NCCO Webinars

Part 3

Series 1, Webinar 5 - 6 April 2020: Recitals, Auditions, and Juries, Oh My!

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Miguel: Our poll results are in, and the overwhelming concern right now is juries. Greg, how can we make juries work technologically?

Greg: If a student has good internet, then a live jury is a possibility. At Oberlin we only do juries during the Freshman and Sophomore years, and we've delayed our juries to the fall because we wanted the students to be able to do a "live" collaborative performance with a pianist. For recitals we are assessing students via recording or via live performance for teachers, similar to a jury.

Miguel: What are your administrators saying they want to happen with juries? Do we postpone, cancel, substitute?

Lisa: At George Mason each area coordinator has worked with the Chair of the School of Music to define how they want juries done. Obviously, if you don't have a marimba at home they can't play rudiments or excerpts. Seniors who have been prepping recitals and graduate school auditions have recordings of excerpts or performances that they can turn in.

Look at creative ways for students to show what they've mastered, whether short term or long term, to give them an opportunity to share what they can. A student can wait until the last possible day of final exams before they decide to take credit, no-credit, or a traditional grade. It's not just "what can we produce in a jury," but rather "what can I show you visibly that I've done at this time."

**Miguel: Any other comments about performance assessment? **

Maya: My students are responding to the [synchronous] meeting time because many of their classes are self-paced. I think that they rely upon that structure to give some sense of normalcy. The mental and emotional implications of having a fixed lesson time cannot be underrated. After we're through this, NASM will have to decide how important is it that a student wasn't able to do everything that is normally required.

Stephanie: My colleagues and I asked our students, "What do you want out of Studio Class? Do you want to meet? Do you want to sing? Post recordings? Listening projects?" Overwhelmingly, they all wanted to sing. Some of them enjoy performing "live" via Zoom; some prefer to make videos and then we comment. We've started doing asynchronous watch parties of operas, musicals, recitals. They seem very happy with the meeting time in person, and also with the time on their own asynchronously. Asking the students what they need is just as important as the NASM rules.

Miguel: What about our students who can't play or sing in their homes?

Stephanie: For the first week of the shutdown our students were still on campus and could use the practice rooms. Then it was reduced to only students with terminal recitals. Now they've been assigned their own practice room until the time of their recital. For those without recitals who can't sing in their home, that's a tricky thing. One of my students goes to the common area of his apartment building to find WiFi. We have

to be lenient to help them with language and musicianship skills. One of my students is working on *Barber of Seville *learning recits, and he doesn't have to sing -- he's been working language, speaking them. He's also doing a character study of Figaro, which is his role.

Maya: I live in a condominium, so I hand-wrote notes to all of my immediate neighbors, introducing myself and explaining that I need to practice at home. I told them what they could expect to hear and when, and to please contact me if there is a problem. I got some very nice responses and nobody has pounded on the floor. I've suggested that my students try the same neighborly approach.

**Miguel: Greg, you have applied technology in ways many of us don't know. What are some technological tools we can use? **

Greg: The benefit of Zoom is the ease of connecting people for conversation, but it does not have music capable audio. Facetime and Skype both have better audio. If you want very high audio quality, use Zoom for video and Cleanfeed.net for the audio. It claims to only work with Chrome, but it works just fine with others. It's used to record high quality audio for radio interviews.

If students have an external microphone it makes a world of difference. For asynchronous things, many people have been using the Acappella app, which lets you multitrack with yourself and friends. Audacity and GarageBand are quite well known for audio recording. We have our staff accompanist recording accompaniment tracks and sending them to students.

Lisa: We're doing that at George Mason. In fact, one of our collaborative pianists has found that she would rather have the student sing the piece with the artistry they want first, and then she plays the accompaniment under their singing.

**Miguel: It's important to remember that many of our collaborative pianists are paid hourly, and losing half a semester is 1/4 of their annual income. If there are ways for us to keep them engaged that will help them survive this financially. **

Stephanie: We have a collaborative piano pool, and the students have already paid their pianists for the semester, so those pianists have been sending in tracks for their singers. Some of our collaborators don't have an instrument available in their living space, and for those students we've used Appcompanist.

Maya: I've asked my students to download the Mini Piano app, so they have a keyboard on their phone which is useful for vocalise and early learning stages.