

February 24, 2022
PRESS RELEASE:

Lessons from the Living Room: Freight & Salvage Finds Success with Online Music Education

When Covid-19 struck and the country went into lockdown, many professional musicians faced a complete loss of income as live venues and dependable gigs shut down. The Freight responded by taking advantage of digital tools to meet the changing needs of the music community. The pivot to online classes at the Freight supported our teaching musicians as they found their feet with digital instruction. *"I was reluctant at first," recalls Hiram Bell, who teaches beginning through advanced Ukulele. "It isn't perfect, especially for music. But I sure do appreciate it. Even without the intimate and immediate experience of being in the same room with students, there is a connection with people who want to learn music."*

Transitioning to a fully online teaching framework required quick and creative thinking from instructors. Sound Engineering teacher Brian Walker's flexibility helped him adapt his class to the new environment. *"My live sound class was canceled around the time that the pandemic began and there was no way to offer that hands-on experience in an online setting,"* he recalls. *"I decided to offer a completely different class designed to help people to learn how to improve their audio at home. It was geared toward people who were suddenly finding themselves in an awful lot of zoom meetings and for musicians whose live streams from home had suddenly replaced their live concerts as a source of income and they wanted to offer a good experience for their audience."* Needless to say, Walker's class was a huge success.

Some instructors found that the medium of online teaching presented new opportunities when it came to presenting complex ideas. Music Theory Instructor Kay Eskenazi shares slides, diagrams, musical notation, and musical scores in her Zoom classes. A virtual whiteboard feature allows her to display musical analyses, rhythmic figures, and chord names while knowing that every student can see the information clearly.

That's not to say that online teaching is without its difficulties. *"When students are muted,"* swing guitar instructor Olivier Zyngier says, *"I'm mostly limited to giving comments on what I can see, not hear."*

Other instructors felt the pinch of platform limitations as well, from struggles to read students' body language through the camera, to the lack of group playing due to lag. However, teachers acknowledged that students were able to find their comfort zone, practicing while muted then sharing when they were confident. *"For most grown-ups,"* reflects banjo teacher Evie Ladin, *"I find they are more comfortable being able to try new things when nobody can hear them...students can noodle away, try new skills at their own pace, and still have the formative experience of playing along/practicing in time."*

As we look to the future of teaching at the Freight in the post-pandemic era, there are bright things on the horizon. Freight & Salvage Director of Education & Community Engagement PC Muñoz looks forward to expanding online offerings. *"Going forward, online programming will*

continue to be a big part of the Freight's educational offerings. Traditional music has gone digital!" Muñoz proclaims. "The move to online platforms also gave us a chance to try new programmatic concepts like our online lecture series, which we launched during the part of the pandemic when we were not presenting shows at all. While we are enthusiastic about the return to safe in-person classes, we also remain excited and optimistic about our expanded online offerings, which have been reaching new students from near and far throughout the pandemic."