



Royal College of Music students push music education boundaries with Polycom®

Students at the *Royal College of Music* (RCM) are used to pushing creative boundaries when it comes to performing and composing music. Through the use of *Polycom's* video solutions and other technologies, the RCM is able to defy distance, break down classroom walls and create with video collaboration the classrooms of the future.

The Royal College of Music is a world-renowned music conservatoire in London, UK. It recently topped The Guardian League Table for the quality of its music education provision. The College offers training from the undergraduate to the doctoral level in all aspects of Western classical music including performance, theory, history, conducting, and composition, and serves as a center for research in musicology, performance practice, and music psychology. The College has numerous links with other educational colleges around the world located in Sydney, Singapore, the US, and throughout Europe.

The Royal College of Music first started using video collaboration technologies back in 2003, primarily using video to connect to the US and other parts of the world for masterclasses. Matt Parkin, Head of Studios, Royal College of Music believes, "Polycom video solutions are uniquely suited to distance education – and music education, in particular – because of groundbreaking technology like Music Mode." Music Mode, an exclusive feature of *Polycom® RealPresence® Group Series* solutions and developed in partnership with the Manhattan School of Music, faithfully reproduces live music picked up by microphones, so remote listeners can hear the true sound of instruments and voices produced by remote participants.

In addition to the day to day use of video in masterclasses and auditions, the students, now fully accepting of the use of video in performance, decided to take things to the next level through 'The Infinite Bridge' project. The Infinite Bridge is a theatrical show which tells the story of Talia, a girl who dreams, through visual poetry and specially-composed music and choreography, combined with state of the art technology, explored in an original narrative by award-winning writer Peter Cox.

The Infinite Bridge was originally created by two Masters students at the College, when they discovered a shared ambition to explore a new form of performance and story-telling. Their idea was to allow musicians and dancers in different locations to 'converse,' using digital technologies on stage, to reveal a multi-layered narrative to the audience.



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Matt Parkin, Head of Studios,
Royal College of Music



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Daily Use

- Distance education
- Knowledge sharing
- Collaboration
- Auditions



This ground-breaking, cross-disciplinary show aimed to defy physical distance and extend beyond commonly accepted concepts of theatre production, live performance, and stagecraft.

The show included three live video streams from different cities throughout Europe, powered by Polycom video collaboration solutions, including dancers in MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona), musicians in the Sibelius Academy (SibA) in Helsinki, playing traditional Finnish instruments, and a brass player at the Royal Danish Academy of Music (Copenhagen). All of them interacted with the performers and visuals on stage and were accompanied by a live orchestra at the Royal College of Music in London. With six months to prepare and only time for three full rehearsals, the use of video was essential not only in the performance itself but also during the development and preparation of the event.

“We felt we could take the risk with the use of technology within the performance because we are a college and open to experimenting. On the night the quality was excellent, it was seamless and the performance was a resounding success. The Nordic instruments that came over Music Mode via the Polycom link made it very special and plausible, and is something which using other technologies otherwise would not be possible,” commented the RCM’s Matt Parkin.

“The Royal College of Music are doing some really exciting work at the very borders of traditional music-collaboration technology,” says Jeff Rodman, a founder of Polycom. “We are thrilled to be involved in initiatives such as these, setting the tone of how music technologies are evolving and pushing the boundaries of education and collaboration. It really shows us what music education in the future could and likely will look like.”

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