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Building sustainable portfolio careers in music:

Insights and implications for higher education

Abstract

This paper outlines a range of significant issues that need to be taken into account by music higher education institutions when preparing their students for a portfolio career in music. Drawing on insights from a review of relevant literature undertaken as part of the Australian Research Council Linkage Project, *Making Music Work: Sustainable portfolio careers for Australian musicians*, it explores the dynamic structure of the music sector and in turn, the ways in which musicians are undertaking a portfolio of roles in order to be financially and creatively sustainable. In particular, it focuses on five emerging issues of importance in need of consideration by the music and higher education sector – including enterprise and entrepreneurship, mobility, digitisation, gender parity, and health and wellbeing – when preparing graduates for a portfolio career reality.

Keywords

Portfolio careers

Protean careers

Career trajectories

Music

Graduate outcomes

Higher education

Introduction

In order to sustain their musical lives, most musicians today have portfolio careers and combine aspects of performance, recording, creation, music direction, teaching, community activities, health, retail and a presence in online environments. Preparing contemporary graduates for this reality is a complex task that not only requires an understanding of how portfolio careers operate, but also a nuanced understanding of the ever-changing music sector more broadly. In order to address such a need, this article brings together a large body of relevant literature that explores the portfolio career phenomenon and the dynamic nature of the music sector in order to outline some of the critical implications for music higher education. While we draw on the significant inroads made in this field by Throsby (2007, 2008, 2010), and the project team (XXX deleted for blind review), we also touch on five emerging issues of importance that are in need of both further research and greater consideration in higher education, including enterprise and entrepreneurship, mobility, digitisation, gender parity, and health and wellbeing, when preparing graduates for a portfolio career reality.

The literature research that both informs and shapes this article has been undertaken as part of a major national study funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage scheme, called *Making Music Work: Sustainable portfolio careers for Australian musicians*. This major project broadly seeks to explore the career trajectories of portfolio musicians, and provide resources and frameworks that can inform and enhance the work of the music and higher education sectors, as well as practising musicians themselves. It is being led by the Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre, Griffith University (ethics approval 2016/524), with industry partners at the Australian Council for the Arts, Create NSW, Creative Victoria, Culture and the Arts (Western Australia), a division of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, and the Music Trust, as well as colleagues at Curtin University. The project's fieldwork has involved eleven in-depth qualitative case studies with musicians from around Australia, as well as an in-depth survey with over 600 musicians across the country (the findings of which will be published in subsequent articles). This fieldwork has been strongly informed by a critical review of existing literature which forms the focus of this article and its emphasis on the implications for higher education. While we have grounded this article and the broader projects within the Australian context, the implications of this work are far-reaching and have strong resonances with music and higher education contexts throughout the world.

To set the context for this article we begin with a brief overview of the dynamic nature of the music sector, and then move on to a brief overview of the current realities of portfolio careers. This then opens up a discussion about five key issues that have been identified in the growing body of literature in this field as significant for the ways in which musicians navigate and sustain their careers. These five issues include: (1) enterprise and entrepreneurship, (2) migration, (3) digitisation, (4) gender parity, and (5) mental and physical health and wellbeing. In this article, we briefly focus on each of these issues in order to begin a conversation about the broader implications for emerging and established musicians and music higher education. At this point, it is worth noting that for the purposes of this article we define a musician as someone who works in one or more specialist musical fields (Bennett, 2008). As such we do not privilege performance careers; nor do we limit the discussion to musicians who include performance within their portfolio of roles.

Setting the context: The nature of the music sector

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In seeking to understand the ways in which musicians make their music work, it is important to briefly discuss the dynamic nature of the music sector and the ever-changing ways in which the income and profit is generated. Over the past two decades, the music sector has undergone significant changes in its ability to invest in and nurture talent, and in its support of musicians' engagement with and development of audiences (Wikstrom, 2009). In the Australian context, the music industry has also specifically been impacted by changes to taxation, changes in music licensing laws and an unstable arts policy. There is also continued concern how much, or how little, musicians actually make from their music and associated activities (Williams, 2015) and the economic impact of live music on the nation's economy (LMO, 2015) These issues have been increasingly visible in the public, industry and academic media and have a direct impact on the ways in which musicians can and cannot generate an income, and in turn, their ability to develop and sustain dynamic and lasting careers.

Similar to other global settings, the contemporary music sector in Australia is anchored by just three major record labels, resulting from mergers and buyouts which have over the past two decades reduced the number and are together responsible for approximately 80% of the music produced and sold around the world (McDonald, 2016). Alongside these major labels is a range of independent labels, some of which are aligned with the larger firms through distribution and financing deals (Ballico, 2013). Record labels, while historically focusing primarily on the production and sale of recorded music formats, also now engage with the live music sector by providing financial assistance to musicians for the costs associated with travel, accommodation and marketing costs for live music performance. As Bishop (2005, p. 445) explains:

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> The bottom line of the music industry is to obtain high-quality content as cheaply as possible and to vend that content to as many people as possible for the highest price the markets will bear.

The continued integration of the recorded music sector in the live music sector has been further influenced by the emergence of what is known as the 360 deal - a recording contract in which record labels co-coupe rate their investments through a diverse range of activities instead of predominantly through the sale of recorded product (cf. Byrne, 2012; Stahl, 2013). The role of technology and digitisation including the various moves from hardcopy musical product to streaming and downloading has arguably influenced the music sector more than anything else to date. Hracs (2010, p. 55) elaborates:

> Technologies have lowered the barriers to entry, and afforded individual musicians unprecedented levels of control, freedom and opportunity to produce, promote and distribute their products. … At the same time, however, these opportunities have been accompanied by increasing demands and personal risk. As record labels 'roll-back' supports and services traditionally provided to signed musicians, musicians are now required to perform a growing range of creative and business tasks independently.

As Klein et al. (2017) suggest, musicians now find themselves navigating a new set of circumstances in light of technological advancements, which ultimately intersect with a range of attitudes relating to art versus commerce debates. Further, it has been argued that file-sharing in of itself has not hurt the overall music industry (Kusek and Leonard, 2005). As touched upon, and discussed in Bartleet et al (2012), the effective collapse of the conventional recording industry has not resulted in direct diminishing of financial returns, but instead, a shifting of the its structure, and in turn on the ways in which money is generated.

The result of this is that musicians operating in this manner must juggle a range of creative and business activities themselves. Concerning, and of direct relevance to music higher education, is that many of these activities are those which musicians may not have adequate training to manage properly. As Hracs (2010) notes, managing these additional roles can result in high stress levels for musicians, due needing to constantly manage a set of competing priorities. This has further consequences on the allocation of time and the ways in which musicians can structure their days:

> If they devote too much time to the business side, the creative content, on which their careers and earning potential rest, can suffer… It is clear that multi-skilling puts independent musicians in the difficult position of subordinating either their creativity or economic wellbeing. As a growing number of musicians choose the latter, the creative content of individual musicians and the scenes they participate in changes (pp. 60 – 61).

Notwithstanding these complex dynamics in the music industry, there are certainly many benefits that come with the flexibility gained from the portfolio reality. Musicians are able to set their own hours, or at least their own limit on hours, as well as teaching in the home-studio. Such a dynamic career trajectory can also open up the space for creative, experimentation and risk taking, which may or may not transform into a viable financial opportunity. In the following section, we turn to look at the ways in which the literature documents the career trajectories of Australian musicians in light of these industry dynamics and changes.

Understanding the realities: The nature of portfolio careers

Given the dynamic nature of the music sector and the ways in which income and profit is shifting, it becomes difficult to ascertain detailed information about how musicians are actually navigating these realities and constructing their portfolio careers amidst this complex landscape. Census collections in Australia and the UK amass only basic occupational data with questions such as, "In the main job held last week, what was the person's occupation?" (Australian Bureau of Statistics); or "[what was your] employment in the area the week before the census?" (Office for National Statistics). These questions cannot capture the complexity of musicians' work, given the landscape we have just briefly described. Graduate outcomes data are similarly rudimentary: in Australia, for example, graduate destinations data are collected six months after course completion, focus on full-time work, and conflate design, media, the arts and the humanities into a single category (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2018). That said, we do know that music work has long been characterised by multiple concurrent roles within (situated) and outside (embedded) music.

Most of these situated and embedded roles in music are currently undertaken on a contractual, by-project or self-employment basis (Bennett, 2008; Hracs, 2010; Throsby 2008). This is largely driven by supply and demand; there are far less full-time positions than applicants across multiple specialisms including performance, music management, sound engineering and conducting (Bennett, 2008); while other specialisms such as composition are almost exclusively freelance roles or roles undertaken within a setting such as higher education (Bennett et al., in review). Likewise, in Australia musicians including community-based work in their portfolios, might get paid small, but regular, honoraria from community groups and organizations, or undertake short-term contracts and projects for larger arts organizations or local or state-based government departments (Bartleet, et. al., 2009; Schippers & Bartleet, 2013). As such, musicians in Australia navigate diverse portfolios of music and non-related activities as they seek to sustain their careers, and the number of musicians seeking to make a living is on the rise. To put an approximate figure on this activity, in Australia approximately 167,000 [DB5] people earn at least some of their income from music related activities (Bennett, 2012). Taking into account population growth one could argue that there are likely to be at least 220,000 people earning at least some of their income from music by the year 2060 (Bartleet et al., 2012).

Despite gaps in the literature on musicians' career trajectories, the extant research confirms that most musicians work in a highly-diversified environment in which they balance multiple concurrent roles, face non-linear career progression, take on higher levels of risk than workers who engage in full-time work and require an entrepreneurial mind-set to negotiate a highly competitive market (Bennett and Burnard, 2016; Farr-Wharton, 2015; Le et al, 2013; Menger, 1999; Throsby, 2010; Baumol and Throsby, 2012). Recent and emerging discussions occurring within the Australian and global music and media industries have revealed an increasing desire to understand these pressures and the impact this complex environment is having on musicians seeking to navigate a portfolio career. These include the broad need for strong entrepreneurial skills in order to navigate and build a lasting music career, migration and mobility, the need to continue engaging in an ever-changing digital landscape, gender parity and mental and physical health and wellbeing. These emerging issues are of increasing concern for music higher education, as institutions grapple with finding the best ways to prepare their graduates for such realities.

Five emerging issues of concern for the music and higher education sectors

Within the growing body of literature on this topic, a number of emerging issues of concern are beginning to surface. These issues relate are clearly the result of the complex dynamics we have just described. In outlining these issues briefly here, it is our hope that this article will spark further consideration and discussion within music higher education about the ways in which music institutions can help better prepare their graduates for these realities.

1) The need for enterprise and entrepreneurship

This article aims to outline a range of influences on musicians' work, the net effect of which is high levels of flexibility in both practice and career possibilities, along with a high likelihood of self-employment and/or short term employment arrangements. The need for enterprise and entrepreneurship among musicians is clearly of critical importance, whether this entails self-management of career, venture start-up and management (whether for-profit or social/cultural in nature), and in the broader sense of identification of opportunities to add value, and then making the most of these (Bridgstock, 2012). Wikstrom (2009) contends that the music industry is underwritten by a high production/low reproduction scenario. In much the same way that musicians seek to mitigate creative and financial risk by engaging in a portfolio of music, music-related and non-music roles, Wikstrom's scenario sees music businesses engaging in multiple entrepreneurial activities in order to manage financial risk. For instance, the uncertainty with which the popular/new music sector operates is a result of its need to engage in a 'future state' (Jones, 2002) whereby no-one can predict the outcome of a good until it is released to market. The onus is on the artist to manage the creative risk through experimentation throughout the development period. Within the classical music sector the demise of venues, the constant search for paying audiences and changing paid opportunities for performance make risk management in this sector particularly troublesome. Contemporary musicians face risks associated with having to relinquish control during the process through which their music is marketed to audiences, which as Ballico (2013) explains leaves them "operationally disempowered" (Jones, 2002). To this end, musicians – even when engaging with more formalised modes of music financing and distribution – are required to continue to take high levels of risks when navigating their careers. Moreover, underlying the importance of enterprise and entrepreneurship is also motivation and talent as Ballico (2016) found in relation to her study of indie pop/rock musicians in Perth, Western Australia, where their experiences of engaging with particular facets of industry activity – such as record labels –contributed to musicians' ongoing motivation toward their careers. In addition, she found high motivation and talent are also intrinsically linked to entrepreneurial engagement (also cf. Patrick et al, 1999, MacNamara et al, 2006).

Of relevance for higher education is what Haase and Lautenschläger (2011, p. 146) describe as 'entrepreneurial conviction.' They suggest this is vital to being able to succeed, explaining:

> Skills such as creativity, proactiveness, leadership, risk taking propensity and wakefulness are decisive for successful entrepreneurial ventures... Without entrepreneurial conviction, i.e. the right mindset, awareness, motivation, and attitudes, no individual will undertake sustainable efforts toward business creation.

Providing the space for such entrepreneurial skill development is heightened in the case of portfolio careers. To link back to the earlier discussion relating to the emergence of portfolio careers, and situations in which musicians may take on additional roles which have traditionally been handled by others in order to support their own careers (such as marketing, promotion and live performance booking), musicians may only retrospectively realise the entrepreneurial skills that they require to be active in the industry. The challenge here is to mix creative activities with administrative ones something that is facing all small businesses in the current economic climate.

2) Migration and mobility

A shifting musical economy, coupled with the need to engage strongly with aspects such as performance has also seen an increased interest in understanding the migration and mobility patterns of the music sector in Australia. Musicians face an ever-diminishing number of performance opportunities in Australia, especially in the classical music sector where they are competing with international performers who migrate in order to take up opportunities within Australian orchestras and opera companies (Bartleet et al, 2012; Harrison et al, 2013). In turn, Australian musicians will often engage with international markets in order to pursue a higher number of opportunities and to achieve a higher level of security within their careers (Bartleet et al, 2012; Bennett, 2009).

This mobility has been the result of a range of 'push' and 'pull' factors that exist around the nature of working in the arts – such as creative desire and freedom, versus needing to hold additional roles for financial security (Bennett, 2016; Bridgstock, 2005; Byrne, 2012; Nelken, 2013; Sacks, 2016). Notions of mobility can also be applied within more localised contexts in which musicians (and more widely, those working the broader creative industries) are required to be more geographically mobile, available for extended and irregular working hours, and – by undertaking a more diversified set of roles to support their musical endeavours – required to work across a range of sites and for a range of employers (Hennekam and Bennett, 2016; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Morgan et al, 2013). This need for mobility, and oftentimes migration, is yet another factor that is compounded by the aforementioned issues around the nature of the music sector, consideration of gender and health and well-being, and has important implications for how the music and higher education sectors support musicians navigating a portfolio of activities at home and abroad.

3) Digitisation

Klein et al. (2017) attest that musicians also find themselves navigating a new set of circumstances in light of technological advancements which ultimately intersect with a range of attitudes relating to the distinctions between art and commerce. Whilst technological advancements have enabled many musicians to develop and manage their careers independently, they have not negated the need for musicians to make informed business decisions and to manage these throughout their career development. Managing these additional roles can result in high stress levels for musicians, due to the competing priorities of making the music (in all its manifestations) and disseminating/managing the creative product (Hracs, 2010, pp. 56-59).

At the same time the sector's digitisation has had positive effects, assisting musicians in being able to operate outside the constraints of a single dominant paradigm such as a major record label, or a Major Arts Organisation (Australia Council terminology). For example, services usually offered by such corporations (marketing and promotion, legal services, contracts etc.), now need to be handled by musicians themselves, and increasingly musicians are also taking on the financial investment (Hracs, 2012; Hracs et al, 2014). As a result of these digitisation shifts, 60% of musicians are considered to be self-employed or taking on multiple roles so as to manage the risks associated with pursuing a career in music (Bartleet et al, 2012; Bridgstock, 2013).

4) Gender parity

In recent years increased attention has been paid to the gendered nature of the music sector. A particular focus has been to increase the prominence of women in the performance space (cf Davies, 2017; Levefre, 2018) through the development of women only music awards (Murphy, 2018) and recognition of the importance of creating 'safe spaces' in live music venues, particularly with regards to gendered violence (cf Stockwell, 2017). While much of this relates to the contemporary music experience, it is interesting to note the representation of women within higher education institutions, such as conservatoriums. Harrison (2007, 2013) found that while the education system tended to have a higher proportion of female participants across all sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary), this did not parlay into senior roles within conservatories and across music genres. Specific instrument types and engagement with particular genres was also highly gendered, with females yet to fully break the glass ceiling in areas such as jazz, metal, rap and, in the classical sphere, brass and percussion (Harrison 2007). That said, there have been substantial changes to this over the past ten years since Harrison's work was first published. However, as Armstrong (2013) has noted, the contested nature of creative work may have particular implications for female freelance musicians and more critical attention is needed to be paid to their experiences.

Such considerations not only relate to working conditions, recognition and formal study, but also to programming choices of major arts organisations in Australia. In the area of composition, Macarthur et al (2017) found that there was a strong correlation between the amount of research conducted on women's music and that of its performance in the concert hall. As Macarthur et al (2017) have cautioned, discussion around gender equity in programming still needs to be maintained in order for action to be taken as Australia has not yet reached a tipping point in relation to gender parity in programming. We are mindful that our research can also address such issues by providing a strong voice for women in our work. As such we have aimed for gender parity in both the survey and case studies in an effort to significant inroads in raising the prominence of women in the music sector, and beginning to speak openly about related concerns such as sexual assault and harassment in the sector. Likewise, there is much higher education institutions can be doing to address such issues in programming and addressing gender parity more broadly. For instance, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music's *Composing Women* program has been established recently and provides an opportunity for four postgraduate women students to work closely with our industry partners, such as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Chamber Orchestra, to develop their own work along with professional skills. Likewise, in 2018 Monash University initiated a *Gender Diversity in Music Making* conference, in order to promote greater engagement with the music of composers and performers who identify as female or non-binary in gender across the composition and performance of all styles of composition, improvisation, song writing, installation, film music, jazz, classical, pop, experimental, noise and world music's. The Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University has also run a critically acclaimed *Amazing Women* concert series dedicated to celebrating the diversity of music composed by women over the past 15 years.

5) Mental and physical health and wellbeing

In light of the complex aforementioned issues outlined in this paper, the mental and physical health and wellbeing of musicians working within a portfolio career reality has become an increasing concern for the sector more broadly. Low incomes, irregular work patterns, the romanticising of the 'tortured artist' and the dismissal of music as being a worthwhile career pursuit have all been contributing factors to the mental and physical health and wellbeing of musicians. Likewise, the work of Teague and Smith (2015) has examined the implications of work-life balance, highlighting some of the difficulties and stresses that are unique musician and the lure of opportunity and the expense of responsibility. In a similar line, recent research (Gross and Musgrave, 2016; van den Eynde, 2015) reveals that working in the music and/ or broader arts sector – as a musician or otherwise – can have a significantly detrimental impact on one's mental and physical well-being.

Such considerations are emerging as significant for the Australia music and higher education sector, however far more research is needed to understand these causal effects. Organisations such as Entertainment Assist are championing such research and by raising awareness about mental health in the Australian entertainment industry more broadly through commissioning research, advocating for workplace and educational transformation and identifying support pathways for those in distress. Understanding the pressure points for this, as well as underlying rates of mental illness and physical limitations for those working in the music sector can assist in the development of support structures with the sector but also within higher education.

Conclusions: Broader implications for the music and higher education sectors

As the literature synthesised in this article attests, there is a growing body of empirical research dedicated to understanding more about the dynamics of musicians' work (see, for example Bennett et al., 2012; Cummins-Russell & Rantisi, 2012; Freeman, 2014; Meier, 2015). Such studies highlight the precarious, multi-genre and internally driven nature of music careers, as well as some of the emerging issues impacting upon the lives of portfolio musicians, five of which have been highlighted in this article. That said, there are still major gaps in our understanding about this broader landscape and very little research that can present a longitudinal view of career trajectories in music, inclusive of peak periods of activity with regard to age, changing musical identities, transformations from on stage to other musical roles, and balancing financial risk with creative interests. As the literature we have woven together here suggests, there are significant and changing dynamics within the music sector that are influencing the ways in which Australian musicians are navigating their portfolio career trajectories. This has great significance for higher education providers seeking to prepare their students and graduates for these realities.

In addition to the issues described in this article, further external influences also play a large role in the manner in which musicians' portfolio careers develop across all genres of music-making. External influences may include government policy settings both in the arts sector and the small business sector, licensing agreements and the live music act; changing qualifications needed for teaching music across the sectors of public and private education, as well as in the independent small business including the home studio; issues concerning copyright law and royalties, or radio play and royalties; the changing roles of stakeholders including managers in a musicians' career. These issues affect the structure and function of the music sector, but also influence decisions made by musicians to navigate various chapters of their career development. In the current cultural and technological environment, there is an expectation of an expanding skill base for musicians inclusive of building websites, understanding small business tax issues, marketing, and tracking social media among many other. One way which has been identified to expand this knowledge base beyond the craft of music is in the higher education and training sector. Several studies cited thus far have engaged strongly with music students as a part of their field work (Bennett et al, 2015; Harrison et al, 2013).

More broadly, the critical role music education plays in adequately preparing students for music careers is increasingly becoming the focus of research. Within this, the reasons students engage with such formal education at a university level, and the practicalities of how this training takes place have been a particular topic of interest (Draper and Cunio, 2014; Draper and Harrison, 2011; Schippers et al, 2016). This research has engaged with both postgraduate research degrees and undergraduate music degrees. In this literature, a significant criticism levelled at undergraduate music training is that it often “replicates knowledge based teaching” (Rowley et al, 2015, p. 1). In addition to this, it has been noted that the ways in which music students are assessed is based is often based on achievement as opposed to talent (MacNamara, 2006). More broadly, a range of studies have also examined career and student satisfaction post-degree (Bridgstock, 2012) and whether or not music training has adequately prepared musicians for their careers in place-specific contexts (Ghaziah and Bennett, 2017).

For instance, in Schippers et al’s recent study of what mature age doctoral students gain through returning to study, the story is similar: confidence, broadening of skills, clarity in practice, leadership, advocacy and national and international networks. (2017). A mid-career focused period of study provides both a skill and confidence booster than will provide nourishment for the next chapter of music-making. Draper and Harrison (2018) found that “musicians bend, shape, and evolve their own individual processes and outcomes over time in much the same way that they might improvise and/or adapt their creative works, commissions and performances in their workplaces.” Furthermore, they noted that doctoral candidates “rejected the idea that ‘career destination’ might be a sensible term for creative artists, or that ‘employer’ or ‘profession’ aligns with the portfolio activities of a musician”

Many musicians are engaged in the cyclic process of teaching and learning, with tertiary students also working as home-studio teachers, and many teachers also engaged in or returning to higher education training. Perhaps this is unique to music, where everyone is both sharing knowledge, and actively learning in an industry than demands a high level of practical musical skill coupled with a broad ranging industry understanding. As such, understanding the specifics of music education – across a range of learning environments – is critical to being able to adequately prepare students for what are becoming increasingly fractured careers. As outlined in the earlier discussion on portfolio careers, Bennett (2016) explains that this cohort of university graduates also often experience multiple entry attempts, while,

> Of all graduates, they have the greatest need for support both during and after graduation. This might include mentorship, short courses, career counselling and access to resources such as equipment, scores, music or rehearsal space.

Reflecting challenges that exist in adequately capturing the nuances of portfolio careers in census data, Bennett (2016) puts forth that similar challenges exist in relation to national graduate destination surveys.

> Most graduate data collections ignore multiple roles in favour of the position in which the most time is spent: the main occupation at a particular point in time. Further, respondents seeking work are assumed to be unemployed, whereas they may be seeking additional or more desirable work from a position of underemployment. As a result, government demands for higher education institutions to define and demonstrate graduates' successful entry into the labour market are confounded by inadequate graduate and labour market data, and the assumption that success is represented by a single, full-time position.

It is this lack of understanding which creates an additional hurdle to grasping the realities of portfolio careers in the music industry. Leaving aside the challenges in adequately capturing post-graduation satisfaction and employment rates, it is vital to examine the realities of music training. As touched upon in the background of Harrison et al's (2013) study into the role of ensemble experience in music training, music performance degrees have largely focused what are known as four traditional pillars: “solo studies, ensemble studies, studies in music literature, and studies in musicianship.” (pp. 173-174). In recent years, however, the importance of engaging with non-music specific fields such as business, marketing and education have also started to be recognised, as has the need for “greater flexibility in degree structures, and a shared understanding of ultimate career outcomes for students (Carey and Lebler, 2012). Other recent work reaffirms the central role that industry/community-higher education partnerships play in connecting students, courses and Music Schools directly with musicians, music work, music workplaces, and communities where music makes a difference (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2016; Bartleet & Higgins, 2018). Such relationships support responsive curriculum change and fostering students’ work-relevant capabilities and professional networks (Bridgstock, 2018). In a context where much of musicians’ ongoing learning and career development is based on ‘who you know and who knows you’, and where the work of musicians is undergoing significant and ongoing change, higher education’s ability to build authentic connections and mechanisms for direct industry/community teaching and also programmatic updating seems to be increasingly important (Lebler & Weston, 2015). Our sense after reviewing the literature for this article, is that it is vital to gain a deeper understanding of how all of the efforts outlined above can be further enhanced in order to support musicians through the ongoing challenge of technical change.

(5,463 words)

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