



Rehearsal Assistant, a mobile application available for Android phones, gives rehearsal directors the ability to record video and spoken notes as well as play music and media for the rehearsal. The app was developed by a Herberger Institute graduate-student team.

Applying themselves

Mobile technology developed at ASU transforms rehearsal process

A group of ASU Herberger Institute graduate students has pulled back the curtain on the performance rehearsal process, which they now are digitally recording with the help of their cell phones – making the act of taking notes with a legal pad and a No. 2 pencil a thing of the past.

A cross-disciplinary team has developed the Rehearsal Assistant, a general-purpose audio recording application for a mobile phone that works in tandem with a computer. The idea for the application began in the mind of dance graduate student Stjepan Rajko as he completed a class assignment for a School of Dance “Performance & Technology” class about five years ago.

He envisioned software that primarily was designed to help a choreographer working alone in a studio to play music and record rehearsal video (with playback) in response to voice commands.

“The idea began as a ‘mockumentary’ about a helpful software system that didn’t yet exist,” Rajko said.

Rajko eventually took his idea and led a team of students to design a rough model for the Rehearsal Assistant. He explained that the app’s main benefit to performers is that the audible notes are time-stamped, and can be played back in conjunction with a video recording of a rehearsal. He believes the time-stamp feature enables performers to understand better the context and meaning of each note.

“This is useful for a dance or theater rehearsal, but it can also be used for a rehearsal of a speech or presentation, or for sports practice,” Rajko said. “A journalist could use the system to annotate an event they are observing and then review it later. A researcher could use it to annotate an experiment as it unfolds.”

To bring the application to life, Rajko teamed up with Jessica Mumford, a fellow dance graduate student, in early spring 2008. The duo then approached Christopher Martinez, a graduate student in the Herberger Institute School of Arts, Media and Engineering, to work on the app’s music and visual design. About a year of development followed. Since its release in spring 2009, the Rehearsal Assistant app, which is available for Android phones, has been downloaded nearly 60,000 times.

Martinez called the application an example of artists creating their own tools for advancing their art.

“These tools also have broader social and cultural implications, that are a result of their flexibility to be employed for art-making as well as for other uses,” Martinez said. “Our team’s passion is about facilitating and promoting the creative process both through works of art, as well as the development of tools that are used as part of the creative process.”

For additional information on the Rehearsal Assistant application, visit urbanstew.org/rehearsalassistant.







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