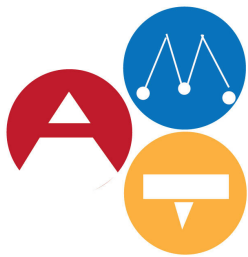# Live Streaming Performing Arts Using Social Media: Why, How & Best Practices

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Live streaming through social networks has become a growing trend for performing arts institutions interested in reaching larger audiences and expanding their online presence. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center on how cultural organizations use different kinds of technology platforms to engage audiences, 29% of participating organizations stated that they host online events, with 81% of them streaming videos and 86% claiming to have expanded their online events within the past several years.[1] Advancements in technology, increased usage of social media, and evolving trends in consumption of art challenge arts organizations to rethink how they present their content, and for many, live streaming has been a valuable and successful practice. The California Symphony[2] and Lincoln Center[3] are just two of many performing arts organizations that have succeeded in reaching larger audiences from utilizing live streaming technologies. A live stream, by definition, is "a live transmission of an event over the Internet."[4] There are countless ways to go about doing this, all of which come with unforeseen costs,

benefits, and legal hurdles. It is vital for performing arts organizations to be aware of why live streaming is important, what options are available, and what obstacles must be overcome to utilize live streaming in a successful and ethical way.

Over the past decade, audience participation and engagement in the arts has evolved tremendously in ways that are highly compatible with live streaming. In 2012, 71% of U.S. adults, or 167 million people, consumed art through electronic media at least once during the previous year.[5] Consumption included art forms such as music, ballet, theatre, and opera, and much of the consumption was done using TV, radio, internet, or a mobile device.[6] These use patterns show that participating in the arts through digital channels is a method of engagement that many people are choosing to do, and live streaming is one way to support this. By broadcasting performances through live streaming mediums, performing arts organizations align directly with the current trends of using electronic media to consume art.

[1] Kristin Thomson, "Arts Organizations and Digital Technologies," *Pew Research Center,* January 4, 2013, http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/01/04/arts-organizations-and-digital-technologies/.

[2] Aubrey Bergauer, "You Don't Have to be the New York Philharmonic to Stream Your Opening Night Concert on Facebook Live," *Medium,* October 6, 2016, https://medium.com/@AubreyBergauer/you-dont-have-to-be-the-new-york-philharmonic-to-stream-your-opening-night-concert-on-facebook-dd32f7ffb253.

[3] Agnes Teh Stubbs, "Livestreaming Cultural Events: How to Engage and Grow Your Community," *Vimeo,* https://livestream.com/blog/livestreaming-cultural-events.

[4] Oxford Dictionaries, "Definition of Live Stream in US English," accessed December 6, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/live_stream.

[5] National Endowment for the Arts, "How a Nation Engages With Art," September 2013. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/highlights-from-2012-sppa-revised-oct-2015.pdf.

[6] Ibid.

Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Participated in the Arts at Least Once During a 12-Month Period, by General Category of Participation (2012)

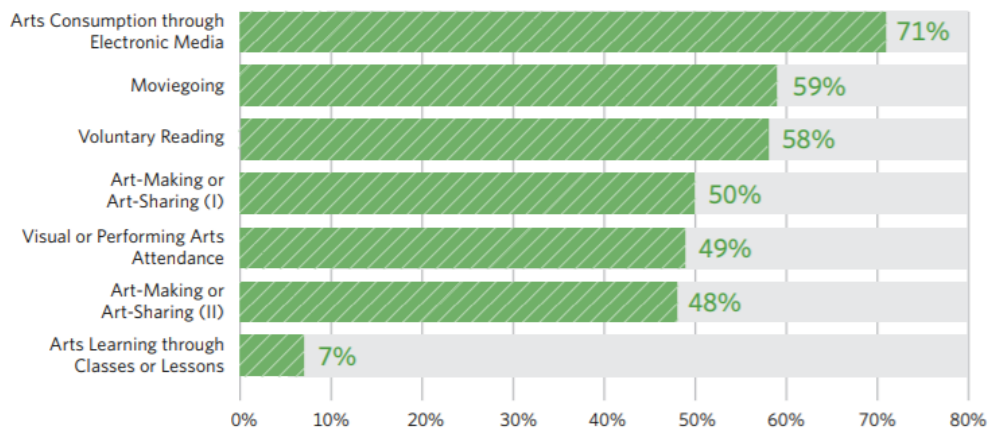|	
Arts Consumption through Electronic Media	71%
Moviegoing	59%
Voluntary Reading	58%
Art-Making or Art-Sharing (I)	50%
Visual or Performing Arts Attendance	49%
Art-Making or Art-Sharing (II)	48%
Arts Learning through Classes or Lessons	7%

Figure 1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Participated in the Arts at Least Once During a 12-Month Period. Source: "When the Going Gets Tough," National Endowment for the Arts.

In addition to aligning with current trends in arts participation, live streaming removes barriers to access the performing arts. In 2015, the most commonly reported barrier to attending arts events was time.[7] Live streaming overcomes this barrier by eliminating time constraints associated with traveling, eating meals, and devoting the entire performance time to being at the actual performance. With live streaming, audience members can watch performances from any place and do not have to devote any time to traveling to the performance location. Additionally, audiences who utilize live streaming do not have to give up other activities of their day in order to view a performance, meaning audiences can engage with performances without it disrupting their plans.

Other barriers to attending arts events include high costs, difficulty in traveling, and not having someone to attend with.[8] Once again, live streaming confronts these barriers in that it is of little to no cost for audiences, does not involve traveling, and can easily be enjoyed independently. For any arts organization wanting to reach potentially interested audiences, live streaming is structured in a way that removes barriers that might prevent audiences from becoming involved with your organization.

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[7] National Endowment for the Arts, "When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance," January 2015,

https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/when-going-gets-tough-revised2.pdf.
[8] Ibid.

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Could not find the time, including due to work	47.3%
Costs too much	38.3%
Too difficult to get there, including difficulty due to physical handicap or illness	36.6%
Could not find anyone to go with	21.6%
Did not want to go to that location	9.0%
Programs or events were not of interest	6.6%

Figure 2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested In, But Did Not Attend the Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Barriers. Source: "When the Going Gets Tough," National Endowment for the Arts.

Live Streaming Platforms

There are an array of social media live streaming platforms available which cater to the needs of music-based, or any performing arts institution. Some of the most common platforms include Facebook Live, Periscope, YouTube Live, and Livestream.

Facebook Live

Facebook Live is one of the easiest and quickest ways to live stream performances and reach millions of people. As of September 2018, Facebook had 1.49 billion daily active users and 2.27 billion monthly active users.[9] Even though it may not necessarily be an arts organization's aim to reach that many people, the fact that one's content can be made available to such a large sum of people is an exciting venture. Additionally, nearly 68% of U.S.

adults are Facebook users, which is higher than every other social media platform aside from YouTube.[10] Therefore, simply having a Facebook presence is a step toward being accessible to a wide audience. Features of Facebook Live include:

- **Simple and easy to use**: requires a Facebook profile, a device with a camera, and connection to WiFi; live stream starts by clicking a button.
- **Access to a huge portion of the population**: billions of people use Facebook on a daily basis.
- **Ability to interact with audience members during the live stream:** viewers can comment, "like", and share live streams as they are happening, and performing arts organizations can communicate back with them. Followers of an organization can also receive notification when a live stream is going to happen.
- **Ability to tag artists, locations, other organizations:** tagging increases the ways in which viewers can find the stream.
- **Option to fundraise through the video:** For registered Facebook nonprofits, Facebook includes a donate button directly on live streamed videos.
- **Options for saving streams:** live streams will automatically be saved

[9] Facebook Newsroom, "Company Info," accessed December 6,' 2018, https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/.

[10] Aaron Smith, "Social Media Use in 2018," *Pew Research Center,* March 1, 2018. http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/.

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to the Facebook profile that is streaming it for future use, but can be deleted at any time.

- **Little to no cost:** the Facebook Live feature does not have any costs.

Periscope

Periscope is an app connected through Twitter that allows people to live stream through a phone or tablet. Like Facebook Live, it is simple to use and is a great option for performing arts organizations seeking to connect with audiences through social media. As of 2017, Periscope had 1.9 million daily active users and 200 million broadcasts.[11] Some of its key features include:

- **Simple and easy to use:** requires an account; live streams start by clicking a button.
- **Interactive user experience:** includes a chat function that allows for comments while watching the video.
- **A map**: allows users to see videos being broadcast around the world and search by location or event.
- **Videos are saved for 24 hours**: can be downloaded to a camera roll for future use.
- **Privacy options:** control who has access to your profile and what content is shown to you.

- **Connect with Twitter followers**: notify Twitter followers when you do a broadcast through Periscope.

YouTube

YouTube has offered a live streaming feature for many years and is continuing to upgrade its features to make the experience easier and more instantaneous. Live streaming on YouTube now requires just a click of a button, but users must be "verified" by the company before they are granted permission to live stream; a process that can take up to 24 hours. As of 2018, live streaming through YouTube no longer required an encoder, making it easier for more people to stream. Live streaming can be done through the YouTube app or the website. Key features include:

- **A chat feature:** set up next to the video that shows up live and on replay.
- **Location tags:** let users know of your location.
- **Super Chats for channels using IFTTT:** IFTTT is a third party web-based service that connects different apps, services, and devices; Super Chat is a feature that allows viewers to have their comments highlighted and featured: you can use these features to enhance audience interaction.
- **Automatic captioning for broadcasts in English:** include

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[11] Salman Aslam, "Periscope by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics, and Fun Facts," *Omnicore,* accessed December 6, 2018,

https://www.omnicoreagency.com/periscope-statistics/.

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English captioning to enhance accessibility and refine how viewers experience your video.

- **No encoder required for Google Chrome:** no extra software required besides the browser.

Livestream

Livestream is a live streaming platform with the mission to "enable organizations to share experiences through live video, unlocking a world where every event is available live online."[12] The platform has over 40 million viewers each month and over 1 million producers with recurring events. It offers a variety of platforms at different costs, all of which differ in their exact features. Some of the overlapping features include:

- **Reach audiences across multiple social platforms**: including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Twitch.
- **High-quality videos:** offers high-quality video tools.
- **Embed streams onto your website:** ability to show live streams directly on your website.
- **Customizations and privacy:** secure viewership with domain restrictions and password protection.
- **Audience interaction:** real-time chat feature and donation integration.

- **Monetization and lead capture:** option to include a paywall and gather data from users.
- **Cross-platform analytics:** obtain data on viewership from all platforms that your video is embedded.
- **Different plans to choose from:** premium and enterprise plans, which are billed annually or monthly starting at $75 per month; option for free trial of enterprise plan.

These are only a few of the platforms available to arts organizations for live streaming services. Their features range from simple with barely any costs to more complex with better quality and features. Choosing a platform to use depends on the goals, budget, and level of usage an organization plans to have with live streaming.

Legal Issues

Copyright

One of the many legal issues to consider when live streaming is copyright. Copyright is a form of protection by law to the creators of literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and other intellectual original works that grants the owner the power to authorize reproduction and distribution of the work.[13] Before live streaming a performance, an organization must obtain permission from the copyright owner, if the work is still subject to copyright.

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[12] Livestream, "What is Livestream?" accessed December 6, 2018. https://livestream.com/about.

[13] Artists Rights Society, "Copyright Basics," Info, accessed December 8, 2018, https://www.arsny.com/copyright-basics/.

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Determining what has a copyright and what is public domain can be complicated, but due diligence is very important. Most works that were created, published, or registered on or after January 1, 1978 are subject to copyright law, as are a significant portion of works published prior to this date.

Many live streaming platforms have Terms of Service that prohibit violation of copyright law, meaning the user would be held accountable for any violations, not the platform. It is also important for arts organizations to consider who will be included in a live stream video, as videos that are used for promotional or commercial purposes must have permission from the individuals included in the video.[14] This means that if audience members are included without giving consent, they have the right to sue your organization.

If permission to use copyright material is granted and all individuals included in the stream are consenting, then you have likely met your legal requirements. The risk with live streaming, though, is that because video is published in real time it therefore runs the risk of including unintended copyright violations. Unintended copyright violations can include unknowingly featuring a person in a livestream who has not granted permission to be filmed, or making last minute changes to a performance that presents material on

the live stream without obtaining permission from the copyright owner. Overall, it is crucial to have a detailed plan for what to include in both performances and live streamed materials to ensure copyright laws are properly followed.
Unions

Unions present another legal consideration in live streaming performances. Union contracts include many regulations and restrictions to protect performers and ensure they are fairly treated, so negotiations about including them in videos are necessary when live streaming a performance. This process can be very detailed and time consuming. For example, after gaining the rights to present an opera, an opera company will have to negotiate with unions for the singers, musicians, and recording artists to legally live stream the production.[15] These negotiations and restrictions are vital in ensuring that all who are involved in a production are consenting to being live streamed and are compensated appropriately.

To make the most of live streaming and to execute it ethically, arts organizations must plan in advance to gain legal rights when necessary, obtain permission from all who are involved, and negotiate fair compensations.

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[14] Mark Dumschat, "How to Legally Live Stream Your Event," *Eventmobi,* November 11, 2015, https://www.eventmobi.com/blog/how-to-legally-live-stream-your-event/.
[15] Technology in the Arts, "Social Media, Video Footage, and the Law: What Performing Arts Managers Need to Know,"https://namp.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/documents/conference/2010/Social_Media_Video_Footage_and%20the_Law.pdf.

Case Examples of Music Institutions Using Live Streams

Lincoln Center

Jazz at Lincoln Center has found great success in live streaming their content since 2012 through the Livestream platform and Facebook Live. In 2017, four million people watched Lincoln Center's live broadcasts, and adding Facebook Live to their offerings increased their total views by 818% as compared to using just Livestream.[16] Using live streaming services increased the amount of people Lincoln Center was able to reach, thus allowing the organization to connect with larger audiences and expand their presence. The organization's Director of Audience Development states that "Livestream has strengthened Lincoln Center's brand by helping us connect with people all over the world" and that "we're four years into presenting free concert livestreams and our ticket sales have only increased during that time." [17] For Lincoln Center, live streaming meant not only reaching more audiences, but also expanding their in-person audiences and developing a stronger brand for the organization. By offering live streams, Lincoln Center has successfully developed their audiences, eliminated barriers to entry, and strengthened their identity.

Figure 3. Jazz at Lincoln Center Live Stream. Source: Jazz.org

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[16] Agnes Teh Stubbs, "Livestreaming Cultural Events: How to Engage and Grow Your Community," *Vimeo,* https://livestream.com/blog/livestreaming-cultural-events.
[17] Ibid.

California Symphony

Successful live streaming can be accomplished no matter the size of the organization. The California Symphony is a relatively small orchestra with a budget of about $1.2 million[18] and a venue with 800 seats.[19] The organization used Facebook Live to kick off their 30th season and found great success through the endeavor. The broadcast was planned only a month in advance, the cost was $2,515.88 (most of which went toward orchestra costs), and they reached 5,200 people (when their concert hall only seats 800).[20] They were also able to obtain audience data and incorporate engagement strategies that would not have been possible without the live stream. With Facebook Live, the California Symphony could define target audiences to send future ads to based on their distance from the organization or the amount of time they spent viewing the live stream and had raffles at their on-site stream for concert tickets and certificates to food trucks. They also provided the opportunity to join their mailing list, thus growing their patron base.

The California Symphony successfully executed a live streamed concert that reached more people than their concert hall was capable of, developed and engaged with new and old audience members, and did so at a low cost with a short planning period. Live streaming can be done in simple or extravagant ways, both of which reap benefits for the organization. While Lincoln Center and the California Symphony are both music organizations, they are amongst the thousands of performing arts organizations of all forms that have found success with live streaming.
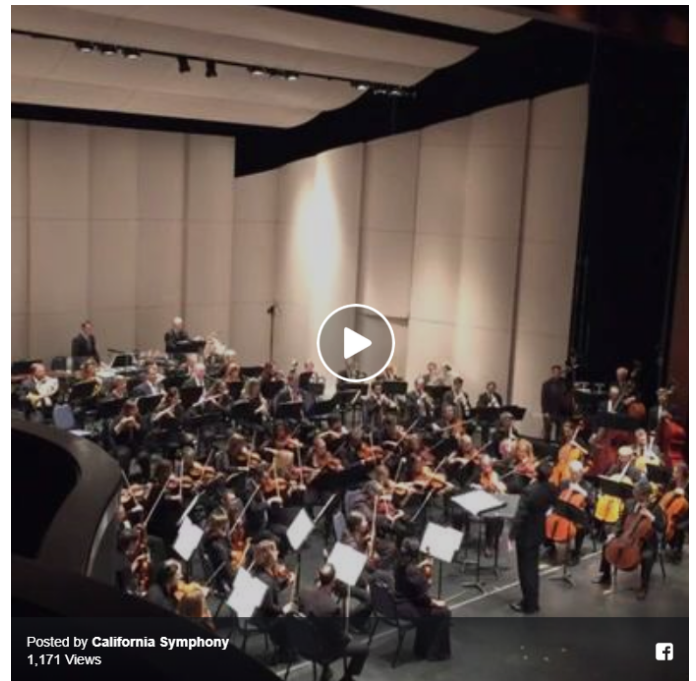

Figure 4. California Symphony Live Stream. Source: *Medium: You Don't Have to be the New York Philharmonic to Stream Your Opening Night Concert on Facebook Live*

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[18] Guidestar, "2016 Form 990 California Symphony Inc.," accessed March 21, 2019. https://pdf.guidestar.org/PDF_Images/2017/943/02 4/2017-943024038-0ed84c71-9.pdf.

[19] California Symphony, "Before You're Here," accessed March 21, 2019, https://www.californiasymphony.org/plan-your-visit/before-youre-here/.

[20] Aubrey Bergauer, "You Don't Have to be the New York Philharmonic to Stream Your Opening Night Concert on Facebook Live," *Medium,* October 6, 2016, https://medium.com/@AubreyBergauer/you-dont-have-to-be-the-new-york-philharmonic-to-stream-your-opening-night-concert-on-facebook-dd32f7ffb253.

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Conclusion

Live streaming is a great tool for performing arts organizations interested in reaching more people and finding new ways to present their content. With current trends in art consumption, technology advancement, and barriers to the arts, live streaming provides a valuable option for performing arts organizations to maintain relevancy and raise awareness for what they have to offer.

If considering live streaming, it is important to research all the platforms that are available and choose one that fits your organization's mission, organizational strategy, and budget. There are several low cost, easy-to-use platforms, and others that offer higher quality tools at a higher price. The level at which an organization wishes to utilize live streaming will determine which platform to use, but much can be accomplished with all types of platforms. Although live streaming can be very simple and effective, there are risks and barriers to consider in order to utilize the technology properly. Copyright laws and union regulations can interfere with live streaming services, so proper planning and acquisition of necessary permissions is vital in obtaining the benefits that come with using live streams.

Live streaming offers an array of benefits to performing arts organizations which they can not afford to pass up. Using live streaming technology, to any extent, has great potential to transform the way audiences and arts organizations interact, supporting a future of accessible performances made available to a diverse range of audiences.

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