European Project MUS4VIP
MUS4VIP (Music for visually impaired persons)
Nr. 2012- 4250

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

New perspectives for music studies for visually impaired persons
Verona, Feb 27 2015

Verona, 27 February 2015 - 15:00
Sala dei Cavalieri
Palazzo Ridolfi, stradone Maffei 3 Verona

Rationale

Although music is the only art totally accessible to visually impaired people, music literacy in Europe and not only in Europe is suffering a dramatic decline.
Braille was invented originally in order to allow blind musicians to be able to "read" their scores, and not only to play by ear (1829). Until the end of the '70s music studies offered valuable job opportunities to

thousands of blind musicians all over Europe, and Braille music libraries / centres / services were present in almost every country, even smaller countries. The new trend in learning methodology, as well as the schooling model based on integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools, have had a negative impact on music literacy, as well as on other curricular subjects such as science, and on manual skills. The tendency of our school system to adopt learning methodologies based on variety of sources (books, internet, multimedia), along with the trend towards massive use of non predictable sources (newspaper, photocopies, etc.), turn out to be a significant obstacle for VI students trying to "stay in step" with normally sighted schoolchildren. It must be considered though that "keeping in step" is one of the main factors for self esteem, and this in turn is one of the keys to success in the learning process. With music literacy, the main difficulty is the enormous difference between Braille music notation and conventional musical notation, a difference much greater than that between literary Braille and conventional literary notation. In fact, common literary notation and its Braille counterpart follow the same model; in other words a normal text can easily be converted / translated into Braille, even using commercial OCR software. This means that no specific preparation is needed in order to scan a good quality text and to translate it into Braille.

The situation with regard to music is very different.

Braille reading is based on haptic (tactile) exploration carried on by our finger tips through well structured motoric behaviours. The nature of our sense of touch means that Braille symbols should preferably be arranged in linear sequence. Music symbols in conventional notation are arranged in a 2-dimensional matrix, in order to visualise the pitch and time in music.

Braille music notation is the most effective means for a blind person to "read" his / her score. Through Braille the blind musician can access every musical element, including not only notes and rests, but also all elements conveying information about how to play / sing a given score (breaths, fingering, use of bow / string), as well as all structural information (theme, variation, etc.). Music literacy requires, first of all, well trained teachers who are capable of introducing the visually impaired student to Braille music notation. Experienced teachers are indispensable for this but our school system is not always able to provide such teachers.

This lack of well trained teachers and also the high cost / production time of Braille material means that the majority of visually impaired students do not have equal opportunities in accessing music studies. Another obstacle is the fact that the blind student must use his / her hands in order to access a Braille music score. This makes it impossible for him / her to read and play at the same time although for singers and for solfege this difficulty is not so relevant. Blind players have to learn their scores by heart beforehand.

Thirdly, the Braille representation of a score cannot display the structure of the score, that is, a Braille music page is like a town with no windows and no signs, but with all points of interest like every town. This means that the Braille reader can find every single element while he or she explores the page, but there is practically no way to offer him an overview of the whole score or of a single fragment (theme, for example).

Learning music is clearly a major challenge but, nonetheless, thousands of blind people have earned their living from music and some of them are well known pianists, organists, even conductors.

IT can open a new age

Mus4vip project is the last milestone of a series of European projects focused on accessible music for visually impaired people.

The majority of the members of MUSIC4VIP consortium have been cooperating for over 10 years within these project, such as Play2 (2001-2003, Ebrass 2004-2005, Contrapunctus 2006-2009).

All these projects have drawn benefits from three main favourable circumstances:

a) Assistive technologies allow effective man - machine interaction based on all possible combinations of different senses, that is sight, hearing and touch, through specific peripherals, including normal screen, paper Braille, paperless Braille, audio files, audio captions / description of musical elements.

b) Music xml format. Music xml format is a de facto standard markup language, that can describe a music score in a very detailed manner. The description of a given score can be stored in electronic form and can then be treated by over 100 different commercial programmes in the domain of music editing.

c) Braille Music xml format. This is a description of a Braille music score fully compatible with the above mentioned Music xml format.

The two mentioned formats, music xml and Braille music xml have proved to be the basis for effective interaction between visually impaired musicians / students and their sighted counterparts (teachers, schoolmates); furthermore these two formats are the basis of an effective interaction between man and machine in accessing music.

The above mentioned European projects, if we consider them a-posteriori, can legitimately be considered as a sort of mosaic, where every single project has brought its specific contribution to the overall outcome.

In particular, Play2 produced the first version of Braille Music Editor, now BME2.

Ebrass produced a valuable accessible online music library, with over 700 titles;

Contrapunctus produced the Braille Music XML format, Braille Music Reader (BMR), as well as the program *Resonare*, a Braille music editing program which produces files in Braille XML format, readable with BMR.

All these resources and facilities make up a new learning environment, whose main characteristics are:
- flexibility
- multisensorial approach
- more effective two-way communication (e.g. VI student with sighted counterpart - teacher or classmate).

The need now is to learn how to draw the best possible advantages from these perspectives.

This is exactly the main goal of Music4vip.

Music4vip has endeavoured to involve both teachers, and self learners in order to improve available products / services, knowing that good ideas are generally the outcomes of many brains at work around shared problems.

Event's main goals

Drawing attention to the work that has been carried out, in particular its core ideas, its achieved outcomes and new perspective, within the framework of European cooperation and its benefits for European citizens.

Improving the level of awareness among School Authorities and policy makers about the meaning and importance of music literacy, in the light of a model of education that considers all potentialities of the individual, especially with regard to visually impaired students.

Illustrate the main problems connected with music literacy for VI students, as well as traditional solutions and the innovative learning / teaching tools which have been realized within the MUSIC4VIP European project.

Target groups
- Students attending the Music Lyceums
- Blind persons and associations of and for the blind
- Their families
- University (research, education, teacher training departments)
- Music schools / academies / institutions
- Local school Authorities
- Local policy makers
- School assistants
- Social workers
- local press
- specialist press (magazine for teachers, for musicians
- association of professionals (teachers, musicians)

Event realized thanks to:

Apertura convegno

15:00 Saluto di Benvenuto
Prof. Matteo Sansone
(Dirigente Scolastico Liceo Montanari)

15:05 Politiche culturali e educazione musicale: presente e futuro.
Senatrice Elena Ferrara
Membro della 7ª Commissione permanente
(Istruzione pubblica, beni culturali)

I Sessione

Moderatore **Prof. Giuseppe Nicotra**
(Ufficio Interventi Educativi UST di Verona)

15:20 Alfabetizzazione musicale e la sua importanza per una formazione efficace degli studi per i non vedenti.
Prof. Antonio Quatraro
(Presidente IRIFOR Firenze)

15:35 Musica Braille e nuove tecnologie, soluzioni didattiche musicali possibili
M° Luigi Mariani
(docente di pianoforte presso il conservatorio di musica statale di Torino)

15:50 L'educazione musicale dei ciechi nel Regno Unito
Mr. Jonathan Darnborough
(Director of Studies in Music Departmental Lecturer in Music - Oxford University)

16:05 Nuove tecnologie per la produzione dei testi musicali in formato Braille elettronico
Prof. Giovanni Bertoni
(Amministratore Arca progetti srl)

16:15 Le codifiche musicali digitali e le implicazioni didattiche pratiche per i giovani non vedenti
Dott. Nadine Baptiste
(IRIT – University Paul Sabatier Toulouse)

16:30 Produzione dei testi musicali in Braille, l'esperienza della biblioteca polacca Edwina Kowalika
Ms. Helena Jakubowska
(Presidente biblioteca musicale Braille EK)

16:45 Le nuove tecnologie per la musica accessibile: come queste nuove opportunità possono essere sfruttate in modo da aumentare il livello di motivazione verso gli studi musicali nelle giovani generazioni
M° Leopoldo Armellini
(Direttore Conservatorio di Musica di Padova)

17:00 L'accesso agli studi Musicali per i non vedenti in Germania
M° Horst Großnick
(Istituto dei ciechi di Colonia)

17:15 **Pausa**

II Sessione

17:30 Tavola Rotonda
Partecipanti: tutti i relatori
Ogni partecipante può avere solo 3 minuti per la sua risposta.

Q1 Qual è l'innovazione più rilevante introdotta dalle nuove tecnologie?

Q2 Quali possono essere le aspettative in termini di miglioramento delle legislazioni nazionali in materia di studi di musica per gli studenti non vedenti?

Q3 in che modo il progetto MUSIC4VIP ha contribuito alla cittadinanza europea?

18:30 Discussione Aperta

19:30 Conclusioni
Prof. Antonio Quatraro

19:30 - 20:30 Concerto pianistico di giovani musicisti ciechi

Per ulteriori informazioni contattare via email: giuseppe.nicotra@istruzioneverona.it