

# ***Audio and Video recordings in the teaching studio:***

*Why should we record out students' lessons?*



*A mirror contributes to the self-awareness of the student.*

## ***Seeing***

There is a mirror in almost every singing-studio. A student needs a mirror to see what exactly he or she is doing. It contributes to self-awareness. A lot of things happen unconsciously. By seeing themselves in the mirror it becomes clear what they're exactly doing and if they correct it. We all know that a student often thinks he's having his jaw hanging on his knees, while the teacher can't even put a piece of paper between his teeth.

So a mirror is useful, but unfortunately not totally sufficient; it acts only like a snapshot. A mirror does not correct you when you don't look into it. Therefore the correction is likely to disappear when you stop looking in to the mirror. This already happens when the student stops looking during his song or exercise, (he often doesn't know he stopped looking!) but also will he not notice that he gets back to his old habits, because one doesn't feel 'old habits'. That's why they die so hard:-) So they have to watch it. If the student watches his whole lesson he becomes much more aware of his habits; the things he does and doesn't. Body-awareness and self-awareness are very important tools for singers. A person sings with the same instrument as the one he talks with.

## ***Hearing***

A mirror doesn't reflect sound and there are many things the student doesn't hear when he is singing. Listening 'from a distance' as in a recording can offer a lot of additional information to the singer. It gives both teacher and student information on whether the directions were followed or not. This is a very interesting and important point because students tend to think they are following all given directions. After the lesson they can watch themselves and see if they did what they thought they were doing. This self-observation provides new input for the next lesson.

Another point here is that the teacher and the student have the same objective information from a recording.

## ***Memorise***

A student remembers only 10 to 30 % of what he is told. Repetition (hearing/ watching all the information for a second time) is very useful. But there's more: Watching the lesson a student can classify the information by making notes. This really helps the brain to manage the information into long term memory. The student can see for himself whether he is following the instructions (or not) and how and what effect it has on the results. Also the progress is easier to overview. The student can watch older lessons to see what has changed.



*A lesson in progress.*



*Make sure you position the camera in a way you get a good frame of your student.*



*Apple iSight separate digital video camera.*



*Samson digital condenser microphone.*

For a lot of students it becomes clear that if they really practice you have more progress. A student who doesn't rehearse will therefore record 'the same lessons' over and over again.

It is well known that remembering is easier when the student is involved, curious and asks questions. It helps the brain consolidate the information and store into the long-term-memory.

Furthermore, as a teacher, I like to tell my students they get more than two lessons for the price of one this way. Students get the live lesson (that's one); and if students bother to critically view the recording they get the same lesson once again (that's two), greatly aiding their memorisation in the process (and that's three).

It is important to note that some students feel uncomfortable watching and hearing themselves and need time to get accustomed to it. By discussing and summarising the recording the next lesson, the student can learn to set priorities and know what to focus on. In time, most students get used to it. One student of mine refused to watch (she simply couldn't watch herself), so we recorded only sound. If you teach singing you work with a lot of different personalities and you have to see what works for who.

I won't get into the didactic details because that lies beyond the scope of this article.

## *Recording: what do you need?*

### **Audio and video recording**

**Hardware:** I use my laptop with a built-in camera but you can also connect a separate camera. This allows more freedom to put the camera in an appropriate place.

**Software:** I use the easy program Quicktime, which can be downloaded free at: <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/> The professional version (Quicktime X) costs: € 30,-.

Recordings made with Quicktime can often be played with Windows software. Otherwise one can easily export the file from Quicktime to other programs.

### **Audio recordings**

**Hardware:** Built-in computer or telephone microphones are often not capable of rendering all pitches and dynamics, so I connect a USB-microphone to the computer. The Samson CO3 is a digital studio condenser microphone which connects it directly with the USB-port of your computer. <http://www.samsontech.com/samson/products/microphones/usb-microphones/c03u/> It is compatible with any Mac or PC and software like GarageBand and costs roughly: € 100,-

An installation CD is included. With an Apple computer, you can plug and play.

**Software:** Quicktime recognises the microphone automatically and is fully compatible.



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QuickTime

### ***Transfer to student:***

How does the student get his recorded lesson?

**There are various possibilities:**

The student can bring along a USB-stick and you can drag the *Quicktime*-file to the stick. At home the student puts the lesson on his computer.

Send the lesson via *YouSendit* or *WeTransfer*. Up to 2 GB (*WeTransfer*) can be sent free. My recordings are high quality so they are too 'heavy' for *YouSendit*. If you only record the sound, which is also possible with *Quicktime*, *YouSendit* is fine. <https://www.yousendit.com>

**Install *Dropbox*:** I share a separate folder with each student which only he/she and I have access so no one sees lessons of other students. At the end of the lesson I drag the *Quicktime*-file in the shared folder and the computer instantly uploads the lesson and the student can pick it up on his/hers. The simple version of *Dropbox* is a free download: <https://www.dropbox.com>. By the way, every time you invite somebody to use *Dropbox*, and you deliver *Dropbox* to a new client by doing that, you get extra free space to use. That's quite important because you can really use the space!

### ***Resume***

It may sound a little bit complicated, but it is actually quite simple. Begin by downloading *Quicktime* and using the built-in computer microphone until you feel you need better equipment or can invest in it. Since I began recording not just sound but also the video image, my students are progressing much more quickly!



*A student can pick up his lesson in his personal DropBox.*

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