Choral Singing in the Clouds: Internet Resources

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Music in the Air

The reach and influence of the virtual world now affects the real world. The internet and digital technology have invaded daily life, and have a similar transformative role as the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, which brought with it a radical democratization of the transmission of knowledge. We are experiencing a revolution of incalculable dimensions, a paradigm shift that is just beginning, and the internet is at its epicenter. Since its beginnings the net has evolved, and we are now in Web 2.0, which, according to Adell (2010), includes an increase in bandwidth to permit the flow of information, and an explosion in the quantity of information uploaded by users via YouTube, Blogger, WorldPress etc. Using these tools, users engage systems to communicate and interact among themselves.

Application software and documents now reside 'in the clouds' (Cloud computing, iCloud etc.) which is to say on the net. This signals the end of the concept of software and applications as products, and the beginning of the concept of software as a service, available at any time and place through a variety of devices. Users can easily become creators of content, and collective intelligence blooms through the participation of system builders.

Music at Any Time and Place

Late generation mobile devices like tablets and smartphones facilitate access to information and communication in any time and place in an easy and attractive manner, revolutionizing the ways in which music is heard, created, written, learned, and taught. The most recent creations of Steve Jobs, such as "the IPhone, IPod, and IPad will be remembered for their capacity to radically transform the way we work and enjoy leisure time." (Beahm 2011) Touch screen tablets enable us to surf the web, listen to music, read magazines and newspapers, edit sound, record video, see pictures and scores, communicate via email, play games, watch television, and participate in videoconferences, all on a single device. The compact size and light weight, expanded battery power that makes cables unnecessary, and ability to enlarge or reduce the size of text or scores make these devices a phenomenal tool for a choir director or teacher of music.

Verbs and Nouns

According to Marc Prensky (2011:64), verbs are the "skills that students must learn, refine and control." Teaching has to do with verbs, which do not change over time: thinking critically, communicating, decision-making, comprehending content, etc… Nouns are "the tools which students use to practice the verbs," including traditional resources such as books, song collections etc.. and digital tools that are unique to the 21st century such as Google, Wikipedia, IPad etc … The nouns are a means to an end, and unlike verbs are constantly changing at a faster and faster pace. In our training we can then focus on the verbs, and put them to use with varying nouns, which change with time. With this idea in mind, below I list twenty verbs that can be useful for choir directors and that I consider fundamental, with their corresponding nouns representing digital technology. It is an open-ended list, open to change and improvements. All the

nouns have a common denominator: they are free (or very inexpensive), easy to find and use, and above all, useful.

PLACES and SERVICES			
	VERB	NOUN	NOTES
1.	Search	Google	Search engine par excellence. Communal intelligence provides answers to any question.
2.	Create websites or blogs	Google Sites, Blogger	Free services from Google that allow the easy creation of public websites. Ideal for creating a choir website for posting of text, images, videos, practice areas, agendas, and commentary.
3.	Learn and share audio-visual content	YouTube	YouTube has become a vital tool for learning. For example, it offers tutorial videos for a variety of subjects. Users can post concert and rehearsal videos, master-classes etc.…
4.	Download programs	a. Softonic b. Hitsquad Music Software	a. Offers more than 80,000 programs. 1,000,000 daily downloads, leader in Europe. Indispensible when searching for programs. b. Useful to find music programs on any platform and licencing option.
5.	Keep documents in the cloud	a. Dropbox b. iCloud	a. Multiplatform cloud storage service (2Gb) b. Storage in the Apple Cloud (5Gb)
6.	Share music education resources	Calaix de músic	Center of virtual resources for music education. Contains a tool to search for scores as well as tutorials for general music, terminology etc.… http://grups.blanquerna.url.edu/musical/ · Spanish: Cajón de músico http://bit.ly/KiCNRL · English: Drawer musician http://bit.ly/KiCdnc
7.	Learn from colleagues and experts	Twitter Facebook Google groups, Google+	Social networks par excellence. They allow communication between people all over the world, exchange of ideas, questions and answers, sharing information etc. …
8.	Search for scores	a. IMSLP b. CPDL c. Partitions-gratuites.com	a. Project of the international library for musical scores. Free scores in the public domain with 153,173 scores of 6,938 composers (as of Jan, 2012) b. Public domain site with an emphasis on choral music with 13,572 free scores of approximately 1,910 composers (as of Jan, 2012) c. Directory for free score search
9.	Learn music theory	a. Aprendermusica.com b. Teoria.com	a. For the little ones b. Interesting site to learn and practice music theory

PROGRAMS and APPLICATIONS			
	VERB	NOUN WINDOWS	NOUN iPad , iPhone (Mac)
10.	Download archives	a. Ares	b. Download All Pro
11.	Download music	a. Songr	b. iTunes, c. Free Music Download

NOTES
a. Peer to Peer (P2P) program to search and download all kinds of archives among users. b. Downloads music, video, pictures PDF documents etc.…
a. Allows easy downloading of MP3 files, and also extracting sound from YouTube videos, and search for songs on the basis of text. b. Allows purchase of songs at .99-1.29 Euros per track c. Free music download directly to IPhone or IPad

12.	Search, listen, share music	a. Goear, Chirbit, Beep b. Spotify c. Grooveshark*	a. Goear b. Spotify	a. Allows listening to and sharing music, and inserting music into websites or blogs b. Huge music catalogue, with restrictions in the free version c. Online music search engine
13.	Edit sound, recording studio	a. Audacity	a. Audacity (Mac) b. GarageBand c. Multi Track d. Wave Pad	a. Free multi-platform music editing program b. Multi-track recording studio, virtual instrument resource c. Multi-track editor d. Simple but efficient music editor
14.	Change format	Format Factory		Excellent converter for audio, video and images
15.	Edit scores	a. Noteflight b. Musescore	c. Symphony Pro d. Notion	a. Online score editor. Allows sharing and publishing of scores. Creates and reproduces scores in WAV files sampled from real instruments. b. Free software published under the GNU license. Allows reading and creating of scores with standard MIDI or MusicXML. c. Allows importing of MusicXML, MIDI, ABC files and some scanned scores. Can export music as MusicXML, MIDI, PDF, MP3, AAC, ITunes Symphony, or email d. Music editor with samples from the London Symphony Orchestra

16.	Listen and review scores	a. PDFtoMusic	b. Musicnotes (iPad)	a. Reproduces scores in PDF format. Ideal for listening to a score, and rehearsing individual parts, which can be isolated. Uses VirtualSinger which, amazingly, sings with synthesized text. Allows export in the following formats: MIDI, WAV, AIFF. The pro version also allows export in MusicXML. b. Score display program. (Scores bought separately)
17.	Create accompaniment	a. Band-in-a-box (trial version)	b. iRealb	These programs create chord changes in varying musical styles. Ideal for contemporary music, and for improvisation above a harmony.
18.	Tune	Chromatic-tuner	Cleartune	Free chromatic tuners
19.	Set tempo	metronomeonline.com	iBeat — The metronome	Free metronomes
20.	Train the ear	a. Teoria.com	b. Ear Trainer c. ReadRhytm d. Absolute Pitch	a. Tutorial and exercises b. Ear training: identification of intervals chords, and scales c. Rhythm practice d. Games to refine absolute and relative pitch

CODA

Thanks to the internet and current technology, choirs have at their service a variety of learning and communication tools that support their work. I believe we must have a presence on the web to facilitate communication between singers and directors, a meeting place, either a website or a blog, where we can share experiences, texts, images, videos, schedules, and have forums for conversation and rehearsal aids. We can keep our archives in the clouds in order to use them where and when we want. This is ultimately a window to the real world.

* alternative to Grooveshark: http://comparitech.net/limewire-grooveshark-alternative

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