Online music groups - goals and activities

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My goal for student group class has always been to develop ability to play independently in small groups (chamber music).

Can we play together at the same time over the internet? No. Latency delay has always been a problem.

The best we can do is take turns, and if we anticipate the previous person, we can reduce the pause between turns as much as possible. This is a valuable ensemble training exercise, and pieces can be arranged to be performed in this manner.

But for our usual chamber music repertoire, instead of learning parts independently and coming together in group to play as an ensemble, we can use group to learn parts while we get to know the piece.

Once we have learned the piece well in online groups, we can then come together either briefly in person and be able to play the piece with minimum rehearsal (minimizing contact time and keeping physical distance) or use a collaborative recording program (BandLab, Acapella, Cyborg Llama, Mixound, FlipGrid, etc) to create a finished group performance. These and similar programs put the responsibility upon each contributing player for knowing that the "take" of each part is correct (which is why we will learn the piece very well in group class first).

Another approach is for each player to submit a recording of their part to the teacher, who then assembles the recording into the finished performance. This makes each player responsible for accuracy of rhythm, but not for knowing how the entire piece fits together.

My goal is to use part submission projects that I assemble only as a stepping stone to collaborative recording projects, because collaborative recording can be eventually done independently of the teacher.

Choreography:
- warmup: find Zoom "room", "window", and "puppet theatre".
- action canon (Dalcroze)
    - alternation, leaving rest between elements to hear follower
    - reduce length of rest and have overlapping elements
    - leader can have metronome in the same "room" (followers muted)
    - clapping / patsching rhythms
    - other actions - scarves, stepping, instrument "dance"
    - challenge - practice at home with right and left hands in canon with each other
- Rhythm Revolution by Jonathan Reok

Taking Turns:
- "soccer" CAD exercise
    - online modification: say name of person you are sending to (zoom windows are in different order for each participant)
    - type name into chat in advance - anticipate turn without saying name out loud and reduce delay
    - start with 1 note, then 2 notes, 3 notes, short phrases of review melody, short phrases of new piece
- reading hocket style duets

- write out alternating phrases as a 2 part score (screen share)
- gradually reduce length of alternating section - work up to single notes back and forth
- use review pieces - score is puzzle, listening is photo on the box lid
    - this aligns with Caroline Fraser's approach to music reading
- use new pieces: "Ping Pong" by Livingstone Gearhardt in Duet Sessions, et al.

Guessing Games:
- Kagome: (or other song with a one phrase solo or cadenza)
    - private chat message to soloist
    - play with back to screen
    - soloists unmutes to play last line, remotes quickly and turns before others look and guess
- Animal Guessing Game (CAD exercise)
    - breakout rooms to work it out
    - come back and play for others
    - encourage choreography and turn taking strategies for group to play together
- Bingo (for reading)
    - each student has bingo card of rhythm / melody patterns
    - listen to pattern, and call our square number where pattern is seen
    - infinite variations (Carey Beth Hockett has many available on her website)
        - all patterns from one piece
        - methodical early reading - starting with single line high, middle, low
- Rhythm dictation using Zoom whiteboard - everyone can annotate heard rhythm

Learning Parts:
- all mute, play along with teacher / backing track / accompaniment[1]
    - its more like a group class if the play along track features a large group, not just sound of teacher
    - collaborative recording can become backing track for eventual play along performance
        - gradually add more players every class - exciting!
    - allow students to self-evaluate while on mute - check in to see if they need another repetition
- spot practice drill
    - bingo cards for reading
    - "soccer" with a spot that needs work

Listening:
- compare and contrast different recordings of the same piece
- can we match playing to what we hear?

Graphic Notation:
- draw to music on Zoom whiteboard (enable annotation)
- improvise on drawing / picture / image
- see Sylvia Hinz for workshop ideas

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[1] Best results for ensemble: backing track in the same "room" as the player