

INNOVATION PARTNERS UNITE WITH MUSIC INDUSTRY TO ADDRESS ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES IN DESIGN AND PRODUCTION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Virtual teams to address a series of challenges to make musical instruments and music tech more accessible for disabled people

Call for disabled and non-disabled musicians, designers, inventors and others to participate and co-create solutions is launched today

Virtual teams to present findings at hackathon event in October 2020

24 JUNE, LONDON – The Inclusive Access to Music Making Hackathon Project (IAMM Hackathon) has today launched a virtual programme, ***The Accessible Instruments Challenge***, to address a series of challenges focused on making access to adapted musical instruments, assistive equipment and music technology easier and more affordable for disabled people of all ages.

Virtual teams, including disabled and non-disabled musicians, instrument makers, designers, manufacturers, technologists, inventors, innovators, music teachers, academics and students, will be asked to address a specific set of innovation challenges that currently limit opportunities for disabled people to play and produce music.

These innovation challenges include the supply of adaptive musical instruments in schools, improving on the design of existing one-handed wind instruments and exploring the potential of virtual music making environments. The virtual teams will have four months to develop innovations and solutions to these challenges before sharing their findings at a major event to be held on Saturday 3rd October 2020.

The IAMM Hackathon is a coalition of high-profile musical experts, innovation partners and academics including the not-for-profit organisation **Creative United**, **The OHMI Trust**, which campaigns to enable people with disabilities to take part in music making, the innovation centre and workspace **Plexal**, the 3D solutions company **Hobs 3D** and **UCL**.

The innovation partners will lead the virtual teams, but wider members of the music and innovation community are being invited to join and share their expertise in the development process. Applications are open until the 17 July 2020.

To join or support a virtual team, please visit: accessibleinstruments.com/join-us

Funded by **Arts Council England**, the project is designed to raise awareness of the challenges facing people with disabilities playing traditional musical instruments and find practical solutions that will enable them to participate fully in music making.

There are currently 13.9m people with disabilities in the UK. While innovations to design more inclusive musical instruments are taking place, the IAMM Hackathon will examine how they can be produced and distributed at scale to make playing and producing music accessible to all.

IAMM Hackathon partner Plexal is currently running an inclusive innovation programme with BT and has delivered an inclusion accelerator for under-represented founders. Plexal has also partnered with UCL, Disability Rights UK and other organisations to launch the East London Inclusive Enterprise Zone at Here East, which is aimed at developing the UK's inclusive innovation sector and supporting disabled entrepreneurs.

Three of the partners - Hobs 3D, UCL (which delivers the Global Disability Innovation Hub) and Plexal - are based at **Here East**: the innovation campus found in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Fellow tenants at Here East include Scope, Love Language and Disability Rights UK, and the campus is becoming a hub for inclusive, disability-led innovation.

Mary-Alice Stack, Chief Executive at Creative United, the organisation behind the IAMM initiative commented:

"Making adaptive instruments and equipment both accessible and affordable for disabled players is an objective that Creative United has been focused on for a number of years now as part of our work as an Arts Council funded Sector Support Organisation.

We are hugely excited to be collaborating with so many brilliant designers, musicians, technologists, academics and creative thinkers who have already come forward to help us address the specific challenges that we will be focusing on over the next three months, enabling us to move a step closer to our goal for a more inclusive and accessible music industry."

Rachel Wolffsohn, General Manager at The OHMI Trust, commented:

"The IAMM Hackathon project is a brilliant opportunity to bring together fresh minds and skills to further develop the valuable work already undertaken in the manufacture of adapted instruments and 'enabling apparatus' and to make them more readily available and affordable."

Russell Gundry, Head of Innovation Strategy at Plexal, commented:

"Plexal is excited to be working with such a talented group on this innovative project. Including users creates better design and it's time that more companies woke up to this fact. What's most exciting about the [Accessible Instruments Challenge](#) is that the teams will approach the challenges from a range of perspectives, and we're also ensuring that disabled musicians and entrepreneurs are leading the innovation process from the start."

Kadine James, Creative Tech Lead at Hobs 3D, commented:

"We're absolutely delighted to be collaborating together with Creative United, UCL, OHMI and Plexal on the extraordinary project. Accessible equipment is a huge challenge that is sadly preventing a number of disabled children from all over the world from being able to fully take part

in music education and I am looking forward to exploring how emerging technologies and co-designing with communities may be able to change that."

Dr Celia Caulcott, Vice-Provost (Enterprise) UCL, commented:

"UCL is delighted to support this important initiative from our world leading Institute of Education working in combination with the East London University Enterprise Zone. This project will enable and encourage those with disabilities to enjoy playing and participating in the performance of music, which so many of us delight in."

ENDS

Contact

For further information and press inquiries please contact:

Melody Patman - Head of Marketing and Communications, Creative United

melody.patman@creativeunited.org.uk

07720 698505

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Creative United

Creative United is an independent Community Interest Company that provides finance-based products and services designed to deliver economic growth and social impact to the arts, creative and cultural sectors.

The Take it away scheme is one of its flagship programmes, which supports participation in music by providing interest free loans for the purchase of musical instruments, equipment and software to enable music making at every level.

In 2018, Creative United launched the beginnings of what has become known as the **IAMM (*Inclusive Access to Music Making*)** initiative, which sees the organisation work closely with partners from across the music, tech and music education sector to raise the profile of music making by disabled children and adults increasing awareness of the opportunities and sources of support available to enable more people to access music.

Output to date includes the Take it away Consortium, Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments, Nottingham Music Hub Pilot Programme and the **IAMM Hackathon**.

Creative United receives regular funding from Arts Council England as a Sector Support Organisation within its National Portfolio. For further information please visit www.creativeunited.org.uk

About The OHMI Trust

The OHMI Trust works to remove the barriers to music-making faced by people with physical disabilities. Any deficiency in an upper limb makes nearly all musical instruments unplayable to any reasonable standard. As a result, thousands are excluded from music-making, including most disabled children. The OHMI Trust strives for full, undifferentiated, participation in musical life for disabled people through the creation and provision of adapted musical instruments and enabling apparatus. It also undertakes and commissions research into pedagogic practises, instrument design, and manufacturing methods.

www.ohmi.org.uk

About Plexal

Plexal is an innovation centre and coworking space located in the fast-growing Here East technology and innovation campus in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. It was launched in 2017 and was founded by clients of specialist real estate investment advisory company Delancey.

Collaboration is at the heart of Plexal's approach to innovation. Its innovation team delivers bespoke programmes for clients like Innovate UK and Transport for London, and specialises in forging connections between industry, academia, investors, startups and scaleups to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing society while getting ideas market-ready.

Plexal has been appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to deliver the London Office for Rapid Cybersecurity Advancement (LORCA): an innovation programme aimed at scaling cybersecurity solutions that are needed most by industry.

It's also delivered OpenDoor, an inclusion accelerator for under-represented founders, and has partnered with organisations like UCL and Disability Rights UK to launch the East London Inclusive Enterprise Zone at Here East.

Members of Plexal's workspace benefit from a comprehensive programme of events and in-house professional services. The 900-strong community includes startups, scaleups, social enterprises and large organisations working in areas like mobility, cybersecurity, AI, healthtech, fintech, the Internet of Things, VR and more.

For more information visit: plexal.com

About Hobs 3D

Creative. Collaborative. Comprehensive. Hobs 3D offers one of the most complete ranges of 3D services in the world. We bridge the gap between digital and physical 3D creation, employing a select and diverse team of 3D printing specialists, model makers, product designers, 3D digital artists and Mixed Reality XR/VR/AR immersive storytellers.

We employ our creativity and technical expertise across multiple industries, working with the world's leading companies from art & fashion to architecture, from computer gaming to

construction, and from marketing to healthcare. We work closely alongside our clients as their creative department to envision, enhance and actualise their projects to the highest standards. hobs3d.com

About UCL

UCL is a diverse community with the freedom to challenge and think differently. Our community of more than 41,500 students from 150 countries and over 12,500 staff pursues academic excellence, breaks boundaries and makes a positive impact on real world problems. We are consistently ranked among the top 10 universities in the world and are one of only a handful of institutions rated as having the strongest academic reputation and the broadest research impact.

We have a progressive and integrated approach to our teaching and research – championing innovation, creativity and cross-disciplinary working. We teach our students how to think, not what to think, and see them as partners, collaborators and contributors.

For almost 200 years, we are proud to have opened higher education to students from a wide range of backgrounds and to change the way we create and share knowledge.

We were the first in England to welcome women to university education and that courageous attitude and disruptive spirit is still alive today. We are UCL.

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