Performing online: Approaches to teaching performance studies in higher education within a fully online environment

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Abstract
Online education is becoming prevalent across the higher education sector and requires new approaches to teaching and learning. As music is seen as a 'hands on' discipline, there has been a very gradual move toward the use of online technologies in music teaching in tertiary education, especially in the area of performance studies. By surveying existing scholarly research, this article investigates the technology available to consider the possibility of teaching performance studies within a fully online environment. Today, music students are also required to develop meta-skills such as social networking, entrepreneurism, self-management, self-regulation, and self-reflection. Through a constructivist teaching and learning paradigm, this article explores how online technology in instrumental or performance studies can support and develop these essential proficiencies as well as continuing to develop technical skills. This study serves as a foundation for further systematic research, and a practical application for online music education.

Key words: music education and training, music performance, higher education, eLearning, online education.

Introduction
As we move through a digital age where the presence of online learning is becoming increasingly prevalent, tertiary music education appears to be an area where there has been little research and application, particularly in performance or instrumental studies (Grant, 2013; Horspool & Yang, 2010; Wilson, 2013). The capabilities and competencies required of music graduates are also becoming increasingly widespread, with the creative industry expecting students to incorporate information technology in a variety of ways (Tregear, 2014). This article will identify approaches that higher education lecturers could use to develop key competencies in performance studies using readily available tools within a fully online platform. Through a survey of existing scholarly research, this paper explores the skills that are required of performing musicians today beyond instrumental competency, and what is currently the best practice for online performance studies that integrate essential meta-capabilities and skills to develop independent and self-reflective musicians.

In order to do this, the use of technology in music education is explored, surveying the advantages and disadvantages of web-based instruction. Through a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, this paper will provide a basis for further systematic research and application of online performance instruction, and the practicalities of teaching what is perceived a difficult task; teaching a 'hands on' subject and breaking ties with traditional music education. This article will discuss university and conservatorium models of education in Australia, new approaches to online teaching and the effectiveness of peer review and assessment, student engagement, and the use of web technology to increase student independence.
The information collected will help inform a best practice approach to teaching performance online, and enhance student autonomy within performance studies.

**Traditional performance instruction and moving forward through the 21st century**

The traditional method of teaching performance is primarily instrumental or vocal instruction using the ‘master-apprentice’ or ‘mentor-protégé’ models. This teaching style stems from 18th and 19th century European music conservatories (or academies) when classical music demanded virtuoso training. Institutions offered advanced, one-on-one individual lessons aimed at producing elite performers; mostly in preparation for a solo, orchestral, or operatic career (Bartleet, Bennett, Bridgstock, Draper, Harrison & Schippers, 2012; Draper, 2009; Nerland, 2007; Simones, 2017).

Requiring a large number of specialist teachers this method of teaching is quite expensive, and has shaped discussion as to whether focusing on this ‘old’ teacher-led way of performance instruction is developing the competencies today’s graduates need to become self-sufficient and self-reflective musicians (Bartleet et al., 2012; Jøgensen, 2000; Miksza, 2015).

The 2011 Tertiary Music Education in Australia Task Force Report (GAP Task Force, 2011) discussed the state of tertiary music education in Australia 20 years after the Dawkins Review. This report revealed that Australia’s tertiary music institutions are under major financial stress due to the cost of running one-on-one instruction. It also highlighted that when merging once-independent conservatories with universities the review ‘ignored the markedly different cultures of universities and conservatoria’ (GAP Task Force, 2011, p. 10). Conservatorium training was very specialised, whereas university departments were regarded as broader in curriculum, engaging in research scholarship as well as theoretical and practical music skills (Parncutt, 2007; Tregear, 2014). Nevertheless, as tertiary institutions, both have a responsibility to prepare music students for a modern professional life. The Task Force Report stated:

> the principal aim of the tertiary music sector in the 21st century is to provide education appropriate for today’s needs and offer graduates the best possible chance of obtaining employment at the conclusion of their studies. Music educators must take a global view of the music industry and examine a broader set of criteria and measures of success for music graduates. (2011, p. 31)

In addition, ‘it behoves the tertiary music institutions to provide appropriate career pathway support for those for whom a performing career may only play a small part in their lives, if any at all. Therefore, courses and course structures need to be examined to reflect the many different career options’ (2011, p. 31). Brook and Upitis (2015) perceived a change in the approach to music instruction, they observed that students needed training which contains a more inclusive education and focuses on their interests. They acknowledged that:

> music instruction has shifted in the past generation to better support the musical interests of students and to embrace a curriculum that is more comprehensive than one primarily based on performing classical music from notation. (2015, p. 44)

These comments support the notion that in the 21st century, a music graduate must consider a variety of career options and have developed additional skills. Elite technical training is no longer the primary reason for tertiary music performance studies.

Peter Tregear’s 2014 essay Enlightenment or Entitlement? also highlights the need for incorporating online technology in Australian tertiary music programs, and discusses the prevalence of this technology in the lives of students which cannot be ignored. As a result, he claims that if the goals of education are to prepare students for professional life, then institutions and curricula must include internet technologies and acknowledge an internet-based music economy.
By embracing technology and using it alongside contemporary teaching philosophies to create ‘student-centred learning’ or ‘problem-based learning’ within academic performance studies, it challenges the one-on-one instrumental pedagogy to shift instruction from teacher-focused coaching to a student-centred learning environment. According to Tregear (2014), online and Web 2.0 technology has ‘made the possibility of at least partially replicating, supplementing, or even replacing some of the traditional modes of conservatoire learning with on-line [sic] delivery’ (p. 32). By using online technology, it opens up the potential to include practically based performance studies in a fully online academic structure.

The increase in digital technology has had an effect not only on the method of instruction (online and blended learning) for university education generally, but also how students relate to everyday life. Those born after 1980 have been described as ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2005), they have grown up using technology to access and disseminate information. Technology is ubiquitous in our day to day lives as we use mobile devices to exchange information and communicate with others. Most universities are adopting online platforms offering students online or blended learning opportunities, which not only appeals to these ‘digital natives’ by aligning with a digital society, but in this case also makes music and music education more accessible to a wider audience (Blackburn & McGrath, 2014). Some studies have described the use of information technology in face-to-face instrumental instruction to monitor student progress, allow students to document and set goals, and reflect on their practice at home (Brook & Upitis, 2015; Miksza, 2013). However, these studies investigate the use of internet tools alongside face-to-face instruction which results in a blended-learning approach, they are not referring to teaching performance studies fully online. In order to prepare for an online-only approach to teaching, a carefully planned alignment of teaching and learning activities is required to remain compliant with the graduate attributes of most higher education institutions. An online teaching and learning model must take into consideration the needs of the student, the presence of technology, and specifically for music, the practicalities of performance studies. At an undergraduate level, it is expected that students must develop independence, ‘they should have begun to take the lead, in some respects, in their own learning’ (Burwell, 2005, p. 202), and an online environment can deliver this.

Constructivist paradigm and transformational learning

When observing tertiary music education through a constructivist lens, attention surrounds what the students ‘do’ to construct knowledge. Teachers engage students in active learning, allowing them to build on concepts and principles they have already developed (Biggs & Tang, 2011). This requires the provision of learning activities that meet the intended outcomes and allow self-reflective learning.

Within this paradigm, the teacher’s role is to facilitate the learning process and the acquisition of knowledge through encouraging collaborative work, and allow students to actively construct knowledge through their own world or environment rather than the teacher ‘dictate’ what is to be learned. Online education can support a constructivist approach whereby students monitor their own learning, they take responsibility for their study and schedule, and they reflect on their experiences to build knowledge. In the case of instrumental or performance studies, examples of constructivist learning could include: students gaining information from additional resources such as experiencing other performers or performances of studied works; taking an independent approach to learning repertoire; developing critical listening skills through live performance and recordings; and establish efficient, independent approaches to performance preparation (Keast, 2009).
Complement each other. If constructivism allows
the student to build on what they already know, begin
where they are 'at', encourage learner autonomy
and independence, inspire student exploration,
and allow them to monitor their own learning;
then information needs to be taught in diverse
ways so students can learn in an environment that
is suitable to their own individual learning style.
Transformational learning develops autonomous
thinking by creating frames of reference - 'structures
of assumptions through which we understand
our experiences' (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). This way
students can actively apply their knowledge to
their world. As performance or technical skill on an
instrument/voice is a challenge to teach online, an
approach would be to focus on the scholarship of
performance, encouraging students to think about
preparation, planning and presentation, and reflect
on other performance indicators such as audience
feedback, and peer reviews. The variety of tools
available online can prepare students to become
life-long learners and apply judgement to both
their own work and that of others, and not focus
solely on technical skill.

Methods of online music
education and music performance
studies

A search through the literature applying the terms
'online music education' resulted in a number
of studies focused on technology and blended
learning in primary and secondary school music
education. For 'online music education and
performance', the results concentrated more on
instrumental tuition; the use of asynchronous
instructional videos embedded within other
learning materials, technology used in the
classroom, or blended learning approaches to
instrumental instruction in the private studio
(Crawford, 2013; Kingma & Swainston, 2015;
Kruse, Harlos, Callahan & Herring, 2012; Kruse
& Veblen, 2012; Riley, MacLeod & Libera, 2016;
Waldron, 2013; Zhukov, 2015). Technologies
discussed included the use of YouTube, Vimeo, or
pre-recorded online lessons delivered by tertiary
organisations such as Berklee Shares (Berklee
Shares, 2018; Crawford, 2013; Wilson, 2013) or
Dime Online (Dime Online, 2018). Although it is
still widely claimed instructional videos or online
synchronous technologies cannot replace face-
to-face teaching, there are strong arguments for
exploring their potential use.

Simonovic Schiff (2011) provides a detailed
review of an online music course delivered by
Portland State University. Her paper discusses
the challenges and benefits of music eLearning
including the facilitation of students' individual
interpretations, group interaction, practical
restraints, and assessment. Simonovic Schiff's
review separates musical knowledge-based and
practice-based subject areas and indicates that
practice-based subjects do present more challenges
than knowledge-based. However, through text and
audio files, online scores, internet links and videos,
a learner-centred environment can be created in
practice-based subjects generating class discussion
to encourage students 'to learn from each other's
perception of certain phenomena' (Simonovic
Schiff, 2011, p. 350). This student engagement can
be developed within an institution's online learning
management system through discussion forums or
live chat rooms, as well as file sharing of practical
examples. The discussions and shared experiences
can provide instruction in performance, as well
as the possibility of group instrumental tutoring
where students and teacher(s) contribute technical
advice. Simonovic Schiff's report demonstrates
that an online music course also has the capacity
to grant students the opportunity to network with
key professionals via live streaming of lectures,
interviews and performances. Creating relationships
with musicians and educators beyond the
student's local domain exercises meta-capabilities,
establishing independent thinking, skill, and
resilience. These meta-capabilities are skills listed by
Bartleet et al. (2012) that musicians need to develop
for professional life. They include: disciplinary
agility, social networking capability, enterprise, and aspects of career self-management. Bartleet et al. recommend that these skills should be incorporated into tertiary music degrees.

A number of studies focus on YouTube as a learning resource within different levels of music education (Crawford, 2013; Grant, 2013; Kingma & Swainstorm, 2015; Kruse & Veblen, 2012; Lierse, 2015; Riley, MacLeod & Libera, 2016, Waldron, 2011; Waldron, 2014; Wilson, 2013). A study by Zhukov (2015) explores the use of YouTube technology in instrumental learning. She explains that showing YouTube videos of other performers and pedagogues to students is an important resource for providing different perspectives on performance practice and instrumental technique. Students gain insight into different performance styles, practice methods and pedagogical strategies, and are able to compare these to their own approaches to performance. Similar to Zhukov's research, Waldron (2011) states that YouTube videos and other user-generated content provide important platforms for social interaction. Developed communities of practice provide a place for members to disseminate and share performance videos in order to connect to similar musicians online. This social aspect is important, for one disadvantage with learning online is solitude and not always being in direct, immediate contact with teachers and peers. Although often asynchronous methods of communication, by using video sharing sites, students can create online communities to network and discuss possible projects and collaborations between their class peers and externally (Waldron, 2011). As social networking capabilities are identified as meta-skills required of musicians, Salavuo (2006) also highlights the social characteristic of online music performance within online forums. These forums facilitate musical activities and develop networks outside an institution (Salavuo, 2006). Within an institution’s learning management system, the online environment can provide connections with colleagues in other locations nationally and internationally, and offer the potential for relationships to materialise at conferences, workshops and other events (Hebert, 2007).

While YouTube videos can be a good resource for performance analysis and comparison, they are limited by asynchrony. Video conferencing software (for example, Skype), despite some technological limitations such as video or sound delay, provide synchronous communication and ‘can at least supplement, if not yet totally replace, face-to-face music lessons’ (Zhukov, 2015, p. 67). For tertiary courses, this technology can be used to provide masterclasses, live performances, and group tuition without the concern for delay; however, performing in ensemble has its limitations. In addition to Skype, other synchronous methods of communication include programs such as Sofasession (www.sofasession.com) and eJAMMING AUDiiO (www.ejamming.com); online collaborative networks where musicians can perform and create music together in real-time. These software programs have reduced the audio delay, allowing musicians to play together at the same time without any audible time-lag. Unfortunately, these programs can only provide audio collaborations, video is not yet available. These synchronous and asynchronous video and live audio performance tools mentioned above are ways instrumental instruction, collaboration and performance can be incorporated into a fully online environment.

An online learner-centred environment can be established further by incorporating other aspects of performance studies such as personal reflection, independent investigation of rehearsal methods, preparation, practice, presentation, and audience-performer communication. Using the concept of social media and file-sharing, self-recorded videos uploaded by students to an online platform gives them the responsibility for preparing their own performances, sharing either full presentations or excerpts of the preparation stages, receive feedback from others rather than one instructor, and then reflecting on what they have produced. The focus on the scholarship of performance encourages
students to think beyond the notes on the page and consider the context in which they are, or will be, performing.

It is clear from the literature that musicians in the 21st century are required to develop skills outside the music discipline (Bartleet et al., 2012; Bennett, 2008; Reid, Abrant Dahlgren, Dahlgren, & Petocz, 2011), and a constructivist, learner-centred approach to teaching and learning can be applied to ensure graduates develop these meta-capabilities (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Miksza (2013) investigated the effect of self-regulation instruction on college wind players’ performance achievement, practice behaviour, and self-efficacy. In this study, students were assigned videos of either instruction in the application of practice strategies (slowing, repetition, whole-part-whole, chaining) or practice strategies in addition to instruction in self-regulation principles (concentration, goal-selection, planning, self-evaluation, rest/reflective activity). The results of this study showed that both groups of students improved performance achievement; however, those that received the self-regulation instruction performed better. This suggests that those who also learnt and applied self-regulation helped them become more efficient and effective in their practising. Miksza’s study, and research surrounding synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication (musical or verbal), reveal that in the absence of one-on-one instruction, and a careful approach to asynchronous pre-recorded video instruction, online performance study can continue to help students improve in performance. Specifically, the areas of personal practice, social interaction, and an increase in self-regulatory skills will encourage music students to become lifelong learners and ultimately become ready for the workplace - meeting the aims and responsibilities of tertiary music education.

Assessing performance online

When performance studies focus on meta-capabilities as well as technical ability, assessment tasks must incorporate learning outcomes associated with all of these skills. The challenge is to find suitable assessment strategies that are appropriate to measure these abilities within an online environment. Simonovic Schiff (2011) identified assessment as a problem for eLearning; however, further research has identified assessment options that can be used as a way to not only test technical skills and knowledge of the discipline, but other skills and competencies. Some scholars have investigated methods of peer assessment to encourage student interaction and engagement, and develop critical life-long skills such as self-reflection (Daniel, 2004; Latukefu 2010). Daniel and Latukefu both found in their respective studies that students who were involved in peer assessment tasks accepted more responsibility for not only engaging with other students’ work, but were more accountable for their own assessment. Latukefu also determined that having to think critically about other performances led students to reflect more on their own practice; proficiencies required for life-long learning, communication, and social responsibility (Latukefu, 2010, p. 71). Daniel’s (2004) study observes a class of performance students who were learning within a mixture of different instruments and genres. He found that exposing students to a range of performances outside their usual style and genre through peer assessment, feedback enhanced student engagement, and developed further critical skills in assessing performance in both written and verbal formats (Daniel, 2004). Daniel also notes that students demonstrate a greater want to prepare more adequately for their own performances as a result of peer review; knowing colleagues were critically analysing their performances meant they felt they should be better prepared. These peer assessment strategies in tertiary music education in the studies by Daniel and Latukefu were implemented in face-to-face study. However, these forms of peer assessment or peer review are approaches that can be easily applied in the online environment. By uploading performances or practice sessions to online forums within an institution’s learning
management system, students are able to receive formative feedback from peers and lecturers in preparation for their final performance assessment. They are also subject to other students’ performances in areas other than their own, and learn to listen and improve critical feedback abilities. These forms of assessment are used as feedback during learning, they create multiple opportunities for active learning and self-reflection within the constructivist paradigm of teaching, and are not required to be live in person.

Rowley and Bennett (2016) explore the use of ePortfolios in arts higher education. They claim that the appeal of ePortfolios in higher education teaching and learning is the potential for multimedia approaches to record and document students’ creative output and successes. Their research shows that students consider ePortfolios as a digital artefact with the benefit of educational vitality, and an important part of their professional portfolio or web toolkit. As educators, the authors also saw the advantages of using ePortfolios for assessing student work and encouraging student engagement by using them for collaborative tasks. If students regularly import video or audio recordings of practice sessions and performances, teachers would be able to have easy access to assess and provide feedback. Brook and Upitis (2015) discuss in detail the use of the ePortfolio iSCORE to assist with practice and encourage self-regulation. This ePortfolio provides a platform for students to upload or record their work and share it with teachers and peers. They claim that ‘students developed more ownership over their learning as a result of using iSCORE’ (Brook & Upitis, 2015, p. 44), and the sharing facility appealed to digital age students. The addition of these ePortfolios within an institution’s learning management system can provide a platform for student peer review, assessment, and encourage collaborative work in a more synchronous way than discussion forums. The ePortfolio can then be used by the students to build academic, professional and personal networks.

Without weekly, individual teacher instruction more responsibility is placed on the student to develop methods of practice and performance preparation. With guidance and facilitation from the teacher, this learner-centred environment helps develop self-management, entrepreneurial and networking skills. Skills that tertiary music courses do not necessarily provide, yet are crucial for professional musicians (Bartleet et al., 2012). The teacher becomes the facilitator, guiding students towards learning activities and resources that they can use to discover and expand knowledge and skills relevant to professional work as a musician, and provide formative feedback during their studies. Collaborative learning and assessment tasks in the online environment provide active learning, networking and social engagement within the class and further afield; enhancing additional professional, life-long skills in the area of performance studies and beyond.

**Practical application**

This survey provides a rationale for further research, application, and testing of online resources in the area of performance studies and instrumental instruction at a tertiary level. The literature highlights the importance of preparing music graduates with meta-capabilities or skills that are required for professional life, therefore, it must be considered how these skills can be incorporated within music courses and degrees. The changing state of higher education teaching and learning, and the focus on learner-centred environments has forced music educators to reconsider the manner in which instrumental and performance instruction is being delivered. In addition to this, the rise in technology in tertiary education requires music courses to consider innovative ways to teach and assess students in these areas, meeting the online and flexible learning demand.

The online tools presented here suggest ways in which performance studies can be taught fully online. The scholarship of performance practice can be delivered, learnt and assessed online, and it can be enhanced through constructivist teaching and
broadening the scope from instrumental studies to personal preparation, rehearsal methods, practice and performance through self-reflective practices. The next step is to implement these methods and tools into a fully online performance studies course. A course using these technologies would develop student knowledge in practice strategies, performance workflows and planning, and presentation. Students would develop networking and critical analytical skills through peer review of self-recorded practice and performance videos, and investigative tasks would require students to produce researched evidence of different performance styles and approaches of the repertoire they choose to study. Synchronous and asynchronous programs, ePortfolios and discussion forums would allow students to collaborate, share ideas, and document processes. Through an online course, the students would be required to be more self-sufficient; developing entrepreneurial skills to locate performance venues, and gain the ability to self-manage by setting their own goals and working towards achieving these within their own schedule. After a course is designed and implemented, student feedback throughout the teaching period, and unit evaluations received at the end of study will provide evidence of the successfulness of teaching performance studies fully online.

**Conclusion**

The literature surrounding musician careers suggests that there is increasing importance placed on skills other than music instrumental competency in music performance, and that this should be reflected in higher education programs. Although face-to-face instruction has been the preferred method of instrumental pedagogy and performance, and to some degree still is, tertiary music education needs to investigate the developments in newer approaches to music performance. This survey has revealed that there are methods to music performance teaching that can encourage students to take more control of their own learning while developing meta-skills they do not necessarily achieve with a master-protégé training. The online resources discussed here can also be applied to face-to-face tuition, but the implications of this review demonstrate that with careful structure and facilitation, an online course could achieve successful results in music performance. The outcomes of online study with a teacher-facilitator can not only develop a student's technical and self-regulation skills, but also create a learner-centred environment in which they discover and implement their own practising strategies and approaches.

As institutions move further and further towards online education, music as a discipline must remain current. Old, expensive, and limited methods of instrumental tuition and the expectations of how a performance course should be conducted are becoming more difficult to support and ultimately fund. By exploring new methods to match graduate outcomes and contemporary theories of teaching and learning, performance studies, and to an extent music instrumental teaching, can still remain an important part of tertiary education.

**References**


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