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New Videoconferencing Tool Lets Distant Musicians Rehearse Live

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By [Nick DeSantis](#)



For many musicians, coordinating rehearsals can be a challenge. They have to bring everyo: their instruments together at the same time. But a new piece of software running on the high-speed backbone of the Internet2 netwo: make scheduling simpler by enabling musicians hundreds of miles apart to join in live.

The low-latency audio and videoconferencing software, dubbed LOLA, significantly cuts the lag time it takes for live sound and video: travel over a network. LOLA lets musicians play in concert over a network without sacrificing speed or sound quality.

According to Ben Fineman, manager of video services at Internet2, LOLA improves on consumer programs like Skype, which produce: far too long for musicians to perform in sync.

“If you have that two-second lag between when you play a note on your instrument and the person on the other end is able to hear it: play a note on their instrument and respond, then you’re not going to be able to play together,” he said. For musicians to pull off netv: live performances, the delay from microphone to musician must be under 60 milliseconds. LOLA reduces that delay to as low as 35: milliseconds, simulating a performance in which the musicians are on stage 35 feet apart.

Paul D. Bauer, director of Northern Illinois University’s School of Music, said musicians have tried using similar technologies to: synchronize networked performances, but he called those efforts “smoke and mirrors” that were fraught with technical problems.

“Everybody has stories of how it’s not working up until the last moment,” he said. “And how, when it actually looked like a great succe: kind of faked our way through it.” LOLA, he added, is the first software he’s seen that allows for true simultaneous live performance.

The new software’s speeds may be useful for professional musicians, but amateurs who want to start their own jam sessions at home: out of luck for now. Mr. Fineman said that the black-and-white version of LOLA consumes about 100 megabits of bandwidth per seco: speed that’s too fast for the cable modems available to most consumers.

The G. Tartini Music Conservatory, in Trieste, Italy, and the Italian Research & Education Network, better known as GARR, develop: LOLA. Internet2 and the New World Symphony plan to demonstrate the software in March at a workshop in Miami.

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