PARA*O*RCHESTRA

Apply to take part in Play with Paraorchestra

An opportunity for young musicians aged 12 - 17 to experience playing with a professional orchestra



Credit: Play with Paraorchestra, January 2025 - Craig Fuller

About Paraorchestra

We are a fearless collective of disabled and non-disabled musicians: a platform that pushes the boundaries of music-making to create art with passion and purpose.

With a diverse ensemble led by the remarkable vision of our artistic director Charles Hazlewood, **our performances are a fusion of emotion, innovation, and intrepid artistry.** Behind the scenes, we focus on **developing careers, building confidence, and fostering collaboration** to inspire a fierce ambition and excellence that matches our artistic programme.

About Play with Paraorchestra

Play with Paraorchestra is an opportunity for young musicians, who **identify as disabled, have special educational needs, or have access requirements** to experience playing on a Paraorchestra project. Over the course of a two-day workshop in October 2026 a small group of young musicians will explore a range of musical styles, with a blend of acoustic and electronic sound worlds, working alongside professional Paraorchestra musicians.

Play with Paraorchestra is a creatively ambitious project for young musicians. It offers the same exciting, collaborative, person-centred way of working as on all Paraorchestra shows, this time for young musicians aged 12 - 17 who are considering a career in music.

All participants on the project must attend with a parent, guardian or carer.

What we're looking for

Are you, or is someone you know, a talented, adventurous young musician who wants to experience playing with Paraorchestra? **We are looking for six young musicians** who either identify as disabled, have special educational needs, or access requirements, and can thrive working in a collaborative environment. **They must demonstrate a creative spark, a passion and commitment to playing live music.**

You don't need to formally identify as disabled, for example you might be Deaf or have a hearing impairment, or you might be Autistic or be neurodivergent. At Paraorchestra we don't work with musicians on the basis of a formal diagnosis, **we use the Social Model of Disability** to guide our work.

If you are a musician aged 12 - 17, considering a career in the music sector, who has access requirements or works best in an environment with additional support in place then Play with Paraorchestra is for you.

Young musicians applying for this opportunity should be playing at a **Grade 5 standard (or equivalent)** in musical ability, theoretical understanding, and technical capability. Participants do not need to have achieved a formal Grade 5 qualification to apply for Play with Paraorchestra. We are using the Grade 5 level of musicianship as a guide for young musicians to emphasise the level of musical skill we are looking for from the participants taking part in this project.

In order to apply, applicants must:

1. Be aged 12 - 17 years old
2. Be someone who identifies as disabled, has special educational needs or access requirements.
3. Be able to perform music equivalent to Grade 5 standard or above.
4. Be a resident in the UK
5. Be able to provide a reference from a music teacher (or equivalent) as part of their application.
6. Be able to provide 2 examples of your playing ability. These clips should be solo performances or accompanied by a piano only. They don't need to be professional video or audio recordings, something filmed on your phone is fine!
7. Be available for a music and access planning meeting on either Tuesday 21st July (3pm - 5pm), Tuesday 28th July (3pm - 5pm), Tuesday 4th August (3pm - 5pm), or Tuesday 11th August (3pm - 5pm).
8. Be available to attend a one hour online meeting on Wednesday 30 September, 6pm - 7pm.
9. Be available on Tuesday 27 & Wednesday 28 October 2026 to attend the two day in-person workshops in Bristol with a parent, guardian or chaperone.

What will be asked of participants taking part in Play with Paraorchestra?

Play with Paraorchestra is our version of **a 'side-by-side' project**, where participants will have the opportunity to sit next to professional Paraorchestra musicians and work through set repertoire in a workshop format. The activity itself will be led by Paraorchestra Assistant Music Directors Siobhan Clough and Rylan Gleave. Paraorchestra Artistic Director Charles Hazlewood will lead a session during the two days. **The project will culminate in a sharing on the second day for a small invited audience.**

This will be an opportunity for young musicians to **experience Paraorchestra's creatively ambitious work and person-centred approach to access**, exploring new commissions alongside pre-existing repertoire. The chosen pieces will be arranged in an **open score format**, meaning that whatever instrument you might play, whether that be an acoustic orchestral instrument or a more modern electronic instrument, **there will be a part that works for you and the level that you are playing at.**

Over the course of the two days, we will explore **a commission written by Liam Taylor-West**, a reimagined version of **Straylight by Rylan Gleave** (first performed by Paraorchestra during The Anatomy of the Orchestra - Drone Refractions, 2024) and some warm up pieces from the **CoMA open score repertoire** list. All parts will range in difficulty, with some parts being easier to play than others. Part selection and distribution will be made by our Assistant Music Directors to suit the musicians selected with their instrument and musical capabilities in mind.

Successful candidates invited to take part in Play with Paraorchestra will be asked to:

- Work with the Paraorchestra Artist Development (Modulate) and Music teams to discuss music scores, logistical plans for the workshops and access requirements so we can best support participants' involvement in the project.

- Spend some time looking at the music we'll be exploring during the Play with Paraorchestra workshops. Music will be sent to participants in early September, along with supporting materials required e.g. an audio version of the music or enlarged parts. We would suggest you take the music with you to any tutoring sessions for technical advice as needed.

- Attend an online pre-workshop meeting on Wednesday 30 September at 6pm, to meet the Modulate team and hear more about the music you will be playing.

- Take part in the two day in-person Play with Paraorchestra workshops.

During the Play with Paraorchestra in-person workshops each day will involve:

- A morning and afternoon 3 hour rehearsal session (6 hours in total).

- A one hour lunch break, plus breaks during each 3 hour

rehearsal session.

- An opportunity to rehearse alongside professional Paraorchestra musicians, who will be there to support you and play your part alongside you, giving you mentoring and support as needed.

Play with Paraorchestra Application Process

To apply to take part in Play with Paraorchestra you will need to complete a short application form. **This can either be typed or answered with recorded or filmed responses.** The application form questions are listed below so you can plan your answers. Each answer has a suggested word limit of 300 words or 2.5 minutes speaking time.

Application form:

The Play with Paraorchestra application form can be found here.

Video Applications:

If you are applying with a video application, please fill out your main details on the application form (https://forms.gle/hVmrJA2SSKrdyiddA) and include a link to your video application in the space provided.

You can share your video in any of the following ways:

- Share via a link to a shared drive such as Google Drive or Dropbox
- Host privately on YouTube or Vimeo.

We will then shortlist the applications and invite a small number of young musicians to take part in Play with Paraorchestra with us.

Please note the capacity for participants on this project is small, six young musicians, this is to ensure we can deliver this creatively ambitious project with the level of access and person-centred support that is central to our way of working on all Paraorchestra projects. We anticipate we will get more

applications that we have spaces for and so unfortunately not everyone who applies will be offered a place on the project. We recognise this can be disheartening, but where possible we will try and provide some feedback on applications and signpost you to alternative opportunities for young musicians.

Application Form Questions:

1) Please give a summary of your musical experience to date.

2) Are you a part of any ensembles or orchestras?

3) What is your primary instrument and level of playing (please list any musical qualifications achieved).

4) Why do you want to be a part of Play with Paraorchestra?

5) Describe a concert or performance you have been to that was memorable for you, please explain why.

6) Do you require any access adjustments to your scores? E.g. braille scores, enlarged scores, scores printed on different coloured paper. (It doesn't matter if you don't know or haven't tried any score adjustments before. However, if you have previously found something useful it is helpful for us to know).

7) There will be space provided on the application form for applicants to share 2 links as evidence of your playing ability. These clips should be solo performances or accompanied by

a piano only. These do not need to be of professional quality, something filmed or recorded on a phone is fine.

8) There will be a space provided on the application for you to submit a musical reference in support of your application (e.g. from a music tutor or individual with experience of the young person and musical level). A template music reference that your tutor can use to draft their reference for you can be found here.

Application Timeline

Applications Open: Monday 27 April 2026.

Applications Close: 10am Tuesday 7th July 2026

Applicants notified whether their application has been successful: by the end of w/c 6July 2026

45 minute logistics and access conversations with the Paraorchestra Team, slots will be available on these dates:
Tuesday 21st July 3pm - 5pm
Tuesday 28th July 3pm - 5pm
Tuesday 4th August 3pm - 5pm
Tuesday 11th August 3pm - 5pm

Pre-workshop online session: Wednesday 30th September 2026, 6 - 7pm

Play with Paraorchestra in-person workshops: Tuesday 27 & Wednesday 28 October 2026

FAQs

Will I need to take time off studies or work to participate in Play with Paraorchestra?

The online session and workshops have all been planned to take place on weekday evenings or during the academic holidays. Hopefully most people will therefore not need to take any time off their studies to take part in Play with Paraorchestra.

Does it cost anything to take part in Play with Paraorchestra?

No, Play with Paraorchestra is a free project for young musicians to apply for and take part in. Paraorchestra will also cover the cost of accommodation, travel, catering and access support for all successful participants to attend the in-person workshops in Bristol. Our team will liaise with each participant to help coordinate the logistics of their trip to Bristol for this project.

Can I come to some but not all of the sessions?

Due to the small numbers and creatively ambitious work involved in Play with Paraorchestra it is a requirement of all participants that they attend all the dates for the project. If unforeseen circumstances arise and you can no longer attend part or all of Play with Paraorchestra please let us know as soon as possible so we can make alternative arrangements.

Do I have to be able to read music?

It is preferred that you are able to read music as this will be the

easiest way to learn and play the parts for Play with Paraorchestra. Where possible we can also provide MP3 audio guides to assist with learning music for those who would find this useful.

I have a question that's not covered in this information pack, what do I do?

You can email the Modulate team on artistdevelopment@paraorchestra.com and someone will get back to you.