Virtual lessons (FaceTime, iPhone, and MacBook) – Personal Experience on Piano Lessons

Kyu Butler, NCTM

*Pros
1. Convenient – students and teachers don’t need travel. Saves time and no snow days or weather-related cancellation of lessons
2. Great way to improve musicianship and self-sufficiency – back and forth playing between teacher and student. Students have to listen and do it by themselves
3. Students seemed to be more interested in the new way of teaching – no resistance from the students in moving to online teaching.
4. You get to see the student’s practice environment - piano, bench height, room, and piano tuning condition etc.

*Cons
1. Difficult to check music theory homework – it has to be sent to me before the lessons. Extra work and time needed.
2. Technical issues - delay, buffering, echo depending on the technology used. (headphone/earphone/airpods recommended)
3. Students can be distracted by siblings or family members
4. One-way communication - cannot play alongside with students, especially for rubato. I had to yell if I wanted to say something while the students were playing. Cannot do piano duet with students
5. Low sound quality - Dynamic changes, pedaling is also not so clear. I recommend use headphones.
6. Both have to own the same book - a student borrowed my book and it was very difficult to have lessons without it.
7. Can need an assistant (typically the parents), especially for younger or beginner students. Huge difference when one parent attended

*Suggestions for more serious virtual lessons with fancy equipment
1. You need good quality internet connection (high speed) and decent devices for both student and teacher
2. Sufficient lighting.
3. Stand/desk/chair
4. Forscore(App), IMSLP, Apple pen – send after the lesson for homework and reminder of things worked during lessons
5. Microphone
6. Cameras for side view and overhead view
7. Laptop (Mac works better than PC)

Feel free to contact Kyu for assistance at: kyuyoun_sim@yahoo.com or 650-278-6588.