

NEWS RELEASE

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Online social network aims to widen access to music education

An online tool which aims to make learning music more social and provide new opportunities for pupils to access music education is being developed by researchers in the Department of Computing at Goldsmiths, University of London.

The tool, known as PRAISE (Practice and Performance Analysis Inspiring Social Education), provides a platform that brings together advances in social networks, intelligent agents, online communities and cutting-edge linguistic, audio and gesture analysis.

The aim is to create an online environment that enriches audio-visual feedback to provide richer and more personalised experiences, than are possible with other online learning systems.

PRAISE is a 3m European project undertaken in partnership with Sony Research Labs in Paris, the Artificial Intelligence Research Institute in Barcelona, and VUB University in Brussels and led at Goldsmiths by Professor Mark d'Inverno.

Dr Matthew Yee-King, the project manager responsible for the delivery of the software across the different European cities, explains: "PRAISE allows students to record and upload practice sessions and for teachers and other learners to annotate specific sections of the performance, responding with text, or other audio, to emphasise aspects of style or performance.

"In music education, receiving personalised feedback is a critical part of the learning process. However, when faced with budget cuts, and increased classroom sizes, it becomes harder for teachers to provide a constant stream of this kind of feedback.

The platform is accessible from any web browser and its user-centric design allows musicians of all abilities to easily upload, share and collaborate with others online.

Dr Yee-King added: "We are currently working on additional features, including a real-time artificial intelligence engine to provide automatic text and audio responses to performances, and a sentiment analysis tool to determine how positive or negative feedback is."

By making music practice a less isolated activity, and exploring the opportunities of peer-to-peer learning and social endorsement, the platform aims to make learning music a social experience, providing a trusted and interactive environment in which to share music learning and feedback.

The PRAISE team of Professor Mark d'Inverno, Dr Matthew Yee King, Dr Harry Brenton, Dr Marco Gillies, Maria Krivenski, Jonathan James and Andreu Grimalt-Reynes, from the Department of Computing at Goldsmiths are now beginning to trial PRAISE working closely with staff and students in the Department of Music at Goldsmiths.

The next stage of the project, due to start later this year, will involve the team working with local schools and other higher education institutions in London to help teachers and their pupils create new learning models.

Professor d'Inverno commented: "We are keen to set up as many communities of music learning and music co-creation as possible during the lifetime of the project to ensure we are building a system that people actually want to use. In fact the idea of participatory design – essentially a sustained dialogue between users, researchers and developers - is a critical part of our methodology. What's exciting is that even though our initial platform has been designed for music

specifically there's the potential for it to be extended across other media, and so to support other types of social creative processes for its production”

Notes to editors

- To find out more about PRAISE, especially if you are interested in building your own music learning community and helping us develop the system visit <http://www.iii.csic.es/praise/> or contact Matthew Yee-King directly at m.yee-king@gold.ac.uk.

- To find out more about the Department of Computing at Goldsmiths, visit <http://www.gold.ac.uk/computing/>

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