

6/15/2018: CymaSpace Transcript

AMBIENT SOUND: Rhythmic clapping

SARIKA:

What you hear is CymaSpace Special Events Coordinator Chris Balduc engaged in Cymatics - the art of making sound visible. Founded in 2014 by Myles de Bastion and run by dedicated volunteers, CymaSpace aims to creatively make music and sound more accessible to the deaf community. Chris demonstrated the iconic symbol - a sort of light-sound structure in the shape of a star - through rhythmic clapping and whistling. The lights flash along with the clapping and seem to slide to the whistling.

AMBIENT SOUND: rhythmic clapping, then whistling

SARIKA:

CymaSpace is hosting The Northwest Deaf Arts Festival, the first of its kind here in Portland, to celebrate deaf culture in the arts and show creative approaches to inclusivity and accessibility. Chris Balduc, who is hard of hearing, explains how the festival is supporting the deaf community.

CHRIS BALDUC:

As culturally deaf people we're not saying "Oh well poor deaf people, they can't hear" but we're saying "we're going to give you an experience with the sound that changes it in a fundamental way and makes it accessible and inclusive to you."

CHRIS:

And what we're trying to do is cue everything together so that deaf people can experience it and go "oh wow! This is really cool!" We're trying to find that formula. We may not have found it yet but we're getting there.

SARIKA:

Traditionally, cymatic technology uses lights to represent music. But CymaSpace founder, Myles de Bastion, has so much more in mind. Myles is a deaf musician himself - and the track you hear is his own composition. He often works with hearing musicians and needed a way to accommodate this.

Myles de Bastion's guitar track fades in

MYLES DE BASTION:

Instead of just lights flashing randomly whenever there's a loud sound, which is traditionally what happens in sort of a lighting system, we're now actually been able to map sound frequencies to light colors and I'm able to use this system to follow the music to know what key I'm in when I perform on a guitar. I'm able to see whether I'm playing in a key of C or G

through the harmony of the light. So I think that's something that's unique and I'm really excited to showcase this and debut it at the festival.

Myles' guitar music fades out

SARIKA:

Myles will be performing at the festival along with rapper Sean Forbes, dancer Antoine Hunter and the Urban Jazz dance troupe and poet Raymond Luczak. These are renowned artists in the deaf world and beyond. Chris Balduc feels that inviting these artists to perform is essential because deaf people in the arts need deaf role models.

CHRIS:

They need people they can look up to. But electronically that's not good enough. They need to see live performances. They need to see deaf people there.

CHRIS:

When that happens, they can be inspired. And deaf people everywhere, they need inspiration. They need to see that out there, there's so many deaf people with talent. And very creative - artists, dancers and poets. And we're bringing these people here to Portland! And we're giving the local deaf community an opportunity to see these people up close. And we feel this is going to benefit the deaf community in a tremendous way.

SARIKA:

As more and more deaf babies are getting implanted with cochlear implants - a surgical device which can help improve hearing, Myles feels this "he feels this festival is crucial to ensuring today's deaf language and culture is passed down through generations."

MYLES:

The work of the festival and CymaSpace is to capture deaf culture at this moment in time and put deaf culture up on a pedestal. We want to preserve the language, preserve the culture for future generations to benefit from.

SARIKA:

Preserving deaf culture and language along with an ability to appreciate music and sound is personal for both Myles and Chris. Myles was born to a family of musicians.

MYLES:

So I was experimenting with light and vibration to translate sound information into other senses that were more accessible to myself

SARIKA:

Chris always loved music and slowly lost his hearing over time.

CHRIS:

My hearing loss was very gradual over a long period of time. But it became apparent to me that I was missing music and sounds more and more. And part of me didn't want to give that up.

SARIKA:

The Northwest Deaf Arts Festival and the work of CymaSpace volunteers wants deaf and hearing people to experience sound and accessible performing arts in a whole new way.

CHRIS:

We want to allow deaf and hard of hearing people to explore their senses a little more than they might have. And to give them opportunities to see the world a little bit differently than the hearing limitations might commit them to. So that's what we're trying to do with this festival. Give them an opportunity to experience the world in a different way.

SARIKA:

He says this festival will provide a way for hearing artists to experience the world in a different way. And in fact, whenever CymaSpace has worked with hearing artists and venues, the response has been positive. Mostly they've collaborated with indie musicians who have been supportive.

CHRIS:

It was a chance for them to explore multimedia in ways that they'd never thought about before. And we were using cymatic light and vibrations and inviting the deaf community to come out. And we could see that there was a groundswell of support and excitement for this.

SARIKA:

In addition to the groundswell of support, this event is focused on inclusivity and accessible arts for the deaf community and what that means for mainstream venues. And as Myles de Bastion says, CymaSpace aims to show that performing arts, no matter the type or genre, can be truly inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Myles' music fades in

MYLES:

This event is also an opportunity to really showcase also what it means to have a truly inclusive and accessible event for both the hearing and deaf or really anyone on the spectrum of disabilities. We're trying to make sure that we can provide accommodations so that everyone feels welcome to the event and sort of set the bar high so that other people can be inspired by this festival. And be like "Oh maybe we can provide open captions, maybe we can be providing interpreters - deaf-blind interpreters, in particular." So we want to be able to invite the community to this event and have them recognize that there's a lot more work to be done in creating truly accessible events here in Portland."

SARIKA:

The Northwest Deaf Arts Festival is this Saturday from 2-8 pm at Mississippi Studios, located at 3939 N Mississippi Avenue in Portland. Tickets are at www.nwdeafartsfest.com.

For K-B-O-O, I'm Sarika Mehta.

Myles' music fades up, overlay with rhythmic clapping.