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DEAF ENJOY MUSIC AND OVERCOME OBSTACLES



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Accessibility Strategies for the Deaf
in the Field of Music

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Introduction

Music plays a key role in culture and community life. However, deaf people often face barriers to fully experiencing music. Music and cultural organizations, as well as artists themselves, can take a number of actions to make music more accessible to the Deaf community.

The aim of the DEMOO project is to raise awareness in this area. Deaf people have the right to hear and feel music, to enjoy its benefits without social and communication barriers.

In this guide, we present a set of examples and suggestions for activities for all entities related to music, so that they can understand the needs of the deaf and open up to this part of the audience.

It is worth remembering that not all deaf people are the same. There are different degrees of deafness and different forms of communication, the choice of which may depend not only on health, but also on personal preferences.

The methods presented below may not be appropriate for every group of deaf people. When preparing an event for this community, you must gather information about the nature of the target group.



Multi-sensory music experience

Deaf people perceive music through other senses, such as touch and sight. Integrating these senses can significantly enrich their musical experience.

Sound visualization



- The rhythms and melody of a piece can be illustrated with changing colors, shapes, and lines. These dynamic images synchronize with the structure of the music.
- The screens can display changing colors and patterns that reflect changes in the key, rhythm, and tempo of the piece.
- The color and intensity of the lights can be synchronized with the rhythm and key of the piece, allowing participants to see how the music unfolds in the space.

Example: [YouTube 1](#), [YouTube 2](#), [YouTube 3](#)

Translation of texts into sign language



- Sign language interpreters perform alongside the musicians (or on large screens), conveying the lyrics of the song in a way that is visually accessible and understandable to the audience.
- This type of intervention allows deaf people to understand the content more fully.
- In addition, if a musician is recording a music video for their song, it is worth considering creating a version in which the lyrics are translated into sign language.
- It's best to organize a team of deaf and hearing interpreters.
- The hearing interpreters can help in the translation of the lyrics while the deaf interpreters can also contribute their knowledge of the deaf culture to make a correct translation, taking into account certain nuances that only a native person has integrated.
- The team of professional interpreters should have the list of songs to be played at the event in advance.

Example: [YouTube](#)

Low frequency sound (bass)

- Using low-frequency sound waves, such as bass. Using bass speakers, deaf people can feel the vibrations resulting from low tones, allowing them to experience the rhythm of the music in a physical way.
- Musicians can also use instruments that generate distinct vibrations, such as drums, percussion, double basses, or bass guitars. These instruments allow deaf people to feel the music on a tactile and vibratory level.

Example: [YouTube](#)

Vibration vests and wearable devices

- Vibrating vests and devices worn by deaf people can transform the sound of music into vibrations felt through the skin.
- Devices like the SoundBeamer allow you to experience music in a way that allows users to feel differences in tones, rhythms, and melodies.
- These types of devices are used both at home and in concerts or artistic shows intended for deaf people.

Example: [YouTube](#)

Vibrating floors and seats

- Innovative technologies allow the installation of vibrating floors or chairs that emit vibrations synchronized with the music.
- An example could be special concert halls or theaters, where the floors are equipped with vibration systems, allowing deaf people to feel the music through touch.
- A vibrating floor can also cause problems for other groups, such as the elderly. If you have such a space, clearly mark it or use barriers that provide protection but do not completely separate the deaf from the rest.

Example: [YouTube](#)





Adaptation of musical events

Adapting concerts and other musical events to the needs of deaf people requires introducing specific organizational changes.

Special zones



- Creating dedicated spaces close to the stage where deaf people can better observe the sign language interpreter, visual effects or feel the vibrations increases their comfort and engagement.
- Use magnetic loops to clean up the sound for people with T-position hearing aids.

Song lyrics and captions



- Displaying lyrics on screens during concerts or sharing them in mobile apps allows for better understanding of the content by deaf people.

Example: [YouTube](#)



Education and training

Raising awareness among musicians and music industry professionals is key to the integration of deaf people.

Workshops for musicians



- Organizing training courses teaching communication with deaf audiences and taking into account their needs in musical creation.
- An example is the activity of Dr. Anna Wojtas-Rduch, who conducts workshops on translating music into sign language, teaching musicians how to integrate PJM in their performances.

Training for sign language interpreters



- Specialised courses for interpreters that teach how to interpret music in a way that captures its emotion, rhythm and dynamics are essential to ensuring high-quality interpretation at music events.

Promoting artistic experiments



- Encouraging musicians to create projects that combine music with visuals, haptic art or technology can lead to innovative forms of expression accessible to deaf people.
- Remember that such experiences must be realistically accessible to the deaf and useful in learning and receiving music. It cannot be just fun for a pleasant time – it will not translate into their real development and participation in cultural life.

Raising public awareness



- Musicians can use their social media and platforms to educate their fans about the need to include deaf people in the world of music.
- Creating posts, videos, and articles about music accessibility can raise awareness and mobilize others to take action.

Music workshops for the deaf



- Musicians can organize workshops in which they teach deaf people how to play instruments, compose, or understand music through vibrations.
- Such classes can be held in music schools or organizations that deal with deaf people.



Collaboration with Deaf organizations and the Deaf community

Active dialogue with deaf people is essential to creating truly accessible music events.

Consultations with Deaf organizations



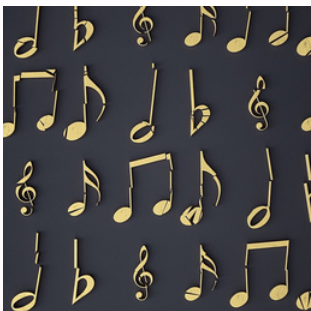
- Collaboration with entities such as the Polish Association of the Deaf or the Seventh Sense Foundation can provide valuable guidance on the needs and expectations of the deaf community.
- The organizations consulted should represent the diversity of the deaf community.
- Include deaf people who have training on accessibility for deaf people and who can validate the accessibility of the events.

Engaging Deaf Artists



- Inviting deaf performers, dancers, or DJs to participate in events promotes diversity and inspires further integration.
- An example is the SEN Art Theatre in Kielce, run by deaf people, which integrates various forms of art, including music, in its performances.

Sensory guides



- Developing materials that allow deaf people to become familiar with works beforehand through tactile or visual interpretations can significantly enrich their experience.

Let's stay in touch!



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