

# Music Making for All: Working Well in Open Orchestras

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## Introduction

This booklet is produced as part of research carried out in the 'Getting Things Changed' project in 2017 at the University of Bristol

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/gettingthingschanged/>

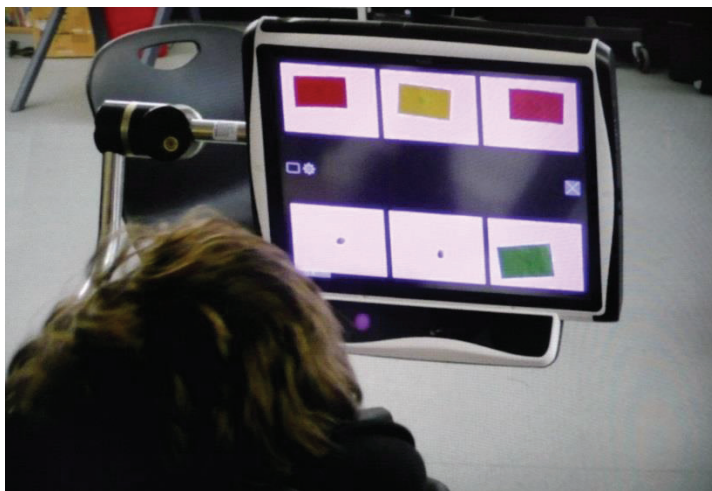
This part of the research focussed on *Open Orchestras*, a programme in which a new instrument – the Clarion - is important. The Clarion is a technological instrument that can be played:

- On an iPad
- using a Satnav (in which a small sensor is placed on the part of the body that the students can move, and which triggers notes on a laptop computer screen) or
- using Eyegaze on a laptop or a PC.

It can be adapted to suit almost any person's physical needs. The *Open Orchestras* programme also offers new musical repertoire for ensembles for young people with special educational needs or disabilities, and training for staff working with the young people.

We filmed *Open Orchestras* sessions at two special schools, to find out in detail how they worked.

This booklet is intended to help staff who are working in *Open Orchestras* sessions, but it could also be inspiring for students, and their families and friends. The young people who took part in these sessions did not use words to communicate ideas but, from our observations, we have reconstructed some of the things that were important to them. Looking at the musical world from their point of view will help us all to do things differently.



## Claire

I play the Clarion on the Satnav. The sensor spot which triggers the sound on the laptop is on my glasses or forehead.

Sometimes the person leading *Open Orchestras* moves around near me to remind me to play with a range of notes, not just the ones that are easy (which I don't have to move my head far to reach). In one piece, he moved to my left and told me that was where the low sounds were, and then he moved to my right and said this where I play notes to get high sounds.

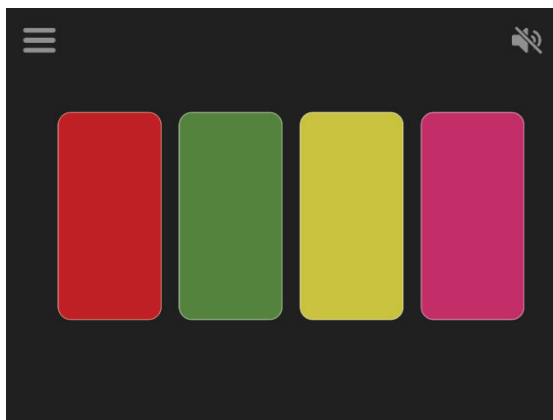
The TA working with me sometimes reminds me when I need to play; she often does this by pointing to the different notes on the screen.

When I am playing music, my TA sometimes has to switch off my sounds using the pause button. This is because I want to watch what other orchestra members are doing. Because the computer screen's in between me and the other students, when I look around I sometimes play musical notes. I don't mean to, but this can't be helped.

I like *Open Orchestras* because everyone has slightly different musical notes or patterns to play; they are nice

separately, but they are even better put together. It is fun working with others so that a group of us make one piece of music.

*Open Orchestras* work makes me smile a lot.



## Mike

I used to be able to sit up to play in *Open Orchestras*. It's great that I can still play the Clarion now that I have to lie down all the time.



At times I have had difficulty playing and so the lead teacher moves my notes closer together on the laptop. This makes it easier for me to reach them which means I can still play the same note patterns.

It is really helpful that I have a TA who knows me because they understand that I sometimes get tired and need a break from playing. But my TA also knows to encourage me. She does this by whispering or by softly touching my arm – where the sensor is.

I like the TAs that support me, but it's best when someone sits next to me who knows how to change the Clarion. Then it means, when there's a problem, we don't have to stop the orchestra for the conductor to sort this.

Before orchestra begins I sometimes experiment and I try different ways of playing. At these times it helps me if the TA or teacher-conductor tells me when what I'm doing is good.

I like the fact that we have some TAs who also take part in the music. Mike is really good guitarist and he is sometimes like the 'glue' in our piece because he plays a part as the background and we students can create our parts to fit with this.

When I take part in *Open Orchestras* it is not therapy, I am a musician, developing my own music skills at the same time as making music with others.



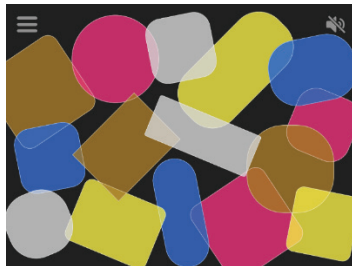
## Naveed

I play the Clarion with the only part of my body that I can move, which is my eyebrow.

i have been playing in *Open Orchestras* for a long time now. It took me a while to work out that it was the sensor spot on my eyebrow linking with the computer screen that made the sounds. But I now know this, and am excited when I realise I'm going to play music.

I know when we are to start a performance because each week, the lead teacher does the same thing: he makes us have a short time of quiet before the performance begins.

In an *Open Orchestras* session, it is helpful when we start by listening to each person's individual musical sound because then we can know who is playing what. We sometimes can't know this by looking at each other, because we need to look at our own screen.





Our conductor says that one of the main things we should try to do in our sessions is to express ourselves. I do not have many opportunities to do this and it is also the only thing I can do independently, and with other people. That's why I like *Open Orchestras* so much.

The Clarion is a great instrument because it's portable so you can take it home to practise and play on. My Mum was really chuffed when I did a performance at home, with my brother, one Christmas. I am really proud of also having performed in the school orchestra at the Colston Hall, Bristol.

## Lucy

I like to play in *Open Orchestras* using different instruments. I often use the Clarion on iPad but I also use the ukulele, hanging chime tree or the drum.

I am someone who finds new experiences difficult and loud sounds can make me nervous. But I have learned to enjoy playing in the orchestra even though I often don't know when loud or new sounds are going to happen.



I have a 'twiddle' that I like to hold as it makes me feel calm and helps me to concentrate better. When I first started in *Open Orchestras* the teacher always had to take the twiddle away from me to encourage me to play. Now I've been in orchestra for quite a while, I sometimes decide for myself when to play; I make the sounds when I think it will be nice for the whole music piece.

The staff always try to encourage us to do things on our own, not with them helping actually make the sounds. They suggest things, but they prefer it when we make our own choices.

But it helps me when the conductor models my part so I'm reminded of it. It also helps when the conductor or my TA points out on the screen the direction of the notes that we have decided I'll play.

I am happy when I arrive early to *Open Orchestras* and I can have time alone with my TA. Then I can practise my own part and also experiment a bit more. We don't have time for this when everyone is in the room because an important part of playing in the orchestra is playing when the conductor tells you. It is just as important sometimes to be quiet. If we all played at the same time the music would sound muddled.

## Alice

My instrument is The Clarion on the iPad but I also have a good singing voice and I sang in one *Open Orchestras* piece, using a microphone.

I am quite a shy person really, but you would not know it when I am in *Open Orchestras* because I am good at making music, on my own and with others. I have even played in front of a big audience at the Colston Hall in Bristol.

I really like to play music with other people. I like it when I make a sound and another person responds. I have been told that this is called Call and Response. I am also able to respond to someone else's 'Call'. I can also copy the rhythm they play really well.

I know that the staff have to check the equipment when we first arrive for *Open Orchestras*, but I sometimes have musical ideas at this time, as well as when we actually start as a group, and so it would be nice if, sometimes, one of the staff responded to my musical ideas then.

I don't like it when I'm left alone too long at the start of orchestra, when things are being organised.

It is really useful having different colours for each note on my screen because sometimes the conductor can remind me of how to play when he's conducting, saying things like 'stay on the green'.



It was good when I was given the chance to lead the orchestra: I played the drum and it was my job to keep the steady beat that kept everyone in time.

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It is great because, playing in the orchestra, including in front of other people, helped many of us achieve an ASDAN Entry 1 qualification for ‘Engaging in the World Around You: Events’. We were really proud of this. So were our families.

In another school, Open Orchestras is also a key part of work towards as Artsmark award.

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Further details about Open Orchestras can be found at [www.openorchestras.org/](http://www.openorchestras.org/)

Further enquiries about the 'Getting Things Changed' programme, please contact:

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