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# Tangram Voices: A Case Study

Exploring Youtube Premieres as a Venue for Collaborative Virtual Concerts

20 July 2020 | Written by Reylon Yount

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## What's Up?

With the majority of live music venues still shut down, ensembles and presenters are scrambling to find engaging and financially viable ways to host virtual concerts.

Last month's launch concert for **Tangram Voices** – a new solo and duet series catalysing transnational imagination – showed that a **“pre-record and premiere” approach** is a promising way to go for digital group performances.

Broadcast via **Youtube Premieres**, the concert circumvented various technical challenges that come with coordinating performances via video-conferencing apps like Zoom, resulting in a frictionless, high-resolution concert experience. What we lost in terms of the real-time “liveness” of the event we gained in **ease, quality control, a relaxed concert experience, new audiovisual possibilities, and engagement through a live chat.**

We were happy (and relieved!) that our efforts drew in over 100 viewers who stayed for the entire hour, and raised a sweet £680 for our partner, the Black and African Solidarity Show.

**5-6PM, 27 JUNE, 2020**

ONLINE LAUNCH  
FUNDRAISING FOR B.A.S.S.

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**TANGRAM VOICES**  
Concert Series #1



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## How Does It Work?

### Before The Event

1. One month before, communicate with all artists to determine a set length for each, the programme, and the deadlines. Programme new music or arrangements - any kind of premiere - where possible. This newness adds to the feeling that this is a special event.
2. Think through and assign spoken parts to record, including the concert introduction and conclusion, and the set introductions by each artist.
3. Ask artists record their performances at home and send all of their videos to the concert editor a week before the event.
4. Edit together the concert video and upload it to your Youtube channel, "scheduling" it to publish as a premiere at the date and time of your choice. Here is [a guide](#) to publishing a Youtube Premiere.
5. Publicise the event as if it's a live concert, as early as you like. Create an Eventbrite to gather registrations via email, and add the Premiere Link to the order confirmation when it's ready, and/or email the link out on the day.

### During The Event

1. Be creative with the spoken introductions and conclusion. You can speak in the same way you would when presenting a live concert: e.g. "We're so happy you could be with us today..." and "Next up we have..." to enhance that feeling that the audience is experiencing a live performance.
2. Ask artists to comment in the chat at the beginning of the concert so the audience knows that.. ~ the artists are present ~ \*soft sparkle\* ..and during their section of the concert. They can also answer questions and take a virtual bow by saying 'thank you' at the end of their set, when the clapping emojis (hopefully!) roll in.
3. Comment from the host Youtube account "Now Playing:.." with the piece titles and performer names. This serves like a rolling programme for anyone that misses the introductions to the pieces.

### After The Event

1. Share 'thank you' posts across socials and advertise that the concert will be up for a remaining 24 or 48 hours for anyone who missed it or anyone who wants to watch again. If it is a ticketed performance, this link can be shared directly with ticket buyers via email.
2. Make the video "private" in Youtube after that period of time if you'd like to preserve the value of the ticket.

## Advantages of Youtube Premieres

### Quality Control

- Zoom, Google Meets, and any of the video-conferencing apps suffer from reduced and inconsistent video and audio quality which can compromise a virtual performance.
- Youtube Premiere enables you to pre-record and edit high quality video and audio, with a guarantee that there won't be any disruptions during the broadcast.

### Stress Reduction

- This guaranteed quality control relieves a lot of stress on the part of the presenter, who does not have to worry about weak wifi signals, assorted tech issues during the call, etc.
- Watching a Youtube Premiere also reduces stress for the audience member. They don't have to worry about witnessing technical hiccups and they know they are not being watched. They can relax, play the concert in the background while doing something else if they like, and rewind if they miss something.
- Artists can prepare multiple takes of their sets and fine-tune their recording quality. This makes them confident in the performance they will present and allows them to relax during the actual event.

### Audiovisual Possibilities

- Pre-recording also affords artists the option to be creative with the audiovisual presentation of their music. They can keep it simple and just record a direct video of their performance. Or they can record multiple angles and give the audience close-ups on the instruments they are playing. They can combine takes from multiple artists for collaborative pieces. Or they can weave together multimedia content to express the piece they are performing in a new way.
- For example, in Tangram's concert, Reylon premiered a new dream folk song called "Night and Day," into which he incorporated videos contributed by artists and audience members present at the premiere as a "found footage / sound" texture. This made the digital performance specific to that particular gathering of viewers for that particular premiere, acknowledging the remote, temporary community that this performance had formed.

## Engagement

- The biggest drawback of Youtube Premiere is that it is technically not a live performance, and the audience knows this.
- But we found that the audience cared much less about the technical liveness than we expected. At the end of the day, they are watching a digital representation of a musician's performance. When the performance was recorded is not as important to audiences as the quality of the viewing experience. Plus, the special feeling of being one of the first to see the performance, and being able to chat with the artists in real-time, makes up for this loss of liveness.
- This could be a more exciting way to present archival performances. When mixed with fresh performances of new music and the personal artist introductions, archival performances can take on a new life. They have a specific, special context and take on a feeling of relevance and revival they otherwise would not have.
- A Youtube Premiere concert dovetails nicely into garnering subscriptions on the presenter's Youtube Channel. With the right combination of announcements in the video itself and links in the Youtube description, you can drive traffic directly to channels that help audiences stay in touch afterward.

## The Case for Creative Digital Presentation

By leaning into the myriad possibilities opened up by video editing technology and media platforms like Youtube, we can find new channels for creating connection with audiences that are not available to us in real life.

For example, it's a refreshing experience for audience members to be able to chat directly with performers, who normally would just disappear backstage after the concert.

Instead of always attempting to exactly replicate the live music experience online - when we *know* we will only be satisfactory in physical venues - why not work on discovering what unique forms of connection an online concert can offer audiences that an in-person concert cannot?

## Testimonials

Here were some of our favourite reactions we received during and after the Tangram Voices concert on Youtube Premiere:

“It was an amazing concert!

(and the best audio quality of all the livestream concerts I've attended so far)”

“Loving this! Incredible visualisation of bewitching pieces on percussion... Thank you.”

“Very impressive and seamless.”

“Setting the standard for online concerts!”

## What's Next?

Tangram will be hosting a Youtube Premiere screening of our genre-fluid stagework **Untold on Thursday, 13th August**, and our next **Tangram Voices concert on Friday, 4th September**. You can follow us on social media - the links are listed below - to get updates.



## About Tangram

Tangram is a new music movement catalysing transnational imagination and celebrating the vitality of Chinese cultures. Made up of composers and performers of Chinese and western instruments, this collective grew out of the artists' shared desire to challenge the widespread assumption that Chinese and Western cultures are mutually exclusive. Leapfrogging beyond the tired notion of "East meets West," the artists create and curate performances that express the richness and multiplicity of transnational Chinese experience as a way to prompt real dialogue around contemporary identity, open up new transcultural spaces, and imagine interconnected futures. Launched in 2019 as recipients of the Chinese Arts Now Artist Development Bursary 2019 and winners of Nonclassical's Battle of the Bands 2019, they have worked with the London Symphony Orchestra and Silk Road Ensemble, and most recently, have been appointed Associate Ensemble at SOAS for 2019/2020. The collective is based in London and co-directed by Alex Ho and Reylon Yount.

**Tangram Voices** is a new concert series that will support solo and duet performances from Tangram artists and guest artists. Each concert will be curated by the featured artist, who will curate and shape the event in the way that best showcases their talent, while engaging thematically with the Tangram mission. We aim to premiere at least one new work from an emerging composer in each concert as well. Beyond offering a new intimate setting for our artists to share excellent performances of contemporary music, this will also serve as an accessible platform empowering young performers and composers to connect and create new work together.

## Please Stay In Touch!

You can read more of Tangram's story and stay in touch with us via the following channels:

Website - [www.tangramsound.com](http://www.tangramsound.com)

Twitter - [www.twitter.com/tangramsound](https://www.twitter.com/tangramsound)

Instagram - [www.instagram.com/tangramsound](https://www.instagram.com/tangramsound)

Facebook - [www.facebook.com/tangramsound](https://www.facebook.com/tangramsound)

Email - [tangramsound@outlook.com](mailto:tangramsound@outlook.com)

If you have questions about how to host a Youtube Premiere concerts, please feel free to email us!

... Thanks For Reading!