

## BEYOND THE BOOKS: CREATING AN EDUCATIONAL YOUTUBE SERIES ON THE PIANO LITERATURE OF MARGINALIZED COMPOSERS

From my experience as a viewer, I have enjoyed the imaginative ways content creators on the internet communicate concepts with lights, animation, sound effects, and graphic design. This format works extremely well for educational purposes as creators have integrated subject material in an attractive and entertaining format through relatable, real-world applications. Scholars in academic subjects including education, electrical engineering, literature, philosophy, and sociology have made headway in researching the efficacy of educational videos that utilize the YouTube platform.

YouTube has become a steadily more popular medium for educators throughout the twenty-first century. We can find many short documentary videos provided by a multitude of channels and their studio creators as examples of how this method of making educational content has been used for a variety of topics. These videos provide learning without financial or environmental barriers, something that I personally find to be admirable and important. I understand, however, that giving free education is a difficult ideal for many musicians to accept, and because of this, I have found a minimal amount of accessible videos that teach music literature and its history that are well-informed, and are created with quality production equipment. I personally intend to do my part with my own doctoral project in filling this gap by creating a series of educational videos featuring composers and their keyboard works that are underrepresented in the classical music canon. I hope to inspire fellow music teachers to pursue similar projects.

My core objective is to provide an informative and free online source to students who are interested in learning about the piano music of considerably underrepresented composers. These composers, both living and deceased, include women, Central and South Americans, and others of

color whose music have been historically marginalized. When I was a young pianist, my parents' financial situation could not match my passion for classical piano music. I had to teach myself, and to resort to what was available to me on the internet at the time. I am hoping to contribute to the ever growing list of free online sources for young and passionate students who are hungry to learn like I was.

We have learned as music teachers through the pandemic that fluency with respect to the internet and its technology is incredibly important for reaching students during these unpredictable times. As a doctoral student who is focusing on piano pedagogy and performance, I have seen many innovative and incredibly impressive approaches towards teaching music lessons with technology. I have also seen a multitude of presentations of composers who are generally under-taught in the applied music studio. I believe that we can fuse technology and our interest in teaching literature from composers of diverse demographics. Creating videos has already become a popular hobby amongst our students. It would be beneficial to share this hobby with them and use these videos as supplementary tools with our teaching. I have found that the interest in discovering women and composers of color tends to stay within the concert hall and the realm of higher education. Music teachers have the opportunity to bring the music of these already established and researched composers to the students who happen to live outside of these closed circles.

### Equipment

The main devices I am using for accessing my chosen software are going to be my iPad and my personal laptop, devices that are commonly owned and used by most music teachers. I also have invested in a personal microphone (a Blue Snowball Ice), and a small ring light. I have seen applied science and math teachers use a Wacom Intuos Graphic Drawing Tablet, however, I do not believe

I'll need it for my documentary style videos. I'm also not a talented sketcher, but I know many music teachers who are, and could use a tool like this for their own projects. For video editing, I will be using Adobe Premier on my computer, Adobe Premier Rush on my Ipad, and will explore what OBS studios can offer for this project. I currently am located at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado as a visiting lecturer. I am thus realizing that a lot of the software that I have learned about is accessible for both students and educators. I know that Adobe Premier has a discount off the original monthly subscription price for teachers and students, and OBS Studio is free for anybody.

### Script Writing

I will be learning how to formally write a script meant for a project of this type, though I do not believe it to be a necessary step for music teachers to take if they choose to pursue a project like this, as I know that many video-making hobbyists don't. I will be learning from and using the program Celtx, a software that is meant to assist in script writing and other pre-production processes like planning and budgeting. This program can be free for a limited amount of pre-production tools. You can also access a lot of content for a more reasonable price. With this script writing tool, I anticipate that I will be able to organize the structure of my educational video material, and I will be able to use my script as a basis for how I approach creating my video and audio content. Many scripts are organized in two columns, the visual material on the left, and the audio on the right. Some documentary-style scripts, however, have three columns where the video content is written towards the left, the narration is written in the middle column, and other audio material is presented in the column on the right. In this instance, I will plan the timing of my personally recorded musical performances.

## Narration and Visuals

The skill of documentary film making is a new one for me, and whenever I pursue a skill or a topic that is brand new to me, I look to what inspires me and follow their example. The series that I find to be my biggest inspiration for this journey is *Crash Course*. Created by Hank and John Green, who are otherwise popularly known as *the Vlog Brothers*, this series originated with the idea of giving educational content without fiscal barriers and with an entertaining delivery. The episodes feature what are commonly known as “intros” and “outros,” typically found in well constructed YouTube videos. The host or lecturer of each *Crash Course* episode stands in a nice, topic-themed studio. This is where they are filmed to teach a lot of their material. This visual is interspersed with photographs, some animation, illustrations, and collages. The host speaks with clarity and fluency, however, they commit to a story-telling type of friendly vernacular featuring popular culture references. They teach key words and terms by featuring these words and their definitions in visual type. These video features are what I’ll be basing my personal video content on. I will be using Adobe Premier and the record feature in PowerPoint to show the historic photos and key information in visual form.

## Music

I chose Amy Beach as the featured composer for my pilot episode. She was the first American woman to be recognized for large-scale works, and the first American composer to emerge without European education. She was a well-known concert pianist and pedagogue, even though she agreed to limit the practices of performing and teaching during her marriage due to the limitations of the gender roles of her life-time in the turn of the twentieth century. I chose to

feature Beach with the understanding that she is already well-researched and beloved within the classical music community, and yet is a perfect example of someone who is still unknown by many of our students. I have chosen to play *Sketches* Op. 15, and *Young People's Carnival*, Op. 25. Both of these works are examples of her earlier compositions that gave her notice as a composer. The four small works in *Sketches*, being “In Autumn,” “Phantoms,” “Dreaming,” and “Fireflies,” are examples of her Romantic stylistic choices in modal mixture and expressivity. *Young People's Carnival* is a set of six movements that each represent the characters found in nineteenth century pantomime, and is extremely effective for the young, intermediate student.



These musical selections give me a blueprint of what future episodes may feature; one set of advanced piano works, and another set of pedagogical pieces that I will talk about more specifically in the episode. These works will be played by myself and professionally recorded. The more advanced selection will coincide with the recorded narration and the visuals pertaining to the composer's background information. The pedagogical set will be the main feature after the composer is introduced.

#### A New Step in the Right Direction

Combining the technology we use in our teaching with our interest in the music of underrepresented composers creates a multi-faceted project. The questions that arise around the ethics and efficacy behind providing free educational content online are also nuanced and difficult to answer. I believe, nonetheless, projects like this one are necessary steps forward in how we teach music and its history to our students. I understand that with my own undertaking, I am going to face difficulties with being a singular creator with a limited budget, but I hope to provide a good example of how one can overcome these difficulties and accomplish a project like this successfully.

- Holly Quist, DMA candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.