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Centre for Arts,
Media & Culture

CIMSRS: Community Instrumental Music Service for Rural Scotland

PhD research project

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About CIMSRS

- **CIMSRS: Community Instrumental Music Service for Rural Scotland**
 - PhD research project
 - Born from lived performance experience, audience engagement
 - Bespoke, accessible (cost-free) music tuition delivered in small groups, based on individual needs, for all levels of experience, similar to IMS in schools
 - Humanizing, student-led, problem-posing pedagogy
 - Violin and viola tuition (for now)
 - **Adults in rural Scotland** are often excluded from music learning/engagement based on **age** and **geographic** barriers.
 - **Provides an opportunity** for adults living in rural Scotland, to engage in music learning and making with music education that is **local**, **accessible** and **relevant**.



RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the impacts (if any) of providing accessible music tuition for the participants of CIMSRS?

A vertical photograph on the left side of the slide shows a person standing in a field at sunset. The person is silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow sky. The field is dark and appears to be a plowed agricultural field.

Why is this a problem?

Adults in rural Scotland are often excluded from music learning/engagement based on **age** and **geographic** barriers.

- Isolation
- Feeling forgotten, feeling left out
- Disconnected from society/community
- Less engagement overall: for wellbeing, cultural preservation, community development
- No pathways for continued or new musical learning and playing after leaving school
 - CIMSRS is a pathway for IMS

What is 'rural' Scotland?

Accessible rural: population >3, 000

- within a drive-time 30 minute to the nearest settlement with a population of <10,000

Remote rural: population of >3,000

- drive-time greater than 30 minutes to the nearest settlement with a population of <10,000

How much of Scotland is rural?

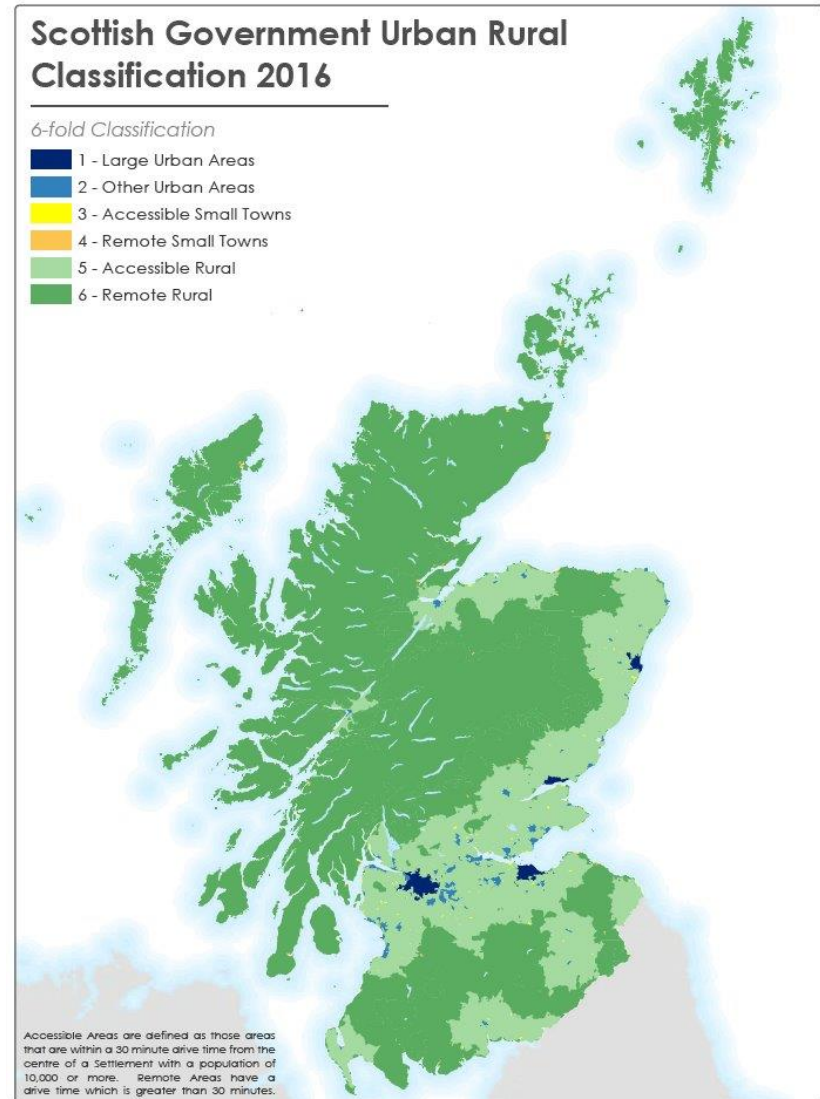
- POPULATION (2019):
- **Remote Rural - 316,166 – 6% of population**
- **Accessible Rural - 616,536 – 11% of population**
- Rest of Scotland - 4,530,598 – 83% population

Remote Rural – 70%

Accessible Rural – 28%

Rest of Scotland – 2%

1 Million



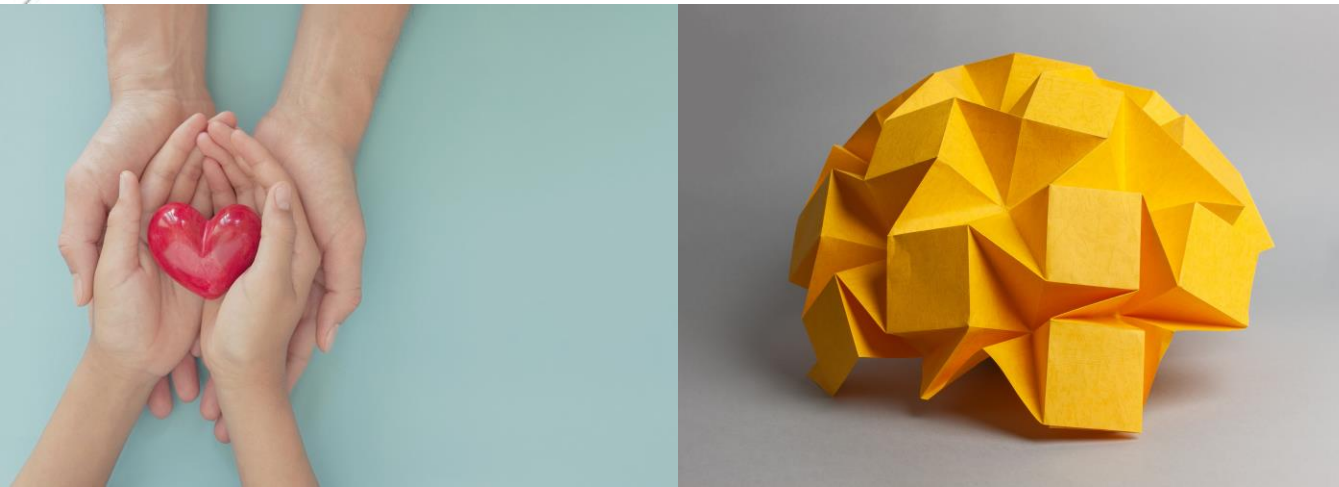
Known Benefits of Music Tuition & Engagement

In children & young people:

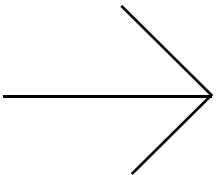
- Literacy and numeracy
- Cognition
- spatial-temporal reasoning
- fine motor coordination
- physical and mental wellbeing
- increased amount of grey matter in the brain, have all been linked with learning to play a musical instrument. (Drury, 2015) (EIS Charter2018)

In the elderly:

- An overall sense of physical and mental well-being
- lessening of stress, pain and medication usage
- the slowing of age-related cognitive decline
- feelings of pleasure and enjoyment
- pride and a sense of accomplishment in learning new skills, and creation and maintenance of social connections
- a means of creative self-expression
- the construction of identity at a time in life when sense of identity may be in flux. (Lemberg & Fung 2010)



***What about all the time in between
our youth and twilight years?***





Project Timeline

Fieldwork: 36 weeks

- **10-12 weeks spent in each location**, allowing breaks for holidays and festive periods
- **Millport (Isle of Great Cumbrae)** September-December 2024
- **Auchtermuchty (Fife)** January-March 2025
- **Glencoe (Highlands)** April-July 2025

Lifelong Learning

- **CIMSRS Encore Workshops**
 - took place in each area after initial project
 - Monthly workshops with bespoke classes & jam session
 - further development, learn, and create music learning & making opportunities
- **Community-based concerts and events**
- **Community collaboration: local choirs, events, theatre groups, etc.**

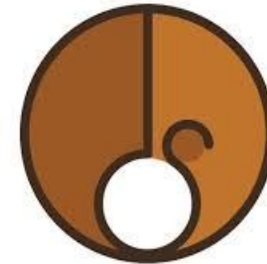
Logistics for the CIMSRS study

- **Collaboration and Sustainability***

- Instruments borrowed from:
 - local authorities, music libraries, charities, small businesses
 - free of charge for the sessions, and some, even longer
- Hiring local community-focused venues that support the project

- **Sustainability**

- Less people travelling, reusing instruments, etc.)
- Community learning development, long term projects
- Self-sustaining projects: participants are supported, having regular, local tuition and opportunities, with pedagogical approaches that suit their needs.





Humanizing

Problem-posing

Student-led



Theory & Methodology

- **Ontology:** Relativist
- **Epistemology:** Constructivist
- **Theoretical Perspectives:**
 - ⑩ Social constructivism (Piaget, 1964; Freire, 1971)
 - ⑩ Interpretivist (human intention, meanings created by humans) (Fodouop, 2024)
 - ⑩ Critical Theory & Pedagogy (Freire, 1971)
- **Methodology:** Ethnographic, Longitudinal Fieldwork (Wolcot, 2005)
- **Methods:**
 - ⑩ Individual Interviews (start, middle, end)
 - ⑩ Group Discussions (not 'focus groups!') (start, middle, end)
 - ⑩ Weekly Reflective Questionnaires
 - ⑩ Personal Observations
- **'Data' Analysis:** Thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

CIMSRS Findings & Impact

Millport, Auchtermuchty, and Glencoe

- Increased self-confidence
- Cohesion across age groups and social circles, unlikely friendships made
- Improved feelings of isolation
- Rediscovery of the joy of learning, new skills, transferring to other aspects of life
- A sense of purpose (esp. After loss, becoming an empty nester, retiring, being a stay-at-home parent)
- Enrichment of life, day-to-day.
- Anxiety relief, a safe space created.
- Improvements in wellbeing, quality of life, and work life.
- Family cohesion: parents of participants, grandparents, and children who receive lessons in schools from IMS)
- Connection with others in the village, and nearby remote villages



Testimonials

'I feel a connection to people around me.'

'Previously, I sometimes felt quite isolated and lonely. It has been great becoming involved in a community group where I can learn, enjoy music and make new connections with people.'

'It's a completely fresh start for everyone involved and provides a framework for learning and engaging where we all have the same aims. To enjoy something new and participate as a group using music as the medium.'

'When I play with others, there's camaraderie and laughter and the feeling of being part of a team. When I play alone, it's much more a feeling of peace and focus and discovery.'

'Absolutely, it is bringing people together and reinvigorating an interest in live music for people, like me, who never thought that it could be them playing, rather than listening!'

'Having this opportunity on the doorstep has definitely made a difference. It has given me a new interest, a new sense of community and an opportunity to learn something new and make friends, as well as a sense of becoming more integrated into the community.'

'I like being in a group of the same level, it definitely makes me feel included and doesn't make me feel as if I've forgotten everything and incapable.'

'I have come to realise through this project that as well as being geographically isolated due to living rurally, I had actually become slightly psychologically isolated...the fact this project has been activity and interest-based has meant I have participated...if the title of the project had been 'sit around chat for a couple of hours a week for isolated adults' I definitely would not have attended!'





CIMSRS & Critical Theory (Pedagogy)

- Key ideas (Freire, 1971; Warren et al, 2020; Moir, 2025)
 - Praxis (committed action!)
 - Student-teacher contradiction
 - Oppression
 - Cultural invasion
 - False generosity
 - Fear of freedom
 - Liberation
 - Humanization
 - Conscientization (critical consciousness)



Discussion

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- *Who gets to engage in music education? How do we feel about it?*
- *How do we decide who gets to engage in music education? Where are the issues?*
- *How can we avoid cultural invasion, or 'colonizing' in our work with others?*
- *In music education contexts (whether formal, informal, non-formal), how much of 'who we are' affects our teaching?*
- *How can we facilitate liberation for others through our work?*
- *How can the student-teacher contradiction affect the success of projects like these?*
 - *Informal*
 - *Mature students*
 - *Wide range of experience / ability / needs / backgrounds*

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