NCCO Webinars

Part 1

Series 1, Webinar 3 - 30 Mar 2020: Remote Lessons and Gesture

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Ferrell

The arc of our conversation will be as follows:

1. How as teachers might we move forward with our students pedagogically and philosophically?
2. Specific challenges of, and strategies for, teaching gesture remotely, and technologies and softwares that we might use.
3. Talk through additional conducting assignments: non-gesture-specific, that are appropriate for graduate and undergraduate students.
4. How can we best serve our students, our community, families, and ourselves?

How as teachers of a tactile art move forward with our students pedagogically and philosophically? What are you doing differently now than what you were doing before the pandemic?

Powell

We have graduate students who primarily study conducting during the summer -- I've been doing distance education since around 2003. So I have grown with the technology. This semester was already a combination of live teaching and video assignments. Here are some takeaways:

1. Tell them how you want the camera situation. Make sure that they know to put it at eye level, so you can see the whole reach.
2. I prepare a video demonstration as well.

Ferrell

Jeff, you're dealing with graduate recitals.

Douma

We had one student whose graduate recital was canceled. We are allowing her to use footage from last fall. She had just presented on her literature in our Zoom seminar which was recorded, and together those elements will count as a degree recital.

I am taking this opportunity to focus on how we internalize a piece of music. A good portion of my private lessons have always been spent on analysis, style, interpretation, pedagogical challenges. We've found some ways to explore gesture in online lessons, but I'm placing greater emphasis on the other things which form the basis of our gestural decisions.

We don't conduct at all for the first several weeks. Instead we talk about how to analyze a piece, how to get the sound of a piece into our ear, culminating in a written score study project. Only after that do we work on

gesture. Students begin to appreciate that their first responsibility is to really know a piece before they think about getting in front of people to conduct it.

I ask the student to think in advance about five problem spots they find in the piece that they're conducting, which gives us a way to talk about gesture without worrying about time lag. I've also asked students to analyze the gesture of other conductors on video.

Daley

Graduate students are used to the one-on-one interaction that they typically have with us, and I've found that transition to be easier than the undergraduates who are used to class format. They miss the live encounter -- they enjoy responding to one another. The question is "how can I continue to spark their imaginations in this way?" Perhaps this is a way to invite them more deeply into the craft of conducting in terms of the individual work that we do in score study. What language can we use to help them think about gesture when we can't demonstrate it and have the tactile aspect? I'm thinking about how to help undergraduates teach themselves and I hope that will transfer to their future preparation as a conductor.

Joseph

My colleague and I are trying to be creative about replacing recitals, classes, and rehearsals. We're going to meet every week as a conducting studio; first, talking through the piece they were going to conduct in recital this semester, Bernstein's Chichester Psalms, and score study, listening to and talking about recordings.

I've also been trying to deal with gesture. The specific challenge of that is talking to students about specific problem spots, and then having the student speak or sing to conduct themselves through that spot. I've been able to do that both in a group setting and in private lessons.

Lamartine

The biggest problem is finding a way to connect the aural experience to the kinesthetic experience. We can't create a true aural experience in this situation, so the responsibility falls on the student to create the sound that is matched to the gesture.