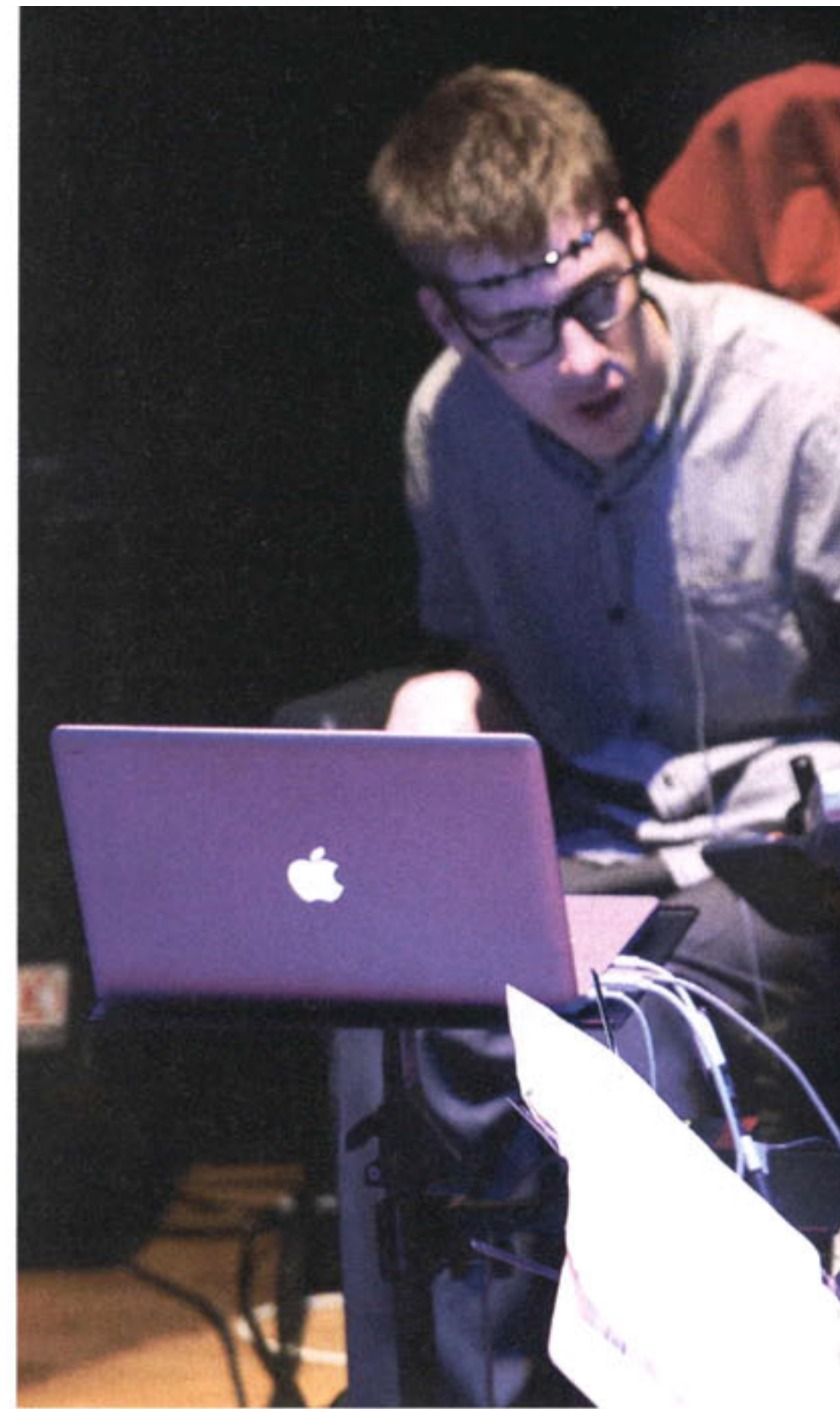




Community Music-Making for Everyone via Performing Ensembles

Here are five groups that make an inclusive, musical difference in their communities.



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STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES are integrated into many school classrooms, including numerous music classes. Teachers use information gleaned from Individual Education Plans (IEPs), special educators, and professional development to help include all students, allowing those with special needs to enjoy music education. But what happens when these students graduate from high school or move on to life in the community? How can these young adults continue their music-making in a meaningful way outside organized school systems?

Donald DeVito works as a music educator and special educator at the **Sidney Lanier School** in Gainesville, Florida. The school is a publically-funded institution for children ages 3–22 who have disabilities. Music classes are inclusive and innovative, with a curriculum based on experienc-

ing music from other cultures via live interactions through a webcam. Students are “in” a new country each class! Staffers work to give students the best opportunities for success with an emphasis on accomplishing anything they set their mind to accomplish. The Sidney Lanier music program works cooperatively with universities across the globe through research and interactive, online music-making. This integrated public approach is a unique way to give students with disabilities the power to make and enjoy music.

A program administrated by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, originally called Very Special Arts (VSA) and now part of the International Organization on Arts and Disability, provides a range of programs and opportunities for young people. An example of a program that benefitted was a 2012 VSA Tennessee project, the **Careers in Music Transition Program**. Many students would like to have a career in music but are not properly prepared by high school curricula for work in the field. This program gave students eight hours with each sponsor:

the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Major Bob Publishing, the Nashville Symphony, the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, and the Fontanel. In after-school sessions, students participated in various aspects of the music business, such as songwriting, theater production, band management and performance, and volunteer management. They also learned about the activities and challenges of being a professional musician.

The **Resonaari School** in Helsinki, Finland, is a remarkable example of community music-making that includes people of a wide range of ages and learning styles. The music school is funded by the tuition of students, the European Union, and various donors in the city of Helsinki. Students of all abilities are included in lessons and ensembles, but the school is best known for its work with individuals with disabilities. Using FigureNotes, a special music notation system that they created, the Resonaari School brings musical independence to students who would otherwise not be included in music classes/ensembles. The school’s

Headshot by Kevin Baldwin, Top photo by Tolbooth Photography.

“Disability is no barrier to making music.”



Drake Music School

It is all-encompassing, offering individual, group, and ensemble lessons to students; professional development for teachers; music workshops; special events within the community; and a groundbreaking “Inclusive Classroom” program for special and mainstream schools. The school uses many tools to help students with disabilities, including Resonaari’s FigureNotes. Their motto is “Disability is no barrier to making music” (see the sidebar on page 20 for a list of program websites). Funded by both private and public sources, the program caters to students of all ages, abilities and interests, though the focus is on those with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Music educators constantly work to build community and opportunity. One unique and desperately-needed medium to help serve the persons in the community who have disabilities are adapted performing ensemble programs. The Resonaari School, Sidney Lanier, and SoundOUT are prime examples of creating opportunities for performance. Each program is different in structure: Resonaari’s programs

primary goal is to graduate students who are able to create music on their own. Many current and former Resonaari students who have Down Syndrome, autism, or other disabilities are paid musicians who gig around the city.

SoundOUT in Cork City, Ireland, is a community-based initiative created in 2011 to increase inclusive music-making and performance opportunities. Its goal is to provide opportunities for the personal, social, and musical development of all students. Developed from the U2 and Ireland Funds initiative and funded by Music Generation Cork City and the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland, this organization serves 400 young people of all ability levels, with an emphasis on accessible interactive music technology. Students in these programs work with assistive technology such as SoundBeam, the Magic Flute, and iPads to enable active music-making. This is ideal for students with disabilities that limit their movement, for students with hearing loss, speech and language or communication disorders, dyslexia, or autisms.

Peer learning and collaboration are important components of the program. With ensembles that bring together students from a local high school with students from a Special Education Needs School, as well as community-based programs in the evening, SoundOUT is a growing entity despite high program costs.

Drake Music Scotland is a program created to support the music education of children and adults with disabilities.



Sidney Lanier School

feature rock-style ensembles, Lanier's feature in-class musicmaking via a webcam, and SoundOUT is primarily ensemble-based. In each of these programs, students gain knowledge that can be applied in any musical setting. The goal of creating community music programs is to give people of all ages, abilities, and interests the opportunity to become independent, performing musicians.

The first hurdle to clear is determining the structure and vision of the program: This planning sets the stage for how the program will develop. What does the community need most? Ensembles can include traditional instruments, electronic instruments, vocalists, and more. Private or group lessons can be provided and adjusted to accommodate the range of learners. Activities such as online music sharing via webcam, master classes, integrated ensembles, paid gigs, special performances, evening social activities, trips to professional performances, and guest artists can be added to enrich the experiences of student musicians and the community. A team approach is essential, and team members should include music educators, special educators, creative and open-minded tutors with appropriate background in teaching with technology, supportive parents and community members, and stakeholders and donors.

A community music program can take place in a self-contained center completely removed from a school setting, such as Resonaari, or it can be a small-scale program run at a school, home, community center, university, community college, or park district building, such as those of Sidney Lanier and SoundOUT. Finding the right location can be a challenge, and an ADA-approved location is necessary. Directors must introduce themselves, ask questions, and listen to what community members want, need, and feel.

PROGRAM WEBSITES

Drake Music Scotland:
drakemusicscotland.org

Kennedy Center VSA:
kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/programs

Resonaari School:
helsinki.fi/resonaari

Sidney Lanier School:
lanier.sbac.edu/pages/LAN0081

SoundOUT:
soundout.ie

VSA Tennessee:
vsatn.org



Funding is a critical consideration: No great idea can flourish without proper support. Directors must seek out grants, donors, and stakeholders in the community, surrounding communities, state, and country. Money, however, will mean very little without an innovative and highly qualified staff. Finding teachers, aides, tutors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and other staff for the program can be challenging. Starting small will help get the project off the ground. Professional development is crucial for the staff, especially when beginning the program with a small number of teachers.

A final challenge is providing

transportation to students and community members who would like to participate but cannot get to the center independently. A bus, taxi, or carpool service may be a good place to start when looking to include all students. Creating a safe environment that caters to the needs of all students (young, old, typical, disabled) will be a work-in-progress and heavily influenced by the vision created for the program.

The foremost consideration to creating an inclusive environment is to consider accommodation, modification, communication, collaboration, and motivation. By using the UDL framework, which highlights flexibility and



opportunities for students to play instruments, sing, or compose ensures inclusion of all types of learners. Students should be able to choose an instrument that provides the best avenue to becoming an independent musician. This may mean helping students choose an instrument that makes the best use of their abilities.

In classes, lessons, and ensembles, students must be met where they are at in their abilities. This can be as basic as learning to play one note at the correct time when performing with an ensemble. This type of modification will look different for each student, based upon his/her individual needs and abilities. Directors will need to be imaginative to meet the needs of each student in their instruction, method, approach, and structure.

Providing an avenue for music creation for all people is essential, as it is our contribution to the community as music educators. Both typical students and those with disabilities should be given the chance experience true music-making, learning, and independence. Many times, citizens who are older or disabled are left out of these opportunities, but music can be the opportunity in their lives. Music educators need to find ways to give the gift of music-making to all citizens. The programs described here prove that inclusive music-making in the form of funding for and the creation of performing ensembles is possible, effective, and greatly needed in our global society. ■

consideration for all types of learners in its design, teachers can openly approach learning activities and curricula in a wide variety of ways to meet each student's musical learning needs. Many students with special needs and those who begin music study later in life will be challenged by or may not be able to read traditional notation. The program should consider adapting various alternatives to traditional notation, such as tools like FigureNotes, color-coding, writing in letter names, or any other creative ideas.

Other modifications or adaptations include the assistive technology demonstrated in the SoundOUT program, emphasizing the importance of giving each child a way to make and perform music. Teachers and staff will need to work with those who are qualified to provide physical and occupational therapy, special education, music education, as well as with students and their parents/guardians to find the best instrument fit, reading strategy, and instructional approach for each student. It is essential that teachers have professional development in the

areas of special music education, Universal Design for Learning, assistive technology, and any other area needed to further develop their capacity to teach all students.

Providing musical opportunities to students with autism, vision loss, hearing loss, a specific learning disability, communication disorder, and other disabilities, requires creative thinking and team discussion. While tackling all of these disabilities is essential, the program should first focus on one or two groups of needs. This allows for a more detailed focus that provides extensive tools to help all students be successful. These modifications should be specific to each student. Providing

SOME INCLUSIVITY RESOURCES

Kaikkonen, Markku. "Music for All: Everyone Has the Potential to Learn Music." *Exceptional Pedagogy for Children with Exceptionalities*. Edited by D. Blair and K. McCord. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, in press.

Lapka, Christine M. "Students with Disabilities in a High School Band: We Can Do It!" *Music Educators Journal* 92, no. 4 (September, 2006): 54.

McHale, Grainne. "SoundOUT: Examining the Role of Accessible Interactive Music Technologies within Inclusive Music Ensembles in Cork City, Ireland." *Exceptional Pedagogy for Children with Exceptionalities*. Edited D. Blair and K. McCord. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, in press.

Palmen, Markus. "A Change that Resonates." *European Lifelong Learning Magazine*. Posted June 26, 2013. elmmagazine.eu/articles/a-change-that-resonates.