>

Dropbox – upload & share documents and much more <https://www.dropbox.com/>

Prezi – create presentations/share ideas <http://prezi.com/>

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A Change in Education

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