

**Bridging Education and Career: Post-Secondary Music Performance
Curriculum and the Portfolio Practices of Classical Musicians**

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Statement of Contribution

All articles and writing in this dissertation are the sole authorship of the Principal Investigator. Advisor and Supervisor contributions include editing, revision suggestions, and methodological advice.

Ethics Approval

This research was conducted with ethics approval from the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board, in accordance with institutional guidelines for research involving human participants.

Abstract

This dissertation, *Bridging Education and Career: Post-Secondary Music Performance Curriculum and the Portfolio Practices of Classical Musicians*, explores the intersections of music curriculum, identity, and career components to provide a deeper understanding of musicians' livelihoods in Canada. To assess the alignment of post-secondary training with the practices of professional musicians today, the author studies undergraduate music performance curricula and nontraditional performance work, examines rhetoric surrounding musicians' identities, and delineates portfolio careers.

Drawing on first-hand Canadian data through a national survey and interviews with graduates of post-secondary music performance programs, a survey of adaptive concert performers, and a curriculum analysis based on web-scraped data from five prominent institutions, the dissertation applies social constructionist theory and the transformative lens to emphasize musicians' perspectives in a practical dissemination of findings. Three core articles address three critical aspects of musicians' careers: (1) Canadian undergraduate music performance curricula, focusing on coursework beyond core musicianship; (2) the portfolio careers of Canadian-trained classical musicians, assessing employment patterns, career sustainability, training relevancy, and identity formation; and (3) nontraditional performance work, with specific focus on adaptive concerts as an emerging performance avenue. The synthesis and conclusion distill key takeaways and present actionable recommendations for curriculum reform, identity affirmation, and professional preparation.

The careers of classical musicians are increasingly precarious and multifaceted, challenging the legitimacy of traditional conservatory models that frame success primarily in terms of full-time performance careers. This research contributes to discourse on music careers by identifying gaps in institutional training and exposing the realities of professional life for performance graduates. By integrating concepts from the performing arts, curriculum, and entrepreneurship, this dissertation offers interdisciplinary insights into how institutions and society might better support musicians in building sustainable careers.

Dissertation Outline: Bridging Education & Career: Post-Secondary Music Performance Curriculum and the Portfolio Practices of Classical Musicians

Preamble

- Researcher's Story: introduces the researcher and her *raison d'être*
-

Introduction

- States the main research question: *What is the relevancy of a classical musician's post-secondary music performance education to their career?*
 - Provides an overview of the dissertation's three-article structure including their individual questions:
 - (1) Aside from musicianship, what courses do Canadian undergraduate classical music performance programs offer and/or require that might prepare musicians for portfolio careers?
 - (2) What constitutes a classical musician's career and how do musicians perceive their post-secondary performance education as preparing them for this style of work?
 - (3) What are the experiences of musicians in adaptive concerts (nontraditional performances) and how do musicians perceive their post-secondary performance education as preparing them for this style of work?
 - Introduces theoretical frameworks: Transformative Lens and Social Constructionism
-

Research Context and Theoretical Frameworks

- **Literature Review:**
 - Discusses models of classical music training in post-secondary institutions
 - Delineates the concept of portfolio careers
 - Examines musician identity formation
 - Highlights institutional definitions of success and projected career narratives
 - **Main Theoretical Framework:**
 - Transformative lens: centers the role of musicians themselves in reimagining music performance education
 - **Additional theories:**
 - Social constructionism: used to explore what delimits a musician, how institutions construct notions of success, and how musicians internalize/resist such narratives
 - Social identity theory: the way in which people define themselves based on their belonging to a specific social category or group
 - The entrepreneurial spirit: to explain a set of attitudes and aptitudes that allow an individual to identify opportunities, gather resources, and/or create solutions
-

Article 1: Coursework of Post-Secondary Music Performance Curriculum in Canada

- Investigates how Canadian undergraduate performance programs structure their curricula
- Analyzes the presence (or absence) of coursework related to career preparation (e.g., entrepreneurship, pedagogy, diverse genres, and other extra-musical skills).
- Compares institutional rhetoric about career readiness with existing curricular content
- Highlights gaps between training and skills required for contemporary portfolio careers

- **Data Sources:**
 - Institutional curricula documents
 - Program descriptions and syllabi from five Canadian universities
 - Existing literature on conservatory and university training models
-

Article 2: Musicians' Portfolio Careers

- Examines the current employment landscape of music performance graduates
 - Analyzes themes including:
 - Portfolio structures (e.g., roles, primary income source, part-time vs. full-time work)
 - Industry realities vs. training expectations
 - Institutional blind spots
 - Identity and success
 - Work-life balance and mental health challenges
 - **Data Sources:**
 - National survey of Canadian music performance undergraduates (2007-2022)
 - Follow-up interviews with select survey respondent musicians
 - Literature on university training models, portfolio careers, and identity
-

Article 3: Nontraditional Performance Work: Experience & Training in Adaptive Concerts

- Investigates adaptive concerts as a growing but underexplored aspect of portfolio careers
 - Surveys how musicians engage in nontraditional performance work (e.g., in healthcare, community settings, or accessibility-driven concerts)
 - Reviews whether musicians receive nontraditional training or develop such skills informally
 - Discusses broader implications of nontraditional work in career and curriculum design
 - **Data Sources:**
 - Survey of musicians engaged in adaptive concerts
 - Observations from performance practice in healthcare and community contexts
 - Literature on music and healthcare, and nontraditional performance
-

Synthesis and Conclusion

- Synthesizes findings across the three articles
- Addresses the central research question: *What is the relevancy of a classical musician's post-secondary performance education to their career?*
- Discusses curriculum and career implications for institutions, musicians, educators, and curricula/policy creators
- Proposes practical recommendations
- Identifies directions for future research, including longitudinal studies on musician career trajectories and further exploration of nontraditional performance work

Researcher's Story

I began playing the piano at the age of three and identified as a musician from the time I can remember. Countless practice hours through my teenage years resulted in auditions for prestigious universities in piano performance, and ultimately, I chose to pursue music as a career. In my mid-20s, following my master's degree graduation, I was working as a portfolio musician¹, although at the time I did not know there was a name for the career I was leading. I was a pianist for multiple choirs, a freelancer and chamber musician, an arts programmer and administrator, a researcher, and a public speaker. I found this mix of work invigorating and inspiring, albeit gruelling from the long hours, consistent pressure, need for entrepreneurial behaviour, and precarious work (whether that was because of an arts organization almost declaring bankruptcy, or a contract falling through without pay).

In many conversations, whether during visits to my hometown over the holidays or in discussions with colleagues both within and beyond the music industry, the question often arose of when I would settle into “just one job,” typically implying either sustaining myself solely through performance or leaving the industry altogether to pursue something more conventional. I wondered, especially as I progressed in each area of my work and continued to enjoy them all, whether these questions would ever stop. They did not. However, I learned how to explain my career as a package – a self-led and specifically curated set of pieces that I chose and that formed a whole – and how to accept my career as progressing positively, as it was. With the respect of my colleagues and peers, successful grant applications, and consistent, enjoyable work, I felt that I was sustaining myself and excelling in the music field. I still feel this way today and am empowered by the research that has begun to highlight stories of portfolio careers. However,

¹ A portfolio musician builds a career from a combination of part- or full-time roles often balancing multiple concurrent or successive freelance, contractual or short-term engagements with different elements taking precedence at varying times.

looking back on my university and early professional days, I question how the industry was presented to me and how my training shaped my readiness for the career I ultimately pursued and thrived in. Why was there such a mismatch between expectation and reality? Why was the projected “successful” path during my undergraduate degree effectively unattainable, while an ostensibly more sustainable, healthy, and fulfilling career path seemingly hidden away?

In speaking to colleagues about the idea of a portfolio career, it became obvious that this was in fact the way nearly all musicians worked. Although it was rarely discussed in the halls of renowned music schools or generally in the music industry, even our most beloved and infamous characters within classical music (alive or passed on) had led these types of careers. From historical examples² to current Canadian luminaries³, past legends and contemporary figures alike shared such multifaceted career structures. Why, then, were the narratives of our educational institutions and industry not representing and supporting these career paths with appropriate stories, tools, and acceptance? Why was the portfolio career not portrayed as the fundamental musician path from the beginning?

This dissertation reflects not only my own story but also that of many colleagues and friends, a story that feels both familiar and yet often unspoken or concealed in the current Canadian context. This suppression may stem, in part, from a disconnect between the professional realities musicians face and the expectations shaped by their education. Recognizing this potential misalliance, we must collectively reshape the prevailing rhetoric in the music industry to support one another, in practical and psychological ways, and to relieve some of the current barriers to entry for those just beginning their musical journeys.

² J. S. Bach (church musician, composer, teacher, performer, administrator), W. A. Mozart (composer, performer, court musician, teacher, conductor, entrepreneur), Franz Liszt (performer, composer, conductor, pedagogue, cultural advocate, cleric, and Kapellmeister) and Robert Schumann (newspaper columnist, composer, performer)

³ Angela Hewitt (performer, curator, masterclass pedagogue) and James Ehnes (performer, curator, pedagogue)

Introduction

Bridging Education and Career: Post-Secondary Music Performance Curriculum and the Portfolio Practices of Classical Musicians, explores the intersections of curriculum, identity, and work streams in the formation of musicians' careers. In a three-article format, the research seeks to determine which extra-musical skills professional musicians⁴ develop during undergraduate music performance programs, examine rhetoric of musicians' identities, explore nontraditional performance work⁵, and assess the relevancy of training against the lived experiences of musicians active in the industry today. The individual articles of the dissertation entwine narratives surrounding the portfolio careers⁶ of musicians and how they are prepared (or not) for these livelihoods, ultimately suggesting how institutions and industry might reconsider training and narratives considering factual music career components in modern times. This research draws partly on my combination of performing arts and management experience. Although complementary, these fields are rarely utilized for interdisciplinary study by an artist-manager-producer-researcher-practitioner. This lived experience has provided me with first-hand observations and social understandings that have ultimately led to my fascination with the concept of what it means to be a musician.

This research is primarily organized in a three-article format. That is, three studies are flanked by an introduction and a literature review, and a final synthesis with conclusion. The core three articles each contribute individually to the overarching research question: *What is the*

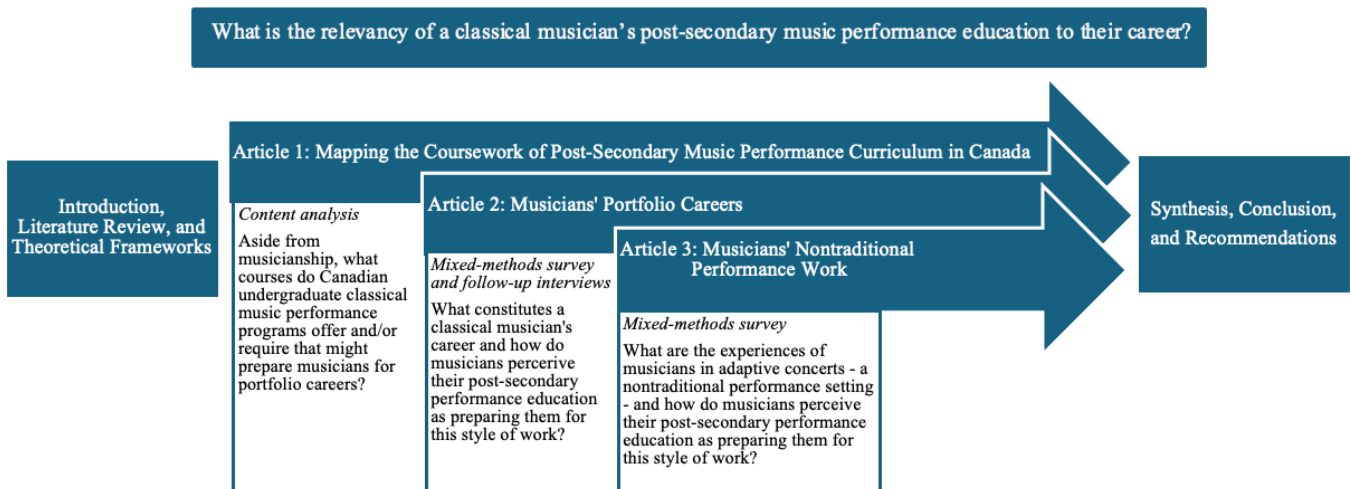
⁴Aligning with Bennett, this dissertation will consider a musician as “someone who works in the profession of music within one or more specialist fields” (2012, 199).

⁵ Nontraditional music performance work entails musical engagements in atypical situations or venues such as healthcare settings, bars, or commercial locations, interactive or multi-disciplinary work, or engagements with atypical populations.

⁶A portfolio career is a career composed of multiple part- or full-time positions and/or a series of concurrent, frequently changing, contractual, or freelance engagements. These positions and individual contracts may be held at once or in short succession, and some components may take precedence over others at varying times (Handy 1994; Templer and Cawsey 1999; Cawsey and Deszca 2007; Bennett 2008b).

relevancy of a classical musician's post-secondary music performance education to their career? The diagram below showcases the articles' questions and how they are positioned within the dissertation under the umbrella of the main research exploration. As the purpose of the dissertation is to explore classical musicians' careers and how performance education may or may not relate to musicians' professional lives, each article contributes a necessary component to the whole picture. As Diagram 1 shows, each study contributes a sub question to answer the broader dissertation inquiry. The diagram may be viewed in larger scale in Appendix A.

Diagram 1: Research Questions and Dissertation Roadmap



The three-article dissertation was chosen for several reasons. First, paralleling a portfolio career, the dissertation by articles demonstrates a conglomerate of related ideas that contribute to one another, perhaps even strengthening their arguments, which are of equal value but not necessarily linear, that is to say that the discussions within this dissertation are connected but may act as independent investigations. Second, the dissertation employs the transformative lens, a theoretical framework wherein the researcher attempts to advance a form of social justice while respecting cultural norms and amplifying the voices of the community for whom they are

advocating (Mertens 2010; 2021). This lens requires quick dissemination of research to spread knowledge, thus making publication a priority. The transformative lens is further chronicled in the Theoretical Framework section (page 16) and subsequent articles. Lastly, from a practical standpoint, a dissertation by articles presents real-world experience in attempting to publish and acts as a steppingstone in the researcher's career.

The first article of the dissertation contextualizes current curriculum⁷ in post-secondary institutions in Canada. Outlining curriculum offerings of major music performance programs, this study focuses on courses outside of core musicianship, including music business and entrepreneurship, pedagogy, extra-musical coursework and the overall breakdown of undergraduate performance degrees. Many scholars⁸ agree that entrepreneurial practices and broad skills are required for the modern music industry. While this is a well-documented necessity, higher education institutions with music performance degrees have been slow to adapt, retaining longstanding practices that date back decades, if not centuries (Baumer 2015; Tolmie 2014; Robin Moore 2017). Further, there is no known academic publication or analysis of Canadian institutional data from a music performance curriculum perspective.

The second article of the dissertation investigates current portfolio careers of classical musicians, drawing on prominent portfolio career literature⁹. Although there are several

⁷Curriculum in this dissertation is understood as an overarching concept that encompasses both the explicit and implicit dimensions of what students learn within undergraduate music performance programs. This includes the formal or intended curriculum (i.e., the structured courses, syllabi, and assessment practices) as well as the hidden curriculum, which refers to the unspoken, often unintended lessons, values, and expectations embedded in pedagogical approaches, institutional cultures, and social interactions (Margolis 2001; Eisner 1994; Apple 2004; Pinar 2012; Aoki 2005). Research from various music curriculum scholars, including Zavitz (2022; 2023) demonstrates how identity and ideology are embedded within curricular structures, influencing students' understanding of what music – and a musical career – should be.

⁸ R. Rogers 2002; Polifonia 2005; Smilde 2007; Bennett 2008a; 2008b; 2018; 2016; 2017; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015; Beckman 2011; Beckman and Essig 2012; Thomson 2013; Bridgstock 2013b; Scharff 2018; Schediwy, Loots, and Bhansing 2018; Bartleet et al. 2019; Smith 2020; Kelman 2020

⁹ R. Rogers 2002; Bridgstock 2005; Polifonia 2005; Smilde 2007; Bennett 2008a; 2008b; 2012; Bartleet et al. 2012; Perkins 2012; Bridgstock 2013b; Teague and Smith 2015; Scharff 2018; Brook and Fostaty Young 2019; Bartleet et al. 2019; Latukefu and Ginsborg 2019; Tomlinson et al. 2020; Diane Scott 2023

publications on portfolio careers of musicians, such research is largely based in Australia to date and led by researcher Dawn Bennett. Bennett is a foundational scholar in the field of music career research, and her work is particularly influential in discussions of career preparedness, curriculum reform, and the realities of professional life for musicians. While the concept of a “portfolio career” was coined and popularized primarily by Charles Handy in the 1990s, Bennett was the first to systematically apply the portfolio career model within music scholarship. Through empirical research and theoretical analysis, she redefined how many who investigate the field understand the working lives of musicians: not as linear or singular career paths, but as diverse, multi-faceted professional identities. Her work has become central to conversations around employability and has influenced curriculum development in higher music education internationally. Given Bennett’s leadership in the field and the widespread adoption of her conceptual frameworks within music career research and curriculum development, it is both academically reasonable and practically relevant to engage extensively with her scholarship throughout this dissertation.

Relying primarily on this study’s survey and interview data, procured from undergraduate performance alumni who studied at Canadian post-secondary institutions, this article presents an overview of the current portfolios of those trained to be “performers” in Canada, musician identities, and post-hoc reflections on performance education. The data from the national survey and interviews is the first of its kind and provides significant insight as to the landscape of music performance graduates from 2007-2022 in select Canadian universities.

The final article of this dissertation overviews nontraditional performance work, which has been increasingly prominent in portfolio careers since the turn of the millennium (R. Rogers 2002; Burland and Pitts 2007; Bennett 2008b; Burland, Mellor, and Bates 2023). To exemplify

one nascent aspect of this domain, adaptive concerts are examined in depth. Adaptive concerts are a subsection of music performance specific to health and wellbeing, itself a flourishing field that includes performances in hospitals, palliative and dementia care, Community Music, and music therapy (Stige 2004; Ansdell 2005; Creech et al. 2014; McDermott, Orrell, and Ridder 2014; Shibazaki and Marshall 2017; Edwards 2007; MacDonald, Kreutz, and Mitchell 2012; Preti and Welch 2013; Raab 2017; Shiloh and Lagasse 2014; Thompson et al. 2020; Foster et al. 2021; Richards and Parkes 2023). Adaptive concerts offer performances for whole families that include neurodivergent individuals and/or individuals with disabilities. Although performance in healthcare settings has become an increasingly prominent revenue stream within portfolio careers, such performances remain largely absent from discourse on music performance education and career readiness, particularly in undergraduate programs (Preti and Welch 2013). This article explores how artists approach this area of work, whether they receive any relevant training, their experiences performing in these contexts, and the specific skills they believe are essential for this professional subspecialty. As such, adaptive concert performance serves as an example of both nontraditional music performance work within a portfolio career and an aspect of musicians' careers that is not accounted for within current performance curricula. This article enhances understanding of an often overlooked, but significant style of work for musicians. There are no known studies of musicians' perspectives on adaptive concert performance to date, contributing original research to the dissertation's overarching question.

A subsequent synthesis addresses the overarching question to which each article sought to contribute: What is the relevancy of a classical musician's post-secondary music performance education to their career? Here, the author teases together various components of the articles' findings, discussions, and conclusions to provide insights and practical outputs for musicians,

educators, institutions, arts organizations, curriculum assessors, and public policy authorities. A conclusion presents the most salient points and an amalgamation of the recommendations for ease of distribution to align with transformative practices outlined by Mertens via Sweetman et al. (2010) as well as contributions to theory and practice, and a researcher's post-script.

Theoretical Frameworks

The transformative lens serves as the primary theoretical framework guiding this dissertation. To support and expand its application, three complementary theories are also employed: social constructionism, social identity theory, and the entrepreneurial spirit. Together, these theories address issues of identity, societal practices, aptitudes, and methods of investigation that position and enhance the research by providing a multidimensional lens through which to examine the research questions.

The Transformative Lens

Framing the entire dissertation is the transformative lens. The advocacy perspective of this framework was originally intended to give voice to various marginalized and vulnerable groups (Mertens 1999) but has since expanded to extend across general societal planes such as social justice, education, health, politics, and the environment (Kumar et al. 2000; Filipas and Ullman 2001; Mertens 2003; Shapiro 2003; Newman and Wyly 2006; Mertens 2007; Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010; Mertens 2013; 2021). A transformative theoretical approach involves addressing issues of precarity, restructuring research to prioritize the perspectives and contributions of the study's participants, and translating data collection and analysis into actionable insights that can be shared and applied. Sweetman et al. (2010) argue for the use of a transformative advocacy lens when engaging in mixed method studies that intend to improve quality of life of and/or advocate for various groups. This work furthers Mertens' development of transformational theory (Mertens 1999; 2003; 2009; 2010; 2013; 2021).

Mertens' (2003) criteria for advocacy research outline essential questions that researchers must consider from the beginning of their studies, focusing on whether power dynamics (both societal and relational) have been addressed, who the research is intended to emancipate, and

whether the study can promote social change or produce practical outcomes. This transformative framework is a relatively recent theoretical perspective, with Sweetman et al. (2010) noting that their discussion includes works from 2000 onward. Yet earlier traditions, such as the Frankfurt School and critical theory¹⁰, Participatory Action Research (PAR)¹¹, Critical Pedagogy¹², and even Dewey's pragmatism¹³, precede and inform its development. Within this specific transformative framework, Sweetman et al. (2010) observe that, based on their adaptation of Mertens' criteria, no mixed-methods study to date has met all the benchmarks. Instead, such studies tend to adopt a broad advocacy stance while incorporating selected elements of the transformative lens¹⁴.

A potential limitation of the transformative approach is the emotional connection that may form with participants, or "co-researchers," which can challenge traditional notion of objectivity and the post-positivist view of rigor in research (Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010). As Sweetman et al. (2010) note, "Transformative research is different because it aims to address power imbalances in society and is not value free," further emphasizing that knowledge is not neutral within this framework. Although the subjectivity inherent in this approach might be viewed as a drawback, it also creates space for participant connection, which enables vulnerable and authentic exchanges that may lead to meaningful and transformative analysis. With this added subjectivity in mind, rigorous ethical guidelines and a disciplined analytical process were

¹⁰ Frankfurt School (e.g., Horkheimer 1930s essays) and critical theory (e.g., Adorno and Horkheimer 1940s) align with the transformative lens in the critique of social structures, power dynamics, and around challenging ideologies that maintain oppression and inequality, as well as seeking to empower marginalized voices.

¹¹ PAR (e.g., Lewin 1946) emphasizes the idea that research should be conducted with (and not on) people.

¹² Freire's 1970 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* encourages co-creation and it heavily influenced emancipatory and participatory research methods (core ideas to the transformative lens).

¹³ Pragmatism (e.g., Dewey 1938) aligns with Mertens' transformative lens in its emphasis on practicality, applicability, and participatory knowledge generation, aiming to improve lives/solve problems through inquiry.

¹⁴ The framing questions of Sweetman et al. (2010) developed from Mertens' criteria are outlined in Appendix L as they pertain to this dissertation.

undertaken to mitigate biases, using NVivo software to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

The transformative lens was applied to this dissertation from its onset in the choices of methodology, such as speaking directly with and through those to whom this study applies (musicians) and advocating for changes that may improve the wellbeing of musicians, who are vulnerable because of their work style, income¹⁵, and the societal challenges of their profession. Additionally, the transformative lens dictates that practical recommendations with tangible possibility for social change should be included in mixed-methods research of this kind.

This dissertation affirms identity models, increases potential understanding of the music profession, and discusses nontraditional performance work, the latter including vulnerable populations and isolated communities. It concludes with recommendations around music performance curriculum. The transformative lens frames the dissertation, grounding its direction on ethical considerations and informing its writing through design and inclusive practices that ultimately lead to comprehensive and applicable results. As an example, the transformative lens is most prominently applied in the third article on adaptive concert performance where the voices of the musicians play the key role in determining research outcomes. Additionally, the synthesis and conclusion provide recommendations for music educators, curriculum designers, and post-secondary institutions to align with transformative theory's call for practical outputs.

Social constructionism

Social constructionism is a term commonly used in sociology and psychology with a broad range of defining characteristics but no single definition. Shaped by Berger and Luckmann in the

¹⁵ According to Hill Strategies, Canadian performing artists' income is 44% less than the average Canadian worker (median income of artists \$24,300 compared to median income of all workers \$43,500 as of late 2010s).

1960's, social constructionism has evolved over the past five decades, increasingly influencing knowledge claims, particularly in the social sciences and humanities (Knoblauch and Wilke 2016). Social constructionists claim that society manufactures ideas and concepts that would not exist without language or people validating their existence. As Berger and Luckmann (1966, 10) outline, people “make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them.” As such, knowledge, history, etymology, and epistemology shape what becomes shared reality. Over time, concepts and ideas take on multiple meanings across groups, resulting in complex and competing subjective understandings of the world (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Most social constructionists hold the belief that “language does not mirror reality; rather, it constitutes it” (Fairhurst and Grant 2010, 174). In this context, each person may have a distinct understanding of their environment based on their socially constructed biased and subjective realities (Lippmann 1922), but there are loose links created by shared assumptions of reality and language (Burr 1995). Burr, in her influential book *Social Constructionism*, contends that to claim a social constructionist stance, one must assert “a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge” that “the ways in which we commonly understand the world are historically and culturally specific,” that “knowledge is sustained by social processes,” and that “knowledge and social action go together” (Burr 2003). Where constructivism emphasizes an individual’s experience and is cognitively focused (i.e., reality is constructed by individuals and is focused on what is happening in their own mind), social constructionism contrasts this approach by supposing that reality is constructed through conversations and social interactions (i.e., reality is constructed by groups/interactions and what happens between people creates shared reality/knowledge) (Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan 2018). Both share a view that knowledge is subjective (Guterman 2006).

A social construction outlook is an alternative view or understanding of context, process, and society when compared to many approaches wherein objective facts and scientific method might reign. Constructionism contends that interactions and (re)negotiations structure our view of reality, with later movements of social constructionist theory striving to show that it is in fact human subjectivity itself that imposes “facts” which are then taken for granted in everyday life, and not the opposite (Blundo and Greene 1991). Some criticize social constructionism in relation to scientific method, noting that even the term “society” is normative and rendered meaningless when used in various contexts (Gergen and Gergen 2004). Additionally, many argue that social constructionism ignores biological influences (Gergen and Gergen 2004). In this dissertation, a social constructionist view of how society has shaped the term and identity of “musician” is brought to the fore. In combination with the transformative lens, the dissertation aims to examine shared meanings to support and empower musicians in the 21st century. Often, the views of the classical music profession are fabricated from societal shaping. Complementing the transformative lens, social constructionist perspectives seek to dismantle oppressive social meanings to cultivate progressive practices and narratives that foster social change (Burr 1995).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) put forward that common knowledge is often negotiated over generations and, therefore, current and future generations “inherit” various significations that become embedded in institutions and are presented as “objective” reality. This concept informs many ingrained views of what constitutes a musician, and subsequently this projection of typification influences the way in which musicians (and society in general) conceive of identity and career. With a social constructionist view, society and musicians themselves may adapt and construct meaning, which may modernize our understanding of complex careers, reinforce positive identity rhetoric, and, therefore, help to reshape what it means to be a musician today.

Social identity theory

Proposed by Tajfel in the late 1970's, social identity theory focuses on the way in which people self-define based on their belonging to a specific social category or group (Tajfel 1978). Tajfel and Oakes (1986) outline that individuals who are members of a social group internalize these groups' identities and attributes to their self-identify, and these group-think formations highlight inter-group differences and intra-group similarities to retain and reject "membership," thus influencing individuals to assimilate in various ways. The collection of individuals who identify with similar social categories often hold strong emotional ties to these social identities and form strong biases that favour the "ingroup" attributes and isolate those who may not fit as neatly into their socially constructed circle (Leaper 2000). Social identity theory also proposes that the expectation to conform to group norms can lead to prejudice and peer-pressure (Turner and Oakes 1986). In fact, these constructed groups can cooperatively build up members while discounting "rival" groups or perceived "non-members" (Neighbors, Foster, and Fossos 2013).

Social identity theory does not negate the concept of personal identity in that one's own identity may shift when in various groups, in the company of close friends as opposed to colleagues, or in situations that warrant differing behaviour (Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002). These negotiations form our collective and individual identities. This theory is particularly relevant to the dissertation because the classification of "musician" operates as both a powerful in-group identity and an exclusionary label, shaping how individuals are perceived and perceive themselves. Individuals who strongly identify as musicians often shape the meaning of this identity by advocating for those they see as belonging to the group, while publicly dismissing or excluding those who challenge its perceived norms. Becker and Barreto (2019) state that in social identity theory, hierarchical and strong-tie social groups require social change that may

only emerge when individuals, either independently or together, engage in collective efforts to elevate their group's social standing. In this regard, the conceptualization of “musician” could be better supported if in-group norms aligned with current practices rather than focussing on socially constructed identity formations that inaccurately represent most working musicians.

The Entrepreneurial Spirit

The entrepreneurial spirit is a loose conceptual framework by which scholars and society have attempted to explain a set of attitudes¹⁶ and aptitudes¹⁷ that allow an individual or group to identify opportunities, gather resources, and/or create solutions (or products) to meet various demands and goals (Albert and Marion 1997; Léger-Jarniou 2012). Abdnor (1988, 2) put forward that the entrepreneurial spirit has the possibility of breaking down social barriers and creating opportunities “for upward mobility of thousands.” Therefore, the entrepreneurial spirit framework aligns well with the transformative lens and social constructionism. However, entrepreneurial spirit equally connects to identity. For instance, within university settings, Fayolle and Klandt (2006, 194) assert that students spend many years developing their competencies to “build up their professional identity.” They hypothesize that the entrepreneurial spirit is built progressively alongside these proficiencies to contribute a set of behaviours, attitudes, and competence feelings they identified as “entrepreneurial.” These constructs allow the individuals to understand their capacities, values, and beliefs, leading to better orientations within their future professional lives (Fayolle and Klandt 2006). Building these understandings

¹⁶ In the context of entrepreneurship, attitudes refer to enduring evaluations and dispositions— affective, cognitive, and behavioral—toward entrepreneurial behaviours or careers. They reflect how positively (or negatively) individuals view entrepreneurship and act as robust predictors of entrepreneurial intention and behavior (Florin, Karri, and Rossiter 2007; Jain, Ali, and Kamble 2015)

¹⁷ Drawing from Ackerman (2018), aptitude is understood as a present, underlying capacity or set of characteristics indicating an individual's potential to acquire specific knowledge or skills through training or education.

of identity within a social context that is public is correspondingly necessary as individuals only identify as “entrepreneurial” if their attempts to act within this identity are realized, recognized, and create self-confidence that leads to self-efficacy and comfort within the roles performed (Fayolle and Klandt 2006). Once practiced in front of others, the identity formation gains clout and begins to hold a central position in the sense of self. Here, the ideas of this dissertation are key – if socially constructed identities of musicians can transform to embrace the entrepreneurial spirit (including within institutional practices) and more sustainable conceptualizations of portfolio musicians are accepted within society, musicians will be positively affected.

Given these circumstances of personal development, Fayolle and Klandt (2006, 192) outline that, “There is a large diversity of entrepreneurial situations because entrepreneurs and their projects differ greatly.” The entrepreneurial spirit allows individuals with multifaceted and self-guided careers, such as portfolio musicians, to sense, seek, and seize opportunities, creating more sustainable livelihoods (Teece 2007). It also presents possibilities for change and innovation that may otherwise be cast aside if an entrepreneurial identity is not formed and bolstered. Finally, as Pinchot (1985) observes, the idea of “intrapreneuring,” wherein a whole group might have a stake in entrepreneurial development, may drastically affect possibilities for social change. The entrepreneurial spirit in this dissertation refers to the mindset, skills, and competencies required for creative, self-directed, and adaptive career pathways, particularly in fields like the arts.

Methodology and Positionality

The dissertation applies a mixed-methods approach guided by an overarching transformative lens (Mertens 1999; 2003; 2010; 2021; Sweetman et al. 2010). Common amongst all articles, the researcher collects and scrutinizes first-hand data to determine themes and develop a discussion. The researcher's perspective as a professional classical musician with lived experience in both academic and performance contexts informs the design and interpretation of the study, consistent with the self-awareness and critical reflection encouraged by the transformative paradigm; throughout the research process, I engaged in ongoing reflexivity to acknowledge my assumptions and remain open to perspectives that differed from my own. Detailed methodology is provided within each article.

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Literature Review

This literature review explores current and historical research on undergraduate music performance education based in the Western art music traditions¹⁸ (WAM). The scholarship reviewed includes curriculum and institutional focus, career trajectories for musicians (e.g., portfolio careers¹⁹), nontraditional performance²⁰, and musician identity. By revisiting the historical development of performance curricula, surveying contemporary models, identifying critical skills for employability, and examining the careers of musicians in the 21st century, this review provides a comprehensive foundation for the dissertation. The primary objectives are to highlight gaps in current educational practices, to contribute to ongoing discussions about curriculum reform in music higher education, and to accurately depict the working lives of professional musicians in Canada. Although this dissertation is grounded in first-hand Canadian data, the existing body of Canadian research on the topic is limited²¹. As a result, much of the literature review draws on comparable studies from American, British, and Australian research, adding Canadian commentaries where available.

¹⁸ Western Classical Tradition (WCT), or classical music, has been used to describe “traditions of European art music evolving from medieval sacred and secular musical practices.” (Bennett 2008b, 8). However, the term Western art music traditions is used throughout this dissertation in place of WCT. This change acknowledges the diversity and historical breadth of musical practices in the West, including liturgical, courtly, symphonic, chamber, and experimental traditions, among others. The singular WCT risks presenting a monolithic narrative that excludes the variety and evolution within these traditions and tends to reinforce a narrow canon centered on Austro-German repertoire from the 18th to early 20th centuries. This usage follows the critical perspectives of scholars such as Taruskin (2005), who interrogates the ideological construction of the Western canon, Ramnarine (2011), who applies ethnomusicological critique to Western art music, and Katz (2009), who examines its self-referential development and cultural specificity. This more nuanced terminology better reflects the complexity of the musical landscape in which conservatory and university curricula operate, and invites discussion of inclusion, canon formation, and professional relevance in music education.

¹⁹ A portfolio career refers to a professional pathway where income and career fulfillment are achieved through a combination of multiple roles concurrently or at different times with potentially ranging importance, as opposed to a single job (Bennett 2012; Perkins 2012; Bartleet et al. 2019).

²⁰ For the purposes of this dissertation, nontraditional performance work indicates performing in nontraditional locations when compared to typical classical music venues, or outside WAM standard repertoire/genre. Nontraditional performances may include concerts in hospitals or healthcare settings, bars, shops, penitentiary facilities, schools, libraries, and outdoors, as well as working across various genres, not only classical music.

²¹ One paper that provides Canadian quantitative data relevant to the dissertation is Don Mclean and Dean Jobin-Bevans’ 2009 work, “Survey of University-Based Music Programs in Canada”, which endeavours to compile various information on post-secondary music programs from bachelor to doctoral level. However, no data specific to performance was amassed, and the study does not have complete data from the Canadian landscape. Additionally, now over fifteen years later, no new publications around such data have been made.

This literature review is divided into two main sections to provide a foundation for the subsequent articles addressing the dissertation's central inquiry: *What is the relevance of post-secondary classical music performance education to a musician's career?* The first section explores current research on post-secondary music performance curricula by offering a brief historical overview and examining the role of higher education institutions in shaping musicianship. It covers key topics such as core curriculum components, entrepreneurship, and pedagogy. The second section focuses on the working lives of 21st-century musicians, discussing portfolio careers, industry challenges, musician identity, and nontraditional performance opportunities. Together, these sections present a comprehensive review of relevant research by guiding the central inquiry of the dissertation.

Literature Review Section 1. **Higher Education in Music: Post-secondary Music Performance Curriculum**

Historical Context

Since the 18th century, conservatory and advanced Western Art Music education have emphasized musicianship²² and mastery of one's instrument, a format originating in Europe that has significantly influenced North American institutions (D'Arms 1977; Bennett 2008b; Roberson 1994; Slaughter and Springer 2015). This model, rooted in WAM, prioritizes technical command, artistic excellence, and solo performance, often at the expense of broader skill development (Carey and Lebler 2012). The first Canadian Bachelor of Music (BMus) degree was conferred in the mid-1800s (1846, to be exact, and on record as the first in North America) (Herndon 2015), with the University of Toronto offering full bachelor to doctoral programs by

²² Musicianship here refers to training in the Western art music tradition that typically includes applied lessons (individual or group lessons on one's primary instrument or in voice), the study of music theory and history, ear training, ensemble, choral, and chamber music work, sightreading, keyboard skills, and/or orchestral training, all with an emphasis on canonical repertoire.

1919 (Green and Spier 2011). Although it is unclear when the first BMus in Performance was awarded in Canada, the first American BMus in Performance was granted in 1918 (Bognar 2023), and it is known that most BMus degrees until the 1940s in Canada were primarily for composition (Herndon 2015). However, by the 1950s, performance, history, and theory majors were offered, and a standardized curricula of musicianship classes that included aural skills, music theory, and history, became widespread in the USA (Wennerstrom 1989). This structure was quickly adopted by Canadian institutions as well (Ellard 1977).

By the late 1970s, calls for curricular reform led to overhaul in some North American music curricula, including greater emphasis on public participation, education, and creativity (Ellard 1977; D'Arms 1977; Wennerstrom 1989; Roberson 1994). The traditional hierarchy in music programs continued to place soloists at the apex of musical success, however, reinforcing a narrow definition of achievement for many decades to follow (Bennett 2008b). As such, music performance students in the 21st century remain occupied with rigorous technical training, repertoire mastery, ensemble participation, and competitive performance in addition to the musicianship classes described above (Bennett 2008b; 2008a). This preoccupation has led scholars such as Bartleet et al. (2012, 36) to argue that music undergraduates are still “being prepared for nineteenth rather than twenty-first century careers and working environments.” While such performance-centric curricula have produced world-class performers, critics contend this emphasis inadequately addresses the broader skill sets required for most contemporary music careers, a concern partially evidenced by Bennett’s observation that two-thirds of music performance graduates exit the music industry within two years of entering it (Carey and Lebler 2012; Bennett 2008b).

At the turn of the millennium, factors such as digitization and shifting economic models fuelled a growing focus on business and entrepreneurship skills for musicians, alongside discussions of curricular reform (Hanson-Brotten 2000; Holzer 2003; Bennett 2004; Beckman 2005; 2007; Polifonia 2005; Bennett 2008a; 2018; 2008b; 2005; Slaughter and Springer 2015). In fact, scholarly and policy-related discussions on music business (i.e., “entrepreneurship”) surged in the mid-2010s²³. Proponents of vocational and career-readiness training for post-secondary music students emphasized the need for curriculum to match the careers of musicians in the 21st-century music industry more effectively, by including (amongst other things) significant business and entrepreneurship instruction (Bennett 2008a; 2008b; Carey and Lebler 2012; Tolmie 2014; Mantie et al. 2017). Regardless of the broader skill sets required of the contemporary musician, the need for high-level performance skills has not been called into question and remains a necessity for those wishing to pursue a career in music (Peperone 1995; Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012).

The realities of the modern music industry require a wide range of career components for those hoping to sustain a professional career in music. These realities should prompt music institutions to respond by providing curricula that equip music students with diverse and transferable skills (Burland and Pitts 2007). However, little change along such lines has been incorporated into post-secondary programs (Baumer 2015; Tolmie 2014; Robin Moore 2017). The following section discusses the role of institutions in music performance.

²³ Scholars writing on the topic of music entrepreneurship since the 2010s include: Beckman 2011; Beckman and Essig 2012; Hallam and Gaunt 2012; Zuilenburg 2012; Tolmie 2014; Daniel 2013; Jen 2014; Pertl 2017; Robin Moore 2017; Schediwy, Loots, and Bhansing 2018; Bartleet et al. 2019; Kelman 2020; Locke 2021; D. Scott 2008; Slaughter and Springer 2015.

Role of Institutions

The role of higher education institutions in preparing music students for their professional careers has been widely scrutinized by authors in the 21st century with debates centering on institutional responsibilities. In the United States, the National Association of Schools of Music maintains that undergraduate music programs' purpose should be to develop "knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the professional life of the musician" (NASM 2022, 97). Building on this mandate, Mantie et al. (2017, 17) state that institutions bear "a high degree of obligation" for vocational training to "help prepare students for their future and their duty, whatever that may be." However, Maris (2000) counters that the nearly 2,000 Canadian and American post-secondary music institutions are not solely responsible for preparing 21st-century musicians. G. Rogers (1988, 16) highlights the tension between academic and vocational ideals, arguing that these "somewhat incompatible ideas coexist in many universities in surprising harmony." Dawn Bennett, one of the foremost academics on WAM careers and training, asserts that it is neither desirable nor possible for any higher education program to fully equip students with the breadth of knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in a professional music career. Yet, it remains imperative that students be presented with a relevant portfolio of materials and skills and that the students be groomed to have the business savvy to apply these resources in practice (Bennett 2008a). Roberson (1994, 13-15) is more explicitly critical, comparing music to other professions:

What other profession would accept such a dismal placement record for its graduates? Would medical schools be content to enroll students in programs with fulltime employment rates in the single digits? Questions of ethics and accountability arise, and the answers for many are terribly dismaying... Precious few question the appropriateness of drawing new generations of professional performance majors into the almost certain trap of a life of fulltime employment frustration... The paradigm must change. What worked a hundred years ago is no longer valid.

Reimer (2003) concurs, adding that individuals outside of music would be astonished at this return on investment as it would not be tolerated within medicine, law, or business if schools had such poor yield. A study at the turn of the millennium found that only fifteen percent of Juilliard graduates (perhaps one of the top tertiary institutions in the world for higher music performance) were making a living as a performer (Post 1999). Similarly, R. Rogers (2002) reports that only 3% of recent graduates in his UK study were regularly involved in “high-level performance.”

While the education-to-career gap is evident across disciplines, music performance education presents a uniquely entrenched form of this disconnect. Rooted in apprenticeship models and “conservative” pedagogies, classical music training often fails to reflect the diverse, entrepreneurial, and socially engaged realities of today’s portfolio musicians (Bennett 2008; Smilde 2009). Unlike other fields that have more readily integrated interdisciplinary, inclusive, and career-relevant competencies into their curricula (Bridgstock 2011; Bennett 2016), music performance remains bound to tradition and aesthetic hierarchies (Kingsbury 2001; Perkins 2013), making it a critical site for examining how post-secondary education can evolve to support meaningful and sustainable careers in the arts. Moreover, the music profession offers relatively low economic return on substantial educational investment and often lacks institutional infrastructure or long-term employment security (Throsby and Zednik 2011; Coulson 2012). This means musicians must personally acquire a broad range of skills (e.g., administrative, financial, promotional) that other professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, or accountants might outsource, amplifying the need for comprehensive and forward-looking music training.

Some argue that undergraduate music degrees serve merely as transitional programs, “stepping stones” to more advanced study (Roberson 1994; Beeching 1996). However, critics challenge this notion for two reasons. First, post-secondary institutions market these degrees as

professional preparation rather than transitional programs (Roberson 1994). Second, institutions charge high tuition and as a result, many students incur significant debt. Given these two points, institutions bear some responsibility for ensuring graduates may either pursue further education or secure employment (Roberson 1994; Beeching 1996). Unfortunately, even if the BMus undergraduate degree functions as a transitional degree, graduate programs such as the MMus or DMus offer similarly uncertain career prospects, often with additional years of study and debt accumulation (Reimer 2003).

Tomlinson et al. (2020) argue that career-oriented training should be central to all music courses to help performance graduates negotiate the complex music industry. In line with other authors, this suggests that institutions may not be able to fully prepare students for their eventual careers. Bartleet et al., (2012) argue that the complex and diverse nature of life as a musician require far more knowledge and skills than could possibly be offered in a formal music degree program. Nevertheless, the classical model's persistent emphasis on excellence in performance above all is a trending topic, driven in part by the cumulative demand for post-secondary institutions to provide diverse curricula that better reflect the portfolio careers their graduates are most likely to undertake. The unspoken reality that most musicians must create a patchwork of roles (i.e., a portfolio career) should be openly acknowledged by institutions rather than treated as an undesirable or secondary outcome (Smilde 2007).

Several authors point to the role of the institution in identity formation (Teague and Smith 2015; Bennett 2018; Tolmie 2023; Burland, Mellor, and Bates 2023), indicating that the downplay of a realistic multi-faceted portfolio career in music leads many musicians to identity crises and feelings of failure (López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020). Additionally, existing curriculum components could be more clearly communicated to students from their first year of

undergraduate study so they value and pursue opportunities outside musicianship, especially elective courses that may enhance career prospects within and beyond traditional performance pathways (Bridgstock 2013b; Bennett 2018).

Curriculum Components

Post-secondary undergraduate music programs continue to prioritize technical proficiency (i.e., physical capacities on one's instrument) and disciplinary expertise (i.e., historical and theoretical knowledge) in their curricula and these musicianship skills remain central to success in the contemporary music career (Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012). However, although this model is highly effective in cultivating performance excellence, it lacks the flexibility to provide the necessary diversity of additional career skills outside of musicianship (Bennett and Freer 2012). Core curriculum typically involves proficiency on one's instrument through lessons, ensembles, chamber music, performances, and instrument-specific training (e.g., orchestral excerpt coaching for orchestral instruments), and musicianship classes that include aural skills, sightreading, theory, and music history (Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012; 2019). Many of these curricular components have remained largely unchanged for decades, if not centuries (Wennerstrom 1989).

Partly because of funding constraints and an enduring tendency for pedagogues to teach as they were taught, much of the broader skill development essential for a 21st-century music career remains optional, elective, or marginal within music performance degrees (R. Rogers 2002; Carruthers 2012; Brook and Fostaty Young 2019). However, while the music industry now demands fluency across diverse genres, entrepreneurial competencies, and flexibility in nontraditional performance settings (e.g., healthcare environments, bars, or sensory-friendly

concerts) many performance programs continue to prioritize traditional classical repertory and concert paradigms. Scholars argue that this narrow training model often leaves graduates with “little or no knowledge of, or experience within the profession” (Bennett, 2004, 58), despite the increasing scarcity of full-time orchestral or academic positions (Carey and Lebler 2012). One key factor contributing to this disconnect is the expertise of faculty members themselves.

Although highly skilled in classical performance, many professors lack experience in contemporary music industry practices, limiting their ability to mentor students in emerging areas of professional relevance (Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012). As Bridgstock (2011) and Coulson (2010) suggest, curricular reform is often dependent on faculty willingness and ability to lead such change. In this context, institutional resistance may stem less from a lack of awareness and more from structural and cultural limitations, wherein traditional definitions of musical success and legitimacy are perpetuated through both curriculum and instruction (Perkins 2012). Consequently, performance degrees risk becoming increasingly misaligned with the realities faced by their graduates, undermining their relevance in today’s multifaceted music industry.

Although he agrees with most scholars that curricula in North America require reform overall, Beckman points out that there have been some innovative institutions and counter-culture models amongst prestigious schools of music such as the Berklee College of Music, which has integrated entrepreneurial training and cross-disciplinary study and diverse musics into its hybrid curricula for decades (Beckman 2011). Similarly, the University of Colorado created an Entrepreneurship Center for Music in 1998 (Reimer, 2003), and the Eastman School of Music developed courses and degrees shortly thereafter for music entrepreneurship/business. Among the most habitually cited gaps in music curriculum are entrepreneurship and pedagogy,

both of which are critical for career sustainability yet often overlooked. The following sections explore these specific deficiencies in greater detail.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is increasingly prominent across disciplines rather than simply in business, with the term entrepreneur encapsulating a broad meaning that Hanson (2014) now calls “a way of life.” Specifically in the arts, entrepreneurship may be defined as “the discovery and pursuit of new ideas through artistic expressions, or the creative application of resources at hand to new problems or opportunities” (Essig 2015,7). Further detail on music entrepreneurship education is outlined by Pertl (2017), who describes cultivating entrepreneurial tendencies such as creativity, curiosity, and adaptability, developed through the combination of performance and diverse training. Entrepreneurship may also be seen as perceiving and responding to social needs through innovative artistic practice (Robin Moore 2017). These arts entrepreneurship scholars, as well as others outside the artistic domain, commonly cite the ideas of opportunity seeking and creativity as the crux of entrepreneurial thinking.

While creativity may seem inherently tied to musicianship, several authors note that the term entrepreneurship, which draws on creativity and opportunity creation, is controversial in the arts because of the implied profit and business relationships that may contradict certain artistic desires (Beckman and Essig 2012; Bridgstock 2013a). The controversy regarding the term entrepreneurship may be caused by traditional business literature that emphasizes profit as nearly the sole benchmark of success, where artistic pursuits may not be planned in this way (Jeffrey Timmons and Spinelli 2004). However, Bridgstock (2013a) also argues that the nature of portfolio careers leads to the need for a cluster of entrepreneurial skills alongside artistic ones.

Diane Scott (2023) reports that there is an added difficulty for musicians and artists in the romanticization of the bohemian-like “starving artist” societal stereotype, which, although embedded in western culture, is generally inaccurate for those who do hold portfolio careers. In fact, Bennett notes that with the dominance of portfolio career structures by musicians in the 21st century, business is amongst the most common activities of musicians alongside teaching, performance, and ensemble direction or participation (Bennett 2008a). This disconnect between perception and reality is compounded by the often-uneasy relationship musicians have with the concept of entrepreneurship, a term that, in some circles, has been treated as a “dirty word” (Beckman 2005; Bridgstock 2013a). Rooted in artistic identity and traditions that prize authenticity, expression, and non-commercial motivations, many musicians view entrepreneurialism as antithetical to their creative values (Bridgstock 2011). Yet, as the traditional pathways to stable, full-time employment in music have become increasingly rare, embracing entrepreneurial skills is no longer optional but essential. Scholars such as Coulson (2012) and Bartleet et al. (2012) argue that entrepreneurial thinking enables musicians to sustain creative careers by navigating the precariousness of the cultural labor market through diversification, innovation, and proactive opportunity creation. Rather than diminishing artistic integrity, entrepreneurship, when reframed as a set of adaptive strategies, may empower musicians to take control of their careers and reach broader audiences. Thus, reframing entrepreneurship not as a betrayal of artistic purpose, but as a pragmatic and empowering component of 21st-century musical life, is an important step in both music education and professional practice. Researchers should consider approaching entrepreneurial discussions from such positive standpoints to alleviate some of the tension the topic may induce.

Bennett and Freer (2012) mention another issue in adding entrepreneurship to performance curriculum: most job descriptions for music performance and general music higher education positions do not include entrepreneurship historically (nor recently) and, as a result, few pedagogues in the university system are comfortable teaching the subject and may become resistant to the topic. Educators need to integrate business and entrepreneurship skills into post-secondary programs from the beginning of study to ensure students have relevant skills and abilities to better navigate the opportunity-focused music industry by the time they graduate (Bennett 2008a). Students and recent graduates have begun advocating for such curriculum focus as well, for better career planning and preparation (Bennett 2008a). However, scholars do not often address how one might transition programs that have ingrained structures and tenured faculty that would cause unrest and require significant resources.

Zuilenburg (2012, abstract) argues that undergraduate music programs owe their students exposure to entrepreneurship “to prepare them properly for life as a professional musician.” Moore (2017), however, shares that 96 post-secondary institutions in the United States offer some form of arts entrepreneurship training, which suggests that simply offering entrepreneurship courses may not be enough to instill entrepreneurial tendencies. The numerous entrepreneurship offerings accentuate R. Rogers’ (2002) earlier suggestion that peripheral coursework (optional, elective, or marginal) is treated as of secondary importance to performance skills. This is seconded by Zuilenburg (2012), who asserts that the role music entrepreneurship training holds in positioning students for the modern music industry should be emphasized. Bartleet et al. (2019, 5) confirm that “Musicians may only retrospectively realize the entrepreneurial skills that they require to be active in the industry.”

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project from the UK provides compelling evidence of the disparity between required and acquired skills in music programs. Among surveyed music graduates, 80% identified business and entrepreneurship skills as necessary, yet only 23% reported acquiring them through their degree programs (Kjar, Montanari, and Thomas 2022). Compare this to artistic technique that was cited at 80% required and 92% acquired and an obvious gap is exposed (Kjar, Montanari, and Thomas 2022). Bennett's survey of Australian music students similarly found that 73% of students reported they required business skills (Bennett 2004; 2008a). Slaughter and Springer concur that there is an extreme mismatch between the need for entrepreneurship training and its application in post-secondary institutions (Slaughter and Springer 2015). Reimer (2003) further contends that entrepreneurship is essential to survival as a professional musician, as does Thomson (2013, 516) who states, "The artist as entrepreneur is now not only possible, but almost a prerequisite." These scholars point to a singular conclusion that is nearly unchallenged in the literature: entrepreneurship is an essential component of sustainable careers for 21st-century musicians, but it is not yet reasonably applied within post-secondary education institutions. This misalignment between study and practice needs to shift to equip students with the skills they require to maintain careers in the music industry.

A weakness of the literature on music entrepreneurship curriculum and entrepreneurial approaches is that the leading experts in this area, such as Gary Beckman and Linda Essig, do not venture outside of the arts entrepreneurship arena and, therefore, often treat the lack of entrepreneurship curriculum or entrepreneurial focus in isolation without considering the implications throughout post-secondary music performance education. However, the broader topic of portfolio careers and music performance curriculum is extremely relevant in the

discussion of entrepreneurship as the concept may be applied across curriculum as opposed to an addition to the curriculum, and, entrepreneurship is not the only vital element missing from many music programs, as is demonstrated by the following literature review section, which is dedicated to pedagogy.

Pedagogy

Many scholars of music performance curriculum and careers declare that teaching is the most common activity for professional musicians, be it through private studios, within schools, or at the post-secondary level (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012; Thomson 2013; Slaughter and Springer 2015). Timmons (2015) asserts that nearly all musicians who remain in the music industry will teach at some point in their careers. However, while music education majors explicitly prepare for teaching careers, music performance students receive little to no pedagogical training, despite the likelihood that they will also become educators. As Doubek (2001, xii) describes, performance majors “become music educators quite serendipitously” without structured preparation or required pedagogy classes in their degree programs (Doubek 2001). Bennett (2008b) found that in Australian music performance degrees pedagogy only occupied 1% of core courses, with many including no pedagogy training at all. This gap is particularly striking given that over 80% of music graduates will teach at some point in their careers (Reimer 2003; Mills 2004; Bennett 2008b). Despite this known discrepancy, no official data from Canadian music curricula is available to support calls for reform specific to pedagogy. This discrepancy also inadvertently supports unsubstantiated hierarchical projections amongst students and society between performance and education majors as it implies, at best, that performance students should not plan to teach, or, at worst, that teaching is an inherent skill

for performers, both of which undermine teaching as a profession. Professors recruited into music performance often have little teaching experience, and this further aggravates the cycle of neglecting pedagogy as an important component of curriculum (Bennett 2008b).

The idea that teaching is a “fallback” career suggests, first, that one part of a musicians’ career (performance) is superior to another (teaching), and second, that teaching for performance majors represents failure in some way (Perkins 2012). Bennett (2008b) declares that musicians at every level teach, and one must only briefly glance at the faculty of the most prestigious schools of WAM to underwrite this idea as names of elite performers of the highest levels populate instructional departments. Bennett (2008a, 6) continues, “The notion that pedagogy is not an essential part of the curriculum I find bizarre.” She also acknowledges that teaching is not intuitively learned and that those who study pedagogy and teaching are proven to provide better-quality education to their students (Bennett 2008b). Mills argues that although teaching may initially be a financial necessity for many musicians, it becomes integral to their identity and career over time. Additionally, teaching contributes to the teacher’s performance through learnings and artistic practice (Mills 2004).

Some shortcomings within the literature on pedagogy curriculum include the lack of detail on music performance curriculum itself when discussing the gap. That is, few scholars cite first-hand data from post-secondary sources in their work. Similarly to the discussion of entrepreneurship curriculum, Canadian perspectives on this issue remain largely absent from the discourse, weakening calls for curricular changes within Canada’s music education system. While most scholars cited are widely respected in the field of music curriculum and musical careers, the topic of pedagogy on its own is not their primary focus. Additionally, the authors who do write about this topic appear frequently cited in one another’s work, which, although

natural, leads to an odd echo-chamber of second-hand information regurgitated every few years. Updated research and data are needed to fill this gap, particularly in Canadian post-secondary music performance curricula, which this dissertation intends to analyze.

Literature Review Section 2.

The Working Lives of 21st-Century Musicians: Portfolio Careers in the Music Industry

The Music Industry

No agreed-upon definition of the creative industries exists, but they are generally understood as industries based on artistic skill, talent, and creativity, both individual and collective, with job and wealth-creating potential (British Council 2012; Bartleet et al 2012). Music is included in cultural industries, as are many other creative artistic pursuits such as films, visual art (e.g., art galleries), museums, theatre, dance, television, literature (e.g., libraries), and even such things as archives or educational activities (Bennett 2008b). The performing arts industry is competitive and precarious; it is extremely difficult to establish and maintain a career (Bennett 2008a; Scharff 2018; Bartleet et al. 2019). In fact, the precarity of work in the music discipline leads the majority of performing artists to exit the profession within just two years of joining it (Bennett 2008a). Scharff et al. (2018) also detail systemic inequities in the field, including pay gaps, underrepresentation of women in leadership and performance positions, and the persistence of stereotypes about women's musical abilities, particularly in jazz and solo performance. These challenges are compounded for musicians from racially and socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds, who often face additional barriers to accessing the training and resources necessary for success in classical music.

Since the 1990s, multiple disruptions, such as declining public funding, digitalization, and audience engagement, have affected the music industry specifically (Bartleet et al. 2012).

Classical music has a reputation as one of the more stable of music genres (Bartleet et al. 2019), but recent financial distress amongst institutions like orchestras and opera companies (Hallam and Gaunt 2012; Zuilenburg 2012) and new avenues for music distribution continuously fund fewer full-time jobs in North America (Brown 2007; Smilde 2007). The music industry in the 21st century has undergone significant transformations driven by these various technological advancements, shifting cultural dynamics, and evolving economic models. Scholars such as Taylor (2016) highlight the growing influence of capitalist frameworks on music production and distribution, emphasizing the industry's increasing reliance on digital platforms and streaming services. These changes have reshaped traditional pathways for musicians, creating opportunities for entrepreneurship while also introducing challenges related to labor and financial sustainability (Menger 2014).

Only a small fraction of musicians sustain a living as full-time “performers” (Robin Moore 2017), estimated at a 20:1 ratio of part-time to full-time performers (Moore 2017), or even less at 0.4% according to Bartleet et al. (2012). Given such a scarce number of musicians sustain a living as a performer only, it is evident that most musicians require further skills than the core curriculum offered during their post-secondary education that focuses almost entirely on musicianship. Pepetone (1995, 27) insightfully notes, however, that, “The products of today’s degree programs in performance may not be full-time performers, but they are an indispensable girder in the infrastructure of professional music.”

While full-time positions in the music industry dissipate, demand for music to be produced and performed remains, and, therefore, high-level performers who wish to contribute to the music industry must find ways to supplement their performance components with other music or non-music related work (Tomlinson et al. 2020; Bartleet et al. 2019). The music industry’s

structure necessitates that musicians adopt diversified portfolio careers that combine performance, teaching, administration, and other income-generating activities to maintain financial viability. Thomson (2013) claims that there is much more risk within the music industry than before the turn of the millennium, and Bennett (2004) adds to this that nearly three quarters of musicians must include non-arts work to subsidize their artistic activities. Citing low incomes and irregular working patterns, Bartleet et al. (2019) observe that musicians are often allured by the claim of autonomy and creativity of the music industry but instead quickly find that they are exploited and subjected to low wages, part-time jobs, and unglamorous routine labour. Ormont (2001, 7-8) outlines several realities of survival in the music profession as a performer:

1. There is fierce competition within the field
2. Salaries are low, especially relative to the level of talent and expertise required for the profession;
3. Excellence may not be rewarded; and
4. Success is difficult to sustain

With these realities in mind, it is not surprising that diverse skills and entrepreneurial mindset are paramount to a musician's toolkit and that portfolio careers have become the dominant paradigm for contemporary musicians (Beckman 2011).

R. Rogers (2002) notes that the overlap of various activities in musical careers often inhibits data collection and muddies understanding of the industry. This is particularly evident with student data, such as the number of graduates from music degree programs, musician data, such as the number of musicians working in the industry and the amount they make from this work, and industry data, such as the global worth of the music industry. Data on students differs significantly with estimates between 5,000 to 14,000 for students graduating each year from music performance degrees in the USA with overall enrollment numbers of approximately

25,000 per year in Bachelor of Music degrees (National Association of Schools of Music 2021; Data USA 2022). In Australia, Bartleet et al. (2012) claim that the census underestimates the number of artists in the country by over fifty percent because of the need for a position to be checked off as “full-time” to qualify as a main job. Notably, there are no credible estimates or sources for student or professional musician data available from Canadian post-secondary institutions or in Canadian scholarship. Even upon contacting individual universities to request such data, most do not provide information for scholars or to the public. To understand and advocate for an industry without such data is challenging (Bennett 2008b), making this gap in the literature an obvious candidate for future research.

A major shortcoming of literature on the music industry is that its reliability is somewhat questionable. As an example, when endeavoring to describe the size and scope of the music industry in the 2020s within the literature review, multiple sources stated entirely different numbers for the worth/value of the industry (ranging from millions to billions). With such discrepancies and few academic publications with verifiable data on the topic, this information was eventually excluded as it was incomplete and estimated. Since reliability of sources for discussions of “music” and “musicians” is equally in question, the researcher chose to narrow the focus of these discussions to Western art music aspect of the industry. Although the increased concentration on classical music alleviates some discrepancies because of an increase in academic papers and scholars invested in the topic, significant variation remains present in definitions and ideas. Compared to most topics presented in the literature review, the overview of the music industry was the least cohesive and did not reach a saturation point amongst authors. However, some authors did represent the work of musicians within the industry with less

variation, noting that portfolio careers have risen to prominence and change in post-secondary music curriculum should evolve as a result.

Portfolio Careers

An increasing body of literature identifies “portfolio careers” as the dominant paradigm of musicians in the 21st century, although biographical and historical data indicates this multifaceted style of work has been present for centuries even amongst prominent musicians (e.g., Telemann, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Liszt). In fact, where historical notions of musicians may have been perceived only as those who perform, according to Bennett (2008b, 2), a musician today should be defined as a person “who works in one or more specialist musical fields.” Bartleet et al. (2012) note that though the career pattern of a portfolio career is widespread amongst musicians, it is not well understood, partially because of limited current research or inaccurate data (e.g., census captures that do not appropriately account for musicians’ portfolio work), which, in turn, impedes appropriate advocacy, policy, training, and career support across the sector. Unfortunately, without significant data, or perhaps simply ignorance toward what data does exist, perceptions of the classical music industry reflect a narrow and naïve understanding of the musician solely as a performer²⁴, with the latter term itself carrying specific connotations of orchestral playing or solo concertizing as the only legitimate claim to such a title. However, most musicians’ careers include more than three concurrent “part-time” jobs (Bennett 2008b). Beeching (2005, 15) states that, “Musicians may perform with various groups, teach both privately and at schools, record, compose or arrange and may assist in the administration of an arts organization,” while Smilde (2007, 6) notes that musicians “have to function in different

²⁴ This dissertation will consider a “performer” as someone who performs in front of an audience professionally (i.e., is monetarily compensated for performance of their craft).

contexts, with roles that include those of performer, composer, teacher, mentor, coach, leader, and many more.”

As the complex and evolving structure of musicians’ careers remains widely misunderstood, the very definition of what constitutes a “musician” continues to be debated in contemporary scholarship (Bennett 2008a; Scharff 2018). Perkins (2012) notes that while some consider teaching an integral aspect of a music career, others view it as a separate occupation, or even argue that those who teach, regardless of their performance activity, are not truly musicians. Yet, with approximately 80% of musicians engaging in teaching at some point during their careers, the “performer-teacher” portfolio (often combined with other roles) emerges as the most prevalent form of professional practice (Mills 2004; Smilde 2007; Bennett 2008b). This widespread dual-role framework suggests that teaching is not only common but foundational to the contemporary musician’s identity, reinforcing arguments for the inclusion of teaching within the professional definition of a musician.

Beyond teaching, musicians must increasingly adopt multifaceted career strategies in response to structural shifts within the music industry. Brown (2007) highlights the decline of full-time orchestral and soloist positions, emphasizing the growing necessity for musicians to develop a broader range of skills. Similarly, Daniel (2013, 217) observes that, “It is rare for a musician to be able to sustain a viable career in one area of activity,” while Smilde (2007) points to the dwindling availability of long-term contracts and secure employment. These conditions have led to a professional landscape in which musicians routinely balance multiple roles, within performance, teaching, administration, community engagement, and beyond, underscoring the need for adaptable and diversified training within music education programs. Bartleet et al. (2012) claim that approximately 50% of musicians in Australia include non-music work within

their portfolios. Also based in Australia, Bennett (2008b) found that only one-third of the portfolio musicians she surveyed preferred to work exclusively within the music industry, suggesting that, despite institutional or societal narratives that frame non-music work as outside the bounds of a successful music career, many musicians find such work personally fulfilling and professionally valuable. No such data, on the amount of non-music work undertaken nor the desire for such work, is available or discussed by authors outside of Australia, which yet again points to a lack of data around the complexity of musicians' portfolio work. While Bennett's (2008b) Australian study is frequently cited and influential, the heavy reliance on data from Australia and the UK across much of the literature raises questions about the generalizability of these findings. Musicians' experiences in North America, particularly in Canada and the United States, are underrepresented in empirical research as mentioned. This geographic gap limits the ability to fully understand or respond to the realities of portfolio musicianship globally.

The demands of a musician's career begin long before post-secondary education with extensive practice, high-stress performances, competitions, and auditions. While challenging, these experiences may offer advantages for some, as Burland and Pitts (2007) note that employers value creativity, versatility, and collaboration. Scholars widely acknowledge that the self-led portfolio careers of musicians necessitate an entrepreneurial spirit (Coulson 2012; Zuilenburg 2012; Beckman 2011; Lindström 2016; Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018). Beeching (1996, 34) was among the first to explore the musician as a portfolio careerist (though not using this term), stating that, "Successful musicians are often diversified - the quintessential 'multi-preneurs,' who have more than one career project or vocation. Musicians typically stretch themselves in many directions, performing and teaching in several venues." Bridgstock (2013b, 179) similarly contrasts the portfolio career with traditional careers: "Unlike the 'traditional'

linear career pattern within one organisation and in one sector, in which professional development and other career development actions such as promotion are often mediated by a human resources department and/or a work supervisor, a much greater imperative exists for portfolio careerists recurrently to obtain or create employment for themselves, and otherwise manage their own careers.” This entrepreneurial adaptability may also give musicians a competitive advantage should they transition into non-music fields (Carruthers 2012). Managing multiple high-pressure projects, balancing various responsibilities, and cultivating an independent work ethic fosters transferable skills that enhance employability beyond music (Smilde 2007).

Musicians’ portfolios in the 21st century frequently comprise various music-related roles, such as teaching, composing, performance, and arts administration, and non-music work, which reflects historical work of musicians as well, albeit in to a greater extent since the 1990s (Bennett 2008b). These professional roles are themselves increasingly wide-ranging, as evidenced by R. Rogers’ (2002) comprehensive UK study, which identified up to 50 distinct music-related roles and Thomson’s (2013) US study, which recorded 42 roles spanning performance, administration, recording, activism, and more. In Thomson’s (2013) survey of approximately 5,000 musicians, nearly 70% distributed their income across eight music-related categories. Such research provides empirical data to support and advocate for musicians in these countries. However, comparable data is lacking in Canada.

A portfolio career may mitigate some risk by diversifying income streams and pursuits. It is, therefore, not only advantageous, but often necessary for professional survival as a musician (Bartleet et al. 2019; López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020; D. R. Scott 2023; Smilde 2007). Nearly three decades after scholars first described the portfolio model, musicians continue to navigate a

highly competitive industry characterized by precarious and inconsistent remuneration. While many contemporary authors frame the portfolio career as a modern response to shifting industry conditions, this framing may obscure the historical continuity of multifaceted musical labour. Musicians such as Bach, Haydn, and Liszt similarly navigated overlapping roles as performers, teachers, composers, and administrators. Thus, the “emergence” of portfolio careers may be less a new development than a rebranding of long-standing professional realities. What has shifted is not necessarily the structure of musicians’ work, but the economic context, the increasing precarity of cultural labour, and heightened awareness of how these factors intersect with identity, mental health, and professional self-conception. Therefore, although the consensus among researchers is that a portfolio career structure is intrinsic to professional musicianship, there remains a need for greater recognition, advocacy, and support (particularly in higher education and policy) to empower musicians in their most common form of work. Additionally, a key gap in the literature is the lack of firsthand data from musicians themselves, particularly in North America. One especially under-researched area is nontraditional performance work within portfolio careers, which serves as the focus of the next section.

Nontraditional Performance Work

As portfolio careers remain the dominant form of work for musicians and the industry progressively uncertain, nontraditional performance work has expanded. These performances across multiple genres and diverse settings have not only created more opportunities for performance but have also increased the enjoyment derived from performance for musicians (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008b). Schediwy et al. (2018, 180) further note that performing across genres may lead to “higher earnings and greater recognition.” This shift aligns with emerging trends among 21st-century musicians, who increasingly seek a sense of mission in their

performance and strive for deeper audience connection compared to previous generations. As Beeching (2012) explains, contemporary musicians are no longer satisfied with performing exclusively in traditional²⁵ environments disconnected from their communities and audiences. Beyond performance, many musicians are also emerging as arts leaders and advocates, fostering a more holistic artistic life and contributing to their professional portfolios (Bennett 2008b; Burland, Mellor, and Bates 2023).

Delivering performance opportunities to underserved and marginalized groups has further diversified musicians' career pathways. Providing cultural engagement for individuals with disabilities, neurodiverse populations, and those isolated because of illness, age, socio-economic struggles, or incarceration have become more significant areas of performance. Concerts for incarcerated individuals, for example, have been documented since the early 1900s, contributing to well-being, boosting morale, and positively shaping identity (Im and Pinto 2023). Since the 2000s, music's role in healthcare has also grown, with performances in hospitals, long-term, nursing, palliative, dementia, or Alzheimer's care, and in therapeutic settings as well as new models such as adaptive concerts (Smilde 2007; Thomson 2013; White 2015; Foster et al. 2021; Richards and Parkes 2023). Thomson (2013) reports that in the United Kingdom alone, over 4,000 concerts are performed annually in hospitals.

Despite these developments, many post-secondary music educators remain unfamiliar with or disengaged from nontraditional performance, potentially limiting its visibility within academic training (Grosse 2016). In orchestral settings (a role trained for in post-secondary music performance programs) declining ticket sales, reduced funding, changing audience preferences, and rising operational costs have prompted shifts in repertoire and concert programming to

²⁵ Traditional music performance work entails musical engagements in concert halls, opera houses, concert series, and at festivals, such as orchestral engagements, solo or chamber music performances, vocal performances, conducting, and more.

regain, maintain, and/or build community engagement (R. Rogers 2002; Diane Scott 2023). These adaptations reflect a growing demand for diverse skill sets even within historically traditional performance spaces. For example, nontraditional performances including creative programming that ventures outside the classical music genre, multidisciplinary acts, or concerts in unconventional spaces (e.g., school performances, sensory-friendly and adaptive concerts, or orchestral members providing chamber music for older adults) demand distinct competencies and training that are frequently neglected in current music performance curricula (Beeching 2012) but are in-demand even in orchestral jobs.

One major impediment to equipping students for nontraditional performance work is the narrow focus of post-secondary music education. Scholars have critically examined the dominance of Western art music (WAM) in educational curricula, advocating for a more inclusive approach to music education. Lucy Green (2008) emphasizes the importance of integrating informal learning practices, often associated with popular music, into the classroom to bridge the gap between students' musical experiences and formal education. Robert Walker (2007) discusses how cultural values influence music education, highlighting the need to recognize and incorporate diverse musical traditions beyond the Western canon. Susan O'Neill, in her work with the International Society for Music Education, underscores the significance of embracing a variety of musical genres and practices to reflect the multicultural realities of contemporary societies. These perspectives collectively challenge the traditional emphasis on WAM and support the inclusion of diverse musical forms in educational settings. However, the term "music school" typically refers to WAM as the primary, and often exclusive, form of serious performance study unless otherwise specified and performance programs tend to focus almost exclusively on WAM (Bennett 2008b). Bennett's work on understanding the classical

music profession reveals that over 75% of musicians perform in two or more genres, even including the fewer than 1% of musicians who secure full-time orchestral positions as the latter have also begun to diversify their offerings beyond Western art music styles (2008b).

The exclusion of diverse musical traditions as central to formal post-secondary education also has implications for representation and identity within the field. By centering curricula on European composers and performance traditions, institutions risk alienating students from non-Western or underrepresented backgrounds, limiting their ability to see themselves reflected in the canon (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). Expanding music performance curriculum to include global and contemporary genres not only promotes inclusivity but also better prepares students for the realities of 21st-century musical careers (Bennett 2012). Addressing these systemic disparities requires a concerted effort to rethink institutional priorities and embrace a more equitable and inclusive vision for classical music education. Additionally, the rigid framing of performance and musicianship often neglects “the whole musician,” potentially leading to identity conflicts as students reconcile institutional narratives with their own artistic and professional aspirations (Bennett 2018; Bennett and Freer 2012a).

Musician Identity

Many cultures, including those in North America, predominantly type-cast individuals by their work, shaping identity through social constructionist notions of professional roles (Reimer 2003). Holland (1959) posits that career satisfaction and fulfillment depend on the alignment between an individual’s personality and the dominant traits within their professional environment. He also postulates that individuals with greater occupational awareness make more suitable vocational choices. However, students across various disciplines hold unrealistic expectations of their chosen careers, including misconceptions regarding job prospects, diverse

roles, and the nature of their workplaces (Perrone and Vickers 2003). When graduates must significantly alter their identity to fit with the realities of their field, they may experience difficulty transitioning from student to professional (Bridgstock 2013b).

Unlike many other occupations where degrees or professional designations confer a clear professional identity (e.g., medicine, nursing, engineering, or law), musicians constantly negotiate and renegotiate their professional identity from childhood until the mature stages of their careers (Roberts 1993; Bennett 2008a; Bennett and Freer 2012a). Stone (1962, 93) asserts that, “One’s identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces.” As individuals often comply with the norms set by their peer groups (Roberts 1993), mentorship and exposure to diverse industry professionals are imperative to offset the mismatch between the narrow conception of a musician and the complex realities they will encounter.

A key distinction previously mentioned between musicians and professionals in other fields (e.g., nursing; accounting) is the lack of a singular certification that unequivocally affirms professional status. Roberts (1993) notes that graduates in fields such as medicine and law attain their professional identity at a specific moment (i.e., becoming doctors or lawyers) or perhaps more comparably undergraduate programs such as accounting and engineering where individuals become accountants and engineers without questioning this identity upon graduation, whereas musicians must continuously reaffirm their status. Moreover, unlike these non-music professions, where one’s status is not contingent on the number of patients, cases, or clients, musicians’ identities are often subject to external validation based on performance opportunities, audience reception, and institutional recognition (Roberts 1993; Scharff 2018).

Musicians often form a musical identity before attending post-secondary education (Gruhn et al. 2017; Schediwy, Loots, and Bhansing 2018), but struggle to maintain this identity throughout their careers. Because music is so deeply intertwined with personal identity from an early age, discrepancies between industry realities and prior expectations, particularly regarding performance careers, may result in feelings of failure or rejection, potentially leading to significant uncertainty and mental health challenges (Bennett 2008b; Bennett and Freer 2012; Grosse 2016; Scharff 2018). To mitigate these effects, post-secondary music institutions must emphasize both intrinsic and extrinsic values across several roles within and beyond the music industry. By fostering and understanding of the interdependence between these roles, institutions may help musicians develop a “meta-identity” to which all their activities relate (Bennett 2018).

Throughout a musician’s career, identity remains fragile and in constant need of reaffirmation as there is no distinctive point at which one permanently attains the title of “musician” or “performer.” Instead, musicians must persistently validate their identity through external recognition from colleagues, institutions, and audiences in addition to their own self-perception (Roberts 1993). Roberts (1993), Burland and Pitts (2007), Bennett (2008), and Gruhn et al. (2017) further argue that certain groups such as peers, professors, and elite performers serve as primary reference points for musicians’ self-concept, even when their influence is not explicitly stated. As Roberts (1993, 75) observes, “Music is a continuing socially defined phenomenon which takes place in its music school with a sort of social inertia, guided by these ‘idols’ and ‘role models’ and what they represent symbolically.”

To obtain credibility as professionals, musicians employ many social strategies to shape their public appearance. The rhetoric surrounding what constitutes a legitimate musician affects what is projected, what is diminished, and what is prioritized in these efforts (Roberts 1993;

Tajfel and Turner 1979). However, efforts to secure professional legitimacy and collegial approval are not without challenges. Within established hierarchies, some aspects of musicians' careers, such as performance, are harder to claim than others, and may, therefore, be opportunistically over-emphasized (Roberts 1993; Bennett and Freer 2012a).

Upon entering post-secondary music programs, students often encounter a pervasive institutional and societal narrative that frames solo performance or performance-only careers as the apex of a successful career path. However, the reality of the music industry is more complex, characterized by portfolio careers that require versatility amongst multiple roles (Bridgstock 2013b; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015). When met with this trademark style of work, the discrepancy between expectation and reality may lead to internal identity conflict for young musicians (Freer and Bennett 2012; López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020). Fundamentally, “When the doubt that the individual has about his role exceeds the role support that the person can find, from himself and/or others, all claims on the identity as musician may be extinguished” (Robert 1993, 185). This struggle may result in identity crises, feelings of failure, and, for many, an eventual exit from the industry (Bennett 2008b; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015; López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020). Alarming, some graduates of performance programs become so disenchanted that they abandon their instruments entirely, which is a disheartening conclusion to years of dedicated training and passion for music. Institutions should consider the conflicting identity formations they perpetuate through their narratives and curriculum focus as identity crises may also inflict mental, physical, or financial harm (Bennett 2019; Bennett and Freer 2012a; Bennett 2008b). As Perkins (2012, 23) warns, unrealistic success benchmarks may be psychologically damaging:

If the benchmark for success is placed so high that few can reach it, most music students are set up to fail. It is this that leads students to doubt their

abilities and to feel that they are ‘failed performers’ if they teach or embark on other non-performance activities. In reality the vast majority of music students are skillful, educated and accomplished musicians who will go on to a wide range of careers. It is nonsensical that success in music has become so aligned with reaching the very top echelons of one particular part of the industry.

Therefore, as Bartleet, Bennett, and other scholars concur, students must be trained to develop the attributes and skills required for a complex professional life that includes an ever-evolving identity or identities to sustain a long-term career (Bartleet et al. 2012; Tomlinson et al. 2020; Bennett 2004; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015).

Another challenge in musician identity formation stems from self-ascription and the fluid nature of the term “musician” to both amateur and professional musicians (Oakland, MacDonald, and Flowers 2017). An individual may self-identify as a professional musician despite playing at an amateur level, while conversely, a conservatory-trained musician who has transitioned to a different career may no longer claim the identity of “musician.” The absence of a universally recognized benchmark for musicianship makes self-identification highly subjective. As Palmer (1998, 13) describes, “Identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me what I am.” Unlike in fields where identity is indisputable (as previously discussed) musicians may experience external challenges to their self-concept, even when they internally claim the identity of a musician.

To combat identity crises and imposter syndrome, Bridgstock (2013b) suggests that musicians require a self-reinventive state, or an adaptive career identity. This reinvention enables musicians to integrate external experiences with their internal and aspirational identities, acting as “a cognitive compass” (Fugate et al. 2004, 17) that provides direction and stability in an unpredictable and multifaceted career path (Bridgstock and Jackson 2019). Given that identity is

shaped by context, training, and experience, its ongoing re-invention is a core capability to cope with the inevitable fluctuations of a musician's career.

Finally, the widespread “starving” or “tortured” artist trope (whether visual, literary, or performing artists) may further affect individuals as they pursue professional careers in the field (Diane Scott 2023). Formed from deep passion and a desire to make music, many individuals who enter post-secondary music performance have formed a musician identity from a young age, and have, therefore, associated their identity with idols or stereotypical societal references of other artists (Bridgstock 2005; Schediwy, Loots, and Bhansing 2018). Consequently, their definitions of success may be skewed toward extremes such as the idea of suffering for one's art or the projected pinnacle of success of WAM superstars (Bennett 2018). These types of careers, however, will not align with most musicians' realities and are largely exaggerated frames of reference. The impacts of narrow performer identities on student musicians may lead to neglecting skill development in needed areas, and eventual loss of potential income streams and/or negative effects on wellbeing (Bennett 2018; López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020). Scholars discussing identity in these practical ways indicate an understanding that one's identity affects mental and physical health, and also impacts one's career.

Despite extensive scholarship on musician identity, certain gaps exist. One area neglected by researchers is how embracing a positive portfolio career identity may help musicians during transition periods, such as the shift from student to professional musician, or from active musicianship to another field or career. Additionally, most authors discuss identity within the context of music, but are not themselves identity, psychology, or behavioural theorists. Consequently, there is limited discourse on how musician identity compares to broader identity constructs apart from a few scholars who touch on the comparison between the identity of a

certified professional, like an accountant, compared to a musician (Roberts 1993; Bennett 2008b; Scharff 2018). Addressing these gaps would provide valuable insights into how musicians navigate career transitions and maintain a stable sense of identity in an ever-changing industry.

Discussion and Conclusion

Bennett (2008, 124) states, “The effectiveness of training and education for any profession is determined by the extent to which the profession is perceived and understood.” By this measure, training in the classical music industry and tertiary institutions is largely ineffective. Insufficient data and overall challenges with identity narrative add to the misunderstanding of musical careers in the 21st-century. Most professional musicians sustain multifaceted self-driven careers. However, the projection of singularly focused careers in “performance” from society and institutions leaves artists with false impressions about the industry, impressions that may translate to ill-preparedness for what the industry requires, and even to identity crises. Although academic discourse increasingly acknowledges musicians as portfolio careerists, this shift has yet to meaningfully reshape performance curricula, narrative, or identity projections. In fact, traditional performance curricula frequently ignore the wide-ranging skill set musicians require for professional success (e.g., pedagogy, marketing, performance, production) beyond mere proficiency on their instrument. Without holistic education, musicians’ emotional and physical well-being and financial stability may be negatively impacted throughout their entire career.

Choosing to observe the “whole musician,” one can infer that certain traits, narratives, and skills learned within music performance curriculum both support and hinder preparation for careers in the music industry. Institutions provide substantial training in instrumental proficiency, yet offer minimal instruction in entrepreneurship, pedagogy, and other vital career

skills. The evolving demands of the music industry necessitate a fundamental reimagining of traditional curricula. Scholars emphasize the need for musicians to “practice” being a musician, which extends beyond performance to include administration, teaching, and entrepreneurial work. This approach may help position musicians more positively for their futures, supporting healthier and more sustainable professional identities. By integrating diverse skills, fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, and promoting more relevant identity models, institutions may more effectively prepare graduates for fulfilling, long-term careers.

Various gaps are evident in the body of literature surrounding music performance curriculum and portfolio careers in Canada. For instance, literature relating to the formative years of musicians’ careers offers a broad purview of music students from all disciplines (not only performance majors), but little to no data exists on current performance curriculum in Canada, especially regarding entrepreneurship and pedagogy topics that have long been recognized as essential. More specifically, no research currently assesses performance curriculum and its relevancy to portfolio careers within the Canadian context. Similarly, emerging nontraditional performance work, such as adaptive concerts, remains largely unexplored in existing literature.

Research on portfolio careers and the preparation for this style of work within performance curriculum has been conducted outside Canada (e.g., Australia and the United States). However, little information has been accumulated, disseminated, or contextualized surrounding portfolio career makeup in relation to musicians’ training, nor has the Canadian context been examined. Furthermore, a comprehensive examination of multiple elements (extra-musical training, identity, and portfolio careers) is lacking in the overall discussion. Research must move beyond

focusing on either portfolio careers or entrepreneurial practices, for example, and, instead, link these components in discussions of post-secondary education and professional life.

Against this backdrop, the following articles aim to:

1. Explore the current landscape of music performance curricula beyond applied musicianship
2. Delineate various components of musicians' portfolio careers
3. Examine how post-secondary training aligns with professional realities in Canada

Drawing from leading scholars such as Dawn Bennett, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, Rosie Perkins, Ruth Bridgstock, and Gary Beckman, this study employs surveys and interviews as primary data collection methods. These approaches generate both quantitative insights and qualitative depth, to facilitate a nuanced discussion on curriculum relevancy, musician skill sets, and nontraditional performance careers in Canada. By contributing to different bodies of literature such as professional practice, music curriculum, entrepreneurship, and identity, this research takes an interdisciplinary approach to address critical gaps this review has exposed. The subsequent analysis challenges entrenched stereotypes and institutional conventions that may inhibit artists from achieving a fuller professional potential. Given this scope, the dissertation should generate findings that will benefit musicians, educational institutions, and the broader Canadian music industry.

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Article 1. Mapping the Coursework of Post-Secondary Music Performance Curriculum in Canada

Many of Canada's leading post-secondary institutions have degree offerings in music performance that follow Western art music traditions (WAM) (i.e. what schools may often problematically called the Western Classical Tradition, or "classical" style²⁶) from bachelor through doctoral programs (e.g., BMus; MMus; DMus; DMA). These degrees almost singularly focus on core musicianship skills²⁷ to increase competency on one's instrument, and knowledge of music theory and music history, retaining a model of music education that dates back centuries (Bartleet et al. 2012; 2019). However, 21st-century musicians require a broader set of proficiencies than their earlier counterparts (Teague and Smith 2015; Brook and Fostaty Young 2019), and, with increasing precarity of work paired with low socio-economic return, a variety of abilities are essential to sustaining a career in the modern music industry in addition to proficiency on one's instrument (Bennett 2008b; Jen 2014; Bartleet et al. 2019). What is the current makeup of undergraduate music performance programs, and, aside from musicianship, what courses do Canadian undergraduate classical music performance programs require that might prepare musicians for portfolio careers²⁸?

The current landscape of post-secondary music performance curriculum should be readily accessible for scholars, policy makers, and educators in a comprehensive fashion. However, this

²⁶ In music, "style" refers to the distinctive features and expressive qualities of a work or performance that reflect a particular historical period, composer, geographic region, or personal approach. Style encompasses elements such as rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, and articulation, and can function within or across genres (Dunsby and Whittall 1988; Meyer 1989). Classical style refers to the Western art music traditions, or often more specifically to "traditions of European art music evolving from medieval sacred and secular musical practices" (Bennett 2008b, 8).

²⁷ Musicianship skills refer to core curriculum components of Western art music traditions, such as aural training, music theory, music history, ensemble coursework (e.g., orchestras), sightreading, masterclasses, and individual or group lessons (Bennett 2008b).

²⁸ A portfolio career is a career composed of multiple part-time or full-time positions and/or a series of concurrent, frequently changing, contractual, or freelance engagements. These positions and individual contracts may be held at once or in short succession, and some components may take precedence over others at varying times (Handy 1994; Templer and Cawsey 1999).

data is lacking, particularly in Canada. Furthermore, curriculum analysis to determine music degree requirements and how these requirements compare to industry needs has yet to be shown. This article contextualizes curricula from Canadian post-secondary institutions regarded as leading music performance educators in WAM: McGill University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto, and the University of Western Ontario. The post-secondary music institutions selected do vary somewhat in student population, though exact undergraduate performance enrollment and graduation numbers are largely unavailable (publicly or even upon request in most instances). Ultimately these universities were chosen for their prominence and significance as five of the largest and most prestigious music program offerings in Canada and for their comparability as they are all English-based Bachelor of Music programs offering specializations in performance across all main instrument and voice types in WAM. While comprehensive data are limited, there is little to suggest that geographic location within Canada significantly influences the structure or priorities of performance-based music curriculum, and available national information (e.g., that provided by McLean and Jovin-Bevans in 2009, and the researcher's direct inquiries to institutions) further supports the comparability of these programs in terms of size and stature. As with all qualitative research, parameters must be defined; future studies could expand to include additional institutions from the prairies, Atlantic provinces, or francophone programs to test the generalizability of findings.

The general music performance curriculum of each school's BMus program is discussed, presenting an itemization of their requirements. Additionally, anomalies and unique features are highlighted alongside narratives from landing pages of websites (i.e., initial webpages for each program when selecting BMus and BMus performance from the school or faculty's individual pages) and public-facing music performance curriculum course calendars and descriptions. Next,

the programs are compared and, finally, an overall discussion of the findings ensues on the music-related courses required by the music schools/faculties outside of musicianship, such as business/entrepreneurship and pedagogy classes. This discussion seeks to outline the current practices of music performance institutions regarding diverse skills outside of musicianship, such as entrepreneurship and pedagogy, which are increasingly acknowledged as necessary components in building a sustainable career in music (R. Rogers 2002; Polifonia 2005; Smilde 2007; Bennett 2008a; 2008b; Beckman and Essig 2012; Thomson 2013; Bridgstock 2013a; Scharff 2018; Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018; Bartleet et al. 2019; Kelman 2020). The study also highlights how these post-secondary institutions construct the narrative of what is essential to a music degree and how institutions frame the needs of aspiring professional musicians within undergraduate education.

Background

The first degrees in music at post-secondary institutions in Canada were awarded over one hundred years ago (Ellard, Brian and Kallmann 2011) with musicianship courses at the heart of the degrees. Musicianship refers to the skills, body of knowledge, and practices that allow musicians to make music, from aural and notation skills to rhythmic skills, musical terminology knowledge, and more (NASM 2016). These musical and technical skills alongside disciplinary expertise remain the core requirements of BMus degrees in higher education over a century later despite increasing evidence that myriad skills outside of musicianship and proficiency on one's instrument are required to realize a sustainable career in music (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012; 2019). While scholars emphasize the need for a broader skill set, they often stop short of interrogating why structural change in curriculum has been so slow, or how

institutional inertia and conservatism within music faculties continue to reinforce narrow definitions of professional readiness. It is not contested, however, that to be a musician the command of one's instrument is, and will continue to be, a fundamental skill (Mills 2004; Bennett 2008b; Bridgstock 2013b; Jill Timmons 2015). As such, institutions boast a variety of curriculum offerings for advanced post-secondary music performance students to hone their craft on their instrument through private lessons, performances, ensemble sessions. Institutions align this practical component with additional musicianship courses such as music history and theory, seminars, and more. The complement of musicianship classes is typically the Western Classical Tradition music program's centre; the lion's share of students' classroom time is spent on the development of technical, aural, theoretical, historical, and artistic skills when pursuing a music performance degree. However, as many scholars note, musicians in the 21st century require more than musicianship and high-level fitness on their instrument to craft a successful and sustainable career in the music industry (Bartleet et al. 2019; Kelman 2020). As Bartleet et al. note:

Music performance degrees have largely focused on the four traditional pillars of solo studies, ensemble studies, studies in music literature, and studies in musicianship. As the importance of preparing student musicians to negotiate the precarious and complex music industry becomes clear, and as the focus on performance careers becomes less relevant, the need for a greater flexibility in degree structures, and a shared understanding of ultimate career outcomes of students is essential. (Bartleet et al. 2019, 8)

However, Bartleet et al. do not offer a concrete framework for how this flexibility might be operationalized across diverse institutional contexts, nor do they fully address potential resistance from faculty who may view such changes as a dilution of artistic rigour.

Most musicians lead portfolio careers (Bennett 2008b; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015; Teague and Smith 2015; Hennekam and Bennett 2018), where performance may or may not be one component of a multi-faceted work life (Bennett 2008b; Thomson 2013; Brook and Fostaty

Young 2019). While some music scholarship effectively describes the prevalence and complexity of portfolio careers, it frequently presents this model as an adaptive response without critically addressing the systemic labour issues (such as precarity and lack of social protections) that necessitate such career structures in the first place. In today's music industry, musicians are more likely to teach (whether privately, in music schools, in elementary through high schools, or in post-secondary institutions) than perform any other role within the field (Bennett 2008a) and approximately one third of musicians' work falls into a category of arts administration outside of performance and/or into non-music work (Bennett 2008a; Bartleet et al. 2019). As such, musicians' self-led and complex careers, which have been documented in increasing frequency since the turn of the 21st century, require business acumen and a flexible skill set outside of proficiency on one's instrument and it is expected that the majority of musicians will assume multiple roles simultaneously throughout their careers (Polifonia 2005; Beckman and Essig 2012; Zuilenburg 2012; Bennett 2008a; Teague and Smith 2015; Bennett 2018).

Musicians themselves have bemoaned the mismatch between their musical education and subsequent career. When asked what they would change in their education and training, the musicians from Bennett's survey study most commonly cited a desire for "career education and industry experience; instrumental pedagogy; and business skills" (Bennett 2008b), and a more recent music performance career study noted that, "Musicians may only retrospectively realize the entrepreneurial skills that they require to be active in the industry" (Bartleet et al. 2019). As artists primarily lead self-managed careers, entrepreneurial traits such as opportunity recognition, creativity, and innovation are advantageous in sustaining and growing musical work (Smilde 2007; Beckman and Essig 2012). Jen (2014) identifies business and entrepreneurial skills as "crucial," as do R. Rogers (2002), Bennett (2008b), Beckman (2011), Bartleet (2012; 2019), and

many other leading scholars in the music career forum. Freelance work is precarious and requires organization, self-actualization, and an entrepreneurial spirit, which can be taught in coursework and by modelling realistic career paths within music schools (Bridgstock 2013b; Bennett 2018).

The lens with which students view a prospective career in music is influenced and shaped by the social and cultural settings they frequent, with particular influence stemming from their learning environment (Bennett and Freer 2012b). As students often enter post-secondary music programs with the impression that a “performance-only” career is a “successful” career (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008b; Burt-Perkins and Lebler 2008a) and are met with similar socially constructed narratives by their peers and institutions throughout undergraduate programs, they are ill-prepared for the reality that a “performance” career in the music industry often entails multiple components (Bennett and Bridgstock 2015; Tomlinson et al. 2020). Bennett confirms, “Students enter higher education with performance- or creation-based notions of success already dominant, and yet careers are rarely limited to those activities” (Bennett 2018). Yet, Lopez-Iniguez and Bennett’s (2020) study of internationally successful performers found that none of those interviewed described their careers as soloist-dominant. These attitudes and the institutional narrative and education that accompanies music performance programs often lead students toward particular end-goals in largely unattainable, unrealistic, or simply unavailable sections of the industry (e.g., international solo careers; orchestral positions) (Bennett 2008b; Jen 2014).

Lopez-Iniguez and Bennett (2020) argue that “surprisingly common” methodologies in music curricula (i.e., singularly musicianship-dominant curricula) may even be damaging to a student’s development. Without optimizing students’ capacity to sustain music careers by supporting a holistic approach to music education, many graduates are impacted financially,

emotionally, and physically throughout their complete career lifespan. Bennett argues that instead, institutions should be championing the notion that “multiple roles within and beyond the music sector” have intrinsic and extrinsic value and constitute a typical and successful career path as a musician in the 21st century (Bennett 2018).

Brown (2007) adds that in the 21st century, music education institutions must be responsive to current social strains such as decreased graduate employability in their fields, particularly for classical musicians where fewer traditional pathways (e.g., orchestral positions) are available, and cost of living and inflation are on the rise with little change in pay for freelancers since the turn of the century (Polifonia 2005; Juuti and Littleton 2012). R. Rogers (2002, 30) notes that the content of music programs and the environment of musical education “determine the kind of musician who will be able to thrive and adapt within a multi-stranded industry.” Lebler and Weston (2015) also discuss the context of musicians’ learning as fundamental to their career development with an increasing importance for higher educational institutions to adapt to “significant and ongoing change” within the music industry.

In contextualizing Western art music traditions, institutions would also be remiss to avoid discussions of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and the legacy of white supremacy and male-dominance in the classical music industry, particularly since the 2010s (Scharff 2018; de Boise 2018; Kolbe 2024). Calls for diversifying curriculum to include global musics, underrepresented voices, and to showcase a variety of styles and traditions have impacted offerings at higher education institutions but have not transformed the lack of diversity in representation, required materials, and fundamental teachings of music degrees (Hess 2015; Scharff 2018; Jensen-Moulton 2020). Kajikawa (2019) claims that one course requirement in a BMus degree or a DEI statement is not enough for core music programs and that these

institutions frequently mirror hierarchical and racialized frameworks that perpetuates inequities. Preserving myths of classical music standing apart from all other forms of music as the more “legitimate” practice invites students (and, therefore, future professional musicians) to consider these other musics as lesser and forms unhealthy perceptions as to success for future performances (Scharff 2018; Kajikawa 2019). Limiting the genres²⁹ and styles that are core to curricula (i.e., required) does not reflect the nature of work most musicians will undertake in the industry (Bennett 2008b; Thomson 2013). In fact, Lopez-Iniguez and Bennett’s (2020) soloist interview study noted that even those touring within international classical stream did not limit performance programs to canonic repertoire. As Mantie et al. (2017, 2) professes, “Those of us in higher education do have an obligation to help prepare students for their future...” Yet, departments of music continue to promote and celebrate narrow focus within Bachelor of Music in performance degrees despite decades of calls from scholars, practitioners and musicians themselves to rewrite the script (R. Rogers 2002; Kelman 2020).

Discussions of higher education training being vocational or theoretical have been deliberated by scholars in many fields as well. Within music studies, an argument may be made for practical, or vocational training, given the focus of learning an instrument is practical in nature. Additionally, as the music industry is precarious and self-driven, certain theoretical and practical coursework is essential if universities are claiming to prepare students for work as professional musicians. Scholars such as Bennett (2008a) and Coulson (2012) emphasize that a balance of vocational skills and reflective practice is critical to preparing musicians for the realities of portfolio careers and the evolving demands of the creative industries.

²⁹ In general music discourse, “genre” refers to a category of music characterized by shared stylistic, structural, and cultural features. It encompasses distinctions such as classical, jazz, folk, pop, and others, and is shaped by both musical traits and the social contexts in which the music is created, performed, and received (Fabbri 1982; Lena and Peterson 2008).

Little specific data is available on the current landscape of music performance curriculum at leading institutions nationwide, particularly in a comprehensive and comparative academic resource. This article reviews components of performance curricula including musicianship (i.e., practical lessons, ensemble and chamber work, music theory and history, and so forth), with a specific focus on courses outside of musicianship, such as pedagogy and entrepreneurship, to determine to what extent these components are addressed in Canadian undergraduate music performance degrees. The paper provides a clear and comprehensive summary of current requirements from the five music performance programs reviewed.

Methodology

The researcher collected data via manual web scraping (i.e., manually extracting various forms of data directly from websites rather than using technical or automated tools) (Weare and Lin 2000). The webpages reviewed included the public-facing pages with degree requirements, course descriptions, and departmental overviews on each institution's website. The institutions from which web scrapings were obtained were McGill University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto, and the University of Western Ontario, which were selected because of their dominant student size and prestige within the music performance education landscape in Canada, while also considering their comparability. Comparability factors eliminated the Université de Montréal³⁰ and the Glenn Gould School³¹

³⁰ The Glenn Gould School is primarily a professional conservatory where students receive a bachelor's degree from an online university affiliated with the institution as opposed to being a standalone post-secondary accredited school. This deviation from standard bachelor programs rendered it unsuitable for direct comparison when considering course descriptions, requirements, and traditional curriculum. The program was thus excluded as a possible institution of study.

³¹ As a Francophone school with a three-year program, Université de Montréal was not comparable with 4-year Anglophone undergraduate programs, particularly given the study intended to review and compare English texts.

from consideration for the study despite their esteem as other leading Canadian music performance institutions.

Curriculum requirements and condensed course descriptions were available online, publicly, for the chosen institutions in the study. Required music performance courses and timelines were scraped. The scrapings of all curricula included course titles and weighting, and the short-form course descriptions were scraped for narratives and themes around entrepreneurship/music business, entrepreneurial identity, pedagogy, and career readiness. The latter scrapings were collected to enhance the discussion of course offerings and requirements that were outlined in the literature review as required in the industry but lacking in post-secondary music performance education.

The scrapings were analyzed to provide a global overview of the offerings and requirements for each school as well as comparative tables and averages. Components of music performance curriculum for each school were outlined and compared to determine the approximate percentage of curriculum (i.e., weighting) each program dedicated to its various sub-sections. These sub-sections included categories such as business and entrepreneurship training, instrument/voice proficiency, music history, music theory, music pedagogy, non-musical coursework, and miscellaneous music courses (e.g., music psychology or music therapy electives). While the overall curriculum was analyzed based on this data, individual course content was not evaluated and therefore the detailed day-to-day experience of students and specific subtopics within courses were not part of the study. Further study to investigate this matter would provide additional details of program content.

To analyze the web scrapings, the researcher initially used a conventional inductive content analysis approach deriving codes directly from webpage data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). The

researcher overviewed each institution's music curriculum course titles and tagged the qualitative (written) portions of data using coding groups (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). These simple codes aligned with the subsections of curriculum previously discussed. As the material was online, the technique is termed web content analysis or WebCA (Herring 2010). Following an immersion within the data once coded, the researcher transformed the qualitative data tags into quantitative data tables for concise presentation and provided averages across the five institutions for overall discussion, also known as summative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Next, this quantitative data, alongside the inductive WebCa of BMus performance degree program landing page and/or main page description themes, were used to construct narratives about the five educational institutions' individual performance curricula and the overall landscape of Canada's music performance curriculum, which is delineated in the discussion of the paper.

Results

Table 1 charts the overall quantitative data of the chosen post-secondary institutions according to the researcher's sub-sectioned codes (e.g., curriculum categories). Additionally, an average for each category combining the institutions' data is provided as a summary in the final row. The quantitative curriculum data in Table 1 provides a snapshot of the division of coursework required for music performance undergraduate students at each university.

TABLE 1		Percentage of overall required courses by subsection				
		Musicianship	Non-music electives	Music Electives ¹	Pedagogy	Business/ Entrepreneurship
Post-Secondary Institution	McGill University	94.4	2.4	0 - 1.6	0 - 1.6 ²	1.6
	University of Ottawa	85.0	10.0 - 15.0	0 - 5.0	0.0	0.0
	University of Toronto	80.0	15.0	0.8 - 5.0	0 - 2.5 ²	0 - 1.7 ³
	University of Western Ontario	83.4	14.6	0.0 - 2.0	0 - 2.0 ²	0.0
	University of British Columbia	77.5	14.6	3.1 - 7.7 ⁴	0 - 4.8 ²	0.0
	Average overall	84.1	11.8	2.5	1.1	0.5

1 Music Electives reference miscellaneous music-related courses such as music technology, music and health, or music education (non-pedagogical) that do not fit into other subsections.

2 Only piano majors were required to take piano pedagogy in all schools where pedagogy was required. Non-piano instrumentalists and vocalists could select pedagogy courses amongst elective music courses in schools where pedagogy courses for instruments other than piano were offered.

3 The University of Toronto required two courses for music business (equivalent of 1.7% of their curriculum requirements). However, these courses are not graded and, therefore, cannot be equated to traditional course requirements.

4 The University of British Columbia has 2.5% of its course requirements specific to music and technology.

As shown by the data, musicianship dominates the compulsory coursework with 84.1% of requirements entailing music history, music theory, aural and keyboard skills, private lessons, masterclasses, and required ensemble (e.g., orchestra, choir, and so on) and/or collaborative playing/singing (e.g., chamber music, accompaniment, and so on). McGill University (McG) saw the highest percentage of required coursework dedicated to musicianship at 94.4%, and the University of British Columbia (UBC) saw the lowest at 77.5%.

When examining the next most significant subsection of the undergraduate music performance degree requirements, non-music electives topped the chart. Nearly all university programs of study elected for 15% of coursework requirements dedicated outside of the music field, with McG being the exception at 2.4%. However, this statistic for McG may be misleading

as the dominant educational path of students in the province of Quebec consists of completing CEGEP (General and Vocational College) prior to attending university which results in many students having already completed some general university-level coursework.

Pedagogy was a required component of some post-secondary institutions of study for specific instruments, excepting students at the University of Ottawa (UO), and some students within McG, University of Western Ontario (UWO), and UT's programs. Specifically, pedagogy was a requirement for all piano performance students across the universities except those at UO where no students were required to take pedagogy. Most universities had one course required in pedagogy for pianists, with UBC having two required courses. Overall, the pedagogy requirement in music performance degrees averaged 1.6%.

For entrepreneurship and business courses, there was significant variation across the five institutions. UO, UBC, and UWO had no required business or entrepreneurship courses. McG required two courses titled "music as a profession" (I and II). UT integrated one required course on the music industry, but this course was the only required course in the undergraduate degree not to be graded, rendering it challenging to compare to other requirements for the music performance degree. The requirements for business within the music degree overall were between 0.32 - 0.86% depending on the weight attached to the non-graded class from UT. The researcher chose to weight the non-graded UT business course at half its course percentage for the overall business course curriculum average in the table.

Lastly, two schools had requirements that did not align with the text-derived subsection codes across the other institutions. First, UT had a requirement for a "music breadth course" selection, which included music education (non-pedagogical) courses and some additional music history classes for studies outside the Western Classical Tradition. Second, UBC required two

courses in music and technology from all first-year undergraduate music students, including performance majors. The latter institution also required all undergraduate students to take writing and literature courses that could be classified under “other” or “non-music” but were not electively chosen. Courses that were required outside of musicianship, music business, and pedagogy, but still within the music offerings were classified under “music electives,” including courses such as music therapy, music and politics, conducting, improvisation, and others.

Individual University Data

To provide a snapshot of the unique aspects of each post-secondary institution’s curriculum, the researcher outlines the anomalies and variations of each in the data analysis script, beginning with McGill University (McG). The most focussed on musicianship of any Canadian undergraduate music performance program in this study, McG has 67 required course credits, 20 complimentary elective music credits with a specified sub listing of music courses, 23 “free credit” electives for any music courses desired, and an additional 3 elective credits in non-music courses. As previously noted, many Quebecois students would not require a full four-year undergraduate program because of their CEGEP degrees, so some variations were described to account for this, namely that “freshman” undergraduates would follow a 34-credit course year prior to the other requirements outlined for “all students” in performance.

McG courses carried practical and traditional titles, such as “Music Theory and Analysis” I-V, “Practical Lessons” I-VIII, “Musicianship Training” I-IV, and so forth. In the discussion of requirements and electives on the music performance website, no descriptors, recommendations, or suggestions were made. Notably, there were variations between voice majors and piano majors (i.e., diction and voice-related requirements compared to accompaniment and piano

repertoire requirements), as well as for instrumentalists (i.e., focus on orchestral studies), but these fluctuations were all within musicianship and music-related courses. For instruments traditionally found in orchestras, large ensembles such as orchestra, wind ensemble, or brass ensemble are required.

Turning to the University of Ottawa (UO), 85% of requirements are dedicated to musicianship with course titles such as “Applied Music” I-III, “Theory and Analysis” I-IV, and “Forms and Styles” I-IV. As the university offers bilingual (English/French) options, it is noteworthy that there is a French requirement for all undergraduates, representing 2.5% of their undergraduate study (classified within the “non-music” category in the summary table). An additional requirement for all students in undergraduate programs is an essay writing course, representing an additional 2.5% of required study.

UO does not require its students to take any pedagogy or business classes. It does require 2.5% of electives to be outside of music in addition to the 5% undergrad-wide French and essay writing courses. The university provides the option for music performance students to choose either music or non-music courses for the remaining 5% of degree requirements. There is very little variation between requirements of instrumentalists and vocalists aside from specific ensembles and repertoire (e.g., guitar ensemble for guitarists compared to opera for vocalists; string repertoire as opposed to vocal repertoire and diction for the respective instrumentalists and singers). For instruments that traditionally found in orchestra, large ensembles such as orchestra, wind ensemble, or brass ensemble are required.

The University of Toronto (UT) had 80% of required courses in musicianship, and 15% in non-music coursework. Similar to McG, not all students at UT were required to take pedagogy classes, but 2.5% of course selection was required to include pedagogy for pianists. The “other”

category for course requirements was substantial compared to equivalent institutions, due in part to the “music breadth” requirement category. This section required students to select from a list of music-related courses linked to music education, politics, anti-racism, youth, or research in a musical context, as well as requiring a “genre/style” course selection that featured over twenty offerings outside the Western Classical Tradition for students to choose from (e.g., “Korean Music”; “Music of the World’s Indigenous Peoples”; “Afro Pop”) or nontraditional historical or socially-related music courses (e.g., “Music, Sound, and the Erotic”; “Music, Power, and Politics”; “Topics in Ethnomusicology: Current Issues”). Although UT had a required business course (“Lives in Music”) for all undergraduate music performance majors, the credit was ungraded, which left it as an anomaly even within the institution’s own curriculum.

The University of Western Ontario (UWO) music students all completed a compulsory common year for their first year of undergraduate studies (whether their intended path was performance, theory, history, education, or other). Including this common year and the remaining three years of music performance, the curriculum at UWO was 83.4% musicianship, including traditional and nontraditional music history, music theory, ensembles, applied lessons and masterclasses, and music electives. Compared to the musicianship curricula at parallel institutions, there was more flexibility in which music history and ensemble courses qualified for the requirements at UWO. Non-music elective requirements encompassed 14.6% of coursework. One pedagogy course was required across instrument and voice types, representing 2.1% of curriculum. No business or entrepreneurship courses were required, although a third-year course entitled “The 21st-Century Musician” was offered as an elective.

At the University of British Columbia (UBC), only 77.5% of curriculum was required in musicianship, the lowest of the institutions studied. University-wide requirements of reading and

writing accounted for 5% of the non-music electives, which totalled 14.6%. An additional requirement of all music performance majors was 5% of coursework in music and technology, which was categorized under “music electives.” The total for this category was 3.1-7.7% depending on whether the performance major was a pianist or not, as piano majors’ electives were lessened by the piano pedagogy requirement of two courses. The two piano pedagogy courses required for piano majors represented the highest percentage of required pedagogy from any school, at 4.8% of curriculum, but no other instrumentalists or vocalists were required to take pedagogy at UBC aside from its piano majors. Lastly, no business or entrepreneurship courses were required.

Qualitative data analysis

Descriptions from each post-secondary institution’s website landing pages for the Bachelor of Music highlight the individual institution’s focus and philosophy for training aspiring musicians. A summary of the qualitative data from this piece of the web scraping is found below.

1. **McGill University (McG):** The performance program description emphasized practical instruction, ensemble playing, and frequent performance opportunities, suggesting that continued post-secondary education following BMus (through to DMus) is a constructive path. However, no explicit discussion of career goals, program options, or philosophical ideas were presented for prospective students.
2. **University of Ottawa (UO):** The program self-described as a leading music school in Canada, providing students with the training needed for an active and successful career in the field while allowing them to pursue their passion. The webpage outlined several career possibilities (e.g., “education, musicology, music journalism or arts

administration”) but ultimately stated that the degree is designed for students wishing to become career musicians.

3. **University of Toronto (UT):** The program put entrepreneurship and creativity at the forefront of its BMus promotion, claiming that UT aims “to foster entrepreneurial performers who understand traditional music and have an eye for future opportunities.” No specific career focuses or positions were mentioned. Opportunities for performance and a core curriculum of lessons, masterclasses, ensembles, and electives were also highlighted.
4. **University of Western Ontario (UWO):** The BMus program was presented as comprehensive and unique, with a focus on music education and performance. Within the body of its landing page text, UWO provided a direct link to a careers page listing thirty music-related careers its alumni have taken on, acknowledging that music degree programs often impart a broad range of skill sets that can be used in various mediums upon graduation. A longer general description, non-specific to performance, occupied most of the webpage, but when the performance area was highlighted, it mentioned private lessons, renowned teachers, and “generous” facilities.
5. **University of British Columbia (UBC):** The program description mentioned its offering as an opportunity to hone performance and technical skills while attaining a solid academic foundation. The webpage did not emphasize performance as the ultimate career path, instead listing multiple options such as educator, composer, and researcher before mentioning the performer role. Further in the description the university described music performance as directed toward students who wish to become professional teachers or

performers in music schools or private studios, omitting mention of orchestral or soloist positions.

Overall, each university offered a unique approach to their music performance program, with varying emphases on musicianship, career possibilities, entrepreneurship, and academic foundation on their front-facing marketing materials for the programs.

Discussion

The literature on music performance degrees suggests that post-secondary music institutions have held onto core performance curriculum for over a century, and the first-hand data collected from the five Canadian institutions in this study supports this claim. In reviewing the quantitative and qualitative materials for the five selected music performance undergraduate programs in Canada, it is evident that musicianship remains the primary focus of Bachelor of Music degrees, dominating curricula across all universities of study with an average of 84% of requirements. Musicianship skills are crucial for musicians, and this article does not contest the need for such components within music degrees. However, when reviewing recent music performance education, career-readiness, and identity literature, scholars demonstrated their belief that more than “musicianship” is needed for individuals to succeed in the music industry in the 21st century, such as pedagogy and entrepreneurship. With over eighty percent of music performance degrees currently deriving from musicianship classes, little space is given to develop comprehensive coursework or cause a fundamental shift in the portrait Canadian music institutions are painting of music performance at the higher-education level.

As musicians require more than simply musicianship skills to craft a sustainable career, the remaining 16% of curriculum space in music performance degrees should offer students business

and entrepreneurship opportunities, pedagogy training, and other relevant preparation, such as diverse genre practice, nontraditional performance prospects, and more. However, the next most substantial subsection of the curriculum for all studied universities is non-music electives, which accounts for 12% of curriculum on average. Between musicianship and non-music electives, 96% of the overall course requirements of music performance curriculum is accounted for. As music performance degrees are generally granted by accredited university institutions, it is customary that some breadth of study outside of one's discipline is considered to round out the undergraduate education. The post-secondary institutions in this study are regarded amongst the top educational facilities in Canada and, therefore, this requirement is not surprising. However, given the fraction of curriculum requirements that remain outside of these non-music electives and musicianship, it is puzzling that little to no guidance is offered in terms of complementary, advantageous, or relevant coursework for musicians.

While some institutions did offer suggestions within music electives or required courses, particularly by instrument, there were no pathways or suggested areas of study for non-music electives. Given the lack of required business/entrepreneurship and pedagogy classes in comparison to need in professional life, non-music electives could provide a much-needed focus for musicians where little room to add such courses exists already. In that regard, curriculum reform for post-secondary institutions with music performance degrees may be stagnant owing to long-held beliefs in the current Western canonical pillars of musicianship. If institutions are unwilling (or deem it detrimental) to remove any core components of their current curricula, certainly recommendations in the more flexible components of their requirements (e.g., non-music electives) could be approached differently. Such recommendations could serve to guide

students toward skills and coursework that strategically support their careers, particularly if they are to take on multiple roles after graduation, as most musicians in the 21st century do.

Pedagogy, which is a key area of learning for teaching, had little to no place in music performance curricula across all universities. Only pianists were obliged to take pedagogy at the schools where a pedagogy requirement was outlined. In fact, according to literature, as many music students will teach during their careers as perform. Yet, the music performance curriculum provides *extremely* limited preparation for this critical aspect of portfolio musicianship. As teaching accounts for a significant percentage of primary income for musicians and most will teach during their career, including those who focus on performance, this lack of course requirements warrants scrutiny amongst curriculum planners, especially considering many music schools already have the resources and courses in place to teach basic pedagogy given their Bachelor of Music in Education degree programs. Further consideration should be given to the role of pedagogy and teaching within a performer's skill set and narratives surrounding teaching should be normalized. As an example, many post-secondary performance professors themselves are considered high-level performers, yet their main income source and time align with their teaching role. As a second example to help normalize this facet of a performance career, international touring soloists frequently deliver masterclasses, support mentees, and teach at conservatories or post-secondary institutions. Music performance degrees need to showcase these standard features of a performer's life and prepare students for the work they will undertake.

Additionally, the disproportionate emphasis placed on performance over pedagogy prompts questions around the respect and value accorded to the art of teaching. When institutional curricula marginalize or exclude pedagogical training, they implicitly suggest that teaching is

either irrelevant to a career in music or does not require formal preparation. As a result, students are less likely to prioritize the development of teaching competencies and experience during their undergraduate studies or independently. Furthermore, when teaching is not explicitly presented as a viable and respected component of a musician's career, performance students may come to view it as a secondary or undesirable outcome. These two dynamics – lack of training and lack of representation – may significantly undermine students' transitions into professional life.

Graduates may feel ill-equipped for the roles they assume to sustain themselves and may experience a dissonance between their perceived definitions of success and the reality of their portfolio careers. The disconnect between curriculum design and career outcomes may lead to professional identity crises and feelings of failure, as students struggle to reconcile their educational experience with the multifaceted demands of the contemporary music industry.

Moreover, the implicit devaluation of pedagogy reinforces hierarchies within music schools, often positioning performance above education-focused programs such as Bachelor of Music in Education degrees, thereby perpetuating a disciplinary divide that undermines the legitimacy of diverse musical pathways.

This undervaluing of pedagogical training is mirrored in another critical omission within undergraduate music performance curricula: the lack of coursework in music business and entrepreneurship. Among the institutions studied, such classes were either negligible or entirely absent, despite their growing relevance to sustaining a professional music career. Only one faculty required a traditionally graded course in music business, representing 1.6% of its overall curriculum. The remaining institution with a class on the music industry did not grade the course, which differentiates the course from its counterparts and would likely lead students not to value

the class equally to its graded counterparts. Three institutions lacked course requirements in music business and/or entrepreneurship entirely.

As demonstrated in the literature, many musicians lead self-driven, portfolio-style careers, where business acumen is a necessary skill for survival in a competitive industry. Without entrepreneurial experience and business skills, competences in relevant areas such as grant-writing, marketing, and networking are likely to be overlooked by most students. Graduates will then be left to develop these skills on their own or face the potential of leaving the industry entirely, which is an unfortunately frequent occurrence because of the competitive nature of music careers (Bennett 2018). Holding only 0.5% of required coursework on average across the five institutions studied, music business and the entrepreneurial skill sets to match are not being given priority in Canadian post-secondary music institutions despite the nearly unanimous call for such content by scholars of musicians' education, career, and work lives. This persistent neglect, which has been identified and discussed for over a decade, must be addressed if students are to bridge the gap between study and practice in an increasingly challenging economy and evolving music industry.

An entrepreneurial spirit is paramount to developing and sustaining a musical career, which requires some level of understanding from music students as they transition from pre-professionals into professional life in the industry. If institutions disregard the entrepreneurial aspect of musicians entirely, students are at a disadvantage in the precarious and competitive musical marketplace. Although there was some opportunity for students to take music courses and music-related courses outside of musicianship, there were no guiding factors provided as to what these may be, and without a music-specific business or entrepreneurship class to help

develop ideas for students to pursue multifaceted careers, students are unlikely to pursue these paths on their own.

When examining the overall curriculum requirements of the post-secondary institutions of study, diverse genre representation was not found. Although many schools offered various electives around themes of “global music” (in itself a problematic concept), “jazz,” “popular,” and numerous specific ethnic musics, these courses were not part of the required core. Rather, WAM comprised the bulk of musicianship and required training, namely in Western canonical theory and Western art music history. Some universities had renamed and begun to change the mandatory music history survey classes (UO; UWO, as examples), but none had explicitly pushed students toward expanding their genre/style horizons on a practical side in their requirements. Scholars have noted that most musicians will perform in three to four genres regardless of their training, and those who are adept at authentically moonlighting with various genres have more opportunity for work (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2012). As such, music schools should be better positioning graduates by providing training opportunities for performance within other genres and styles, even if these areas are not the primary focus of the students. Additionally, learning and promoting diverse styles/genres lessens the white patriarchal heteronormative structures that frequent the Western classical canon and aid in presenting all musics as valued.

Students enrolled in music performance programs at Canadian post-secondary institutions “tend to value and prioritize performances activities” (Jen 2014, 7). However, the ability to transfer academic skills (both practical and theoretical) into a professional context requires intentional bridging, which students may not recognize as necessary because of the narrow scope of many music performance degrees and the limited career narratives they imply. The strong

emphasis on musicianship and instrumental expertise may inadvertently restrict students' awareness of the diverse pathways available to them post-graduation, often leading to a constrained sense of identity tied almost exclusively to performance (Brook and Fostaty Young 2019). This narrow view of their social identity carries over into graduates' careers. Beyond providing opportunities to learn imperative skills for the music industry, post-secondary institutions should be preparing students for the realities of their profession in the narratives they promote surrounding career prospects and what constitutes a musician.

Descriptions of music performance had wide variance on the landing pages of the institutions' degree requirements, with only UWO providing some insights into the breadth of careers music performance degrees could lead toward. Despite this one glimpse at the multiple strands of musicians' lives, references to coursework to enhance skill sets relevant to the various areas of the music industry were lacking across all school sites, which would leave students to glean insights only from the descriptors provided. These descriptive paragraphs for music performance spoke of the performance and teaching opportunities for students by referencing orchestras, soloists, or facilities, never citing overall career trajectories, alumni of various career paths, or how diverse a "performance" portfolio may be. As such, the performance programs of study maintained and propagated misrepresentative storylines of where music school will lead most graduates. The portrayal of orchestral and solo performance as the primary or idealized work for musicians may be detrimental to students' development of the diverse skill sets required for sustainable careers. This narrow narrative risks contributing to future identity crises or feelings of failure when graduates encounter a professional reality that diverges significantly from the one they were led to expect.

Hierarchical rankings between music's subdisciplines (e.g., performance and education) were also evidenced in this study. As an example, on the main UWO landing webpage, music education is highlighted first. However, performance is discussed as reaching the "highest levels" when it is addressed next. This problematic language perpetuates stereotypes of hierarchy between the subdisciplines of music that places performance on a pedestal above its counterparts. These narratives are harmful to graduates as the realities of musicians' work are that most careers entail a plethora of jobs and aspects within and outside music, all of which are of value and contribute to sustainable and successful self-managed careers. It also creates a competitive environment where students in the various streams of music are at once together within the school but differentiated by invisible hierarchical social construction. As students are likely to blur the lines between various aspects of music in their professional lives (including for music education students who often also perform), it is disadvantageous to position these subdisciplines into tiered rankings, particularly devaluating those that are not spoken of as "highest level" despite their equal level of post-secondary study. These class-based hierarchies also extend across musical genres, where a "school of music" frequently means a "school of Western Classical Tradition music," thereby marginalizing and devaluing other musics through their exclusion from most top-tier post-secondary study in many highly ranked schools.

Overall, curricula in the five post-secondary institutions chosen for this study remain largely tethered to Western classical tradition formula in "conservatory" style of over a century ago when Bachelor of Music degrees were introduced in Canada. Despite demonstrated need, the programs lack pedagogical, business/entrepreneurship, and diverse style training. Besides these absences, music schools continue to perpetuate stereotypes that narrow the student's vision of

what music performance graduates do in their careers, which lead students to limit their focus and miss opportunities that ultimately render them less prepared for their work life.

Conclusion

Music performance degrees include musicianship classes to improve proficiency on one's instrument and knowledge of music history and theory. As this primary focus eclipses other aspects required within programs across the country, it is evident that music performance degrees remain largely unchanged since their 19th-century inception despite broad and diverse modern-day needs (Bridgstock 2005; Bennett 2008b; Bartleet et al. 2019). However, nearly all scholars engaged in discussions of curriculum relevancy in music careers state that business and entrepreneurship training is lacking and most criticize the absence of pedagogical instruction (Beeching 2005). Others cite lack of diversity in musical genres/styles as a significant hindrance (R. Rogers 2002; Hannan, Bennett, and International Society for Music Education. 2007; Bartleet et al. 2012). These scholars concur that additional skills beyond musicianship are imperative to sustainable 21st-century music careers. Yet, music schools have not adapted curricula to include these prevalent aspects of portfolio careers as evidenced by first-hand data of five Canadian post-secondary institutions' music performance curricula. Without training in these arenas, students are not properly prepared for the dominant style of self-led work life they will meet in the music industry. Training in Bachelor of Music performance programs must be modified to stress the importance and relevancy of business acumen, pedagogical training, and diverse genre understanding, and to include these components on equal footing to other musicianship requirements.

Furthermore, music schools' narrow portrayal of the music field disadvantages students, leaving them "uninformed" with unrealistic expectations and restrictions to their skill set (Beeching 2012, 28; Bridgstock 2013a; 2013b). Substantiated by the qualitative data on landing pages of university performance programs, and the implication of lack of pedagogy, diverse musics, and business training from curriculum, post-secondary performance education misleads students into hierarchical and unrealistic views of what successful musical careers entail. Suggesting that orchestral and soloist careers are the primary forms of work musicians undertake is improbable and deceptive. This narrative can hinder progress in other areas of interest that provide as much or more possibility for portfolio work in the future as students may ignore or disregard opportunities to enhance other competencies. For example, if a piano performance major is fed the narrative that they must focus on solo performance as they are to be a soloist, they may neglect opportunities to work with colleagues or other groups such as choirs, ensembles, and chamber groups, which is more likely to entail sustainable performance work in the future. Or, outside of performance, students might neglect opportunities to advance skills in music librarian training, marketing, arts administration, production, recording, fundraising or other areas if they do not see these as a necessity to make a living as a musician.

Performance narratives and curricula in post-secondary institutions also perpetuate stereotypes regarding musician's day-to-day work. As 84% of curriculum is spent on musicianship, over three quarters of students' time is spent on musicianship-related work. While this period of study requires more time than the real-life work of a musician (where nearly half of musicians' time is spent teaching, on average, and most have three to four roles including non-musical, administrative, or other non-performance related roles in tandem with performance), it is not solely the amount of time spent in practice that is problematic. Training prior to

professional life in many occupations requires more study/practice than a job will require. However, music schools need to make this clear from their program design and the way they discuss music careers so that students are not set up to expect orchestral and solo performance to occupy the majority of their time and to dismiss other activities as lesser. If the institutions involved intertwined narratives of entrepreneurship, administration, pedagogy, and the need for multiple roles throughout a degree, including through classwork, then students' expectations and understanding of their future career path would improve.

Contributions to practice include much-needed curriculum data for music performance degree programs in Canada, allowing for ease of access and a greater understanding of the current makeup of performance training as of 2025. This data accessibility is useful for policy makers, curriculum evaluation teams/consultants, researchers, professors, university administration and leadership, students, and parents, particularly those wishing to address curriculum reform. The comparison of various schools' required curricula and front-facing narratives could also be advantageous for students, professors, and others looking for "the right fit" for their education or career by presenting the emphasis and core of each school's philosophy and unique characteristics that may align with individuals' values and interests.

Future areas of research include in-depth analysis of courses (e.g., course descriptions and syllabi examination) that are offered on pedagogy, music business, and other topical classes related to musicians' careers to determine what these offerings are providing to students and whether they are relevant to the needs of the industry. Further, courses within the required musicianship classes of universities may need to be reconsidered by curriculum researchers. Analysis of additional music performance institutions within Canada and a comparison to post-secondary institutions in other countries would also increase knowledge on the Canadian

landscape and general state of 21st-century music performance curriculum. Moreover, investigating how music schools could better prepare students through narrative and rhetoric should be considered for future studies to provide practical advice and validated information to post-secondary institutions that are looking to create positive change in the philosophy, career guidance, and holistic health of the musicians they are training. Additionally, discussions with administration and educators at the institutions as well as those reviewing curriculum would allow for more comprehensive understanding of the reasoning behind current curriculum offerings and how they might change in the future. Lastly, few studies have addressed musicians directly when assessing curriculum, with no known studies to date on the topic in the Canadian context. This article thus provides an overview of required courses and program focus in Canadian music performance degrees, laying the groundwork for direct discussions with musicians about the relevance of their training to their careers.

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Article 2. Musicians' Portfolio Careers

Introduction

The career trajectories of music performance graduates have long been a subject of interest within higher education and professional music communities. Traditional conservatory models and university music programs have historically framed success in terms of securing full-time orchestral, chamber, or soloist careers (Bennett 2008b; Smilde 2009). However, the realities of contemporary music careers tell a different story, one characterized by portfolio careers where musicians engage in multiple roles to sustain their livelihoods (Perkins 2012; Bartleet et al. 2019). This study investigates the professional lives of music performance graduates from Canadian post-secondary institutions, examining how musicians' training aligns with their career realities and how they construct professional identities.

Drawing on two primary sources of data (a national survey of undergraduate music performance graduates and follow-up interviews with select respondents) the researcher applies an overarching transformative lens (Sweetman, Badiie, and Creswell 2010; Mertens 2010) and employs a social constructionist framework (Berger and Luckmann 1966b) to explore how graduates navigate their careers and identities. The social identities of musicians in their work world and the entrepreneurial spirit demanded in portfolio careers are also examined throughout this article. The specific research questions of the article are:

1. What constitutes a classical musician's career?
2. How do musicians perceive their post-secondary performance education as preparing them for musicians' work?

The transformative lens, as articulated by Sweetman et al. (2010), emphasizes the need for research to advocate for marginalized or underrepresented groups and to contribute to practical change. In this context, the researcher investigates institutional narratives and career preparation

in relation to graduates' lived experiences, with particular attention to training gaps and the psychological dimensions of career identity.

The data collection is structured around three central areas: training, careers, and identity. Here, training includes coursework, institutional messaging, and graduates' reflections on what was useful or missing in their education. The career section of the survey examines main sources of income, number of professional roles held by graduates, whether graduates remain working in the music industry, and the nature of their work. Finally, identity is explored through graduates' definitions of success, their perceptions of institutional success narratives, their evolving identification as musicians, and their portrayals of struggle related to professional and social identity.

Results are organized into eight themes: (1) Lifelong relationship with music as a motivating factor for pursuing music; (2) Institutional blind spots in career preparation; (3) The disconnect between institutional expectations and industry realities; (4) Portfolio musicianship as a career necessity; (5) The "hard work" of music; (6) Identity and success as evolving constructs; (7) Work-life balance challenges; and (8) Mental health considerations. Notably, the first six themes were anticipated based on existing literature and survey/interview questions, while the final two themes emerged autonomously and require future research. Lastly, the two research questions (mentioned above) for the study return in the discussion. The researcher's own experience as a portfolio careerist adds a dimension to the research, discussed in the conclusion. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on post-secondary music education reform, advocating for a more holistic and flexible approach to career preparation that acknowledges the realities of contemporary music work and supports graduates in constructing sustainable and fulfilling careers.

Background

Musicians have been known to manage portfolio careers for centuries and increasingly work in this protean style today (Bridgstock 2005; Latukefu and Ginsborg 2019; Tomlinson et al. 2020; Diane Scott 2023). However, it is difficult to accurately discuss the portfolio careers of musicians as census data does not capture this style of work (Bartleet et al. 2012; 2019) and few researchers have broached the subject in Canada. Although this form of work was explicitly articulated in the 1990s (Templer and Cawsey 1999) institutions are slow to respond and have yet to change their narratives around performance instruction over three decades later (R. Rogers 2002; Beckman and Essig 2012; Zuilenburg 2012). Table 1 (drawn from Bridgstock 2005) notes the key attributes of traditional and portfolio careers.

	Traditional Career	Portfolio Career
Mobility/Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low mobility • High job security • Firm-specific skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High mobility • Low job security • Transferable skills, knowledge, and abilities
Occupational Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One occupational role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several occupational roles
Source of Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer • Salary/wages • Single source of income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client(s) • Contracts or invoices • Multiple sources of income
Career motivation and measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical position • Salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjective • Psychological measures of success
Responsibility for career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational responsibility for career development • Personal and professional networks often subsidiary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal responsibility for career development • Personal and professional networks imperative

As Table 1 reflects, traditional careers differ significantly from portfolio careers in multiple areas. With data from Australia suggesting that only 0.4% of musicians hold full-time positions in performance (and many of those individuals also hold additional positions), students in performance programs should be preparing themselves for work that includes multiple roles such as performing, composing, teaching, arts administration, production, and many more (Bartleet et al. 2012). Concurrent work roles, including non-music work, contribute to the overall portfolio and may allow musicians to sustain themselves financially more easily than singular roles. Portfolio careers also help individuals withstand variations within the music market. In fact, Bartleet et al. (2012, 35) claim that “financial viability depends for many musicians not only on talent, but also on their own ‘portfolio’ skills.” These portfolio skills, ranging from business, pedagogy, multiple genre literacy, grant writing, communication, and more, are equally thought necessary by leading area scholar Bennett (2008a), who suggests that four such skills are required, on average, for musicians to maintain their careers.

Elaborating on some of the required skills in portfolio practice, 87% of musicians in the industry perform diverse genres from pop to jazz to world musics, with over half of musicians performing in four or more genres regularly. However, most undergraduate performance degrees in Canada center solely around Western art music traditions (WAM) (R. Rogers 2002). In a noteworthy study by Bennett (2008a), 62% of respondent musicians deemed communication skills to be the most important skills in their practice. Additionally, multiple studies have found that over 80% of musicians teach, including teaching in private studios, school settings, and university programs (Bennett 2008a; Jill Timmons 2015). Teaching is, in fact, the most common activity for musicians according to such literature, and it is therefore not surprising that musicians and scholars emphasize the need for pedagogical skills. However, although many

studies from the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia cite multiple roles as the standard musician career format (e.g., Scott 2023; Latukefu and Ginsborg 2019; Thomson 2013, Bridgstock 2019) Brook and Young (2019) contend that those who remain in the music industry acquire the skills they need to manage these roles by necessity and are not taught such skills explicitly in their undergraduate degrees. Many students reported that their music programs did not adequately support them to enable successful navigation in the music industry. However, Tomlinson et al. (2020) also found that 90% of musicians in the field have completed some post-secondary education, which may imply post-secondary training is central to a music career.

The expectations of musicians graduating from post-secondary programs are partially formed by institutional narratives and emphasis on performance. As such, many musicians describe the transition to professional work as challenging and different from what they imagined as students, whether following undergraduate or graduate-level training. Musicians are often negatively affected by the narrow projections of their institutions. For example, various imperative skills may be considered irrelevant or unimportant if the students choose to focus entirely on nearly unattainable career goals of solo or orchestral performance. This focus may later result in a loss of income-deriving activities and identity struggles when other skills are needed and notions of success are not met (López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020). In fact, 85% of mid-career musicians have changed career goals, emphasizing that, “their careers differed vastly from their initial expectations...” and that, “this change in mid-career was typically the result of considerable self-doubt experienced as identity trauma when initial goals were unrealized” (Bennett 2018, 21). Identity grievances may be avoided in part if institutions affirm a broader and more realistic scope of work for musicians by showcasing roles other than performance as a central aspect of musical careers.

Methodology and Theory

The overarching structure of this dissertation follows mixed-methods research with a transformative lens (Mertens 2003; 2010; Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010; Mertens 2021). In this article, the researcher employed a mixed-methods approach to explore the relevance of music performance curriculum to the portfolio careers of musicians, again framed through Donna Mertens' transformative lens. The research methodology was, therefore, designed to align with the values of the transformative theory, focusing on the inclusion of musicians' perspectives at every stage of the research process. The transformative theoretical perspective, as succinctly articulated by Sweetman et al. (2010) in a series of ten questions for researchers, serves as an advocacy framework that values the voices of marginalized groups and seeks to amplify their perspectives. In applying this advocacy lens, the aim was not only to uncover the lived experiences of musicians but also to provide clarity on the precarity and structural challenges musicians face in their careers. This approach was crucial in ensuring that the research was centered on participants' viewpoints and oriented toward practical outcomes that could influence the future of music education and the professional environment for musicians.

Combining the transformative lens with social constructionist theory, particularly for the sections on musician identity, the author's view is that individuals fashion distinct understandings based on various factors including language, history, bias, and shared assumptions. Aligning advocacy practice with social constructionism through the ideals of Burr, the author asserted a critical stance when creating questions for the survey and interviews to counteract biases and "taken-for-granted knowledge" (Burr 2003, 2-3). Additionally, in analyzing data, the concept of subjective, complex, and competing views of the world and understanding of certain phenomena were considered to form a discussion surrounding identity,

projections, and music industry or institutional stereotypes and narratives. These considerations also align with social constructionist and social identity theory views in that they appreciate multiple identity constructs and the societal relationships and structures that shape them.

A mixed-methods approach with a survey and follow-up semi-structured interviews was employed. Surveys are one of the most prominent forms of data collection for scholars in the music field exploring analogous topics (Bennett and Freer 2012a; Thomson 2013; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015; Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018; Brook and Fostaty Young 2019; Jackson and Bridgstock 2020; Tolmie 2023). To increase trustworthiness in the study, the survey was piloted with three professional musicians. This helped ensure clarity and understanding of questions as well as providing feedback on the survey overall in terms of relevancy and appropriateness of subject matter. The survey, produced and sent via Survey Monkey, was anonymized. It included 35 questions in four sections, beginning with an initial consent-to-participate checkbox and three optional demographic questions. Following this, the three main data collection sections of the survey examined career, training, and identity. Survey questions consisted of multiple choice, comment box, and Likert scale (1-5) stylings. Upon completion of the survey, respondents could choose to select whether they could also be contacted for an in-depth interview. At the conclusion of the survey, 78 participants submitted their information for the possibility of interviewing. Those participants who volunteered as a potential follow-up interviewee provided their email address in a separate unlinked section within the Survey Monkey platform to ensure their responses prior to the final section remained anonymous while also allowing the researcher to contact them directly. To collect data for the portfolio career article, the study used snowball surveying (Johnson, Armitage, and Colton 2005; Dusek, Yurova, and Ruppel 2015) through alumni networks, graduate departments, social media, and personal

direct contacts (via email and social media). Initial outreach through these various platforms drastically increased the sample size, as demonstrated by the number of individuals who provided their names and email addresses for potential interviews. Notably, over 50% of respondents in this subsection were previously unknown to the researcher despite the relatively small and interconnected professional music community in Canada.

Having chosen a cross-section of interviewees based on a variety of musical instruments, graduation dates, genders, and post-secondary institution locations (provided in the final section of the survey and attached to their interest in being interviewed), interviewees were then identifiable to the Principal Investigator (PI). Only the PI was able to access survey and interview data, and all information, content, and material acquired in the interviews was anonymized in the written portion of the dissertation, to follow the stated and approved ethics protocols. The survey engaged 210 individuals over six weeks in Fall 2022, with 133 qualifying respondents completing the survey in its entirety.

After closing the survey, the researcher performed an initial analysis to identify overarching themes and appropriately modify the interview protocol as needed to tease out further information from participants. Interviewing is a well-established approach for qualitative research (Quinn 2002) and a common practice amongst prominent researchers in music career and curriculum relevancy studies (Mills 2006; Creech et al. 2008; Teague and Smith 2015; Brook and Fostaty Young 2019; Zhukov and Rowley 2022). The in-depth semi-structured interviews provided increased capacity to understand participants' original survey responses by expanding on the survey questions and posing follow-up queries. The interviews were conducted until a saturation level was reached. Saturation in interviews is reached when new themes or significant information no longer arises (Hennink and Kaiser 2021). The saturation point

occurred with a sample of participants (n=12) who were selected from those survey participants who volunteered to be interviewed (n=78). The 12-person sample aligns with suggestive scholarship on interviews that claim a sample between 4-17 participants frequently reaches a saturation point when interviewees are from a relatively homogenous population (Hennink and Kaiser 2021). The interview sample consisted of individuals with various years of graduation and geographical locales of study as well as different instrument/voice types to provide a snapshot that comprised multiple musician experiences. The selection process ensured participants were representative of various parties from the survey and were willing to discuss their educational and professional experiences with the PI in interview format. The sample included eight instrument and voice types, a cross-section of Canadian geographical locations of study, female and male gender participants, and graduation years from 2008-2022. The characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Interview participant profiles

Individual	Graduation Year	Instrument section/ voice type	Geographical location of study	Gender
A	2015	Keyboard/Percussion	East Coast	F
B	2015	Keyboard/Percussion	Ontario	M
C	2008	Voice	West Coast/Prairies	M
D	2012	Woodwinds/Brass	Quebec	F
E	2017	Voice	Quebec	F
F	2010	Keyboard/Percussion	East Coast	M
G	2022	Woodwinds/Brass	Ontario	F
H	2012	Strings	Quebec	F
I	2019	Keyboard/Percussion	Ontario	F
J	2009	Woodwinds/Brass	West Coast/Prairies	F
K	2013	Voice	East Coast	F
L	2013	Strings	West Coast/Prairies	F

The interviews took place over a period of six weeks in Spring 2023 and lasted between 48 minutes and 1 hour and 18 minutes each. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom

software and video-recorded by the PI for accuracy and ease of transcription. The researcher transcribed each session individually in intelligent transcription style (McMullin 2023). The transcripts comprised twelve documents totalling 231 single-spaced pages. These transcripts were imported into NVivo as “files” to manage and organize the data analysis. NVivo software aids in systematically analyzing qualitative data by providing various options for coding, cross-referencing, graphic/visual presentation of data, and adds reliability because of its non-manual techniques. Using combined techniques of Nvivo assistance, triangulation, and prolonged engagement offers improved credibility and reliability to the overall analysis (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Richards and Richards 2003).

Employing qualitative techniques relevant the transformative lens paradigm (Mertens 2010; 2021), the interviews were structured in three sections (aligned to the survey’s three sections) – training, career, and identity – allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants’ educational experiences and how these experiences shaped their professional trajectories and self-perceptions. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze the qualitative data collected in the interview section of the study. This method provided a flexible yet rigorous framework for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns across the dataset. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase process: (1) familiarization with the data through multiple readings, (2) generating initial codes around meaningful aspects of the data, (3) probing for themes by grouping related codes, (4) reviewing the themes for coherence and alignment with the dataset, (5) defining and naming the themes to capture their essence, and (6) producing the discussion and results for the study. This iterative process allowed for a deep engagement with participants’ experiences, ensuring that the final themes reflected both the explicit content and the underlying meanings within the data. This methodological approach of

inductive theme development through multiple iterations ensured that findings remain grounded in participant experiences (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012; Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010). Participants' voices were also centered through *in vivo* coding, where words of the participants themselves are used as code terminology (Saldaña 2014). Qualitative survey material was coded and analyzed in similar thematic fashion for select open-ended questions from the survey data. The multi-step methodology captured recurring patterns across the dataset and highlighted participants' insights into the disconnects between music performance education and professional realities. The final themes were established with attention to the broader social and institutional contexts that shape musicians' career trajectories, in keeping with the transformative goal of producing knowledge that may inform relevant educational practices.

Creswell (2007) suggests that by reading through and familiarizing oneself with the data, a researcher may begin to understand it. Thematic analysis provides rich, detailed, and complex accounts of data (Braun and Clarke 2006), which enables the researcher to situate the data within their broader methodological framework and previously discussed literature. Combining the primary data of the survey and delving further through the interview analysis, the researcher was able to build on Creswell's concept while using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Bowen (2009) to ascertain common and recurrent themes that reached a saturation point (the eight themes to be outlined later in the discussion) (Braun and Clarke 2006; Bowen 2009; Creswell 2009; Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010).

Reliability was enhanced by the two forms of data collection (surveys and interviews), following rigorous iterative inductive methodology (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012; Braun and Clarke 2006), use of NVivo, and a reflexive journal (to detail progress with the investigation). Critical dialogue between the researcher and her supervisor, and related

literature/studies assisted in corroborating the analysis. Understanding that the interviewer inevitably creates a power dynamic with interviewees (Quinn 2002), the researcher assured the participants that interview contents would be anonymous and that the participants were in a safe environment for the interview. The researcher also informed all participants of the potential benefits and vulnerabilities of the study as stipulated by the Ethics Review Board.

Results

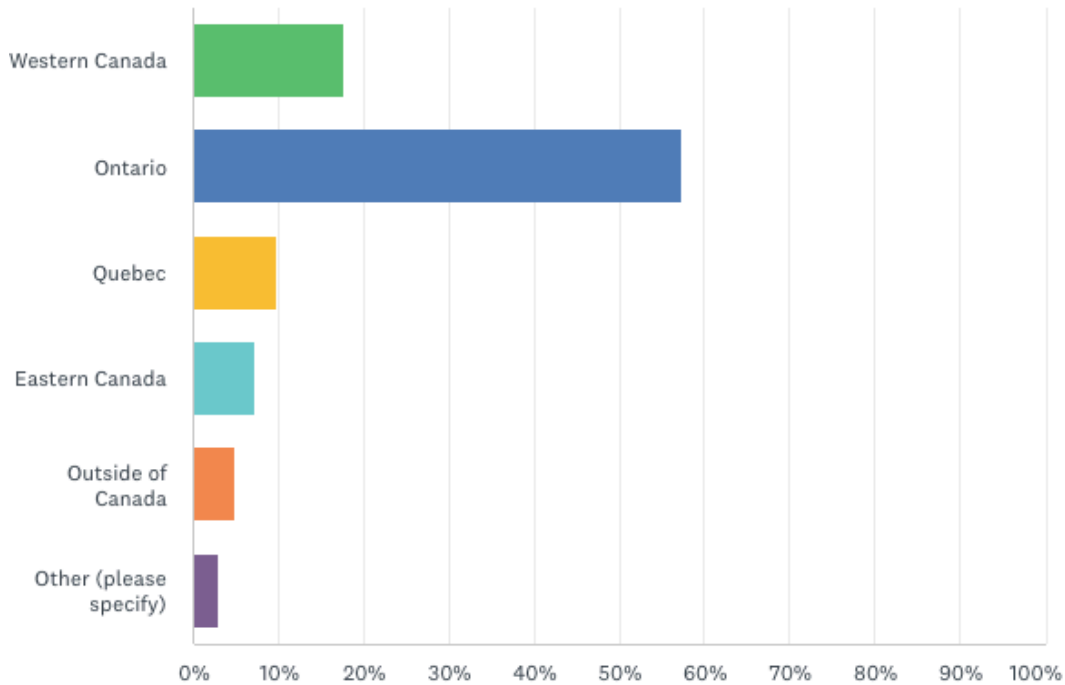
The survey for this article consisted of four sections: three for data procuring and one for demographic information. The following section offers a high-level summary of the analysis. The first section of the survey delineated the institution where the graduates completed their undergraduate degrees, their year of graduation, and their instrument type. Table 3, Figure 1, and Table 4 summarize this information. First, Table 3 outlines the number of respondents from each graduation year, which were distributed across the fifteen-year parameter of the study.

Table 3: Number of participants per year of graduation

Year	Number of Graduates
2007	5
2008	7
2009	10
2010	10
2011	11
2012	17
2013	19
2014	15
2015	14
2016	14
2017	15
2018	15
2019	6
2020	17
2021	9
2022	7
	TOTAL: 191

Next, Figure 1 shows that most respondents were from Ontario, followed by Western Canada and Quebec. Eastern Canada had fewer respondents (potentially attributed to its smaller population), and those outside of Canada were disqualified for not fitting the study’s parameters.

Figure 1: Percentage of graduates per area of Canada



Lastly, Table 4 presents the distribution of survey participants according to their primary instrument family. Further detail on specific instruments within each family (e.g., “violin” under “strings”) is provided in an expanded table in Appendix K. Among individual instruments, the most highly represented were pianists (46 participants), singers (37), and violinists (26).

Table 4: Survey participants by instrument family

Instrument family	Participant Total
Strings	59
Woodwinds and Brass	52
Keyboards	48
Vocal	37
Percussion	9

The final demographic question asked if participants pursued formal education following their undergraduate in performance, to which over three quarters of individuals responded yes. The most common additional degree was a master’s degree in music (MMus, MA, or equivalent) with 63% of participants selecting this answer. An additional 22% pursued a non-music degree. Only 13% of respondents had not pursued additional degrees.

When asked about which aspects of the music industry individuals had engaged with professionally, the most frequent responses were performance (87%) and teaching privately (83%). The latter may have been even more prominent had all teaching categories been combined (meaning combining teaching privately, teaching in post-secondary school, and teaching in K-12 schools together as one general teaching category). All remaining categories were stated as less than 50%. Some prominent categories included orchestral performance (48.5%), arts administration (45%), production (34%), teaching in post-secondary institutions (32%), arranging/re-composing (30.5%), grant writing (30.5%), event management (30%), and teaching in K-12 schools (30%). However, when asked about primary income source, teaching became most prominent at 38%, though performance remained significant at 36%. This information is overviewed in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Professional engagement in aspects of the music industry

Work Category	Participants’ Professional Engagement
Performance	87%
Teaching (Combined categories)	Approximately 83-90%*
Teaching (Privately)	83%
Teaching (In post-secondary settings)	32%
Teaching (In K-12 school settings)	30%
Orchestral Engagements	48.5%
Arts Administration	45%
Production	34%
Arranging/Composition	30.5%
Grant writing	30.5%
Event Management	30%

* “Teaching (combined categories)” represents an estimate if private, post-secondary, and K–12 teaching were counted together as one category.

Over 70% of respondents remained active to some extent in the music industry since graduating. Answers from respondents who had exited the music industry included responses that they felt a career in music was challenging (e.g., *“It was impossible to grow this career without a more stable source of income. I always had a second job in social services to support myself”*) but also discussed transferable skills (e.g., *“No regrets about pursuing music as a degree even though I don’t work in it now – work ethic, discipline and style are all important skills I’ve taken with me to a new career”*; *“A lot of my experience in school and in music has formed a strong core of abilities that are highly sought after in the job market. I have had several employers or potential employers comment on the strength of my resume.”*). Participants who exited the music industry also mentioned that music helped them in other ways (e.g., *“The music degree definitely improved my chance of getting into law school.”*). For the remaining data analysis percentages, participants entirely outside the music industry have been removed to avoid skewing the musician data.

Most participants who remained in the industry claimed they held two to three professional roles concurrently (56% of participants) with an additional 24% of participants holding between four to six roles. Only 15% of participants held a singular role (the residual 6% stating they held no role because of such reasons as parental leave or retirement). Table 6 provides this information in visual format.

Table 6: Number of professional roles held concurrently

Number of Roles	Percentage of Participants
1	15%
2-3	56%
4-6	24%
0*	6%

*e.g., parental leave; retired

In terms of time spent on performance-related activities (e.g., performing, rehearsing, and so forth), the most popular answer was 0-25%, selected by 42% of respondents, meaning 42% of respondents spent a quarter or less of their time on performance-related activities. Each subsequent percentage interval declined in responses with 26% of respondents spending 26-50% of their time on performance activities, 18% spending 51-76% of their time on performance, and, finally, 14% spending 76-100% of their time on performance. Therefore, overall, more than 70% of respondents spent less than half their time on performance-related activities. Table 7 overviews this data.

Table 7: Participant professional time spent on performance activities

Time spent performing (including rehearsals, etc.)	Percentage of Participants
0-25%	42%
26-50%	26%
51-75%	18%
76-100%	14%

In terms of performance genres, nearly half the participants (48%) stated they performed outside the classical genre. Nontraditional performances such as long-term/senior care events were prominently selected at 35.5%, as were multidisciplinary shows (33.5%) and children’s performance (27%). However, when asked how much of their time was spent performing nontraditional concerts, 65% of participants allotted 0-25%. Somewhat similarly, when asked about the percentage of time spent on non-musical aspects of their career 51% of participants (slight majority) fell in the 0-25% range. To be clear, however, this result does indicate that the remaining 49% of individuals spent over 25% of their time outside of the music industry.

When asked whether their current careers aligned with their original career intentions, the most common response was “no”, selected by 47% of participants. Among those who responded negatively, most participants suggested they had initially envisioned careers as full-time performers (e.g., “*No, I imagined myself performing with an orchestra full-time*”; “*No, I*

originally wanted to perform full-time.”; “No, I wanted to be an opera singer FT.”) or that there was significantly more struggle than anticipated (e.g. “No, I intended to stay in music but gig opportunities were limited and teaching was not enjoyable. To survive financially I had to branch outside of music.”). Participants also expressed that their desires had changed (e.g., “No, because I used to think I wanted to only play classical music, but I developed and pursued other interests over time”; “No, it’s not what I intended while I was doing my undergraduate degree, but I enjoy the balance and want to keep it.”). An additional 34% of participants maintained that their careers aligned with their original intentions. Here, most had anticipated a combination of performing and/or teaching and stated that they were currently engaged in these activities (e.g., “Yes. I wanted to play in an orchestra and now I play in an orchestra!”; “Yes, I am a symphony member and teaching.”). Lastly, 18% were unsure if their career was as they had intended.

In the identity section, participants were asked to describe what they do. The most common report by respondents was that they self-described as a musician, singer, or instrumentalist at 42% of participants. Teaching was prominent, with approximately one third of respondents explicitly noting it, though some of those who self-identified as a musician, singer, or instrumentalist may also hold teaching roles. Non-music and administration roles were also notably cited as single roles. For those who offered multiple roles in their account, performing was frequently mixed with teaching, administration, programming, management, coaching, research/academia, and/or non-music roles. When asked if their answer to the question “What do you do?” varied depending on the context (e.g., when speaking with a colleague versus someone outside of the industry, or at a professional conference versus a high school reunion) respondents’ answers were mixed. A slight majority (55%) stated their self-descriptions did change depending on the situation, while 41.5% indicated their descriptions remained consistent.

An additional 3.5% selected “other”, providing statements such as “maybe.” In elaborations, a significant majority of participants answered that they increased/decreased the specificity of their descriptions depending on the perceived knowledge of the inquirer. Many respondents also discussed that their answer would differ to impress or position themselves a particular way.

In defining “musician” and “performer,” answers varied, but some themes emerged, including the idea of income or monetary compensation for music-related activities, playing at a “high level,” education level, and devotion/commitment to the craft (time or otherwise). Four themes surfaced from the qualitative replies about identifying as musician, performer, or neither:

1. Many individuals always identify as a musician regardless of their career trajectory (e.g., “*I have identified as a musician from the time I acquired the ability to play standard repertoire pieces and will likely always identify as such.*”; “*I will always be a musician.*”; “*If I never performed again I would still consider myself a musician.*”; “*I am a musician because I cannot go about my day without practicing or playing my instrument.*”).
2. The distinction between “performer” and “musician” is often seen as a matter of semantics (e.g., “*I have never distinguished between the two.*”; “*I believe the above terms – musician and musical performer – are equivalent terms.*”).
3. Some respondents viewed “performer” as inherently part of being a musician, or vice versa (e.g., “*Musician encompasses being a performer to me.*”; “*A musician is just a subset of a performer.*”; “*Performer is an offshoot of musician.*”).
4. The term “performer” may carry a negative connotation, suggesting it diminishes or “cheapens” the perceived legitimacy of musicians (e.g., “*I think I have been indoctrinated to think musician > performer.*”; “*I think ‘performer’ is a bit derivative and implies I only play for a paycheck.*”; “*Performer is too close to ‘entertainer’ for my comfort.*”).

Most respondents (64%) disclosed that they had struggled with the identity of “musician” during their education and/or professional life. Those who did not state they struggled accounted for 29.5%, with the remaining 6.5% giving unclear answers. Of those who indicated they had struggled, many suggested that it was a “constant” battle, or that they had “always” found identifying as a musician challenging because of societal perceptions, the opinions of colleagues, finances, imposter syndrome, and nonlinear paths.

When asked about undergraduate coursework, 41% of respondents identified pedagogy as a required or elective component, while only 17% selected business courses. Participants were also asked to rate, on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) the extent to which their undergraduate education prepared them for a career in music. The average response was under 3, showing that most were inclined to say their education did not prepare them for a career in music. A second Likert-scale question assessed whether participants felt musical careers were accurately represented and discussed during their undergraduate studies; the average rating was just over 2 out of 5, demonstrating that most participants felt their undergraduate programs did not accurately represent or discuss music career. The final Likert-scale question asked participants to what extent career coaching was provided in their undergraduate programs, and here the average was 1.8 out of 5, indicating that a strong majority of participant did not agree that coaching was provided in their music performance degrees.

Q30 asked respondents to describe how they felt their undergraduate education prepared them for a music career. The most significant response theme was around the ability to play one’s instrument (or sing) at 57%. Two other themes emerged at 22% each: social capital/networking (e.g., “*meeting like-minded peers who became colleagues*”; “*networking*”) and the idea that the degree did not prepare them (e.g., “*woefully unprepared*”; “*It did not.*”; “*It*

was absolutely awful... downright abusive at times.”; “It was inadequate.”). Conversely, the next question asked respondents to indicate how their undergraduate education did *not* prepare them for a music career. Including answers addressing more than one topic, over 60% of survey respondents felt business/entrepreneurship training was missing in their degree and 45% discussed a lack of preparation for the reality of the music industry. Three other themes emerged from this question with 16% of respondent discussing the lack of mental health or performance anxiety resources, 13% stating that pedagogy or education was missing, and 12% noting that diversity of genres/nontraditional instruction was missing.

An open-ended text box asked if respondents had anything further they wanted to add about their undergraduate performance program experience. Responses included enjoying the undergraduate experience (e.g., *“It was a lot of fun!”*) with some adding they cherished the degree despite its shortcomings (e.g., *“I loved every minute of it, but it was its own little bubble which did not represent how a career in music would actually be.”; “While I loved my undergraduate experience, I do wish there was a more practical application to real life involvement.”*). Contrastingly, some negative experiences were added (e.g., *“I harbour resentment towards my institution. It wasn’t a good experience.”; “Pretty traumatizing”; “It was generally quite demoralizing”; “I had a horrible, emotionally abusive teacher which has had a long-lasting impact on my perception of myself as a performer and a person”*). Many individuals repeated what they felt was missing from their degrees, such as, *“It felt like there was very little career preparation, or consideration given to how you would succeed/what you would do after graduation at the time,” “I feel strongly that all performing arts training needs to be much more well-rounded to prepare students for the reality of the market,” “I paid a lot of money to attend a school with a very high reputation. It’s 2022, these things need to be taught (career-related*

courses)” and *“these programs are too intensive on history, theory, ensemble, and skills training. Real industry tools for teaching, admin, and engagement are needed.”* Additional qualitative data procured from the interviews and survey are peppered throughout the results and discussion sections of this article to illuminate various themes.

Themes

This study’s findings elicited material for discussion surrounding graduates of music performance programs in Canada. The survey and follow-up interviews procured information on three topics: training, career, and identity. When analyzed as delineated in the methodology section, the inquisition ultimately led to eight thematic groupings:

1. Lifelong relationship with music as a motivating factor for pursuing music
2. Institutional blind spots in career preparation
3. The disconnect between institutional narrative and industry realities
4. Portfolio musicianship as a career necessity
5. The “hard work” of music
6. Identity and success as evolving constructs
7. Work-life balance challenges
8. Mental health considerations

These topics convene around music performance curriculum and its relevancy to portfolio careers. While most of these themes were anticipated because of the questions asked, literature review, and a practical understanding of the field, two unexpected recurrent topics emerged – the seventh and eighth themes – which are briefly outlined and then proposed as important areas for future research.

1. Lifelong relationship with music as a motivating factor for pursuing music

The first theme revealed itself primarily through interview data. Namely, all participants established that they had been involved with music from an early age (most from three to five years old and all before eight years old) and described an early passion for the field. For instance, Participant K asserted, *“I’ve always identified as a musician, ever since I was four. That has always been what people thought of when they thought of me. As I grew up my name was synonymous with choir and band and piano and singing and musical theater, and that’s just... That’s what I did,”* while Participant D stated, *“It was the only thing I imagined myself ever doing. I really loved it. I felt most myself when playing music.”* Participant B declared, *“I loved it - genuinely loved it - and had been doing it for a long time. I started when I was about 5.”* Finally, Participant A mentioned, *“I think I was looking for a sense of belonging, and music was the place I found it.”* All interview respondents mentioned music as a seminal part of their childhood and a natural place to pursue a career as a result. The love of music and a passion for exploring the field quickly translated into the identity of “musician” being self-ascribed, long before a career in the industry was chosen.

For some participants, there was a sense that music was, in fact, the only choice for their career and they could not see beyond this path. As an example, Participant A declared, *“Music has always been part of my life, and it seemed like it was unavoidable for it to continue whether I liked it or not!”* Participant G also discussed this topic: *“Music was always just the thing I did best. I never really thought about whether it was a good career choice. I just knew I had to do it,”* as did Participant I, who said, *“I just loved being part of that music education environment, and so it almost seems like a no brainer that I was going into music.”* Most framed their relationship with music as a positive, similar to participants G and I, and broached the topic of

passion and commitment in their descriptions of long hours of daily practice (e.g., Participant A: “*If I didn’t do 3 - 5 hours I was slacking.*”) and love for music compared to other aspects of life (e.g., Participant B: “*I’ve never had a meaningful job other than playing*” and Participant D: “*I have always just known. I was more excited about playing music than biology. By the time I was in grade 9 I knew it was what I wanted to do.*”). Participants demonstrated that music was prominent in their life long before pursuing post-secondary education, a trait that may not be commonly found in some other fields (e.g., dentistry, law, engineering), although some aspects of these areas may be found in relevant schoolwork or hobbies.

Some may consider lifelong links to music as vocational, and the vocational aspect of being a musician did permeate multiple participants’ discussions of professional and personal aspirations. Many participants noted that the connection between music and community gave them purpose. For instance, Participant H mentioned:

It’s a sense of vocation. It’s this sense of agency that... not only are my skills interesting and can bring joy to other people who are not in my bubble... they’re bringing joy because the string quartet is a really interesting thing to pretty much everyone, even if they’ve never heard it before. And so, it’s nice to know that you can create projects and contexts and have interactions with audiences that are not within your bubble, but that truly can get something from what you have to offer. So, then I realized that’s a big part of what I want my life to be about.

Lifelong affiliations and deep personal connection with music were discussed at length by participants in both the interviews and survey. Many expressed that their motivations for entering music programs were tied to passion, identity, and early exposure, but their motivation for remaining in the industry evolved over time as they dealt with the realities of a music career.

2. Institutional blind spots

Participants overwhelmingly cited various aspects of musician career-related training as missing or insufficiently covered in their undergraduate performance programs (e.g., from a survey respondent: “*The experience of graduating and stepping into the real world with no structure and very few tools beyond my musical skills was a very challenging one*”). Business skills were highlighted. Although business skills could be widely interpreted, participants often specifically addressed topics of financial literacy, grant writing, networking, marketing, and overall entrepreneurial activities. Participant J professed, “*I would have benefited from official business training,*” while Participant G noted, “*A class on finances working as a freelancer would absolutely help every single person in that department,*” and Participant F added, “*Everything I know about running a business, I had to learn after graduation. I wish I had even a basic course on how to market myself as a musician.*” Lastly, from Participant D, “*If universities actually prepared us for the reality of today’s music industry, they’d teach us how to be entrepreneurs, not just performers.*” These testimonials explicitly state the need for business training within post-secondary education, not only entrepreneurial aptitudes. In the survey sections that allowed for short or long form answers (as opposed to check boxes or multiple choice), respondents also mentioned these ideas, with 60% stating business skills were missing from coursework entirely.

Another blind spot for institutions was that of a Western classical bias and/or lack of diverse representation. Programs were overwhelmingly focused on the Western concert canon, with little to no room for jazz, pop, folk, or global traditions for serious study even as electives. Participant L mentioned, “*I was interested in other music, especially coming from the recording studio, but it was frowned upon. I was told I couldn’t play repertoire that wasn’t classical, or that wasn’t*

'standard repertoire', and when I tried to put some stuff on my recital or something solo cello that was a little bit different, it was a quick shut down: 'No'. When I presented it multiple times, it was shut down.' As 50% of survey respondents stated that they perform outside the classical genre in their careers, this mismatch warrants investigation.

In fact, some participants were actively discouraged from playing music by composers from underrepresented backgrounds even *within* the Western art music canon. For instance, Participant I divulged, *"It was very looked down upon to play anything other than the Western classical music canon... when I was submitting my graduating recital, I was told 'Your program isn't diverse enough', and I was like, 'What do you mean? I have queer composers, Asian composers - this is the most diverse program!'" and they responded, 'Where is your Beethoven sonata?!! I was also told playing women composers was 'pushing feminist' stuff!"* Faculty often dictated "acceptable" repertoire, which led to frustration for many participants, who mentioned they wanted to explore contemporary, diverse, or unconventional works. Participant J spoke to this: *"The formal training was definitely classical, and I really pushed to have a non-classical piece and I got push back, and I was like, 'but this is what I've been working on... this is what I care about... what I'm going to do', which people... I wouldn't say rolled their eyes at, but I don't think they took entirely... seriously."* These rigid and narrow notions of music and the discouragement of students endeavouring for broader genre representation or pursuits beyond solo, chamber, or orchestral performance show a blind spot for institutions in their teaching and understanding of the industry today and the desires of their students. Similar to the disconnect between institutional narratives and industry realities that is presented in the next theme, the results of this blind spot could negatively affect students' work capacities in real life situations.

3. Disconnect between institutional narrative and industry realities

Almost all participants explicitly reported that their undergraduate program prioritized solo performance over practical career preparation (e.g., *“They were stuck in the 19th century conservatory model... it focuses almost entirely on solo playing...”* Participant F). Many felt pressured to pursue exclusively classical performance-based careers even if their interests included other elements such as teaching, community work, arts administration, or nontraditional forms of performance. For example, Participant G discussed her experience lobbying for arts administration electives: *“The most frustrating of all of it is that I settled on this career path after my first year and I tried so hard and spoke to so many professors, including the director of the music department, about having that opportunity... there was no support for me,”* and Participant D who felt, *“They only pushed me toward orchestra. That’s what I felt I was groomed for. There were quite literally no other options presented. At any point.”* These two statements were echoed by many descriptions where performance was the only endorsed path, and alternative or tandem pursuits were actively discouraged. As Participant L noted, *“It was shunned or not acceptable if I did a job outside of the traditional things we were trained for in music or otherwise,”* and Participant D who, referring to performance, explained that *“A lot of the issue is that we’re told and taught that you haven’t really made it until you do this ‘one thing’ so it pushes you away from those other career paths because they’re sold as being a ‘lesser than.’”* Participant H mentioned, *“I would love for it to be normalized that being a portfolio musician is the career path.”* Some participants even declared that the focus on performance may have caused those who the institutions celebrated prominently to neglect other essential skills, leading to their exit from the industry: *“People think ‘if you’re the best, you’re going to get the job’... but that’s not actually the case, right? I think back to who was the ‘star pupil’ of my cohort, and they’re not even playing their instrument anymore!”* (Participant J).

The mismatch between institutional expectations for performance and the realities of music careers were bemoaned by both those who remained in the industry and those who had exited it.

As Participant L stated:

There's a mismatch between what institutions present compared to the industry... what is actually there for opportunity... the opportunity to become one of those three that I mentioned [solo, chamber, orchestra] is very low, statistically, but then also, some people either don't want to do it, or they don't realize that they would enjoy doing something else. Not only is that not what I personally wanted to learn, it was also not conducive to what's actually out there in the world. It's a super big failure. I still strongly believe that if we... or they received that, not only would we see them be successful, but then also more opportunities would come up.

Additionally, Participant F suggested, “*There's this myth that you're either 'making it' or you're not. But the reality is, most musicians are doing a million different things,*” and Participant I also said, “*There was a lot of pressure in the performance department to be a career pianist, which I don't think most of us wanted to be...*” Participant J echoed, “*I really don't think that's the pinnacle of what students want anymore, and it's really sad that institutions aren't able or don't seem willing to make that change.*” These participants outline that although there is still projected and (likely) internalized hierarchy that dictates many programs' dedication to solo/chamber/orchestral classical performance, the reality of what musicians are doing and want to be doing are at odds with their training.

For some, the concept of passion beyond reason frequently relayed by institutions was a problematic and unnecessary narrative further promoting narrow views of the field. Such narratives created noticeable disconnects, such as between the reality of a portfolio career compared to the notion of a single position in orchestra. In one respondent's description the professor had asked about career goals and the student stated, “*I like orchestra, but I also like chamber music and teaching, so I'm keeping an open mind.*” However, her teacher went on to

say, “So, it’s not like ‘If I don’t get into an orchestra and I don’t play our orchestral music I’m going to die!’ kind of situation? That’s the way it has to be if you want to do this.” While passion for music was discussed by nearly all participants as a motivating factor for pursuing music, the idea of suffering for one’s art to attain a singular full-time position (if even achievable) was not.

The survey’s quantitative data, in the form of two Likert Scale questions, noted that graduates felt their schools did not provide them with the required skills to develop a music career. Additionally, respondents felt that musical careers were not accurately portrayed or discussed in their undergraduate programs. Lying well under the middle marker of least to most preparation and accurate portrayal, these numbers suggest that respondents had to supplement their learning outside of formal training. Participant comments substantiate this claim, such as “*It felt like there was very little career preparation, or consideration given to how you would succeed/what you would do after graduation...*” As such, the gap between institutional narrative and industry reality remains significant.

Overall, participants noted that while institutions promoted the idea of a singular form of success, being a full-time performer in solo, chamber, orchestral, or operatic roles, the reality of the industry was that musicians almost exclusively led portfolio careers with multiple roles that required other training and non-performance work. Not only were those few with full-time performance roles (less than 1%) holding additional roles regardless of their full-time positions, but also, most did not sustain these singular roles for any length of time because of the work-life balance hardships they caused, particularly in solo, chamber, and operatic roles (e.g., travel, family needs, desire for artistic ownership, health). As such, the narratives of post-secondary institutions regarding the livelihoods of musicians were incompatible with musician experiences following graduation.

4. Portfolio musicianship as a career necessity

The prevalence of portfolio careers among participants highlights the disconnect between institutional expectations and the lived realities of professional musicians. Both the quantitative survey data and qualitative interview accounts underscore how many performance graduates ultimately engage in diverse combinations of work rather than following the singular performance-oriented career path implicitly (or sometimes, explicitly) promoted during their training. While the concept of portfolio careers is increasingly recognized within music discourse, the data suggests that for many musicians, this form of work is not an aspirational choice but a necessary adaptation to the structural conditions of the industry.

Participants' reflections frequently conveyed a sense of surprise or disillusionment with the degree to which their careers had diversified. Several described entering the field with expectations of full-time performance work, only to find that such opportunities were scarce or unsustainable. As Participant F remarked, "*I thought I would be playing in an orchestra or playing gigs all the time... I didn't realize how much of my work would be in other roles.*" This shift from initial ambition to diversified practice was echoed across multiple interviews, with portfolio careers often framed as a pragmatic response to the precarious nature of performance work. The survey data further reinforces this pattern, with over 80% of respondents citing two to five professional roles, often blending performance, teaching, administration, and non-music work within their careers. The necessity of such diversification was particularly apparent in participants' discussions of income, with over 20% of survey respondents identifying non-music work as their primary source of income, despite considering themselves professional musicians.

Teaching emerged as the most prevalent role alongside performance, with over 80% of survey respondents engaged in one or both activities. However, the data also indicates that teaching represented a higher percentage of participants' primary income than performance even though all respondents were performance graduates rather than music education majors. This trend highlights the extent to which performance graduates are not only diversifying their work but often deriving most of their income from non-performance roles. As Participant H observed, *"I don't think anyone really told us how much teaching would be part of the job... but it's the thing that pays the bills."* This gap between institutional training and professional reality reinforces the persistent hierarchy that privileges performance as the ideal career outcome, while relegating other forms of musical labour to secondary or fallback options. However, with 42% of survey respondents stating that performance-related activities occupied between 0-25% of their time and an additional 26% stating performance occupied 26-50% of their time, an overwhelming percentage of performance graduates (nearly 70%) spend less than half of their time in performance-related activities (i.e., practicing, rehearsing, or performing) once they enter the industry. As a result, it may be determined that on average more than 50% of musicians' labour is outside of performance-related activities, and, therefore, in other non-performance roles or outside the music industry entirely.

Beyond teaching and performance, the prevalence of roles in arts administration (cited by 45% of survey respondents) and production (33.5%) further illustrates the breadth of skills required to sustain a career in the music industry. Many participants explained how these roles emerged out of necessity rather than intention, with Participant G reflecting, *"I took on administrative work because I needed something steady... but now it has actually become one of the most fulfilling parts of my career."* Such accounts challenge the assumption that non-

performance roles represent a compromise or deviation from artistic identity, suggesting instead that portfolio careers offer meaningful and multi-dimensional forms of engagement.

The diversification of participants' careers extended not only across roles but also across genres, settings, and types of performance work. Nearly half of survey respondents (48%) indicated that their performance work occurred primarily outside the classical genre, and over a third cited performing in nontraditional settings such as seniors' homes (35.5%). These statistics point to the increasing prominence of community-based and cross-disciplinary performance practices within musicians' portfolios, practices that are often undervalued or overlooked within post-secondary training. The emphasis on "elite" concert settings within performance curricula stands in stark contrast to the range of performance contexts outlined by participants, further exacerbating the gap between institutional narratives and professional realities.

Although the necessity of portfolio careers was widely acknowledged, participants expressed inconsistency about how this model was framed (or not framed) during their training (e.g., Participant I: "*I really wish that the career aspect of becoming a musician was talked about. I went through a lot of trial and error*") and Participant J: "*I don't know if it's formally talked about – how to balance these things, how to manage your musician self in these different ways. I know not everyone wants that dual perspective, but I think a lot of people do it partially because now I think students are told to diversify.*"). While some participants celebrated the flexibility and variety of portfolio work (e.g., survey participant "*I love that I get to do it all*"), many described feeling unprepared for the challenges of unpredictable employment, low pay, and work-life balance that accompanied it (e.g., "*Even after completing a bachelor and master's degree, I still don't feel 'ready'*"; "*Essentially everything I have learned as a professional musician working in the community has been from lived experience and from having extreme*").

courage.”). This sense of unpreparedness highlights the persistent tension between the idealized narrative of the full-time performer and the more fragmented, multifaceted careers that most musicians experience. While the potential of portfolio careers is increasingly recognized in scholarship, participants’ reflections suggest that this model is still predominantly framed as an exceptional or marginal path rather than an industry standard. The data from both the survey and interviews suggests that diversification is not merely a pragmatic necessity but a defining characteristic of contemporary musical work.

5. The “hard work” of music

Participants consistently emphasized the intense effort required to build and sustain a career in music and how challenging this effort and the work could be. They often felt pressure to accept every available opportunity, regardless of its effect on their well-being. One survey respondent reflected, *“I wish I didn’t have to say yes to every single gig that comes my way to make a living. I’m so happy to be performing, but I’m exhausted”* while another said, *“The stress of performing is unlike other stress. It’s very hard to balance with the rest of life and extremely difficult to earn a decent living.”* This sense of fatigue and stress was echoed by others who described the constant grind of seeking work, managing uncertainty, and negotiating their professional identity.

Although participants rejected extreme notions of sacrifice, the kind often romanticized by society, they still depicted music as an inherently challenging field. A common thread emerged in every interview and was evident throughout the survey’s qualitative data: the sense that hard work, discipline, and perseverance are essential to navigating a career in music. Many participants acknowledged that their degree programs had instilled these qualities, preparing

them for the demanding nature of professional life. However, even with this preparation, participants often found themselves taking on roles far removed from the high-level musical engagements they had once envisioned. One survey participant exposed the reality of this transition: *“I went from playing concert halls to playing background music at corporate events... it wasn’t what I imagined, but it paid the bills”* and Participant A mentioned, *“I finished my artist diploma, which was at a doctoral level, and I taught kids in a broom closet.”* This stark contrast between training expectations and real-world outcomes underscores the volatile nature of the industry and the need for adaptability.

The demanding nature of music work is compounded by the sheer effort required to achieve proficiency. As Participant I stressed, *“I worked really, really hard. I would practice six, sometimes eight hours a day. I really, really worked my tail off to be good at my craft.”* Yet despite this dedication, many musicians found that their hard work did not always translate into sustainable careers. A survey participant shared, *“It was impossible to grow this career without a more stable source of income. I always had a second job in social services to support myself,”* and Participant J echoed this account with *“A career in music is next to impossible.”*

The idea that a musical career requires substantial hard work was thought by some to be misunderstood in society. Participant J noted that music careers may be somewhat demeaned and seen as “fun” or “lucky” when compared to other career paths, saying *“Being a musician is different in that it’s given a perception of fun, because no one sees us do the hard stuff. I don’t see lawyers do the hard stuff, but the portrayal of lawyers is they’re working hard where musicians are often just seen as the fun. I don’t know that musicians are given that same latitude... the severity, the depth of knowledge, the hard-working aspect.”* Participants indicated that, in fact, music careers are very busy and require extreme dedication and hard work, such as

“I remember it being really hard, and not hard in a like ‘I’m not going to make it’, but just so much to do” (Participant J). Respondents also discussed the level of education and rigour of training in comparison to the outcomes of their work (financially and/or artistically) as incompatible, noting the poor ratio of work to financial/safety reward in professional life as a harsh reality of the industry such as a survey respondent who said, *“The personal, physical and financial toll of being a professional musician is something that I struggle with daily. It is a very prohibitive industry, and you’re expected to put in a lot of work for very little reward often.”* And Participant F, *“The reality of my situation is that I can’t really dial back the pace.”* Despite this, participants stated that being a musician is ultimately tied to many individuals’ identities, and there is a sense of vocation and devotion to the field from an early age.

For many participants, the emotional toll of their career reality was deeply challenging. Musicians described feeling trapped between passion and economic hardship, with some questioning their place in the industry. The tension between a deep love of music and the struggle to make ends meet was a recurring theme, and the weight of these tensions could also be intensified by cultural narratives that romanticize suffering for one’s art. As Participant C noted, *“There’s those old-school romantic ideas, right? You’re supposed to give up everything... You should sacrifice all.”* This belief system, combined with what one participant characterized as the *“weaponization of passion,”* creates an environment where musicians may feel pressured to endure unhealthy working conditions in the name of artistic dedication. Balancing this demand with personal priorities, such as family or mental well-being, may feel insurmountable. For those who leave the profession or shift their focus away from performance, this sacrifice may carry emotional weight. One participant described feeling a sense of grief after stepping away from traditional performance roles, saying, *“One of the griefs of giving up that moniker or leaving the*

group... I still want to engage in this community. I love this community, I love the people, I love the interactions.” This reflects how identity as a musician is often deeply tied to participation in the field, making career transitions particularly fraught.

Collectively, these participant reflections highlight the immense effort musicians invest in their craft and the emotional and financial strain that often follows. While participants repeatedly asserted their dedication to music, their experiences reveal a profession that demands extraordinary perseverance, adaptability, and resilience. Despite rejecting extreme narratives around romanticized notions of sacrifice, musicians still grapple with the reality that success in their field requires relentless effort, often without the hoped-for financial return.

6. Identity and success as evolving constructs

The interconnectedness of musical identity and success emerged as a persistent theme across participants’ reflections on their professional lives, revealing both the weight of institutional narratives and the ways individuals negotiate various understandings of their identities in different contexts. While respondents clearly felt that institutional frameworks promoted narrow visions of success (primarily centered on high-profile performance careers) participants themselves articulated far more fluid, multifaceted, and self-defined interpretations of what it means to be both a musician and a successful professional. As Participant I noted,

That was success... ‘you’ll be a touring pianist’, which for me, honestly, to be a touring pianist playing a different hall and concerts every week?!? That is my worst nightmare. I don’t want to do that at all... stop advertising that being a piano performer is the end all be all (I’m using my instrument), or being an orchestral musician is the way to ‘make it’ in this industry because there are so many ways to be successful... we define what success looks like for us.

These evolving notions of success and identity reflect the complexity of navigating the transition from student to working musician, as well as the inherent vulnerability of tying one's sense of self to artistic practice.

For many participants, the idea of being a musician was deeply embedded in their sense of self, commonly rooted in early formative experiences. Participant I described how musical identity can emerge long before formal training: *“I don't think any 5-year-old would say that they're an accountant, but I can name some 5-year-olds who would say that they're a musician.”* This sentiment highlights how the act of making music, whether professionally or informally, may become a core part of self-definition from an early age. At the same time, several participants acknowledged the tension between identifying as a musician and meeting external standards of what a “real” musician is. Participant G reflected that some individuals struggle to maintain their identity when their careers diverge from initial aspirations: *“They might be reluctant and going, ‘Oh, well, am I really a musician? I'm not doing as well as I wanted to, or exactly what I wanted to.”* This sense of internalized doubt echoes the ways institutional narratives of success may exclude and marginalize those who pursue portfolio careers or alternative paths.

The difficulty of separating personal identity from professional work was a recurring thread, particularly as participants described how music permeates every aspect of their lives. Participant H articulated the blurring of boundaries between self and profession: *“I think it's really hard to take the hat off... the lines are blurred when you're a musician and it's very hard to define boundaries, particularly professional boundaries, and how you spend your time.”* This entanglement of identity and work was contrasted with other fields where professional boundaries may be more distinct. The immersive nature of musicianship, where creative ideas

and artistic practice often extend beyond working hours and attendance of concerts or listening to music is part of both professional and personal lives, complicates the process of defining success on purely external terms. As Participant I observed, music may be “*one of the only places that I feel totally and completely like myself*” further reinforcing how selfhood becomes wrapped up in artistic practice and it may be difficult to separate the two.

Whether or not participants worked full-time in music, being a musician was intrinsic to their identity with only 8% of survey respondents stating otherwise (of which some noted they would identify as “singer” as opposed to musician or performer). Respondents from the survey provided various justifications for this identity (e.g., “*I have identified as a musician from the time I acquired the ability to play ‘standard repertoire’ pieces, and will likely always identify as such*”; “*I am a musician because I participate in music, but I don’t do it as a job anymore*”; “*I am a musician because I cannot go about my day without practicing or playing my instrument.*”), while others were more subjective simply stating that they could not be otherwise. For instance, answers from the survey included, “*I will always be a musician,*” “*If I never performed again, I would still consider myself a musician.*,” and “*Music is a large part of my identity.*” These ideas show the fundamental relationship many trained in music have with this identity.

However, many participants expressed varying degrees of struggle in reconciling their identities with the realities of their careers, especially when their paths did not align with dominant institutional narratives. Most survey participants (64%) answered “yes” when asked if they struggled with their musician identity. Of those who stated yes, many suggested that it was a “constant” struggle, or that they “always” found it challenging because of societal perceptions and the opinions of colleagues, finances, imposter syndrome, and nonlinear paths, particularly following graduation. Of those who answered “no”, some further clarified their musician’s

identity was fundamental regardless of profession (e.g., “*I’ve had that identity seemingly from birth. It is just who I am.*”; “*Never did... loved music and never wanted to do it professionally.*”).

Several participants acknowledged grappling with imposter syndrome or questioning whether they belonged in the profession at all. Participant I described how performance anxiety and self-doubt shaped her understanding of what it meant to be a musician, particularly in settings that prioritized solo performance: “*I definitely questioned myself... my own identity, and if I had what it took.*” However, she found greater self-acceptance by expanding her definition of what a career in music could look like: “*I learned that I don’t have to make a career as a person always on stage... For me the goal is to be self-sufficient in terms of creating/building a life that I want.*”

The act of defining success for oneself emerged as a powerful counterpoint to institutional messaging. While several participants acknowledged the influence of external validation (e.g., prestigious gigs, competitions, or peer recognition) many emphasized more internal markers of fulfillment. Participant G described success simply as “*being comfortable in life, being able to pay all the bills... and being happy when I go to work.*” Similarly, Participant J framed success as “*playing music that I like with people that I like,*” challenging the notion that high-profile performance roles are the only legitimate markers of achievement.

At the same time, participants recognized how institutional narratives continue to shape the broader perception of success built through decades (or even centuries) of social construction. Participant F noted how community validation often hinges on visibility and reputation. Participant G observed how performance careers are habitually portrayed as the definitive goal while other forms of musical work, such as arts administration, receive far less recognition. Many respondents mentioned that teaching and other non-performance music roles were viewed as a fall-back or secondary aspect of music. For instance, Participant D stated, “*It’s not seen as*

the same level of artistic excellence... they're sold as being a 'lesser than.'” Participant A also mentioned, *“Anything that wasn't performance was seen as less than,”* and Participant B discussed institutional narratives around portfolio careers including teaching by saying, *“They talk less, or talk down (even subconsciously) about other ways of formatting one's life outside performance.”* These ideas point to the persistent hierarchy embedded within institutional structures, where certain career paths are elevated while others remain marginalized.

Yet, despite these external constructions, many participants expressed a desire for more expansive definitions of success that reflect the realities of portfolio careers. Their vision of success emphasized sustainability, community impact, and personal fulfillment – values that often fall outside institutional portrayals. For those who had found fulfillment in nontraditional career paths, there was a sense of pride in carving out spaces that aligned with their own definitions of success. Participant F commended musicians who build unique careers, noting that *“If somebody has carved out their own niche in the industry, I'd applaud them for it.”* Participant I similarly celebrated the legitimacy of diverse musical work: *“Playing in seniors' homes... playing for community organizations... those opportunities have helped me build my career.”* These reflections highlight how musicians are actively reshaping what it means to be successful, even as institutional frameworks lag behind.

Across the survey and interviews, participants articulated a vision of success that is not static or singular, but instead evolves alongside personal growth, life stages, and shifting priorities. While external validation and institutional narratives continue to exert influence, the process of defining success on one's own terms emerged as a deeply personal and often liberating act. As Participant K mentions, *“After a lot of work, my definition of success (I don't have a definition yet, but...) is working much more towards the words 'happy' and 'balanced' and 'healthy',*

words that a lot of non-musicians already put value into, but because music has been synonymous with my identity for my entire life I never thought that I could define success by what I wanted. I thought that I had to define success by what people expected of me.” This ongoing negotiation between external expectations and internal fulfillment reflects the broader tension at the heart of musicians’ professional lives, one that invites a diverse understanding of what it means to be both a musician and a successful professional.

7. Work-life balance challenges

A prominent theme that emerged across participants’ reflections was the difficulty of achieving work-life balance as a musician, particularly around travel demands, relationships, long hours, variable pay, and the possibility of having children. Despite not being part of any explicit questions, the topic of work-life balance surfaced frequently in both interviews and surveys, which showcases its profound impact on musicians’ career decisions and well-being. Many participants described the inherent sacrifices of a music career and the challenges of integrating personal life priorities with the demands of freelance performance work. Participant A articulated the scope of these sacrifices, noting that musicians face uncertainties around income, retirement, and family life:

*Music schools don’t quite explain how much of a sacrifice it is to be a musician. I know very few musicians who are rolling in money. I see government workers getting 6 weeks off a year, or ‘Oh, I’m sick, I get to take a day off.’ It’s like ‘Well, if I’m sick, I either work or I not only lose that pay, but usually, if I’m bringing someone in it is **more** expensive. So, I have to pay money to be sick.’ What does my retirement look like? Do I get to retire? No. Navigating these uncertainties has a lot of sacrifice to it, along with family life... and nurseries... it’s a 9-5 situation. They don’t have nurseries 5-10pm!*

Travel demands were a recurring source of strain, with participants expressing a desire for more local work to maintain connections with loved ones. Participant B remarked, “*I don’t want*

to spend my entire life on the road to be able to make money... being away from my partner..."

Similarly, Participant E reflected on the nature of constant travel: *"Traveling is a lot, which sounds fun at the beginning, but then, if you want to have stable friendships or a stable romantic relationship or a family, it starts to get really tough."* For some, the desire to prioritize relationships or family life played a direct role in shifting their career trajectories. Participant C acknowledged that, *"You can want a full-scale music career, but you could also want to have a very specific type of family and friends relationship... and those things can be at odds."*

Several participants observed that the instability of freelance work made it especially difficult to consider having children, both financially and logistically. Participant F stated, *"I don't know a lot of freelance musicians who have kids... there are a lot of people who decide not to because they just can't afford it."* Participant H echoed this, pointing to the unpredictable nature of freelance schedules: *"Every week is completely different. You're juggling a ton of different projects, many most of which you are not in charge of. There are very few freelance musicians over the age of when you typically want to have a family, and I don't think that's a coincidence."*

The pressure to prioritize career advancement over personal life was reinforced by institutional messaging. As Participant D remarked, *"You're told that you say yes to everything, and you put your life on hold until you win the job... but I have friends who are in their 30s getting close to 40 and they have so much regret because they're lonely and they don't have a partner, or they're away from the people who matter to them... that's very sad and mental health takes a hit because you gave everything up for this career."* Others, like Participant E, expressed a desire for more diversified training that could provide stability and allow for greater work-life balance instead of significant travel from performance, stating, *"I think there is always going to be a time in someone's life when they don't want to be a full-time performer anymore and if you*

wait too long to develop other skills then it gets really difficult to do anything... you just simply get burnt out from traveling all the time.”

Across participants, the struggle to balance artistic joy with life stability appeared to be a central tension, a tension that shaped professional choices and underscored the appeal of portfolio careers. For many, diversifying their work provided not only financial stability but also a pathway to sustain both their professional and personal aspirations. However, even with those who led portfolio careers, economic instability necessitated multiple income streams including work graduates had not intended on undertaking, and several participants cited burnout from juggling their various roles. As one survey respondent stated, *“It has been incredibly discouraging. I find myself in a position of not having enough success to satisfy myself financially/personally but unwilling to move into another field for fear of feeling like a failure.”* Although participants in both the survey and interviews largely supported the idea of a portfolio career, the necessity of its demanding lifestyle was cited as hardship-generating for many.

8. Mental health considerations

A recurring theme among participants was the pervasive anxiety associated with both performance and the broader uncertainties of a professional music career. Notably, this topic emerged organically in nearly every interview and survey response, despite not being explicitly prompted, which accentuates its significance in the lived experiences of musicians. Performance anxiety – sometimes termed “stage fright” – surfaced as a critical factor influencing participants’ career trajectories, career satisfaction, and, ultimately, their decisions to pursue or abandon significant performance work. Several participants articulated how institutional environments and the dominant “conservatory” model intensified these anxieties by equating musical success

with the pursuit of elite, full-time performance careers (an ideal that is practically unattainable for most). As Participant E verbalized, *“There’s a heightened amount of pressure that comes with these very big opportunity projects.”*

Participant C explained how escalating performance anxiety prompted his exit from a full-time opera career, reflecting on the strain of an exclusive focus on one artistic activity:

“Performing gets a lot less fun when you add the anxiety piece... and I’m not a ‘one thing’ kind of person, anyway.” Similarly, more than one participant specifically associated performance anxiety with feelings of exclusion and imposter syndrome, noting that the pressure to embody the idealized image of a “true” musician who thrives on stage led to self-doubt. For example, Participant E stated, *“I always felt that ‘true’ musicians had to love being on the stage all the time... and a lot of times I just hated it.”*

The absence of institutional support for addressing performance anxiety was a common critique, with interviewees such as Participant E and Participant I emphasizing how the pressure to achieve technical mastery and external validation was prioritized over emotional well-being. Participant E remarked, *“I would say that stage fright was not something that was addressed in the institution ever. The anxiety of having a very unstable profession... I think I count myself as one of those people who was probably negatively affected by the way that the institution describes a professional career.”* Meanwhile, Participant I reflected on how the anxiety of “*not being the best*” exacerbated self-doubt and destabilized her musical identity. However, she found greater fulfillment when broadening her career beyond solo performance: *“I could perform... it was just certain settings were not for me.”* This sentiment was echoed by Participant H, who linked her own experiences of nervousness to a desire to create more accessible performance opportunities for others.

Participant L articulated the profound impact of fear on both her musical identity and her ability to enjoy performance: *“I felt fear constantly. So, my identity with music would be very fearful and constantly critiqued, and school sets you up for that. I lost, for a while, a lot of my ability to do the thing that I loved, and that, I think, is unique to music.”* This intertwining of fear, identity, and performance capability was frequently hinted at in the survey’s qualitative data. While some participants developed coping mechanisms or diversified their portfolio careers to mitigate performance pressure, others found the stress insoluble. The consistent emergence of anxiety-related reflections across interviews and surveys signals that anxiety may be a foundational, yet often invisible factor in shaping musicians’ careers.

Discussion

The discussion of this article focuses on the two questions the study aims to answer. It references the thematic materials from the analysis to explore the subjects of post-secondary performance education preparation and the careers of musicians and is followed by a brief dialogue from the author around lived experience.

The first question addressed in the discussion is: How do musicians perceive their post-secondary performance education as preparing them for musicians’ work?

As the literature noted, 90% of musicians working in industry have a post-secondary education in music. The survey specific to this study showed that of those with an undergraduate in performance, 72% pursued further studies, whether master’s degrees (63%) or further with PhD or DMA study (9%). Additionally, 25% pursued a degree outside of music beyond their undergraduate degree, whether they remained in the music industry or not. However, participants consistently described feeling underprepared for the realities of portfolio careers despite

developing some transferable skills in their performance education. While many respondents acknowledged that their training provided strong technical foundations, artistic discipline, and a commitment to high-level performance, they also noted a significant gap in practical preparation for the multifaceted nature of their eventual careers.

A recurring theme was the perception that post-secondary institutions framed success primarily in terms of achieving a full-time performance career, chronically cited as a soloist, chamber musician, or orchestral performer, with little acknowledgement of alternative or multifaceted career paths. As Participant D remarked, *“We were taught to strive for these big performance goals, but no one talked about what to do if those didn’t happen or how to make a career out of multiple things.”* This disconnect left many feeling unprepared for the more fragmented, diversified careers they ultimately pursued. Additionally, institutional narratives did not align with many individuals’ visions of professional life, such as a lack of teaching or other performance styles that they valued. The concept of institutional ideals versus professional realities was also central to the discussion of how musicians perceived their education as preparing them for music work. As institutions chiefly promoted a singular vision of success tied closely to performance-focused careers in elite settings, they largely overlooked the looming realities of portfolio careers their graduates would face. For example, nontraditional performance and genre preparation outside of the Western canon was not only limited, but outright discouraged in many cases, which respondents noted as detrimental and unsatisfying.

Although hierarchical messaging was not always explicit, participants described an implicit hierarchy that privileged soloist and orchestral roles as the gold standard of success above all, setting up graduates to feel like failures if they instead followed the most realistic (and commonly preferred) portfolio musicianship career path. Instead, institutions perpetuated

stereotypes of focusing on a sole goal of traditional performance as if this were the only legitimate and desirable path with little regard for any other pursuits. Consequently, those who moved into diversified or non-performance roles often felt that their careers had deviated from “the ideal” even if their career proceeded as they aspired. Several respondents in both the survey and interviews suggested that institutions should bring in successful alumni or working professionals to mentor students on career-building beyond traditional paths. Aside from the potential external contribution of working musicians, institutions with faculty members who are themselves leading portfolio careers should capitalize on the in-house mentorship and personal possibilities their professors might already supply as opposed to promoting only their (traditional) performance role.

The unrealistic romanticization of artistic dedication in pursuit of the performance-only institutional ideal was a prominent narrative that affected graduates’ perceptions of the field. As Participant C shares, “*You’re supposed to suffer... you should be 100% focused on this thing. You should give up all. You should cut your ear off. There’s that sense of sacrifice and the needing to sacrifice all.*” Preserving this narrow view of success as solo/orchestral performance, which is known to be decreasingly possible in an already highly competitive industry was reported to be damaging to financial and mental wellbeing upon graduation by multiple participants across the study. In fact, students valued a wider variety of musical possibilities that are more likely and relevant to their pending work industry but conflicted with institutional priorities according to their curricula.

The institution-student disconnect was compounded by participants’ observations of limited training in skills crucial to their eventual careers. The theme of a lack of practical preparation emerged strongly, with participants frequently citing gaps in entrepreneurial skills,

financial literacy, and industry knowledge. Several participants stressed that while institutions offered some career development resources, these tended to be supplemental rather than integrated into core performance curricula. As Participant G shared, “*I remember there was one workshop on grant writing, but it felt like an afterthought, not part of what they were actually preparing us for.*” Subsequently, participants reported learning key skills such as entrepreneurship, marketing, administration, and teaching predominantly through trial and error or once they had entered the workforce.

The theme of “adapting through necessity” further underscores this point. Participants discussed the need to pivot or expand their skill sets to sustain their careers. Many described taking on roles they had not anticipated or had not planned on as a significant aspect of their career (e.g., teaching, arts administration, or non-music work) simply to maintain financial stability or because they realized performance-only careers were incompatible with a stable lifestyle (i.e., having a partner, not travelling constantly, and so on). This adaptive process was rarely addressed in their training, reinforcing the feeling that institutions had failed to prepare them for the professional realities they encountered.

Despite these gaps, some participants identified ways in which their performance training contributed to their ability to navigate portfolio careers. For example, discipline, resilience, and flexibility cultivated through intensive performance study were cited as crucial in managing the demands of multi-role careers. As Participant H observed, “*The pressure of preparing for juries or recitals actually helped me develop time management skills. I just didn’t realize I’d need those skills to juggle five different jobs at once.*” Participants also had mixed feelings about the general experience of their post-secondary education regardless of its relationship to later endeavours with some mentioning they enjoyed their undergraduate period despite its shortcomings while

others exposed negative experiences that were “*traumatic,*” “*abusive,*” or “*demoralizing.*” As such, musicians’ assessments of their university experiences differ significantly depending on the individual, which is likely similar to students in other programs.

Overall, while participants valued the artistic foundations their training provided, they expressed a desire for more explicit preparation for the realities of diverse career paths through narratives and experiential learning. Many called for greater emphasis on entrepreneurial skills and practical training in non-performance roles, elements they felt were essential to sustaining a career in today’s music industry. The tension between the strengths and gaps in participants’ training highlights a critical area for post-secondary institutions to address.

The second question in the discussion is: What constitutes a classical musician’s career?

Participants’ reflections challenged conventional definitions of a classical musician’s career, revealing a professional landscape that extends far beyond traditional performance roles. While many respondents maintained strong identities as musicians, their careers were often shaped by a complex blend of performance, teaching, administration, and non-music work characterized as portfolio work. Over 80% of survey respondents reported holding 2-5 professional roles, and a staggering 70% spent less than half of their time on performance-related activities with nearly half spending *less than a quarter* of their time on performance work. This reality contradicts the idealized notion of a full-time performer as the primary career outcome for performance graduates as, in fact, performance occupies a secondary or lesser role in the majority of musicians’ lives. Instead, teaching emerged as an equally or even more dominant component of music portfolios, with respondents frequently identifying teaching as their primary source of income and including it as a treasured element of their professional life. As Participant J explained, “*It’s important to me to keep playing and teaching... I find I am most happy when I*

can do both.” Furthermore, respondents cited embracing opportunities in areas such as arts administration, production, nontraditional performance, and non-music roles. The prominence of non-performance roles further complicates traditional narratives of classical music careers and emphasizes the need for data collection tools (such as Canadian census data) to capture broader information than simply one’s primary role for income.

Participants in the study highlighted that their performance work often deviated from conventional expectations, especially institutional expectations. Nearly half of participants reported performing outside the classical genre, and over a third performed in unconventional venues (e.g., seniors’ residences, children’s concerts, or interdisciplinary shows). As Participant F shared, *“I never imagined I’d be playing more gigs in bars than in concert halls, but that’s where the work is and honestly, it’s some of the most rewarding stuff I do,”* and Participant H stated, *“I realized I would love to just play music for a bunch of kids and so for 7 straight years before the pandemic hit, I would organize these like 40 concert school tours... and that was such a turning point for me. Now I am constantly going into community music organizations as well as schools and, frankly, I’ve lost track of what a traditional concert setting is.”* This shift toward diverse performance contexts reflects an evolution in what constitutes meaningful artistic work.

For many participants, success was no longer defined solely by “elite” performance achievements but by the ability to sustain creative practice across multiple roles and to connect with community. As Participant I reflected, *“At first, I thought I had ‘failed’ because I wasn’t a full-time performer, but now I see my work as a musician as this whole web of things that connect back to music in different ways.”* However, a musician’s sense of self may result in identity crises and mental health struggles if individuals’ expectations, set out and internalized by institutional and societal narratives, are not met when they transition into the industry. The

misalignment between institutional expectations and industry realities stresses the necessity of highlighting portfolio careers within the post-secondary experience. Nevertheless, even those who embrace this model battle financial and emotional challenges because of the precarious nature of work in the music industry and the hardships a musician's lifestyle often presents.

A musician's career cannot be entirely defined by a singular study of this kind, and what it means to be a musician is shaped through social construction over time and specific to place. However, the results of the survey and interview in this study do point to some specific commonalities and markers of a musician's career in Canada. Markers include the idea of being paid for work as a musician, dedicating time to one's craft (often including formal study), sustaining oneself from the industry, and incorporating multiple roles to form a portfolio of work that could include all music-related or a mix of music and non-music components.

Additionally, musicians noted that music is challenging as a career path and may cause significant hardship in work-life balance and one's sense of identity. Still, most who pursued music in post-secondary education highlighted that whether they remained in music as a profession, they did and would continue to identify as a musician. The experiences of these musicians challenge fixed and hierarchical conceptions of identity and success. Instead, the experiences reveal how both constructs are fluid, socially mediated, and deeply personal.

Together, the study's themes illustrate that a classical musician's career is no longer defined by performance alone but by a flexible and adaptive combination of roles that respond to both economic pressures and artistic interests. Participants' reflections accentuate the need for institutions to redefine what constitutes a "successful" classical music career. Rather than framing non-performance roles and nontraditional performance settings as deviations from an idealized path, these elements have become integral to the profession itself. Embracing a broader

definition that reflects the realities of portfolio careers, community engagement, and interdisciplinary work acknowledges the adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit required of today's musicians.

Researcher's Reflection

Approaching this study through a transformative paradigm required an intentional integration of personal positionality, ethical responsibility, and methodological rigour. My role as a peer and practitioner (i.e., portfolio musician) within the music industry may be viewed as an epistemological strength as it aligns with the transformative emphasis on relational and situational knowledge. That is, my insider status as an active portfolio musician enabled a deeper level of trust and openness within the study's interviews, ultimately enhancing the authenticity and richness of the data collected. In qualitative inquiry, particularly within semi-structured interview frameworks, rapport is foundational. My shared lived experience allowed participants to speak with greater candour and nuance, often extending their reflections beyond surface-level accounts. Being perceived as "one of us" by participants not only increased trust but also created an intuitive conversational rhythm where I could recognize and respond to subtle moments of tension, pride, or uncertainty. This dynamic supported more meaningful probing by gently encouraging participant elaborations when significant insights were emerging but not yet fully articulated. Such moments often revealed layered and emotionally resonant material.

This work also engages with a social constructionist understanding of knowledge, particularly in how language and narrative shape, and are shaped by, professional realities in the music industry. The language participants used to describe their careers was often at odds with dominant institutional narratives about success in music, which continue to prioritize

performance-centric trajectories in WAM. However, musicians appear to actively co-construct new understandings of what it means to be successful, fulfilled, and professionally sustainable once they have graduated. As a researcher embedded in this community, I was uniquely positioned to observe and participate in this discursive co-construction. The interviews often took on a tone of mutual recognition, where participants expressed relief or validation that their experiences were not isolated. In this way, the research setting itself became a site of affirming dialogue, where alternative narratives rooted in multiplicity, flexibility, and entrepreneurial creativity were not only recorded but reinforced. Understanding how musicians name and frame their own careers is essential to transforming institutional discourse, and a social constructionist lens allows us to frame these career stories not as fixed truths, but as dynamic, evolving meanings negotiated through peer interaction, institutional norms, and lived experience.

Throughout the interviews, a recurring thread that closely aligned with my own experience was the presence of an entrepreneurial spirit: the drive to identify opportunities in unexpected places, to build careers through strategic improvisation, and to create meaningful work across multiple domains. This entrepreneurial mindset did not manifest as a purely commercial or business-oriented ambition, but as resourcefulness and resilience. It represented an alternative theory of success that was grounded in adaptability and intrinsic motivation rather than linear achievement. From a methodological perspective, my awareness of this mindset (and my own embodiment of it) allowed me to recognize entrepreneurial tendencies in participant narratives even when they were subtly or indirectly expressed. This did not compromise rigour; rather, it supported a richer analysis by connecting emergent themes to both practice and theory. To ensure trustworthiness and reduce bias, I maintained an audit trail, used intelligent verbatim transcription, and conducted an iterative coding process with *in vivo* codes to preserve

participants' own language as previously articulated. Reflexivity was integral throughout, and I remained critically aware of how my position shaped not only data interpretation but also the data collection process itself. Ultimately, this study upholds that proximity with methodological discipline may enhance trustworthiness, especially within a transformative framework that values research as both inquiry and intervention.

By inhabiting the dual role of peer and researcher, I was able to validate the lived experiences of participants not only through interpretation but through shared recognition. This mutual understanding helped surface critical themes often overlooked in traditional narratives such as the need for music education to support entrepreneurial thinking, multifaceted career development, and mental well-being. These findings do not simply reflect my own path; they call for a shift in how musical careers are conceptualized, taught, and supported across the profession. As this study's findings equally align with previous insights from scholars, practitioners, and musicians alike, the notion of a classical musician's career in 21st-century Canada must be reconstructed to better recognize musicians as dedicated artistic entrepreneurs whose careers are defined by versatility, creativity, innovation, and resilience.

Conclusion

This study explored the career realities of classical musicians in Canada through a nationwide survey and follow-up interviews, employing a transformative lens and social constructionist framework. By centering the voices of performance graduates, the researcher examined how musicians perceive their post-secondary education as preparing them for portfolio careers and questioned what constitutes a classical musician's career in the contemporary landscape. The findings reveal a complex interplay between institutional training, professional

experiences, and evolving notions of success and identity for participants in the study. The realities of a career in music may be far more complex and demanding than many undergraduate performance programs acknowledge, and institutions often fail to prepare students for these realities by perpetuating the belief that dedication alone will lead to success. While post-secondary institutions frequently promote an idealized vision of professional music careers that centers around artistic skill and high-level performance opportunities, participants in this study reveal that graduates frequently encounter a starkly different landscape characterized by financial instability, relentless work demands, and a need to diversify skill sets simply to sustain a livelihood.

Participants in this study consistently described a lifelong relationship with music as a primary motivator for pursuing a performance degree. This deep connection to their craft was foundational yet often conflicted with the challenges they encountered in the workforce. While institutions were recognized for cultivating high-level artistry and discipline, participants highlighted significant gaps in career preparation. Many reported feeling underprepared for the realities of portfolio careers, particularly the need to balance multiple roles both within and outside the music industry. Graduates lamented that nontraditional performance, diverse genres, and business/entrepreneurship skills were not taught, and relevant portfolio roles such as teaching and arts administration were neglected. This is particularly salient in that the study's data demonstrates that portfolio careers are not merely a choice but a necessity for many musicians. Therefore, the institutional narrative emphasizing traditional performance careers was seen as disconnected from the industry's demands, where teaching, administration, nontraditional performance, and non-music roles were often essential to maintaining financial stability. Across all participants, there was a desire for greater career preparation.

The challenges of building and maintaining a career in music were deeply felt. Participants described music as demanding and often exhausting work, requiring relentless effort to secure opportunities and maintain stability. The strain of this lifestyle often extended beyond financial concerns, impacting mental well-being and self-worth. Many participants articulated feelings of discouragement, questioning their place in the industry despite their continued dedication. The pervasive belief that musicians must sacrifice personal stability for their art was acknowledged and, in some cases, challenged by participants striving for greater work-life balance.

Participants' reflections revealed that success was rarely defined in fixed terms but rather evolved alongside their experiences, shaped by practical realities that conflicted with previous educational narratives. For many, the pursuit of a music career was marked by a tension between professional aspirations and economic necessity, compounded by the precarious nature of the industry. Amid these challenges, participants consistently emphasized their enduring commitment to music and their artistic communities. While the realities of the industry demanded compromise and adaptation, this dedication was a defining feature of their professional identities. The traditional notion of a classical musician as solely a performer emerged as insufficient in describing contemporary careers. Instead, musicians' careers are shaped by diverse roles, flexible skill sets, and ongoing negotiation between artistic aspirations and practical demands.

The overwhelming consensus from literature and first-hand data is that post-secondary music education needs to evolve to reflect the realities of professional life. More specifically, institutions should integrate career training (e.g., business skills, grant writing, financial management) into core curricula and expand definitions of success beyond solo careers and orchestral positions. Moreover, they should explicitly and frequently acknowledge and

promote portfolio careers as legitimate and sustainable career paths for musicians. The deliberations of survey and interview respondents in this study highlight the urgent need for undergraduate music performance programs to foster holistic ideas of musicians. Instead of safeguarding a singular and unrealistic vision of success, institutions must equip students with practical tools (e.g., career training, financial literacy, mental health support) to help them navigate the difficult but necessary realities of portfolio careers without giving rise to identity crises. Finally, participants voiced that they want what they learn to reflect a broader musical world than simply the Western traditional canon repertoire, so institutions need to diversify curriculum to include underrepresented composers, non-classical genres, and nontraditional performance as central to their programming rather than othering them. By acknowledging the realities of portfolio work, embracing nontraditional performance, and valuing the broad skill sets musicians develop, institutions can better prepare graduates for sustainable and rewarding careers. The stories shared by participants illustrate that musicians are not simply performers, they are educators, administrators, community builders, and creative entrepreneurs. Their dedication reflects a resilience and passion for their art, one that continues to shape both their identities and the evolving landscape of the music profession.

Future research is myriad from this study. First, emergent data revealed unanticipated themes that, although peripheral to the study's central focus, merit further investigation because of the frequency with which they were discussed. This included work-life balance discussions, particularly surrounding mental health, personal relationships, and considerations around having a family. Given the interview questions did not explicitly ask about these aspects of musicians' lives, their frequency of discussion demonstrates a strong influence on career choices and life progression. While some performers thrived on stage, others struggled tremendously with

performance anxiety and/or did not enjoy solo performance at all. While performance anxiety is well-documented in music psychology literature (Senyshyn and O'Neill 2001; Sadler and Miller 2010; Guyon et al. 2020; Martins, Salgado, and Silva 2024), its relationship to portfolio careers is less frequently examined. For many participants, diversified careers that included non-performance work or nontraditional performance settings appeared to provide both an outlet for creative fulfillment and a means of alleviating performance-related anxiety. The findings suggest that broadening the definition of success within music institutions could better support students' mental health, self-concept, and long-term career sustainability. However, this requires further dedicated study to validate and elaborate.

Second, additional research is needed to better understand how music performance identity, career development, and curriculum continues in graduate studies as this dissertation uncovered that many music performance undergraduate students continue onto graduate studies if they remain in music. Although information around music performance graduate degrees suggests these degrees primarily focus on performance skills with even fewer course requirements and breadth of study than their undergraduate counterparts, it is unclear if narrative shifts, professional development, or identity formation in graduate studies differ significantly from undergraduate programs.

Third, the Canadian music industry would benefit from a longitudinal study with musicians regarding career preparation, beginning with pre-college students and following them through their progression to university and into their careers (whether they continue in music or not). This would allow for better understanding of musicians prior, during, and following study, as well as further illuminating identity formation and career development properties. The study could also detail the success rate of graduates in entering and remaining in the music industry

and/or work force (which is not accurately captured in current census or university data), and the variation and weighting of musicians' various roles throughout their career.

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Article 3. Nontraditional performance work: A study of musician training and experience in adaptive concerts

Introduction

Professional musicians in Western art music traditions³² (WAM) typically have extensive training on their instruments and post-secondary education to supplement their knowledge (R. Rogers 2002; Polifonia 2005; Beckman 2011; Zhukov and Rowley 2022). In-depth study to master technical and musical skills may adequately prepare individuals for some traditional performance practice in the Western classical canon through directed studies in this niche, but these traditional performance skills do not necessarily transfer to nontraditional performance arenas, such as healthcare settings, bar concerts, and multi-disciplinary engagements, or beyond canonical repertoire. Studies show that in the 21st century, most musicians lead portfolio careers, of which nontraditional performances entail a significant and ever-increasing portion of professional work (Bartleet et al. 2012; Bennett 2008b; Preti 2009; Smilde 2007). What are the experiences of musicians in adaptive concerts – a nontraditional performance setting – and how do musicians perceive their formal musical education and training as preparing them for this style of work?

With this article, the researcher contextualizes the training and experience of musicians in a nontraditional style of performance: adaptive concerts. Adaptive Concerts (equally termed “Sensory Friendly Concerts” or “Relaxed Performances”) are events specifically created and produced for marginalized populations, namely children and adults with disabilities and/or neurodivergent individuals and their families who may not feel welcome or at ease in a typical

³² The term Western art music traditions is used throughout this dissertation in place of Western Classical Tradition. This change acknowledges the diversity and historical breadth of musical practices in the West, including liturgical, courtly, symphonic, chamber, and experimental traditions, among others.

concert setting due to traditional conventions and lack of inclusive design (Kempe 2015; Lamarre, Rice, and Besse 2021; Richards and Parkes 2023). Originally produced in theatre and film settings at the turn of the 21st century for individuals with autism and their families (Shiloh and Lagasse 2014; Vize 2014; Lamarre, Rice, and Besse 2021; Umeda and Jirikowic 2019), these events permeated the North American music industry in the 2010s. They have since evolved to encompass concerts with modifications to environment, programming, and communication that attempt to alleviate the stresses of those with disabilities and/or neurodivergences and their families or caregivers to improve the likelihood of attendance for these often-excluded groups.

Applying the transformative lens throughout the study (Mertens 2003; Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010), this research intends to amplify the voices of musicians so that their work may be better supported and understood, leading to potential changes in education, training, and research for the future. As adaptive concerts are a burgeoning field, few peer-reviewed articles have been published, and this research focusing on performer perspectives is the first of its kind. First-hand accounts from the respondents provide significant information regarding their perceptions of these events, their comfort in performing, and what training they have received. This study, therefore, aims to focus on adaptive concerts as a phenomenon of nontraditional performance within a portfolio career to better understand what skills are used, what training has been provided, and how musicians view this type of work. These findings contribute information for practitioners, educators, and musicians themselves.

The article first outlines literature to describe nontraditional performance work with a special focus on healthcare settings and adaptive concerts, positioning the latter work as complementary to traditional performance, music therapy, and community music practices. The

article also highlights the lack of information on the current landscape of post-secondary training for nontraditional performance. The study then presents original data from a survey of musicians who performed adaptive concerts in the past five years from two Canadian presenting organizations. The data is analyzed and discussed with reference to previous literature to show that nontraditional performance work is a significant and meaningful component of classical musicians' portfolio work in the 21st century. A discussion and conclusion elaborate on findings.

Background

Professional musicians lead portfolio careers with various activities contributing to their working lives over time (Mills 2004; Carruthers 2012; Creech 2014; Brook and Fostaty Young 2019). As part of this patchwork, most artists include performance in diverse contexts, from traditional concert hall recitals and orchestral events to bar concerts, busking, community music, and older adult and children's performances. Bridgstock (2013b) describes musicians as "embedded" within fields outside of music, such as healthcare, where, as an example, R. Rogers claimed in 2002 that over 4,000 performances take place in hospitals in the United Kingdom alone. However, despite these insights, there is a lack of empirical data to trace how musicians navigate or prepare for these roles, especially in countries like Canada where systemic structures and supports differ from the UK and Australia, where much of this literature originates.

As many scholars assert performance in healthcare and other nontraditional performance settings has drastically increased since the early 2000s (Preti 2009; Rollins 2020; Sonke 2020; Franz et al. 2020; P. Lambert, Rollins, and Sonke 2020; Foster et al. 2021), and musicians themselves ascribe multiple roles and diverse styles of performance in their routine work (Bridgstock 2005; Creech 2014; López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020), it is reasonable to

hypothesize that nontraditional performances in these various settings may be partially underwriting portfolio careers in the 21st century. However, without data to support these claims within the Canadian context, it is not easy to advocate or substantiate for nontraditional performance in curriculum.

Of the minimal specific discussions in literature on nontraditional performances, most scholars advocate for diversifying musicians' skills and capacities, and for musicians to embody an entrepreneurial spirit to create and sustain their careers (R. Rogers 2002; Bridgstock 2005; Bennett 2008b). The need for proficiency across diverse genres is underscored by statistics that most musicians perform in four or more distinct musical styles throughout their careers (R. Rogers 2002) and that such abilities “appear to increase not only the opportunities for performance, but the enjoyment derived from it” (Bennett 2008a, 65). Other skills required for various performance contexts include social and interpersonal skills (Bennett 2004; Bridgstock 2013a; Bennett and Bridgstock 2015), and entrepreneurship (Bridgstock 2005; 2013a; Bartleet et al. 2019; Zhukov and Rowley 2022; Zuilenburg 2012; Schediwy, Loots, and Bhansing 2018). However, these studies are generalized, with few references to specific healthcare or nontraditional performances. This limitation highlights a gap in the literature: while scholars emphasize the importance of entrepreneurship and interpersonal skills, few studies ground these competencies in detailed accounts of nontraditional performance scenarios, such as concerts in hospitals or adaptive performances.

Over two decades ago, R. Rogers (2002) published a comprehensive study on the portfolio careers of musicians in the United Kingdom, including a substantial dedication to musicians in nontraditional performance settings such as healthcare. However, in recent years little to no changes have been made in the core content of curriculum to reflect the significant portion of

musical portfolio careers that rely upon nontraditional performance as a major source of income and musical work. As R. Rogers (2002, 16) stresses, “Higher education institutions need to be more robust in, and in some cases more committed to, offering a wider curriculum to produce musicians who are fit for the 21st century music industry [sic]. They need to address the kind of music activities that their students will be engaging in.” In the absence of focused validation and coursework to develop and reinforce these essential skills, musicians are often left to acquire them post-graduation, in real time and under pressure, assuming they are even afforded the opportunity without prior experience or demonstrable knowledge. Foster et al. (2021) reaffirmed this need two decades later in a Canadian study on overall music in healthcare stating that “a baseline” of music care training for post-secondary students needs to be given for healthcare contexts “at the very least.”

Within music programs at post-secondary institutions, some scholars discuss a social hierarchy of music performance being considered more elite or above music education, history, or theory (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008b). Even more specifically within the music performance stream, certain types of performances are considered as desirable while others may be viewed as a necessary part of a performance career to “pay the bills” (Burt-Perkins and Lebler 2008b; Bennett 2008b). Nontraditional music performances seem to fall into the latter category as music programs promote soloist, orchestral, and/or traditional performance venues/stages almost exclusively in their narratives (R. Rogers 2002; Bartleet et al. 2012). These narrow perceptions of success are viewed as detrimental by many scholars, even leading to identity crises or feelings of failure by musicians who are able to sustain themselves in a competitive field but have socially constructed views of success that conflict with their livelihood based on their educational experience (Bridgstock 2005; Bennett 2008b; 2012; Bartleet et al. 2019). Still,

most scholarly critiques remain at a conceptual level. Few studies offer practical curricular solutions or pedagogical models that challenge this hierarchy and prepare students for the realities of nontraditional performance work.

The “music and health” domain, defined by MacDonald et al. (2012) as the intersection of music therapy, music education, community music, and everyday uses of music, emphasizes the practical and therapeutic benefits of music in healthcare environments. This interdisciplinary field supports the use of music to enhance well-being, promote recovery, and improve quality of life in clinical and community-based settings (MacDonald, Kreutz, and Mitchell 2012). As a subcategory of this form of nontraditional work, adaptive concerts are a somewhat independent niche, not within music therapy or community music, but instead within performance as an inclusive social and cultural practice (Richards and Parkes 2023). From the limited literature that discusses performers in music healthcare settings (as opposed to caregivers, patients, or the effects of music) two articles that stand out nevertheless are “Music in Hospitals: Defining an Emerging Activity” (Preti 2009), and Preti and Welch’s (2013) subsequent publication on professionals in healthcare settings. Here, the scholars discuss how music in hospitals has various categories, from music therapy to bedside music, with one category consisting of “regular concerts.” For the latter, Preti (2009, 3) mentions that the average number of concerts of this kind performed each year by musicians varies between about 12 and 20, and that, “The general criteria sought in a musician are reported to be: high level of musicianship, a varied and suitable choice of music, good presentation skills and an ability to establish a rapport with the audience.”

It is now acknowledged more than ever that access to cultural events and inclusive design are a human right (Kempe 2015; Lamarre, Rice and Besse 2021; Richards and Parkes 2023). For

music performance, scholars argue that this should include performances that whole families may attend, whether the members of the group are able-bodied, disabled, or neurodivergent (Kempe 2015). The growing awareness of the need for inclusive cultural practices has given rise to new performance models designed to address barriers faced by disabled and neurodivergent individuals and their families. One such practice is that of adaptive concerts. While musicians performing in healthcare settings is not an entirely new concept, adaptive concerts are a performance initiative that have only become more popular in the last decade, specifically beginning in the early 2010s in North America and approximately 2015 in Canada (Shiloh and Lagasse 2014; Lamarre, Besse, and Rice 2021; Richards and Parkes 2023). Known by various terms of which the most inclusive is “Adaptive Concerts”, these musical performances are gaining traction alongside more traditional concert presentations with symphonies, chamber music events, community engagement activities, and more (Richards and Parkes 2023). This emerging inclusive performance activity attempts to remove or lessen barriers to accessing performances for individuals with neurodiversities and the disability community (Shiloh and Lagasse 2014; Kempe 2015). As approximately 22% of Canadians over the age of fourteen identify as a person with a disability (Stienstra 2020), there is significant need for events that are accessible and inclusive. Adaptive concerts are in high demand as they provide increased possibility for participation for those with disabilities and their families (Richards and Parkes 2023). In line with the need for inclusive cultural events, Jones et al. (2022) also call for the inclusion of the disability community in designing and performing these concerts. In response to this growing demand, organizations and artists have begun to adopt specific strategies to make performances more accessible for diverse audiences.

Current adaptive concert practices include pre-show work, an environmental audit, extra-musical aids, and programming adjustments (Richards and Parkes 2023), of which the final piece is most relevant for performing musicians. Performers are asked to modify interactions with the audience to be inclusive of verbal and non-verbal attendees, able-bodied and disabled individuals, as well as modifying piece selections to shortened lengths of works when compared to traditional concert environments (Richards and Parkes 2023). Including the community for which these concerts are produced in their design process and involving experts from special education, occupational therapy, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) fields is also recommended (Jones et al. 2022; Richards and Parkes 2023). Producers are equally engaged in strengthening inclusivity by providing accessible venues, variable seating, venue guides, sensory toys, and more (Lamarre, Rice and Besse 2021).

While producers play a critical role in logistical and environmental adaptations, the responsibility also extends to performers, who must be equipped with the appropriate skills and training to succeed in these contexts. Organizations seek musicians with the skill sets and training to engage in these adaptive environments (Rollins 2020). However, current musical training in post-secondary music performance education does not include preparation for most nontraditional subsections of musicians' careers, such as healthcare and adaptive concerts. Additionally, in current literature on adaptive concerts, scholars have neglected to address performer training. One article from 2020 regarding sensory friendly *theatre* mentions artist training, where it is suggested that artists should be trained and involved in the process of production planning to better "understand the need for equity and access" (Santanello 2020, 110), as does Richards and Parkes' 2023 article. Aside from these brief assertions, no studies to date have broached the training required for such events, let alone studies specific to music.

When widening the scope to general healthcare setting performance training, research does increase, although it reflects overall narratives on the arts in healthcare with little specified to the music specialty. For instance, Sonke (2020) references challenges in training for artists in the healthcare field, stating that considerable knowledge and skills are required to professionalize artistic practice in these settings for artists and administrators. Rollins (2020) emphasizes that artist training is essential for success in pediatric healthcare settings. She outlines a specific twelve-hour training guide as the “foundation of knowledge, skill, and trust on which to build.” However, this guide focuses primarily on health conditions and professional expectations, offering little guidance on artistic practice or performance modifications. In addition to formal training, Rollins (2020) highlights the importance of specific personal qualities in the recruitment and selection of artists for these roles. Key attributes include flexibility, a sense of humour, respect, a strong foundation in one’s art form, and, importantly, “a genuine interest in children.”

Musicians have been surveyed and interviewed regarding their portfolio careers to some degree in Australia and other regions, such as the United States and United Kingdom (R. Rogers 2002; Bennett 2008a; Thomson 2020; Tomlinson et al. 2020). However, these studies focus more broadly on the portfolio division and how musicians spend their time and make money, rather than delving into subcategories of performance within the portfolio careers, such as nontraditional performance. This study examines adaptive concerts to gain insight into the skills musicians employ, the training they have received, and their perspectives on engaging in this type of work.

Methodology

This section outlines the theoretical framework and methodology used in this dissertation article. Within the overall study, the author assumes a transformative lens framework (Mertens 2003; Sweetman, Badiee, and Creswell 2010; Mertens 2010; 2021). The transformative lens was first advanced by Mertens in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and a distinct set of questions to frame the researcher's work was ascribed by Sweetman et al. in 2010. In this investigation, the principal investigator utilized these questions from the study's inception to ensure an advocacy stance was undertaken and the participants involved were set to benefit. The practical implications of the study are presented at the conclusion of the article, offering steps to advance research, practice, and industry narratives in ways that support musicians and the work of adaptive concert presenters to foster a more inclusive environment in the performing arts.

Social constructionism provides theoretical support for this article to complement and inform the transformative lens framework. The foundation of social constructionism is the idea that knowledge is constructed, not something that is innate, universal, or that someone or something possesses (Burr 1995). Promoting investigation as a method of social action (Burr 1995), social constructionism "invites researchers to reflect on the responsibility that accompanies the action of writing about other people" (Losantos et al. 2016). It focuses on how individuals engage in the construction of knowledge, particularly through historical and cultural action, narrative and subjective discourse (Young and Collin 2004). As a result, researchers must carefully construct the language and findings they present, as these influence how individuals perceive a study and relate it to their societal ties, such as institutions and work habits. This relationship aligns with advocacy perspectives, such as the transformative lens, which emphasize that socially constructed concepts are not static or objective and therefore can be changed for the

better. Consequently, researchers and practitioners have the potential to positively shape future constructions and understandings by elevating individuals and ideas that are underrepresented, marginalized, or subject to bias in current frameworks. Social constructionism focuses on the process of generating knowledge based on interactions, including procuring information from experience and expertise of individuals, which complements the transformative lens in its efforts to amplify the voices of participants and thus support whole-system change.

The author applied a surveying approach to garner data from musicians who had performed in adaptive (sensory friendly) concerts for two organizations in Canada. These two organizations were leading presenters of sensory friendly/adaptive concerts in Canada and as such, provided the longest history of performances in this region (i.e., the most substantial list of performers for these performances). Notably, the sample size for this survey was smaller than many portfolio career surveys in the literature, reflecting the much narrower pool of musicians engaged in nontraditional formats, especially those performing in adaptive concerts. Furthermore, as this style of performance has been implemented in North America for less than a decade, relatively few musicians have had the opportunity to engage in this form of work.

The combined performer lists from the two presenting organizations yielded a total of 60 performer contacts who had performed adaptive concerts dating back to 2017. Participants were sent emails in Fall 2022 requesting voluntary completion of the survey, with two subsequent reminder emails. The survey was completed by 27 participants within a six-week period, after which the survey was closed by the principal investigator. The 45% response rate is high compared to other adaptive performance related studies using surveying methodology (Vize 2014; Fletcher et al. 2019; Santanello 2020; Stasell and Bathje 2021). This atypical response rate may be explained by the close ties of the musicians and presenting organizations as well as trust

in the researcher, who is part of the musical community. It may also be attributed to the intimate and meaningful experiences musicians have with nontraditional work that is rarely discussed in research. The response rate is in line with a previously conducted survey of caretakers at adaptive concert events undertaken by the principal researcher as an independent study in 2022, where the response rate was nearly 50% (Richards and Parkes 2023).

Adaptive concert musicians were surveyed to better understand how they were trained for such performances, and what their experiences were with adaptive concerts. The survey applied mixed methodology (Creswell and Clark 2007) and was informed by the transformative lens based on the work of Mertens (2003) and Sweetman et al. (2010). The transformative lens asserts that mixed-methods research can advocate for improvements in quality of life of marginalized groups, and that it can assimilate important data that may benefit these groups (Sweetman et al. 2010). Amplifying the voices of participants (in this case, musicians) while also collecting data to benefit training for those intending to work with isolated and marginalized groups (e.g., neurodivergent individuals, individuals with disabilities, and their families), this study provides a rare opportunity for data collection and a platform for practical knowledge dissemination.

The survey engaged musicians on topics of nontraditional performance training (e.g., what skills and attributes are utilized in this context) and conceptualizations of this stream of portfolio career work (e.g., how musicians understand, define, and perceive this kind of performance work). The survey is presented in its entirety in Appendix F. The survey was created via the University of Ottawa's Survey Monkey online platform, with an opening page consenting the respondents to participate in the study. No identifying information was obtained in the survey, rendering it entirely anonymous.

The mixed-methods triangulation model for the study consisted of multiple concurrent phases wherein quantitative and qualitative data sets were analyzed and weighted equally (Creswell 2006). In this model, the researcher collects various data sets (quantitative and qualitative together through surveying technique), analyzing and reviewing the content in an immersive iterative process, and upon completion of initial analysis, the overall content is thematically analyzed. This mixed methodology integrates two critical ways of understanding social phenomena (Fielding and Fielding 1986). The mixing of data provides a more complete picture of a complex problem, increasing understanding of phenomena through various angles.

To increase trustworthiness in the study, the survey was piloted with three musicians who are considered by their peers and presenting organizations to be experts in adaptive concerts. This helped ensure clarity and understanding of questions as well as providing feedback on the survey overall in terms of relevancy and appropriateness of subject matter. Following the pilot phase experts from each of the two presenting organizations were engaged to vet the survey. Additionally, the principal investigator has had prolonged exposure to the subject matter because of her involvement with adaptive concerts and performances of these events for seven years at the time of writing. Lastly, a journal was kept by the principal investigator describing the progression of the study and exploring decision making, rationale, and logistics of the research.

Results

In the results section, the author summarizes the information procured directly from the survey of adaptive concert musicians. Each question is detailed in the section below. However, a summative section of quantitative findings is first presented for a concise overview.

Summary of Quantitative Data

Table 1: Number of adaptive performances by participants

Number of Adaptive Performances	Percentage of Participants
1-5	63%
6-10	18.5%
11+	18.5%

Table 2: Participant engagement in nontraditional performances

Engagement Type	Percentage of Participants
Longterm care/senior's home concerts	92%
Children's concerts	89%
Multidisciplinary shows	70%
Nonclassical concerts	59%
Bar concerts	56%
Hospital concerts	52%
Palliative care concerts	44.5%
Busking	18.5%
Other	18.5%

Table 3: Participant training for nontraditional performances in their undergraduate degrees

Did not receive training	92.5%
Unsure if they received training	7.5%
Received training	0%

Table 4: Do you adjust aspects of your playing/singing for adaptive concerts?

Participant Response	Percentage of Participants
No	52%
Yes	48%

Table 5: Do you use more than your primary instrument in adaptive concerts?

Participant Response	Percentage of Participants
No	70%
Yes	30%

Detailed data by question

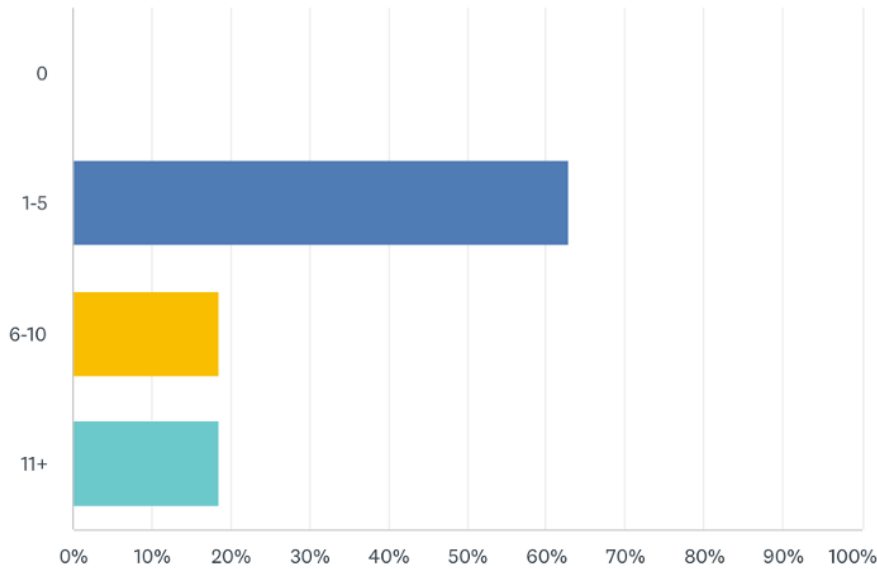
The first question (Q1) of the survey required participants to consent to participate.

Following Q1, Q2 asked how many times the participants had performed an adaptive concert.

The majority stated 1-5 times at 63%, with 18.5% stating 6-10 times, and the final 18.5% stating they performed 11 or more times in adaptive concerts (shown in Figure 1).

Figure 1

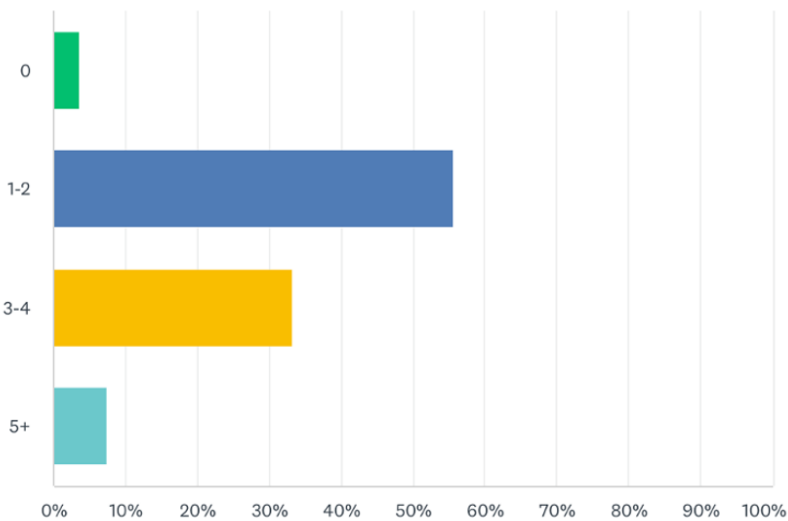
Q2: Approximately how many times have you performed an adapted concert?



Next, Q3 asked how many times the musicians performed adaptive concerts annually, shown in Figure 2. Here, 55.5% responded they performed 1-2 times a year in such concerts, while an additional 33.3% said three to four times. Fewer respondents (9%) stated they performed 5+ times in such concerts, while one person claimed not to perform in such concerts annually.

Figure 2

Q3: Approximately how many times do you perform adapted concerts annually?



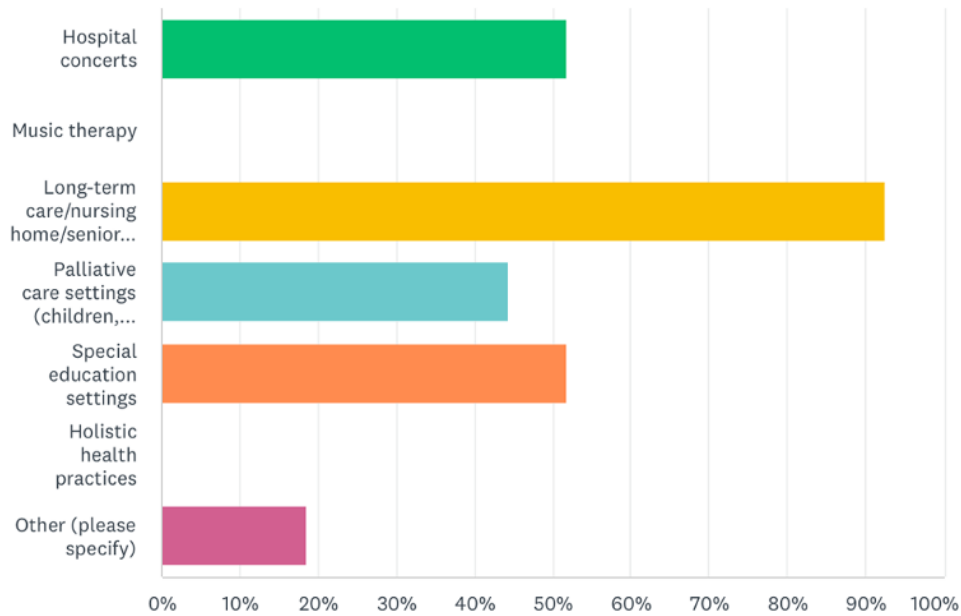
Q4 inquired as to how and when the participants first learned about adaptive concerts. Most respondents specified that contact with the organization that hired them to perform was the first time they heard about these kinds of performances (e.g., “*When I was hired to play one*”; “*Organization A’ in 2019*”), some even naming a specific individual. Others indicated they did not recall, or that they were working with colleagues who had performed in these spaces before. Similarly, for Q5, which asked how the musician was first engaged to perform for an adaptive concert, most respondents stated that one of the two presenting organizations had hired them as a performer, or that they were recommended by someone (e.g., “*I received an email inquiry*”; “*I was recommended by my teacher...*”).

For Q6, musicians were asked if they engaged in other healthcare-related performances outside of adaptive concerts. 92.5% participants responded that they performed in long-term care or senior home settings, while 52% responded hospital concerts and special education settings, respectively. A further 44.5% shared that they performed in palliative care settings. No respondents selected music therapy or holistic health practices (which, as alluded to in the literature section, are not performance-based practices). One participant added that they performed in “homeless shelters” in the “other” comment box while the remaining “other” respondents wrote specific settings such as “Cancer centre.” Responses to Q6 are presented in Figure 3.

In Q7, the respondents showed that the large majority (81.5%) only spent 0-25% of their career in nontraditional performance settings. An additional 11% of respondents spent 26-50% of their time in nontraditional performance settings, while the remaining 7.5% asserted 51-75% of their time was spent in nontraditional performance settings.

Figure 3

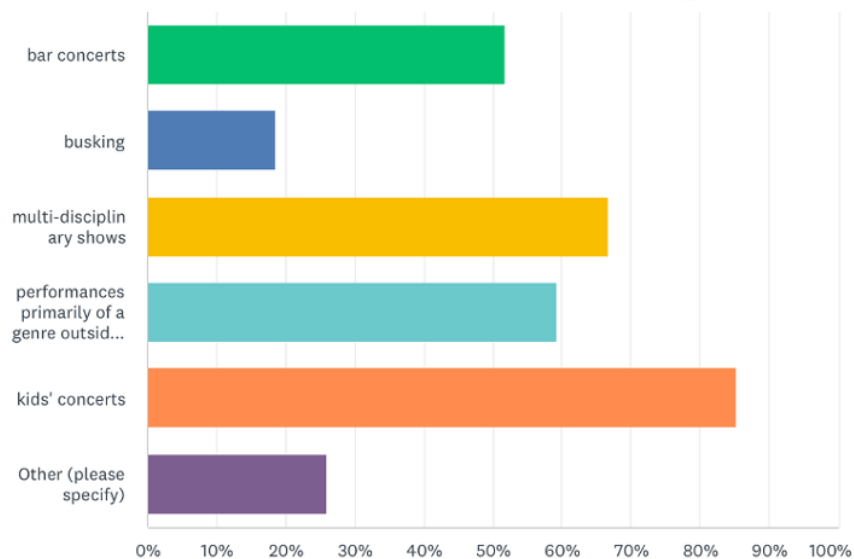
Q6: Do you engage in other healthcare-related performances aside from adapted concerts? Please select any/all that apply.



Outside of healthcare settings, the primary form of nontraditional performance work for respondents was children’s concerts at 89% (accounting for adjustments with responses made under “other” that belonged to the preconceived categories) as outlined in Q8 and represented in Figure 4. More than half also performed multi-disciplinary shows (70%), performances outside of “classical” music (59%), and in bars (56%). Finally, 18.5% had busked.

Figure 4

Q8: Do you engage in any of the following non-traditional performances outside of healthcare settings? Please select any/all that apply.



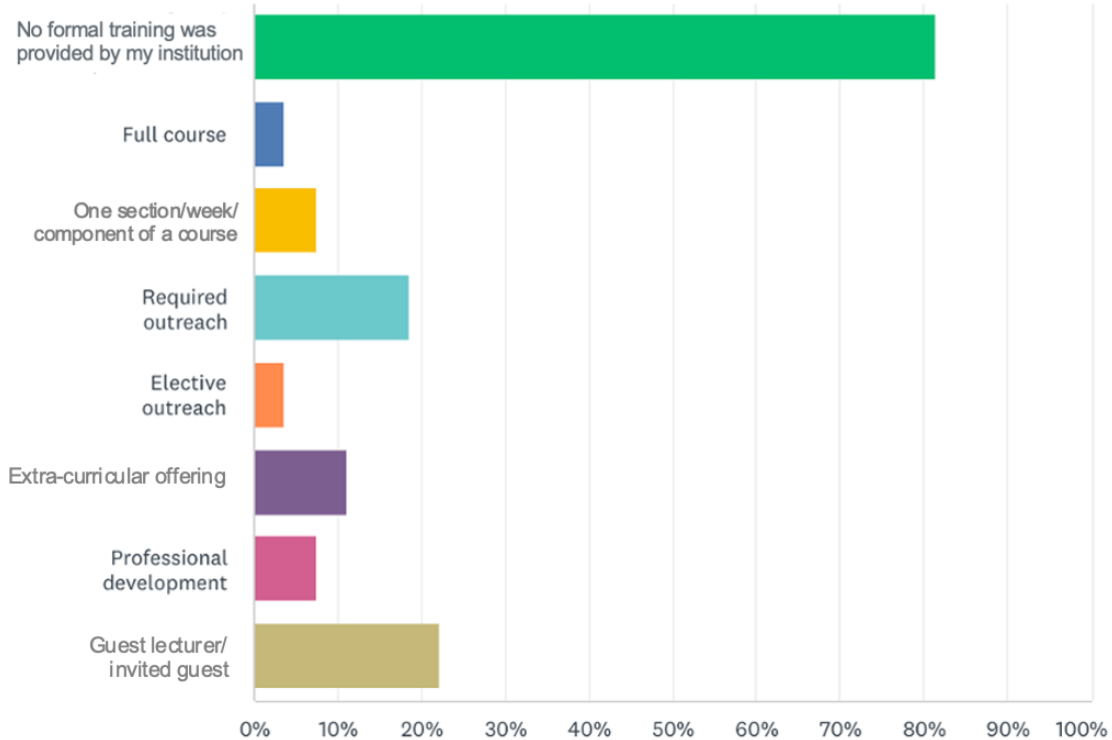
Q9 asked if the musicians considered nontraditional performance as central to their career. The answers were mixed with most (52%) stating yes with varying descriptors (e.g., “*Yes. It is incredibly important.*”; “*Yes. I enjoy performing in these settings perhaps even more than ‘traditional’ ones.*”). An additional 18.5% stated “somewhat” or “maybe”, and 26% responded no or not really (e.g., “*I do not*”; “*It’s not the primary thing that I do, but an important secondary thing that I try to do whenever possible.*”) One respondent skipped the question.

In Q10 the survey asked if participants’ undergraduate institutions discussed nontraditional performance work as a possible component of a musician’s performance career. Most respondents answered no (74%), with some elaborating with an explanation (e.g., “*I recall zero discussion about nontraditional performance in my undergraduate music classes. However, I also majored in visual art as an undergrad and I found a great deal of support for my experimental work in performance and the sonic arts (more so than in the music department actually)*”), 11% stating somewhat (e.g., “*There were some nontraditional performance opportunities.*”) and 7.5% saying yes with qualifiers (e.g., “*Yes, but only as electives and very few people recognized their significance during undergrad and therefore didn’t enrol.*”) Two made remarks about nontraditional performances that were not relevant to the question.

Q11 followed up on question ten by asking the musicians to select what training their undergraduate degree provided them, if any, for healthcare settings. A large percentage, 81.5%, checked “no formal training was provided by my undergraduate program.” Some respondents did select other options, such as “required outreach” (18.5%), “guest lecturer/invited guest” (22.25%); “extra-curricular offering” (11.25%), or “one section/week/component of a course” (7.5%). Only one respondent selected “elective outreach” and “full course” each. Figure 5 shows these replies.

Figure 5

Q11: Did your undergraduate degree provide training for performance in healthcare settings (e.g., music therapy, long-term or palliative care concerts, adaptive concerts, etc.)? Please select any/all that apply.



Asking whether their undergraduate degree provided specific training for adaptive programming, Q12 elicited 92.5% of respondents to cite “no” and the remaining 7.5% to say, “I’m not sure.” In response to this question, 0 participants selected “yes.” In Q13, respondents were asked if they drew on secondary instrumentation or vocal capacities when performing in nontraditional contexts. Here 70% stated “no” and 30% said “yes”, although most “yes” respondents added that it was rare or only in improvised or collaborative manners (e.g., “Rarely, but yes, more so than in traditional performance”; “Yes, I have made music on all manner of things...”).

When Q14 asked, “What skills would you describe as required for a comfortable and engaging adaptive concert performer?” the respondents’ answers varied from discussions of empathy and flexibility to creativity and patience, but the most commonly cited skill was communication (e.g., “verbal”; “calm and clear speaking voice, excellent vocal microphone

technique, clear pronunciation, respectful discourse...”; and *“comfortable public speaking”*).

Some participants also thought that knowledge of diverse musical and learning styles would be useful as an adaptive performer in addition to a passion for music, a friendly demeanour, and strong interpersonal skills.

Q15 inquired how performances in an adaptive concert compared to traditional performance requirements. Respondents frequently cited that the priorities were speaking and interacting and/or connecting with the audience, specific and thoughtful curation, and the ability to perform amidst a more chaotic environment than traditional settings. Flexibility was cited by many. Musicians also emphasized that performance excellence was required in both settings.

When asked if the organizer who hired them for their adaptive concert provided training or guidance to prepare them in Q16, most musicians responded agreeably at 81.5% with further explanations such as, *“Yes, we had a Zoom meeting with members of a local organization which works with people who are neurodiverse. We were given tips about how to interact with the audience, what to expect, how to keep attention, etc.”* or *“Yes! In all cases there was extensive training and consultation in order to make the event fit the needs of the individuals who would be listening.”* Some had mixed responses of *“yes and no”* or *“somewhat”* (15%) and one respondent stated *“no.”* As a follow-up in Q17 the musicians were asked if they felt the training they were given was adequate and 70% answered yes. The remaining respondents supplied a combination of responses from wishing there could be more in-depth or comprehensive training to stating that it *“could always be better”* or that *“I did not feel like it changed the way we led our usual kids’ concerts.”*

Q18 asked how the musicians prepared for adaptive concerts. Participants mentioned that there was more thoughtful preparation and scripting than in typical performances, although

several musicians also mentioned that they prepared the same “*as for a regular concert.*” Some discussed shortened pieces, organization/planning, and managing pacing of the performance differently. Program choices and speaking notes were the most cited items.

When asked to compare performing an adaptive concert to performing a traditional concert in Q19, the respondents by large majority made positive statements toward nontraditional performance, such as that they felt they were “*more satisfying,*” “*more intimate,*” “*more casual,*” “*very meaningful,*” “*much more of a relaxed performing environment,*” and “*I personally find great joy in adaptive concerts,*” “*feels like home,*” “*makes me feel over and over that music is truly a universal language....it’s moments like these that I feel grateful to be a musician,*” “*much more rewarding.*” Of note, two respondents mentioned that adaptive concerts required more energy, with one specifically noting it was “*emotionally*” involved.

In Q20, “Do you adjust any aspects of your playing or singing when performing an adaptive concert?” respondents were split almost evenly into yes and no (48% and 52%). Some chose to elaborate on their answers of “yes” to mention elements such as adjusting volume, avoiding certain types of programming, modifying the way they speak, and shortening length of pieces. A few performers mentioned amplifying contrasts or exaggerating compared to traditional performance.

Q21 asked respondents if there were elements of adaptive concerts that made them anxious. Generally, responses were “no,” but some did discuss that speaking and interacting could make them nervous, and that being unsure about the comfort and enjoyment of the audience members made them anxious. Two respondents mentioned concerns about audience members encroaching on personal space (in one case, regarding their instrument). As a follow-up, Q22 asked what could improve their comfort level in terms of preparedness and experience performing an

adaptive concert. Answers varied from discussing understanding of audience member needs and behaviour to having previous experience in settings of a similar nature. Most musicians discussed the idea of needing to know what was expected or what would take place so that they could prepare properly. One respondent mentioned that having access to resources such as videos from previous performances would be useful and another stated that ensuring caregivers and concert presenters were well-informed would be helpful.

Asking how musicians thought the music industry views nontraditional performance, Q23 elicited diverse answers. Some respondents claimed that nontraditional performances are “*being increasingly embraced*,” “*becoming much more accepted over time*,” or “*welcomed*”, while others mentioned they felt such performances were secondary or even more cynically “*a necessary evil or ‘lesser’ artistically*.” The most common ideas were that the industry viewed nontraditional performance as an “*add-on*” or additional requirement to supplement traditional performance, and that it was important but viewed as charitable or lesser, rather than artistic and primary. One respondent mentioned that it was becoming popular particularly for grant applications.

In Q24, musicians were invited to share any additional thoughts related to their training, experiences, or other topics relevant to adaptive concerts. Only 48% answered, with three of the respondents simply stating their thanks or “no.” Of the remaining responses, many expressed the “*special*” and “*meaningful*” contributions of these types of initiatives, that increasing the resources and presentations for adaptive concerts was necessary, and that removing barriers was important for inclusive arts practices. One respondent mentioned that fees are generally not sufficient in nontraditional performance with another respondent similar stating that more funding is needed to support initiatives at the “*grass roots level*.”

The final four (optional) questions asked about instrument/voice type, primary genre of artistic practice, gender identity, and age. Q25 had 23 responses for primary instrument (4 participants chose to skip this optional question) showing twelve respondents were string players, four were pianists, two were vocalists, and four were percussion, accordion, or wind players. For primary genre of practice (Q26), the same 23 respondents answered. Of these, 17 stated “classical” only as their genre of practice, with an additional four stating classical with other genres (“*classical, world, electronical, rock*”; “*classical/Broadway*”). The remaining two responded, “*No primary genre*” and “*Jazz / R&B / Pop.*” Of the 23 respondents to Q27 regarding gender-identity, 12 selected male and 11 selected female. Finally, of 26 respondents to Q28 around age demographics, most respondents fell between 26-32 years of age (42%), with an additional 31% over 40 years of age, and the remaining 27% between 33-39 years of age.

Themes

This study surveyed musicians regarding their experiences with adaptive concerts, including training, comfort level, and how they felt these performances were reflected in their careers and by the music industry at large. Five themes emerged from the survey data:

1. Adaptive concerts require flexibility and differing skills when compared to traditional performance;
2. Adaptive concerts are meaningful and special for performers;
3. There are mixed opinions on how nontraditional performances, including adaptive concerts, are viewed by the music industry and post-secondary institutions;
4. Musicians need training, resources, and defined expectations to feel comfortable and prepared for adaptive performances, which post-secondary education does not currently provide;
5. Nontraditional performance, including adaptive concerts, are a significant component of 21st-century music careers.

Theme 1: Flexibility and Skills

Many skills were discussed by survey respondents when asked about the requirements for adaptive concerts compared to traditional concerts. The most prevalently mentioned ideas involved increased needs for empathy, flexibility, patience, creativity, programming, and communication. Various respondents noted that excellence in performance (i.e., capacity on one's instrument and ability to perform) was required for adaptive and other nontraditional performances, as much or more so than in traditional performance, such as "*superb playing ability*," "*I believe that adaptive concerts require just as much musical excellence as a traditional setting, but then adding extra public speaking skills...*," and "*both types of performances require the foundation of excellence at one's instrument*." However, 50% of participants acknowledged that they altered their playing in adaptive settings compared to traditional concerts. The changes musicians discussed were primarily amplifying contrasts or exaggerating (e.g., dynamic or character). For instance, in response to the question about playing adjustments made in adaptive concert settings, select participant answers included: "*I might exaggerate certain things in the music*," "*I animate my movements a bit more, sometimes make things a bit more blunt/blatant than subtle*," "*more exuberance and more gestures*," and "*I think I might provide slightly more contrast*."

Some respondents shared that a knowledge of diverse musical styles would be of use (e.g., "*I think variety is key*"; "*range of styles*"; "*incorporate a bigger range of styles*," and congruently approximately 30% of survey participants said they performed on a secondary instrument or sang in addition to using their primary instrument for adaptive performances, which they would not typically do in traditional concert settings. For example, one participant who stated their main instrument was cello mentioned, "*I have occasionally played guitar and*

percussion in these settings” while a few participants mentioned singing in addition to their main instrument in these events. Continuing along the lines of diversity, knowledge of varying learning styles was considered valuable (e.g., *“familiarity with a broad range of learning profiles”*; *“learning strategies”*; and *“learning child psychology, better understanding and study of any diverse needs in audiences and how to address those with music”*).

The demand for increased effort or energy was noted by many respondents in their responses, including: *“adaptive concerts are very challenging mentally and emotionally,” “high energy level,”* and *“it takes more energy as a performer.”* One specific response example regarding playing was: *“I don’t adjust any playing elements consciously but do believe that it is harder to enter a performance mindset when the situation feels more casual - again, I think this is why the music should be extra polished when in an adaptive concert setting.”* Complementary statements included discussions of the need for strong interpersonal skills, compassion, and empathy. These described attributes indicate the idea of communicating positive energy and a potential increase in emotional/social burden on performers in these settings. Participants discussed social skills, awareness, and enthusiasm throughout their answers. Additionally, added effort in curation and programming was discussed by many (e.g., *“I make sure to come up with a concrete plan which includes as much detail as possible and exact timings,”* or *“I give more consideration to the instruments and repertoire... I also give a fair bit of thought to the organization of the space... and also to the set list,”* and lastly, *“The program has to be carefully considered, as does the presentation/speaking portions of the concert.”*).

Communication was perhaps the most discussed skill requirement for adaptive concerts by survey participants. Some respondents were detailed in the skills they felt were necessary for this element, such as *“calm and clear speaking voice, excellent vocal microphone technique, clear*

pronunciation, respectful discourse....,” and, *“speaking slowly, and with more clarity.”* Also acknowledged was, *“Coming up with what to say is definitely a different challenge from a traditional concert,”* and *“Public speaking skill is very important, some humour would help, and storytelling would also be very beneficial,”* while others simply stated more generally that *“verbal”* skills and the ability to communicate comfortably were a necessity in this situation when compared to traditional performance (e.g., *“ability to speak informatively with humour or eloquence”*; *“comfortable public speaking”*). Using speaking notes and specific curatorial ideas that related to the music, but were not part of the musical performance itself, were also mentioned (e.g., *“ability to speak about music in a casual, enthusiastic, and relatable way”*).

Along these same lines, most respondents discussed adjusting programming (e.g., shortening pieces or performing only single movements from a longer work) and modifying speaking (e.g., simplified language and multi-modal delivery entailing modelling speaking with movements), which partially aligns with the survey’s quantitative data, where nearly half the participants stated they adjusted their playing in adaptive concerts. The modifications to programming and curation skills corresponded to the idea of diverse needs, variety of styles, and flexibility in performance, such as one participant’s assessment that a *“range of styles and ability to curate a contrasting and engaging program”* was needed.

Theme 2: Meaningful and Special Work

Participants frequently described adaptive concerts as *“special”* and *“meaningful”* throughout the survey, particularly when compared to traditional performance. For example, one respondent stated, *“I find adaptive concerts to be more rewarding than traditional performance,”* while another explained, *“I always feel great after an adaptive performance because of the*

human element and the special connections. They are all so unique,” adding, *“One feels they are truly contributing something special.”* Others depicted these concerts as *“usually more satisfying,” “much more intimate,”* and said they *“feel like home.”* In fact, across the qualitative data every respondent stressed that adaptive concerts were at least equally meaningful to traditional concerts, if not more so, in terms of the joy and fulfillment they brought to the performer. These findings echo Bennett’s (2008) research, which emphasized that nontraditional performances not only contribute to musicians’ livelihood financially but also to their overall satisfaction and sense of purpose within the field.

Survey respondents addressed the distinctive connections and heightened audience engagement adaptive concerts foster, especially in contrast to traditional performances. One participant noted, *“Traditional concerts are very much one-sided whereas with adaptive concerts, you interact and respond to the energy of the audience. It’s less about the artist presenting a work versus creating connections in the moment.”* Another reflected on the different communicative demands, stating they were, *“more thoughtful about exactly which and how ideas should be shared and developed.”* A third respondent shared, *“I personally love these kinds of concerts, because they really force us as musicians to find meaningful and impactful points of connection with our audiences.”* Collectively, these insights reveal an added level of awareness from the performer around the importance of real-time audience connection as a key component in adaptive concert experiences.

The unique qualities and additional efforts required from performers and presenters of adaptive concerts was addressed both positively and critically in the survey. While many acknowledged the extra planning, flexibility, and attentiveness involved, the majority emphasized that the rewards far outweighed the challenges. As one respondent noted, *“It is so*

nice to know that you are connecting with an audience that really wants to be there but may have had trouble attending traditional concerts for any number of reasons.” Another reflected, *“It’s a little exhilarating trying to keep up. Also knowing that it’s something hard for these kids to experience in traditional settings makes you feel you’re doing something special.”* These reflections suggest that while adaptive concerts require intentionality and responsiveness, they ultimately foster a deep sense of purpose and impact for those involved.

Theme 3: Mixed Support in the Industry

While most survey respondents described adaptive concerts as more satisfying and meaningful than traditional music events, many also expressed concern about how these performances are perceived within the classical music industry. Quantitative data showed that most were only performing 1-2 adaptive concerts a year, displaying a limited frequency of such concerts. According to participants, nontraditional formats like adaptive concerts were commonly viewed by the industry as “add-ons” presented for charitable optics rather than as legitimate artistic practices. Several participants also implied that such concerts are often seen as “lesser” (e.g., *“not the primary focus”*; *“less artistic”*), which again aligns with literature (Bridgstock 2005; Bennett 2008b; Hannan 2012; Bartleet et al. 2019). Although a few participants felt the landscape may be beginning to shift, observing that nontraditional performances are *“being increasingly embraced,” “becoming much more accepted over time,”* or, even, *“welcomed”*, others expressed skepticism. The latter participants cast these concerts as *“a necessary evil,”* and noted they are primarily presented *“for grant applications,”* implying that financial motivations, rather than genuine commitments to accessibility, were the primary driver for presenting adaptive concerts for presenters.

This mixed sense of support was reinforced by concerns around funding and compensation. Many participants pointed to the lack of funding and insufficient artistic fees associated with nontraditional performance. Additionally, 74% of respondents indicated that nontraditional performances were not discussed as viable career options in their undergraduate education, suggesting either a disregard for their growing prevalence or a broader lack of institutional awareness about nontraditional performances overall. This gap in professional preparation is troubling, not only because it limits awareness of inclusive artistic practices, but also because it fails to equip emerging artists with a full and realistic understanding of today's professional landscape.

Both qualitative and quantitative data from the survey show that despite significant prevalence of nontraditional performance work in musicians' careers, post-secondary institutions do not empower or actively teach about these opportunities. As one respondent recalled, "*It seems like nontraditional performances were viewed as an add-on to the traditional performances. The faculty members didn't actively encourage students to pursue such performances.*" Others repeated this idea, saying, "*I recall zero discussion about nontraditional performance in my undergraduate studies,*" and "*I think most, if not all, of the official school curriculum consisted of traditional performance work.*" When asked specifically about training in this area, 76% of respondents said that they received no instruction in nontraditional performance during their undergraduate degrees. This number rose to 80% when asked about performances in healthcare settings, and even further to 96% when asked about training specific to adaptive concerts in undergraduate curricula. Where training did exist, it was often described as "*some,*" "*a little,*" or involving "*required outreach*" or "*guest lecturers sometimes*" outside of formal coursework. As adaptive and nontraditional performances continue to gain prominence,

the lack of institutional support and training not only undermines their perceived legitimacy, but also hinders the development of more inclusive, responsive, and relevant artistic practices in the classical music field.

Theme 4: Need for Training, Resources, and Setting Expectations

Dovetailing with the theme of mixed support within the classical music industry for nontraditional performance, participants noted that training and resources for such work were lacking. The respondents were adamant about the need for training, resources, and clear expectations when discussing nontraditional performances, including adaptive concerts. Notably, 81.5% of participants reported receiving no formal training in their undergraduate studies for performances in healthcare settings, and 100% had no training in their undergraduate degrees for adaptive concerts, specifically. This finding is salient for those developing curricula and training in post-secondary and other settings.

Nonprofits, presenters, and producers in the industry appear to be stepping in to fill the current training gap for this nascent field. This was reflected in the 81.5% of respondents who indicated that they received training from a presenting organization prior to performing an adaptive concert. While this support was appreciated, many respondents noted that such training was often brief or lacked depth. The absence of formal preparation in undergraduate degrees perpetuates inequality in the arts as artists are not comfortable in these nontraditional settings compared to traditional concert experiences to which they are exposed regularly.

Survey participants offered insights into what would help increase their confidence and comfort in adaptive performance contexts. A common thread was the importance of understanding audience needs and behaviours. Respondents emphasized that their comfort would

improve with “*a clear idea as to what to expect and how people have done things in the past,*” along with “*more understanding of the abilities of the audience and traits surrounding autism, FASD, etc..*” Others highlighted the importance of “*better knowledge of our audience’s needs,*” and “*knowing the environment and audience’s needs ahead of time.*” Artists also suggested several practical resources to support their preparation, such as access to video recordings of past performances and conversations with well-informed caregivers and concert presenters. Setting clear expectations in advance regarding audience behaviors, the physical environment, and performance flexibility was cited as an important factor in helping artists feel more prepared and less anxious. As one respondent noted, “*It would be great to have the chance to watch videos from previous performances to get an idea of what to expect.*” Together, these findings underline the pressing need for more robust training structures in formal education and beyond to ensure artists feel confident, informed, and supported in inclusive and nontraditional performance environments.

Theme 5: Importance of Nontraditional Performance Work in 21st Century Music Careers

Both quantitative and qualitative data procured from the survey highlighted the importance and prevalence of nontraditional performance work in 21st century music careers. A staggering 92% of participants noted that they perform in long-term care, nursing or senior home settings, and 89% perform in children’s concerts. These percentages suggest that performances outside of traditional spaces are very common. Multi-disciplinary shows, bar concerts, and performances primarily of a genre outside “classical” also showed significant prominence amongst survey participants at 70%, 56%, and 60% respectively. Several respondents added answers in the “other” section of nontraditional performance and health performance spaces as well to explain

that they performed in homeless shelters, community parties, school outreach, and “*unusual spaces*” such as “*caves*” or “*art galleries*.”

Healthcare settings were prominent nontraditional performance arenas, with approximately half the respondents having performed in hospitals (52%), special education (52%) and palliative care settings (44%). As the survey respondents have all also performed in adaptive concert settings (100%), the survey asked how many of adaptive concerts the participants performed annually, which resulted in over 40% of participants stating they performed adaptive concerts more than 3 times per year. Additionally, 40% indicated they had performed more than 6 adaptive concerts in their careers, which is significant given the juvenility of the events in Canada.

To further support the importance of nontraditional performance, most musicians who completed the survey established that nontraditional performance was central to their career. For those participants who responded as such, they were asked to elaborate on their answer. These qualitative data pieces included how the musicians felt about nontraditional performance such as, “*Nontraditional performances are the most meaningful. They create deeper connections,*” “*Music is music!*,” and “*It’s a very important and meaningful part of my career.*” They also discussed their perception of the classical music industry’s viewpoint of nontraditional performance with statements such as, “*I feel it’s becoming more traditional to include more multi-disciplinary shows (visual art paired with music, etc.)*” or “*many [nontraditional] concert settings are more interactive and fluid than traditional classical concerts.*” Motivations were another prominent point of interest in these elaborations, such as, “*Kids concerts are the reason I became a professional musician*” or, “*One of the main motivations for my work as a performer is to make music accessible for new and existing audiences, and ‘nontraditional’ performances,*

whether it's the venue, program, or format of the concert, is central to achieving that." Lastly, some respondents provided more detailed explanations of how nontraditional work fit into their career or trajectory (e.g., *"It has been a big part of my early career."*; *"I would consider that it is gaining more importance in my career as I gain more experience in the field."*). These excerpts and the survey's quantitative data expand on the concept that nontraditional performances, including adaptive concerts, are becoming more prevalent and mainstream in the industry, and are important to the musicians performing them. The findings of the study are explored in the following section.

Discussion

The survey revealed many insights concerning musicians' training, experience, and outlooks on nontraditional performance work, particularly concerning adaptive concerts. As a relatively new field, described in literature and in practice by participants, it was not surprising to uncover that formal education has not adjusted to include specific training for adaptive concerts. However, literature shows that nontraditional performance, particularly in healthcare and community settings, have been a mainstay of musicians' careers for some decades (R. Rogers 2002; Preti 2009). Given the results of the study, participants indicate that post-secondary institutions and the classical music industry overall have not properly considered the importance and relevancy of nontraditional performance in the portfolio careers of most 21st century professional musicians. As such, training in these formal settings is not yet in line with need, and critical skills including fluency in diverse musical styles, public speaking, flexible communication, and a nuanced understanding of audiences and expectations in nontraditional contexts, have been overlooked. Musicians emerging into the 21st-century industry context are

thus underprepared for some of the most meaningful and increasingly in-demand areas of the field.

New understandings were procured from the survey regarding musicians' experiences with adaptive concerts, notably that these events are generally considered more meaningful and satisfying than traditional concerts, and that the level of performance ability for these events is considered on par with traditional concerts. As the respondents mentioned that adaptive concerts require additional skills, such as superior communication and curation capability, this information suggests that adaptive concerts are challenging artistically and socially, which necessitates increased efforts in training and education. Literature suggests that the arts need to better consider inclusivity and address barriers to access for individuals with exceptionalities and/or disabilities (Lamarre et al. 2019; Santanello, 2020; Thompson et al., 2020; Richards and Parkes, 2023), so a concerted effort is essential by post-secondary institutions, presenters, and musicians themselves to increase the comfort level of performers and thus decrease the current individual and unique burdens of those attempting to present these concerts with little formalized and industry-wide support.

In discussing the prevalence and importance of nontraditional work in their careers, artists revealed a striking mismatch between skills and value associated with these performances and the classical music industry's prevailing narrative that often labels them as "secondary," "add on," or "lesser" than traditional performance opportunities. The data procured in this study challenges these stereotypes through the voices of professional musicians actively working in the field. These respondents were unanimous in affirming that adaptive concerts were at least as meaningful as traditional performance, with the majority of respondents emphasizing that they found adaptive concerts even more fulfilling. They were also clear in the high level of

instrumental proficiency required, noting that these performances often demand additional skills (e.g., responsiveness, fluid communication, curation flexibility), which increases their overall complexity. As one participant detailed, *“Depending on the event, there can definitely be a much more casual feel in comparison to a traditional concert. I almost find that if this is the case, the music needs to be even more polished and the flow of the performance (including the speaking and transitioning from block to block) even more seamless to have a truly satisfying concert.”*

This mismatch between industry perception and professional reality accentuates the need to reframe nontraditional performance as artistically rigorous, emotionally impactful, and a viable option for portfolio musicians.

As all survey respondents performed at least one adaptive concert, and all performers also performed for children’s concerts and/or in healthcare settings (e.g., long-term care and senior’s homes) the prevalence of nontraditional work seems habitual in the portfolio careers of musicians, but the industry and its formal training have not adjusted narratives nor curricula equivalently. Musicians reported that their comfort level would increase in adaptive concert settings if they had a better understanding of audience member behaviours and needs, access to resources to clarify what to expect and how to prepare properly, and former experience in these settings. These statements point to a lack of exposure, education, and practical experience, which could be alleviated by industry and post-secondary support (e.g., resources and education). This subject needs to be addressed in both educational and social settings to better prepare musicians for the variety of work they will likely undertake in their career, and for society at large to recognize the role musicians play outside of traditional performance. Without this recognition, stereotypes and myths about nontraditional work (e.g., these types of performances are only for those who “cannot make it” in traditional performance, that nontraditional work requires less

skill, and/or that nontraditional events are “secondary” to traditional performances) will be perpetuated, causing a continued lack of education for musicians and detrimentally affecting programming by arts organizations who do not have enough resources to independently train and present artists in these settings.

This study advances the literature on adaptive concerts and nontraditional performance, particularly in contributing the first data of its kind on musician training and experience from the musicians’ perspectives. It also intersects with discussions of musician’s work in the 21st century, further solidifying the concepts of portfolio work in performance careers by showcasing the prevalence and importance of performance in nontraditional settings, and, particularly, in the growing sub-specialty of healthcare-related performance (Preti 2009; P. Lambert, Rollins, and Sonke 2020; Rollins 2020; Sonke 2020).

Conclusion

This article sought to contextualize and advance knowledge on musicians’ training and experience in nontraditional performance settings, particularly examining adaptive concerts as an example of such musical work. The article first summarized literature around nontraditional performance work with a special focus on healthcare settings and adaptive concerts to position nontraditional performance work as complementary to traditional performance and other musical work. There is a lack of information on the current landscape of post-secondary training for nontraditional performance and adaptive concerts, which this article aimed to combat. The study compiled original data from a survey of adaptive concert musicians from two Canadian presenters (employers). The data was analyzed and, combined with previous literature, demonstrated that nontraditional performance work plays a significant role in the portfolio work

of musicians today. The data also provided new information on the experience and training of musicians in these settings, revealing a distinct lack of education in formal institutions as well as a mismatch between industry narratives around nontraditional performance and the real-life experiences of musicians performing in these arenas.

Themes that emerged from the survey data suggest that adaptive concerts hold special significance for performers when compared to traditional performance, and they require additional skill sets, such as increased flexibility, communication, and interpersonal skills, as well as requiring more effort in curation, such as diversifying repertoire and styles of performance and creating more interactive and engaging programs. Despite musicians' views that there is a lack of support from industry and post-secondary institutions in training, resources, and positive narratives, the thematic analysis reinforced the idea that adaptive concerts are meaningful and unique, not only for the audience they intend to serve, but also for the musicians themselves. Lastly, musicians were clear that they need training, resources, and defined expectations to feel comfortable and prepared for adaptive and other nontraditional performances, which is currently only available in fieldwork itself, as opposed to formal music education.

Implications for practice include the need for music performance programs to incorporate nontraditional performance training within their core curriculum as well as emphasizing the regularity of a nontraditional performances within a musician's portfolio career. Additionally, musicians, educators, and presenters should attempt to incorporate inclusive design and accessible practices into all concerts, not simply those labelled as "adaptive." Many suggested that adaptive concert modifications to reduce barriers to attendance for those with disabilities may be integrated into mainstream artistic practices with few additional resources (e.g., adapting

the ways in which artists speak to audience to include accessible language), especially once artist training is included in educational environments.

Implications for research include the need for more first-hand data directly from musicians to align literature with practice. Additionally, the application of the transformative lens to this topic represents a novel and valuable approach within the music field, particularly in amplifying musicians' voices and by extension of the study, the voices of underrepresented cultural attendees such as the disability community. To date, the transformative lens has only been applied once before in music research, by the author herself in a study exploring caregiver perspectives on adaptive concerts (Richards and Parkes 2023). The findings in the current study further support the potential of the transformative lens to be a powerful theoretical framework for human rights advocacy, especially in expanding equitable access to cultural participation.

Future research includes examining how post-secondary institutions could better prepare musicians for the nontraditional performance work they are very likely to undertake in their careers, as well as investigating the current training and capacity of organizations who present adaptive concerts and healthcare performances. Additionally, further research on nontraditional performance, generally, must be conducted. There is limited information available, particularly in the Canadian landscape, for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to access and determine proper steps to advance the field. Lastly, future research could and should include discussions with the disability community in better integrating adaptive concert practices within the performing arts in general and how to support musicians with disabilities in leading events of this kind.

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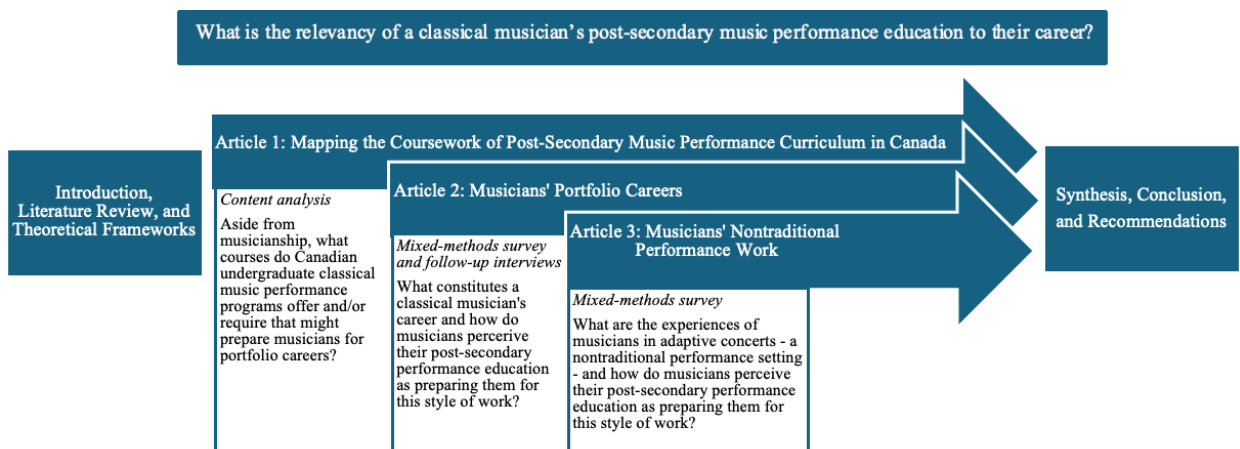
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Synthesis

Introduction

The landscape of professional music careers has evolved significantly in recent decades with a distinct decrease in full-time employment from orchestras and opera houses and an increase in the precarity of freelance opportunities partially caused by advances in digital offerings and by shifting public interests. However, as indicated by literature and participants in this study, post-secondary music performance degrees intending to train musicians in Canada remain largely unchanged from the conservatory-style practices of the 1800s, adhering to a curriculum model misaligned with the realities of musicians’ professional lives today. This synthesis integrates key findings from the three research articles of the dissertation to assess how well undergraduate music performance programs align with the realities of professional musical livelihood. The synthesis also proposes practical recommendations for curricular improvement. In terms of format, the concluding aspects of each article are presented, followed by an interpretation of their results. Recommendations are then articulated in detail and, subsequently, recapped in a condensed and functional manner. The synthesis serves as the culmination of the dissertation and strives to answer the study’s overarching subject. Below, Diagram 1 revisits the questions of each article and central dissertation inquiry. Diagram 1 appears in larger format in Appendix K.

Diagram 1: Research Questions and Dissertation Roadmap



Research Highlights: Article 1

In the first article of the dissertation, a review of music performance undergraduate curriculum from five Canadian post-secondary institutions revealed a distinct lack of pedagogy, entrepreneurship and/or business training, a deficiency of diverse genres and musical style offerings, as well as the promotion of unrealistic professional narratives for performance majors. While most of these findings align with previous literature, this first-hand Canadian data is new and confirms that the primary focus of music performance degrees remains concentrated almost exclusively on performance and musicianship skills, with over 80% of curriculum dedicated to these aspects. Bearing in mind that an additional 10-15% of curriculum in each undergraduate performance program was devoted to non-music electives without any guidance from the institutions in terms of relevancy, or otherwise, the knowledge and skills required to maintain a diverse and multifaceted career in music are not explicitly evident within the undergraduate's required coursework. As a result, students are unprepared and lack training in imperative areas such as business skills (e.g., marketing, entrepreneurship, communications, finances), pedagogy, genre diversity, production, arts administration, and/or other music-related work they will undertake within the music industry.

The narratives studied on landing pages of websites for undergraduate performance programs and writing around required musicianship courses were also found to perpetuate unrealistic and narrow career narratives for students. Misleading young musicians' understanding of the classical music field by indicating performance-only careers are "the norm" and/or restricting their required coursework to align with narratives of solo, orchestral, or operatic performance employment as being the primary and successful outcome of their undergraduate degree delays, and, likely, impedes their development in other important and

opportune arenas (e.g., music-related non-performance skills). If institutions explicitly noted the portfolio career as the expected outcome for music performance students, graduates might consider their elective courses and non-performance work within their degree differently.

Research Highlights: Article 2

In the second article of the dissertation, a multi-part survey and follow-up interviews were used to uncover first-hand data about the experience of musicians in their Canadian undergraduate music performance degrees, including discussions of training, their subsequent career (whether this included the music industry or not), and their professional identity. The results revealed several central points. Most graduates felt their training did not prepare them for their careers because of a lack of business training, primarily, and that false narratives within the undergraduate performance experience regarding career expectations contributed to feelings of failure and identity crises. Additionally, participants in the interviews maintained that they led multifaceted portfolio careers, including music and non-music roles, and most confirmed that the institutional rhetoric of solo, orchestral, or operatic performance as the “ultimate success” did not resonate with their viewpoints. Instead, most participants preferred a portfolio that allowed for better work-life balance and lessened anxiety. Lastly, and perhaps most crucially, the study revealed that performance work entailed less than half of musicians’ work – frequently a quarter or less – and teaching was as significant and more financially viable than performance overall.

The themes of the study outlined how musicians had a lifelong relationship with music which was often strongly linked to their identity following graduation from music performance degrees whether they remained employed as musicians or not following graduation from music performance degrees. Music was described as “hard work” with significant work-life balance and mental health challenges. When discussing training, musicians from the survey affirmed that

institutions were out of step with the realities of the music industry. This disconnect led to idealistic and improbable expectations amongst students and faculty. Lastly, while most recognized their undergraduate education for its cultivation of high-level artistic abilities and discipline, participants outlined various gaps in career preparation outside of these skills, including business/entrepreneurship, pedagogy, nontraditional performance, genre/style diversity, and anxiety coping mechanisms. As the musicians noted that portfolio careers were a necessity for survival in the competitive music industry, the omission or lack of training in the aforementioned areas resulted in mental and financial strain for new graduates in particular.

The findings of the study revealed a complicated relationship between institutional training and musicians' careers that affected musicians' identities and work. While some graduates were able to reconcile differences between post-secondary training and the realities of the music industry by attaining new skills "on-the-job" or through additional education/experience, others felt that their degree programs set them up for failure and they ultimately left the profession. Even for those who did feel they acquired appropriate skills, the relentless nature of musicians' work, financial precarity, and diverse roles (unexpected or planned) required of a music career often led to an early exit from the industry, identity crises, and/or a sense of being overwhelmed by professional expectations in practice.

Participants in the portfolio career survey and interviews discussed the portfolio style of work as straining, both in the amount and type of work (e.g., having to accept every gig including through evening and weekends; travelling frequently) and the scant returns (e.g., financially; professionally). Musicians' self-worth and mental well-being (as well as that of their families) were affected, particularly if performance work was expected and not realized, or expected but a habitual source of anxiety. As a result, a recurring topic was the idea of

broadening roles to allow for a better work-life balance, including non-performance roles and roles beyond the music industry. Participants then revealed that their definitions of success differed greatly from those of institutions and included more holistic ideals than performance-oriented ones. Lastly, there was some dissidence amongst respondents and interviewees regarding their feelings toward their academic training overall, with some sharing that their undergraduate experience was generally positive despite shortcomings while others claimed their experience was harmful to their identity, sense of self, and eventual career.

This article exposed various gaps in post-secondary training for Canadian musicians working in the industry today while equally presenting what this work entails, upon which there was previously little to no data in Canada. Although respondents generally maintained a strong sense of identity before, during, and after their performance training, many reported that this identity was challenged by post-secondary institutions' misrepresentation of what a musician's career entails. Upon entering the music industry, those who successfully adapted their personal narratives to align with the reality of the industry often did so independently of their formal education. In contrast, respondents who struggled to make this transition frequently expressed frustration or resentment, citing harm caused by these unrealistic or idealized portrayals. As such, one conclusion from this article is that post-secondary institutions should fully acknowledge and explicitly promote portfolio careers as the leading sustainable career path for musicians rather than specially focussing on performance, and, consequently, skills to sustain such a career should be more prominent within the performance curriculum.

Research Highlights: Article 3

The final standalone article of this dissertation surveyed musicians who had performed in a specific nontraditional performance setting: adaptive concerts. These performances geared toward individuals with disabilities and neurodiverse audiences were found to be an increasingly significant opportunity for musicians to gain work, a trend that matches other nontraditional performance opportunities within healthcare and other areas. However, despite the prominence of nontraditional performance amongst working musicians today, the results of the survey reveal that such performances are vastly underrepresented in undergraduate performance curriculum and, if discussed, they may be downplayed or implied to be “lesser than” or less valuable than traditional performances.

However, the study strongly contradicts the notion that nontraditional performances are viewed as “lesser than” amongst musicians themselves on multiple fronts. First, musicians in the study shared that nontraditional performances formed a significant portion of their portfolio. Second, such performances proved to be extremely meaningful with the majority of musicians specifying they were more meaningful than traditional performances and equally or more satisfying. Third, musicians indicated that the level of artistic excellence required for adaptive concerts was equal to that of traditional contexts. Lastly, respondents stated that they desired more training in nontraditional performance practices, which signals they would like to increase their abilities and continue to perform in such contexts.

Survey participants raised concerns around the idea that society, institutions, and students without knowledge of nontraditional performance who are affected by societal and institutional narratives project certain negative connotations on performing in nontraditional contexts, and that the pay for such engagements is regularly less than traditional contexts. However, while

musicians from the study disclosed that their nontraditional training in undergraduate degrees was nonexistent or limited, they indicated that nonprofits and presenters were attempting to fill this gap with individualized programs, training, and meetings prior to adaptive concert performances. This investment demonstrates that value placed on such concerts as these third parties are providing precious resources to support nontraditional programming and artists.

Another theme from this article was that adaptive concerts and other nontraditional presentations require flexibility and additional skills compared to traditional performances including empathy, communication, and patience. As many of the adaptive survey musicians performed multiple adaptive concerts per year, and 92% additionally performed in long-term care settings and 89% for children's performances, such events are seemingly prominent amongst musicians. As a result, the skills related to such work need to be addressed in formal training, such as in undergraduate performance curriculum.

Adaptive concert musicians reported a deepened connection with audiences, leading to both positive and challenging outcomes including more meaningful relationships than in traditional performances, but also the need for greater effort in creating appropriate and inclusive interactions. Similarly, compared with traditional performances, special labour is involved in the curation aspect of nontraditional performances where accessible interactions with audiences, diverse styles and/or genres, and more, shorter pieces (i.e., more compositions or sections of multiple compositions) are essential. Overall, musicians noted that extra training and clarity on what to expect in nontraditional settings would allow them greater comfort and the ability to prepare more efficiently and effectively for adaptive concerts, pointing to a need for theoretical and experiential coursework in formal music education settings.

Synthesis Discussion Part I

The first section of the synthesis discussion highlights how certain articles' topics dovetailed into one another while also exposing some discrepancies. Article 1 demonstrates that undergraduate music performance curricula include little to no required coursework in pedagogy or business, with only a few elective options available. The lack of pedagogy and business training in undergraduate curriculum clashes sharply with the findings in Article 2, where musicians consistently noted that such skills were critical to their careers. The disconnect between the needs of musicians and performance curriculum indicates that institutions are not equipping students with the fundamental tools they need for professional success, reinforcing a gap between academic preparation and real-world demands. This finding underscores the necessity of integrating pedagogy and business training as core components of music performance programs rather than treating them as peripheral or optional subjects. However, a notable discrepancy arises in the discussion of pedagogy. While Article 1 presents evidence that music curricula include minimal pedagogy requirements and offer few elective courses on the subject, in Article 2, many surveyed musicians claimed that pedagogy was a required part of their coursework. This contradiction may stem from a misunderstanding of what constitutes pedagogy or a recall bias among participants. Some musicians may have conflated informal teaching experiences or single-course introductions with structured pedagogical training, leading to an overestimation of their formal preparation. The qualitative feedback from both the survey and from all interviews in Article 2 support the notion that pedagogical training is lacking in post-secondary music performance education. The absence of substantial pedagogical training in undergraduate programs is particularly troubling given that teaching is one of the most common professional activities for musicians. The lack of required coursework, combined with the

broader institutional narrative that undervalues teaching, reinforces a hierarchy where performance is prioritized over education. This undervaluation further disincentivizes students from developing necessary teaching skills, leaving them underprepared for one of the seemingly most stable and essential components in a musician's career.

Article 1 highlights another crucial component that is missing in required coursework: exposure to diverse styles and genres. Article 2 similarly demonstrates that musicians encounter and value such diversity in their professional work but have little formal training in styles outside of the Western classical canon. Article 3 further reinforces the need for stylistic diversity, as musicians noted that incorporating multiple genres was essential to their careers. Moreover, despite some institutions listing courses in diverse genres as electives, participants in Article 2 indicated that these courses were often unavailable to access in practice. This points to a systemic issue where institutions may acknowledge the importance of genre diversity but fail to provide practical opportunities for students to engage with it in their training.

Article 2 examined how performance opportunities hold deep significance for musicians and revealed that, for some, the pursuit of a music career was driven in part by experiences with nontraditional performance. However, the article also revealed that institutions often frame these opportunities as lesser than traditional performance paths, a framing which discourages students from pursuing them. Additionally, relevant training in this area is largely absent. Article 3 reinforced the significance of nontraditional performance work, with many musicians asserting that it requires the same – if not more – skills than traditional performance settings and similarly stating that nontraditional performances are frequently more meaningful than traditional ones. Despite the significance of nontraditional performance work in practice, undergraduate programs provide little to no training for these types of performances, further exacerbating the gap between

education and professional reality. However, while Article 3 demonstrates that musicians view nontraditional work as highly meaningful, this sentiment does not figure as prominently in Article 2. While this discrepancy does not negate the significance of nontraditional performance, it suggests that its value may be more apparent to those who have actively engaged in such work rather than to all surveyed musicians. This further supports participants' experiences in this study that suggest institutions they attended did not adequately highlight nontraditional performance paths as viable career options.

Synthesis Discussion Part II

The second section of the synthesis discussion addresses the central findings of the three articles in combination, detailing basic gaps in current music performance curricula: a lack of pedagogical training, inadequate integration of entrepreneurship and business skills, limited exposure to diverse musical genres and nontraditional performance opportunities, and the persistence of unrealistic narratives around full-time performance careers. These gaps contribute to an incomplete education model that leaves graduates underprepared for the realities of a modern music career. This section explores each of these four issues and provides recommendations for post-secondary institutions to improve their programs.

Lack of Pedagogical Training

Even though teaching is one of the most common activities among music graduates, pedagogy is often absent or optional in performance programs. Survey responses confirmed that many graduates relied on teaching to sustain their careers, yet they felt unprepared for this role because of a lack of formal training. The absence of pedagogy coursework reinforces the perception that teaching is a secondary or lesser pursuit compared to performance, discouraging

students from recognizing its value as an integral part of a professional music career. Many institutions perpetuate this issue by failing to include teaching-related content as required courses or in applied lessons. As a result, graduates often develop their pedagogical skills through trial and error, rather than receiving structured guidance during their studies. This lack of preparation has consequences not only for the musicians themselves but also for the quality of instruction they provide to future generations of students.

Recommendations:

1. Make pedagogy courses a mandatory component of undergraduate music performance degrees for all instrumentalists and singers, not only pianists.
2. Provide hands-on teaching experiences throughout the undergraduate degree (e.g., afford upper-year undergraduates opportunities to deliver masterclasses and/or studio classes).
3. Integrate discussions of pedagogy into applied lessons, encouraging students to analyze and reflect on their own learning processes and their professors' teaching methods.
4. Emphasize the importance of teaching in career advising, reinforcing its legitimacy as a core professional skill.

Inadequate Integration of Entrepreneurship and Business Skills

A recurring concern among participants and an evident issue in current Canadian curricula was the lack of formal entrepreneurship and business training in music performance programs. While students develop high-level artistic skills, they graduate with little to no preparation for the financial, marketing, and administrative aspects of sustaining a career. Many reported feeling lost when it came to securing gigs, managing taxes, applying for grants, or promoting their work. Still more described a post-graduation realization that self-employment is the norm rather than the exception in the music industry – a concept completely at odds with their educational experience and institutional narratives. Unfortunately, the issue with entrepreneurial practices in the performing arts is not simply the absence of entrepreneurship courses but also the failure to embed business training throughout the curriculum and communicate its importance. Treating

entrepreneurship as an elective or external offering conveys the impression that it is an optional skill rather than an essential aspect of professional musicianship. Some students resist the idea of thinking of themselves as entrepreneurs, viewing business skills as separate from their artistic identity. Institutions must actively challenge this mindset by demonstrating how business acumen empowers musicians to create sustainable, fulfilling careers.

Recommendations:

1. Integrate entrepreneurial training throughout undergraduate training, including in multiple courses and across institutional rhetoric.
2. Introduce business and marketing concepts early in the degree to normalize self-led career development.
3. Bring in working professionals and successful alumni to mentor students on career-building strategies.
4. Frame entrepreneurship not as a separate discipline but as an essential skill set that enhances artistic autonomy.

Limited Exposure to Diverse Musical Genres and Nontraditional Performance Opportunities

Music performance programs prioritize Western art music traditions, even though most professional musicians engage with a broad range of genres and performance contexts. Many study participants expressed frustration that their training had not adequately prepared them for the diversity of musical styles they encountered in their professional work. Those who later incorporated jazz, folk, contemporary, or world music into their careers habitually sought additional training outside of their formal education or learned “on the job.” Beyond genre limitations, traditional curricula also neglect nontraditional performance opportunities, such as interdisciplinary collaborations, community-based projects, music in healthcare, and alternative concert formats. Many musicians engage in these activities post-graduation, yet they are seldom acknowledged or valued within academic programs. The failure to expose students to these

career paths reinforces the notion that traditional concert hall performance is the only legitimate form of musical success. This not only limits students' creative and professional opportunities but also perpetuates a model of music culture that does not reflect contemporary artistic practice.

Recommendations:

1. Expand course offerings to include diverse musical traditions and contemporary genres.
2. Allow students to study and present more underrepresented composers within the Western art music tradition and non-classical repertoire in their studies, including in their lessons and recitals.
3. Encourage student participation in nontraditional performance settings, such as site-specific concerts, multimedia collaborations, and outreach projects, which may be added to performance curriculum coursework.
4. Frame diverse musical experiences as valuable, rather than treating them as secondary to classical performance norms.

Unrealistic Narratives Around Full-Time Performance Careers

A fundamental issue in undergraduate music performance education is the persistence of a narrative that equates professional success with full-time high-level performance careers. In reality, the majority of musicians build portfolio careers that incorporate a mix of performance, teaching, administrative work, and other music-related or non-music roles. However, institutions continue to emphasize performance as the primary – or even the only – valid career path, as noted by many participants in Article 2. This creates identity struggles for graduates who find themselves in multifaceted careers, as they may perceive any musical career other than full-time performance as a failure rather than an imperfectly presented industry norm. Several participants noted that their institutions rarely discussed the realities of financial instability, job market precarity, or work-life balance associated with performance careers. Many musicians ultimately seek out diversified roles to achieve stability and personal fulfillment, yet these realities are often excluded from institutional rhetoric. Some graduates reported feeling blindsided by the need to

piece together multiple income streams, as their education had not adequately prepared them for this model of professional life. Reframing the conversation around portfolio careers is essential for aligning educational programs with professional realities. Rather than presenting diversification as a fallback, institutions should position it as an expected and viable career model. This shift would not only provide students with a more realistic understanding of their prospects but also reduce the stigma associated with pursuing varied career paths.

Recommendations:

1. Redefine career success in institutional messaging to include portfolio careers rather than primarily focusing on solo, orchestral, or operatic performance careers.
2. Incorporate discussions of career diversification into professional development courses and career advising, especially from faculty already interacting with students regularly.
3. Invite working musicians with diverse career paths to speak with students, showcasing real-world examples of sustainable careers and affirming that musicians at all stages and levels of the music industry hold multiple roles.
4. Provide resources and training on managing multiple career streams, helping students develop the skills needed for professional flexibility.

The gaps identified in this second synthesis section reveal a need for significant reform in music performance education. Pedagogy training must be recognized as a core professional skill rather than an optional add-on. Entrepreneurship and business skills must be integrated into the curriculum rather than treated as external knowledge. Exposure to diverse genres and nontraditional performance settings should be expanded to reflect the breadth of professional opportunities available to musicians. Finally, institutional narratives must shift to acknowledge the reality of portfolio careers, ensuring that students graduate with a clear and realistic understanding of their future in the industry. Addressing these issues better prepares future generations of musicians for sustainable and fulfilling careers.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the dissertation examines how the study contributes to theory and practice and highlights how the author's experience aligns with the study's findings. Future research is outlined and a summary of the recommendations from the dissertation are provided.

Contributions to Theory

This study contributes to the application and extension of Mertens' transformative lens (the overarching theory of the dissertation) particularly in the context of music performance education. By situating the dissertation within a framework that prioritizes the voices of marginalized groups and seeks practical avenues for advocacy, the study demonstrates how transformative research principles can be operationalized to address systemic gaps in post-secondary music training. Mertens' theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of amplifying underrepresented perspectives and using research as a tool for social change. This dissertation applies these principles by foregrounding the lived experiences of music performance graduates and critically examining how their training has prepared them for professional realities. Through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study highlights the ways in which existing curricula may reinforce exclusionary practices, particularly for musicians who face financial, social, or systemic barriers to professional success. Beyond identifying these limitations, the research actively engages with the advocacy-oriented dimension of the transformative lens in that it integrates qualitative insights with broader discussions on curriculum design and moves further into a descriptive analysis to propose recommendations for educational reform. This practical contribution aligns with Mertens' emphasis on research that is both participatory and action-driven and aspires to have the findings serve not only as an academic contribution but as a catalyst for meaningful change in the field.

The dissertation also extends the transformative lens beyond its previous usages. While Mertens' framework has been widely applied in education and social sciences, its application in music and post-secondary training remains underexplored. This dissertation extends the transformative lens by demonstrating its relevance to professional music education and, more broadly, to human rights activism in the arts. The researcher demonstrates that the transformative lens provides a powerful theoretical foundation in advocating for greater access to cultural events, particularly for marginalized audiences such as individuals with disabilities and neurodiverse groups by training musicians for nontraditional performance practices. Current traditional music performances often exclude these audiences because of rigid concert norms, limited accessibility, and a lack of inclusive programming. The research engages with scholarship on nontraditional performance practices, particularly adaptive concerts designed to accommodate diverse audience needs. By framing these initiatives through the transformative lens, the study positions inclusive performance practices as an extension of social justice work, reinforcing the idea that access to cultural events is not merely an artistic consideration but a fundamental human right. This extension of the theory shifts the focus from solely transforming performer training to reconsidering how music institutions and concert experiences can be redesigned to be more equitable. In doing so, it highlights the broader societal role of music performance and its potential as a vehicle for advocacy and systemic change.

Lastly regarding the transformative lens, there are practical and novel theoretical contributions from the dissertation. The primary theoretical contribution of this dissertation is its synthesis of transformative research principles with the realities of music performance education. By providing a structured analysis of how performance training aligns (or fails to align) with professional demands, the study offers insights that can inform both curriculum designers and

arts policymakers. Moreover, this research serves as an example of how qualitative methodologies, such as *in vivo* coding and cross-case analysis, may be used to generate findings that are both theoretically rich and practically applicable. The emphasis on lived experiences ensures that the study remains rooted in the realities of those most affected by educational inequities, reinforcing the transformative principle that research should serve as an instrument for advocacy and change.

In addition to contributions to the transformative lens, this research contributes to an expanded theoretical understanding of the entrepreneurial spirit as it manifests within the lived realities of music graduates. Rather than approaching entrepreneurship through a traditional economic or business framework, the study reveals it to be an embedded, adaptive mindset – an entrepreneurial spirit that must emerge to respond to structural gaps between formal training and the demands of real-world music work. Those participants who managed to remain working in the music industry described forging flexible, creative, and often community-centered careers that required initiative, risk-taking, and innovation which are hallmarks of entrepreneurial thinking. Through the transformative lens, these entrepreneurial practices are recast not only as career strategies but as acts of agency. They reflect a proactive effort to build sustainable artistic lives outside of rigid institutional norms, and to imagine new ways of engaging with audiences and communities. In this way, the entrepreneurial spirit revealed in the study aligns with the broader social justice orientation of transformative research, as musicians reconfigure traditional pathways to foster inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful cultural participation. This highlights the urgent need to integrate entrepreneurial thinking as a core element of undergraduate music curriculum – a through-thread essential to preparing students for the diverse realities of musical life.

This study also contributes to social constructionist theory by emphasizing how musicians actively construct meaning around their professional identities in relation to their sociocultural contexts. Rather than passively accepting institutional definitions of success or legitimacy, participants articulated alternative narratives that challenged dominant assumptions about what a “real” or “successful” music career entails. These narratives were shaped not only by personal experience, but by broader discourses of inclusion, access, and artistic relevance. The research, therefore, underscores the socially constructed nature of music careers and highlights how meaning is co-created through interaction with audiences, communities, and institutions. Furthermore, the findings speak to social identity theory by demonstrating how music graduates negotiate their sense of self within (and sometimes against) the professional roles and expectations of post-secondary institutions. Participants’ identities as musicians were often fluid, context-dependent, and shaped by their affiliations with multiple groups (e.g., educators; performers). This dynamic process of identity construction reflects both the challenges and the strategic self-determination inherent in navigating post-graduation life, offering new insights into how social belonging, recognition, and validation are experienced within the arts sector.

Through its application and extension of the transformative lens, this dissertation not only deepens theoretical discussions on equity in education but also offers a framework for institutional reform. By bridging the gap between academic discourse and real-world impact, the study contributes to an evolving conversation on how research can be used to reshape music education in ways that are more inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of the diverse professional pathways musicians pursue today.

Contributions to Practice

This research provides practical contributions that extend beyond theoretical discussions, offering insights for musicians, educators, researchers, and institutions seeking to bridge the gap between music performance education and professional realities. By analyzing the lived experiences of music graduates, this study highlights actionable areas for reform in curriculum design, professional preparation, and inclusive performance practices.

For post-secondary music institutions, this dissertation presents an evidence-based case for reevaluating how performance training aligns with professional demands. The findings suggest that current curricula often prioritize traditional, conservatory-style training without sufficiently addressing the diverse career pathways available to musicians today. By integrating recommendations grounded in qualitative research, the study provides institutions with a data-backed roadmap for designing more holistic programs that prepare students for portfolio careers that will more than likely include a combination of performance, pedagogy, entrepreneurship, and non-music work. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of accessibility in both education and performance. Institutions that implement nontraditional performance training (such as for adaptive concerts) and inclusive programming within their curricula will not only equip students with necessary skills for engaging diverse audiences but also position themselves as leaders in equitable and socially responsible arts education.

For musicians, particularly those navigating careers outside traditional orchestral or solo performance tracks (i.e., the majority of working musicians today), this research validates and amplifies their lived experiences. By documenting the realities of professional life after graduation, the study offers a framework for understanding career development in a rapidly evolving industry. The findings encourage musicians to embrace entrepreneurial skills,

interdisciplinary collaboration, and advocacy as integral components of their artistic practice while also revealing that success comes in many forms and is not limited to those who project performance-only careers. Additionally, the study highlights the growing importance of diverse genre work and nontraditional performance models, such as adaptive concerts for individuals with disabilities and neurodiverse audiences. The research not only legitimizes these aspects of musicians' professional endeavours as valuable career opportunities but also calls for broader institutional recognition and support. Musicians trained in inclusive performance practices will be better equipped to engage diverse audiences and expand the reach of their artistry beyond conventional concert settings.

For researchers and pedagogues, this dissertation contributes methodological and conceptual advancements in studying music education and career trajectories. The use of *in vivo* coding and cross-case analysis offers a replicable framework for qualitative research in music performance training, demonstrating how researchers can center the voices of graduates to inform curriculum reform. Additionally, by integrating the transformative lens into discussions on music performance education, this study expands the scope of research on equity in the arts. It provides a theoretical model for future studies investigating not only curriculum design but also broader issues of accessibility, representation, and social justice within music training and performance.

This dissertation provides a critical and previously unavailable dataset on music performance education in Canada, filling a significant gap in research. Prior to this study, there was no comprehensive curriculum data specific to music performance degree programs in Canada, nor was there first-hand data from Canadian musicians on how their training has shaped their professional trajectories. By collecting and analyzing these perspectives through a nationwide survey and follow-up interviews, this research offers an unprecedented look at the

effectiveness of post-secondary music training from the viewpoint of those who have experienced it firsthand. This contribution is particularly valuable for educators, policymakers, and institutions seeking to make evidence-based decisions about curriculum development. By establishing a foundational dataset, this study paves the way for future research into the evolving needs of musicians and provides a benchmark for assessing and improving performance training programs across the country.

Postscript: Reflections from Lived Experience

Reaching the conclusion of this research, it is important to share how deeply the themes identified through participant responses have resonated with my own lived experience as a musician. This reflection serves not only to contribute to the study's overall depth, but also to embody the spirit of transformation central to the transformative lens, highlighting how a shared, saturated, and seemingly homogeneous participant group may still yield valid insights and rally toward meaningful change. While my initial aim was to explore the experiences of others, I found myself repeatedly nodding in recognition as interviewees spoke of the disconnect between their formal training and the careers they ultimately shaped. I strongly believe that these careers are not only viable, but vibrant, creative, and successful, and they reflect the true nature of music work in Canada today.

Like many of the participants, I recall feeling uncertain during my undergraduate studies, not because of a lack of drive or talent, but because the narrow vision of "success" institutions presented did not align with my own aspirations. Along with my contemporaries, I was immersed in solo piano repertoire (e.g., concertos or showpieces) that I knew I did not intend to be performing publicly in the future. I was also expected to orient my entire professional identity

around performance, despite knowing, even then, that I did not want to be a soloist and had other musical and non-musical interests. Collaborative work energized me. The idea of engaging in diverse musical settings and building a career that extended beyond the stage was not only appealing, but it also felt truer to my artistic self. Yet, these pathways were rarely acknowledged, let alone celebrated, in my formal training.

The portfolio career I eventually built, which spans performance, arts programming, education, administration, and research, was never introduced to me as a legitimate or desirable option during my studies. I had to discover this career on my own, largely by observing how colleagues cobbled together their work, meeting with various musicians, arts administrators, and curators for coffee (i.e., advice), and by trial and error. And while this path has at times been exhausting, it has also allowed for more sustainable income, creativity, and personal agency than a singular focus on performance could have offered. In fact, my portfolio career has improved my performance skills as well, and perhaps most importantly, it has kept me rooted in the artistic community I care so much about.

Collecting, reading, and analyzing data for this dissertation that outlined the experiences of my participants was revealing and galvanizing. The consistency across stories – the clarity with which musicians articulated their diverse practices, the frustrations with outdated curricular priorities, the desire for mentorship and more realistic career preparation – strengthened my conviction that change is not only necessary, but already underway. What remains is for educational institutions and professional organizations to catch up with what musicians already know: portfolio careers are not a consolation prize, but a cornerstone of musical life. As such, portfolio careers must be more overtly displayed and the diverse skills they require need to be communicated as part of music performance curriculum.

The recommendations of this study emerge primarily from the voices of my participants, but in my own voice as a portfolio careerist and researcher I, too, urge institutions and society to recalibrate definitions of success in music to match the longtime standard and current reality of musicians' portfolio work. As musicians and educators in the field, we must embrace plurality over hierarchy and prepare students not just for the "spotlight," but for the full spectrum of creative and professional opportunities that exist in music today. We must legitimize the portfolio model from the outset, present it proudly, support it explicitly, and resource it fully. Doing so will not only better equip emerging musicians for the realities ahead but will also affirm the rich, adaptive, and multi-dimensional lives that so many of us are already living and loving.

Future Research

This dissertation rouses various areas for future research across its comprehensive topics. First, additional data on curriculum offerings, including in-depth analysis of course descriptions and elective courses, should be undertaken, particularly at the undergraduate level. Second, topics related to music business should be examined to determine if they are themselves relevant to the current music industry market. Third, research on the current requirements of undergraduate curriculum within musicianship should be pursued to provide practical advice for curriculum reform that counteracts the additions required (i.e., curriculum changes or cuts may be necessary to make room for new and alternative requirements). Fourth, discussion around barriers to curriculum reform warrant investigation. Lastly, in the curriculum domain, a broader spectrum of Canadian data (beyond the five institutions specifically selected in the curriculum

section of this study) would further inform students, educators, and institutions about the landscape of Canadian undergraduate performance curriculum.

Future research should also examine how music performance identity, career development, and curriculum evolve in graduate studies, as this dissertation revealed that many undergraduate music performance students who remain in the field pursue further education. While existing literature suggests that graduate programs place an even greater emphasis on performance with fewer course requirements than undergraduate degrees, it remains unclear whether professional development opportunities, identity formation, or career narratives shift significantly at this stage. A deeper understanding of these factors could inform more holistic approaches to preparing musicians for sustainable careers.

Aside from curriculum itself at any post-secondary level, the rhetoric and narratives of post-secondary institutions should be further studied to understand the messaging in recruitment and throughout the early years of study for musicians as the dissertation revealed the social construction of musician identity was strongly influenced by institutional narratives. Discussions with policy makers, administrators, and educators would provide additional understanding of current and future intentions with curriculum.

Post-secondary coursework on nontraditional performances should be scrutinized to determine if there are current offerings to support this aspect of musicians' careers (no known studies to date examine this aspect of curriculum). Outside of curriculum, nontraditional performance work must also be studied as current research is scarce on music and health from performer and workforce perspectives. With limited data available, particularly in Canada, musicians and policymakers are unable to accurately assess and advance the nascent field, which

is particularly relevant for disability and neurodiverse communities who have traditionally been underrepresented as audience members in the performing arts.

While curriculum reforms may be seen as evident based on literature and the industry today, in practice the integration of curriculum changes may face significant barriers. These factors need to be investigated, and may include:

1. Bureaucracy and institutional inertia
2. Resistance from current faculty members
3. Financial and resource constraints
4. Perceived devaluation of Western canonical tradition

To elaborate, structural rigidity may slow the implementation of meaningful change. Curriculum committees navigate extensive approval processes, which may delay reforms. The institutional hiring process could further reinforce this inertia, as new faculty members may fit within existing academic frameworks rather than bringing in diverse, industry-relevant expertise. In addition to new hires, some longstanding/tenured faculty members may see no need to alter their courses, while others feel that new pedagogical approaches threaten established expertise and positions. Even when institutions acknowledge the importance of entrepreneurship, pedagogy, or diverse musical styles, existing faculty may not have the necessary skills to teach these subjects. Budgetary limitations could further complicate efforts to modernize music curricula. Implementing new courses, hiring faculty with industry-relevant expertise, and restructuring programs may require financial investment, which many institutions may be reluctant or unable to provide. These potential barriers, among others, should be investigated to determine how they influence and affect music performance curricula.

Unexpected or unsolicited results, particularly from Article 2, warrant new studies in the areas of work-life balance, mental health, and personal relationships for working musicians. Differences by gender should also be considered, as this study illuminated some divergences

between female and male respondents. Performance anxiety, which was not an explicit topic in questioning, was prevalent in responses around reasons for desiring portfolio careers (to lessen stress of performance itself) and this should be examined to determine how musicians might be better supported in mental preparation for performances and/or if having portfolio careers reduces anxiety in performance settings or simply lessens the number of performances overall contributing to less anxiety.

Lastly, a longitudinal study tracking musicians from pre-college through university and into their careers (whether they remain in music or transition to other fields) would provide valuable insights into career preparation and identity development. Such research could clarify how musicians navigate their professional paths, identify gaps in career support, and capture employment trends not currently reflected in university or census data. By documenting career trajectories and the evolving roles musicians assume over time, this study could offer a more comprehensive picture of success and sustainability in the Canadian music industry.

Summary

This dissertation examines the relevance of music performance training to the careers of 21st-century musicians, revealing significant gaps between post-secondary education and the realities of professional life. The findings indicate that current curricula, which focus on Western classical performance, inadequately prepare graduates for the diverse, entrepreneurial, and multifaceted careers they ultimately pursue. While technical and artistic training remain crucial, institutions must recognize that career sustainability depends on broader competencies, including pedagogy, business acumen, and the ability to engage with multiple genres and performance formats. Without intentional curriculum reform, graduates will continue to enter the workforce unprepared for the challenges and opportunities of the modern music industry.

The research highlights four key areas where curricular reform is urgently needed: the integration of pedagogical training, comprehensive entrepreneurship education, exposure to diverse musical genres and nontraditional performance settings, and a fundamental shift in the narrative surrounding career success. Teaching is a primary source of income for musicians, yet it remains undervalued and underrepresented in training programs. Likewise, business skills, essential for self-sustaining careers, are often omitted or relegated to elective coursework which consigns graduates to navigate professional realities through trial and error. The exclusion of non-classical genres and alternative performance models further limits students' adaptability, reinforcing a vision of success that does not align with industry realities. Perhaps most importantly, institutions must move beyond the ideal of full-time performance careers as the pinnacle of success and instead embrace portfolio careers as the prevailing professional model (given their historical and modern prevalence, this style of career is evidently the main path for musicians despite potentially being at odds with institutional/societal projections of musicians). As Bartleet et al. note (2012), a musician's career is inherently complex, requiring a broad skill set that extends beyond performance mastery to encompass strategic career development, adaptability, and creative problem-solving. To modernize music performance degrees and ensure their continued relevance, post-secondary institutions must take decisive action.

The following recommendations summarize key areas for reform:

1. **Require pedagogy coursework for all performance students** to ensure that those who pursue teaching (i.e., most working musicians) are equipped with necessary skills.
2. **Integrate entrepreneurial training throughout curricula**
3. **Expand curricular offerings beyond the Western Classical Tradition**, incorporating diverse genres and performance practices to better reflect the professional landscape.
4. **Reframe career success narratives to advance portfolio careers as the norm**, emphasizing the viability of multi-faceted professional paths rather than positioning orchestral, operatic, or solo performance as the ultimate goal.

Success in the music profession is not solely determined by technical excellence but by the ability to implement creative, strategic, and resourceful career-building approaches. Institutions must evolve to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to navigate this reality. By embracing curriculum reforms that align with the lived experiences of musicians, post-secondary programs may cultivate a generation of adaptable, self-sufficient artists who are not only exceptional performers but also capable of sustaining meaningful and diverse careers in music.

Works Cited

Bartleet, Brydie, Dawn Bennett, Ruth Bridgstock, Paul Draper, Scott Harrison, and Huib Schippers. 2012. "Preparing for Portfolio Careers in Australian Music: Setting a Research Agenda." *Australian Journal of Music Education* 1 (1): 32–41.

Appendices

Appendix A. Diagram 1: Research Questions and Dissertation Roadmap

Appendix B. Portfolio Career Survey Consent Form (Article 2)

Appendix C. Portfolio Career Survey Questions (Article 2)

Appendix D. Adaptive Concert Invitation to Participate (Article 3)

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Appendix F. Adaptive Concert Survey Questions (Article 3)

Appendix G. Portfolio Career Interview Invitation (Article 2)

Appendix H. Portfolio Career Interview Consent Form (Article 2)

Appendix I. Portfolio Career Interview Protocol (Article 2)

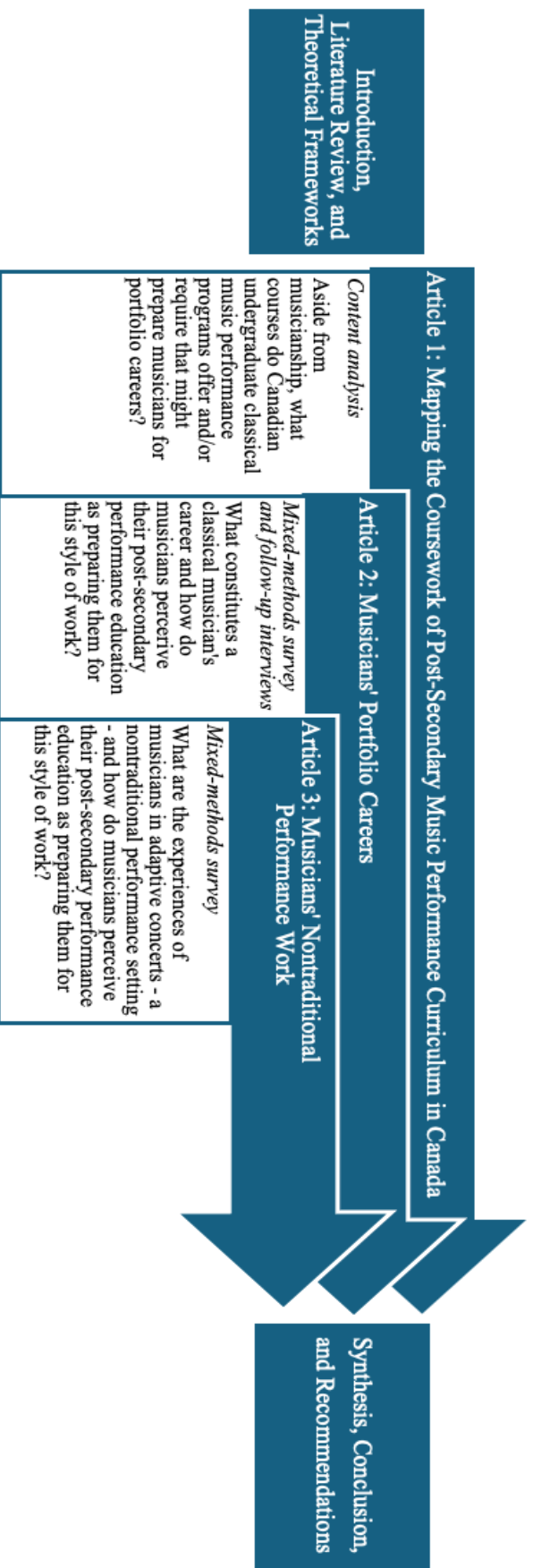
Appendix J. Ethics Approval Certificate

Appendix K. Expanded Table 4 from Article 2

Appendix L. Framing Questions of the Transformative Lens (Sweetman et al. 2010)

Appendix A. Diagram 1: Research Questions and Dissertation Roadmap

What is the relevancy of a classical musician's post-secondary music performance education to their career?



Appendix B. Portfolio Career Survey Consent Form (Article 2)

RESEARCH SURVEY CONSENT FORM: Portfolio Career Survey

Principal Investigator: Jenna Richards, School of Music, University of Ottawa

Supervisor: Dr. Dillon Parmer, School of Music, University of Ottawa

This project will elicit feedback from music performance undergraduate alumni who studied at Canadian post-secondary institutions regarding their education and careers. The study is being conducted for academic purposes as part of the PI's PhD thesis under the supervision of Dr. Parmer. The purpose of this study is to acquire and disseminate data around musicians' training and working lives to uncover curriculum strengths and weaknesses, working patterns, common portfolio career structures, and identity attributes of music performance graduates. The study seeks to determine how musicians work, if their post-secondary training supports their careers, what skills are taught and required for 21st century music practice, and whether industry and institutional rhetoric is reflective of musicians' identities and working habits. The intention is to better understand musicians' experiences, education, and to help inform curriculum, community, and artistic practice to improve musicians training and understanding of the field to acknowledge industry realities and support holistic and realistic practice.

You are invited to participate in the study by completing a one-time online survey ([link](#) to Survey Monkey sent by email). Data acquired from the survey is anonymous. The survey will include questions regarding undergraduate curriculum choices, career aspirations and expectations, institutional practices, entrepreneurship interest, identity, and work experience. It will also include retrospective career expectations compared to practice realities, as well as questions pertaining to career portfolios, identity, and self-education following graduation. The researcher anticipates that in gaining better understanding of musicians' training and working lives, institutions and the music industry will be able to better support artists in their identity and career construction. The PI is a musician active in the industry with significant experience researching portfolio careers. Your participation in the study will consist of completing the one-time survey online. Your participation will entail discussing your training, career, and identity. Your personal identity will be protected, and data will be used for the purposes outlined above.

The data collected will be kept in a secure manner via password protection and will only be accessible by the PI of the study. To minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, it is recommended that you use standard safety measures, such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your device when the survey is completed.

You are under no obligation to participate and should you choose to participate you retain the right to:

- withdraw from the study at any time (however due to anonymous data collection it will not be possible to withdraw submitted survey data)
- refuse to answer questions without fear of reprisal or ill treatment
- be informed of how your identity will be protected in the publication of data
- be informed of the limits of confidentiality

Participants may contact the researcher with any questions/concerns about the research being conducted. Should participants wish to file a complaint regarding this study, the Ethics Office at the University of Ottawa has a due process. Their contact information follows:

Tabaret Hall, Room 154

550 Cumberland St

Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1N 6N5

Tel.: 613-562-5387

Fax.: 613-562-5338

ethics@uottawa.ca

By clicking “Yes” on the online survey landing page, you are consenting to participate in this study. The participation of the participant does not mean that you have given up any right, but rather that you have been informed of the requirements of the proposed research and that you agree to take part in the research project. It is recommended that you retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

Appendix C. Portfolio Career Survey Questions (Article 2)

Portfolio Career Survey

(Plain text downloaded from online SurveyMonkey portal)

This survey consists of 34 questions and will take approximately 10–20 minutes to complete.

1. I consent to participating in this survey.

Yes, I consent

The first section asks about your background

2. What year did you graduate from your music performance undergraduate program?

3. Where did you attend your music performance undergraduate program?

Eastern Canada

Western Canada

Ontario

Outside of Canada

Quebec

Other (please specify)

4. What was your primary instrument or voice type?

5. Did you pursue further formal education following your undergraduate in performance?
If yes, please specify any degrees obtained.

Artist Diploma

MMus, MA in music, or equivalent

DMA, DMUS, or equivalent

PhD in music

No

Other (such as non-music degrees, please list)

The next section asks about your career.

6. Which of the following aspects of the music industry have you engaged with professionally (defined by receiving compensation)? Please select any/all that apply.

Arranging/charting/transcription

Production (live performance)

Arts administration (organizations/collectives)

Production (recording)

Artist management

Programming

Artist management

Orchestral performance

Composition

Research

Event management

Teaching in post-secondary institutions
(contractor or employee)

Freelance performance

Teaching in schools (K–12)

Fundraising

Teaching privately

Grant writing

Other (please specify)

Music marketing

Music therapy

7. What is your principal source of income? (Please write out your role from the list above or another role from outside the music industry.)
8. For approximately how many years have you been or were you a professional musician? (“Professional musician” in this context is self-determined; loosely defined as receiving compensation for your artistic practice; not necessarily full-time; not necessarily exclusively performance activities.)
9. Excluding Covid-19 prevention of work, have you remained active as a professional musician since graduation?

Yes No Partially Other (please specify)

10. How many roles do you currently hold in your professional career (defined by receiving compensation)?

- 0
 1
 2
 3
 4
 5+

11. In terms of time, what percentage of your career would you estimate is performance related (e.g., performing, rehearsing, etc.)?

- 0–25%
 26–50%
 51–75%
 76–100%

12. Do you engage in any of the following nontraditional performances? Please select any/all that apply.

- Long-term care/senior home/nursing home performances
 Bar concerts
 Adapted (i.e., Sensory Friendly; Relaxed; Neurodiverse) Concerts
 Hospital concerts
 Busking
 Multi-disciplinary shows
 Performances primarily of a genre outside “classical” music (e.g., performing with a rock band or singer-songwriter)
 Kids concerts
 Palliative care concerts (children, adults, or seniors)
 Music Therapy performances
 Other (please specify)

13. In terms of time, what percentage of your career would you estimate nontraditional performances represent?
- 0–25%
 - 26–50%
 - 51–75%
 - 76–100%
14. What percentage of time would you estimate you spend on non-musical aspects of your career?
- 0–25%
 - 26–50%
 - 51–75%
 - 76–100%
15. Is your current portfolio makeup what you intended for your career? Please explain why or why not.
16. Is there anything else you would like to add about your current or former music career experience?

The second-last section asks about your identity

17. In terms of professional identity, how do you answer if someone asks you “What do you do?”
18. Does your answer change according to the situation (e.g., colleague vs. person outside the industry; conference vs. high school reunion)?
- Yes No Other (please specify)
19. If yes, how does your answer change, and why?
20. How would you define/describe a professional musician?
21. How would you define/describe a professional performer?
22. Do you identify yourself as a “musician,” a “performer,” both, or neither? Please explain why or why not and provide any details you think are relevant to your professional and personal identity.
23. Was there a time in your education or professional life where you struggled with the identity of musician? Please explain.
24. Is there anything you would like to add about your professional identity?

The last section asks about your education

25. Did your formal undergraduate training include required coursework in the following area(s)? Please select any/all that apply.
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business of Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Nontraditional performance work (e.g., non-classical ensembles or health-related performances) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Composing and/or arranging | <input type="checkbox"/> Pedagogy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurship | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant writing | |
26. Did you select electives in any of the following areas? Please select any/all that apply.
- Arts administration
 - Business of Music
 - Composition and/or arranging
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Grant writing
 - Marketing
 - Nontraditional performance work (e.g., non-classical ensembles or health-related performances)
 - Non-music coursework (e.g., language training, psychology, etc.)
 - Pedagogy
 - None of the above
27. On a scale from 1–5, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most, to what extent do you feel your post-secondary undergraduate education has provided you with the required skills to develop a music career?
[Likert Scale]
28. On a scale from 1–5, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most, to what extent do you feel the way in which musical careers were portrayed/discussed by your faculty or school in your undergraduate program was an accurate representation of the music industry?
[Likert Scale]
29. On a scale from 1–5, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most, to what extent was career coaching provided to you in your undergraduate program?
[Likert Scale]
30. In what ways do you feel your undergraduate education prepared you for a music career? Please describe.
31. In what ways do you feel your undergraduate education did not prepare you for a music career? Please describe.
32. Is there anything else you would like to add about your undergraduate performance program experience?

The last two questions are for demographic comparisons within the analysis.

33. With which gender do you identify?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> Male |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender variant/nonconforming | <input type="checkbox"/> You don't have an option that applies to me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intersex | I identify as (please specify): |

34. What is your age?

- Prefer not to answer
- 18–25
- 26–32
- 33–39
- 40+

You have completed the requirements of this survey. Thank you for your time!

In the next phase of my research, I will be conducting interviews to further explore classical musicians' careers and identity, and the extent to which undergraduate education prepares musicians for the industry. If you are willing to be contacted for an interview, please enter your email address below. SurveyMonkey anonymizes contact info so that it is separated from your survey answers. Your survey results will remain anonymous. If selected for an interview, you will receive an official invitation and further information by email in 2023.

Name

Email Address

Thank you again!

Appendix D. Adaptive Concert Invitation to Participate (Article 3)

Dear Sensory Friendly and Adapted³³ Concert artists,

Hope you are all doing well! You are being contacted as you performed in a Sensory Friendly Concert or Adapted Concert presented by Xenia Concerts and/or Ottawa Chamberfest between 2014-2022. I am conducting a study as part of my thesis at the University of Ottawa under the supervision of Dr. Dillon Parmer. As a performer of a Sensory Friendly Concert (online and/or in-person), I would love to hear from you. The study seeks to determine how you, as artists, identify and seize nontraditional performance opportunities such as Adapted Concerts, if you have received any training for this type of performance, the experience of performing in this context, and what skills you feel are required for this work. The purpose of this survey is to better understand your experiences, education, and to help inform curriculum, community, and artistic practice that will improve adapted concert training and performance in the future. Any adult performer who performed in a Sensory Friendly Concert for Ottawa Chamberfest of Xenia Concerts falls within the inclusion criteria of this study and may opt to fill out the survey (i.e., more than one adult per group may fill out the survey individually as well if one member only is the email contact).

Should you be willing and interested in participating, you will find a link to complete the survey below via Survey Monkey. The anonymous survey consists of 23 questions (no names or identifying information will be collected) and is estimated to take approximately 10-20 minutes of your time. At the onset of the online survey, you will be asked to consent to participate. The consent information is attached to this email, should you wish to view the consent information prior to accessing the survey link. Your consent to participate (embedded within the online survey questionnaire by clicking “I agree”) is a pre-requisite of participation for studies conducted at the University of Ottawa.

Please visit the link below to complete the survey.

[LINK TO SURVEY]

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Jenna, at [\[email\]](#)

Thank you for your time!

Jenna Richards

³³ Adapted concerts is the former term for what are now called adaptive concerts. As the ethics submission included the previous language, “adapted” is retained in the historical documents, but updated within the dissertation text.

Appendix E. Adaptive Concert Survey Consent Form (Article 3)

RESEARCH SURVEY CONSENT FORM: Sensory Friendly & Adapted Concert Musician Survey

Principal Investigator: Jenna Richards, School of Music, University of Ottawa

Supervisor: Dr. Dillon Parmer, School of Music, University of Ottawa

This project elicits feedback from performers of Sensory Friendly Concerts (Adapted Concerts) from Xenia Concerts and Ottawa Chamberfest to inform training and practices of Adapted Concerts moving forward. The study is being conducted for academic purposes as part of the PI's PhD thesis under supervisor Dr. Parmer.

The purpose of this study is to acquire/disseminate data around musician training and experiences with adapted concerts (in this case most frequently produced as "Sensory Friendly Concerts"). The study seeks to determine how musicians identify and seize nontraditional performance opportunities such as Adapted Concerts, if they have received any training for this type of performance, the experience of performing in this context, and what skills they feel are required for this work. The purpose of this survey is to better understand musicians' experiences, education, and to help inform curriculum, community, and artistic practice that will improve adapted concert training and performance in the future. To date, no studies of this kind have been undertaken.

You are invited to participate in the study by completing a one-time online survey ([link](#) to Survey Monkey sent by email). Data acquired from the survey is anonymous. The questions in the survey will address the performance experience, any training from undergraduate degrees or the organizations producing the events, what may differ in this type of performance environment as opposed to "traditional" performance environments, and what modifications are made in programming adapted concerts. The researcher anticipates that in gaining better understanding of musicians' experiences, organizations, individuals, and communities will benefit. The PI is involved with non-profit arts organizations who produce adapted programming and foresees increased capacity for these organizations with knowledge gleaned from this study. Your participation in the study will consist of completing the one-time survey online. Your participation will entail discussing Sensory Friendly Concert performance and training experience. Your identity will be protected, and the data will be used for the purposes outlined above.

The data collected will be kept in a secure manner via password protection and will only be accessible by the PI of the study. To minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, it is recommended that you use standard safety measures, such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your device when the survey is completed.

You are under no obligation to participate and should you choose to participate you retain the right to:

- withdraw from the study at any time (however due to anonymous data collection it will not be possible to withdraw submitted survey data)
- refuse to answer questions without fear of reprisal or ill treatment
- be informed of how your identity will be protected in the publication of data
- be informed of the limits of confidentiality

Participants may contact the researcher with any questions/concerns about the research being conducted. Should participants wish to file a complaint regarding this study, the Ethics Office at the University of Ottawa has a due process. Their contact information follows:

Tabaret Hall, Room 154

Tel.: 613-562-5387

550 Cumberland St

Fax.: 613-562-5338

Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1N 6N5

ethics@uottawa.ca

By clicking "Yes" on the online survey landing page, you are consenting to participate in this study. The participation of the participant does not mean that you have given up any right, but rather that you have been informed of the requirements of the proposed research and that you agree to take part in the research project. It is recommended that you retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

Appendix F. Adaptive Concert Survey Questions (Article 3)

Adapted Concert Survey

(Plain text downloaded from online SurveyMonkey portal)

This survey consists of 24 questions and will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete.

For context before you get started, some specific terms are outlined below.

Nontraditional performance work

Concerts, performances, or events outside of Western Classical Tradition halls/series, such as performing at a bar or in a multi-disciplinary show, engaging in concerts in healthcare settings, or other atypical concert presentations

Traditional performance work

Concerts and/or performances that occur in typical concert settings such as concert halls, churches, and theatres, and include traditional programming (e.g., string quartets, orchestral performances, solo work)

Healthcare setting

Environment wherein the primary purpose is focused on health, such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, special education centres, palliative care, and more

Adapted Concerts

Performances where modifications are made to the environment and programming to help address barriers for individuals with exceptionalities and their families

1. I consent to participate in this survey.
 Yes, I consent.

2. Approximately how many times have you performed an adapted concert?
 0
 1–5
 6–10
 11+

3. Approximately how many times do you perform adapted concerts annually?
 0
 1–2
 3–4
 5+

4. How and when did you first hear about adapted concerts?

5. How were you first engaged to perform in an adapted concert?

6. Do you engage in other healthcare-related performances aside from adapted concerts?
Please select any/all that apply.
- Hospital concerts
 - Music therapy
 - Long-term care/nursing home/senior home concerts
 - Palliative care settings (children, adults, or seniors)
 - Special education settings
 - Holistic health practices
 - Other (please specify)
7. In terms of time, what percentage of your career would you estimate nontraditional performances (including healthcare settings) represent?
- 0–25%
 - 26–50%
 - 51–75%
 - 76–100%
8. Do you engage in any of the following nontraditional performances outside of healthcare settings? Please select any/all that apply.
- Bar concerts
 - Busking
 - Multi-disciplinary shows
 - Performances primarily of a genre outside “classical” music (e.g., performing with a rock band or singer-songwriter)
 - Kids’ concerts
 - Other (please specify)
9. Do you consider nontraditional performance work as central to your career? If yes, please elaborate.
10. Did your undergraduate institution discuss nontraditional performance work (such as adapted concerts) as a possible component of a music performance career? If yes, please describe the context and ways in which it was discussed or addressed.
11. Did your undergraduate degree provide training for performances in healthcare settings (e.g., music therapy, long-term or palliative care concerts, adapted concerts, etc.)? Please select any/all that apply from your undergraduate degree.
- No formal training was provided by my undergraduate program
 - Full course
 - One section/week/component of a course
 - Required outreach
 - Elective outreach
 - Extra-curricular offering

- Professional development
- Guest lecturer/invited guest

12. Did your undergraduate degree provide training specifically for adapted programming?
 Yes No I'm not sure

13. When performing in nontraditional contexts, do you draw on other instrumental/vocal capacities in addition to your primary instrument? If yes, please elaborate.

14. What skills would you describe as required for a comfortable and engaging adapted concert performer?

15. How does performance in an adapted concert compare to traditional requirements for performance (skills, styles, etc.)?

16. Did the organization or producer who hired you to undertake adapted concert work provide training, guidance, or resources to prepare you for the adapted performance? If yes, please describe.

17. Do you feel this training and/or the provided resources were adequate? Please explain.

18. How do you prepare for an adapted concert?

19. How do you find performing an adapted concert compares to performing a traditional concert? (E.g., How does it make you feel? What is different?)

20. Do you adjust any aspects of your playing or singing when performing an adapted concert? If yes, please elaborate.

21. Are there elements of adapted concerts that make you anxious? Please explain why or why not.

22. What could improve your comfort level in terms of preparedness and experience performing an adapted concert?

23. How do you think nontraditional performance work (such as performing adapted concerts) is viewed by the music industry?

24. Is there anything else you would like to add about adapted concerts, your training, experience, or another related topic?

Demographic Questions (optional)

25. What is your primary instrument? (e.g., piano)

26. What is your primary genre of artistic practice? (e.g., classical)

27. What is your gender identity? (e.g., female)

28. What is your age?

Prefer not to answer

18–25

26–32

33–39

40+

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Appendix G. Portfolio Career Interview Invitation (Article 2)

Dear Portfolio Career survey participant,

You are being contacted because you self-selected as a potential interviewee in follow up to your completion of the musicians' portfolio career survey from Fall 2022. As you know from having completed this survey, I am conducting a study as part of my thesis at the University of Ottawa under the supervision of Dr. Dillon Parmer. The purpose of the interview is to examine your experiences, education, and identity formation to better understand the working lives and education relevancy of music performance graduates working in the industry today. As a graduate of a music performance undergraduate degree at a Canadian institution from 2007-2022, you fall within the inclusion criteria of this study.

Should you still be willing and interested in participating, we can now schedule a time for your interview. Please respond to this email to indicate if you would like to schedule an interview in the coming weeks. Should you be willing, consent is required prior to the interview. The consent form is attached to this email and requires a signature as well as two check box selections regarding recording and anonymity. Please sign and return the form if you are willing to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Jenna, at [\[email\]](#)

Thank you for your time!
Jenna Richards

Appendix H. Portfolio Career Interview Consent Form (Article 2)

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Jenna Richards, School of Music, University of Ottawa

Supervisor: Dr. Dillon Parmer, School of Music, University of Ottawa

This project will elicit feedback from music performance undergraduate alumni who studied at Canadian post-secondary institutions regarding their education and careers. The study is being conducted for academic purposes as part of the PI's PhD thesis under the supervision of Dr. Parmer. The purpose of this study is to acquire and disseminate data around musicians' training and working lives to uncover curriculum strengths and weaknesses, working patterns, common portfolio career structures, and identity attributes of music performance graduates. The study seeks to determine how musicians work, if their post-secondary training supports their careers, what skills are taught and required for 21st century music practice, and whether industry and institutional rhetoric is reflective of musicians' identities and working habits. The intention is to better understand musicians' experiences, education, and to help inform curriculum, community, and artistic practice to improve musicians training and understanding of the field to acknowledge industry realities and support holistic and realistic practice.

You are invited to participate in the study by engaging in one interview as a follow up to your participation in the Portfolio Career Survey, where you indicated your interest in participating as an interviewee. The interview will include questions regarding undergraduate training, career aspirations and expectations, institutional narrative, identity, musicians' portfolio-style work, and other relevant experiences. The researcher anticipates that in gaining better understanding of musicians' training and working lives, institutions and the music industry will be able to better support artists in their identity and career construction. The PI is a musician with significant experience researching portfolio careers. Your participation in the study will consist of a one-time interview of approximately 30-60 minutes. Your participation will entail discussing your training, career, industry narrative, and identity formation. Your personal identity will be protected, and data will be used for the purposes outlined above. For transcription and review, the PI would like to record the interview. **Please select your preference below:**

- Yes, I may be video recorded**
- No, I may not be video recorded**

Data collected will be kept in a secure manner (password protected) and will only be accessible by the PI. To minimize the risk of security breaches and help ensure confidentiality, it is suggested that you use standard safety measures, such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your device when the interview is finished.

You are under no obligation to participate and should you choose to participate you retain the right to (1) withdraw from the study at any time; (2) refuse to answer questions without fear of reprisal or ill treatment; (3) be informed of how your identity will be protected in the publication of data; (4) be informed of the limits of confidentiality.

Potential Risks: It is possible that some participants feel anxious or emotional within the interview context as you will be answering questions concerning your career, past, and identity. Should you experience any emotional discomfort, a list of in-person and online resources is available at <https://www2.uottawa.ca/campus-life/health-wellness>

Participants may contact the researcher with any questions/concerns about the research being conducted. Should participants wish to file a complaint regarding this study, the Ethics Office at the University of Ottawa has a due process. Their contact information follows: *Tabaret Hall, Room 154, 550 Cumberland*

St, Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1N 6N5; Tel.: 613-562-5387 Fax.: 613-562-5338 ethics@uottawa.ca

By signing below, you are consenting to participate in this study. The participation of the participant does not mean that you have given up any right, but rather that you have been informed of the requirements of the proposed research and that you agree to take part in the research project. It is recommended that you retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I. Portfolio Career Interview Protocol (Article 2)

Portfolio Career Interview Protocol

Hello! Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this in-depth interview. The purpose of today's interview is to better understand your career, your educational background, and your identity as a musician. This information will contribute to this study on the Canadian landscape of professional musicians, from training to practice. With your permission, I would like to video and/or audio record with transcription on Zoom because I don't want to miss any of your comments. You may decline to answer any question or stop participating in the interview at any time and for any reason. Do I have your permission to begin to audio-video record? [*answer Y*] Great, I will begin to record now; [*answer N*]: No problem, we will not record. Let's start.

Section 1 – Training and institutions

1. To begin, what year did you graduate from your undergraduate degree in music performance?
2. And where did you study?
3. What was your primary instrument or voice type?
4. Could you describe how and why you decided to pursue music in university?
5. What were your career expectations when you started your undergraduate program?
6. Could you describe how your undergraduate institution (staff, teachers, courses, overall narrative) portrayed a musician's career?
7. What did you feel the university pushed you toward or kept you away from, in terms of what was expected of you musically/for your career?
8. How do you feel your undergraduate education prepared you for your career? (Follow up: What, if anything, do you think could have been added to your undergraduate degree to better prepare you for your musical career?)
9. *If orchestral instrument:* Would you say the main purpose of your degree was geared toward getting an orchestra job? (Follow up: Were there non-orchestral career options outlined for you? What would you say the narrative around non-orchestral work was?)
If pianist or singer: Would you say the main purpose of your degree was geared toward becoming a soloist? (Were there other careers options outlined for you? What would you say the narrative around work outside of solo practice was?)
10. Were there discussions about the various genres/styles of music you would likely be asked to perform? (Follow up: Were any of these genres/styles part of your undergraduate education?)

11. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about your training?

Section 2 – Career

12. Can you describe your current career portfolio? (Follow up: How many streams of work would you say you undertake in any given year?)

13. If more than one position, what does a typical work week look like for you?

14. If given the choice, would you change anything about your current work life? (Follow up: do you prefer to work entirely in the music industry?)

15. Do you undertake nontraditional performance work like kids concerts, performances in healthcare settings, bar concerts, etc.? How much of your performance time is spent on this compared to a traditional concert hall performance?

16. Do you think most musicians earn their living as portfolio careerists (meaning, multiple income streams/roles)? (Follow up: Do you think this is reflected in how institutions discuss music careers? Do you think musicians portray their careers this way?)

17. How would you define success in your music career? (Follow up: How do you perceive success in other musicians?)

18. How do you think music institutions, such as your undergraduate program, portray success in a music career?

19. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about your career?

Section 3 – Identity

20. To you, what does it mean to be a musician?

21. Do you identify as a musician? If so, did you always identify as a musician?

22. How do you think a musician's identity differs from other types of professionals, like doctors, lawyers, etc.?

23. How do you describe your current work life and overall career to others?

24. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about musicians' identity?

25. Is there anything you would like to revisit or add before we finish the interview?
Anything about your education, career, or identity? Anything related to the music industry or musicians in general?

Thank you so much for your time. If I have any follow up questions or clarifications, do I have your permission to contact you again? [*Pause*] I will stop the recording now. Again, thank you for your time!

Appendix J. Ethics Approval Certificate

06/10/2023

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-09-22-8146
Titre du projet / Project Title	Beyond Music: Post-secondary Performance Curriculum Relevancy and the Portfolio Careers of Western Classical Musicians
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Renouvelé / Renewed
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	05/10/2022
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	04/10/2024

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Jenna RICHARDS	Département de musique / Department of Music	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Dillon PARMER	Département de musique / Department of Music	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
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www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie | www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Coordonateur / COORDINATOR

Coordonnateur de l'éthique / Ethics Coordinator

Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie | www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

Appendix K. Expanded Table 4 from Article 2

Instrument family	Individual Instrument	Number of Participants
Strings		
	Violin	26
	Cello	15
	Viola	9
	Guitar	6
	Double Bass	3
Strings total		59
Woodwinds and Brass		
	Flute	13
	Saxophone	11
	Trumpet	8
	Oboe	5
	Horn	5
	Bassoon	3
	Trombone	2
	Clarinet	4
	“Brass”	1
Woodwinds and Brass total		52
Keyboards		
	Piano	46
	Organ	1
	Accordion	1
Keyboards total		48
Vocal Total		37
Percussion Total		9
All instrument total		205*

*Total reflects more than total number of survey respondents because of respondents who were double majors.

Appendix L. Framing Questions of the Transformative Lens (Sweetman et al. 2010)

Sweetman et al. (2010) developed framing questions from Mertens' transformative approach. These questions are outlined below, annotated with author responses in the context of this dissertation:

1. Do the authors openly reference a problem in a community of concern? Yes, the author identifies a problem within the artistic community for musicians. Musicians face socioeconomic hardships as their annual incomes fall well below average³⁴.

2. Do the authors openly declare a theoretical lens? Yes, the author declares the use of a transformative lens from the outset of the research, supported throughout the methodology by complementary frameworks including social constructionism, social identity theory, and the concept of the entrepreneurial spirit.

3. Were the research questions (or purposes) written with an advocacy stance? Yes, the research questions were developed to address the misalignment between music training and professional practice. While crafted to avoid bias, they are purposefully designed to generate findings that could be leveraged for advocacy within the musician community.

³⁴ According to Hill Strategies, Canadian performing artists' income is 44% less than the average Canadian worker (median income of artists \$24,300 compared to median income of all workers \$43,500 as of late 2010s).

4. Did the literature review include discussions of diversity and oppression? Yes, though minimally. The literature review addresses issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), noting restrictive practices that limit diversity in the music field and the marginalization of certain groups of musicians.

5. Did the authors discuss appropriate labeling of the participants? Yes, participant labelling was considered to align with both disciplinary standards and the transformative lens, respecting participant identities and contexts.

6. Did data collection and outcomes benefit the community? The intention is to benefit the community by sharing previously unavailable data and providing actionable recommendations for change. However, a formal evaluation of the study's impact(s) post-completion would be necessary to determine the extent of any benefits.

7. Did the participants initiate the research, and/or were they actively engaged in the project? Participants actively engaged in the research through voluntary contributions in survey and interview sessions, enriching the project with their perspectives and experiences.

8. Did the results elucidate power relationships? Yes, the findings illuminate several embedded power dynamics in post-secondary music performance education, including:

- Institutional authority in shaping curriculum design, often privileging traditional Western classical canon and Western Art Music (WAM) performance models, which may marginalize entrepreneurial, pedagogical, and/or career-relevant content.
- Faculty influence in preserving legacy structures that favour elite performance pathways, despite graduates pursuing diverse portfolio careers, as evidenced by participant narratives.
- Student disempowerment in influencing their own educational trajectories, with many reporting insufficient preparation for real-world professional demands beyond performance.
- Gatekeeping within academia and the professional music world, where success remains narrowly defined by artistic excellence and prestige rather than adaptability or community engagement.

9. Did the results facilitate social change? Similar to question 6, it is premature to definitively assess if the results have directly facilitated social change. Nonetheless, the research aims to inform and catalyze change within music education and professional practice.

10. Did the authors explicitly state their use of a transformative framework? Yes, the author explicitly states the use of a transformative framework throughout the dissertation.