



 PercussionPlay
Outdoor Musical Instruments

Inclusive Communities

Music for Inclusive Communities

An inclusive community is a place where everyone feels they belong, are valued, and supported to actively engage and socially connect with others.

Crucially, a socially connected neighborhood requires spaces for people to gather, to create new friendships, and contribute. ADA accessible parks enable people of all ages and abilities to be physically active and challenged, however it is music parks or playgrounds with outdoor musical instruments that offer a unique opportunity and approach for social connections. They encourage human interaction, from children of diverse abilities playing together side by side, to parents, adults with disabilities, and seniors all able to join in creating outdoor musical hubs for harmonic community connections!



Shared music-making leads to wonderful, and often profound, feelings of connection and unity and is incredibly important in creating a welcoming and inclusive community for all.

Building a community music park or playground using fun, easy to play, accessible outdoor musical instruments will help break down barriers, quash misconceptions and focus on the abilities of individuals with disabilities rather than their differences, demonstrating that anyone can communicate through the universal language of music.

“Music is a world within itself with a language we all understand”

♪ Stevie Wonder ♪

American Singer-songwriter



Music to Support Communication & Self Expression

Music can have a profound effect on anyone, but the rewards of exposing people within the disabled community to live music-making can be huge. Making music can provide a fun and non-threatening approach to encourage creative and emotional expression and through the medium of music, many essential life skills can be learned or developed.

For individuals who struggle to express themselves through speech or where words fail, music can become an outlet to explore one's inner world and experiences.



When supported to express themselves non-verbally by playing music with others, there often follows an improvement in speech and verbal communication.

Making music can mean much more than simply playing an instrument and creating a sound - it is about freedom, expression, aspiration, and achievement.

“Connecting with children of different backgrounds and abilities encourages empathy as well as social and emotional skills. To see this inclusive park with so many children playing alongside each other is magical”

♪ Alana Sagar ♪

‘Differently Abled Children of Marlborough’, NZ.



Music Therapy in The Great Outdoors

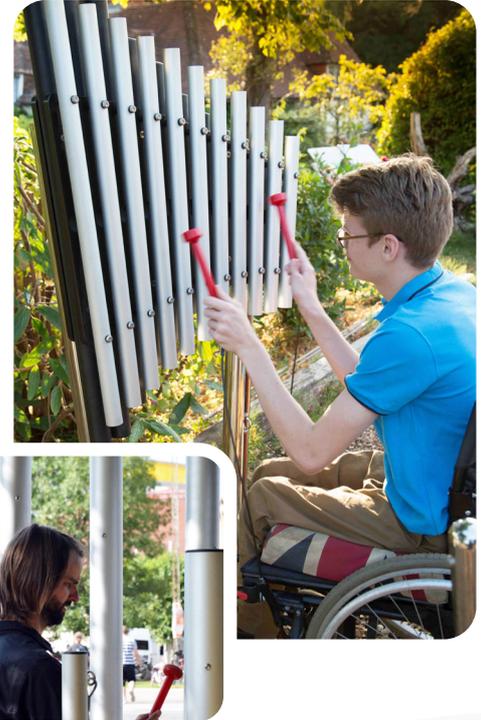
Music therapy is becoming an increasingly popular form of holistic 'healing' and is used in hospices, care homes, residential homes, schools, and rehabilitation centers to great positive effect. Music therapy using outdoor musical instruments can support people living with disabilities in a wide range of ways. Their simple pentatonic scales are harmonious in whichever order they are played, this helps remove feelings of fear or self-doubt and allows individuals to participate more meaningfully.

Several outdoor instruments installed together will allow the therapy to take the form of a group session. An outdoor ensemble will encourage peer interaction, improve communication, and maximise social and emotional benefits alongside the physical and mental stimulation of being outside and connecting with the natural environment.

“No matter what disability a camper has, the music park brings them all together. Each day they are there, playing alongside each other.”

♪ Charlie Becker ♪

Camp Courageous CEO



Outdoor Musical Instruments for Sensory Disabilities

Outdoor musical instruments in the playground offer blind or partially sighted children the opportunity to explore musical sound and awareness. The instruments are simple to play and enable creative experimentation and tactile exploration. They encourage the use of motor skills, developing coordination whilst stimulating the imagination.

For children with very limited movement, the placing of their hands on the vibrating lids of our drums or anywhere on the [Emperor Chimes](#) or [Tubular Bells](#) can elicit a positive response as the vibrations travel through the child's skin. Varying the pressure and volume of the beat will enhance the sensory experience for them. For children and adolescents with cerebral palsy, playing music may be an effective way to stimulate speech development and communication skills, express emotions, develop a sense of rhythm and provide an opportunity for physical, cognitive, and motor development whilst creating an environment for socialization and fun.



Music Therapy Helping Students at Western PA School

The Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children with over 190 students as well as a child care center for the employees of the school and an adult day program for graduates of the school, has created outdoor music areas to enhance the lives of its students - all through sound and vibration.

The instruments were chosen by the school and Sue Wiedder, Director of Development and Communications. They include the [Stepping Stones](#), which are perfect for all students including the 75% who use wheelchairs for mobility, a Sunflower shaped [Petal Drum](#), and the colorful [Harmony Flowers](#). The most popular are the [Tubular Bells](#) with their outstanding resonance and rich deep tones which the students can feel as well as hear.

“When you see a student with the mallets in their hands and they’re hitting the tubular bells and seeing the smiles on their faces and their reaction, that makes it all worth it – music is amazing.”

♪ Sue Wiedder ♪

Western Pennsylvania Director



The school has 5.5 acres of land within an urban city and decided to create multiple areas for the students to play with the instruments. All of the instruments were installed by the school's buildings and grounds staff after the lockdowns due to COVID were finished.

Kelly Welsh, Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) at the school says about one of her students; "Isaiah is primarily a tactile learner meaning he accesses his environment and surroundings by touch. He does have some light perception in one eye, hence him soaking up the sun in one of the pictures. Due to his profound hearing and visual loss, he needs to use his other senses such as touch and smell to better understand what is going on around him. Within the classroom he uses sign language for core vocabulary words such as eat, drink, go, more, finished, he uses tactile symbols, and physical prompts to help him throughout his school day. As for the Tubular Bells, Isaiah is probably feeling the movement of the bells as they are played as well as the vibrations that come from striking the bells. Isaiah loves movement and gross motor activities so it's not a surprise that he enjoyed the Tubular Bells so much."



“All of the teachers can see how much the outdoor musical instruments have enhanced our students’ lives”

♪ Sue Wiedder ♪

Western Pennsylvania Director

Using Outdoor Musical Instruments to Develop Physical Skills

Outdoor musical instruments in a school playground, sensory garden, or park will offer players the opportunity of developing, maintaining, and/or restoring physical skills in a fun, creative way. Simple to play but pleasing to hear, the instruments can be used to motivate movement and facilitate exercises designed to; develop and maintain muscle function, increase fine and gross motor skills, increase range of motion, strengthen equilibrium, develop hand-eye coordination, and encourage cross-lateral body movements.



Relaxation is an important component in achieving an increased range of motion and flexibility, especially for those who have difficulties with spasticity. Music-making in a calm outdoor environment will provide a positive and enjoyable atmosphere for players to experience success and causes the brain to discharge those feel-good endorphins.

“Staff working with our pupils with more complex physical needs have reported that the instruments have been great motivators during physio and OT work, encouraging pupils to stand for longer periods of time, or stand and use their physical skills independently.”

♪ Rachel Hayden ♪

Medina House Community Special School, UK



Music And The Spectrum

Music can support people who live with autism and their families in many ways including helping with communication, emotional wellbeing, and social interaction. Percussion Play's [Duo](#) is particularly beneficial due to its shape and note layout which allows for close social interaction without forcing close physical proximity. The players can interact with each other in a safe space without the need for direct eye contact, offering the chance to explore and experience creativity non-verbally through a shared moment together.



The Power of Percussion Play

Making music together can help build a harmonious cooperative spirit of support and encouragement for everyone. People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to join in, to practice and acquire new skills and abilities, the chance to be creative, for their independence to be fostered and self-confidence and self-esteem enhanced.

Outdoor musical instruments located in inclusive community environments have such exciting potential for both young and older people who face a wide range of life challenges. These soundscapes mean people of all ages and abilities who want to make music, can make music, and reap the personal, social, and collective benefits that come with it.

“Your amazing instruments have transformed our sensory area and helped create a truly inclusive sensory experience, for young and old alike, regardless of abilities”

♪ Niamh Egan ♪

Chair of Greystones Inclusive Playground Comittee





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