ONLINE LESSONS

TEACHER INFORMATION

Lotus Centre is now offering online music lessons! Online lessons provide an alternative form of music learning for students who cannot attend face-to-face lessons. However, if you're never taught online, it can be hard to know what to expect. Below is some information to help you get ready for online teaching!

Planning

- Pick a video platform you are comfortable with. Many teachers are using Zoom, but there are other platforms such as Skype, Facetime, etc. Choose whatever one works best for you and your students.
- Spend some time exploring your chosen platform **before** your first online lesson. This will allow you to test your set-up and will give you time to get familiar with platform features that may help facilitate lessons
- Send parents instructions beforehand to let them know what to expect and how to set up for the online lessons. You can also send them any music or activity sheets they need to print before the lesson. You might also find it helpful to ask parents some questions about their child's learning space to help you better prepare for the lesson (See "Questions for Parents")

- Prepare all your materials before the lesson. Make sure you have all your students' music on hand, as well as any other activities you may need. If using online resources, make sure they are open and ready in your browser before starting the lesson
- Spend some time thinking about adaptations. While many of us provide adaptations during face-to-face lessons, it can be tricky to figure out how those adaptations translate to online learning. For example, if you usually colour code a student's music, will you get the student to colour their music at home during the lesson, or ask parents to colour their child's music before the lesson? Online adaptations can require some extra planning but they go a long way to help lessons run smoothly!

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Questions for parents

Here are a few examples of questions you can ask parents before the first lesson:

- Will your child have access to an instrument?
- Do you have the necessary music books at home?
- Will a parent be available during the lesson if needed?
- What kind of device will you be using during the lesson?

Online lessons offer students and teachers more flexibility compared to face-to-face lessons. Think about offering students the opportunity to have more than one lesson per week, or offer mid-week check-ins where students can let you know how practice is going and ask questions about their pieces

Set-up

- Set up your teaching area in a quiet space with minimal distractions. This will allow you to focus while you teach and will minimize distractions for your students
- Your teaching space should be in a well-lit area to allow your students' to easily see what you're playing and saying
- Set up the device perpendicular to the instrument so that your student can see your hands, upper body, and face. Students should be able to see what you're playing during demonstrations, but also be able to see your face clearly when you speak. Some teachers find it helpful to use two devices (one for instruction and one close to the keyboard for demonstration) and switch between cameras
- Make sure the device volume is turned up and the microphone turned on so you can hear your students and vice versa
- Make sure the device is plugged in or fully charged before starting. Have a charger nearby in case you need to plug in unexpectedly
- Avoid having other household members downloading or streaming during lessons. Heavy internet use can affect connection during online lessons and result in technical problems

Other Tips

- Speak slowly and clearly during lessons. Give short, simple instructions and use visual cues when you can, such as pointing, gestures, and facial expressions
- Have structure during the lesson. While it may look different from your typical lesson structure, creating a routine will help your student feel more comfortable and understand your expectations during online lessons
- Decide if/how you will assign homework. Will the student or parent write it down during lesson? Will you email homework instructions after the lesson? Make sure homework assignments are clear and easy to understand
- Ask parents to be present for the lesson (especially at the beginning and end!) Parents can help with technical problems and can also help students adapt to receiving virtual instruction. Send parents our **"Online lessons - Parent Information"** package to help them prepare for lessons!
- Expect the unexpected! Online lessons will look different from face-to-face lessons and that's ok! Communicate directly and often with parents and students to figure out what works best for everyone. Above all, remember to enjoy the lesson and have fun!

More information

Check out these websites for more useful suggestions:
- https://claviercompanion.com/covid-tip-sheets - Clavier Companion has a whole section on their website dedicated to teaching online during COVID-19. Check out their tip sheet on "Using Zoom" for some great suggestions for teaching with this platform!
- https://the-piano-studio.com/how-to-teach-online-piano-successfully-part-2/ - This website offers tips on how to effectively deliver instructions when teaching online
- https://clarionclavier.com/skype-lesson-setup/ - This article describes in detail how to set up for an online lesson. There are also several other articles on Clarion Clavier that are helpful for online teaching
- https://rcmusic-kentico-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/rcm/media/main/teaching/documents/teaching-music-online-practical-guide.pdf and https://rcmusic-kentico-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/rcm/media/main/teaching/documents/teaching-music-online-zoom.pdf - both in-depth guides offer suggestions for teaching online and teaching using Zoom

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Other instruments

Most of the tips above are focused on teaching piano online. Read below for some suggestions on online teaching with other instruments, as well as a few extra tips!

Guitar

- If your student has access to a tuner, ask the student/parents to tune the guitar before the lesson. This way your student will be ready to start right away!
- Make sure both you and your student turn off any noise cancelling settings on the online platform. Otherwise, it may be difficult to hear instrument sounds
- Ask students/parents to set up the camera so you are able to see the entire instrument, with both left hand and right hand in view
- Take advantage of screen sharing options (Zoom has a great screen share function). If using arranging software, you are able to share your music during lesson, highlight and playback sections of the piece, and let your students follow along while instructing

Voice

- Ask students/parents to set up the camera so you can see their upper body. Students can stand or sit on a chair during lesson
- Audio lag can make accompanying students challenging. If comfortable, you can anticipate lag while accompanying (it is often 1-2 seconds behind on Zoom). Communicate with your student to make sure the audio is lining up on their end
- Other solution to audio lag are: have your student sing a cappella in lesson or use the screen sharing function to play karaoke versions or instrumental tracks
- Consider spending more time on vocal technique or ear training during online lessons. Try out some fun vocal technique games!

Extra tips

- Send students new music through email well-ahead of their lesson to give them time to prepare
- For group lessons, mute all participants when giving instructions to eliminate background noise. You can unmute students and ask them to sing/play independently to check on individual progress
- Modeling (my turn, your turn) can be very helpful in online lessons. This lets you demonstrate exactly what you want the student to do without using too many words

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