

PROJECT REPORT

Project name: Musical experiences of people with hearing disabilities. Identification of musical habits, adaptive needs and accessibility recommendations for music listening and music making. Pilot workshops

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BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Over the past five years, FILARMED as a cultural organization has been involved in developing ways to promote the participation of usually marginalized groups in the musical world. The Soy Músico program (I'm a musician) is one of our programs in this line. This program was designed for people neurodiverse and/or with disabilities (16 years old and older) to strengthen their identity as musicians, in the orchestra context. We also strive for a shift of focus in favor of wider actions in the direction of accessibility, participation and accommodations for people with disabilities in the arts. The program used to be open only to people already participating in music programs at different cultural organizations of the city. But given its impact and good results, we decided to open cycles of monthly open workshops to reach out to a larger population. We noticed in the process, that there is an interest in the community of people with hearing disabilities to engage in the program. Since Soy Músico incorporates at its core the need to understand how participants relate with music and music making, our project is to do two pilot workshops (90 minutes each) to explore different ways participants relate to music and music making, and find ways (if identified as a need) of adapting musical experiences according to their needs.

According to the National Health Questionnaire of 2021 (National Administrative Department of Statistics), in Colombia almost 500.000 people identified themselves as having a hearing disability. Almost 35% have had no access to education, their inclusion in the labor market is very low (around 16% according to estimations of the health ministry), and around 80% of the community has low incomes.

In Colombia, Law 1618 (2013) on article 17, deals with the protection of cultural rights for people with disabilities in the country. However not too many Initiatives are visible In this direction. Data is scarce at the moment, but an article found in this topic look into the problem of the exercise of such rights by identifying cultural barriers that stand in the way of a cultural paradigm shift that will increase the full exercise of cultural rights for people with disabilities (Leah and Ferri, 2022). The barriers identified by the authors for the European context include: Lack of effective/adequate legislation, policies, and legal standards, Lack of funding and/or of adequate services, Negative attitudes, Lack of accessibility, Lack of consultation with, and involvement of, persons with disabilities in cultural organisations. Our project is to start breaching the gap in some of these barriers, so that moving ahead we can increase accessibility of the people with hearing disabilities to cultural life, and specifically in our case to musical experiences.

Within the Soy Musico framework, the project aims to understand how people with hearing disabilities in our communities relate to music and music making, to find ways (if identified as a need) of adapting musical experiences according to their needs, and to have basic recommendations for the orchestra in order to improve accessibility of people with hearing disabilities to our events.

WORKSHOP PLANNING

PARTICIPANTS: The workshops were organized following the dynamics that have been previously used by the orchestra when offering open workshops for people with other disabilities. The process included open call through the orchestra's social media; production of an invitation video in Colombian Sign Language; list of institutions, organizations and associations already working with people with hearing disabilities and direct contact through calls and emails to each one of them; personal visits to some of the institutions that require further information.

PRODUCTION:

Venue: It was decided to organize the event at the main rehearsal hall of the orchestra at the Palermo Cultural complex. This hall has a section with wooden floor that can be helpful for sound perception by people with hearing disabilities. Also, all orchestra instruments can be available for the workshop as this is the main rehearsal hall for the orchestra.

Facilitators: Four music therapists were involved in the planning and facilitation of the workshop. Also two Colombian Sign Language interpreters and four orchestra musicians participated directly during the implementation. The musicians had a sensibilization meeting with the project coordinator in order to plan the activity and fully understand the goals of the workshop in terms of accessibility, given priority to understand the best way for the participants to be engaged in the music and the music making.

Design: The design was thought of following Soy Musico experiences, adapted to what the literature and the interpreters identified as accessibility needs of people with hearing disabilities. From what we know from our usual public, people with hearing disabilities don't tend to attend orchestral concerts, or take lessons on symphonic instruments. The core of the workshop was built around the experience of listening to different orchestra instruments, and participate in the music making with these instruments and small percussion instruments. Also a part of the workshop was devoted to sign language singing. A following workshop has already been planned to use Kodaly musical signs in combination with the orchestral instruments to model and enhance understanding of the relationship between vibrations and tones in music. This workshop has not taken place yet, due to different conditions that have halted the possibility of implementation (e.g: teacher's strikes, interruption of water supply on the day of the workshop, etc)

WORKSHOP 1

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE ACTIVITY, THE FACILITATORS, THE INTERPRETERS AND THE PARTICIPANTS.

2. MUSICAL TASTE AND HABITS QUESTIONNAIRES. The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires prepared in order to better understand their musical tastes and habits and possible adaptations of live music events to their needs.

2. INTRODUCTION OF THE INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THE WORKSHOP

3. EXPLORATION OF AN INSTRUMENT PLAYED BY THE ORCHESTRA MUSICIAN. The musician played on his instrument different short pieces. The pieces were contrasting in tempo, character, melodic or rhythmic variety. The participants were asked to find the place in the space where they could better perceive the sound of the instrument.

4. RELATING TO THE INSTRUMENT. After finding the best spot for perception different activities around improvised movement to music, description of the qualities of the sound through sign language, and participants requests to the musician were done. For some of the instruments (i.e: all the instruments from the percussion line) participants also took turns to play the instruments themselves.

5. MUSIC MAKING. Body percussion and small percussion instruments were used for a group music making including the orchestra instrument and all the participants.

STEPS 3,4,5 were repeated for the different instruments

6. SINGING IN COLOMBIAN SIGN LANGUAGE. With the assistance of a choral director of a sign language choir, a group of the participants sang a song using CSL, and afterwards participants taught the facilitators some of the signs, so that facilitators could sing too.

WORKSHOP 2

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE ACTIVITY, THE FACILITATORS, THE INTERPRETERS AND THE PARTICIPANTS

2. INTRODUCTION OF THE INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THE WORKSHOP

3. EXPLORATION OF AN INSTRUMENT PLAYED BY THE ORCHESTRA MUSICIAN. The musician played on his instrument different short pieces. The pieces were contrasting in tempo, character, melodic or rhythmic variety. The participants were asked to find the place in the space where they could better perceive the sound of the instrument.

4. RELATING TO THE INSTRUMENT. After finding the best spot for perception different activities around improvised movement to music, description of the qualities of the sound through sign language, and participants requests to the musician were done. For some of the instruments (i.e: all the instruments from the percussion line) participants also took turns to play the instruments themselves

5. LEARNING THE KODALY SIGNS. Using a large print board with the Kodaly signs teach the signs. The melodic instruments will model the notes on their instruments as we learn the signs and play around with them

6. COMPOSING WITH THE KODALY SIGNS. In groups the participants will compose a short musical piece with notation for duration of note (long/short), tempo (fast/slow) and tone. The musicians will support the activity and play the piece the groups composed.

6. MUSIC MAKING. Using the Kodaly signs, and CSL the group will complement the compositions and make a group interpretation of them.

STEPS 3,4,5 were repeated for the different Instruments

IDENTIFY NEEDS AND HABITS RELATED TO MUSIC IN THE COMMUNITY WITH HEARING DISABILITIES

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was design by the coordinator of the project with input from the team of music therapists. It includes 5 close questions and 6 open questions. We were able to have 20 questionnaires filled. We found an unexpected difficulty in the fact that some people with hearing disabilities do not read or write. And we had planned on giving written versions of the questionnaires for written responses.

How many times a day do you use (consume) music?

54,5% of respondents report using music 1 to 5 times a day

36,4% of respondents report using music more than 10 times a day

9,09 % of respondents report not using music during the day

When you use music, which application do you use more frequently?

63,6% report using youtube

9,09% report using Facebook

9,09% report using Instagram

9,09% did not report an app

Not all respondents reported the device they used. But 3 of them reported using a music speaker, 1 using the computer, and 1 using the Phone for this apps.

What do you like the most about music?

This was a question were participants could list up to 3 things they like about music. The list below includes their responses and how many participants listed each item as a response.

The rhythm: 10 participants

The lyrics: 8 participants

The vibrations: 6 participants

To dance: 6 participants

Try to play Instruments: 6 participants

Watch the music: 4 participants

Ensamble, Interpretation, the release of stress, use In church: 1 participant each Item.

Do you play an instrument?

81,8% report they don't play an instrument

18.18% report they play an instrument (the guitar)

Are you part of a musical group?

54,54% report they are not part of a musical group

45,45% report they take part in a musical group

Who are your favorite artists?

This was a question where participants could list up to 3 artists who are their favorites. The artists were then categorized according to music genre, and the list presented below is the list of genres and how many participants listed at least one artist on each genre.

Christian music: 5 participants

Colombian Popular music: 5 participants

Urban Music: 6 participants

Pop: 4 participants

Opera: 1 participant

No response: 4 participants

Have you gone to concerts in the past year?

54,54% report they went to a concert in the past year

45,45% report they have not gone to a concert

Have you ever gone to an orchestra concert?

54,54% report they have not

45,45% report they have gone to an orchestra concert

If you responded yes to either of the last two questions, which were your favorite concerts?

This was a question where participants could list up to 3 of their favorite concerts. The concerts were then categorized according to music genre, and the list presented below is the list of genres and how many participants listed at least one concert on each genre.

Orchestra concerts: 2 participants

Popular Colombian music: 4 participants

Salsa, Opera, Christmas: 1 participant each one.

If you have not gone to concerts, what are the reasons?

This was an open question. Most respondents listed reasons as phrases. The phrases were put together in categories presented below

Have not had the chance: 4

I was living at a small town. No concerts: 1

Lack of access to cultural agenda: 4

How do you think that the experience of live music can be improved for your needs and taste?

This was an open question. Most respondents listed reasons as phrases. The phrases were put together in categories presented below

Music learning experiences for people with hearing disabilities: 8 participants

No response: 8 participants

Free concerts: 6 participants

More Interaction with musicians: 5 participants

Participation of people with hearing disabilities: 2 participants

Weekend programming: 2 participants

More affordable tickets: 2 participants

The Implementation of the musical taste and habits questionnaire requires a future adaptation given what was mentioned earlier about the need for a sign language version of questionnaire and forms of response. To implement focus groups would be another way of implementing the questionnaire. But given the difficulties to approach the community, perhaps sign language versions of the questionnaire would be more advisable. We believe in the importance of continuing to use the questionnaire whenever we work with a different group of participants with hearing disabilities, and plan to do so until we reach approx. 100 questionnaires to have a better understanding of the issues presented in the questions in relationship with the population.

From the difficulty to find participants for our workshops, and the responses to the questionnaire we have come to understand some of the current barriers for the participants to approach music closer. It does not appear that many people with hearing disabilities actively seek musical experiences beyond watching musical videos. From the participants' comments during the implementation and their responses is evident that things like playing an instrument, or being able to attend live music events is something that the participants don't usually do, but they would like to do. None of our participants have had previous direct contact with Instruments from the orchestra. Two of them had gone to orchestra concerts, but had not been close to the instruments.

Given this, everything was surprising for them. From the size, textures, materials of the Instruments; to seeing the movements of the Interpreters. Of course the way each Instrument is perceived was perhaps the most surprising experience. With the support of the Interpreters, we learned how the participants described the sound of the Instruments. A french horn that is felt vividly in the stomach. A gong that is sharp and is felt in your entire body. A timpani that is felt deeply everywhere (even in your head). A vibraphone that despite its name, does not really transmit vibrations efficiently and therefore does not produce the most significant experience. This experience also was new for the music therapists and the musicians. To relate with the Instruments more from the experience of the body with the vibrations and the vision with the movements, than from the sound itself. It was clear from our experience that some orchestral Instruments are indeed interesting for people with hearing disabilities, and building from this and the results of the questionnaires

full orchestral experiences and other “hands on” musical experiences could also be interesting for this community.

The relevance that the rhythm, the lyrics, the movement and the visual cues in the music have for the experience was evident. But it was also interesting to explore the melodic dimension of the music. At first the expectations revolved more around the loudest percussion instruments. But within the workshops, and given the opportunity to walk around the space and find places where the perception of the vibrations of the instruments were optimum, it was also evident that the melodic dimension of wind instruments as well as percussion instruments like the timpani was also an important component of the experience. The participants responded to this part of the experience with surprise, and through CSL explained how they felt the different sounds. Expressions like: waves coming and going, or sound that becoming “thinner or thicker”, or something that I can feel like a heart pumping, were used to describe the way this was felt. It was notably important to have experienced musicians playing the instruments so that they were able to “play around” different sound qualities of their instruments and provide a richer experience for the participants.

One appreciation we got from a couple of participants was how for them, the experience of music had been quite mediated by the visual component, and how this experience had been much more a “whole body” experience. The live music experience added an awareness of the proprioceptive dimension of the music experience.

Some of the participants referred to how they usually approach music watching videos and how the focus is more on the basic beat (amplified) and the lyrics interpreted in sign language. This experience plays an important role in deciding musical tastes. Lyrics that are relatable, or beats that are enjoyable for dancing or feeling it strongly are decisive factors. And in the workshop they explored music in a completely different way which was enjoyable for them. Even though for the most part, the music did not have lyrics.

A couple of participants that had been previously in orchestra concerts also made the point in how different the music is felt when given the opportunity to be closer to the instruments and to find a space where each of them can perceive music better.

SO... WHAT WE LEARNED

The first thing that we learned from the experience of approaching the community of people with hearing disabilities, is that there is an interest for approaching music, musical events and music making. But that as a society we have failed in terms of designing accessible experiences for this community. From school age, deaf people are being told music classes are not a place for them. Or they are marginalized from the musical experiences within such classes. In the music world, the deaf community hardly appear in planning and production workflows. The cultural agenda is not usually accessible for this population.

Given that our mission as an orchestra is to be able to reach different communities with music, we need to begin implementing steps towards becoming a more accessible organization for this population.

On the beginnings. The usual process done by the orchestra team to open the call for participants for the workshops was harder than it usually is. We usually have a large number of participants that see our social media and register for our workshops, but this was not the case for these particular activities. Our guess speaking to the participants and interpreters is that our social media networks do not reach this population, and therefore are not useful for getting the word out. The idea of having CSL videos appears to be the most useful communication tool, but they have to include showing what actually happens at the workshops, and testimonies of the participants to increase confidence in the musical space. Also these videos need to be available not only in our social media, but also directly shared with organizations of deaf people and previous participants.

We need to recognize that given these existing barriers, an effort should be made to bring music to spaces that are safe for people in this community. We have identified an interest in our proposal from schools attending large populations of children and adolescents with hearing disabilities. We will begin bringing our workshops to such institutions in an effort to make music more accessible, and to begin to create a space of trust with our organization. We will re-assess the need to have our workshops outside our venue when we have done several workshops "out of house".

As a next step we would also like to offer access to open rehearsals for people with hearing disabilities, so that at a more relaxed environment, they can experience the instruments and find ways to relate to the live orchestral music experience. We would like to have this as a learning opportunity for us to later make focus groups on concert adaptations for hearing disabilities.

We are also trying to connect with different organizations working on technology and accessibility in the arts, to explore ideas we could use to increase accessibility in our organization.

FACILITATORS: From our experience music therapists have the competences to plan the current workshops and to train musicians into what is important to be open to in the experience of implementing the workshops. Even though we had CSL interpreters for the implementation it's desirable in the near future for the team of music therapists to take some basic course of CSL in order to be more present in the experiences. Also, for musicians participating in the activities it's important to learn basic signs (such as their names, their instrument name and some basic courtesy interaction words).

For design of workshops to follow workshop 1 and 2, It's important to incorporate people with hearing disabilities who can provide us with input on our actions and ideas for future implementations, and also who can become facilitators of the experiences.

Interpreters also play an important role on this Issue. Their constant contact with the community (and some of them being part of the community) makes them also "cultural Interpreters" on situations that require specific knowledge. One of our experiences around this, was the fact that some of our participants did not

know how to read Spanish and therefore were unable to filled out the questionnaires of habits and musical tastes.

DESIGN: The current design for workshops 1 and 2 appear to be useful In identifying how we can adapt our experiences for people with hearing disabilities.. It is advisable to give workshops 1 and 2 as a series for exploring orchestral Instruments and ways of doing music. However an adaptation could be made to simplify workshops 1 and 2, into one unique 2 hour workshop. This would cover exploration of the vibrational and visual qualities of the Instruments, music making, as well as the Kodaly signs as a way of interacting with the vibrations and tonal qualities of the Instruments.

KIT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Previous to workshops

1. Gather the team of music therapists and plan the workshop with clear roles and responsibilities. Remember the importance of being aware of the role of the interpreters and the importance of positioning themselves correctly towards the participants for those who use lip reading as a tool. Also remember the importance of being open to new ways of relating to music.
2. Create a CSL invitation video. Share it directly with organizations working with people with hearing disabilities and previous participants in the workshops. Share it also through the orchestra social media.
3. On deciding the venue for implementation consider first doing the activity at a place that is familiar to the participants. If not possible try to bring small musical experiences to such places prior to the main event as a way of building trust.
4. Contact CSL interpreters and have a briefing meeting with them. Explain the activities and define clear roles. Ask interpreters for feedback on your plans. Adapt if necessary remembering that the ones with more in depth experience with this population are them.
5. Make a preparation session with the musicians that will be participating in the activities. Give them information on music perception and their instruments. But also give them freedom to plan on music they want to share with the participants, taking into account that they want to provide a varied experience regarding the rhythmic, melodic and phrasing/textural qualities of their instruments. Share the Kodaly signs with the musicians and ask them to be familiar with it. Explain that participants will be moving around them and that they will be using CSL to communicate. Teach basic CSL signs.
6. Make a preparation session with the production team. Explain not only the workflow of the workshops, but also specific recommendations. Talk about the role of interpreters and teach basic CSL signs.

7. Prepare a CSL video version of the questionnaire. Send it to the registered participants and ask them to send their responses via email or whatsapp (in video or written versions). If somebody is unable to have access to technology, set up a time before or after the workshop to do the questionnaire.
8. Make large charts of Kodaly signs.

During the workshops

1. Make sure the facilitators team is aware of the elements discussed in the preparation meetings.
2. Have the instruments ready before the workshop and present the instruments at the beginning of the experience.
3. Make sure to provide enough space and time for participants to move around the instruments during the exploration, so that they can find the way they feel more engaged in the musical experience.
4. Make sure to provide opportunities for group music making and individual opportunities to feel a grounding pulse, and to explore at least one of the instruments.
5. Be aware of the importance of rhythm, lyrics and movement for the participants, and plan activities accordingly. But do not forget about exploring the melodic dimension of music.

After the workshops

1. Collect responses to the questionnaire and upload responses into the database.
2. Collect impressions of the participants (in their prefer way)
3. Involve interested participants in focus groups to continue planning of other activities and accessibility ideas for the orchestra.

ON BECOMING A MORE ACCESSIBLE ORCHESTRA FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING DISABILITIES

As an orchestra we are aware that we are not accessible for people with hearing disabilities. We are also aware that is not feasible to move from a non accessible environment to a fully accessible environment without a transition period. Therefore we have created a stages process to advance in our plans for accessibility.

1. Provide the planned workshops in different institutions and organizations working with people with hearing disabilities. Provide at least 1 extra workshop in 2023, and 3 workshops during 2024.
2. Plan 2 focus groups with participants from the workshops to talk about the workshops and to pitch for them ideas for accessibility in the orchestra.
3. Pilot the idea of open rehearsals for people with hearing disabilities.
4. Advance in contacting organizations working in technology in arts and disabilities to explore ideas of technologies to increase accessibility in our organization.
5. For the 2024 program the presence of one musician with hearing disabilities as part of our concert series

6. During 2024 have at least one concert that can be accessible for people with hearing disabilities (from preparation to performance. Including know before you go, team preparation, technologies, follow up).

MUSICAL TASTES AND HABITS QUESTIONNAIRE

MUSICAL TASTE AND HABITS QUESTIONNAIRE

We want to ask for your collaboration in order to get to know your musical taste and habits. In order to do so, we kindly ask you to fill out this questionnaire. This will help us to know the ways you approach to music, your habits and tastes. We also want to know your opinion on how to adapt live music events to different needs. If there is a question that we did not included in the questionnaire, but that you consider we should also include, please write it on the opposite side of the sheet and give us the answer according to your perspective. Thanks a lot for your help!

How many times a day do you use (consume) music?

1. Between 1 and 5 times
2. More than 5 times
3. I don't use music

When you use music, which application do you use more frequently? (or device?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you like the most about music?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do you play an instrument? YES NO WHICH?

Are you part of a musical group? YES NO WHICH?

Who are your favorite artists?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Have you gone to concerts in the past year? YES NO How many concerts:

Have you ever gone to an orchestra concert? YES NO

If you responded yes to either of the last two questions, which were your favorite concerts?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If you have not go to concerts, what are the reasons?

How do you think that the experience of live music can be improved for your needs and taste?

PRESS ARTICLES

The following articles were published at different Colombian media highlighting the workshops we made
<https://www.elcolombiano.com/cultura/musica/talleres-musica-personas-discapadad-auditiva-filarmed-FA21742430>

<https://hjck.com/musica/la-filarmonica-de-medellin-ofrecera-talleres-para-personas-con-discapacidad-auditiva-rg10>

<https://www.prensanet.com/filarmed/index.php?res=360&linknoticia=10950067§or=32032&codigo=744322341811>

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CtwFwocPY3m/?igshid=MTc4MmM1YmI2Ng==>

VIDEO SUMMARIZING EXPERIENCE

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/rtwzxqzgb6wosvrnecbe/SOY-M-SICO-1.mp4?rlkey=9pjnuqppf14sawv73spcurib4&dl=0>