

Utilizing Technology in Teaching AMEB Piano

- Students are very “tech savvy” and are captivated by use of technology
- Teachers need to be able to keep up with latest innovations
- Technology is a tool and shouldn't be feared

Computer technology includes PC/Mac computer, (either desktop or laptop), speakers/headphones, digital piano or keyboard, iPad, iPhone or other “smartphone”. Fast internet connection is essential for smooth playback of video streams.

YouTube (www.youtube.com)

- Excellent “how to” resource
- Many students show the initiative to seek out video clips of pieces they're studying.
- Teachers can guide students in discerning good performances from not so good ones
- Great tool for appraisal and interpretation discussion
- Teachers can video themselves playing and post to YouTube “channels” for private access by students

Using video/photo in teaching studio

- Teacher can record student's performance for later discussion
- Photograph student's hand position for detailed analysis. (Students often don't realize how bad their posture or finger/hand shape is until shown conclusive photographic evidence!)
- Great for building confidence in lead up to concerts or exams. Students have to aim for a flawless performance whilst being filmed

Backing Tracks

- Many books come with CD backing tracks
- Excellent way of developing sense of rhythm, timing and continuity, as well as adding another “dimension” to the music being studied
- Also helps in fostering a sense of style and musical colour
- Introduce playing along to backing tracks as early as possible
- Not difficult to create own backing tracks for use in teaching studio. Band-in-a-Box is easy to use and can produce worthwhile results with minimal editing
- If using backing tracks, some means of slowing down the tempo is useful. The “Amazing Slow Downer” (www.ronimusic.com) is an inexpensive way of doing this and is easy to set up and use.

Online Sheet Music

- Lots of sites offering free and paid sheet music publications
- Be aware of copyright and avoid “swap” sites
- Consider establishing a PayPal account for added payment security
- Petrucci Music Library is an excellent resource for public domain classical music (www.imslp.org)

iPad

- Revolutionized computing
- Programs (“apps”) available from App Store
- “There’s an app for that...” – every aspect of music education has an app
- Many apps are free or free to try, others start from 99c
- Quality and style varies greatly
- iPads and Apple computers in general are not prone to virus infection

Specific iPad apps:

- *Garageband*: music creating, recording, editing
- *Reverse Chord Finder*: touch the notes of a chord on the keyboard display and the app will identify the chord. Fantastic tool for harmonic analysis
- *Soundhound*: Hum, sing or play a few bars of a pop song you need to identify and Soundhound will find a list of all matching possibilities
- *Amazing Slow Downer*: Slow down any audio file without affecting pitch. Can also be used to alter the pitch of a backing track to suit individual voice range
- *Steinway metronome*: A free metronome app. Has a handy silent tap function that tells you the precise tempo being played
- *Acoustic*: Designed for guitarists but can also be used by other instrumentalists. Good tool for teaching improvising to a blues-based backing track
- *Aural Book*: Aural training app. Designed for ABRSM exams but AMEB grades 6,7, & 8 are available
- *Auto Flip*: Sheet music viewer that works with any PDF music file. Once the app has “learnt” the music, it automatically turns the page at the right time
- *Music Teachers Helper*: Studio organization tool. Free to try or if you have less than 5 students. Integrates with your studio website. Simplifies the task of running your teaching business

Conclusion

Technology is advancing at an alarming pace and will not stop. Today’s students expect today’s teaching techniques; the music they study may well be three hundred years old, but the way it is taught should be more contemporary.

There is some mind-boggling technology available that can assist teachers in communicating their art with today’s students, but the technology in itself is only part of the equation. For the foreseeable time being, music teachers will still be needed to teach artistry, feeling, expression and emotion, and above all, to be mentors to the next generation of musicians.

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23rd January 2013