

Developing Home Practice Online Accompaniments Using Free and Almost Free Software



**National Association for Music Education
2013 NAFME Eastern Division Conference Hartford
CT, April 4-7, 2013**

presented by:



Dr. Fred Kersten

e-mail: fredkers@fredkersten.com

**Presentation online at: [http://fredkersten.com/
Hartford/NAfME2.htm](http://fredkersten.com/Hartford/NAfME2.htm)**

Abstract

This presentation will illustrate how you can develop online accompaniments to support home practice for your students using free and almost free software. When this proposal was developed, trakAxPC, a powerful, multimedia editing and recording application for

PC was free. It has recently been marked at a minimal cost. Other free and low-cost software for both mac and PC platforms will be illustrated as this topic is explored.

Why online accompaniments for the home?

*Practice at home as an extension of public school general music classes can be fun and vital especially as a follow-up to singing or playing activities.

*Students, especially boys, involved in singing activities (sometimes shy-to-sing in the classroom) can receive valuable support allowing them to practice and rehearse music learned in class in the privacy of their home through video/audio support in the form of a podcast or You Tube accompaniments generated by the teacher.

*trakAxPC can be utilized to develop multimedia online accompaniments for home practice opportunities. The advantage to this software is that it can handle both video and audio in a very sophisticated manner with many included editing tools. Audacity obviously can be used for this purpose, however it can only work with audio.

Accompaniment Development Suggestions

1. You can convert any PowerPoint presentation to a movie by exporting to .png or .jpg and then importing the slides into the timeline of a video track.
2. A neat trick is to highlight text with colors for each synchronized verse line. This can be done in Powerpoint before the slides are exported.
3. For singing songs with lyrics. "Line out" or call response of a song can be done with instrumental accompaniment. The leader sings a part of the piece and the singers repeat this, sometimes by rote. The class can rehearse or woodshed for specific notes. Listen and repeat phrases and then learn whole song. Sites on the web are available that allow ESL students to learn American songs. Check out <http://www.manythings.org/songs/ck-tucker.html>
4. Choral Rehearsal Backgrounds. Choral Directors (both public school and church) can provide woodshed accompaniments for their members. Single part woodshedding is helpful with accompaniment files. You can use actual choral backgrounds or you can provide a MIDI background with the specific voice part emphasized.
5. Instrumental or Choral accompaniments placed online can be developed by accessing MIDI files from sites listed on *The Cyber Woodshed*. <<http://www.webring.com/t/The-Cyber-Woodshed-Learning-Choral-Parts-Online>>. Convert these into audio files through programs such as Music Creator 5 (Cakewalk) and then include sections or specific parts that need to be rehearsed. Dependent upon copyright you might include music sections in video format for rehearsal with or without the music. You might use a single voice part or the whole audio file as background. Single lines can be "soloed" in the audio file for emphasis.
6. You can provide several online video accompaniments with altered tempos for woodshedding. To practice sections with difficult interval patterns you can "loop" the

section or cut and paste section, so that the students can sing over and over to master the specific section indicated.

7. Backgrounds for band music or class methods books can be developed and placed online for students to practice with. This is especially helpful if the teacher develops specific accompaniments for melodies that he/she wishes to include that are not in the instrumental method utilized by the school.

8. Accompaniments for recorder tunes played in the general music class can be placed on line along with the music so that students can practice and play along with the notation in visual format. This can be especially creative and helpful if the tunes are composed by the teacher, or in many cases by the students themselves as part of their work with music technology in the computer lab.

9. A "play along with me" video can be created with collage settings in trakAxPC that allows a teacher to play the song to be learned as the students follow along and play with the notation on the screen.

10. If using MIDI files, you can stay free by converting MIDI files played by your sound card synth and recorded to audio (.wav or wma) with trakAxPC using the stereo mix setting of your sound card. Sound quality will be limited by the sophistication of your sound card.

11. Higher quality of audio for MIDI files can be accomplished by using a soft synth on your computer or hardware. I have utilized Music Creator 5 software and the Cakewalk TTS-1 soft synth at times and this allows more dedicated editing features and a sophisticated mixer window. With this software you can quickly convert MIDI to .wav or other formats recognized by trakAxPC for inclusion in your mixes.

12. Using the pitch envelope you can alter the pitch of an accompaniment, *within limits*, to suit the needs of your vocal students, or you can change it to accommodate Bb, Eb, or C instruments to provide accompaniments.

13. Solfedge accompaniment backgrounds can be developed for both public school and college sight singing classes. Accompaniments allow kids in public school music classes to go home and sing songs learned in class or solfedge exercises without fear of embarrassment or self-consciousness that can be induced by their peers.

14. Vocal warm-up accompaniments can be accessed online or developed to suit needs of the choral organization or class activity. Check out CyberBass <http://www.cyberbass.com/>

15. Teachers in Orff classes can have access to backgrounds to work on their recorder for performance and improvisatory sessions. Orff arrangements can be provided on line with barred percussion accompaniments for recorder playing singing and improvisation. Use General MIDI or other soft synth percussion instruments to simulate barred Orff instruments.

16. College students in brass, woodwind or string methods classes working on their alternate instruments can have access backgrounds to exercises included developed by the instructor to explore specific elements of introductory techniques, and/or improvisation.

About the Software

Window Views

- *Mixing Window—allows editing access to all audio and video aspects.
- *Video Output—A video window that can be expanded fullscreen to see editing process, and tutorials.
- *TrakKutter—A dedicated window for discrete editing and blending of audio/video files.
- *Media Browser—Access to all related files on the computer for quick input in to trakAxPC mixing window.
- *Prompt Pane—provides explanatory descriptions of every aspect on the screen as elements are scrolled-over.
- *Beat Syncing Feature—You can include audio files with different tempos and “beat sync” to synchronize the tempo of all files.
- *Individualized online support videos—functions and procedures of editing are quickly explained via tutorial videos dedicated to a specific aspect of the production process.
- *Produced by HighAndes, Dublin 2, Ireland. Two versions: Pro 3.0, and Free. <http://www.trakax.com/>

Software Features

- *Direct Upload to YouTube.
- *Add Text and Credits to your Videos and Photo slideshows.
- *Collaging allows you to display two or more videos / images together in the same output screen.
- *Export Mixes in Popular Formats MP3, AAC, MP4, M4A, WAV.
- *trakAxPC comes with a range of video, photo and audio effects and transitions - adding a professional touch to your mixes.
- *Includes professional audio effects from Blue Cat Audio.
- *Microphone/Webcam Record in directly to trakAxPC from your Webcam or Microphone for Videocasts, Podcasts.
- *Strong Video Tutorials that you can view from within the application.

Resources

trakAxPC webpage <http://www.trakax.com>

PhotoFiltre 6.4.0 <http://photofiltre.en.softonic.com/>

[http://www.wondershare.net/ad/video-editor-win/?](http://www.wondershare.net/ad/video-editor-win/?gclid=CMHMmbb11LQCFe5FMgodGTIAQQ)

[gclid=CMHMmbb11LQCFe5FMgodGTIAQQ](http://www.wondershare.net/ad/video-editor-win/?gclid=CMHMmbb11LQCFe5FMgodGTIAQQ) Wondershare Video Editor for Win & Mac

NCH Software Wave Pag and VideoPad Editing Software <http://www.nchsoftware.com/software/editing.html?gclid=CKSX9bSj1bQCFYLd4Aod5XgAfw>

<http://download.cnet.com/windows/video-editing-software/> CNET List of Video editing software and reviews

<http://www.snapfiles.com/freeware/gmm/fwvideoedit.html> Great list of software....make some screen shots of the last few examples to talk about.

<http://tv.isg.si/site/?q=node/873> Great List....did download

<http://www.htmlkit.com/> HTML editor

Gimp for mac <http://www.macupdate.com/app/mac/14597/gimp>

<http://gimp.en.softonic.com/mac> Gimp download

Windows Movie Maker

Mac iMovie

Online audio/video/photo editors that work from the clouds.

These resources you will have to explore but you can work from any platform and do limited editing of audio/visual presentations from both mac and PC platforms.

Online audio/visual/photo/video editors <http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/30-free-online-multimedia-photo-audio-video-editors/>

<http://beta.photobucket.com/> photo bucket online video clip

<http://soundation.com/studio> Soundation Studio edit audio and midi