



How to Make Your Musical Look and Sound Great On-Line

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The three best reasons to record my musical are:

1.

2.

3.

My goals for this recorded presentation are:

1.

2.

3.

Three Alternatives for Online Performances of Plays/Musicals:

- Live
- Hybrid
- Pre-recorded

Live is NOT a viable option for performing MUSICALS online due to:

- Latency (sound travels faster than video)
- Variations in sound quality
- Room for error (pressing the wrong button, etc.)

Zoom* format offers an advantage over table or traditional stage readings:

- Zoom makes it feel more like a performance
 - less like a reading
- Cinematic feel of the screen
 - borrow from TV: pictures, sound effects
 - delete stage directions and scene numbers
 - actors moving vs. talking heads
- Props
- Use input from the director to think visually

Thinking in visual terms, my musical could employ these elements:

*StreamYard is a popular alternative to Zoom

Programs

	Mac	PC
Record Music Tracks	GarageBand (free)	Audacity (free)
Record acapella video tracks	Quicktime (free)	Debut (free)
Assemble music video	iMovie (free)	VideoPad (free)
Trigger cues	QLab(\$10/day rental)	Show Cue System Lite (\$58)



I wanted everything to be DIY. I did it all myself and so can you!
PRO NOTE: You can divide these tasks if you have a team.

Recording Music Tracks

- Piano only vs. full orchestrations
 - depends on budget and time
- Click vs. no click
- Mute the voice track (if it exists) and create piano/orchestra MP3
- Send this MP3 and the lead sheet PDF to the singer

Who is involved in recording music tracks on my team? Where am I right now?

What do I still need to do? Who will do this?

How to Create the "A Cappella" Video:

- Laptops work better than iPhones
 - position lead sheet at top half of computer screen
- Positioning the Computer
 - place laptop at eye-level (sitting or standing)
 - actor should look at camera lens (not green light)
 - ask them to use earbuds that are hardly noticeable
 - advise actors about desired screen composition
- Sound quality
 - try to minimize background noise such as traffic, etc.
 - quality mics help with sound quality
 - make sure device records in stereo
- Video quality
 - select a neutral background wall
 - green screen with virtual background is great
 - black velvet is dramatic
 - have good lighting on the face
 - light should be behind computer, not behind actor
 - assume you're on a stage and think theatrically
- Actor appearance
 - choose costume carefully in advance because it must be used for both recordings and live reading
 - also be consistent with hair style, makeup, and background
- Test run
 - as final quality check, have them record 8 bars and send it to you
 - keep in mind that recording these tracks is an arduous task for the actors
- Use Dropbox to transmit video files (file size ranges from 50-100MB)

My next step in recording video is:

Assembling the Music Video

- Each song is its own iMovie file
- Place the voice-only video file on the timeline
- Place the MP3 piano-orchestra MP3 on the sound track below
- Match the two files up so they are synced
- Move the MP3 file by 0.1 second to zero in
- Save it as a movie file (MP4 format)

Option 1: Hybrid (using both live actors and edited video)

- Each music video, picture, and sound effect will be a "cue"
- All the cues should reside in one file on your hard drive
- Number cues consecutively (#1, #2, etc) and indicate their location in the script in a **LARGE BOLD** font
- Script should indicate where cue **starts** and **stops**

Using QLab is easier than you think

- You'll need to upgrade to "standard" level
 - can be rented by the day (\$10)
- You also need a second monitor (costs around \$100)
 - ensures your cursor is invisible and the movie fills entire screen

Next: Set Up the Cues in QLab:

- Slide the cue into the main cue list
- When it's time to trigger the cue, simply click "go"
- The next cue will automatically be highlighted and ready to go
- Adjustments to the cues:
 - for videos, click the 3rd tab at the bottom (Display and Geometry) and select your second monitor. Do this for each cue and save the file.
 - if using external speakers, click the 4th tab (Audio Levels) and select the correct audio output patch
- Save cue list on your hard drive. Even if you discontinue QLab, your cue list will remain available for future use.
- Close QLab

Presenting the Hybrid Presentation on Zoom:

Follow these steps in this exact order, otherwise the sound will not work:

1. Open Zoom first
2. Click share screen and check the box that says "share computer sound"
3. Open QLab
4. Select second monitor (a green line around the screen indicates that it's shared)
5. This will trigger the show from your main monitor. The triggered cues will appear on the second monitor (with the green line)

As Show Progresses:

1. Click "share screen" at the bottom
2. Click "GO" to trigger the cue
3. Click the "stop share" at the top to return to live action



Triggering the entire show can be done by one person, but requires you to be on your toes every minute!

Is a hybrid presentation what I want?



Pros

Cons

Option 2: Prerecord the Entire Show

- Ask the actors to record all the dialogue (scene by scene) as well as each song
- Create a giant movie
 - Large file size: 2.5G for one hour

Advantages:

- You can control everything
- Edit final details
- Actors don't have to show up for the reading

Overall Time Involved:

Prepare to spend about 100-200 hours for both Option 1 & 2

- Good task to do during pandemic!



PRO NOTE: Ask actors to record files 3-4 weeks in advance

Is a fully-recorded presentation what I want?



Pros

Cons

Go back to your goals on page 1:

Which option will best serve my present goal? Why is this the best choice?

Who do I need on my team that I don't yet have?



PRO NOTE: Schedule roughly one month to record + one month to edit

Additional Thoughts

Paying Actors:

- SAG New Media contracts start at \$125/day (8 hours) + \$25 (approx.) Pension & Health
- Even non-union actors should be paid a stipend
- SAG New Media contract allows you from 13 weeks to unlimited unpaid streaming on social media (check with your union representative)

Think "Cinematic":

- Zoom is more cinema than stage, so employ a visual/auditory storytelling aesthetic
- Coach actors toward film acting - watch those close up moments
- Vary your shots: establishing shots at the top of a scene, reaction shots, etc.
- Allow the camera to shift the audience's gaze at important moments
- Discard stage directions, substitute title frames

Ensemble numbers:

- Group numbers can be recorded with everyone in squares (Brady Bunch) lip-syncing
- Images can be projected over the demo (like the historical pictures used in CURIE)
- Borrow from YouTube and scroll the lyrics to accompany the music track



PRO TIP: Realize that you can edit your presentation into:

- a full-length presentation to send to interested producers
- music videos to live on your YouTube page or website
- a 1-2 minute sizzle reel to embed on your website or email signature page

Storing Your Video to share:

- Dropbox
- Vimeo
- Website
- Password-protected on YouTube

My Webinar Notes

My biggest "a ha!" moment in this webinar was when...

I now realize that I can...

My next step is to....