

Another Perspective: The iPad Is a REAL Musical Instrument

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This article “Another Perspective: The iPad Is a REAL Musical Instrument” by David A. Williams provides us with an alternate perspective on the concept of if the iPad is a musical instrument. The article attacks the “traditional” music educators who do not believe in studying popular music or other social trends such as digital instruments. The “traditional” music teacher believes there is only one way to teach music and favours the large ensemble method.

It was **interesting** to read this article as we just had a workshop on the use of iPads in music classrooms on Monday. This was the first time I had heard of this concept and was fascinated. It was interesting to read that iPad instruments reaches students with special needs in a way that other musical instruments cannot. When reading the article, I could not think of anything negative that could happen when using iPads as musical instruments. However halfway through the article, the author started to explore some of the challenges associated with using iPads as musical instruments. One of the challenges was how difficult it is to achieve rhythmic cohesion with iPads. In traditional ensembles, we have conductors who are able to keep us together and on the same beat. However, with a small ensemble like Touch, they do not have a conductor and I can imagine how difficult it is to stay together. To mitigate this challenge, the author stated that the students exaggerate their movements in the same way a violinist exaggerates their movements to stay cohesive.

I found it **surprising** to read about the number of commonalities between traditional band instruments and the iPad. Some of the commonalities include the importance of practicing your instrument and the importance of the musician to create beautiful music. Since there were so many similarities between the instruments it made me wonder why the iPad is condemned and the other instruments are not. This reminds me of a poster I saw on the subway. The poster was promoting vegan society and showed two pictures. One was of a dog and the other was of a pig. The caption was “why love one and eat the other?” This is similar to condemning an iPad and praising other musical instruments.

I was **frustrated** to read about the traditional music educators who were so firm in their pedagogy and approach that they were not even open to incorporating iPads and other digital technology into their classroom. They believed the iPad is unworthy and less deserving. One teacher went as far as to say “each year it seems there are more sessions and performances that do not align with what our core mission is as music educators.” If I am being honest, during the workshop in class, I too was wondering why the iPad was considered a musical instrument and thought “this is so easy, this can’t possibly be considered a musical instrument”. However after being given free time to check out the iPad apps I realized how hard it is to make music on the iPad and felt guilty for undermining the musicians who use iPads. I think it is important for all teachers to keep

an open mind and consider using the iPad in the classroom, especially if it will attract new students to their music program.

If I could **talk to the author**, I would want to ask about the negative sides of using the iPad. The article was clearly biased towards favouring iPads so it would be interesting to read about the negative side. I believe that a disadvantage of using iPads in music classrooms is that it may cause classical music to die or fade away. I feel that students would be more interested in learning about the iPads and newer styles of music that there would no longer be a need to teach classical music. Thus, it might be interesting for the author to explore what would happen to classical music if iPads were added to the music education curriculum.