City Music Center's New Mobile Musicianship Program

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Recommended Citation
(2013). City Music Center’s New Mobile Musicianship Program. TEMPO, 11 (1). Retrieved from https://dsc.duq.edu/tempo/vol11/iss1/7

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The program and its curriculum were developed by adjunct professor of musicianship Jordan Mroziak to fit into director Christopher Bromley’s vision of a more modern education method for today’s youth. The concept for this type of program was born out of a discussion on possible uses of the iPad as educational technology. Mroziak, who is also a Ph.D. candidate in Instructional Technology at Duquesne said, “From this, Chris and I began the discussion of shaping an entirely online musicianship program that would provide grounding in both written theory and aural/oral skills. In my ongoing education, I focus on implementing educational technology in studies of music and the arts. This seemed like a fantastic opportunity to create an innovative program for students that would leverage culturally relevant and state-of-the-art technologies for their learning experiences.”

The musicianship program is unlike anything experienced in the classroom. Students utilize the Blackboard learning platform (an internet-based software portal), to participate in classes and to complete coursework from anywhere, at any time, without spending time in the classroom. The classes are taught by City Music Center faculty who aid the students by posting class materials, online videos and iPad apps to help them learn the material while answering questions along the way. The program is taught at an accelerated pace and acquaints students with the rigors of college-level learning prior to their taking college courses. The online program also represents an overall shift in education practices from a brick-and-mortar classroom to a mobile education solution that is easily molded to fit any schedule, learning ability, or location. These themes move to decentralize learning from the classroom, allowing students to work from anywhere with the flexibility needed to fit their schedule.

Many online programs, including the new musicianship program, are created for use with different types of portable internet-accessible devices, such as the iPad, to allow for maximum flexibility. These portable devices are multimodal, in that they create many different types of learning experiences in a small, portable device. According to Mroziak, “This type of learning, where the student is increasingly self-directed while having a wealth of educational experiences in the palm of their hand, promises to become a standard way of learning as we move into the future. Helping students learn how to learn is a foundational goal of the program and a necessary skill for education in the 21st century.”

According to Bromley, the online program’s curriculum and delivery methods are extremely flexible and can be tailored for use as supplemental learning in the traditional classroom or to provide a cost-effective option for public schools whose arts programs are affected by budget cuts. Other options include offering the program to home-schooled and cyber school students who may not have music courses as a standard part of their curriculum.