READY TO LAUNCH YOUR STUDIO INTO CYBERSPACE?

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Part 1: What a Website Can Do for You

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To promote yourself professionally, a website is an indispensable and economical way to go. You can use a website in so many ways to actually do work *for* you while you can do more of what you *want* to do (practice, perform, garden or sleep)!

A website will communicate 24/7/365 all on its own! While you are "sleeping," current students, future students, and the whole world will be at your "doorstep" learning and researching about you and your business with your website presence.

The Internet is such an amazingly powerful tool of communication that it is now almost an expected communicative tool for professionals. Successful 21st century musicians and educators utilize the benefits a website affords in order to establish a credible and professional presence. Without spending a lot of money you can create a personalized and professional-looking web presence that will be worth its "weight in gold" for you, your students and your business!

What a website can do for you:

- **Promote and market** yourself 24/7/ 365
- A website can do work *for* you
    - Taking emails, leaving messages for you
    - Answering questions
    - Checking your availability
    - Establishing credibility
    - Providing reference tools
    - Communicating important dates/deadlines
- **Attract** future business
    - New students
    - New performing gigs
    - New accompanying gigs
    - New presentations and new collaborations

- o New job opportunities
- **Communicate** to current students
  - o Communicate to colleagues
  - o Communicate to parents
  - o Communicate to other business professionals
- **Substantiate** your credibility
  - o List your background, education and experience
  - o Post your resume or curriculum vitae
  - o An information bio
  - o Professional and candid photos
  - o Documents or news-items from local media/paper/newsletter
  - o Multi-media tools such as videos, slideshows, audio
  - o Parent and student testimonials, endorsements, etc.
- Provide a **Reference** tool
  - o List local competition information & local and national musical events
  - o Required repertoire and technique
  - o How-to secure a piano technician
  - o At-home instrument care and maintenance
  - o Local and national music ordering sites and businesses
- Articulate **Terms**
  - o Specify your rates or tuition
  - o List your fees for accompanying, performances, special services (such as background music or weddings)
  - o Cancellation Policy and Late Fees
  - o Registration information and/or forms (pdf) for setting up new client
- **Safely communicate**
  - o Using "Contact Me" email page/link without disclosing actual information such as personal home street address, home phone number and personal email allow others to contact you directly
- Details your **Availability**
  - o List your wait-list or open slots for new students
  - o Your calendar year teaching schedule and holidays
  - o Professional conferences and skip-days/weeks
- Use of a **Blog**
  - o A blog (or online journal) can be used to keep people coming *back* to your website with regularly updated material
  - o Your thoughts, musings, advice, tips, pointers,
  - o Gratitude towards parents for recitals, gifts, referrals,
  - o Listings of current student accomplishments or awards
  - o Your own upcoming personal professional engagements, appearances or accomplishments

Part Two: What to consider when building a website

Presenter: Stella Branzburg Sick, DMA. Hamline University; Managing Director, Minnesota International Piano-e-Competition. sbranzburg@gmail.com

When building a website (whether you do it by yourself or with a help of a professional), there are several important points and rules to follow. Here are my three most important guidelines to follow:

1. **Content** – when thinking about the content, you should have your target audience in mind. Use only the relevant information. Before you start the website, think of what you want to say and what to convey to your audience. A website is an image of you, and you have to put a lot of thought in what you want to be "out there." Once the website is created, even if you take it down, it is still "out there."
2. **Organization**/**Navigation** – your website has to be logical and easy to navigate. Navigation, just like the content must cater to your intended audience. Navigation is a map to your website.
3. **Design** – develop a brand, use consistent font and colors, choose appropriate backgrounds, attractive images and clean lines. You may think about branding – creating a logo, or something similar (good example simple but very effective logo-like design is on Alejandro Cremaschi website http://www.alejandrocremaschi.com/ Look how letters A and C are positioned and crossed on his name! Very simple, clever and effective.

Much can be learned from bad websites: Here are some of the most glaring examples that earned the honors of the worst websites in 2008 (by www.webpagesthatsuck.com – no joke!)

Bad:
http://www.havenworks.com/
-   Too much information on one page (Content)
-   Horizontal scrolling (very bad thing – avoid at all costs) (Design)
-   Confusing menu, too many links from the front page (Navigation)
-   Visually very confusing
http://yvettesbridalformal.com/
-   Music starts playing while opening the website, no way of stopping it (Design)
-   No rhyme or reason to navigation to speak of (Navigation)
-   Orphaned pages (pages with no menu on them, not connected to other pages)
http://www.stexps.com/
-   Cursor has a "tail" – simply maddening (Design)
-   Design changes from page to page – no consistent "brand" (Design)
-   Menu items change from page to page (Navigation)
Good:
http://sites.google.com/site/kgtuition/ - very nice clean website that has pertinent information about the teacher, clear laid out studio policy, pictures of the students (have to be careful about getting releases from the parents). Website does not really have his own domain name - not always a good thing, but the design is nice.

http://www.shaunaleavitt.com/index.php - created by Handmade Designs. This is a very nice website. It has clear navigation, menu is consistent everywhere, the text is precise and informative. There is a definite color scheme for design. It also has a page for payment, something you may consider making a part of your website.

Summary:
Don'ts
Content:
- Too much information on one page
- Poorly chosen language, grammatical mistakes
- Images that are too large (take long time to come up on the screen)
- Displaying copyrighted images without permission
- Do not put anything on the website that you do not want to be downloaded by anybody (everything on the website is downloadable).
- Pictures of minors without their parents' expressed permission

Design:
- Busy backgrounds
- Flashing or moving images
- Music or videos starting with the webpage!
- Elaborate fonts (serif fonts)
- Random changes of font color, size and style

Navigation:
- Inconsistencies of the menu from page to page
- Complex drop down menu. If you are going to have a drop down menu, keep groupings logical
- Pages that are not connected to the home page
- Keep important information (e-mail, phone number, or however you would like to be contacted) on your home page, so that it is easy to find

Dos:
- Put some thought into the website: for whom are you creating the website, do you want it to be instructional, educational, informational? Remember, once you put it out there, it is out there for good. Be thoughtful of what you say and how you say it. People will forgive bad design, but not if what you say is inappropriate or controversial.
- Try the "low-tech" approach first – before you ever venture into a website-building adventure; write it out on a piece of paper. This is especially helpful for figuring out your site plan and navigation. I recommend working on navigation using post-it notes – they are easy to move around.
- **Keep things simple**
- **Have fun!**

Part Three: How to Build a Website

Presenter: Kathleen Theisen, NCTM. Theisen Music Studio; Assistant Professor, Western Connecticut State University. www.kathleentheisen.com

YOUR WEBSITE: Two considerations
- Self-Designed or Hire a Designer?
- Design on your computer and then upload to the web or log into a site to design it on the web?

STEP ONE: Make a list of what is important for your site.

Use this checklist as your guide. Put a check next to the things that you would like to include on your site. Feel free to make additional notes about each item.

___ PDF files (newsletters, studio brochure, compositions)

___ Photos

___ Videos

___ Links to other pages, teacher organizations, websites, software

___ Newsletters

___ Basic Calendar with dates

___ Calendar that LOOKS like a calendar, with (or without) RSS feed

(so that people can 'subscribe' to your calendar)

___ Practice suggestions for your students

___ Teacher Biography

___ Educational Philosophy

___ Password-protected page for students/parents only

___ Blog

___ OTHER: _____

___ OTHER: _____

STEP TWO: Make a rough sketch of what you would like your site to look like. Make sure you include the 'click-path.'

STEP THREE: Pick a domain name.

This is the name that will come after 'www – dot' in your web address. You will be registering the site for at least one year and possibly as long as 10 years or more. The easiest place to check to see if a web domain is available is to go to http://www.whois.com. This site allows you to "lookup" the

owner of any domain name. If the site is already 'taken', an X will appear next to the name. You can choose to try to backorder the name, meaning you will get to take over the name if the current owner fails to renew it on time. You can also try to acquire the name by buying out the current owner. A better option would be to look for a different 'ending' to your name. Instead of dot-com, try dot-net, dot-org, dot-us, dot-tv, dot-name, etc.   If you purchase a web domain and you are actively using it, DO NOT let it expire! You might lose the domain forever. Whatever you do, make sure you domain name is easy to spell and MEMORABLE.

STEP FOUR: Pick a website hosting plan. Some suggestions for hosting:

- http://www.wordpress.com– free blogs and web pages
- Webs.com   (formerly called "freewebs")
- Google Sites – FREE - you get a complicated 'address' http://sites.google.com/?pli=1
- Yahoo Business Websites: $6-13 a month, depending on the plan you choose: http://www.smallbusiness.yahoo.com
- http://www.Godaddy.com$5-15 per month
- Domain.com $5-18 usually includes free domain name registration; different price for Linux (for MAC users) and Windows.
- Namezero.com Same as domain.com
- MobileMe (Apple computers) - $99 a year (60 day free trial). Price is often less with the purchase of an apple computer: http://www.apple.com/mobileme/ (Note: PC users can also sign up for MobileMe)
- Tripod Lycos - Free or $5-20 per month depending on which plan you choose: http://www.tripod.lycos.com/
- "Opera Unite" is a browser that lets anyone run a web server from his or her own desktop. This is ideal for people who have low traffic levels on their site. FREE. You won't need to pay for hosting! However, PC World magazine is warning about the security of this. http://unite.opera.com/
- Your own Internet service provider may provide free websites for its customers. (Comcast, Optimum Online, Time Warner Cable, Verizon, etc)
- Above all - If you design your site on your own, make sure you check it in several web browsers and make sure it will work on PC, MAC and smart phones. That means you need to open it in Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Netscape, Opera, etc. and make sure it looks okay in each browser.

STEP FIVE: Pick a design program

- Return to your list of what is important for your site. Do you want things that are basic, or things that flash and sparkle?
- BEFORE YOU BUY AN HTML EDITOR, read this: http://webdesign.about.com/od/htmleditors/bb/aabhtmleditor.htm
- *NOTE*: WYSIWYG is easiest to use.

Here are some examples of design software:
- Many designers use a very high-end program called **DreamWeaver**. $399
- i**Web** is an apple-only program that comes as part of the iLife Suite on any Apple computer. The cost varies depending on how you purchase it (cheaper if you buy it with a new computer, more expensive if you buy it separately later on). $79-99. This program has pre-

loaded templates, with various styles for each type of page: blog, photos, videos, etc. So, you do not have to do any design work. The other advantage is that this platform supports "drag-and-drop" style of editing. You just plug in your information or drag and drop your photos and…VOILA! You're done. It's also one-click publishing if you have a MobileMe account.   (I forward my URL to make it look like my site is really www.kathleentheisen.com, but it's really hosted at MobileMe.)

- **WordPress** - Free Program that I absolutely love. The program can be used in a couple of ways: you could use it just to create a website or you can use it as a blog. As a blog site, it is quick and easy to learn. If you use it for website design, it has a much steeper learning curve.
- **Plesk Site Builder** – This is perhaps one of the easiest editors I have ever seen. (It is a lot like KomPozer.) The difficulty lies in uploading documents to your site. For example, if you want to post a downloadable PDF file for your students, you would have to use something called FTP to upload that to a specific folder on the host server and then create a link to that file. In fact, you will have to do this sort of thing in virtually any program that you use for design.
- **Windows Live Writer** – Highly rated. Blog software for windows. FREE.
- **Infinite Sushi ecto 2.3.4**. Highly rated. Blog software for MAC. $18
- **Coffee Cup Visual Site Designer** - Highly Rated. Basic web design software for Windows only. $50
- **Realmac Rapid Weaver 4.1.3** Basic web design software for MAC 10.5 or higher only. $80
- **Microsoft Expression Web 2**. Full-featured web design software for WINDOWS only. $300.
- **Evrsoft First Page 2006**. FREE. Nice interface, requires learning some HTML. Not much support.
- **KompoZer**. FREE WYSIWYG editor. Easy to use. Not much support.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Text by Jocelyn Morrow, Stella Branzburg Sick and Kathleen Theisen

Hyperlink

A piece of text that you can click on that will take you to another page or place on the webpage or the Internet. It can also be used as a link to open an email to someone.   It's usually underlined or in a different color (usually blue). For example: www.kathleentheisen.com

Blog

A frequently updated and newsworthy web page – like a journal or diary - usually maintained by an individual with updated and regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.

Domain Name

In simplified terms, this is the name of your website (the words to the left of dot-com, dot-net, etc) and the address that people type in to find your site.

URL

The address that people type into their browser to find a website. This includes the domain name and the dot-com, dot-net, dot-edu, etc.

Host/ Domain Host

The company that physically 'stores' your website on their server. It is possible to be your own 'host,' but often preferable to use a hosting company unless you know a lot about Internet security. *Hosting* is the process or service of storing computer files on your behalf and make those files available from the Internet.

Browser

A program on your computer for viewing web pages posted on the Internet. Some examples include Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Opera, Netscape.

Server

In simplified terms, a large, fast computer that stores your web pages and is always online.

FTP

File Transfer Protocol is a way of exchanging files over the Internet. People use FTP programs to upload or transfer their web pages to the server.

Site

Your actual web pages that will appear for the whole world to see!

HTML

Hypertext Markup Language is the computer language that web pages are built with. You need not be afraid of HTML! It's hidden from you if you use a WYSIWYG editor. If you learn a few simple HTML 'tags,' you can edit the site more easily. HTML is written in the form of "tags" that are surrounded by angle brackets. For example: <h1>This is a heading</h1>

Search engine optimization (SEO)

A way of creating keywords that help people find you on the Internet, so that your page shows up at the top of a Google search, for example.

WYSIWYG

" WYSIWYG (pronounced /ˈwɪziwɪg/), is an acronym for **What You See Is What You Get**, used in computing to describe a system in which content displayed during editing appears very similar to the final output, which might be a printed document, web page, slide presentation or even the lighting for a theatrical event." (Source: Wikipedia) WYSIWYG web page editor is software that works like a word processor. It allows you to build your web pages without having to understand HTML.