

StAMP Brass Camp Evaluation Report

Camp set up

St Andrews Music Participation (StAMP) is a five-year music education project in Fife that aims to support and invigorate the cultural heritage of brass playing in schools, in the community, and across the world. The project is a partnership between the University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre, Fife Music Service, Fife Brass Bands and The Wallace Collection.

In 2020 we had to cancel several events for the local brass community and young people as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. We decided to provide an opportunity for brass players of all ages and abilities to come together, play music, and learn about brass instruments in an inspiring digital environment as well as start some beginners off with our newly purchased polycarbonate natural trumpets which were sitting in storage. The project was called the **StAMP Brass Camp**, a play on the experiences that one may have had at summer band camps, or through attendance at large summer music festivals, which music lovers attend en masse.

We entered into the project with the confidence that similar online initiatives that ran during the pandemic had been successful (for example, those instigated by the Benedetti Foundation), though we were unsure of the demand for such initiatives from brass players. The StAMP management group agreed that extending the aims of the project to an online and international audience would need to be treated somewhat as an experiment, and regardless of the participation levels, we would be developing the capacity of the project for potential blended delivery in the future and creating an archive of resources. Three intertwined principles were at the centre of all the content that was delivered and all planning decisions:

- 1) The offer of the brass camp was focused not on orchestral or band instruments or any specific repertoire, but rather a broad and borderless definition of brass instruments and the plurality of the music that is performed by them, and the diversity of the people who play them.
- 2) That outstanding performers and experts will, in their own way, be engaging for audiences of all ages and abilities.
- 3) That the learning experience for everyone on the course would be different to anything they had before. We believed that mixed ability groups will learn not from a sequential and prescribed curriculum, but rather from rich experiences which, as Pinar (1975) suggested, allow for the learner to simultaneously reconsider their past experiences in comparison to the present so that they can reimagine their future.

The camp was promoted digitally which included paid advertising on Facebook via the university's Music Centre page and direct e-mailing to local brass groups and teachers in Fife and the surrounding area. The promotional campaign material consisted of an e-flier which was followed up by a series of 'meet the team' videos and additional digital content posted on social media over a two-week period. The paid post reached 13,600 people directly and 62,538 in total. There were 298 post engagements and 426 shares.

Sign up to the camp was through the completion of an online registration form and participants were asked to join a camp 'tent' by self-selecting the standard of their playing and their instrument. Tent one was for beginners who could play up to five notes, and tent four for advanced players of approximately grade 6 standard and above. This allowed the camp organisers to arrange the repertoire and ensure there were available parts for everyone to join in at an appropriate level.

A further, and major aspect of the camp that related to our pre-covid ambitions included an opportunity for local children in Fife to learn the natural trumpet completely from scratch from their homes. Due to the online delivery, we expanded this reach to include Clackmannanshire, Tayside and Perth & Kinross. The programme, Discovering Brass, involved two introductory lessons before the camp, participation in the main camp, and a follow up programme of twelve lessons and participation in an online concert. This replaced our planned in-school activity for 2020 and is an ongoing part of the project and evaluated separately.

Camp delivery

The brass camp took place on three consecutive Saturdays; 7, 14, and 21 of July 2020, from 2-4pm (GMT) with additional 'fringe' events during the weekdays in between.

The camp was delivered by Laidlaw Music Centre staff, its ensemble in residence, The Wallace Collection, emerging ensemble Solstice Brass, and a number of renowned musicians and leading academics from the brass world; Marco Blaauw, Christine Chapman, Trevor Herbert and Arnold Myres. The camp combined playing with talks and panel discussions. We also developed a fringe programme for participants which included masterclasses, films, interviews, and a quiz.

In total, 155 people signed up for the camp and 76 children and young people took part in Discovering Brass making a total of 231 camp attendees. The participants came from all over the world; Brazil, Russia, Germany, China, Ireland and four different states of the USA. 111 Participants came from 21 local authority areas of Scotland and 22% of participants were from Fife, where the university is based.

The camp was delivered via Zoom. Zoom codes and passwords were distributed to all participants in advance by email and information on how to use Zoom, prepare for the camp and all music parts were downloadable from the StAMP website. The camp included playing in large and small groups (sectionals) using the breakout room function on Zoom and rooms were allocated to individuals according to their instrument and standard. Playing was interspersed with talks and discussions on specific topics. The longer in-depth talks took place at the end of the camp so that younger participants could choose to leave without missing any of the playing. We also collaborated with Marco Blaauw on his international research project Global Breath based on sounds of lip-blown instruments from across the world.

Full programme details:

	11 July	18 July	25 July
1.45pm	Zoom waiting room enabled. Time to get ready.		
1.55pm	Camp open, join the meeting.		
2pm	Welcome and massed warm up		
2.10pm	Sectional rehearsals	Sectional rehearsals	Global Breath with Marco Blaauw and Christine Chapman
2.40pm	'The Beginnings of Brass' – Presentation by Peter Holmes	'Sounding Brass' – Presentation by Arnold Myers	'Seven Big Things' – Presentation by Trevor Herbert
2.50pm	Sectional rehearsals	Sectional rehearsals	Play through of all Camp repertoire
3.20pm	Massed band play Band Camp Blues	Global Breath with Marco Blaauw and Christine Chapman	
3.30pm	Campfire Discussion: Peter Holmes discussing 'The Beginnings of Brass' with Trevor Herbert, Arnold Myers and Bede Williams.	Campfire Discussion: Trevor Herbert, Arnold Myers, Tony George and John Wallace discussing Historically Informed Performance.	Campfire Discussion: Peter Holmes, Marco Blaauw and Christine Chapman discussing <i>Global Breath</i> .
4pm	Camp ends	Camp ends	Camp ends

Camp participants were invited to record themselves playing along with the repertoire and to submit these videos for inclusion in a finale concert that premiered live on Facebook on Wednesday 29 July. We had approximately 400 separate submissions for inclusion in this concert.

Participation rates:

Camp Week 1	188
Camp Week 2	156
Camp Week 3	149
Masterclass with Ian Bousfield	6
Performance class week 1	6
Performance class week 2	5
Camp Quiz	30
Total participations	540

The finale concert was watched on Facebook 2,600 times and reached 4,259 people with 662 engagements. The concert also received 490 views on YouTube. The Ian Bousfield masterclass video received 2,900 views on Facebook, and 1,100 views on YouTube. Total reach 8,785 people.

Camp evaluation

We invited all camp participants to complete an evaluation online. 52 people completed the form (22% of participants) and the evaluation is based upon this data. We received additional feedback and comments via email and on social media that also make up some of the quotes included.

Overall, the camp received an average rating of 4.35 out of five, with 61% marking it 4/5 or 5/5. These statistics were generally the same for the rating of the tutors (average 4.64 out of five) and the camp information and organisation (4.75 out of five).

The different components of the camp were rated for their suitability to online delivery, also out of five. Again, the marking of these components was fairly consistent with very few scores of 1 and 2 suggesting that we successfully managed to transfer learning and participation to the online environment.

The percentage of 5/5 scores were as follows:

Warm-ups 64%, sectionals 65%, video presentations 46%, campfire discussions 43%, masterclass with Ian Bousfield 71%, film Screenings (on Facebook) 60%, performance classes 70%, participating in finale concert 58%.

We asked for comments on the best/most useful aspect of the camp for individuals, along with the least useful. The answers to this were fairly mixed, but with some overall trends in thought. In the 'least useful' aspects, the most comments (11 people) were connected to the campfire discussions and talks, followed by issues connected to technology and internet provision (8 people):

"[The least useful aspects were] the presentations in between sectionals, because I was enjoying the sectionals so much."

"The presentations seemed more geared for adults/teens, dry for youngsters just starting out."

"It was quite a steep learning curve to master all the technology but now we have done that next time should be easier, especially if we don't have laggy Internet!"

"It's unfortunate zoom had audio lagging problems during sectionals but that didn't stop us. Sectionals were great!"

For the 'most useful' aspect of the camp, 12 people commented on the sectional rehearsals and 11 were in relation to the discovering brass programme and getting to try the trumpet for the first time:

"Being in a small sectional groups at the right level and being able to work on the music with our tutor."

"The sections were more personal and individual, would have preferred if they lasted longer."

"The input from and involvement of professional musicians was excellent. I enjoyed the group sessions and playing along with the backing tracks."

We also had some touching comments in relation to isolation and appreciation of playing with others during lockdown:

"At last, the opportunity to play along with others at this time of isolation."

"Playing with other Brass players and learning new music without having to travel 100s of miles online worked very well."

"I'm shielding [and] over the years have missed out on opportunities to learn for health reasons. This course was fantastic."

We asked participants if they signed up to the camp specifically because of the lockdown; 63% responded yes. 77% said they would consider signing up to a similar camp in the future and 75% said they would attend a future one-off online workshop. We asked participants whether we should consider restricting numbers for future online workshops and we had a pretty even split between answers of yes, no, and not sure, leaving this question inconclusive.

Future topics for online workshops that participants would be interested in included jazz (4 responses), historic brass instruments and playing (4 responses), and workshops on specific aspects of technique such as developing tone, breathing, articulation, vibrato and muting. There were also suggestions of instrument maintenance, practise techniques, and learning styles.

Finally, 85% of evaluation respondents found the camp inspiring and 69% felt their brass playing had improved. Some of the overall comments received were as follows:

"Fantastic camp! Thank you so much."

"A highlight of lockdown for us!"

"This was so fascinating! I never even thought I'd be interested in this ancient history and culture that we have as brass players, but I want to learn more now!"

"It gave me a reason to practice, and really enjoyed learning more about brass history including instruments."

"You all handled everything brilliantly, excellent composition throughout, Tony [was] totally brilliant with kids, great tone level and fun for them. So pleased my daughter has had this experience and could go on to continue with brass!"

"I just wanted to say thanks to all the teachers and sectional runners because they were fab and really lovely!"

"Loved seeing the variety of ages of the players, from the kids to the old ones like myself."

"[My son] loved the camp each week, the lessons and talks have been fantastic. He really enjoyed taking part in global breath yesterday. He loved hearing the pieces from different tents & participants & he finished feeling really excited."

The camp exceeded our expectation in terms of the numbers of people who took part and their enthusiasm for the activity during the lockdown period. We were also encouraged by the interest in discussion and playing providing a wholistic overview of brass in a musical, historical, social, and anthropological context.

The most exciting aspect of the camp was the inclusion of our 76 beginner trumpet players on Discovering Brass who began, and are continuing, to learn their instrument entirely online. In December 62 children opted to continue their weekly lessons with players from The Wallace Collection, an 82% retention rate.

“It was hugely impressive to see so many active participants engaging in learning a brass instrument and inspiring too. There was genuine excitement in the air which seemed mutual from both students and tutors. Hard to imagine this kind of vibe could be possible in a virtual context - but it was!”

“This has been an absolutely amazing experience. With lockdown, unfortunately our state music lessons ceased and motivation to practise music was lost. This opportunity inspired my son to pick up his instrument every day! We found Sandy (&the others) to be very kind and encouraging and positive feedback really gave him a boost so that he wanted to play more. Even though his playing wasn't perfect, he (unusually) was happy to be recorded as Sandy had said to him that it didn't matter if there were mistakes, just play what you can.”

Delivery of this camp has strengthened our confidence and ability to engage and connect people from around the world and digital events will become a permanent feature of the StAMP project, something we would not have considered pre-pandemic. We will also continue our commitment to nurture brass playing in our local area by continuing to deliver Discovering Brass lessons, currently still online, but moving to in-person as soon as we can.

Our digital 'camp' has transformed to become the StAMP Virtual Conservatoire; an event designed to continue the aims and principles that underpin StAMP that we will offer a couple of times each year of the project. This concept has been inspired by the Italian Renaissance concept of *conservatorio* in which engagement with music was valued not only for the sake of musical development, but also for the way in which music aids human thriving.

Our original aims for the camp were to create an environment that was a broad and borderless definition of brass instruments, the plurality of the music that is performed by them, and the diversity of the people who play them. Our evaluation suggests our experiment worked; we developed our project capacity through the delivery of online provision and blended delivery will continue to be a part of our offering (when we are out of the pandemic). We met our aim to engage audiences of all ages and abilities from across the globe and inspire people through brass thanks to the expertise of our outstanding performers and speakers.

The brass camp has certainly reimagined our future as we begin to shape the content of StAMP in 2021.

Report written by members of the StAMP Management Group in December 2020.