



FLIPPED STUDIO “SUCCESSFUL INNOVATOR” - NOVA

Project No. 2020-1-LT01-KA227-ADU-094751

When life gives you lemons you make lemonade and carry on



Photo: Lijana Stakauskaitė / Personal archives

Lijana Stakauskaitė, Lithuania

Sector: Music.

Position: Singing teacher.

About me

My hometown is Ignalina, a secluded town in the eastern part of Lithuania. It is a well-known tourist destination famous for its forests, lakes and a, now closed, nuclear energy plant. However, apart from a few tourist attractions there were not many things that one could do with their time after school. Therefore, instead of wasting my time doing nothing I spent it in a music school learning to play various instruments and improving my singing. Coming from a musically educated family with quite a few relatives in the field, after finishing high school and local music school, I



have decided to join the Faculty of Arts in Vilnius College where I studied music pedagogy with emphasis on leading a vocal collective. After that, I continued my studies for bachelor's degree in Music pedagogy in Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and master's degree in Music education technologies.

My way to the CCS and main achievements before the Pandemic

Cultural sector has played a huge part in my life and my career choices. My mother worked in a local culture center most of her life and encouraged me to pursue my passion for music ever since I was a child. I also attended a music school where I had a wonderful piano teacher who encouraged and helped me create my own melodies and songs from an early age of eight, which in turn made me love music even more.

While studying in university, I focused mostly on the keyboards and played in a few bands to gain experience and earn a living. It opened up even more opportunities for me to get to know the world of music. I have started creating musical parts that fit the composition of the respective music style of the band that I played in at a time. The most notable tour I

had during my studies was with a rock band called "The Skys", together we have performed in many festivals and concerts in Poland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Austria and France.

Soon, after finishing university, I became a music teacher in a primary school in Birstonas where I taught children the basics of singing and using musical instruments. It is also where I found a passion for discovering and raising musical talents. Together with the most talented children and the help of their parents, we managed to start a vocal children's group called "Crazy". This was a start of a completely new journey for me, which is still going strong even during the pandemic.

Right before the pandemic hit one of my most prized achievements was the development of a republican children and youth festival-competition called "Autumn Carousel". For the past few years it gained a huge following and support among young artists and music teachers from all over Lithuania, so much so, that it had to be divided into two festivals – Autumn and Spring Carousel. Another big achievement was a songbook for children called "Crazy Island". It contains twelve songs for children and parents to sing along and the Crazy studio pupils recorded all the songs in our local studio.



Photo: Lijana Stakauskaitė / Personal archives



The challenges faced during the Pandemic and innovation solutions to overcome them.

When the pandemic started, I had many fears and doubtful thoughts about my work, and the vocal studio that I created. Most of the club activities were either restricted or cancelled completely and at first, it was extremely hard to teach children over the internet. However, with time, and after some creative thinking I was able to come with different forms of the same familiar events and activities that my students were used to. It is evident that teaching children during the pandemic became much more difficult, they needed to be motivated, and encouraged more than in person. In addition, our usual activities had to change completely since I teach children from 3 to 16 years old and not all the children were able to use the internet equally.

On the other hand, distance learning has led me to learn many new things and research creative technological solutions to improve the skills and knowledge that I already had, and to implement that knowledge in a way that would reach my students over the long distance. Our usual events became remote and it posed many new challenges that we have not experienced before. Everything we did for others to see had to be filmed and edited, usually by students themselves. That way they learned many valuable new skills and even taught me how to use some of the apps that they were using. We even held a remote competition “Autumn Carousel” with many contestants from all over Lithuania that was a huge success. We also filmed various concerts for students’ parents and the local community to view during local celebrations like Mother’s day, Christmas and other events that were canceled due to pandemic restrictions.



Photo: Lijana Stakauskaitė / Personal archives.

I have learned more lessons and new skills during the pandemic than in the 5 years before it, and I am certain that this knowledge will help me strive for years to come



My future plans and aspirations for developing my career in CCS.

Although I plan to carry on all the duties and events that I have previously established within Birstonas and two other music schools that I work at, during the pandemic my focus has shifted slightly and is now divided between teaching my students and focusing more on my personal musical career. During the pandemic, I had more free time to practice and improve my own singing skills, which in turn, led me to interesting opportunities. In between the pandemics, when the restrictions allowed bigger events I have played back vocals and keyboards for a famous Lithuanian pop singer on her tour as well as quite a few solo performances in events around Lithuania.

I am also currently participating in a TV music show X- Factor Lithuania where so far, I have had amazing results and huge support from the audience and the X-Factor judges. This has boosted my confidence and singing skills to the new highs, which I hope, will bring even more opportunities to display my musical skills and knowledge to an even wider audience.



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My suggestion for those who wish to work in CCS

Never give up. Period.

You never know when your time will come and age, looks or your current set of skills might not be as important as the right mindset and eagerness to succeed. We all have to adapt to some things in life and the harder it gets the harder you have to keep pushing forward.



Self-reflection questions

1. How far will I climb in the X-factor scene and what new opportunities will it bring?
2. Should a music teacher have a personal music career?
3. How long can we teach students over the distance without starting to downgrade their skills?

This good practice story is prepared by Birstonas Culture Center.