



# The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts



TANDBERG fosters a world of music education without borders.

Tucked into the Wanchai district of Hong Kong, amidst a residential neighborhood, swanky hotels and rustic old buildings, the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (the Academy) is much like its surroundings, embracing both Western and Chinese traditions.

Over its 24-year history, the Academy has taken strategic steps to carve out a leadership role in imparting and promoting arts education. Whether in dance, drama, film/TV, music, Chinese opera or theatre and entertainment arts, it believes in music education without borders.

In delivering on its vision, the Academy constantly seeks opportunities to work with other international institutions. The Juilliard School in New York City, with which the Academy organizes a series of international masterclasses, counts amongst the many institutional partnerships the Academy has forged. Others include the Royal College of Music (RCM) in London, Brooklyn Academy of Music (New York), Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing) and National Institute of Dramatic Arts (Australia).

The pursuit of extending education beyond its four walls has seen the Academy conduct masterclasses in music and other subject areas with overseas experts, as well as participation in international conferences and symposia.

“To bring expertise to the point of need, that is, to have the right people at the right time, is imperative,” says Phil Soden, Associate Director of the Academy. “You might say this vision of music education without borders started really with [Grammy Award-winning violinist] Pinchas Zuckerman. He was a pioneer in using videoconferencing to keep in touch with his students while touring the world. Early one morning many years ago, when he was in Hong Kong, Zuckerman took a party of staff and students – it was a primitive set up of a videoconference room back then – and gave a masterclass to his students back in Brooklyn, New York.”

Like Zuckerman, the Academy believes in improving collaboration and communication with peer institutions. To achieve this, the Academy decided to adopt videoconferencing in its pedagogic methodology.

Early attempts at using videoconferencing systems to conduct classes and conferences however had been unsuccessful as the video resolution was not clear and audio quality crucial in music classes was less than ideal.

All this changed at one lecture exchange conducted at the RCM where Benedict Cruft, the Academy’s Dean of Music, was delivering a lecture to staff and students.

Cruft was playing the violin and had a sheet music on PowerPoint projected onto the screen. “I had a facsimile of Bach’s original manuscript on my laptop and was able to blow up particular portions of it and say why it should be played in a particular way,” recalls Cruft. “I thought the students benefited from it; and I believe these teaching methods will continue to develop as information spreads around the world.”

The success of that particular event prompted the Academy to look again at purchasing a videoconference system.

“TANDBERG, which the RCM was using, seemed like the one [solution] that was compatible with the systems used by the other participants in that symposium,” says Soden. “Our choice of system was obviously based on the success of that event.”

## BUSINESS ISSUES:

Delivering and sharing performing arts education beyond borders with other leading international institutions.

## SOLUTIONS:

TANDBERG Profile  
Maestro MXP

## RESULTS:

Being able to conduct a series of masterclasses, share and exchange expertise with international institutions around the globe.

## FUTURE:

Expanding and extending the use of video communication for delivering various arts classes to more students within the campus and also with overseas counterparts.



## TANDBERG Profile Maestro MXP



Built on the TANDBERG 6000 MXP Codec, the Maestro includes the TANDBERG Precision High Definition Camera and CD-quality, stereo audio. The CD-quality, stereo audio and the Digital NAM are enhanced by an optional satellite speaker system to ensure a superior audio experience.

Today the Academy uses the TANDBERG Profile Maestro MXP system which is equipped with delivering high audio quality that meets their needs. All that was needed to get the system up and running were a few hours' training.

The adoption of video has made a marked difference to how the Academy teaches its students and recruits staff.

"Audio quality is paramount for music classes and TANDBERG has a reputation for focusing on audio quality," says Cruft.

"Subtle changes or nuances in violin techniques, for example, produce starkly different sounds. In masterclasses, the teacher must be able to hear the way the student plays, and provide immediate feedback. To have a videoconference system that picks up on these nuances, regardless of where teacher or students are in the world, is wonderful. And because the Academy's videoconference system is now compatible with those the RCM and Brooklyn Academy use, we no longer have signal drop outs or incompatibility issues."

Since adopting video, the Academy has found that the benefits far outweigh the costs.

In return for the investment into the video system and Internet connection, the Academy has been able to conduct music masterclasses and participate in international symposia from within one of their performance halls, which boasts a large seating capacity and better acoustics. As a result, these music classes and symposia are able to reach a much wider audience of students.

Another area from which the Academy has benefited is the recruitment of foreign academic staff. Currently almost half of its 60 full-time and 250 part-time academic staff are non-locals from the U.K, U.S and Australia. And owing to the nature of the job, face-to-face interviews are a necessity. Now the management has the flexibility to arrange and conduct interviews through video which saves time and money.

Cruft sees videoconferencing playing a bigger role in becoming the medium for natural face-to-face communication: "Being able to interview prospective teachers without having to fly them over to Hong Kong will result in considerable cost-savings. Sometimes if there were a lot of applicants from one particular country, the Academy would fly one of its deans over to interview them in one go. Now with video, we will no longer have to make the trip halfway across the world."

The Academy is next exploring to conduct lectures via video linking its Wanchai campus to its second campus in Pok Fu Lam which is a 15 to 20 minutes bus ride away. This will allow an increase in capacity for the more sought-after lectures and make it more convenient for students attending lessons at the respective campus.

The Academy's vision of music education beyond its four walls is indeed coming to life with the implementation of the new system.

"Videoconferencing allows us to draw on expertise in other parts of the world we wouldn't otherwise be able to," says Soden.

"For example, it is amazing being able to tap on international designers, cinematographers and directors for an hour or two between their shooting schedules without having them get on a plane and spend three days for that hour-long lecture. Our students now have the opportunity to connect with these people from all over the world, and with that the opportunity to learn. Videoconferencing certainly has allowed us to bring them face to face naturally."

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Mr. Phil Soden  
Associate Director of  
HKAPA