



# Sapphire Skye Toth

MUSIC COMPOSITIONS

## Recording from home:

In the 2020's, it's an essential skill. Music students attending college/conservatory when the world first went on lock-down are perhaps best equipped in this area, and in many areas of this industry the world is catching up. In the Orchestral world, music and personnel directors are faced with the question of if doing digital first round auditions can help support DEI efforts. In this document I'll go over two of the resources that I've found **extremely** helpful for recording music from home on a budget and how to use them. Most modern phones at least have a MEMS (Micro Electro-Mechanical System) Microphone enabling most people to make a quality recording from home.



## Live from Zoom:

Zoom is nobody's favorite app - however it is an awesome tool. I myself use it to record my podcast "Chatting with Creators" with artists from all over the world. Before each interview, I often send my guests the following instructions (these are what I mentioned at The League of American Orchestras session):

1. If the place where you study/teach/record/practice will work, that is best – it should be a quiet, private, well-lit place. If it doesn't have plenty of natural light, consider shining a soft sidelight on you rather than an overhead light.
2. Avoid sitting with your back to a glass door/window because it casts a shadow on your face.
3. Sound is very important. If possible use an external microphone (your headphones may have a microphone). The microphone on your computer may be good enough, but it's great to have options.
4. Make sure your computer camera/phone camera is sitting at eye level.
5. Wear clothes that you'd be comfortable with and authentic in. No logos should be visible unless directly associated with your work

Please follow these steps to guarantee the highest quality video/audio on Zoom:

### COMPUTER

Step 1: Go to Zoom's settings menu

Step 2: Click on the Video option in the left panel

Step 3: Select 16:9 (Widescreen)

Step 4: Select the option for Touch Up My Appearance.

Step 5: Select the option "Enable HD"

Step 6: Click on the Audio option in the left panel

Step 7: Make sure that Speaker and Microphone have the correct options selected. Test both and select, "Automatically adjust microphone volume"

Step Eight: Suppress background noise, select "High"

Step 8: Under "Music and Professional Audio" select, "Show in-meeting option to enable "Original Sound" and select "High-fidelity music mode" and "echo cancellation"

\*Note: once original sound is selected ensure that your mic is not covered by anything. If you are on your phone it is likely that your microphone is at the bottom of your device. Make sure that it is not pointed into your music stand. Microphones on iPhone XR and later are located on the back of the phone.

More about high fidelity music mode can be found [here](#). Notably, Zoom recommends using a high-quality usb mic. While this is helpful, the iPhone's compressor mic or even the microphones found in ear buds or airpods work wonders.

### Sent from my iPhone:

Sometimes it isn't practical to do digital auditions live. That's okay! Garage Band is a great free resource available on apple devices to help musicians submit auditions. My experience as an Apple user (and having attended an Apple college) has had good results in this area. n-Track Studio Music DAW is a free app available on Android and Microsoft devices that also yields positive results.

Using Garage Band allows musicians to not only record sounds but to adjust their settings as necessary. I feel that [the directions on Apple's Website](#) are very clear, but feel free to contact me if additional clarification is needed.



**Let's be Real:** These apps are not perfect solutions to supporting DEI efforts. These mics can be damaged over time and many people aren't tech savvy enough to notice or in an economic position to get them fixed. There's also always going to be the fact that some people have access to recording studios, higher quality equipment, the time/skills and/or money to get things mixed etc. etc. etc.

What these tools do is give musicians a tool to help level the playing field and often help them showcase their ingenuity.

### What comes next:

My time at The League of American Orchestras conference showed me that there is still a lot of work and education that needs to be done in this area to help ensembles find the best musicians possible regardless of their backgrounds. So, consider this to be Newsletter No. 1. By subscribing to this email list you'll not only get updates about my work as a composer but monthly newsletters where I expand and teach about the above resources. I'll also be opening myself up to work as a remote consultant for groups that need more than this newsletter or simply need the information faster. This document is just the beginning - as I only had 3 days to pull all my stuff together as I prepare to move across state lines!

Next month I'll address step-by-step (in more detail than above) how I set up my equipment for interviews and auditions.



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