

**Virtual Ensembles:**  
A Case Study with Feedback and Reflections

By

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## **Virtual Ensembles, A Case Study with Feedback and Reflections**

### **Abstract**

This research was carried out through the creation of six virtual ensemble projects and included input from participants and reflections by the researcher to refine the process and improve the quality. A video report was created and is available here (removed to protect anonymity). In the first minute and thirty seconds, the listener will hear excerpts from five virtual ensembles including William Tell Overture by Rossini, Canzon IV a4 CH189 by Gabrieli, Plaisir D'Amour by Martini, O Sacred Head Now Wounded by Bach, and the traditional tune, We Wish You a Merry Christmas as arranged by the researcher. The following steps were identified as critical to the process: (1) select repertoire, (2) create scratch track, (3) distribute music, scratch track and instructions (4) practice, perform, record, and upload audio and video, (5) performs quality check and addresses issues, (6) load audio tracks, align, mixer and master tracks, (7) load photos or videos into a professional-level video-editing application and create visual elements, using the mixed audio as the soundtrack, (8) upload videos to a learning management system or to a file sharing application. The author concluded with the following observations: Virtual ensembles offer many of the same benefits of in-person ensembles. In both, students learn to listen to one another, to play together, to phrase notes, to match styles and articulations, to execute dynamics, to balance and blend. Whether virtual ensembles are used to provide experiences during a pandemic, or to provide enhancements in other times, they are approachable by students and faculty and are here to stay.

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### **Dr. C. Floyd Richmond**

#### **Abstract**

This research was carried out through the creation of six virtual ensemble projects and included input from participants and reflections by the researcher to refine the process and improve the quality. A video report was created and is available here (<https://youtu.be/Ga3hwX5SM6c>). In the first minute and thirty seconds, the listener will hear excerpts from five virtual ensembles including William Tell Overture by Rossini, Canzon IV a4 CH189 by Gabrieli, Plaisir D'Amour by Martini, O Sacred Head Now Wounded by Bach, and the traditional tune, We Wish You a Merry Christmas as arranged by the researcher. The following steps were identified as critical to the process: (1) select repertoire, (2) create scratch track, (3) distribute music, scratch track and instructions (4) practice, perform, record, and upload audio and video, (5) performs quality check and addresses issues, (6) load audio tracks, align, mixer and master tracks, (7) load photos or videos into a professional-level video-editing application and create visual elements, using the mixed audio as the soundtrack, (8) upload videos to a learning management system or to a file sharing application. The author concluded with the following observations: Virtual ensembles offer many of the same benefits of in-person ensembles. In both, students learn to listen to one another, to play together, to phrase notes, to match styles and articulations, to execute dynamics, to balance and blend. Whether virtual ensembles are used to provide experiences during a pandemic, or to provide enhancements in other times, they are approachable by students and faculty and are here to stay.

#### **Research and Purpose**

In the first one minute and thirty seconds of this video (<https://youtu.be/Ga3hwX5SM6c>) the listener will hear excerpts from five virtual ensembles including

- (1) William Tell Overture, Rossini
- (2) Canzon IV a4 CH189, Gabrieli
- (3) Plaisir D'Amour, Martini
- (4) O Sacred Head Now Wounded, Bach
- (5) We Wish You a Merry Christmas, Traditional

Later in the video (15'25") is a sixth excerpt from a virtual ensemble (Dona Nobis Pacem, Traditional).

The lessons learned in these specific case studies will be shared.

#### **Methodology:**

##### **Case Study**

The researcher arranged, created and recorded six virtual ensembles. As each was completed, input was solicited from the participants, problems were solved and reflections were made. Refinements to improve the process and experience for students for the greatest efficiency and impact were identified.

#### **Findings:**

There are two general approaches to creating virtual ensembles. The first requires the use of audio and video production software and permits the greatest flexibility and quality. The second

uses a dedicated virtual ensemble app, and provides a great measure of convenience. For both, the steps are basically as follows.

1. Selects repertoire
2. Create scratch track.
3. Distributes music, scratch track and instructions
4. Practice, perform, record, and upload audio and video
5. Performs quality check and addresses issues
6. Load audio tracks, align, mixer and master tracks.
7. Load photos or videos into a professional-level video-editing application and create visual elements, using the mixed audio as the soundtrack.
8. Upload videos to a learning management system or to a file sharing application.

Virtual ensembles will enable students to continue making music, even during pandemic or other conditions that might make live ensembles difficult.

### **Implications**

Teachers viewing this presentation will be better informed as to how to create their own virtual ensembles, and will gain a measure of efficiency. Virtual ensembles provide unique experiences that would benefit students regardless of whether required for pandemic conditions.

### **Conclusion**

Virtual ensembles offer many of the same benefits as in-person ensembles. In both, students learn to listen to one another, to play together, to phrase notes, to match styles and articulations, to execute dynamics, to balance and blend. Whether virtual ensembles are used to provide experience during a pandemic, or to provide enhancements in other times, they are approachable by students and faculty and are here to stay.

### **References**

See a YouTube video of this presentation here: <https://youtu.be/Ga3hwX5SM6c>.

See an online poster of this presentation here: <https://api.ltb.io/show/ABEYN>

## **Bibliography:**

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<https://ilmea.org/music-ed-blog/2021/1/14/the-virtual-ensemble-a-brief-history-and-guideline>

## **Examples of Virtual Ensemble**

William Tell Overture Excerpt (Tubas)  
<https://youtu.be/PwyYAb80oWo>

Jean-Paul-Egide Martini's Plaisir De Amour (Guitars)  
<https://youtu.be/yuPt7-L80uw>

J. S. Bach's Canzon (Tuba/Euphonium)  
<https://youtu.be/YOJib0jNVdw>

Traditional, Donna Nobis Pacem (Guitars)  
[https://youtu.be/kdZr2kMTm\\_M](https://youtu.be/kdZr2kMTm_M)

Hans Leo Hassler, O Sacred Head (Guitars)  
<https://youtu.be/jWLwWfn5D9Q>

Eric Whitacre's 'Lux Aurumque'  
<https://youtu.be/D7o7BrlbaDs>

Eric Whitacre's Sing Gently  
<https://youtu.be/InULYfJHKIO>

## **Biography**

Dr. C. Floyd Richmond began teaching in 1980 as a high school band director and has been working in music education and technology in higher education since 1987. He held full-time positions in Mississippi, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York, and is currently the Music Area Coordinator for Tarleton State University near Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas.

