

This is an abridged version of the keynote address given by Lawrence Becko from Sound Connections at Roundhouse Rising Futures: Participation Now! in February 2014. This was a groundbreaking symposium programmed by Wired4Music, the music council for young Londoners. The event was created to advocate for young people's democratic participation through music, and explored how young people can take a leading role in shaping their own musical experiences.

"Welcome, thank you – it's great to see everyone here and thanks to Roundhouse for hosting our first youth-led symposium on participation. This is a really special occasion – not only have we just launched the Wired4Music Manifesto, but it's also five years since Sound Connections first launched the programme that would become Wired4Music. I'm really proud of all the young people who have been part of the journey so far, many of whom are here today, making things happen, leading sessions, appearing on the panel.

So, we're here to talk about 'participation'. I guess some of us might be wondering what it's all about. So first up I thought it would be good to get to grips with some of the big underlying ideas. The term 'participation' is used in a number of different ways: it starts with 'taking part' but it can go as far as young people shaping major decisions that affect their lives.

The concept comes from 'democratic participation' an idea championed by the UN and UNICEF over many decades. **Democratic participation means giving people a say in decisions that affect their lives, their communities and their world.** One of the main ways we do this is by voting in elections but there are lots of other meaningful ways to shape the world around us - from taking part in local boards to community work, campaigning and activism.

And this doesn't just apply to adults. The UN have worked extensively to spread the message that children and young people should be part of meaningful 'democratic participation' - this is embodied in a document called The Rights of the Child and was developed by Environmental Psychologist Roger Hart.

What this is all about is empowering young people to have a say and take a lead in all aspects of their life - whether that's expressing their views, shaping a programme, influencing a space or campaigning for their rights. Roger Hart used the idea of a ladder to show how adults and young people could increase their participation together.

The arts have a long history of engaging young people in creative ways, and, through music, we're doing it all the time. Whether it's young people producing their own events, leading their own bands or ensembles, initiating their own recording projects or sitting on an organisation's board - these are all ways that young people can have a say and work with adults to shape their creative journeys.

The key thing here is that we're doing music *with* young people not *to* young people. The idea is simple: if we're working with young people and designing music programmes for them, then we should probably ask them what they think and give them a chance to shape it with us!



People often say 'yes but adults know best' - and it's true that adults are more likely to have experience and knowledge that young people may not yet have gained. But if we're honest, aren't adults sometimes too rigid, too set in their ways? **Can't we all think of times when young people have blown us away with their ideas, initiative and creativity?** Shouldn't we work together to harness this. Isn't the result more powerful?

So this isn't really about 'who knows best', it's about everyone working together, sharing decisions and pooling our collective creativity.

At Sound Connections, youth participation is something we take very seriously. Five years ago, we were working with lots of young people on projects and programmes across London. But we wanted to find a way to hear their views first hand and give them ways to input into their own music provision. So we set up Wired4Music, the music council for young Londoners.

The vision was simple but the task was potentially huge: give young people a platform to take a lead on their own musical dreams and ambitions, to raise awareness of musical opportunities and to contribute to a groundswell of youth music-making in London.

Over five years we've grown from a small group, to a buzzing collective of over 300 young people. Our members represent the city in all its diversity. We've consulted with the Mayor of London, BBC Three and Youth Music; we've produced our own events and appeared at national conferences; and our members have initiated their own projects from campaigns to musical ventures like the Wired Choir.

Today, we're very proud to present the Wired4Music Manifesto, a groundbreaking and game-changing campaign produced entirely by young people for young people all over London. The manifesto sets out the things that we think are great about being young and musical in London, and flags up some of the challenges that young people face on their musical journeys.

We've initiated the campaign to open up channels of communication between young people and major decision-makers, like funders and people in government. This is only the beginning. We ask you to endorse the manifesto, join the conversation and make a pledge. With your input we can create real change.

In a minute I'm going to hand over to Keiran and Delicia from Wired4Music who will tell you how it all came about. It's been amazing to work with the Wired team on this and I think together we can all do something really amazing here.

This is just one example of young people finding their voice, having a say, and shaping their own destinies. Today's symposium is our chance to take this to the next level.

This is what we want to share and explore together today: **the massive potential that can be unlocked when adults and young people work together through music.** We hope to empower and inspire you all, whether you're running programmes or taking part in them, to imagine a music sector where young people have a voice, make decisions and take a lead.

We believe in participation, and we really do believe that its time is now.