

Finding meaning in music: The impact of community engagement for professional musicians.

Sara Ascenso, Royal College of Music

Research commissioned by Music Masters



table of contents

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	4
Background and Aims	5
The Research Process	5
Who Took Part	5
Collecting Musicians' Thoughts	6
Analysing the Research Material	6
Research Findings	7
Identity	7
1. Meaning (individual)	7
2. Meaning (society)	13
Skills	16
3. Personal Skills	16
4. Interpersonal Skills	17
5. Musical Skills	21
6. Cognitive Skills	23
7. Teaching Skills	25
Wellbeing	27
8. Feeling Good	27
9. Functioning Well	28
Conclusions	32
What this means for LMM and the music sector	33
Acknowledgments	34
References	34

foreword

Community music educators are dedicated to making an impact in society. We expend ourselves tirelessly for the cause, providing access to music for people who have previously been excluded from the benefits of rich musical and cultural experiences. It is right that we focus on the marginalised as the primary beneficiaries of our work, but at London Music Masters we have also begun to think about the value that community music projects can bring to the professional musicians who take part. Musicians are invaluable partners in community engagement. Without their expertise, willingness and good humour much of our work would be impossible! In the past, music educators may have been guilty of taking for granted that musicians will enjoy the experience of participating, and will leave with a generally positive feeling of having 'given something back'. In commissioning this research we wanted to see whether there were more tangible benefits that musicians could derive from the experiences, benefits such as the development of new musical skills, personal growth and enhanced wellbeing. In a typical workshop setting, an amateur and a string ensemble might engage a group of children in the creative exploration of a piece of repertoire. This could be through an exchange of ideas and skills, composition, improvisation, singing, play or co-performing. The usual measure of success is how much the children learned and benefitted from the experience. But by failing to consider how much the musicians have also benefitted we risk two things:

1. Missing important opportunities for the musicians to grow and develop
2. Undervaluing the contribution that community groups can make

It is evident from this new piece of research that community engagement projects create unique opportunities for musicians to develop new professional skills. In addition there are key areas of wellbeing and personal identity which participation in such projects greatly enhances. Fully appreciating the nuanced and positive ways that a simple music 'workshop' can benefit a musician is key to unlocking the potential of community engagement to enhance the skills, wellbeing and positive sense of identity of our professional musicians. In an era where funding for professional development is tight, and specific player wellbeing projects are few and far between, this could be a route to much needed positive change for our community of professional musicians. Secondly, it is important that we place the appropriate (high) value on the role that our community groups play in the lives of the professionals who interact with them. It is easy for us to see the relationship as broadly one sided: the musicians come and give of their time and talents, and the community group is enriched. This study shows that the reverse is also true, and that mutuality – a reciprocal relationship between musician and community – is possible. The communities we work in are playing a vital role in enriching the lives of professional musicians. This should be celebrated, and expanded as we understand the benefits to both groups of participants. It will change the dynamic from a one directional 'giver- recipient' approach to a more inclusive approach which sees co-beneficiaries working with and for each other. My thanks to the London Contemporary Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, musicians teaching on the LMM Learning programmes, the staff and students of Ashmole Primary School and Jessop Primary School and to Dr Rosie Perkins and the Royal College of Music Centre for Performance for helping us to explore this important issue. Thanks also to Sara Ascenso for diligently and expertly leading this project.

Rob Adediran

Executive Director

London Music Masters

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community engagement, I think, is a good reminder of why we do what we do... kind of brings you back to reality a bit more. Orchestra Musician (London Philharmonic Orchestra)

The report that follows is an evaluation commissioned by London Music Masters (LMM) and conducted by the Royal College of Music (RCM). It is focused on the impact of community engagement for professional musicians, concentrating in particular on musicians who have orchestral work as their main professional activity. Recent decades have witnessed a rapid expansion in community music projects and findings regarding their positive impact have been unequivocal: community music offers the potential to build important psychological resources such as positive emotions, a sense of accomplishment, enhanced engagement, purpose in life and social skills. Interestingly however, despite the collaborative nature of this type of work, the experiences of the musicians who facilitate it remain largely undocumented and impact evaluations have tended to remain focused on one side of the equation: the so-called “receivers” of projects. The starting points for this research project were two innovative LMM initiatives that, in the autumn of 2015, united primary school children and musicians from two of London’s major orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra and London Contemporary Orchestra) to work together and perform new music written by emerging composers. Building on these collaborations and on the musicians’ previous experiences with community engagement, the goal was to investigate how these musicians view this type of work and its value for the profession more broadly. A total of fifteen musicians (six female, nine male), ranging from 26 to 57 years of age, took part in the research. Years of professional experience as a classical musician ranged from 4 to 35. The majority of the musicians had previous experience in a large number of community engagement projects. One-to-one interviews were conducted with all musicians covering two areas: 1) history of community engagement and 2) thoughts on the value of community work both for each musician, individually, and for musicians as a professional group. The final section of the interview sought specific feedback about the LMM projects that each musician had been involved with, feeding into their overall reflection on community engagement projects. Despite the experience of community engagement being a highly personal journey, three main areas accounted for the benefits of this type of work across the group. **1. Identity** The new encounters facilitated by community work brought an opportunity to see the power of music more directly and to gain a stronger perception of what it means to be a musician, both individually and collectively. The musicians highlighted increased meaning through opportunities for self-expression, giving to others, and passing on music to the next generation, as well as building new audiences and supporting music education. Additionally, community activities were seen as representing new avenues for employment. **2. Skills** The musicians reported that community projects also served as a laboratory for consolidating five areas of skill: personal, interpersonal, musical, cognitive and teaching. Personal skills highlighted included flexibility, readiness and an understanding of child psychology. On an interpersonal level, community engagement enabled the development of perspective, tolerance and empathy, teamwork and communication skills. Musically, for some musicians, the work in community settings facilitated a re-focus on basic techniques and ways of analysing repertoire. For others, the greatest gain came from being involved in a project that encouraged improvisation, something that is not part of their typical activities. Reaching out to different communities also allowed musicians to optimise musical communication, as they bridged the traditional gap between performer and audience. On a cognitive level, the space to develop creativity was strongly highlighted and, finally, community work brought the opportunity to develop teaching skills such as class management and the application of specific music teaching resources.

3. Wellbeing Lastly, engaging musically with communities contributed to the musicians' wellbeing. This happened not only through the experience of positive emotions such as joy or gratitude, but also by reinforcing a sense of accomplishment, purpose and through fostering social connections. For some musicians, the nature of these initiatives also brought a much-needed variety to daily routine, allowing for greater engagement and excitement about music-making. The results of this study offer a motivating picture of the potential role of community engagement projects for musicians. First, through allowing a more direct experience of the power of music, fostering an awareness of the giving nature of music-making and of its impact on the next generation, these initiatives help build a stronger personal sense of meaning. Second, musicians gain a greater perception of their crucial role in society, as a group. This happens through the sense of impacting the development of new audiences and shaping music education. Third, community engagement provides a space for strengthening a wide variety of skills. Finally, there is scope for community projects to allow an enhancement of musicians' psychological wellbeing through not only the experience of pleasurable moments, but also through engaging more, strengthening purpose and accomplishment, and connecting socially. The experiences of these fifteen musicians bring compelling evidence on the potential of community initiatives. The positive change it allows seems to go well beyond the typical "receivers" of projects and is substantial enough to deserve further attention and debate. One topic of reflection is around the best routes towards optimising collaboration between communities, having in mind the needs of all involved, and ensuring that this type of work is firmly considered as an ongoing part of the professional musician's portfolio, in any area of music-making.

background and aims

Community engagement projects involving music are rapidly expanding, reaching a progressively wider set of populations and contexts. Alongside their proliferation, there has also been significant improvement in documenting the evidence of their benefit. There is now a strong body of research unanimously pointing to their impact in promoting positive change in areas such as self-esteem, social bonding, and engagement (e.g. Cohen et al. 2006; Davidson, 2011). Additionally, mental health benefits have been recorded through, for example, anxiety reduction (e.g. Hars et al., 2014), a heightened sense of accomplishment (Perkins & Williamon, 2014), purpose in life, control, autonomy, and social wellbeing (Creech et al., 2013), social skills such as empathy and social awareness (Kirschner and Tomasello, 2010), as well as cognitive function (Seinfeld et al., 2013). One of the components often highlighted in the evaluation of these projects is the mutual nature of the process. Music-making happens in interaction and is communicative in its essence. Interestingly, however, assessment of the impact of community initiatives typically remains focused on one side of the equation: the receivers of interventions. The experiences of the musicians who facilitate this type of work are still under-researched. This research aims to help fill this gap by bringing to light how professional musicians construct and make sense of community engagement, in particular in relation to their typical daily professional life. Having as starting point two innovative community engagement projects designed by London Music Masters, we will investigate the most prominent dimensions of impact that this type of work brings for musicians.

the research process

who took part

A total of fifteen musicians participated in this research project. Participants were invited by LMM to take part, based on availability. Eight participants are members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), three are members of the London Contemporary Orchestra (LCO) and three musicians are part of the London Music Masters (LMM) group of teachers. One musician is an award holder with LMM, currently engaging in solo and chamber work. To preserve full anonymity, participants will not be identified in relation to their organisation but rather as "orchestral musicians" and "teaching musicians", according to

their function in the two specific projects that were the starting point for the current research¹. Six participants were women and nine were men, with ages ranging from 26 to 57 years. There were three instrument families represented: strings, woodwind and brass. Years of professional experience as a classical musician ranged from 4 to 35. The majority of the sample had previous experience in a wide number of community engagement projects.

collecting musicians' thoughts

The main research question that guided this project was “what is the impact of community engagement projects for professional musicians?”. In order to answer this question with as much detail as possible, encapsulating the richness and subjectivity of each participant’s experiences, one-to-one interviews were conducted with all musicians. They lasted, on average, 55 minutes each. The interview questions were organised around two main areas: 1) history of community engagement and 2) thoughts on the value of community work both for each musician, personally, and for musicians as a professional group. The final part of the interview also aimed to generate feedback about the specific LMM projects that the musicians had been involved with. Alongside the interviews, the researcher was also part of both projects’ rehearsal sessions and concerts, which allowed detailed observation, aiding in the interpretation of the interview material. This project was granted ethical approval by the Conservatoires UK (CUK) Ethics Committee.

analysing the research material

All interview material was fully transcribed and analysed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This is a process of research focused on grasping how the participant, in context, constructs subjective meanings and makes sense of a given phenomenon. After multiple readings of the interview transcripts, these were chunked into themes that encapsulated the essence of the musicians’ experiences, making use of specialist analysis software (NVivo 11). These themes were then grouped together based on similarity, leading to a final table. Throughout the process, decisions were discussed with another researcher to ensure accuracy.

¹ We will include the LMM award-holder musician in the “orchestral musician” group, given that his role in his specific project was closer to that of the orchestral musicians.



research findings

The musicians' experience of community engagement throughout their professional pathways was accounted for through three main themes: i) identity, ii) skills and iii) wellbeing. Each main theme is built upon constituent sub-themes that represent its different facets emerging from the data. This section explores each theme and sub-theme, through example quotes that encapsulate their meaning.

identity

The strongest impact of community engagement shared by the musicians participating in this project is linked with the concept of identity in music. In other words, community work shapes the definition, beliefs, and expressions of what it means to be a musician, both individually and collectively. The musicians highlighted two broad ways in which community work feeds into their sense of identity: 1) through increasing the meaning of music-making on an individual level and 2) through increasing the meaning of what it means to be a musician within society.

1. identity: meaning (individual)

At an individual level, community work supported the musicians in building meaning through six main pathways. First, it allowed for a clearer perception of the power of music. Second, it stimulated a sense of being grounded, through providing a 'reality-check'. Third, it brought new insight into how, as musicians, they were contributing towards the benefit of the next generation. Fourth, it offered a space for giving to others and an increased awareness of the sharing nature of music-making. Fifth, it enabled the development of self-expression while encouraging higher freedom in music-making. Finally, for some participants, this work brought memories from their own past experiences **1.1 The Power of Music** Community engagement facilitated a strong awareness of the power of music. Musicians mentioned this process often as being mediated by the enhanced personal interactions that a small-setting allows and the nature of the process of music-making in these contexts, which elicits direct and constant feedback. The specific emotional reactions observed in workshop participants were also mentioned in most accounts.

It takes you back to what music does and it reminds you in a very real way of the power of music and the unique way it can stimulate people's lives and I think to be reminded of that as a musician when you're thinking about money, schedules, family life, work life balance, travelling... all that sort of thing... to be reminded in a very real way of the simple power of music is really enriching. I think it's really very positive and uplifting to remind yourself maybe if you've been doing too many concerts, this work reminds you of what it is you're actually doing... so when you play to all these people anonymously what you're actually doing is speaking to them on an emotional level and this is something I truly believe we starve people of and I think that's why people like coming to concerts because it stimulates their personality and their whole wellbeing hopefully in a way that work and daily grind maybe doesn't. I think it is a very good thing for a professional orchestra musician to be reminded that you've taken someone on a really special journey! Orchestra Musician (participant 6) Sometimes when you do a project like that, you go "this is it... this is why music is so great!" You see what it brings to people. And seeing young children benefitting and really enjoying those sorts of projects... it makes you feel good about your own playing that you're doing! Teaching Musician (participant 15)

This sub-theme also emerged with a link to specific work among populations with special needs. Most participants had experienced community work across a wide variety of vulnerable settings, and highlighted how this engagement allows music to reach all levels of society.

I mean the problem with classical music is that in today's society, some people see it as a luxury and not really a necessity. It's for just the elite, it's for the rich or whatever. Which I don't believe is true. But there is a perception like that among us and if you can actually get through on a different level to different sections of the society and make yourself feel justified and relevant, it's a good feeling yeah.

Especially, if you feel that you're bringing in a little bit of something into some less fortunate person's existence, it makes you feel quite good about what you've done, you know, and you think "I have not just, you know, turned on another Beethoven 5 to a sort of mildly interested audience or whatever"... It's actually made a big difference to that person's day, you know? Orchestra Musician (participant 3)

1.2 'Reality Check' Closely linked with a clearer perception of the power of music, another aspect of the experience of community engagement that feeds into a stronger sense of a musician's identity is the space for a 'reality check' on why musicians do what they do. Participants often referred to this as a sense of being more grounded. For some musicians, community engagement allows to combat the possible alienation that an intense career immersed in performance can bring.

I think it's a good reminder of why we do what we do, kind of brings you back to reality a bit more. Orchestra Musician (participant 1) You can get some people who gradually come on side but occasionally you get people who simply don't want to do it and again that's actually quite a good reality check [...] I think if the project is done well then I think it's a very positive experience because as a high level professional musician you can lose touch with the baseline and why you're there. You'll do a concert maybe to a thousand or two people and they'll applaud us and they'll go home and then we'll go home and although you can obviously tell when an audience has enjoyed a concert and you are aware of your own personal feelings about that concert you don't have any interaction with those audience people unless you happen to have a chat with them in the bar or something, so I think it's a very useful exercise for people who maybe have been in the profession for a while because it keeps you grounded and it reminds you of the tremendous power that music can have. It distils it to the very basic level of how if you're playing and you see a child's face light up you can see that you're communicating with them on an emotional level. No books, no pencils, no computer screens, purely emotional and real and I think it's really very positive and uplifting to remind yourself maybe if you've been doing too many concerts... Orchestra Musician (participant 6)

1.3 Generativity For the musicians in this study, community engagement also brought an opportunity to develop the sense of guiding the next generation. The direct interaction with people in the different communities enabled by the projects was at the base of this process. We borrow the term generativity from psychology research to label this theme. This refers to the concern for establishing a legacy and nurturing the next generation, stemming from a sense of optimism about humanity.

I just think it's important to educate the next generation of what you have learned. It's the most important thing and the most valuable thing you can pass on and yeah you can educate by people going to a concert but I think by doing a workshop it's much more intimate. It's as powerful and maybe even more so because there is this one-to-one engagement with the child. Orchestra Musician (participant 11) You're seeing a future of the music in these projects... Orchestra Musician (participant 5) I think I feel more comfortable in a performance setting, whatever it is even if it's in the community or with children, whatever in schools, that'd be fine. Maybe that's just who I am, I'm more comfortable like that. But at the same time I realise the importance of this kind of work in terms of passing on and giving the initial thought of music to children when it doesn't necessarily come from their parents or their environment so that is very important. Orchestra Musician (participant 1)

In the context of the idea of contributing to the next generation, one of the musicians shared the specific story of a student who was inspired by a community project and decided to become a professional musician. A decade after their first encounter in the community setting, this student shared the stand in one of the main professional UK orchestras with the musician who first inspired her:

I had a pupil once that was inspired to take up the [instrument] as a result of a school visit and she's now a professional player in the [orchestra name] so I had one really great positive result and I'm still in touch with her because she was 11 when we went into her school and I did a demonstration on [instrument] and she went home that day and asked her parents if she could learn [instrument] and she went through the whole system and she played with us on trial in the [orchestra name] so I sat with her in the end, 10 years later. And she's now a professional orchestra player. That's very specific and a very narrow avenue to go down but just generally I guess when we do this work we hope that people will find an interest in music and enjoy it and it's a long term hope that they'll keep in contact with music or maybe learn an instrument. Just doing what we can for the next generation. Orchestra Musician (participant 15)

1.4 Giving to Others Community projects were also experienced by musicians as a space for giving to others and for generally developing greater awareness of the shared nature of music-making. Giving emerged simultaneously as an intrinsic definer of the profession for some musicians – that is, the musical identity equated as a giving identity – and, for others, as a much-needed process to help deal with the industry's potential tendency towards self-centredness.

Well I think just from speaking about my own experiences now as a musician, which is that it's a difficult job to do, especially it's not very well paid, it's long hours, and with a family, I know a lot of people who are thinking of giving up, they want to do something else and that's why. If you think you can put something back into the community, just give something. Music is so important, making new music and feeling drained after a long rehearsal, I just want to go home and see my own children. I was really lucky to see the keenness of those young students in the project, and think of what I can offer them. This is part of our role as musicians! Orchestra Musician (participant 5) I think actually the whole fact that you're actually giving something back to the community the whole idea that you're actually helping someone, helping kids, it's a sense of it's much better than usual "9-to-5 what's my life all about?". Orchestra Musician (participant 10) I think it is easy to lose side of what benefits you are bringing to the world, to society you know. I think a lot of musicians - and I talk to my friends and you know - it's like "oh, I envy doctors" and that's a very tangible way of changing the world and for us, you know, we're performing a concert. Ultimately a concert, is that much of a selfish experience - pursuing your own career is a solitary pursuit and you are serving your ego ultimately. I mean yes, you're also potentially touching other people's lives but it does feel like you're just serving yourself very often. So outreach is a reminder that you can go a step further and actually do something much greater for people. It feels like you're immediately changing the future for the better, if you're giving people positive reinforcement and influence. So I guess it feels much more concrete as a performer, you know. The benefits of performing for yourself versus performing for kids and giving out... it feels much more immediate and more real. Orchestra Musician (participant 9)

The opportunity to give back expertise in community projects, was also highlighted by the teaching musicians in the sample.

You've had this... you've grown in this way and you've had these opportunities and to give back your skills is rewarding... yeah rewarding...and I think the more you do it, the more rewarding it becomes, you know? Teaching Musician (participant 15)

1.5 Self- Expression Another aspect of experiencing community engagement highlighted in the context of a stronger sense of identity was self-expression. Some musicians mentioned community work as a forum for experiencing greater freedom and being allowed to express more of their individual voice. Underlying this theme was the idea of "letting go", experienced differently in the group. For some musicians, the path to self- expression in the context of these projects, meant letting go of discipline of their perfectionistic concerns, and re-equating what counts as a "mistake". Two of the younger musicians in the group also linked these

experiences to a feeling of liberation from a sense of being under constant scrutiny. For others, the strongest element was the letting go of the need to be led, and of anonymity, embracing autonomy and individuality. Finally, some musicians referred to letting go of behavioural patterns and routines and learning how to “be”, musically, in a different way.

Maybe it's great to know what we need to do in advance. But then again in this kind of project there's also that element of freedom, it is a good thing that you learn as well... as opposed to getting rules of how things go. From a performance, musician's point of view, it's more liberating. Orchestra Musician (participant 11) And in that respect working in this sort of scenario is incredibly useful, because it frees you up from the very necessary discipline that you've had to achieve, but it's lovely to be free of that, and I think that's a very valuable thing. Orchestra Musician (participant 6) Having to question how to be... because it does take some letting go... you do have to question how to be with children, how to be yourself and feel comfortable as well because you need to relax and not feel that you're being watched or you're being - you know, because you'd have to be a bit silly as well. You have to just let go... And prior to me getting involved with these projects [...] I was always too conscious, I'm a perfectionist therefore in my work and my performance, I need everything to be spot on and then when I give a reason for anybody to - to say anything bad... So when you are with children and you understand that you just have to let go and stop being that... you can't be too serious but you need to find the balance. And all of a sudden, you do need to find some room for mistakes, and just be yourself. So that's very powerful, I'd say, yeah! Not feeling that you're being watched... because in an orchestra, you do feel that you're being watched and you do feel that somebody is watching over your shoulder, you know. Especially if you're young and extra or on trial, then you have the other ones... they have had the job for so many years and they're just comfortable. Teaching Musician (participant 14) My job in the orchestra... I'm not a principal player, I'm a second player so you don't get all the big solos and stuff. Going to school I can demonstrate my instrument and I can play a tune to children which is great and I did quite a few projects with [a colleague] who plays the piano... we used to play a little bit on the piano which I don't do so it was nice to do that. I felt I was able to express myself with those two projects. Orchestra Musician (participant 8) A lot of the time orchestral players hide behind their part, you know. They hide behind their desk, they play the notes. But actually you don't have to be an individual to be in an orchestra but to work with children, you have to be an individual... it's a challenge but it's freeing! Teaching Musician (participant 14)

1.6 Reminders of the Past Finally, in the context of strengthening one's personal identity through community engagement, three musicians mentioned this type of work as a source of recalling their own individual journeys with music. The workshops evoked memories from early musical experiences, allowing them to re-visit important personal narratives.

I mean there is a personal connection if you do look back and look back on them, some of the same pieces that you've played in the first year. It makes you go back to your own story, and you are who you are now... Orchestra Musician (participant 9) For example, in this project, children reacted in really different ways so there were one or two children... if I was playing a melody and they would memorise it and play it back to me... they'd be really vocal and confident and then other children that struggled a bit. It was very often those children I noticed when you asked them for something, they would step forward and like, give you something so that was really interesting. I think I was one of those types of children... when I was younger... Orchestra Musician (participant 12)

I grew up in a musical family and my dad, he worked for BBC. He was a [instrument] player as well and he had to retire when he was 60 as the BBC did in those days but he was still passionate about music. He still wanted to play and he created a lot of ensembles. But one of the things he was really passionate about was community work in hospitals. And he basically did literally hundreds of concerts in care homes, hospital wards... I used to get the right, it was called the burns you know. It was – it was a unit where badly burned people are [...] I used to go down there every Boxing Day and play, you know, for an hour. [...] I suppose, you know, I came in to profession knowing that, you know, that were other – avenues to – to play other than just, you know, the standard sitting in the orchestra, so – Obviously, it's – its broaden way beyond that now, you know. [...] And so this kind of work brings me back those memories too. Orchestra Musician (participant 3)



2. Identity: meaning (society)

Besides reinforcing individual meaning, community engagement also helps strengthen the connection with society, reinforcing the profession's role in it. Musicians mentioned this in relation to three components. First, community projects as a space for developing new audiences. Second, community engagement as an important source of employment and, finally, community engagement as making an important contribution into shaping music education. **2.1 New Audiences** The contribution towards developing new audiences through engagement in community work was thoroughly highlighted. This was mentioned often following the argument that a more direct experience with music in a community setting will very likely feed into the development of music appreciation and the value of live performance. This point was often raised in relation to the growing accessibility of music online and the danger that this can represent to the sustaining of live audiences. Finally, a common thread within this topic was, once again, the opportunity for higher inclusion that community engagement work offers to the music sector.

Kind of in a selfish way it's important for the orchestra to build the audience of the future and we have to think about who will come to our concerts in the next 20 years or so... it all makes a lot of sense. I think we sort of take it for granted that someone is going to keep learning our instruments and the next generation is going to come along and play but also listen to us and I think now that you can have every experience in terms of classical music on YouTube or online or even if you - whether you pay or not is a different matter- you can get pretty much everything online these days and so we live of the people coming to the live concerts... we have to create this feeling that it is worth coming to the concert to hear the orchestra playing live and the best way you can achieve that is by someone experiencing what it is to play an instrument themselves. They don't have to be a professional musician... [...] just to know what [music] can do to you emotionally but if we don't nurture that... I don't know maybe there will always be people coming but we have to make sure it's the maximum outputs because it's rather old-fashioned what we do anyway [...] and we have to try and maybe go convince that it's still worth hanging onto this concept of there being a stage, people in tail suits playing music like they did 300 years ago. [...] It's not gonna come by itself and you can quote me on that but the upper class is not interested in this kind of entertainment or upbringing or education so what you're left with is not very much... you have to encourage it and that it's not elitist. Somehow we're being accused of being elitist... or the spectrum of different races isn't wide enough in the orchestras, etc. We're not the cause of that, society is the cause of that but we can still try to change it by going out there and making sure that we will connect... it might just be a small contribution but we have to try and encourage as many people as possible to at least have a look at it and maybe come back to it when they're in their thirties or so when they have different interests. Orchestra Musician (participant 1) The offshoot of community engagement is hopefully that we will have a population of people who appreciate the arts because there's no point in us doing concerts unless people want to come listen to them so hopefully you're developing an audience for the future as well as hopefully people who are better at learning and possibly feel better in their own skin hopefully. Orchestra Musician (participant 6) It was kind of like the big question of who our audience is and why is it getting smaller, why is it getting bigger, what can we do to encourage people to listen more? I think it's a central thing for people to be engaged. Thinking of that engages me and to the same extent the workshops did as well, because it's like you're young musicians and you're loving it and potentially you could be the musicians of tomorrow or the audience of tomorrow or the music lovers of tomorrow and that's really good and it's so different from everything I do so it gave me a refresh about who our audiences actually are which is really good. Orchestra Musician (participant 12)

2.2 Employment For the majority of the musicians of this study, community engagement can represent a useful resource for employment in a profession where many struggle to find work. The financial benefit of these projects was highly emphasized. The portfolio nature of music careers was also mentioned along with the need for a wider training across different facets of music-making. Musicians see community projects as bringing the potential to contribute to the development of the so-called “well-rounded” musician.

And the reality is not everybody can play or perform as their job because there's not any jobs. So it only seems sensible to me to be as rounded as you possibly can be, and if you can do some of this work that's another strength to you and a new possibility for work. Orchestra Musician (participant 2) I mean, being purely mercenary, I mean, obviously it's employment. Yeah. I mean it's a gig, you know? So it's a different sort of gig but it's still a gig! It's a day in your diary and income! Orchestra Musician (participant 3)

The financial gains from this type of work were also reinforced in the context of a professional orchestra:

But again it's coming around to bringing it into a modern day business... I mean part of the orchestra income possibly could be from these projects. I think if the orchestra thought that they had a duty almost, to go in and to support these projects or communities... Not that it's just an option for some players if they want to, but actually if you want a job in this orchestra then you have to do that! I mean it should be seen as part of the job, as to reach out to communities and perform to different groups. I think orchestras should feel a responsibility to do that as well. And surely that would then help funding with the orchestra, you know if we're seen to doing more, reaching out to people. Orchestra Musician (participant 5)

2.3 Shaping Music Education Musicians highlighted how community engagement may also feed into the music education agenda. Participants stressed this pointing especially to how orchestral musicians, in the dialogue with communities, can represent role models and facilitate music learning:

And I think it's really good for the kids to have players of a high standard or professional players who go in and help them although the kids aren't phased by that. They don't know that you've got one of the principals coming in or someone who's really fantastic, one of the top players in the country, it doesn't mean anything to them just for them to hear that quality of playing and sound. Orchestra Musician (participant 7) And you know we go on tour so much, and you just get the feeling that music education is so much more important, a journey, and just like that people are just much better educated with music and that sort of thing, I think it's really lacking here. So to get any sort of hands on experience, or to be in an orchestra, or playing in an orchestra, or have orchestra musicians in the classrooms, I just think it's really really important from an educational point of view. And obviously it makes you think about what you're doing yourself as well. Orchestra Musician (participant 2) I just feel without putting back into education it's not worth it... Orchestra Musician (participant 11)



skills

The second group of themes emerging from the participants' experiences with community engagement relates to skill-development. Most participants mentioned community engagement experiences as a potential forum for consolidating skills and/or broadening existing skills. Three participants also mentioned these activities as catalysts for a higher awareness of their own skills. Since the personal history of engagement with community project varies significantly across the group, different skills were highlighted by different groups within the sample. The following list encapsulates all the skills mentioned, which were clustered into five overarching categories: 1) personal skills, 2) interpersonal skills, 3) musical skills, 4) cognitive skills and 5) teaching skills.

3. skills: personal skills

Personal skills refer to competencies that are more related to individual traits than specific job tasks. They feed into general functioning both within and outside of the work context. Three personal skills stood out in the musicians' accounts: flexibility, readiness and understanding of child psychology. **3.1 Flexibility** Both orchestral musicians and the teaching team stressed the importance of flexibility in responding to the challenges brought by different community projects. The development of this skill in the context of community initiatives was often mentioned in relation to its subsequent generalisability to others contexts of daily life.

It does teach me so many skills. One thing that it definitely has taught me is flexibility. Orchestra Musician (participant 4) Community engagement is about learning how to adapt, how to approach different people differently. Teaching Musician (participant 13) It's about having the right energy to keep things fun but also developing them in all sorts of different areas like technical areas and musical areas. So the ability to be doing music in a room where you've got very different types of learners, very different types responding to things and having a way of teaching the same material but tailoring it to those different needs in a group. You learn to be incredibly flexible. It's the constant challenges of a child that's not quite getting a certain concept or just constantly changing the way I'm teaching according to that particular child, but I think the big thing is just keeping them enjoying what they're doing the whole time and reaching their potential. [...] Still about being flexible, you also develop an openness to learn other techniques from other colleagues, be it performers or teachers working with you in these projects, and step back from your usual way of doing things sometimes. Teaching Musician (participant 15)

3.2 Readiness The second personal skill mentioned was readiness. This was referred to in two distinct ways. First, generally as the ability to act quickly. Usually mentioned as being willing to step up towards an activity or to deal with unexpected behaviours or reactions. Secondly, in relation to performance: being able to play on the spot, often with little preparation and without the ideal conditions, which can feed into how a musician approaches performance more broadly.

In these types of projects we have to be very flexible and also very quick on the ball. You need to react quickly. It's very useful! Orchestra Musician (participant 11) You sort of break down that wall of, you know, you can react immediately – you're forcing yourself to immediately concentrate [...] It's perfect practice for when you actually have to walk on stage. But it's not about being just calm. I would say... when I started to do more community work I think what I developed was how to access a place of concentration despite distractions. You know kids, inevitably if we ever got to move... if you only practice in a practice room and prepare yourself only

from a completely silent concert hall, you're going to be caught off guard if somebody coughs or something like that. So if you're dealing with kids and you're speaking you have to change places in your brain very quickly actually. When you're speaking to kids and entertaining them versus going into performance mode. So I would say working with kids helps me develop how to quickly switch between those two places in my mind. Orchestra Musician (participant 9)

3.3 Understanding of Child Psychology Finally, a third personal skill strongly highlighted by the majority of participants was an understanding of child psychology, and a consequent easiness in relating with children. All musicians who had experienced workshops with children that enabled opportunities for one-to-one interaction, reinforced how this brought an invaluable exposure to a rich set of behavioural patterns. Particularly strong to this theme was the reinforcement of how this skill can be useful in other contexts. Some musicians highlighted the family setting, while others pointed to the context of the orchestra, stressing the importance of this type of knowledge in effective concert programming.

I think the number one thing for me is, you know, the child psychology thing [...], that is something that you start to grasp, you know? That makes it kind of a lasting thing, it isn't a musical thing, it's really just this kind of greater understanding of child psychology and just how to behave around children and how to treat them. To get the best out of them which just then leads you to just be better at acting with children around, you know, any situation. And it's pretty hard to be a good teacher without a good understanding of child psychology or else it's a fight and you can turn that fight into a positive thing and, you know, get the energy flowing in the right way rather than the wrong way. Not sure if everyone gets that for a long time, uhm, but it's something I enjoy. Teaching Musician (participant 13) *Before we engage in this it's like "oh I don't know how I'd work with children, I don't know what I'll say to them or I don't know how to talk to children" and then doing a few of those projects - sort of straightaway - it drops that barrier.* Teaching Musician (participant 15) *For me, one of the highlights has been learning about personalities and slightly rebellious behaviour and how easy it is to ignore kind of difficult children but actually very often you work out that it's not because they're difficult it's just actually because they're two steps ahead and they're bored. It's something I hadn't heard very much about. I had no idea... so actually just learning there are just some things you can do that universally work with children which is really good [...] to learn all of that stuff, it's basic child psychology, which for me is cool.* Orchestra Musician (participant 12) *I think as a professional going in and as a performer going in to work with children and just performing to them and learning about what excites them and how they listen and how they engage and what you can do to help them engage and how you can encourage them to listen deeper... I think is essential for how we think about programming, essential for how we think about performing our music, why we want to perform it, who we perform it to, who we perform it to in the future.* Orchestra Musician (participant 12)

4. skills: interpersonal skills

The skills linked with interaction – interpersonal skills – were the second category of skills highlighted by musicians. These were: perspective, tolerance/empathy, teamwork and communication. **4.1 Perspective** Perspective was mentioned with two meanings. First, it was highlighted in relation to stretching one's approach adopted in a project through developing how to position oneself in another's perspective. This was mentioned in relation to both children and colleagues. This theme was closely linked with the theme of flexibility mentioned earlier, but framed within the context of interaction:

Just trying to think about things from a different angle -- think about things, turn it on its head and trying to put yourself in the child's point of view and make it interesting. Orchestra Musician (participant 2)

Perspective was also mentioned as the re-definition of one's own problems and the re-equation of their weight in the light of the broader picture that develops as a result of the interactions enabled by community work:

It puts things into perspective... actually life in general, you know, can be tricky and you see - you're faced with that. If you have grown up and one - one would say in a bubble and you haven't experienced many - very many bad things... you've been privileged to have a really good life. And then you're faced with problems that you never had to face as a child. So actually it makes you appreciate what you've got which quite often we forget. And also...in a performance, because I get obsessed... So if I have a competition, I'll be practising 10, 12 hours a day, I mean, I'm just making myself ill to be perfectly honest with practice and that's not just me, musicians do tend to do that. Because we're workaholics but actually when you take a step back and think about the important things and actually focus, it makes you focus on the right things even within your performance. And it makes you - I don't know, it makes me analyse things that I do and things that the way I perform and what I worry about and what I should worry about which are two different things most of the time. Teaching Musician (participant 14) Sometimes in a particular project certain things didn't quite add up or there were things that one didn't think were right or whatever but the bottom line is I always felt it was really worthwhile doing and sometimes the path to performance is quite tricky and things you're not happy with but then for instance in these pre-concert events, when the children are out there and it's their big moment you feel like all of my problems, what I'm unhappy about is really... it just doesn't really matter anymore... it matters that they are enjoying themselves and they're having a good time and they can present what they've been learning. It's not really important whether I feel I can be at my best because it's not really why we're here and of course we should try... and if something isn't right if maybe the pieces aren't chosen right or maybe somehow the program isn't suitable or you don't agree with what the conductor's doing these things need to be talked about afterwards but at that moment you should try to just overcome that and see what's really important. Orchestra Musician (participant 1)

4.2 Tolerance/Empathy Linked with perspective, some participants highlighted community work as a means to develop their tolerance and empathy. Participants referred the idea of tolerance in relation to the specific contours of their main activities, teaching and performing, respectively:

When you're a performer, you're obviously "I'm a true performer and I'm true to myself" but as an artist, sometimes you might just not be feeling great, but you still have to - you're like an actor, you have to perform and you have to, just put aside your problems. But actually in the teaching world, I think, it teaches you that you have to face a lot of those problems on that spot, not necessarily yours but the problems that you come across from the children especially where we work which is, in - you know, we work with children that come from, dysfunctional families or you know. This develops a lot of empathy for sure. Teaching Musician (participant 13) It certainly makes you more empathetic and so that may well feed into the way I perform. I found working with [specific project] was absolutely fascinating because that made a real impression on me because I realised while it was the first time that I really delved behind the anonymous face of homelessness and to see that there was a huge range of people: social intellect, background, ethnicity, educationally, there was such a vast array of people and you thought, "blimey! that could be me!" and that was very thought-provoking and made me much more benevolent in my attitude toward people who are down on their luck. [...] It may well mean that - I suppose... to take it to its furthest extreme - it may mean that you may coin a phrase in a particularly sensitive way because you're thinking of some experience you've had and certainly probably makes you more empathetic and so that may well feed into the way I perform. I think as we go through life and you get more experienced I think you probably do become more expressive in the way you play music so that

probably is part of it. Orchestra Musician (participant 6)

4.3 Teamwork

A third skill linked with interaction mentioned by participants was teamwork. This was referred to both in relation to fellow colleagues and children participants:

They need a lot from us. But it's a teamwork isn't it? We need a lot from them. It works both ways. Teaching Musician (participant 14) It was a really good experience working with [name of colleague], the viola player, and he sort of said... I've kind of got the vibe that perhaps I don't know how much teaching he does or if he does that much of that kind of working in groups but that was sort of perhaps what he was kind of saying... and that was a good experience for me to get the balance right of kind of letting him sort of explore and having that different relationship with the children but also helping to guide things so it was quite a nice teamwork. Teaching Musician (participant 15)

Within the theme of teamwork, one musician explored the idea of the need for intentional training of this skill in the context of professional orchestras. Community engagement was seen as a possible route towards social-skill training in the context of a professional orchestra's plan of professional development.

We need to train teamwork. I mean there are modern businesses that run workshops, courses, etc. A lot of my friends work in a wide variety of jobs, and they get on training courses once a month in these sort of skills. And they're valuable, you know they go away with their team of people and do something together. Why is it different with an orchestra? Orchestra Musician (participant 5)

4.4 Communication Community engagement also allows a forum for development of communication skills. In this context, teaching musicians highlighted the potential for developing good strategies for presenting their ideas clearly:

It makes you develop a kind of clarity of thought that you can then, you know, turn into – into teaching which is being able to present an idea clearly. However simple it is. Communication skills, you know, we – we have to talk a lot, because otherwise the children talk. [Laughs] But within that, you still got to be able to teach something very clearly. Teaching Musician (participant 13) The ability to translate what you do to verbal. All this training on your instrument... it's not just because you can play it that you can then teach it, you have to be able to translate all of these things that you learn along the way and a lot of them you would have forgotten how you learned and that's not really relevant anyway because how you're teaching now it should be different and should be responding to what it's the room, but so to be able to translate in a way to people a lot younger in age and in a way that's engaging. Teaching Musician (participant 15)

Additionally, orchestral musicians stressed their experiences in community as a good space for working on the process of engagement with the audience. The opportunity for developing public-speaking and presentation skills was recurrently mentioned. One participant also highlighted the enabling of knowing how to communicate with all types of public:

I feel it's very important to do these projects especially if you perform. I do a lot of solo repertoire and I find these community projects help me to understand how you engage with the audience. So when I perform I like to talk to the audience, I like to tell them a little bit about the piece and how I got around to doing it and I just feel... in talking to people in the workshops it opens up that possibility to make sure you're doing it in the right way, or in the way that makes it the most sort of open to that discussion and not just being cut off by stage and making sure there's a conversation between the audience. Orchestra Musician (participant 11) I even found that the class talking was good to train my public speaking. I started doing this when my children were very young and I found it more difficult then because you're not sure when you don't

have children you're not quite sure how to talk to them really. Now my children are older I'm more ok with it. But that was interesting - coming up with scripts for that in the projects. Very good! Orchestra Musician (participant 8) Well it certainly helps you with learning how to interact with non-musicians, children who are non- musicians. This work kind of makes you figure out how you talk about things. Orchestra Musician (participant 7)



5. skills: musical skills

Community projects also allow a forum for development of musical skills. Musicians referred to the opportunity of going “back to basics”- exploring the fundamental pillars of technique and expression. This type of work also steered them towards a new understanding of musical material through the need to “dissect it” in the process of making it more accessible to the communities they worked with. The opportunity for developing improvisation was also thoroughly highlighted across most accounts. Finally, the theme of communication re-appeared but framed as a musical skill, both as a greater ease in bridging the gap with the audience when performing and an optimisation of the translating of musical ideas. **5.1 ‘Back to Basics’** Engaging in community work can help musicians re-visit technique and mechanisms of music communication. The time spent modelling basic elements of music-making was seen as very useful by some of the participants. This was also mentioned in relation with effective practice:

Well if you're trying to present an instrument, or trying to get somebody interested, or trying to explain it at a level that they can understand, you have to think about it more yourself as well so it can only develop me as well as the kids I think. Orchestra Musician (participant 2) Musical skills, obviously, mostly! Just doing this for eight years it just makes you challenge – you constantly challenge your most basic of techniques – every day. I think it's, you know, even if I haven't been practising fiendish studies on my instrument for eight years, but I've been playing every day in a way that I think children should learn... without realising it, I've kind of just been practising the basics. Everyday, playing in tune on Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, etc. Or just making a nice sound on open strings has probably done me more benefit than I possibly could've wanted to do because I never – we've played that basic stuff, right? For so long. Bored me out of my mind but [laughs] – but it didn't in the workshop situation. Teaching Musician (participant 13) Sometimes I try and think of my students at home practising and things that I've told them and trying to do them myself, so I do think it helps you to be more analytical about basic elements of playing. [...] I often become more aware of sometimes how I'm doing things and I actually have become sort of better. Since leaving music college, I don't have as regular lessons as I used to have and I guess that's part of getting better at my instrument, but also I'm better at teaching myself now and I kind of put myself out... Teaching Musician (participant 15) You go back to thinking more about what you're doing and you're thinking about doing different things and you're speaking as well, etc. which is something in the orchestra you may not do... you just go back to thinking about how to play things. Orchestra Musician (participant 7)

Within the idea of going back to the basics of music-making, one orchestral musician highlighted the opportunity for playing from memory that this type of work often encourages:

It also forces you to go back to the times when you played from memory, which can be a challenge, but incredibly useful. Orchestra Musician (participant 4)

5.2 Understanding/‘Dissecting’ Another component brought by community projects mentioned by the musicians in this study was the development of a different understanding of the music material, through the process of having to - in the participants’ words – dissect its basic elements:

All of the sudden, I have to try and explain to somebody else what I was doing and I really never analysed it and you know, this is something I had done since I was very young. I didn't really think about it too much so, actually I think it's made me possibly a stronger player in a way because I've analysed the science of what's going on, this new understanding, and actually I sort of know how to, deal with things if it's maybe not such a good day, you know? Orchestra Musician (participant 3)

It makes me analyse things that I do and the way I perform and get to the elements of the pieces. Teaching Musician (participant 14) I think in terms of kind of connecting it to the performance, it's also sort of it makes you... having to dissect things very sort of very carefully and so a lot of the style I think of LMM teaching and the way I've sort of done things in these projects is kind of sort of dissecting things so sort of quite sure activities. Teaching Musician (participant 15) In this context, some participants referred specifically to one of the recent LMM projects as an example: Ok well it's very interesting to dissect the piece because we were performing it the next day and I just felt a lot more comfortable doing this project and knowing it the way we did and playing it. I think I benefited more by doing that workshop than somebody that just came in to rehearse it and perform it. I think that's a very valuable thing...Because you're not just staring at the score, you are creating a different world based on the score so you are getting ideas from the people that never heard it before. For example, breaking down [name of piece], and making sure that they understood the different colours that [the composer] was creating. Finding the colours within the pieces because you talk about that... you break down the pieces when you're thinking of introducing it to a person that might not have ever heard it before so I think that helps to highlight a few colours or palettes and help in that way, I think, when I'm approaching a piece myself. This new look at a piece... you learn a piece you go and workshop it and come back to it, you see it in a different way, because what interests the other people you might not have known of before. You dissect things in a different way, sort of it in more detail, I feel. Orchestra Musician (participant 11) In this project it was very interesting to work on the actual piece when we did the rehearsals. Ok the piece is fantastic and it's played really well but it kind of made me really want to play it more if you see what I mean. The process made me want to understand it get under the skin of it in a way which we did. Orchestra Musician (participant 10)

5.3 Improvisation Linked with the theme of readiness mentioned before, participants found community projects a valuable way for developing improvisation skills. This is an activity that most musicians of the group do not engage with in their professional context. The theme of improvisation was thoroughly highlighted also in relation to the idea of letting go of the need to “get it right” and a process of getting out of one’s comfort zone. Improvisational skills were highlighted also in relation to the importance of seeing music-making in community as a process, in contrast with the focus on a perfect, finished, product.

In some projects I did, I found myself, doing jazz improvisation, you know, and you know, normally we're sort of – sort of got dots in front of us – and you play according to what somebody else wants you to do, you know? I mean, it was really scary at first, like “this is your solo” – you just got accompaniment going on behind you. You gotta try and improvise something, you know? And I think I never imagined that I would ever feel comfortable in that sort of environment. But I got there in the end [...] and you find yourself standing out for a solo, you just completely improvise, you know, not really knowing what you're going to play but you sort of ...I mean those sort of things... I was really lucky because it's definitely broadened my abilities as a player, you know. Orchestra Musician (participant 3) I felt like when comedians get a topic and they just have to improvise on the spot. I felt it maybe as a very similar situation. You just have to be quick... and how do I make sure that you sustain that interest? Orchestra Musician (participant 11) It sharpens up your musical skills because someone might just say, “Okay [name] can you give me a 12 bar blues base line in C?” and then you've just got to do it. There's no music to work from! Orchestra Musician (participant 4) In terms of my own personal development there's one very significant thing. And that's that when you go into schools and each project you have to put the music to one side, the printed music to one side. And you have to be prepared to improvise, and you have to be prepared to react to what's being

improvised around you, be it from another professional or somebody who maybe is bashing a drum for the first time. And I think when you've been classically trained you are very very hidebound by the process of reading music, following the composer's directions, giving the most perfect performance, it's all about perfection, idealism... It's tremendously useful to be pulled away from that discipline, to have to oh my god improvise you know that's really scary, and the first time you do that my goodness me are you out of your comfort zone. So it's almost the antithesis of what we do, because you are trying to encourage somebody to pull a bow across a string for the first time. And it'll sound chronic but you have to work with it and encourage them, and they'll hopefully be thinking they're making marvellous strides, and it's all about the process rather than the product. Whereas when you're performing to a very high level it is very very much about the product. Orchestra Musician (participant 6)

5.4 Musical Communication Reaching out to different communities has also allowed musicians to optimise musical communication. Not only can they grow in general communication skills through developing verbal expression about music as already mentioned, they are also stimulated to think on how to communicate musically with different groups and enhance the specific translation of musical intentions as they bridge the gap between themselves and their audience. The richness of encounters that community work allows was also mentioned as an important contribution for one's general growth as a human being, which was linked by one participant as a factor possibly feeding into musical expressiveness. Orchestral musicians also highlighted this exploration of new ways of communicating musically as a challenge:

I like these projects but maybe I'm kind of hesitant to go beyond that barrier of performance stage and audience. I think that's one of those barriers that's quite hard to overcome for orchestral musicians. I wouldn't exclude myself from that group! Orchestra Musician (participant 1) Also something I find is that... I'm playing a lot in lessons a lot. I'm demonstrating things. We team teach so there's two of us often in group lessons so I play duets and things to them and ask them questions about that and I find that performing in those situations is actually a really beneficial thing for me because that kind of... you can communicate in a different way and that's actually made me realise that that kind of playing is the kind of playing I really enjoy a huge amount... playing with a community audience. It kind of makes you play in a different way. If you're doing a workshop not only do you learn specifically how to talk about music but also perform music to children... The way you perform - perhaps moving around more or just kind of thinking about how the music is presented might be different to a group of children to how you would play in the Royal Festival Hall, for example. That might also set thoughts rolling for "ok how could I play here... oh maybe I might be interested in doing this in a care home or a homeless shelter" or something like that - just kind of acknowledging the way we present music can be different for different groups so... through doing that kind of work it would help to develop those types of musical skills. Yeah.... That's the big one. Teaching Musician (participant 15)

6. skills: cognitive skills

Working in new environments and with new musical tasks was highlighted in relation to cognitive function. Linked with community music as a space for enhanced self-expression and freedom, and also in relation to the opportunities it often brought for improvisation, musicians stressed the potential for developing creativity in this kind of work. To a smaller extent, community work was also mentioned as potentially helping cognitive function through enhanced concentration, by two participants.

6.1 Creativity The opportunity to perceive in new ways, to build novel ideas and approaches, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena and to generate novel solutions can be one of the benefits of community engagement work. This emerged as a significant element particularly for orchestral musicians, in relation to the repetitiveness that can arise after several years in the profession. Throughout the accounts mentioning creativity, it stood out that there seems to be a paradox around classical music performance: it is part of a so-called creative industry and musicians see themselves as creative, however, on the other hand, it remains a business where there is little room for experimenting with novel ideas and conformity to tradition is reinforced.

I think after a long time in the profession I can say it has its limitations, it's repetitive, and it's not particularly creative. And so I think what I like about this type of work is that you are stretching yourself in that way. Orchestra Musician (participant 5) This depends on the orchestra, but for an average orchestra musician which plays the same orchestral works year in and year out... I think the creativity's gone a long time ago. Sometimes I wanted to just throw a grenade in the centre of it because it would just be better without them because after you've been playing the same Tchaikovsky ballet for the last 35 years, there's nothing creative about it. It's like doing a job. It's like going to an office and doing a 9-to-5 job which is boring. So the benefit of this work is obvious! Orchestra Musician (participant 10) If you're working with kids you get to exercise your own creativity much more, much more. You can create your own structure, you can sort of decide what is important to teach the kids and what pieces are important. You're not going to play exactly the same excerpts from symphonies. You can play solo music - yeah, all of that, it's very, very helpful. Orchestra Musician (participant 9) For one participant creativity was further linked with positive emotions about playing: Having that creativity does feed into my general enjoyment of playing music still and I feel I really enjoy playing music if I'm gonna play it... It creates... it gets your imagination going because once again you are looking away from a traditional way of rehearsing. Teaching Musician (participant 15)

6.2 Concentration Concentration was also mentioned as a cognitive skill developed from this type of work. This theme was explored by two participants. One of the teaching musicians elaborated on how workshop settings enabled the training of focus on the most important elements during a task. The other participant, linking enhanced concentration to the theme of readiness already discussed, shared how the experience of community engagement helped in terms of developing strategies to avoid distractions.

This type of work makes you focus... you kind of concentrate on the right things even within performance. Teaching Musician (participant 14) So I would say working with kids helps me develop how to quickly switch between those two places in my mind [speaking and performing] and also how to either block out or acknowledge - but not be bothered by - ambient sounds or excess noises. Orchestra Musician (participant 9)



7. skills: teaching skills

The final set of skills enabled by community work is related to teaching. Specifically, musicians highlighted the development of their ability to manage a group and the opportunity to gain new resources for teaching. Here, the process of being inspired by colleagues and learning through observation was highly emphasized. Also, the musicians who highlighted community initiatives as a vehicle for growing as teachers, expressed recurrent appreciation and respect for the work done in these settings, acknowledging it as highly demanding. **7.1 Class Management** As all experiences recalled by musicians happened in a group, a very recurrent theme was about learning how to manage a group situation, in particular with children.

You sort of learned a bit how to deal with a class and sort of make it fun. Trying to get them to come up with their own ideas. It's very easy to say ok you'll do this and obviously you know what you're doing whereas if you were actually... if you try and draw it out of them, or if you can see there isn't much going on just say well have a go at it or what kind of stuff do you like... and trying to sort of control it and trying to get them not to play their instruments as well is also very tricky... so all this management of the group. Orchestra Musician (participant 8)

When mentioning the ability to deal with a class, leadership as a core skill was also highlighted:

You definitely develop leadership basically in terms of being a lead tutor and kind of managing a group of children for example. Teaching Musician (participant 15)

Throughout the musicians' accounts this theme also re-appeared in the form of short comments on specific class management behaviours from the teaching staff that musicians noticed and valued. **7.2 New Resources** In the context of teaching skills, musicians also experienced community work as a source for gaining new, useful, resources for teaching. For some musicians it was mostly about general strategies and a better understanding of the teaching process more globally, for others this theme was highlighted in relation to new ways of addressing specific music-related content.

There are several things I picked up along the way like certain little things you can do to make the child quiet instantly, little tricks... the bow on the head, getting them to hold their instrument in a certain way, getting them to line up in a certain way, just things like that to go through the basics... how to teach the rest position... I think it's very helpful because it instils positivity and just think of it in a different way. I learned a lot of these things. Orchestra Musician (participant 12) Things like introducing the instrument or trying to work out how to teach to them, and they were learning quite a lot of advanced stuff like syncopated rhythms, or stuff that they wouldn't know that they were technically doing. So obviously the kids were learning, but then the teachers were trying to pass on their skills to us about teaching, so we were getting teaching skills to try and teach a classroom. But then we were trying to [...] help them a bit with the musical side of things, so everybody learnt from it. Orchestra Musician (participant 2) I teach as well as play, you have to be able to demonstrate... sometimes when they don't know how to do it and when you demonstrate you have to physically put their fingers in the right place and sort of say, it's this note, then that note and that note. You kind of develop all of this. And I think there are people that are just amazing at working with children and teaching children and I think it's an incredible skill just like playing an instrument to a really high standard is an incredible skill [...] you really learn how to do, and the reason I like this type of work is because you have all these teachers and the guy leading the workshops [name]... you just learn so much from them! Orchestra Musician (participant 10)



wellbeing

The third and last area benefitting from community engagement is psychological wellbeing. The wellbeing experience is a very personal phenomenon and different participants stressed different components of wellbeing. Overall, community projects seem to have a role in: 1) feeling good (or the more emotional side of wellbeing) and 2) functioning well (through aspects of wellbeing linked with engagement, a sense of accomplishment and social connections).

8. wellbeing: feeling good

The facet of wellbeing linked with pleasurable experiences and feeling good (also known as hedonic wellbeing) was very present in most of the musicians' accounts. Community projects were linked to positive emotions, in particular, joy and gratification (or satisfaction) and gratitude: **8.1 Joy/Gratification** The sense of happiness through joy and gratification that this type of work brings was consistently highlighted. Musicians found joy in doing these activities for their own sake but also through observing the joy they brought to the people they were working with.

You get a lot of satisfaction and enjoyment out of it. Orchestra Musician (participant 8) You looked at them [children] and they seemed to be completely engaged which is refreshing, you know... being a sort of almost retired professional it's quite invigorating seeing that in children. It's something very different to what we do, there's a sort of passion for it or for the project coming from them. It just makes you happy. Orchestra Musician (participant 5) I mean I think it contributes to my wellbeing when I see a child who is engaged with music for the first time. That gives me a feel-good factor. If you're involved in a very good project, it's very uplifting! Orchestra Musician (participant 6) Seeing the hope and then the joy, I mean all of the necessary components to be like a healthy human being. You can see very quickly when you're working with kids. You know most of them haven't yet learned to like hide who they are or hide a lot of their emotions. So they're open books, so if they're excited about something, you immediately see it. Orchestra Musician (participant 9) I do think it has an impact, a positive impact and it's something that is different from our everyday grind of rehearsing concerts and so on and I find it refreshing. Once you've got a good job and you feel like that's what you want to do then you are functioning in a very special way in a very good way inside a well-oiled machine that basically would beat itself for the next 40 years and you have the task of making your work life basically interesting and the conductors... they come along who tell you what to do most of the time are not always very good, you don't like them but you still have to perform well and that is a challenge and I think I can cope with it quite well. Coming back to it, that's why I like these challenges where I'm slightly out of my normal everyday life and I have to prepare in a different way so it might not be that significant as the concert later in the evening but for me personally that pre-concert event was far more significant than anything else I'd done in that month or definitely in that week. It doesn't mean I didn't perform well but for me personally that kind of thing lifts me up and that concert lifts my spirit for the next month. Orchestra Musician (participant 1)

8.2 Gratitude When mentioning gratitude as a source of positive emotional experiences in community work, participants highlighted two aspects. First, being impacted by the thankfulness coming from the people benefitting from projects. Second, an enhanced experience of personal gratitude for their own life circumstances that seems to arise when they are introduced to challenging life-stories in the context of vulnerable populations.

You get a lot of gratitude back and of course that feels great. Orchestra Musician (participant 6)

I think it kind of makes me feel lucky to be where I am. To be involved with what I'm involved in and I love, I mean I love the violin, I'm myself when I'm on stage performing and I'm myself when I'm in the classroom teaching, making a change for them, so... Actually life in general can be tricky and you see - you're faced with that. If you have grown up in... I would say... in a bubble, and you haven't experienced many bad things, you've been privileged to have a really good life. Then you're faced with problems that you never had to face as a child in these scenarios... actually it makes you appreciate what you've got which quite often we forget. Teaching Musician (participant 14)

9. Wellbeing: functioning well

Musicians shared how community projects helped them not only feel good but also function well psychologically. This included reference to components of eudaimonic wellbeing – the facet of wellbeing that draws from processes linked with virtuous action, such as a sense of engagement, accomplishment and purpose – and social wellbeing. **9.1 Engagement** Engagement refers to the sense of feeling involved in an activity. This was consistently highlighted by the musicians relating to the newness of the activities they get to experience in community work and also to how these bring variety to their lives, fostering an increasing interest.

I mean, variety is obviously, the spice of life. It's, I think personally as I've got older I've enjoyed doing different things because, I mean, as much as I love playing Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms and all that, you know, it's nice to do something a bit different. Orchestra Musician (participant 11) I think there are different types of focus and some are quite unhealthy and I think the kind of focus you have as a classical musician is very often an unhealthy focus because it's really insular and inward looking and yourself and an instrument in a room and practising something over and over and over again and then going to some concert and playing it and getting clapped and that's all nice but it's like why are you doing it... who's attending that concert... is it state-funded, is it attended by two men, an old lady and a lovely little dog like what is the point? What really engages me with the music I'm making is thinking of something really beautiful putting a package together of music in a concert and an idea and filling it with an exciting crowd who is buzzing about something... that sort of thing engages me, sort of what we did in this project! [...] Also there are younger musicians coming out of college and then even with, we're dependent on our body to perform well and as you age playing the violin is getting harder there's no question about that so you have to kind of make sure you don't miss the boat. Teaching for quite a lot of my colleagues is a good way of keeping yourself busy and thinking in a different way about music and passing things on which is great. Orchestra Musician (participant 12)

The theme of engagement was specifically highlighted in relation to the challenge of routine often experienced in orchestra work:

I think you have to be active. You have to try and branch out and do other things. I guess just putting the responsibility away from yourself is not a good strategy [...] just sort of complaining about the everyday grind and not trying to get out of it yourself, that's not gonna be a good way forward. I'm not saying that everybody does that but it's a trap that's easy to fall into because we're so busy... you can just switch off your brain you can do all this, you earn enough you don't have to worry about it in an orchestra like [orchestra name] because there's always the next thing to do but before you know it somehow you're unhappy and you've had 10 years without thinking too much about what you actually want. If you don't set yourself these new challenges and you'll think "oh no I can't be bothered to do this pre-concert event" - it's kind of out of the comfort zone - but if you always turn these opportunities down then you can't really complain that your life is a routine! [...] So it's a matter of being open to doing something different in order to keep yourself interested in the normal part of the job and I don't know I mean it might work for everybody, I just think it helps me, for sure. I have to ask myself... I'm 42 now and I've got a great job and I like it but it's likely that if I don't do anything different that I'm going to be sitting there in the next 20 years and doing similar

things... how do I get through this or how do I keep interested in what I'm doing and I think obviously there's performances and very good opportunities just by touring to very important destinations and concerts with conductors you really admire, or you really rate highly, you want to play well and all these things... It's not as bad as it maybe sounds now... but of course you look forward to these things and you want to play well and it keeps you going, I'm just saying it's not easy to just... you know... really... be in the routine.... yeah. There's enough I'd say there's enough pressure in an orchestra like [orchestra name] to perform well because we don't want to fall below a certain standard. It's very hard for people to get jobs here so you do remember that, that you're lucky in this position and that you have a duty to perform well. Having said that, performing well and your psychological wellbeing are different matters. You might not necessarily like doing it always... the repetitiveness of the job is sometimes difficult to overcome. Orchestra Musician (participant 1) I think people generally don't feel that a sectional player, there's no way to put yourself beyond sort of what you do on a day to day basis, and that probably isn't very healthy. I think a lot of people talk about you know retraining, and it is because it is quite stagnant. There's nowhere to go, it's just a question of getting enough work, and for that to be your career for the next 20 years when you've already done it, I think it's difficult to work with. Like in a normal career you know people are always thinking about where you can develop your skills, it's almost a requirement isn't it? Orchestra Musician (participant 5)



The concept of engagement was also mentioned in relation to bringing more variety to one's career more broadly:

It just widens your professional scope in a sense and horizons and you can just have a more varied career as a result really... because playing in the orchestra all the time I think would be quite difficult just to do that all the time. Lots of people do do other things, whether it's chamber music or teaching but I haven't done that so this is giving me another interest in terms of my career. Orchestra Musician (participant 7) And that's one of my -- when I sort of think about staying in the profession and I often think about changing or going more into teaching, it's because I find it very limited in terms of development for each individual. I feel like there's nothing more I can get. I mean of course you know I enjoy the concert, but I think in terms of what we do every day we're not stretched. I think just getting out, getting out of what you do on a regular basis and sort of seeing something else. Orchestra Musician (participant 5)

9.2 Accomplishment Reaching out to communities was also mentioned as a source of a sense of achievement and reward. This happens both through perceiving what one is achieving through the workshops personally, but also through observing how other people benefit from them. This component was often linked with the accounts on the higher perception of the power of music, already explored under the section on Identity.

You do get a very heart-warming experience from it when you do see these kids who've really developed during the project and that's very rewarding! Orchestra Musician (participant 6) They all did well and they were all very proud of themselves, their parents are very proud, we were proud because they did actually work very very hard. [...] yeah, at the end of the day, it's not about me, it's about them and the overall result, yes, they were great, they loved it, they went home feeling proud, parents feeling proud, you know, it's great! Teaching Musician (participant 14) I guess for me it was one of those things... it was a lot of hard work but you come to the end of it and you think, "wow I was able to do that". I think if something like that was thrown at me again I'd know how to do it. I'd have an experience of teaching that sort of repertoire and I know it can be done! I do come home from certain sessions and just think....ufff... how can I... what can we do here think again about this and then come home from certain sessions and it's got me "yes"! You know? "That worked really well". Teaching Musician (participant 15) Just working towards a project that comes off great like the one we just did is great. I just had a big smile on after we did it but I think it was partly because I did do the workshops it was just such a great coming... an occasion with a few weeks working towards it but a smile I guess... just knowing that you could inspire at least one person in the room and it doesn't matter where it is, it could be the smallest village in provincial Emirates or middle of a desert or Royal Festival Hall. Yeah it's just music is important everywhere wherever you go, I think... you need to play well. It's this that we want to achieve! Orchestra Musician (participant 11)

9.3 Purpose Participants also referred to community engagement as fostering a sense of purpose. This theme partially overlaps with the increased individual sense of meaning already explored under the section on Identity. Purpose appears here, however, with a very clear link to overall psychological wellbeing, going beyond the musical identity. Musicians shared how this work can help in developing a sense of belonging to something larger than one's self:

It's a sense of being more than just an average human being, yeah and for me it's quite important because I guess we're still young we're radical we're still thinking what is the meaning of life what's this all about and if you go to most religions, I'm Russian Orthodox but if you go to most of religions the meaning of it is to change yourself to a better person or whatever or a higher spirituality and all

that and you do that if you change yourself and the people around... you start changing and when you actually do something that.... you like, through giving to others, it feels there is a purpose, you know? Orchestra Musician (participant 10) I think certainly it gives you a sort of sense of doing something valuable, when you go and you can see how it can change someone's life... just give a child confidence... to come here and say "okay there is certain value in what I do", you can sort of forget that... Orchestra Musician (participant 5)

9.4 Social Wellbeing Wellbeing is not just an individual phenomenon. Social processes are key to optimal psychological functioning. For some of the musicians in this project, community engagement brought experiences that enhanced this facet of wellbeing. In this context, musicians highlighted the experience of a higher sense of connection with both the external world (outside the professional music sphere) and within their own orchestra:

When you work in an orchestra generally speaking, and you work with the same people every day, it's like being in an office, you know, and you got the same people across the desk from you, or whatever. There is nothing wrong with that but it's nice to meet all sorts of different people. I have a good balance... I do spend a lot of solitary time and I am used to it because it's the main thing that I've done in my life so I do have to practice on my own but that's why I do love big workshops or rehearsals because you get that balance of meeting new people and making music with yeah other people for a longer period of time as opposed to just going and playing a concert. That's a hard thing to do actually to just go in and you play your solo piece and you go and there's this whole other world of people that you could get to engage with on a different level. It's great, I think it's important to have both... for me personally to have that balance. Orchestra Musician (participant 11) I really think it is important, because it's a very insular world and we are very much confined. We often don't see past you know a second violin section or the first one or whatever, and so I think in that sense it could certainly be beneficial to see or to take a project from the start to completion, and sort of be involved with other people. Orchestra Musician (participant 5) Through these projects I've also got to meet and got to know some names and members of the orchestra that I wouldn't otherwise have known actually. A violist and harpist and a few others. So I've met a couple of people that I wouldn't necessarily have met in my normal sort of everyday in the job. Orchestra Musician (participant 4)

Finally, one of the musicians highlighted community engagement activities as a possible way of dealing with social challenges arising from the professional context.

I think we're not also made to think about how to develop as a section, or how to work better, and there are a lot of personal problems. I think that in a modern business it would be dealt with in a much better way, and that's a real problem. So I think it's quite refreshing to go into a new situation to a school and to do something, that we take for granted almost and to sort of take it further. Orchestra Musician (participant 5)

In Summary, community engagement projects are experienced very positively by musicians. They have the potential to strengthen the sense of identity through fostering higher meaning (both at an individual and a society level). These projects also represent a prolific laboratory for developing new skills, or consolidating existing ones, be it personal, interpersonal, musical, cognitive or related to teaching. And finally, community projects serve as a forum for increasing psychological wellbeing, both through the so-called hedonic route (feeling good) but also through engagement, a sense of accomplishment, purpose and social wellbeing.



conclusions

The results of this study offer a motivating picture of the potential role of community engagement projects in the lives of professional musicians. First, it seems that through enlarging the contexts and human encounters around music-making, musicians build a stronger sense of personal meaning and gain a clearer perception of their crucial role in society. Not only are they able to experience the impact of music in a more direct way and come closer to their most primary motivations for music-making, they feel strongly part of the narrative of both present music education and the future of music performance. Community work makes musicians feel valued. It strengthens the sense that what they do matters, both on an individual level and as a group.

Secondly, engaging with community projects can bring a very structural contribution towards musicians' growth, through serving as a laboratory for experimenting and consolidating skills. This seems to be transversal to very diverse areas of functioning including personal, interpersonal, musical, cognitive and teaching skills. Embracing these activities as intentional professional development training in the context of orchestras gains here strong support. This also opens the discussion on how to plan community initiatives from both the participants' and the musicians' points of view, ensuring that the design of a project meets the needs of all involved.

Finally, community works builds psychological wellbeing for musicians. Despite music standing as an unequivocal enhancer of wellbeing across a wide variety of contexts, musicians remain linked to negative wellbeing indicators through phenomena such as injury, Music Performance Anxiety and overall stress levels (Ascenso et al., 2016). This is particularly true for orchestral musicians, who have highlighted, for example, the role of routine and boredom as a significant barrier towards their optimal psychological functioning (Parasuraman & Yasmin, 2000). The strong link between community projects and components of wellbeing that serve as buffers to these challenges deserves very careful attention and is indeed promising. Crucial in this context is the role of enhanced engagement and a strong sense of purpose, as recent research has pointed to these components as the main pillars that build a sense of wellbeing in musicians (Ascenso, Perkins & Williamon, 2016; Ascenso et al. in preparation).

Overall, for musicians, this piece of research serves as an encouragement. Community projects are available and offer a platform for personal growth, professional development and full enjoyment of what it means to be a musician. They encourage freedom, self-expression and creativity, empowering musician to develop their individual voice. This comes as an invaluable tool for meeting some of the needs that have been highlighted the most when considering musicians' optimal functioning (Ascenso et al., 2016). For music institutions, the reflections shared by the musicians in this study bring crucial food for thought on the potential of community initiatives towards sustaining the relevance and accessibility of music in all spheres of society. Concurrently, they offer institutions a fertile ground towards fostering their musicians flourishing both musically and psychologically. This opens up the discussion on the best routes towards optimising collaboration between communities, having in mind the needs of all involved, and ensuring that this type of work is firmly considered as an ongoing part of the professional musician's portfolio, in any area of music-making.



what this means for Imm and the music sector

by Rob Adediran - London Music Masters, Executive Director For London Music Masters the results of this study are a positive challenge to consider opportunities for skills development and increasing wellbeing and positive identity of musicians in the design and evaluation of our community engagement projects. We understand the vital role that the communities we work in can play in the lives of our professional musicians and we want to maximise that. By bringing this mind- set into our planning process we can ensure that the musicians are having experiences that really benefit them, even whilst they are benefiting others. This report shines a spotlight on some of the needs of the professional musician and the way community engagement can address those needs. This is a good news story for the community music education sector! We hope that it will give our fellow practitioners a renewed sense of the immense value that their work brings to the musicians we work with on a daily basis. Through our work bringing different communities together we have something of vital importance to offer, and we are delighted to be able to celebrate it in this way. We are committed to sharing the learning of this report as widely as possible. We have created a short film which reflects some of the key issues highlighted here and the report itself will be available to download from our website: www.londonmusicmasters.org. For more details about the research process content please contact Sara Ascenso on sara.ascenso@rcm.ac.uk. Finally, we would encourage arts educators to consider the musicians they work with as a beneficiaries of their work. As this report shows, there is a huge professional development need amongst our musicians that can be met by music educators everywhere! By including musicians in our community work we are offering an invaluable service and an opportunity for growth. By actively considering them in the planning of our work we can start to make the most of this unique opportunity.

acknowledgements

A big thank you to all the participants in this project for sharing their thoughts with depth and trust.

Special thanks to Dr. Rosie Perkins for generously supervising this work.

references

Ascenso S., Perkins R. & Williamon A. (2016), Understanding the psychological wellbeing of professional musicians through the lens of Positive Psychology. *Psychology of Music*. Advance online publication, doi: 10.1177/0305735616646864. Ascenso S., Williamon A. & Perkins R. (In preparation), The wellbeing of professional musicians: a profile. Cohen G. D., Perlstein S., Chapline J., Kelly J., Firth K. M. & Simmens S. (2006). The impact of professionally conducted cultural programs on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of older adults. *The Gerontologist*, 46, 6, 726–34. Creech A., Hallam S., Varvarigou M., McQueen H. & Gaunt. H. (2013). Active music making: A route to enhanced subjective well-being among older people. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 133, 1, 36–43. Davidson J. (2011) Investigating group singing activity with people with dementia and their caregivers: Problems and positive prospects. *Musicae Scientiae*. 15, 3, 402-422. Hars M., Herrmann F. R., Gold G., Rizzoli R. & Trombetti.A. (2014). Effect of music-based multitask training on cognition and mood in older adults. *Age and Ageing*, 43, 2, 196–200. Kirschner S. & Tomasello M. (2010) Joint music making promotes prosocial behaviour in 4-year-old children. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 31, 354-364. Perkins R. & Williamon A. (2014). Learning to make music in older adulthood: A mixed-methods exploration of impacts on wellbeing. *Psychology of Music*, 42, 4, 550–67. Parasuraman S., & Yasmin P. (2000). Distress and boredom among orchestra musicians: The two faces of stress. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(1), 74–83. Seinfeld S., Figueroa H., Ortiz-Gil J. & Sanchez-Vives M. V. (2013). Effects of music learning and piano practice on cognitive function, mood and quality of life in older adults. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4: 819. [34 | The impact of community engagement for professional musicians](#)

www.londonmusicmasters.com
www.rcm.ac.uk