

FROM THE STUDIO TO SHANGHAI AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN

CIM's Distance Learning Program sends students around the country and the globe without ever leaving Cleveland.

Photos by Robert Muller





The basement of the Cleveland Institute of Music might not look like much at first. A long white corridor snakes past lockers and practice rooms, the muted sound of students practicing filling the space. At the end of the hall, at the back of the building, there are two studios. And although their soundproof walls make what goes on inside completely unheard to the passerby, these spaces are bursting with energy. The type of energy you need to engage a room full of elementary school kids a thousand miles away or to play your heart out for a revered faculty member from the Royal College of Music in London.

In studios A and B the Distance Learning program does its finest work; connecting with classrooms, institutions and organizations not just across the country, but around the world. The K-12 program links elementary, middle and high school students to CIM students honing their teaching skills. The Global Auditions Training Program sets up mock auditions so CIM students can practice this often-daunting process. But the best part about each and every program within Distance Learning is that it's educational for those all over the globe.

MUSIC AND MRS. M

Each year, Distance Learning provides 300 to 400 lessons to K-12 classrooms through videoconferencing technology. Half of the lessons are solely music education; the other half, interdisciplinary. These lessons have names like "Mozart Math," "Science of Sound" and "The Planets? Suite!" and all teach music while incorporating math, science and history. These lessons are vital in an age when arts and music programs are being trimmed back or cut entirely. Each lesson, built by the Distance Learning Department, educates children in the subject of music but also strives to give teachers what they need to meet their standards and curriculum requirements of today.

Heather Young Mandujano, Distance Learning's education coordinator, sits patiently in front of the perfectly positioned camera in studio B waiting for the sixth grade class in Texas to come on the screen. As soon as the connection is made, Mandujano (or "Mrs. M") launches into her lesson, "La Musica de Mexico." "*¡Hola!* How's everyone doing today?" she asks with a smile.

Mandujano spent several years as a classroom teacher before coming to CIM and it shows. She leads the 45-minute session, which focuses on Mexican culture through music, but includes history, rhythmic meter and instrument identification along the way. Nearing the end, Mandujano turns it over to CIM student Chee-Hang See, who is a participant in the Distance Learning Student Apprentice Program. He begins his lesson on Mexican composer Manuel Maria Ponce, describing one of the composer's most popular songs, "Estrellita." Then, he and fellow CIM student JW Kriewall perform the piece on piano and bassoon for the class that sits more than a thousand miles away.

See and his fellow student apprentices often choose every part of the lesson, from the piece of music presented to which subjects are incorporated. They create lesson plans and perform for and interact with students of all ages. See has been a student apprentice since last fall. "I love teaching," he says. "This is a good way to interact. I taught before I came to Cleveland, but this is a new form of teaching. I've always wanted to try videoconferencing teaching, and this was a great opportunity."

Soon See will be moving from student apprentice to student presenter, sitting in Mandujano's seat and leading the full session. "I love the interaction. I get to see how middle school students will act versus high school students, so it's really a great experience," he says.

TECHS IN ACTION

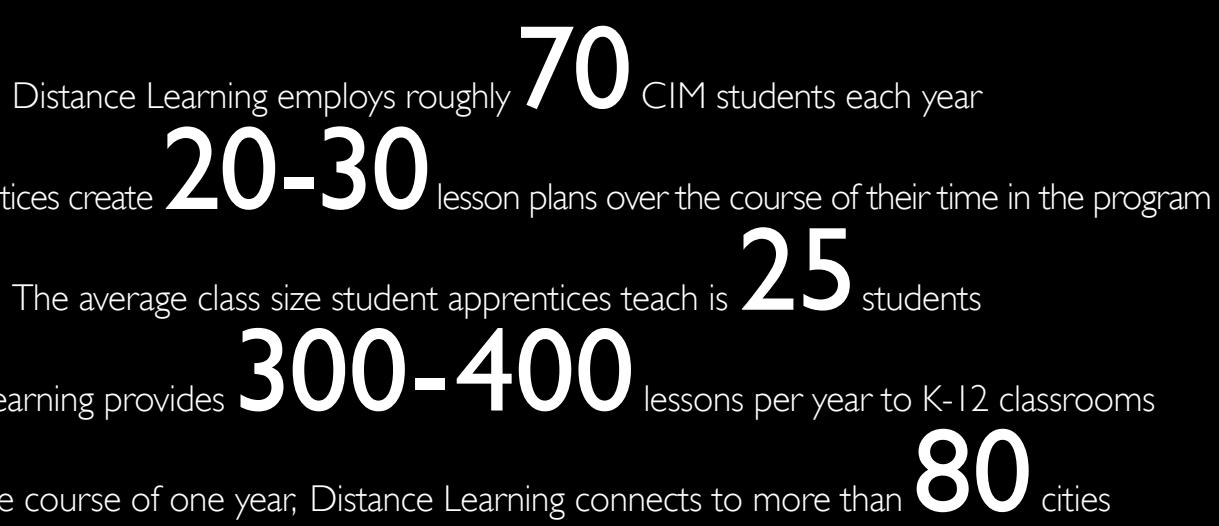
Classrooms around the country get to see what goes on inside the studio, but behind a double glass window in the Distance Learning studio CIM student technicians sit in the booth, busy balancing audio levels on the mixer and queuing up video clips and slideshow presentations to run seamlessly throughout the lesson.

Student technicians (or "techs") Susan Bengtson and Nick Voorhees run the "La Musica de Mexico" lesson. "If you wanted to work in sound production or recording this type of job would be really useful," says Bengtson. These techs are trained on all the equipment and entirely handle the technical part of every session. But this job gives you more than just a crash course in audio or video production; it also helps with people skills and interaction. "You have to speak with other people, so it helps with your public speaking," says Voorhees, who's been working as a tech for two years. "Even with test calls to make sure the connections work, I have to talk to new people all the time. It gets easier the more often you do it," he says. After a job like this student techs can work on a deeper level when, as performers, they need to work with a recording engineer. "It will help you speak intelligently to sound production professionals in the future," Bengtson adds.

AUDITIONS GO GLOBAL

Auditions are a major part of a musician's career, and being prepared for them is the goal of Distance Learning's Global Auditions Training Program (GATP). This unique program allows CIM students to play for and receive feedback from four different professionals at conservatories and institutions around the world. This year, those institutions include the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the New World Symphony, the Royal College of Music – London and the Royal Danish Academy of Music.

When CIM students in this program sit down in front of the camera and the top-of-the-line microphone, they are performing (or mock auditioning) for experts in the field. Once our student finishes, students from other institutions play. The sessions focus on one instrument at a time, and each student plays about eight minutes of music. CIM faculty members invite their studios to observe so that everyone can reap the benefits of the international instruction and discussion.



"It was quite an interesting experience, and I think that it was quite valuable to the students," says Mary Kay Fink, flute faculty and Cleveland Orchestra member. "They received immediate feedback on their auditions and sometimes suggestions on how to improve. It was beneficial for them to learn what musical concepts appear to be universal and how much of judging is also personal taste."

Stephen Geber, head of the cello department, also participated in the program. "I think the program is tremendous," he says. He spoke about the discussions among the different faculty members from around the world. "The basic technical aspects are pretty uniform from nation to nation—intonation, rhythm, sound quality—we're 100 percent in agreement. But there are some differences in stylistic interpretations. In the end, if there's a disagreement, it's a friendly one."

Gregory Howe, the director of the Distance Learning program, explains that the goal of GATP is to discover the differences in style from country to country, continent to continent. "A CIM player

would be prepared to go on and audition for the Royal Danish Symphony Orchestra after this program," he says. "The biggest challenge is finding a time that works in everyone's time zone!"

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AT A DISTANCE

At the end of the day, the Distance Learning program strives to make connections—both personal and technical. They connect third graders to CIM student musicians and percussion studios with masters in Shanghai. Whether students participate as an apprentice, a student tech or an ambassador for CIM during a global audition, they will expand their skill set and be prepared for today's multifaceted professional landscape. When the lines of communication are open and available, great discussion, learning and growth are inevitable.



PICTURED: From left to right: Leah Stevens (flute, Smith) is a Distance Learning apprentice and performer, and this is her second year in the program. Siyao Li (piano, Paik) is in her first year as an apprentice and technician. JVW Kriewall (bassoon, Clouser) is also in his first year as a performer and technician. Eun-Song Koh (violin, Sloman) has been a performer in the program for four years.