



innovate

Innovate Case Study: Call and Response

A report by Tom Slater, November 2016

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Introduction

Call & Response (C&R) is an independent sonic arts organisation serving as a focus for sound arts practice in London. C&R helps artists develop their practice, providing high-quality technical resources as well as education and training opportunities. Our aim is to provide an artist-run space for the exhibition and performance of sonic artworks, reflecting the emerging interest in the use of the auditory in contemporary art.

What were you hoping to achieve?

Our objectives were to deliver a series of complementary activities that could inspire young people to think creatively about computer code and the wider digital ecology. We wanted to provide challenging and high-quality activities that would engage young people on both practical and philosophical levels.

Once engaged we wanted to further understand what young people would want from a digital sound arts-focused activity. We also hoped to push the participants with a much higher level of critical engagement than they might have experienced in other youth arts activities.

What actually happened?

Participants were exposed to an extremely wide range of approaches to using computing in creative ways. The emphasis was on using our ears, and participants used methods such as recording, audio coding, scoring, synthesis and sequencing to explore the potential of data and code.

All learning of 'hard skills' was embedded and achieved through practical activities with a focus on learner-directed outcomes.

"Working with Facebook data was really, really interesting" - Alicia

Skills learnt included coding, field recording, sound processing, editing, sequencing, sampling and video processing. The main focus of the week was for participants to come up with projects that they would like to see realised. The young people thereby devised and researched in detail the projects that they wanted C&R to take forward and for them to participate in.

"It was great, really fun and informative, I enjoyed presenting our final idea the most" - Francis

Three projects that the young people came up with were:

1. A virtual reality maze presented as a public exhibition.
2. An immersive audio installation exploring the relationship between colour and sound.
3. A sound-activated drawing robot presented as a public installation.

"I'm going to make a virtual reality maze, where the user puts on a headset and holds a controller" - Francis

Outcomes

After a session on Digital Literacy the young people took part in a learning exercise in cloud computing. They used the skills learned in these sessions to set up their own shared online space which they used to work collaboratively on their project ideas. This online space continues to be updated as it is populated with signposting to further opportunities in arts funding for young people, relevant cultural content such as upcoming exhibitions, and relevant FE and HE courses. The young people will receive alerts to their personal devices when updates are made. The C&R team also receive alerts to new content and act as moderators in the shared space. All participants have been made aware of their input in the process of deciding what course our future activities take and have an open door to participation in future sessions. All participants have been signposted to further opportunities in the creative areas that we have been exploring and to further training and ways in which to access the industry.

"I've just bought a Raspberry Pi so I can make my own projects at home" - Wahid

C&R are leaders in our field and we firmly believe that our unpatronising approach to participation in activities using new audio technology and exploring sound is of the highest level across the board. The recognition that we have been receiving from partners such as Arts Council England, Heart n Soul, Sense, Metal and Onedotzero all support this.

"You guys have got a really unique offer here" - Raidine Carter, Head of Creative Programmes at The Albany Theatre

