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## **What does it mean for a musician to be socially engaged? How undergraduate music students perceive their possible social roles as musicians**

**Catherine Grant**

A raft of recent music education research has advocated fostering social awareness and engagement among tertiary music students. The evidence is compelling: a socially engaged tertiary education prepares students to play meaningful roles in their societies, while also better meeting the aspirations and needs of music institutions, universities and society at large. As tertiary music institutions respond by exploring ways to increase the social orientation of their curricula, it is important that the student voice be present in research and scholarship. How do students themselves conceive of the notion of a ‘socially engaged’ musician? What social roles, if any, do they see for themselves as musicians? Exploring this question, this article draws on qualitative survey and focus group data from a small-scale research project at one Australian tertiary music institution. Findings show that students envisage their social roles as musicians in a gamut of ways, from believing it is ‘wrong’ for musicians to engage with contemporary social issues, to holding a sense of moral responsibility to act as agents of social change. An understanding of the diverse ways in which students envisage their social roles and potential as musicians provides a necessary foundation for expanding relevant, effective, and targeted teaching and learning initiatives that develop social consciousness in students.

### **Keywords**

social awareness, social engagement; social responsibility; tertiary music education; undergraduate music education

### **Introduction**

According to what seems to be a growing number of music researchers and educators, music education with an end-goal of music-making for its own sake ‘is not enough ... We should also prepare students to ‘put their music to work’ for the betterment of other people’s lives and social well-being’ (Elliot, 2012, p. 22). Music ‘requires our moral engagement’, claim Allsup and Shieh (2012, p. 51). While the rigour and discipline of many tertiary music education programs are very effective in training highly skilled musicians, several scholars have noted that tertiary music education often falls short of educating ‘for political awareness, political engagement, independent thought, creativity ... or ... personal flexibility’ (Vaugeois, 2009, p. 19). For students, this can give rise to warranted misgivings about the wider relevance of their music education. As a pre-service music teacher who experienced her music education as ‘irrelevant and arbitrary’ (p. 317), Whyte (2009) remembers feeling ‘enraged’ at how she and her fellow students were ‘encouraged to have

such a narrow and archaic vision for music education' (p. 317), especially as various global crises unfolded around them.

By contrast, when tertiary-level music students learn about music and music-making while developing a sense of social and ethical responsibility, they are empowered and mobilised to pursue a 'life well lived, a life of well-being, flourishing, fulfillment, and constructive happiness for the benefit of oneself and others' (Elliott, 2012, p. 22). The 'unrealized opportunities and responsibilities' to put music and music education to the service of social aims (Elliot, 2012, p. 21) offers a pathway to making tertiary music education not only more relevant to students, but more socially relevant too. This represents 'an extraordinary opportunity' for educators and institutions that choose to commit to transforming the study of music into a force for social good (Campbell et al. 2014, p. 57). Some scholars believe that for educators and institutions, this is not merely an opportunity but also a responsibility: since music is an inherently social activity, connecting individuals and connected to cultures and communities, it has deep ethical implications—and even for this reason alone, argues Whyte, 'music education *must* be a social justice endeavour' (2009, p. 322).

Recognising this, many music institutions (and their parent universities) are giving closer attention to ensuring that students have the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to improve social outcomes in their local and global communities (Elliot, Silverman & Bowman, 2016; Nyland, 2017). A fast-growing body of literature, now known as the 'scholarship of engagement', explores how universities are striving to address important social issues and contribute to public good, including by cultivating students as 'citizen scholars' (Arvanitakis & Hornsby 2016; Dragne, 2007). Specifically within the arts, a plethora of research over the last decade or so has variously defined, justified, critiqued, and propounded the value of a socially engaged tertiary education curriculum (including Allsup & Shieh, 2012; Baxter, 2007; Benedict et al. 2015; Camlin, 2018; Elliot, Silverman & Bowman, 2016; Frierson-Campbell, 2007; Gould, Countryman, Morton & Rose, 2009). Such research explores various education-relevant concepts directly linked to social engagement, including *social justice* (Bates, 2012; DeLorenzo, 2012; Vaugeois, 2007), *global citizenship* (Brockington & Wiedenhoft, 2009; Grant, 2018), and *artistic citizenship*, including *musical citizenship* (Elliot, 2012; Elliot, Silverman & Bowman, 2016). In its sum, the evidence is compelling: a socially engaged tertiary education improves learning outcomes for students, with concomitant benefits for universities and society at large.

As tertiary music institutions explore ways to increase the social orientation of their curricula, it is important that we engage the experiences and perspectives of tertiary-level music students themselves: students' understandings of what it means for a musician to be socially engaged, and their beliefs and ideas about their potential *as musicians* to play a meaningful role in society. As groundwork for advancing a more socially relevant learning and teaching agenda at the case study institution and beyond, this article reports on a small-scale research project that investigated these matters for undergraduate students at one university-based Australian music and performing arts institution.

## **Approach**

The urban tertiary music institution that forms a case study for this project offers degree programs specialising in a range of music areas, from classical, opera, and jazz, to popular music, musical theatre, and composition. In the 2017 academic year, just under 20% of its approximately 850 students came from low socioeconomic status backgrounds; 10% spoke a language other than English at home;

5% were international students; just under 5% identified as having a disability; and eight identified as First Peoples ‘of [Australian] Aboriginal origin’.

Some socially-oriented learning activities are available to these undergraduate students through the formal curriculum, mostly on an elective basis; these include a course named ‘Music and Society’, some learning activities in other courses, community outreach initiatives, short-term mobility programs, and research-based project studies. These outward-looking learning activities advance the university’s aims to graduate students who are ‘socially responsible and engaged with their communities’ and who are well equipped to play an influential role in the world (Griffith University, 2017, pp. 10, 12).

Data for this project was gathered in August and September 2017 through an online survey and focus groups, following university ethics processes. The purpose of the survey was to gather data on undergraduate students’ social awareness and engagement. One of its four sections is the focus of this paper<sup>1</sup>: that section asked respondents whether and how they could envisage engaging with certain social issues, and it sought their interpretations of what it meant for a musician to be ‘socially engaged’. The survey was disseminated by email to all undergraduate students (n=634), and sixty-one responses were received – a response rate of around 10% (see Table 1 next page). Those students who chose to respond to the survey may not be representative of the participant pool – they may, for example, represent more heavily those at both lower and higher levels of social awareness and engagement, and/or those with strong views or experiences relating to musicians’ social roles.

Although the survey represents the main data source for this project, this article also draws on data from four 50-minute focus groups that sought more expansive information about students’ experiences and perspectives on social awareness and engagement. A total of fourteen participants, six female and eight male, shared their views on social engagement for musicians, both for them personally and in general. Questions included: *As musicians, do you think you could engage with social issues? Could you imagine using your music skills to engage with social issues? If so, how, and if not, why not?* Focus group participants came from all year levels of study (Years 1-3 and Honours); all but one (aged 26) were between 18 and 20 years old. Participants’ specialisations included composition, classical instrumental, classical voice, and popular music. Eleven of the fourteen had also participated in the survey<sup>2</sup>. Focus group responses may have been affected by students’ perceptions of, and familiarity with, each other; their willingness to share their personal views and experiences with others in the group and with the facilitator; and their experiences and perspectives of tertiary music education within the institution in question (among other factors). A non-lecturing facilitator from outside the research team was chosen to lead the focus groups, so as to minimise the likelihood of existing power relationships between facilitator and participants.

Iterative thematic data analysis (Gibson and Brown, 2009, pp. 128-129) was conducted on the open survey responses and subsequently the focus group transcripts, with cross-reference to demographic data. Data analysis is presented below in three sections. The first examines students’ perspectives about their own role and potential as musicians to engage with social issues. The second explores

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining survey data demanded a mixed-methods approach to analysis, presented in a separate forthcoming publication.

<sup>2</sup> In the following sections, survey respondents are referred to by the identifier R + number, and students participating in focus groups are referred to as S + number. Those eleven students who participated in both survey and focus group are identified by both their R- and S-numbers.

their more general interpretations of what it means for a musician to be ‘socially engaged’. The third section explores ‘negative cases’: participant responses ‘that differ in meaningful ways from other data points’ and that therefore warrant particular attention (Brodsky, 2008). While the generalisability of this small-sample project to other populations or educational contexts is limited (Wiersma, 2013), the ways in which the students describe and reflect on the research topic offer important insights into the perspectives of this cohort, with possible broader implications for music educators and institutions across the tertiary sector.

**Table 1. Survey respondents**

All students who answered the demographic questions were Australian residents (no international students chose to take part). Nine students chose not to answer demographic questions. Of the remaining 52 students:

***Gender***

female	47.5% ( <i>n</i> = 29)
male	34.4% ( <i>n</i> = 21)
non-binary	3.3% ( <i>n</i> = 2)

***Age***

minimum	17
maximum	47
average	20

***Degree program***

Bachelor of Music	70.5% ( <i>n</i> = 43)
Bachelor of Popular Music	9.8% ( <i>n</i> = 6)
Bachelor of Music Technology	1.6% ( <i>n</i> = 1)
Other	3.3% ( <i>n</i> = 2)

***Program level***

Year 1	31.1% ( <i>n</i> = 19)
Year 2	16.4% ( <i>n</i> = 10)
Year 3	32.8% ( <i>n</i> = 20)
Honours	4.9% ( <i>n</i> = 3)

***Main area of study***

Classical instrumental	45.9% ( <i>n</i> = 28)
Classical voice	16.4% ( <i>n</i> = 10)
Popular music	9.8% ( <i>n</i> = 6)
Jazz (instrumental / voice)	8.2% ( <i>n</i> = 5)
Composition (including jazz)	3.3% ( <i>n</i> = 2)
Music technology	1.6% ( <i>n</i> = 1)

***Cultural identity***

Australian	68.9% ( <i>n</i> = 42)
Chinese-Australian	9.9% ( <i>n</i> = 6)
Japanese-Australian	1.6% ( <i>n</i> = 1)
European-Asian	1.6% ( <i>n</i> = 1)
No response	3.3% ( <i>n</i> = 2)

## **What role (if any) do you envisage for yourself, as a musician, in social issues?**

Nearly all responses to this question fell into one or more of four partially overlapping categories. First, respondents referred to their potential role as musicians in *fundraising, benefit, or charity concerts* that financially benefit the efforts of other socially relevant groups or organisations (R1, 13, 14, 15, 20, 32, 33, 37, 46, 48, 52, 54, 55, 57, 60). Several of these respondents stated that by participating musically in such initiatives, they felt they could also raise awareness or educate people about key social issues.

Second, respondents reported envisaging how they could *raise awareness* of social issues through music, for example through performances at music festivals and other artistic or political events (R1, 4, 20, 35, 41, 44, 51, 53, 54, 58). These responses differed from the previous group of responses in referring to ways in which music or music-making could *directly* engage with social issues. For example, several of these respondents referred to artistic approaches to raising awareness of social issues, such as publicly performing existing musical works or composing or commissioning new works with a social theme (R7, 14, 16, 19, 22, 31, 34, 45, 52). One respondent referred to the possibility of promoting, through performances, the music of particular cultures, or music by composers who are a part of disadvantaged social groups (R6).

Third, respondents could envisage a role for themselves in using music as a tool for *promoting social cohesion* (R12, 20, 32, 49), thereby 'taking advantage of music's power to bring people together and remove the stigma of social differences and unite everyone' (R12). In this group of responses, respondents did not specify the strategies they might adopt to this end; these might have incorporated some of the strategies mentioned by the previous two sets of responses, such as performing or composing socially relevant musical works. Indicative responses included:

The way that music can bring people from different walks of life is a start in solving some of these [social] issues. Music gives people a common ground in which their perceived standings in society becomes irrelevant and people can enjoy something together. (R61)

Music is something that unites people. It's the most universal thing next to religion... (R32)

In addition to promoting social cohesion, one respondent observed that music can also inspire productive debate, and that this may be a possible role for musicians:

Musicians have the means to use music as a medium to spark debate and therefore change through music. (R48)

Fourth, many respondents envisaged possible social roles for themselves as *music educators* (R2, 3, 6, 10, 15, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 46, 48, 51, 52, 57, 58), particularly by developing and/or delivering music workshops or outreach programs for people from socially disadvantaged groups (R2, 3, 23, 24, 25, 26, 46, 48, 51, 57, 58). Respondents reflected on their possible social contributions as musicians in the following ways:

Giving concerts for people who otherwise might not be able to attend 'official' music performances; i.e. the elderly, disabled, refugee, and prisoner, etc. (R46)

Providing music education to people with lower socio-economic background to equip them with a skill to change their future for the better. (R52)

Helping people with mental disabilities like Alzheimer's disease through music therapy practises.  
Helping people with physical disabilities by playing music they can dance to. (R56)

These four main ways in which survey respondents could envisage a social role for themselves as musicians—by indirect means such as fundraising and benefit performances; by raising awareness of social issues directly through performances and other musical endeavours; by promoting social cohesion through music; and by educating others musically, and socially through music—represent a range of student perspectives about the nature of their possible future social roles as musicians. Some responses indicate a sense of the socially transformative potential of music, and of the respondent's concomitant potential to play a valuable social role as a musician. However, others (such as those who refer to using musical knowledge and skills for social good only indirectly) suggest that some students may hold relatively narrow conceptualisations about how they could engage with their local and global communities as musicians, in ethical, moral, social, and political ways.

In turn, this suggests a need—and a potentially high return—for educators and institutions, as an integral part of a tertiary music education, to introduce or increase ways to expand all students' understandings of their possible social roles as musicians (Reimer, 2007). Some focus group participants believed that their tertiary music education would benefit from greater emphasis on social engagement:

I just think the university should actually encourage more of this, playing for social issues and stuff. Because I feel like we can sometimes be so bogged down with repertoire ... There's not enough of that [social engagement] at the uni. I think it's very content-based. We should be looking at more broad issues. (S8 / R56, Focus Group, 21 August 2018)

I believe it [social responsibility] is something that everyone should have to learn about. Because it affects everyone. (S14 / R28, Focus Group, 29 August 2017)

These perspectives seem reasonable: when all students have a clearer understanding of the diversity of possible social roles they may play as musicians, they will be better equipped to forge lives and careers that are socially productive, responsible, and engaged. This aligns with Camlin's (2018) findings (and those of other scholars) that providing opportunities for tertiary-level music students to engage socially as musicians in the course of their studies can expand students' sense of personal and professional identity, help them become more confident personally and as performers and facilitators; and inspire in them a greater sense of social responsibility.

Some focus group participants expressed eagerness to participate in socially engaged music-making and activism, yet felt it was difficult for them to access the resources and opportunities to do so:

There are some really amazing compositions ... that were written as activist pieces about certain social issues, and I've always wanted to be involved in a project like that. ... But I think as a student musician it's hard to find the pieces or the resources to go about [such] activism. (S4 / R61, Focus group, 22 August)

I think the biggest problem is actually finding the people who are organising these events [or initiatives]. ... sometimes it's not easy to find out what's actually happening and who's organising what. I definitely would be willing to put my hand up for whatever happens. (S5 / R24, Focus group, 22 August)

As a composer, I've written a piece [for orchestra] about the Great Barrier Reef and destruction. But it hasn't been performed. But if it got performed, I hope that that would create some awareness of that [issue]. (S3, Focus group, 22 August)

These remarks indicate that although some students may be ready and willing to adopt social roles that draw on their musical knowledge and skills, they sometimes struggle to find suitable opportunities to do so. This suggests a possible need for expanded opportunities for tertiary-level music students to participate in socially engaged initiatives.

### **What does it mean for a musician to be 'socially engaged'?**

Student responses to this question fell across a wide spectrum that may be categorised into six groups. First, a few respondents interpreted social engagement for musicians to simply mean musicians extending their interests and activities beyond the musical sphere. For example, social engagement meant:

To be involved in groups and activities that are not music related. To play sport, to be interested in politics, to love reading. It can be anything. (R49)

To be connected to society such as interacting with social media and the community. (R33)

In the second category, a few respondents felt that social engagement for a musician meant sharing music or musical knowledge and skills with others, for example in the local community:

To me, socially engaged means to play /perform/ engage /listen to music that has a social aspect to it. It can be as simple as playing to your family, joining a youth orchestra, listening to bands in the parks or educating others. (R16)

Third, some respondents suggested that personal qualities and values were an integral part of what it means for a musician to be socially engaged. One respondent felt that for musicians, social engagement meant:

To get their head out of the practice room / music stand and read, listen, learn, and be a charitable, kind and aware human being. (R39)

Two other respondents referred to compassion in their interpretation of what it meant for a musician to be socially engaged:

... Being compassionate (R53)

... to be compassionately engaged in supporting the people who have the greatest needs. (R1)

Open-mindedness was another quality that one respondent felt was important:

... Being socially engaged means being open to new ideas, not limiting yourself to a certain viewpoint or group, understanding that there is a lot of diversity in the world and embracing other people's opinions and ideas. (R41)

This last response invokes the concept of *social imagination*, the 'capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society' (Greene, 1995, p. 5). Overall, this group of responses about what it means for a musician to be socially engaged broadly resonates with the

findings of Baxter, who found multifaceted, values-based understandings among students of social justice in relation to music education (2007, p. 271).

In the fourth category, respondents referred to a socially engaged musician as meaning that a musician is well-informed and aware of issues in the community and broader society. *Social awareness* was key here, in the relatively narrow sense of seeking out ‘factual knowledge’ (Wani & Nadeem, 2016, p. 4915) about social issues.

To be socially engaged means that I care about social issues and strive to be informed about important issues. (R26)

A socially engaged musician should be aware of their community's issues and those of the wider society (R10)

I think socially engaged means to be aware of issues within society. (R21)

Fifth, some students felt that social engagement for musicians entailed a level of action or activism.

We don't create music in a vacuum. ... Music can do things. (S7, Focus Group, 21 August 2017)

Several survey responses in this category made it clear that engagement encompassed and necessitated an awareness and understanding of social issues, and many referred to driving social change.

For a musician to be socially engaged would be, for me, to use your musicianship to try to resolve or aid social issues around the world. (R12)

... They use their career to help raise awareness and promote action towards these issues. (R14)

Musicians who are socially engaged tend to involve themselves with these [contemporary social] issues in the community and use their music as a strong force of positive change. (R13)

... A musician who actively participates in promoting social change is socially engaged. (R48)

Actively playing a role in society as a positive tool for change. (R51)

To me, being ‘socially engaged’ means to have a good understanding of today's major social issues, and as a musician it means using our art form to influence people positively and produce positive change. (R58)

Exemplifying this category of student perceptions about social engagement, two focus group participants (S12 / R13 and S13) spoke about their ongoing participation in a student-led university-based environmental group that they referred to as ‘artist’:

We are young people who want to take action. But we are also artists and this is a very important way of our expression - as an activist, as a person, as an artist as well: to be able to express what we value and what we're concerned about. . . . [We are] trying to create some kind of bridge between those two things which often people don't really relate: . . . Activism and art. (S12 / R13, Focus Group, 29 August 2017)

The responses in this category move beyond notions of *social awareness* to an understanding of musicians as change agents in their societies. In this way, they suggest the notion of a *citizen scholar*, that is, ‘a student who cares not only about gaining information and generating knowledge but one that is rooted in the reality

of their context, problem oriented and interested in applying their knowledge for the betterment of society' (Arvanitakis & Hornsby, 2016).

A sixth and final category of responses went further still, expressing the views that, for musicians, social engagement was not only morally desirable, but even a responsibility. One respondent, for example, noting that musicians are able to 'inspir[e] many people to action' and 'create change', wrote:

They have the power, and with it comes the responsibility to do something about making the world a better place. (R4)

Other respondents held comparable views, referring to their beliefs that musicians have a level of social responsibility:

... As musicians we are granted this medium that can be very easily wide spread ..., and I think it's important to use that power, and the voices we are given as musicians to try and make the world a little better. (R32)

I think as people we have a responsibility to be socially engaged. As musicians I would say that is a crucial aspect of music-making, particularly if we have various types of privilege, it is important to let marginalised groups be heard. And of course, music can be a tool for social change... (R3)

Several responses falling into this category also expressed a belief that music was somehow unique or particularly 'powerful' (R7) in its ability to create social awareness or inspire social change. Respondent 6, for example, reflected:

art is representative of culture and has the ability to critique, challenge and change the status quo. ...  
A socially engaged musician is someone who takes responsibility for that. (R6)

These responses resonate with those articulations of *artistic citizenship* in which musicians not only have the potential to be social change agents, but also a responsibility to that end (cf. Elliot, 2012; Elliot, Silverman & Bowman, 2016).

These six categories of responses are represented visually in Figure 1. Some of these conceptualisations of what it means for a musician to be socially engaged are clearly more expansive than others—for example, *engaging in social change agendas* and *acknowledging and embracing social responsibility* suggests a more sophisticated understanding of the potential depth for social engagement than does *extending one's interests and connections beyond music*. However, all six components are arguably important aspects of what it means for a musician to be socially engaged, and tertiary-level music students could benefit from being supported and encouraged to grasp the range of possibilities for their social engagement as represented here.

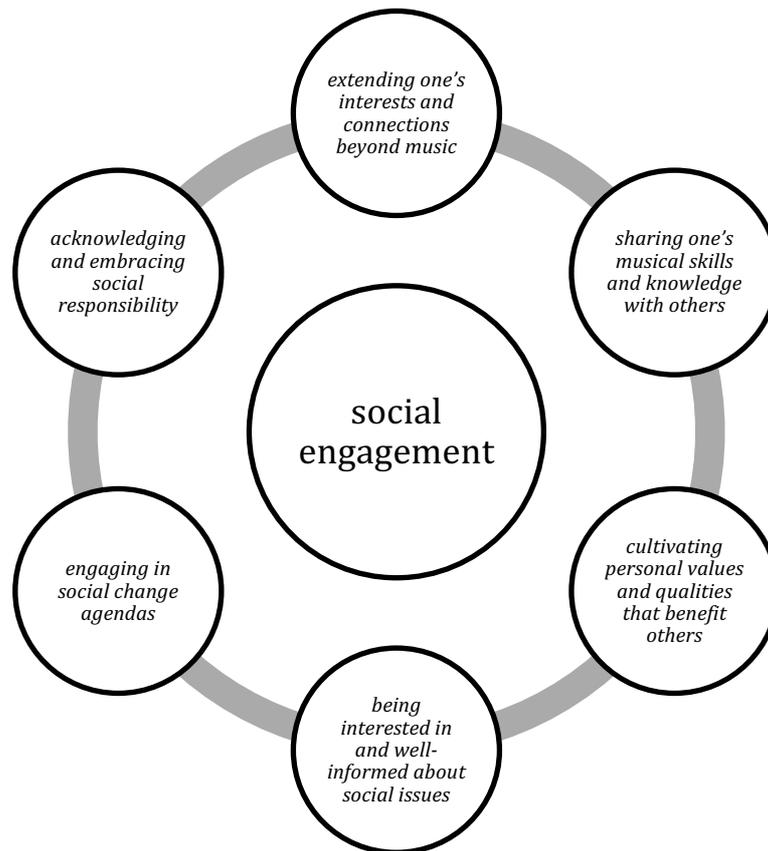


Figure 1. What does it mean for a musician to be socially engaged? Typology of student responses

### ‘Negative cases’

Brodsky (2008) recommends that qualitative researchers ‘actively search for disconfirming evidence’. Analysis of ‘negative cases’—ones in which respondents’ viewpoints ‘differ from the main body of evidence’ (Hsiung, 2010)—can bring greater nuance and rigour to data analysis, as well as reflecting an ethical approach to the data (Brodsky, 2008). Several such cases are represented in this research, perhaps somewhat surprisingly given that research participants were self-selecting.

Responses from three of the survey participants (R18, 42 and 47), all young men aged 19-21, expressed the view that it was irrelevant or even immoral for musicians to be socially engaged. R42, a 19-year old in second year of a classical instrumental Bachelor of Music, felt that social engagement was out of place for a musician—that to be socially engaged as a musician meant:

to follow the left-wing postmodernist cultural Marxist view [of] society and try to change society for the ‘better’. ... I think music has very little place in these issues and should be dealt objectively not with feelings. ... Music should have no role in social issues and politics... (R42)

In a focus group, this same student expressed doubt that social engagement through music is educationally appropriate for tertiary-level music students:

I think it [university music education] should be more neutral . . . Because [on] either side, someone’s going to dislike it. So there should just be no opinion. I think that’s what I’d like. (S11 / R42, Focus Group, 21 August 2017)

However, this respondent could envisage his own musical engagement with social issues, albeit only to a certain extent:

I can imagine engaging through fundraising festivals for mental health and disabilities by performing. I believe poverty and social disadvantage is a touchy subject so I'd try to stay clear of that one. (R42)

A 21-year-old Bachelor of Popular Music student in third year of studies, R47 felt (like R42) that it was morally wrong for a musician to be socially engaged:

It means to be socially irresponsible. It's like asking a sociologist to try and change society instead of studying it, it's unethical. (R47)

This same respondent believed that he held no social responsibility as a musician, even if in the future his standing or reputation as a musician afforded him a position of influence:

It's my job to look after me. I will not be held responsible for the actions and positions of others just because my job description could lead me to a place of prominence. (R47)

R18 identified as a 19-year-old in second year of a classical instrumental Bachelor of Music. He felt as though it was simply not the concern of musicians to engage socially:

I don't think it is important for musicians to be 'socially engaged', especially classical musicians. We study music, not social science or politics. (R18)

Asked whether and how he envisaged any role for himself as a socially engaged musician, this respondent replied:

I don't. (R18)

Comments from some other survey respondents suggested that some had reservations or concerns about musicians engaging with social issues. Without providing further detail, one (a male aged 18, in first year of a classical instrumental Bachelor of Music) felt that it would be 'very troublesome' for him to engage with social issues as a musician. More generally, however, this respondent felt that for a musician to be socially engaged entailed:

Be[ing] involved with a lot of matters and affairs relating to [diverse] groups of people. (R40)

This response does little to clarify the respondent's expressed concern about his own potentially 'troublesome' engagement with social issues. However, it does suggest that he is not reactively opposed on principle to the idea of social engagement by musicians, in the same way that Respondents 18, 42 and 47 appear to be.

When asked about the potential to draw on musical knowledge and skills to advance social causes, one focus group participant responded with ambivalence:

I find that really difficult. I know there are lots of musicians who write protest songs ... But I feel like I need to keep it [music and social activism] separate. ... If I want this to become my job, I feel like

they need to be two different things, if that makes sense. I don't know. I'm still trying to think that one out. (S9 / R22, Focus Group, 24 August 2017)

Two further survey respondents expressed some doubt as to the potency of future social efforts they may make as musicians:

I can see myself engaging in these issues, as a musician through playing to these people, teaching them music and etc. However, I feel I would be able to contribute more not as a musician but [as] someone of another profession, e.g. lawyer. (R5)

I feel that musicians might not find it as easy to engage in these issues as people from other disciplines might. In a lot of ways I don't see how these issues relate to music. (R23)

However, both these respondents held views concordant with other respondents in relation to what it means in general terms for a musician to be socially engaged: being socially involved (R5) and engaging people musically for social benefit (R23). This suggests a possible discrepancy between these students' understanding of the potential for musicians in general to play a social role, and the potential for themselves as musicians to do so.

These negative cases and ambivalent and outlier responses underscore the array of understandings and opinions among students about the value and importance of social engagement. That such a great diversity of perspectives should exist among undergraduate music students at a single institution reconfirms the need for, and the potential high value in, teaching—and embracing and exemplifying—the values, attitudes, and behaviours that would enable and empower all tertiary-level music students to play meaningful social roles as musicians, during their studies and throughout their lives.

### **Closing thoughts**

The academic plans and graduate attribute statements of a growing number of tertiary music institutions and universities state that one objective of tertiary education is to foster in students a sense of social awareness, social engagement, and social responsibility. When, as a matter of course, tertiary music education integrates into the core curriculum the social, political, moral and ethical dimensions of music and music-making, only then could it be realistic to expect that students will graduate from their studies as mature 'artistic citizens'—individuals 'committed to engaging in artistic actions in ways that can bring people together, enhance communal well-being, and contribute substantially to human thriving' (Elliott, Silverman & Bowman, 2016, p. 8).

This research indicates a wide diversity of perspectives on this issue among participating students, both in terms of the possible social roles of musicians at large (that is, the potential for artistic citizenship in general), and in terms of their sense of their own possible contributions (the potential for their own artistic citizenship). Expanding the scope of this single-institution, small-scale study to other institutional contexts, as well as more deeply in this institutional context, will help ensure that future efforts by educators and institutions to expand socially-oriented learning activities proceed from a clear understanding of current student perspectives on these issues. In this way, the relevance and efficacy of those activities may be increased.

The findings of this research suggest potentially high value in making such learning activities a core part of the tertiary music curriculum, and expanding the breadth of opportunities for students to

engage with socially-oriented learning activities. In this way, all students, including those with deviant views like those represented by the ‘negative cases’ above, would be exposed to a range of opportunities for them to play meaningful roles as musicians in their local and global societies. Scaffolding of these learning activities could help ensure relevance for the diversity of student perspectives and experiences across year levels. Furthermore, expanding and embedding socially engaged learning activities in the core curriculum could better enable all tertiary-level music students to cultivate the values, attitudes, and skills needed to move their notional understanding of the ideals of social awareness, engagement, and responsibility ‘from discourse to practice, from abstraction to concrete action’ (Baxter, 2007, p. 267). In these ways, tertiary-level music students will have the best chances of forging meaningful, socially-engaged lives during and after their studies—and more than this, of being ‘empowered and critically reflective about current society so that they may not only live in it, but transform it’ (Whyte, 2009, p. 319).

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