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DEMONSTRATING DREAM: A DIGITAL RESOURCE EXCHANGE ABOUT MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

The Digital Resource Exchange About Music (DREAM) is an online tool for exchanging information about digital learning tools for music education. DREAM was designed by our team to encourage music teachers to learn about digital resources related to learning to play a musical instrument, both in classroom and independent music studio settings. In addition to enabling music teachers to learn about resources, DREAM allows music teachers to evaluate the resources based on their own experiences using the resources, to read about other teachers' views of the resources, and to add resources to the learning objects repository. During the demonstration of DREAM, we will showcase some of the resources and discuss the evolution of the design of DREAM. We will encourage participants to explore DREAM on the devices we provide and/or on their own laptops, tablets, or smartphones.

KEYWORDS

Digital music tools, learning objects repository, music education

1. SESSION DESCRIPTION

Digital applications for music education have been growing at an astonishing rate, and these resources are changing the ways people teach, learn, and make music (Burnard, 2007; Partti, 2012; Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Waldron, 2013). The Digital Resource Exchange About Music (DREAM) is an online tool especially designed for music teachers to help them access the best of the many digital applications that are currently available (www.dreammusictool.ca). DREAM is one of a suite of digital tools for music learning designed by a research and development team comprised of members from two Canadian universities, Queen's University and Concordia University, and The Royal Conservatory (RCM), a national conservatory teaching and examination system. The first tool in the suite, iSCORE, supports students in their path to becoming self-regulated musicians. Two tools that are presently under development include an iOS mobile app for annotating music videos called Notemaker, and another web-based tool called Cadenza, which, like iSCORE, also was designed to support student self-regulation.

DREAM allows users to explore digital learning tools in music education, and to add their own tools to the digital repository. DREAM provides a forum for teachers to keep informed about the latest websites, apps, and recordings that apply to music learning, as well as to exchange their own evaluations of the resources. DREAM enables users to download the resources they would like to use directly on their laptops, tablets, or smartphones. For example, DREAM can be used to locate games that support sight-reading—a perennially difficult area for most music students to master—and to learn about drills to support ear training and theory. Users can also listen to excellent recordings of repertoire, and explore professional resources. DREAM currently contains over 3,500 high quality resources, all of which have been vetted by professional musicians and educators.

DREAM was designed by our team to encourage music teachers to become familiar with digital resources related to learning to play a musical instrument, both in classroom and independent music studio settings. In accordance with the other digital tools we have designed, DREAM is an evidence-based tool, created on the basis of research that shows how students can become self-regulated learners when their music learning is scaffolded appropriately. We have secured funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, under the Partnership Grants program, to design and develop tools and to conduct

research on the effectiveness of the digital tools in *The Suite*, and to share those findings with the academic community, musicians, teachers, and the general public. Our work is also supported by a Leadership Opportunity Grant from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. While DREAM was designed by Canadian developers and researchers, the tool has international reach, especially in English and French speaking countries where there is a conservatory system or some other music pedagogy and examination process in place.

In addition to enabling music teachers to learn about resources, DREAM allows music teachers to evaluate the resources based on their own experiences using the resources, to read about other teachers' views of the resources, and to add resources to the digital repository. In the release version (DREAM, v. 1.4), resources were organized into six categories: (a) musical repertoire, (b) ear training and sight-reading, (c) practising, (d) history and theory, (e) creating and composition, and (f) professional resources. All of the entries in DREAM are searchable by title and key words, and users can also filter the resources by instrument, ability level, or platform (e.g., by type of tablet or smartphone). The resources—whether they are recordings, apps, websites, or software programs—are described in the language of origin (English or French).

We characterize DREAM as a Trip Advisor™ for music teachers—but instead of choosing, for example, a hotel based on such filters as free parking and internet, the teachers might select musical repertoire, filtering for instrument (e.g., violin) and difficulty level (e.g., intermediate). Once the teacher has selected a resource, DREAM recommends resources to users based on their prior choices. Again, this has parallels to travel sites, for once the user browses through some hotel choices, the user is shown other hotels that might be of interest, based on the user's choice as well as the selections of users with similar profiles.

The demonstration of DREAM will showcase some of the resources and discuss the evolution of the design of DREAM (Upitis, Abrami, Brook, Pickup, & Johnson, 2015). Before releasing DREAM in September of 2014, an extensive usability testing period took place. During the first usability study, the design and content evolved, based on the feedback from 12 core test participants and designers, a group of 24 classroom music teachers, as well as nearly 50 studio music teachers from across Canada. The results of this usability study provided evidence that DREAM could serve as a centralized place for music teachers to keep abreast about digital technologies, by providing a tool that would be valued in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

The demonstration will also detail some of the patterns of use that have been revealed since DREAM was first launched in September of 2014. These will include site analytics on the number of unique users (close to 5,000), countries of origin, most popular resources, browsers and devices used, and the time spent on the site and total page views (over 40,000).

In addition to describing the design process, patterns of use, and showcasing some of the resources contained in DREAM, we will encourage participants to explore DREAM on the devices we provide or on their own laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Participants will be able to access resources in the learning objects repository, open their own accounts, and add comments to the resources that are already available in DREAM.

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