

# Teaching Piano Online: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly!

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# Modalities for online teaching

## **Synchronous**

Live, face-to-face online teaching

## **Asynchronous**

Pre-recorded video exchanges

## **Hybrid**

Combination of both modalities

# Synchronous Online Teaching - The Good

- Allows students and teachers to adhere to social distancing practices
- Creates an avenue for socialization and normality for children (and adults!)
- More likely to continue lessons now that they can occur at home
- A new alternative for teaching post-pandemic; not just an emergency

# Synchronous Online Teaching - The Bad

- Sound will never be the same as an in-person
- It requires patience, flexibility, humor, and a willingness to adapt
- Student behavior can be harder to manage online
- Technical difficulties can disrupt the lesson (but it's less often than you think!)

# Synchronous Online Teaching - The Ugly!

- It can be hard to attract new students because parents/students can't wrap their heads around how online teaching would work
- There can be a bit of a learning curve in adapting your teaching
- Rescheduling due to technical difficulties does happen

# Synchronous Teaching Settings

# Synchronous Teaching - Setting One

## Setting One

- The simplest setting you can get: laptop and internal microphone
- Video conferencing via Skype, Zoom, FaceTime or Hangouts
- [Tour Video](#)
- [Teaching Demo](#)
- Discussion
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# Synchronous Teaching - Setting Two

## Setting Two

- More complex setting: laptop, webcam, external microphone, microphone boom stand with camera attachment
- [Tour Video](#)
- [Teaching Demo](#)
- ManyCam Video: allows teacher to “mix” input from two or more cameras
  - Picture-in-picture
  - Split screen
- [Demo](#)
- Discussion



# Synchronous Teaching - Setting Three

## Setting Three

- Most complex setting: laptop, webcam, external microphone, Internet MIDI
- [Tour Video](#)
- [Teaching Demo](#)
- Discussion

# Practical and Pedagogical Considerations

# Practical Considerations - General

- Consider the extra financial cost investing in equipment
- Schedule a few test-runs when setting up the equipment outside lesson times
- Always be grateful for the students/families who follow you on to the online teaching realm. It's a large leap for them (and yourself if you haven't done it before!)

# Practical Considerations - Technological

- Begin with a manageable/comfortable setting. Add more features as able.
- Place the microphone/laptop at a medium distance from the piano. If it's too close (esp. for an acoustic piano) the sound gets clipped or distorted
- Experiment with the advanced settings of Skype or Zoom. Some things to try:
  - Turn off the “automatically adjust microphone volume” (Zoom and Skype)
  - Turn off “Suppress background noise” setting
- Be sure your internet bandwidth is ready to handle multiple devices (also your student's). The more Mbps the better (60 would be ideal)
- When connection is poor, turn off video streaming (work with audio)

# Pedagogical Considerations

- Listen closer to the sound that the student produces, rather than relying on a visual.
- Structure your lesson in “short bites,” and use short demonstration.
- Use colorful and enthusiastic language, as well as imagery
- Take full advantage of online music theory learning tools
- Make sure to use the same edition with numbered measures
- Setup up a Google Drive or Dropbox to have a shared list of documents

# Asynchronous Teaching: Exchanging videos

# Recording

- Use your smartphone!

# Sharing

- Google Drive, Youtube or Dropbox
- Facebook closed group
- Collabra (\$)
  - collabramusic.com
  - Recording within the portal with device's camera, or video upload
  - Student management, groups
  - Video commenting
  - Practice assignment and more...





# Commenting and annotating

- Dropbox: time-stamped comments ([demo](#))
- VideoAnt <https://ant.umn.edu>
  - Create “ants” and share
  - An “ant” contains a video from Youtube or Google Drive (public or unlisted video)
  - Original video is NOT altered. Comments only live within the “ant” and are not visible unless you have the “ant” web address
  - [Demo](#)
- Similar tools:
  - ReClipped <https://www.reclipped.com/>
  - Timeliness <https://www.timeline.ly/>

Combining both modalities for optimal  
experience

# Examples

- Ask students to pre-record pieces and share before the lesson
- Annotate pre-recorded videos using VideoAnt or Dropbox before the lesson
- Ask students to annotate their own videos
- Ask students to annotate an existing video of an artist or a peer
- Watch pre-recorded videos together in live lesson

# Watching together

- Facebook closed group's "Watch Party" feature
  - Viewers can share real-time comments and emojis
- Screen sharing in Zoom or Skype
  - Be sure to select "Share computer sound" (Zoom) or "Share system sound" (Skype)

