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Journal of the Society for American Music (2015), Volume 9, Number 3, pp. 375–378.
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Spotify. https://www.spotify.com/. Retrieved 21 January 2015

The online streaming of audiovisual material is on course to become the primary way by which consumers receive music, film, and television. The medium is becoming increasingly more difficult to resist as the costs go down and the variety of material available goes up. For access to music, among the most popular of these platforms is Spotify. Created in Sweden in 2006, this online streaming site now has more than fifty million users throughout the Americas, Europe, and Australasia. It is usually as part of the culture industry that streaming media platforms are discussed in academia, but Spotify is an excellent tool for teaching and research in music education, as well as for personal enjoyment. In this review I will highlight some of the program's benefits and drawbacks, and offer some ideas of how it can be effectively used in the classroom.

Spotify is a database to which record labels and individual artists can submit their material, whether they be million-record selling superstars or amateurs hoping to break into the market. The consumer can then stream this material over the internet, and the submitters are paid per stream. The model is radio, but in the Spotify system the consumer chooses what is played, rather than a DJ or computer algorithm. While Naxos Music Library, which many music educators use already (and to which I'll return later) is a "classical music" library with a few extensions into jazz and musical theater, Spotify features music from all genres. Most of the major record companies, such as Universal and Warner Music, and many smaller ones, have put their entire back catalogs onto Spotify. Although used primarily as a pop-streaming service, it has nearly all of the classical material that can be found on Naxos, as well as any other genre for which one would care to search. Claiming to have more than thirty million tracks in its database, Spotify is one of the largest music streaming services available. That makes it indispensable for studying and teaching American music in all of its variety, as the material is not limited by the artificial boundary between "pop" and "art" music. Because of this variety, Spotify is more democratic than other such programs (such as Naxos) in its amassing of cultural production. It should be said, though, that because Spotify is a commercial platform, anything on it needs to have been put there by a record company or an individual with the intention of earning a profit. That is, unless an enterprising individual were to collate and submit them, Spotify is not the place to find rare or obscure recordings; its founders are businessmen, not curators, so it is unlikely to replace such resources as the Library of Congress National Jukebox.

Spotify has an easy-to-use playlist function, and it is this feature, combined with the vast amount of material available, that makes it so compelling a resource for teaching. I make a playlist for each lecture, consisting of the music played during the lecture and sometimes some related music. Sharing these with the students via a link

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196315000280 Published online by Cambridge University Press

on the course learning management system page (e.g., Blackboard) means that they have easy access to that music and can listen to it again, or can hear whole pieces when class time only permits excerpts. Nearly all of the music from the various textbook CD anthologies, particularly the Norton anthologies, is now available on Spotify, and for anything not there, an alternative can be found. While some instructors might prefer students to have a physical object, the comparative cost of those CDs ($100 or more) and Spotify (free if you don't mind the ads and slightly lower sound quality) make the site financially viable. Even the full subscription cost of $9.99 a month (students are offered a 50% discount) is reasonable considering the amount of music to which one gains access.

Many in the music industry have been asking how Spotify is sustainable at such low monthly prices. The company has been rather quiet about its business model but claims that the ads on the free version, combined with subscription costs, keep it profitable. The way it pays out royalties is also quite mysterious, but the company claims that artists and/or producers are paid approximately $0.006 to $.0084 per stream.[1] For example, "Something's Coming" from the *West Side Story* film soundtrack has been streamed 238,559 times, which calculates to around $1650 for Sony Records. Most albums are not nearly as popular, so clearly most artists do not stand to make much money from Spotify. But it seems an increasingly important way to market one's music. Musicians such as Taylor Swift who decide to forgo Spotify do so to considerable backlash from fans and the press, which attests to the popularity of the site.

Naxos Music Library is the most frequently used resource in universities for art music, and it has some distinct advantages over Spotify for these genres. The Naxos search function is superior because one can search for composer, artist, and title separately rather than aggregated, and it is more effectively catalogued (although not foolproof). For a project on the history of recordings of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, for example, on Naxos it is easy to find all available recordings of the musical. On Spotify, a search for "West Side Story" results in full recordings, excerpts, individual songs, and large amounts of material that has nothing to do with it. The first result to appear on Spotify is a song called "West Side Story" by late-90s pop group Lyte Funkie Ones. It is followed by "America" from the film soundtrack, then another "West Side Story" by the artist Dela. Because of the vagaries of its search function, separating wheat from chaff can be very difficult and frustrating on Spotify. If, however, you know what you are looking for, Spotify has a major advantage over Naxos: it is fast. To see exactly how much faster I asked which program could find the original Broadway cast recording of *West Side Story* more quickly. From opening the respective programs on my computer, searching "West Side Story," finding the correct version, and starting the Prologue playing, Spotify took 32 seconds, while Naxos took 102. With both programs already open, a search for Simon Rattle's recording of *Wonderful Town* took Spotify 15 seconds, Naxos 34.

Although both services can provide a list of albums including composer and title, Spotify also provides pictures of the album covers, making it much easier to

[1] Articles on Spotify and royalties are available at https://futureofmusic.org/tags/spotify.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196315000280 Published online by Cambridge University Press

find what you want if you know what the album looks like. This provision means valuable time can be saved in a lecture or seminar. The sound quality of the two is comparable, but perhaps slightly crisper on Spotify. Both, of course, use highly compressed digital sound, which serious audiophiles will not be happy with in principle, but for convenience, it certainly beats carrying around a pile of CDs or LPs. Spotify also offers a mobile app (free with the $9.99 premium subscription). It works much the same way as the computer version, but with everything on your smart phone or tablet. Playlists and saved albums are synced across devices, meaning that all of the music needed to play in a lecture or conference presentation can be in one's pocket, with an audio jack being the only other equipment needed, a great benefit when lectern computers are not cooperating. Naxos also has a mobile app, but it currently lacks the functionality and search options of the full version. The mobile version of Spotify even has an offline function, where tracks can be temporarily downloaded to be listened to offline. This is excellent for classrooms without wifi (as long as instructors load the music beforehand).

Although Spotify is comprehensive and quick, it has one serious drawback if used in an academic context: its near-complete lack of discographical information. For example, if one were searching for Ella Fitzgerald, at first glance a user would excitedly find her artist page with 112 albums and sixty-three compilations. The so-called "compilations" are, unfortunately, mostly assemblies of public-domain material by people hoping to make a quick buck. More power to them, but knowing the provenance of the material in these compilations is impossible (unless you already know Fitzgerald's oeuvre and can recognize the recordings). Of course it is extremely important when studying the history of jazz to know the date and location of a recording, as well as the personnel involved, but Spotify's compilations give none of this information. The albums are little better; although Fitzgerald's earlier albums do have their correct date (*Ella at Duke's Place*, 1965), remasterings and special editions give only the copyright date for the new version (a student might well think that the recently-released *Twelve Nights in Hollywood* set was originally recorded in 2009).

Although a source to be used with caution in research, Spotify is excellent for teaching music performed by Fitzgerald because users can find nearly everything she ever recorded and can play it in class with great ease. Assigning students a task involving their own searching for Fitzgerald's recordings, however, would be dangerous, unless they had previous training in critical discography. At the very least students would need to corroborate their findings against the available discographies, which themselves can be difficult to come by and require much foreknowledge about jazz history to be used effectively. If educators are willing to curate playlists for their students, however, the benefits can be more easily reaped.

Aside from its often inaccurate search function and its lack of discographical documentation, Spotify is an invaluable resource. In addition, many students come to university already knowing how to use Spotify, so by featuring familiar technology in class, a professor can help them bridge the gap between listening for pleasure and critical listening because the initial step of familiarization with the medium will already have been taken. It is likely that Spotify will continue to improve its functionality, although an improvement in discographical information seems unlikely. It is, after all, a commercial venture rather than an academic one. Spotify

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196315000280 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is comprehensive, fast, and affordable, all factors valued by students and educators alike.

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Journal of the Society for American Music (2015), Volume 9, Number 3, pp. 378–380.
© The Society for American Music 2015 doi:10.1017/S1752196315000292

Banjo Romantika: American Bluegrass and the Czech Imagination. Shara K. Lange, director; Lee Bidgood and Shara K. Lange, producers. Light Projects, 2013, DVD.

In the opening shots of *Banjo Romantika: American Bluegrass and the Czech Imagination,* bluegrass enthusiast Luděk Brancuzský stands outside a blacksmith shop in the Czech town of Luka Nad Jihlavou, talking about bluegrass and freedom while attempting to start the engine of aged American jeep. As the engine roars to life, the film's theme song begins, featuring banjo, mandolin, guitar, resophonic guitar, bass, and the Czech-language vocals of the film's producer and writer Lee Bidgood. Immediately a link is established among freedom, nostalgia, bucolic settings, the open road, America, Czechs, and the modern "hillbilly" sounds of mid-twentieth century bluegrass.

Banjo Romantika is about what bluegrass signified to Czechs before, after, and especially during the Cold War years. The film celebrates bluegrass in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, where, according to the film, almost every town has a bluegrass band featuring a banjo. For all of its apparent idiosyncrasies, Czech bluegrass is a typical twentieth-century phenomenon, a musical style appropriated and resignified within a social context far removed from its origins.

The origins of bluegrass in the Czech Republic are part of the "tramp movement" of the years following the First World War. Inspired by American cowboy films and novels of the Wild West, "tramping" was a Czech scouting movement for all ages that involved hiking, camping, and singing songs around campfires, as researcher Ruth Ellen Gruber explains early in the film. During the Cold War, such activities took on a new light, as singing American country songs in the wilderness expressed a rebellious desire to be free from Soviet repression. Some "tramps" built simple cabins in the woods that served as retreats from Soviet modernity and shrines to a romanticized world of cowboys, American Indians, grizzly bears, gold miners, and the American frontier as described in the popular novels of nineteenth-century German writer Karl May.

Tramps were drawn towards certain iconically American products that could not be purchased in areas under Soviet control. Jeeps, blue jeans, musical instruments, and bluegrass albums were smuggled in—in the case of jeeps, part by part. In one memorable sequence in the film, banjo player Marko Čermák, founder of the band the Greenhorns, meets the filmmakers at his country cabin and discusses the joys and difficulties of exploring bluegrass music during the Soviet era. He describes teaching himself to play banjo from recordings of Earl Scruggs that he and others were able to smuggle in or hear on Allied Forces radio programs broadcast from Munich. Before

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