

Recording video for auditions –

There are a variety of different ways of recording videos for auditions, in this article we are going to cover three different setups. These will range from very basic, to two slightly more advanced methods. The hope is that this guide will help you decide which is best for you and the intended use for the resulting video.

For any technical terms please see the glossary of terms at the end of this article this will be highlighted by being in *italics*. You can also email us, avsupport@trinitylaban.ac.uk.

To book out equipment either email us at avsupport.music@trinitylaban.ac.uk or you pop into the office during opening hours (9:00-17:00, Monday-Friday). For Laban there is the online booking system – <https://cts.trinitylaban.ac.uk/loginfod/>

Summary –

Method 1 – the easiest option, this should be sufficient for most applications. You simply position the camera, check the *gain* and record.

Method 2 – medium difficulty, this option will give you better picture quality (especially when you need to position the camera at a distance). The audio is also better, but the setup is much more involved.

Method 3 – medium difficulty, this is basically the same as Method 2 except you will be using your mobile phone as the camera. It requires much more setting up than Method 1 but because most people already know how to record video on their phones this should be a bit easier than Method 2.

Method 1. Zoom Camera - difficulty, EASY

Equipment needed for this method -

Zoom Q8 video camera

SD card

Tripod

The most basic method is to use one of our Zoom Q8 Video Cameras. The main feature, and selling point, of these cameras is that they have a pair of built in X-Y *configured* microphones. These will give you an above average stereo audio recording. The compromise with this camera is that the camera sensor is very small, so the quality of the videos is average and will be worse in lower lighting conditions. Also, these only have a *digital zoom*, meaning that the further you zoom in the lower the video resolution gets.

These aside, with the correct setup, these cameras will be good enough for most archival and audition quality recordings.

A video on the basics of using this camera can be found here –



Lighting – The first thing to consider is the lighting conditions. These cameras perform best in ‘ideal’ lighting conditions, basically the more light the better. If you are recording during the daytime then it’s best to open any curtains and raise any blinds.

Natural sunlight is always the best light. This however, is not always the most reliable, a passing cloud can dramatically lower the light levels. Often it is easier to just use the lighting within the room, although this will often look flat and cold, especially when using fluorescents. But, depending on what the intended use of your video this may not be a problem.

Positioning – Once you have decided on the lighting you need to decide where to position the camera. When borrowing the camera make sure you borrow a tripod too. Because the zoom function is digital I would suggest ignoring it. Set the zoom to 1.00, then based on what you see on its screen position it to your liking. For an audition this would be face on, to the side, or at a slight angle. The main thing is that your hands and face are visible, sometimes this may need to be the entire body (read the audition instructions carefully). Of course if you've positioned the camera and discovered that the lighting isn't right (for example there's a large shadow on your hands or face) it is important to change this before you make the recording.

A good example of this can be found here –



Volume – I would always recommend checking the volume levels. Ideally you would have someone else watching the camera, you would then play the loudest part of what you are recording, the other person would then adjust the *gain* accordingly. The volume should peak at approximately 2/3rds or -12 on the *volumeter*.

Recording – Once the camera is setup, it is simply a case of recording your video. If it's a short piece I would recommend just pressing record and playing. Try to ignore the camera, play through the piece a few times and then stop. If it is not going well, just stop and take a moment, or three. It rarely goes well just trying to push through, although we are all different.

Method 2. Canon Camera and audio recorder - difficulty, MEDIUM

Equipment needed for this method –

Canon Legria HFG25 video camera

Zoom H6 audio recorder

Stereo bar

Manfrotto tripod

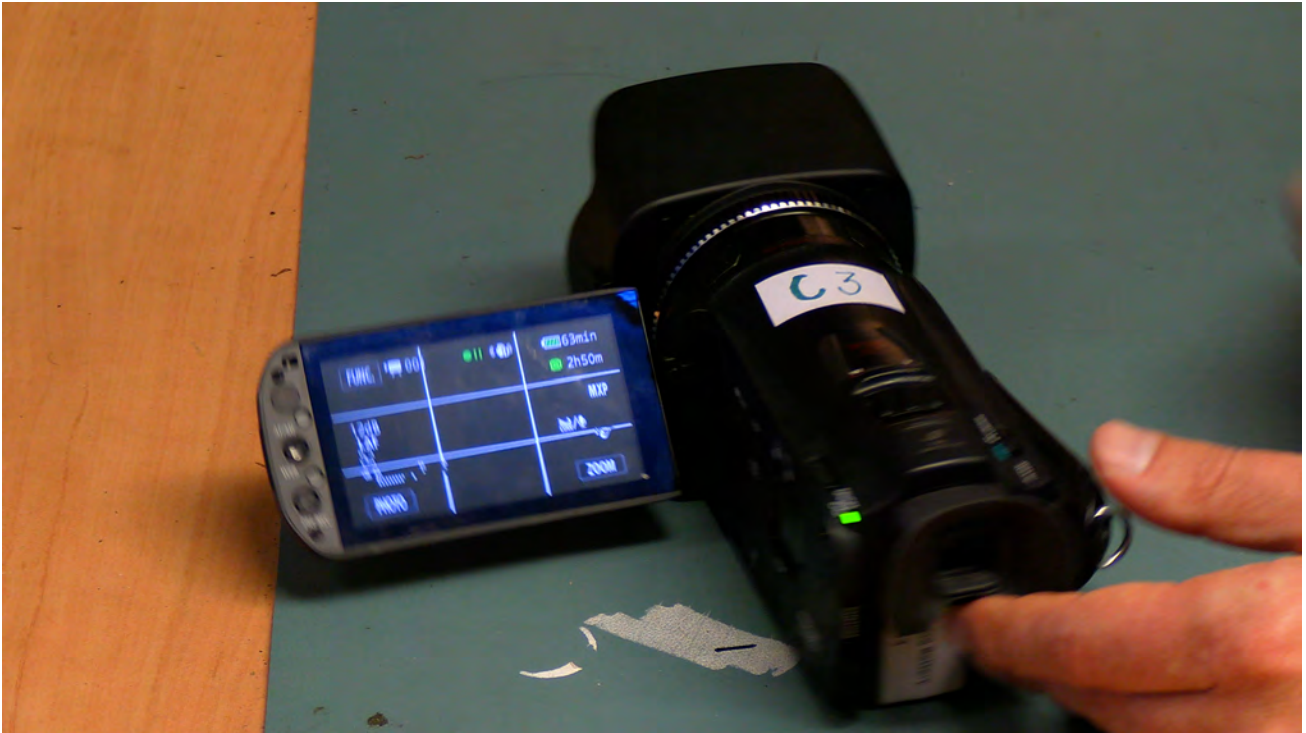
SD card

Pair of headphones

Short 'aux' lead

The idea behind this method is that with more effort you can achieve good audio and better video quality. This requires using one of our other cameras, the Canon Legria HFG25. This has much better picture quality than the Zoom Q8's, it also has an *optical zoom* lens, giving more flexibility for placement. The main disadvantage with this camera is that its built-in microphones and audio recording functions are not as good as the Zoom Camera Q8. To compensate for this, we will use an external audio recorder in place of the built-in microphones, I'll go into that later on.

A video on the basics of using this camera can be found here –



Lighting – The same principles apply to this camera as for the Zoom Camera (and to be honest most cameras). The better the lighting conditions the better the resulting video.

Audio – The biggest difference with this setup is that you will be using a separate audio recorder as a microphone. For this guide we will be using a Zoom H6 audio recorder. This is a highly versatile device, we won't go into all of what it can do but lots of information can be found here – <https://zoomcorp.com/en/gb/handheld-recorders/handheld-recorders/h6-audio-recorder/>

A video on the basics of using the Zoom H6 can be found here –

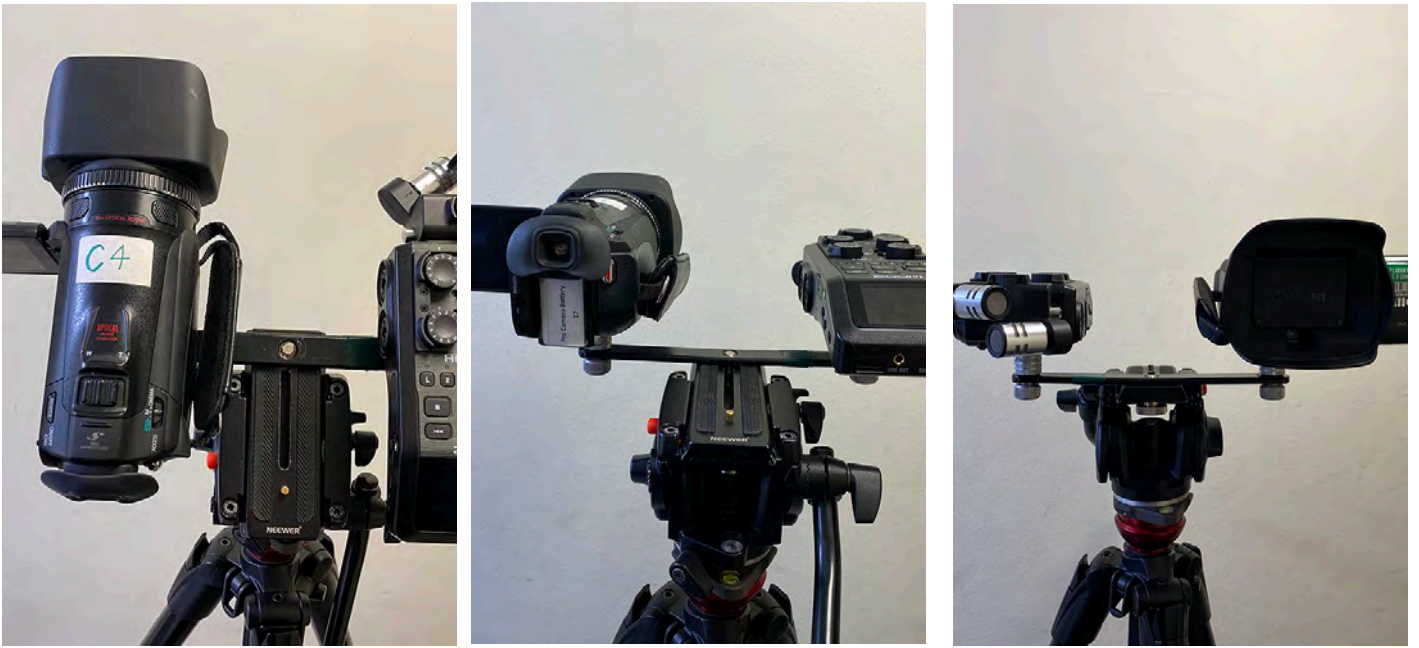


We will be using the *X-Y configured* module that comes with the recorder. The first thing is to fix the stereo bar to the mounting plate of the tripod, this will need to be separated from the rest of the tripod (ask a technician to demo how to do this) then attach the camera and audio recorder to the stereo bar. I'd strongly advise attaching the equipment in this order, stereo bar to tripod then camera and audio recorder to stereo bar, this should minimise the chance of anything getting broken. When both devices are in position it is simply a case of connecting the Zoom H6 to the Canon camera using the short aux cable. One end will go into the 'line out' plug on the H6, the other goes into the 'mic input' port (this is located near the front of the camera, on the right, just behind the lens). The camera should automatically switch to using the external mic. To test that this is working plug in the headphones and have a listen, clicking your fingers in front of the H6 should be louder than in front of the camera.

Here is a brief video on how to set this up –



Here are some photos of how this should look –



Positioning – Again, the principle is very similar to the above instructions. The main advantage with this camera is that it has an *optical zoom*. This means that when you zoom in there is no loss of quality.

But, as always this depends on the situation. If you're recording a concert with an audience then you can't, usually, have the equipment 'plonked' in the middle of the audience. If there is no audience, then the best placement depends on what you're recording.

Once the positioning is set it's always best to do a volume test, the same guidance as above implies. The maximum you want the volume to be is at 2/3rds or -12 on the *volumeter*.

Recording – when you're ready and confident that everything is working then it's simply just a case of pressing record on the camera. The resulting video can be copied onto a computer from the SD card

Method 3. Mobile Phone and Audio Recorder - difficulty, MEDIUM

Equipment needed for this method -

Zoom H6 audio recorder

Stereo bar

Manfrotto tripod

Mobile phone bracket for tripod

Another viable option would be to use Method 2 but in place of the Canon camera using your own mobile phone. Mobile cameras are often very good these days. This coupled with the familiarity of your own device, makes this an easy option. It's important to make sure you have enough free space on your phone and that the battery has sufficient charge.

Setup the Zoom H6 and mobile phone in the same way you did the Canon and H6 in Method 2. Instead of using an aux cable to connect the two devices you be using a USB lead (included with the H6) and an adaptor to plug it into your phone (Lightning or USB-C). Whilst setting this equipment up make sure that the H6 is turned off. When it's turned on again it should give you the option to use it as an *audio interface*, select this, then 'ipad with battery', then select 'stereo mix'. This will then be the default source when you record.

A brief video on this setup can be found here –





Then simply position the mic stand (with phone and H6 attached) open your camera and record a video as normal. To listen to the video you can plug the headphones into the H6, any audio played on the phone will come out through headphones via the H6.

Extras –

Lighting – visually the biggest upgrade that can be made to any video will be the lighting.

Three Point Setup –

What's often described as the 'swiss-army-knife of lighting setups' is the three point setup. This comprises three lights: a Key Light, a Fill Light and a Back Light or hair light.

The Key Light is positioned in front of the subject at a 45 degree angle to the camera, just above eye level. This can be either side of the camera and is usually the brightest. The Fill Light is positioned on the opposite side of the camera, at just above eye-level, and will be less bright. This is to 'bring up' the shadow created by the Key Light. Finally, the Backlight is to separate the subject from the background. This will add depth to your video and so will look more interesting. A good alternative to the Fill Light or Key Light can be sunlight. If

you have a window available then just reposition everything accordingly, although this may not be practical with some instruments. This is also useful if you happen to only have two lights available.



Top Light Setup –

Another good setup is the Top Light setup, this will add dramatic facial shadows and will add a more 'ominous' tone (this may be too dramatic for an audition video though). For this setup you will position the light directly above yourself and point it straight down. If you want a bit more face to be lit then move the light forward slightly.

There are many other lighting techniques that can be used for various effects, but these two are a good starting point. **What's most important to remember is that no matter what it looks like to your eyes it only really matters what it looks like in camera. This will probably mean that you have to make the lights brighter than you'd think, trust what you see on the screen.**



Glossary of terms –

The **gain** is the amount of amplification applied to the signal coming from the microphones. The higher the gain the 'louder' the microphone will be.

X-Y configuration is where two matching microphones are positioned at approximately 90 degrees to each other. This is one way of capturing a stereo recording.

A **Volumeter** is a visual representation of the amount of audio going into or out of a device.

Digital Zoom is where the camera crops the digital video then zooms in. This gives the illusion of a zoom at the expense of the resolution of the video. A lot of smaller cameras and older mobile phones use this.

Optical Zoom is when the lens assemble within the camera has multiple lens that can move back and forth. This allows you to zoom into an object without sacrificing resolution.

An **Audio Interface** is a device that is used to convert an analogue signal into a digital signal, or vice versa, for use within a computer or mobile device. You would generally use one if you wanted to make a recording using software like Logic Pro or Garage Band. Most computers and mobile phones have a basic one built in, this is often used for headphones or a microphone. For better quality it is best to invest in, or borrow from the AV office, a stand alone one. This will usually have better components and so will give a better sound to your recording.

Trouble Shooting Tips –

Help! The video is really dark! – It's likely that for these methods you will be using the cameras built-in automatic settings. These should give you good results, depending on the lighting conditions. But if it's still too dark and you've noticed this during the recording session it could just be a case of adding more light by turning up the lights in the room. If you've only noticed this once the video has been recorded your options are more limited. You could try adding brightness afterwards, depending on how dark it is this will may work or could potentially show a lot of 'noise'. For this you would use some video editing software (or within your phone, if you used Method 3). Remember, no matter what it looks like to your eyes it only matters what it looks like in-camera.

Help, the audio recording is too loud/soft! – unfortunately there's not a massive amount that can be done. It is always better to get it right during the recording. If you'd like to pop into the av office we can try a few things. If the volume is too low we can turn it up, if it is too loud then you will get distortion, it will never be as clean as a good recording. Remember to use the headphones and double check the volumenter BEFORE you start recording.