

The Major Scale of Technology – RESEO 10/03/16 – Siggy Patchitt

Hi, I'm Siggy Patchitt. I am the Education Manager here at Colston Hall for Bristol Plays Music, the Music Education Hub for Bristol where I lead on the New Ambition for Inclusive Excellence work that we do with Children in Challenging Circumstances, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disability and Children in Care.

I'm also a Director of the national membership organisation for Community Musicians in the UK, Sound Sense.

Just to fill you in about Sound Sense; it's members work across all ages and the organisation, led by Kathryn Deane, exists to support its members but also inform policy by conducting research and writing national evaluation of the impact of music education.

One such report, The Power of Equality 2, is the latest report and is extremely comprehensive review of Inclusive Practice in music education. I'll be paraphrasing a lot from it in this presentation.

I wanted to talk to you a bit about the role of technology in music education and how it can and hopefully will lead to a whole new way of working. I will be focusing on the impact of technology on the participants of music, rather than on audiences or venues but these are obviously very closely linked.

Of course, I don't have to tell you why the performing arts are important. But, if you'll allow me a moment to indulge myself, I would be most obliged.

There is nothing on this planet, no activity, no experience, nothing that provides such rich opportunities to develop creativity, confidence and communication as taking part in performing arts. The social, emotional, health and economic impact of the performing arts is the closest thing to magic that exists and everyone here should, I hope, regularly feel a sense of pride, humility and duty attached to the privilege of being able to earn a living within such an amazing universe.

For those living with impairments or chronic conditions, however, access to these experiences is far from a reality. Even for those more physio and neuro-typical people, the ambition and expectation are often completely lacking due to two things:

1. The perception of these activities as elitist and exclusive,
2. The often rigid nature of some of the more traditional artistic institutions (I'm thinking of instrument quotas for orchestras, the fact that most orchestras require musicians to be able to sight read, etc.)

Technology can help

But technology, as it always has done, can help.

When we think of the word "technology" I think of this:

Or this

But I don't often think of this

Or this

But these have all been invented to enable us to improve our ability to do something

If you look at a symphony orchestra and how it is constituted, you will see instruments that have existed for thousands of years next to ones invented in the last couple of hundred years.

That's evolution. Being open to new things has enabled music and the orchestra to develop. We've gone from this:

To this:

And from this

To this

But here's the thing. We seem to have stopped. And for many, being able to participate in anything orchestral (i.e. in any group of musicians playing together) is simply not realistic.

See, if you take any instrument

You have three elements:

1. The shape of the instrument
2. The interface (how you make it make noise)
3. The sound it makes when interfaced with.

Traditionally, these three things were inextricably intertwined. You can't make a violin sound without something shaped like a violin, and you can't make a violin sound like a violin by blowing it.

This applies to all mainstream instruments.

But, here's where it gets interesting. New technology now allows you to make a cello sound with a keyboard. Or a trumpet sound with a phone. Or a guitar sound with your eyes.

You no longer need to be able to use both hands, or even one hand, or even any part of your body to be able to make music.

Music Technology represents a leap forward in the potential of music in and the orchestra

- Music technology is instantly **engaging**

There are no difficult physical hurdles to overcome as there can be with many instruments.

- While the entry-point may be highly accessible, technology work can be challenging and of **high quality**
- It is essentially a **creative** form.
 - It establishes a level playing field
 - Some children have different levels of playing skill on non digital instruments and different levels of support in developing musical knowledge
 - But they are all highly imaginative. Encouraging them to use their imaginations creatively gives them that sense of achievement. They are developing skills; they are good creative learners. And this builds a positive sense of self-identity:
- Music Technology is increasingly more **affordable** – apps
- Music Technology is **flexible**
 - It supports **personal endeavour**, so a musician can be in control of the outcome of a piece.
 - It also develops **group working** skills
- Music Technology supports **self-evaluation**.
 - Less didactic teaching (set list of tasks)
 - More Socratic direction (i.e. questioning of choices and rationale while allowing them to stay in full control of the creative output).
- And finally, music technology enables ready access to **progression**: after all, most homes have a computer/tablet/smartphone, many fewer would have a non-digital musical instrument.

So, for all those who are unable to engage with music because of a disability or otherwise, technology, just like it always has, is providing ways for this to change.

So, if a gap of over 5 millennia is ok, why aren't we able to add newer instruments into the traditional orchestral set up? The argument of the inability of technology to allow virtuosity has all but completely evaporated.

Why can't we continue to evolve the orchestra, and the art form of music and make playing in orchestras something that everyone can enjoy at all levels.

I'll tell you why. It's us. Our attitudes are the only thing stopping this happening.

We are responsible.

But once we change our attitudes, someone like Bradley

can now play in the UK's first disabled led regional youth orchestra because of his eye gaze instrument. He plays alongside Ashleigh who is blind and has learning difficulties but is able to play any piece of music on the keyboard after hearing it just once...and she's 12, which is why there's no photo of her. This is the future of the orchestra.

But you can't just throw this orchestra together. You need seriously good directors and composers and conductors and seriously accessible and flexible spaces.

You need great partners

And this is the bit that gets me really fired up and excited.

If you take instruments which are only just being invented and repertoire that has yet to be written and musicians who have never been given a voice, put them together and provide them with the opportunity to create and perform music together, what do you get?

That's what you get....something we don't know yet: A new form of music. And once the repertoire, conductors, musicians, instruments are used to working in

this new, flexible, non restricted, inclusive way, what's to stop adding in a violin player, or 4 violin players. Or 16 bassoons? Or a DJ?

Yeah, nothing.

This isn't about disabled orchestras or even digital technology. This is about getting to a point where music is no longer disabling, in any way, to anyone. Setting up an orchestra or band or choir so that it is build around it's members and allows anyone with a passion and desire to perform and create to do so means that the door can be open to anyone and everyone and that each orchestra is unique.

Later on, you will all get the chance to experience some of this. OpenUp music are working with us to establish this Open Orchestra model in special schools across the region. This gives children a chance to make music in groups using some of the technology which will be commonplace in the Regional and National Youth Orchestras of the future.

So we're beginning to sew the seeds for a new generation of creative musicians who know nothing different than "anything is possible."

Technology has always helped us to overcome obstacles.

Now we need to let it help us transform the arts on a Major Scale.

Thank you