

THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

Volume 1, Issue 2, 2021

View from the Field - Online Music Education – Is it Possible?

The whole world has adapted to the new normal. Inevitably so. The realm of music and musicians are no exception. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube etc., have tried to recreate the experience of a stage performance or a kacheri/concert. Likewise face to face teaching-learning mode has been taken over by online lessons. Here is an insight into the altered space of music learning and a few tips to efficiently teach music online during these pandemic times.

Undoubtedly, music, or any fine art for that matter is most effectively learnt through a *guru* and in the presence of a *guru*. This teaching-learning methodology is also the most efficient and appropriate according to the Indian cultural tradition. Nevertheless, it isn't wrong that we have resorted to online teaching and learning so as to ensure uninterrupted/continuous learning and safeguard our health. Teachers and students must understand that this is only a temporary phase. However, we should be wary of choosing this format over the offline mode in the future. After all, the online mode of learning music is not a new phenomenon. Musicians and students of music who have settled in foreign countries, or students who for various reasons are unable to go to a music class have been learning music via Skype and other channels for several years now. It is only as a matter of necessity that the online mode has gained widespread acceptance during the corona pandemic.

Online or Offline?

As far as vocal music is concerned, teaching-learning at the basic level can be managed over a simple phone call; a web-conference application is not necessary. However, the student must be driven by an intense desire and dedication towards music. The notes/notation can easily be shared with the student. However, when it comes to learning to play an instrument, a simple phone call may throw up some challenges, because learning to play an instrument is possible only by 'watching' how the instrument is played; hence, a web conferencing app is necessary. Thus, teachers may have to reevaluate and improvise on their teaching methodology. The teacher/ guru must be technologically savvy/skilled. There are many well-versed artists who have leveraged technology to teach music lessons, so it is not an impossible task.

Learning via a Phone Call – How easy is it?

This mode of learning is suitable only for children above the age of seven, since it demands twice as much concentration than the offline mode. Children tend to easily get distracted and it is difficult for teachers to hold their attention over a phone call than in their presence. Here are a few guidelines for online teaching:

- A group should have no more than 5 or 6 students.
- Ensure every student gets a chance to sing solo
- Create a cheerful atmosphere and if the children are 11-12 years old, humour them with small stories

The advantage of this mode is that screen-time can be curbed. Since, academic classes are also conducted online, it is advisable to adopt other modes for co-curricular and extra-curricular learning activities, keeping in mind eye-health. Parents play an important role in ensuring the success of this method and should refrain from disparaging the offline modes of teaching. The learning atmosphere should be rid of all distractions. Above all else, the child should genuinely be interested in learning without external pressure or coercion.

New Learners

The transition from offline music classes to online mode may not be a challenging task for students who are accustomed to face-to-face music lessons. Whereas, beginners may lose out on several aspects such as posture, learning *talas* through demonstration and the experience and practice of singing along with the teacher. Hence, it is prudent for parents to wait until the pandemic situation eases out.

Tips/ Guidelines for Students

Irrespective of the learning infrastructure being used, it should be free from technical snags. Besides, the physical space and atmosphere plays an important role in the learning of any art. A student would be accustomed to the atmosphere of the teacher's house or the learning centre. This space and atmosphere help in achieving focus/concentration and discipline. Likewise, a quiet and peaceful atmosphere is essential for online learning. A printout of the lesson is indispensable to capture and understand the nuances of the *kriti*/ composition/song being learned.

Learning any art is an emotional and experiential activity. Online learning cannot replicate the experiential learning that occurs in the presence of a *guru*. Students therefore must learn to be emotionally responsive to the *guru*'s teachings and the art. They must maintain the same discipline that they would in the presence of the *guru*. With social distancing norms and restrictions on movement, there is ample time for practice and learning. If children utilise their time effectively while avoiding distractions, they can remain active even as they learn via the online medium and achieve preparedness for the days to come.

This article has been published earlier in a special festive edition of Hosadigantha (a Kannada newspaper)

Vid. Ranjani S.

Ph.D Scholar in Music

JAIN

(Deemed-to-

be

University)

Email:

ranjani.keert

hi@gmail.co

m

