

St Andrews Music Participation

The below article is drawn from a public talk titled 'Can Music Change Lives? An introduction to StAMP' given by Michael Downes, Ellen Thomson, John Wallace and Bede Williams on 13 November 2019.

The origins of StAMP

The University of St Andrews' Strategy for 2018–23 places social responsibility at its heart, noting that 'social responsibility is a deep-woven thread which already runs through much of what we do'. This commitment is central to the work of the Music Centre: our programme of activity is embedded in the local community, and recent years have seen increasing emphasis on outreach projects that bring together University staff and students, internationally renowned musicians, and members of the community (particularly children) in innovative and exciting ways. The opening of the Laidlaw Music Centre brings both new opportunities and renewed responsibility to ensure that access to potentially life-changing musical experiences is shared with those beyond the University.

StAMP is an acronym that conveys both the project's commitment to accessible, visceral forms of music-making and three key elements within it: music, participation, and St Andrews itself. Many of the Music Centre's existing strengths – talented, committed and engaged students; connectedness to networks of professional musicians; a track record of successful delivery of outreach projects – in a way that we believe will be transformative for our students, for significant numbers of school pupils across Fife, and for the communities in which those young people live. The project will involve primary and secondary schools, University students and staff, professional musicians from Scotland and further afield, and the 'informal sector' of amateur musical groups (whose importance is so often under-estimated). By working with these diverse constituencies in creative and flexible ways, we expect to bring benefits to the communities in which we work that will outlast and go beyond their immediate impact. We also intend to offer a model of musical pedagogy that will be exemplary and influence practitioners across Scotland and beyond.

What are the aims of StAMP and what will it offer?

To answer this question, let us consider this short trumpet duet written in 1695 for two natural trumpets by the Austrian monk and composer Romanus Weichlein.

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1. Intrada Romanus Weichlein



The trumpets of Weichlein's time had no valves so all the notes that were played come from the harmonic series. The harmonic series in maths is a 'divergent infinite series'. According to legend, it was discovered by Pythagoras when he walked through a market place some 500 years BC. Pythagoras noticed the differing timbre of Blacksmith's hammers as they hit an anvil: this eureka moment is certainly more myth than fact, but Pythagoras did discover that consonant intervals in the harmonic series have whole number ratios, and that the dissonant intervals have non-whole number ratios. Pythagoras thought about the world in numbers, and his maths stretched far into the universe with his *Musica universalis*.

The harmonic series is a feature of physics, Pythagoras an important historical figure of ancient Greece, and we mentioned a moment ago that the duet was by Austrian monk. We hope that playing of the duet would have you curious as to how the players make the sounds with their bodies and whether there is any significance or meaning to the sounds. From this very short duet, we have in just a moment of reflection raised points around astronomy, physical anatomy, theology, physics, history, music theory, philosophy and the aesthetics of art.

The heart of StAMP is an in-school programme called 'Discovering Brass' which uses the natural trumpet as a tool to teach an interdisciplinary curriculum. Natural trumpets are twice the length of a regular trumpet: when a beginner brass player learns a natural trumpet for a number of weeks they are perfectly primed to go onto a bigger instrument like the trombone, euphonium or tuba; as well as to a higher instrument like a trumpet, cornet or horn. They will learn the basics of good brass playing like breathing, posture and articulation; but they will learn so much more too. The

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programme has been delivered once in London to over 90 children by The Wallace Collection who are the delivery partner of StAMP.

Sessions for the full class will last approximately 50 minutes per week and will run for a total of 16 weeks. At the conclusion of the in-school programme students will have the opportunity to continue their learning in their local brass band: the schools that the project is working in are in a 'catchment' area for a band. Brass Bands are a truly exceptional form of community music making and the project will support them by providing fresh cohorts of players. StAMP will also support performances of bands in their local communities as well as in St Andrews with The Wallace Collection and other special guests. The project will also work with Fife Music Service to launch Fife Youth Brass, a new brass ensemble for talented brass players across the region.

Why Brass Bands?

The British Brass Band is our own unique UK contribution to the world of music. Whereas most other forms of musical genres were invented in the melting pots of Africa, Asia, America and Latin America, and closer to home in renaissance Italy, baroque and classical Austria, Germany, France, and Gaelic Ireland probably for traditional music, and we imported them into all parts of Great Britain including Scotland, the brass band is a totally home-grown British musical invention and export. It is an amateur form of community music making which is inclusive and open to all comers of any ability, but which also scales the transcendental peaks of excellence to beyond professional standards because most bands don't only play in bands for the joy of music making. Brass banding is competitive. The Brass Band movement grew during the enormous amateur participation in music making that accompanied the Industrial revolution and included the formation of amateur choral societies all over Britain and Ireland. Participation in organised sport was similar and there was a great urge to organise national networks as the rail network connected the entire country from almost John O'Groats to Land's End. Bands were forming themselves into categories based on standards of playing around the same time as the football leagues. As in football, the Scots were very organised very early on, and the first formal brass band association in the world was formed in Scotland in 1895 when there were about 1300 bands in Scotland. That is the Scottish Brass Band Association and its still going from strength to strength and runs national and local competitions and the National Youth Brass Band of Scotland which has three bands with around 250 children in them.

Brass banding is a form of competitive music-making in the same vein as the Meistersingers. Playing your very best and having a better band than the village four miles along the road is a matter of life and death. A band is a source of great civic pride and like a pipe band, or the local Amateur

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Dramatic Society, or the bowling or golf club, is an essential part of our social fabric in Britain. There have been around 20,000 brass bands in Britain since the nineteenth century to the present day. The most southerly was in St Mary's in the Scilly Isles, and the most it is reported that his first musical memories were of listening to the band in Peel Park in Salford playing Gilbert and Sullivan. At one time there were 123 bands in Fife. There are now 7. In Scotland there are 93 and in the UK 1,234 bands. The Faroes have 9 bands – not bad for a population of 49, 000. British style bands spread all over the old Commonwealth and now are particularly strong in Norway, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Austria and Japan. They are also starting up in China. It's a patchwork like Rugby Union, and like Rugby Union, the best bands now tend to be outside the UK and set standards which keep the British on their toes.

Why bands are special are because in a band you learn in a large group as a team. You learn through aural transmission, as in folk music. You learn to read music *en passant*. But the first thing is to listen to each other and make a glorious harmonious sound. Brass Bands flourished in the 19th C because it was the era of the autodidact. People didn't expect to be spoon-fed or for teachers at school to be responsible for their entire learning process. People left school very young, and if they wanted to improve their playing, they learnt from some of the great progressive musical treatises which emanated from the Paris Conservatoire. The Bible for Brass Band players was written by Jean-Baptiste Arban and a true brass bander made it his or her life's work to play the entire method from cover to cover. Music making in Brass Bands is a perfect context in which to learn all of the human skills necessary for mutual coexistence in this world, and musically their tastes are totally eclectic. They play all styles of music from Unfinished Symphony to Daphnis and Chloe and although there are no strings or wind, they do their best to be chameleons and magpies, and try at times to emulate violins and flutes etcetera, so the sound world is complex and more than just a diet of Hovis bread advert music. It's a great tradition which we are plugging into at St Andrews, and it's a tradition in which Britain leads the world and others emulate.

The context of Fife

When you google Fife you get lots of 'hits' about the region's history, culture and natural beauty not to mention the University and its impressive 600 year history. Fife is a tourist destination with countryside, coastlines, fishing villages and world-class golf courses. It is the third largest authority after Glasgow and Edinburgh, with 370,000 residents and is often considered by statisticians to be a microcosm of Scotland due to its mix of rural and urban settings, industry and agriculture. Sadly, the tourist friendly images don't necessarily tell the full story about this area; Fife is actually a

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divided Kingdom housing some of Scotland's poorest communities. Brass Bands exist in these communities and this is where StAMP will focus a significant part of its work.

It is important to understand some of the issues affecting some of the families of young people who will be involved in StAMP. According to figures from the Department for Work and Pensions, 4.1 million children live in poverty¹ in the UK which is about 30%. Or put it another way, nine children in any classroom of 30. This figure actually rises in certain areas of Kirkcaldy, Methil and East Wemyss, all former mining communities and target areas for StAMP. Living in poverty means you cannot afford the basic things in life like shelter, food and clothing and in monetary terms this is calculated annually by the government as living on less than 60% of the median household income – currently £248 per week.² This affects about 21% of families in Fife,³ though this is the average and there are concentrated areas where the numbers are higher. Fife council is aware that Mid-Fife has some of the poorest outcomes in the area and there are initiatives in place to improve employment opportunities, travel infrastructure and housing costs. Living in challenging economic circumstances has many consequences. It can cause stress and anxiety, this could lead to mental health issues, more general health issues, the inability to work: sadly, the list goes on.

Students in StAMP who come from these circumstances are affected in different ways – mental health and stress often dominate their lives. Children take on the stress of their family's circumstances, often they're a carer or they have to work to bring money into the home. They can arrive at school hungry and lack the equipment needed to do their schoolwork at home, such as access to a computer. These children are just surviving rather than thriving.

What similar initiatives are there and what have been their impacts? What will be the impacts of StAMP?

Since Jose Abreu founded El Sistema in 1975 there has been a seismic shift in music education across the world. Abreu founded his El Sistema because he saw that countries such as Argentina, Brazil or Mexico had developed classical instrumental playing but yet there was no national orchestra of Venezuela. El Sistema was famously started in a car park in Caracas with initially just 11 musicians: as an organisation it eventually grew to have over 300 orchestras and choirs. The programme reaches those living in adversity and uses music as a tool for social change. The idea that music can

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/households-below-average-income-hbai--2> March 2019

² <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/measuring-poverty>

³ Scottish Government Children in families with limited resources - main tables 2014-2017

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be a tool for social change, or of using music as a means to achieve broader educational aims is not new of course. One could argue that Brass Bands are a system of music education for the empowerment and betterment of communities that long pre-dates the Sistema movement: recent articles by Gavin Holman (2018; 2019) detail how brass bands had an important role to play in the temperance movement and other institutions that supported the most vulnerable in society.

But the global movement of music projects that use music as a tool for broader aims is here to stay. El Sistema inspired projects can be found throughout North America, the UK, Germany, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia and across the whole of South America. A literature review published in 2016 by Sistema Global, the American not-for-profit that networks El Sistema inspired project worldwide cites that 'the global El Sistema Community of practice provides an extraordinary example of how, given excellent support, high expectations, and high quality resources, individuals and groups can achieve remarkable things through participation in joyful Music-Making.' The report outlines the need for further research into how we learn in ensembles and the benefits of doing so, it also highlights the need for more research into the impact of programmes at a community level. The challenge for these studies is gathering longitudinal data, and that much of the research to date is completed by sole researchers.

Music is quite unique in the way that it works with multiple parts of the brain (cf Levitin & Tirivolas (2009); Koelsch (2011); Hyde, Lerch, Norton et al. (2009)). If we recall the trumpet duet that was discussed at the beginning of this paper, there is something unique to music as a subject: it has an enormous 'conceptual geography' as a literary theorist might put it. To think musically is to think about the world just as Pythagoras thought. The El Sistema global report summarises the impacts of music making on individuals into the below 32 points:

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Attention	listening skills
Autonomy	motivation
commitment	obedience
concentration	optimism
confidence/self-efficacy	perseverance
coping	personhood
determination	positive attitudes towards school
discipline	pride
effort	raised aspirations
emotional well-being	resilience
engagement with learning	responsibility
expression	Self-concept
focus	Self-esteem
happiness	Self-regulation
health	time-management
life satisfaction	well-being
	(Creech et al., 2016)

We know that musical activity is particularly good for literacy, for example, Moreno et al. 2011 showed that verbal intelligence and executive control improves in children that engage in musical activity. There is so much positive research into why music education should be central and not peripheral, but we think that part of the challenge that all music educators face is articulating what is special about music in comparison to say, sport, or dance or drama. Sistema Scotland has been studied by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health since 2013. Their findings are absolutely positive, though they too are aware of how any music project is 'likely to be optimised when embedded alongside effective physical and economic regeneration and a range of good public service provision.' (GCPH, 2016). So, in answer to the central question of this paper, can music change lives, well of course it can, we all know that, but an important part of StAMP will be contributing to the global efforts of articulating the importance of music and music education to the whole of society, and in particular Scotland.

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How does STAMP contribute to Music Education in Scotland?

The high point for music education and instrumental teaching in the Scottish state system was in 2008, and it came about because of the enlightened funding policies towards education and health of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, born in Kirkcaldy, who is an unsung hero amongst our politicians of whatever political hue – Gordon Brown. At that time there were around 1200 instrumental teachers in Scotland. In the age of austerity since the Global Financial Crisis, that number has about halved, although the number of students being given weekly lessons has increased by 10% to over 60,000. Tuition fees of up to £524 annually have been introduced although our biggest cities, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee are still free, and 19,000 of those pupils get free lessons because they are on free school meals. In Scotland learning an instrument is still education and its delivered in school during school hours. I can't think of anywhere else – even Finland or Norway – where this happens. It's always after hours or weekends. In our nearest neighbour, England, learning an instrument is culture, not education, and it is delivered out of school in a music hub. Over Scotland, the budgets of local authorities aggregate up to a taxpayer spend of 24 million pounds on instrumental music services. In England the Arts Council just trumpeted a raise of the spend on music tuition through hubs of 4 million to 79 million. Per capita, the spend in Scotland is significantly more than that in England: if England were to spend as much as Scotland on instrumental tuition, they would have needed to increase the amount to around 275 million. But the situation in Scotland is precarious: budgetary pressures and ensuing insecurities and instabilities are becoming unbearable, and our hard-pressed music services, including the excellent one in Fife run by Sandra Taylor, need all the help they can get. The appetite for music lessons amongst the young is enormous. The MEPG WGON report calculated that 100,000 more kids would take lessons given the opportunity. We hope that StAMP's contribution to Music education in Scotland will be that other centres of learning in Scotland will follow St Andrews example of putting social responsibility at the centre of their strategy and including schools and communities in their orbit of engagement and life-long learning.