INSTRUMENT DESIGNED FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

NONPROFIT & SOCIAL CAUSE

The benefits of music as a therapeutic tool are widely acknowledged, but actually creating music has traditionally required more dexterity and skill than many handicapped people have at their command. Not so the Skoog, a brand-new musical instrument that can be played by anyone. Designed specifically to empower those unable to play traditional instruments, the Skoog is a soft, squeezable object that plugs into a computer's USB port. Once that's done, users can simply touch, press, squash, twist or tap the Skoog to play a wide range of instruments intuitively. With five colour-coded, touch-sensitive sides, the Skoog offers access to the full dynamic characteristics of a real flute or xylophone, for example, without requiring mastery on the part of the player. Any part of the body can be used to play the Skoog in a variety of ways, such as squeezing it for flute sounds or tapping it to strike a xylophone. And because the Skoog uses physical modelling synthesis — not just sampling, midi or wavetable synthesis — it responds directly to the player's movements, so that variations in touch directly affect the sound produced. Twelve brass, woodwind, percussion and string instruments can be played using the Skoog, which can also be customized through sensitivity and skill settings. Pricing is GBP 625 for a Skoog Personal Edition, or GBP 500 in educational settings. Currently sold by Scottish Skoogmusic — a spinoff from the University of Edinburgh, where it was developed — the Skoog is already in use in schools across the UK and beyond. Spotted by: Jane Strachan

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