

My Mobility

Students from Ca' Foscari Recount their Learning Experiences Abroad

Limitless music

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Destination: University of Southampton, UK

Marta Lucente discovers the power of music to help people with disabilities.

The Erasmus experience was one of the biggest challenges of my life. Arriving to my destination and settling in was very difficult, but in the end, the effort I put into much of what I did makes me feel proud of myself, and I am pleased to recall experiences which influenced my Erasmus and the perception I have of myself.

When I first arrived in Southampton I was very excited and at the same time scared because of the new experience. I had never lived away from home, my level of English was basic, meaning I could understand what people were saying if I paid attention, but it was very difficult for me to speak. Moreover my music knowledge was extremely basic, because in Italy my bachelor is focused on History of Performing Arts, while at University of Southampton I was in the Music department and most of the exams and coursework we had to prepare were practical, which I was not used to at all. For a number of days I felt like I was overwhelmed. Everything seemed to be unknown to me, everyone knew English and music at a higher level and I kept asking myself – Why am I here?

When classes started, it only got worse. In fact, the main reason why I chose Southampton was because of the modules Music Therapy, Music and Disability and Community Music. As soon as I got there, I was informed that two of them were not running that academic year so I quickly had to choose alternative modules to replace them.

The Music Technology class, that I chose instead of one of the others courses, was extremely specific and technical. We studied the technologies used in music and we also had to apply the concepts we learned by composing a song, playing it on the piano to then record and modify it using the program Logic Pro X. My basic knowledge of music theory, not being able to read music well nor to play the piano, which on the other hand was slightly compensated by my singing skill, did no help. I would say... challenging! To be honest, at the beginning of the project I was in despair. Going into the music lab was frightening and I had no inspiration at all. Moreover the music

editing programme was quite difficult to use without any kind of experience. Thankfully, during this difficult moment, my friends in Southampton helped me with support, giving advices, inspiration and helping me to understand and use the program... even until 1 am! And guess what? In no time the song was finished and quite pleasing to hear. Of course not a masterpiece, but I felt incredibly satisfied because I had gone over my limit: music and technologies did not scare me anymore! I had done it and succeeded!

Although we all have moments in which it feels like everything goes wrong, we should remember that with effort and perseverance difficult situations can be solved. Feeling satisfied and proud of myself put me in a great mood, and it is then that my great Erasmus time started.

I decided to go to a dance school which offered classes focused on 'dance and disabilities', the exact topic of my thesis. I present myself asking to watch and observe a class to help me gather information for my thesis, just for a few times. Surprisingly, they asked me to join them every week until the end of my Erasmus, giving me the possibility to add a lot of information to my thesis. I met a lot of people and I was stunned by how outgoing they were, even the dancers with disabilities. They kept asking me about my work and telling me their feelings, such as the reasons why they felt better while dancing. It was incredible!

I also met Claire, the manager of a Community centre close to the dance school, in which some performing arts classes for disabled people were taught (folk dance, music technology, singing, music). In only one day my month was planned: I was going to go to both place three times a week.

Day by day I explored the world of disabilities and performing arts with different tutors, approaches and points of view! Every time I was amazed by the power of music; to give an example, seeing a woman using the walker, but then completely forgetting about it while dancing. And that is not all: thanks to my professor I had the opportunity to join a music therapy group session in a children hospice. All of these experiences made me more aware of the differences between Italy and the UK in the approach towards disability.

I think Erasmus is a lot more than going to university and doing a great job by having great marks. Certainly good academic results are important and necessary, but during your Erasmus you should also dedicate time to becoming aware of your own possibilities, trusting yourself, understanding what you are interested in and trying to achieve your goals. You will also meet a lot of new people and you should test your limits, such as language and being in a different context while away from home. Challenge yourself by discovering parts and characteristics of yourself you did not know about, or a strength you could not even imagine. And remember: everything cannot and will not be perfect during your experience, but do not be worried. Try to change what you think is wrong and observe the outcomes. Do not give up! Be brave, trust your sensations. You just need to make the most of the moment!