

# Chapter 12

## A Model for Online Music Education

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter proposes a sustainable model for online music education in post-secondary contexts. This model is framed around the intersections and along the continua of formal and informal music teaching/learning, conscious and unconscious knowing/telling, synchronous and asynchronous musical e-spaces/places, currencies, and e-collaboration. The model maintains deterritorialization (i.e., an e-space or e-place without boundary) as a foundational underpinning. The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate notions of online music learning, challenge preconceptions, and leverage innovation and technological advancement to redefine and re-understand how music can be taught and learned in e-spaces and e-places. The chapter can serve to disrupt traditional conceptions of musical teaching/learning. By disrupting the cycle that perpetuates music education at the post-secondary level, this chapter seeks to leverage online innovation, draw out technological inevitabilities, and push the music education profession forward towards new frontiers.*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and Context

The post-secondary music teaching/learning profession, as a whole, would benefit by joining the rest of the world by leveraging online cultures. Precisely how we do this is part of our challenge; it requires careful considerations and adjustments in practices and approaches. Musical transmissions are limited only to the musics, learning styles, and pedagogies conceivable by musicians, learners, and teachers. What is required here is that we first recognize that we have for many years, intentionally or otherwise, established some habits. These teaching/learning habits are part of our default approach (Regelski, 2013). We have established ways of doing what we do - and those ways are repeated so much that a kind of groove has been established. This is akin to a well-worn path in which teachers and learners reinsert

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themselves cyclically, year-to-year, without much in the way of critical thought. Huberman and Miles (1984) refer to this as engrooved practices.

Is there anything wrong with engroovement? Certainly not inherently. Tried and true approaches that may have worked in the past can continue to work in the future. But, with innovation comes possibility. We can now jump out of our groove and step into formerly unimaginable ones becoming groove makers. As groove makers, we can now look at computer networks and online learning as new modalities and venues for musical transmission.

Online learning is not a new phenomenon (Major, 2015). Online learning in music is also not new by any means. Unfortunately, to date, most of the teaching and learning of music in online contexts closely resembles traditional (brick and mortar) music teaching and learning. For example, teachers and content specialists of online classes often upload the curricular content of what typically is transmitted in non-virtual spaces, giving learners asynchronous access to it. Historically, an online music class looks very similar to a non-virtual one. There are dedicated areas related to announcements, modular and sequentially outlined curricular content, opportunities for assessments and forums for discussion. Because music teachers have aimed to replicate non-virtual music learning in virtual spaces, not much that is different or innovative has become mainstream in online music education. The content and pedagogic strategies embedded within, typically closely parallel their non-virtual cousins. In essence, we have merely “onlinified” the content of music curricula. We have done well to take this first step—we have enlarged the participant base creating new access points and cleared the road for future adaptation. There does exist potential in online music education to leverage technologies more to decentralize the teacher, engage more of the learner and adapt to the specific needs of each.

“Online,” as a term, may frighten some. It may be loaded with connotations that fail to capture the human, organic interactions afforded by face-to-face communications (Conrad, 2002). Those fears are valid. We should address those concerns and find ways to make online music learning acoustically and musically rich. “Online,” as a term, may excite some. It may open up musical, sharing and experiencing possibilities once inconceivable (Johnson, Wisniewski, Kuhlemeyer, Isaacs & Kryzkowski, 2012). Those excitements are valid as well. The key here is to honor both critics and supporters, and provide a way for all voices to move forward in this discussion.

In order to remain viable and sustainable in an evolving and diverse educational and musical edusphere, post-secondary music teaching/learning ought to establish broader and more diverse approaches. Conservatories are havens for excellence, and certainly the aim of conservationism has its merits. The push away from traditions towards progressivism also holds merit, particularly as it allows for greater diversity. More specifically, online learning and other efforts to integrate more contemporary pedagogies in music education context has the potential to capture broader learnerships, students of all backgrounds, and embrace all forms of music including those beyond the Western canon (Williams, 2007).

Currently, music education in post-secondary contexts is outmoded, outdated, and in desperate need of an update. Post-secondary music education, while once contemporary and culturally responsive, continues to cling to a 19<sup>th</sup> century model of conservatory training customized for professional classical performers (Kratus, 2007). This culture permeates collegiate music learning in many departments including music education—which ironically is called to address the preparation and promotion of music educators for the future. In order to remain relevant, connected, and responsive to an evolving musical, teaching and learning ecosystem, it is incumbent upon the music education profession to seriously investigate teaching and learning in digital musical spaces and places.

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