

# INTRO TO ONLINE LESSONS

## SETTING UP ZOOM

- After trying a few systems, I've found that Zoom is by far the most useful. It offers loads of helpful things, is easy to use, and is free for the basic version.
- First you'll need to download the Zoom Client Meetings app. If you are going to use a tablet or phone for lessons then just visit the app store, or if you're on a laptop or desktop computer visit [zoom.us](https://zoom.us), click on 'resources' then 'download zoom client'.
- You'll then need to create an account which is a simple process. Don't worry when it asks for your 'work' email address, you can use whichever email account you like! It will try to upsell you a premium account, ignore that as the free one offers more than enough for our needs.
- Send me the email address that you've used and I'll add you as a contact (or you can add me). Look out for the notification via email and accept the invitation from me - then we're ready to go!
- For under-18s, I request that parents use their own account/email address.

## SETTING UP YOUR LESSON SPACE

- If you have more than one device please think about the best one for you to use. In general a phone probably isn't the best as the screen size may be too small - a laptop or a tablet is better for both maneuverability and ease of viewing. Also have a think which one has the best camera and microphone.
- If you have an external usb microphone or webcam, they may well be better than what you have built in to your device so if so please use them! But if not don't worry.
- Try to position the camera so I can see your instrument and hands - it's less important for me to see your face! I'd recommend using a chair or a stool and some piled up books to get the correct height and angle.
- For piano, I'd recommend having the camera side on, ideally slightly above the keys so I can see arm shape and the keys you are playing.
- For violin/viola, face the camera straight on with the music stand to the left of the screen you are using, instead of the other way around. Stand about 2m away from the camera.
- I'll be using a second camera for close ups on my fingers so make sure you can see your screen clearly.
- For under-18s please make sure a parent is nearby while the lesson takes place.

## PREPARATION BEFORE THE LESSON

- I must have the sheet music for the pieces we'll be playing in the lesson. I may have it already so check first, but if not you'll need to scan the music and email it to me.
- By far the easiest way to do this is to use a free scanning app on your phone. My recommendation is Adobe Scan, though there are loads of others (eg. Scannable or CamScanner or Tiny Scanner). These apps

use your camera phone but instead of just taking a photo they flatten and crop the image and turn it into a black and white document which you can then just send to me straight from your phone.

- Sending the music as a scan is preferable to dropping round hard copies, as I can annotate them and highlight notes and passages during the lesson via screen sharing.
- It's worth filming yourself playing your pieces before the lesson and either sending them to me or (preferably) uploading them to an unlisted YouTube link (again I can help with that if you don't know what you're doing!). This can help get round some of the audio issues with live video chat and give me the best idea how you're getting on.
- If you're needing a piano accompaniment to one of your pieces, do ask me to do a recording for you. I can do this during your lesson and will upload to Seesaw, or send via email, so you can use it at home for your practice.

## THE ACTUAL LESSON

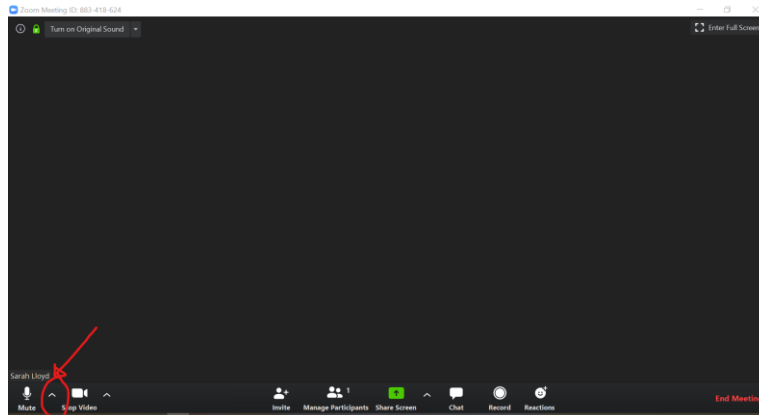
- I'll 'host' the meeting. You will have received an ID number and password in the initial email invitation. Open the app using the link (or copy and paste the ID number into the app). You'll be asked if you want to connect audio - click yes. At this stage you will have entered a virtual waiting room. Once we are both ready, I will admit you into the lesson. **N.B.** if you are joining the meeting with a 2<sup>nd</sup> camera (i.e. a camera over your hands), please *don't* connect with audio on this 2<sup>nd</sup> device.
- I've found there's really no reason why lessons can't then proceed as normal - I'll listen to you play, we'll talk about it and I can make suggestions and demonstrate things that you can try, just like in a face-to-face lesson.
- However, as you may know already, it can get a bit more complicated when we both try to talk or play at once. When you work online, you have to listen with more concentration than face-to-face. Please make sure you understand my instructions before playing.
- The only major difference is that I can't point at the music. This is where screen sharing is really useful, so when needed, I'll put the music on my screen, which you'll be able to see - then I can zoom in on passages, highlight things with the cursor, and type in notes and fingerings.
- PLEASE make sure you have a pencil ready in lessons so you can write these things on your copy!
- It's easy to record your lessons in the app, and if you'd like to please go ahead - it could be really useful for remembering what we did during a lesson when you're practicing. (Just bear in mind that it doesn't record in high quality so don't be disillusioned!).

## AUDIO AND PICTURE QUALITY

- Obviously, the better the quality of the image and sound, the better experience we'll both have of the lesson.
- Though it might be tempting to click the options that offer a virtual background or "touch up my appearance" (a genuine option!) they do slow things down a lot!
- It's worth thinking about how well lit you are. It's far better to have a light source above or in front of you - try to avoid bright lights behind you or the image will be very dark.

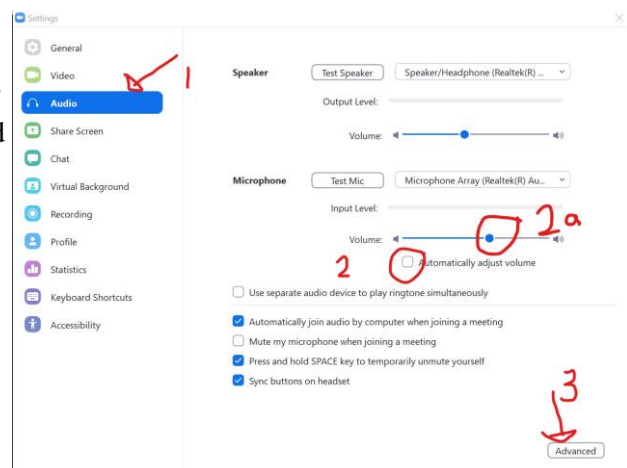
- One of the best ways to improve the audio connection is to increase your internet bandwidth as much as possible - so before the lesson wherever possible please disconnect or turn off other devices that are connected to your wifi, and close apps that may continue using internet in the background. **If you can connect via an ethernet cable instead of wifi this will also give you a more stable connection.**
- If you feel confident, there are also some changes you can make to the settings which will offer a real improvement to the sound. (These options aren't available on a phone or tablet). In Figure 1, you will see the up arrow, next to the mute button, circled. Click on this and choose 'Audio Settings'

Figure 1



- Figure 2. 1) Make sure you are in the audio setting. 2) make sure 'automatically adjust volume' is NOT ticked. 2a) set the volume level to around 3/4. 3) click on advanced

Figure 2



- Figure 3. In the advanced settings (see fig. 2). 1) make sure that 'show in meeting option...' is ticked. 2) select 'disable' for both the suppress persistent background noise and suppress intermittent background noise. Once you have done figures 1-3 you will be set up ready for your lessons.

Figure 3

