

PIANO BREAK RECORDING GUIDE

ADAPTED, WITH PERMISSION, FROM THE [GROUPMUSE LIVESTREAM TECH GUIDE](#)

Whether you're new to audio/video gear, or looking to upgrade your current setup to improve your recording quality, this guide can help with tips and equipment recommendations. *Audio quality matters a lot to listeners* and we want to help you engage and move your audiences when sharing your music online.

ENTRY LEVEL SETUP

Don't have a lot of money to create a home studio? Here are some economical options for boosting audio and video quality.

COMPUTER

Desktop/laptop, or mobile device, relatively new, with at least 10 gigabytes of free space. Check [this article](#) to make sure you have enough space free on your device.

VIDEO

Laptop webcam, or a cell phone with a good camera. While you can use your laptop's webcam as a video source, most mobile devices actually have better cameras than the average laptop. If you'd like to use your mobile device, the following apps convert your cell phone camera to a webcam (via wireless or USB cable):

- Epoc Cam for Mac and PC, www.kinoni.com
- OBS Camera for Mac, obs.camera

A tripod is the fastest and most convenient way to get your camera or device positioned correctly. The MV88+ Shure Video Kit comes with a tripod, but otherwise, you may want to invest in one to make set-up easier. Luckily, you can get a decent tripod inexpensively.

AUDIO

Microphone that connects to your laptop or mobile device. USB mics are easy to use, and are advanced enough to provide decent audio quality for capturing classical music. The Shure MV88+ Video Kit is also a great one-stop shop. Recommended USB microphones:

- [Blue Yeti X \(\\$170\)](#)
- [MV88+ Video Kit \(\\$249\)](#)
- [Apogee MiC+ \(\\$260\)](#)
- [Apogee HypeMiC \(\\$350\)](#)

MID-LEVEL SETUP

If you'd like to step up your game, add an external microphone & an audio interface. You can also upgrade to a DSLR camera for video.

COMPUTER

A relatively powerful computer/laptop.

VIDEO

■ **DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex)** cameras have high-quality sensors and optics; they've traditionally been used for still photography. But they're a great image source for your broadcast/recording, as long as you get one with [clean hdmi output](#). Recommended:

- [Panasonic GH7 with included lens \(\\$498\)](#)
- [Sony a5100 with included lens \(\\$550\)](#)

■ **Capture card** to connect the camera to the computer. These might be difficult to find at present due to high demand. Recommended:

- [Elgato Camlink \(\\$130\)](#)
- [Razer Ripsaw \(\\$160\)](#)

■ **Cabling.** You'll need **HDMI and USB connector cables**. Optional: a dummy battery, used to prolong camera battery life if it's not connected to a power source.

AUDIO

■ **USB audio interface.** This device allows you to connect any XLR microphone to your computer. In addition to allowing a vast number of microphones to be used, the interface itself offers improved sound quality and allows you to connect multiple microphones. Some recommendations:

- [Focusrite Scarlett Series, \(\\$100-\\$400, depending on inputs\)](#)
- [Apogee One](#) or [Duet \(\\$275 - \\$649\)](#)

■ **Microphone.** There are too many to list, but we recommend you research the best microphone for your instrument. [Rode](#) and [DPA](#) microphones are considered reliable options at this price point.

PROFESSIONAL SETUP

Making another jump up in price and quality, one can offer a truly professional audio and visual experience.

COMPUTER

A relatively powerful computer/laptop to broadcast your audio and video via [OBS](#) to Youtube.

VIDEO

■ **Camera.** Note that these require more gear (lenses, rigs, stands, etc.) to be fully functional.

- [Panasonic GH5 \(\\$1,398\)](#)
- [Black Magic Pocket 4K \(\\$1,295\)](#)
- [Nikon Z6 \(\\$2,397\)](#)

■ **Capture Device.** The [Atem Mini and Atem Mini Pro](#) are two handy devices that connect multiple camera sources to your computer. You can switch between the camera sources for a TV studio feel. The Mini Pro even allows you to stream directly from your audio and video sources to YouTube Live, bypassing your computer.

AUDIO

■ **Audio interfaces:**

- [RME Babyface Pro FS \(\\$899\)](#)
- [Sound Devices MixPre III \(\\$649\) and VI \(\\$885\)](#)

■ **Microphone.** There are too many to list. Powered Ribbon mics are a bit of a new phenomenon that offer incredible sound for classical instruments: [AEA](#) & [Royer](#) are highly recommended.

■ **Audio FX.** Adding a subtle reverb effect to your performance can help add presence and depth to your instrument, regardless of the acoustics of your space. Conveniently, the OBS app ([here's the link again](#)) is able to accommodate VSL reverb plugins (such as the free [Tal-Reverb-4](#)).

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

In order to make your streaming concert experience feel special, please consider the environment you're performing in. If you've taken the time, money and care to acquire great audio and video equipment, make sure you apply that same care and thought to the visual element of your performance!

■ **Experiment with the lighting in your home**, or purchase equipment to create a [key light setup](#).

■ A simple way to improve your presentation is to **use a black backdrop**. You can simply hang a black sheet behind you, or purchase more professional gear [such as this](#).

■ Taking it further, you could **create a moody scene** with the [Rembrandt lighting technique](#), to make your setting feel more evocative and cinematic.

■ Going along with this theme, **you could see yourself as an 'actor-musician,'** where your own dress and visual appearance is an extension of the atmosphere of your scene. Have fun expressing yourself, and reinvent the concept and meaning of 'performance attire!'