

# Music for well-being – creating unity between community and humanity

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## Abstract

As humanity around the globe enters the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, immense technological change is more profound than any previous time with pursuant massive social change. Central to this change is the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0). Three revolutions have gone before: mechanisation, mass production, and simple digitisation/automation. The fourth revolution builds on the third and is characterised by a combination of technologies where the boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological spheres are now blurred.

Drawing on musical examples from Australia, this article is sited in and makes links with relevant elements of the fourth industrial revolution illustrating how music (in combination with other artforms) has enormous potential to benefit the well-being of the nation's citizens, creating unity between community and humanity. In this article (an expansion on Watson & Forrest, 2020) we focus on music initiatives that operate within Australian hospitals, the community and schools, involving marginalised members of society, with outcomes that are not specifically music-related. A variety of partner organisations and volunteers provide professional services and financial support to allow these activities to achieve their goals and remain viable.

The organisations and programs under consideration are the *Hush Foundation*, the *Choir of Hard Knocks*, three *El Sistema* inspired programs (*The Pizzicato Effect*, *Crashendo!* and *Crescendo*), the *Boite Schools Chorus* and *Millennium Chorus* and *Don't Stop the Music*.

Musicians (as professionals, undergraduates, amateurs) and music educators, are involved in these types of projects either as an aspect of their career and earning a living or as a voluntary community member. Although music is a central point for achievement, the major outcomes are not necessarily going to be musical, either by design or through lack of planning. It is acknowledged that music has a significant role in the community for therapy, for healing, for well-being, and to support other academic goals.

**Key words:** Fourth industrial revolution, humanity, employability skills, intercultural dialogue

## Background

The fourth industrial revolution is a term devised by Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum. He describes a world where individuals use connected technology to enable and manage their lives, moving between digital domains and off-line reality (Xu et al., 2018). The previous three revolutions can be described in the following way: The first industrial revolution started in 1760 with the invention of the steam engine; the second industrial revolution began in 1900 with

the invention of the internal combustion engine; and the third industrial revolution started in 1960 and was characterised with the implementation of electronics and information technology to automate production (Xu et al., 2018).

Sheldon (2018) argues that an important issue facing education, and humanity in general, is the fast-approaching revolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Sheldon remarks that nothing matters more than education for people to use AI as a liberation tool for the future of humanity. It is acknowledged that people will have no control over either technology

or the disruption that comes with the fourth industrial revolution, but it will shape the impact on government and business. (Xu et al., 2018).

This article positions the interaction of musicians, composers, commissioners of musical works, influences of life's experiences and the resulting musical performances as the central pivot; within a larger setting of the fourth industrial revolution. Schwab (2015) remarks that "inequality represents the greatest societal concern" associated with this revolution. He continues that "The largest beneficiaries of innovation tend to be the providers of intellectual and physical capital – the innovators, shareholders, and investors – which explains the rising gap in wealth between those dependent on capital versus labor" (Schwab, 2015).

An image of the fourth industrial revolution (2019) depicts elements in an inner and outer circle that are networked together in an intricate pattern. Elements in the inner circle that are relevant to this article are innovation and productivity, fusing technologies, security and conflict, inequality, and ethics and identity. The outer circle shows other related elements such as mental health, values, arts and culture. Associated with education, Xu et al. (2018) comment that the fourth industrial revolution presents the challenge of how businesses and workplaces can motivate their knowledge workers to release their human potential. This challenge remains central to the vision of arts education institutions, musicians and community activities as they foster inclusion, sustainability and equity in and through their musical practices.

Culturally responsive teaching is explored through the literature, expressed specifically through teacher expectations and attitudes, as one approach to achieving social justice in music classrooms. Enacting culturally responsive teaching acknowledges that teachers must be able to self-reflect on their own cultural identities, values and knowledge; recognise forces that impact on others' positions in society; and develop strategies to respond with actions to the needs of a diverse

population. Musicians working in the community must also make relevant connections between cultural experiences and content matter; and make judgements about the prior learning of those with whom they engage, to make their music experience meaningful (Abril & Robinson, 2019; Hess, 2017; Spradley, 2010; Spruce, 2017).

Spruce (2017) elaborates on distributive social justice paradigms that are readily visible in music education. The resulting programs centre around school-aged students' lack of access to material musical resources and existing music education structures. Young (1990) points out that participants involved in these types of programs are characterised by what they do not have rather than in what they might bring to music education.

Another theme in the literature is the relationship between music and ethics, supported with the central question, can music make a person morally better? It is recognised that music does not have to improve a person's moral character although it does have an influence on people to be aware of their connection with others. Cox and Levine (2016) suggest that the moral effect of music may be associated with its social effects (to bring people together or isolate them) or a cognitive moral effect (to understand a person's place in the world). They propose that the main connection between ethics and music may be a link with the expressive power of music – to express emotions and in the right contexts.

The International Music Council has developed five music rights and these are integral to their goals. They provide clear viewpoints for facilitators of programs designed to benefit diverse disadvantage communities.

The right for all children and adults:

1. To express themselves musically in all freedom
2. To learn musical languages and skills
3. To have access to musical involvement through participation, listening, creation, and information

The right for all musical artists:

4. To develop their artistry and communicate through all media, with proper facilities at their disposal

5. To obtain just recognition and fair remuneration for their work.

(International Music Council, 2001)

Brynjolfsson, McAfee and Spence (2014) suggest that people who can create new ideas and innovate will be the scarcest and most valuable resource in an era driven by digital technologies. What a great asset for any music educator? They forecast that talent, more than capital will be a critical factor of production and building the economic basis of an economy.

The UNESCO survey of intercultural dialogue 2017 (UNESCO, 2018) was taken at the mid-point of the *International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022)* and notes that “intercultural dialogue is recognized for its capacity to nurture the values and principles that underpin peaceful societies” (p. 10). The report highlights that today’s world is characterised by a rich diversity of people living in increased proximity. With the growth of interconnectedness and interdependence, “the need for dialogue, tolerance, respect and mutual understanding among different cultures has never been so crucial” (p. 10). Music activities in the community contribute significantly to promoting intercultural dialogue and they are reliant on “the crucial role of educational institutions in

building and enhancing the resilience of societies, promoting citizen responsibility, and advocating for inclusion and pluralism” (p. 43).

School-aged students are well placed to use skills and knowledge acquired in their participation in music activities offered in formal and informal contexts to make a link between the community value of music (and the arts) and employment. The *Future of Jobs Report 2018* (World Economic Forum, 2018) makes a prediction of stable, new and redundant workforce roles in order to harness the transformative potential of the fourth industrial revolution. The arts are underrepresented in the examples provided, although People and Culture Specialists and Innovation Professionals are listed as new roles. The report features a comparison table of the top ten skills in demand between 2018 and 2022. These are classified as Today, 2018 (being current); Trending, 2022 (developing) and Declining, 2022 (redundant).

Although the skills comparison has been developed to encapsulate as many jobs as possible, in relation to working in the arts and educating the professional musician, the skills in each category remain constant across the four-year time-frame. Those listed as Today, 2018 are just as vital as those listed as Declining 2022 for people pursuing a

**Table 1: Comparing skills demand, 2018 vs. 2022, top 10.**

Today, 2018	Trending, 2022	Declining, 2022
Analytical thinking and innovation	Analytical thinking and innovation	Manual dexterity, endurance and precision
Complex problem-solving	Active learning and learning strategies	Memory, verbal, auditory and spatial abilities
Critical thinking and analysis	Creativity, originality and initiative	Management of financial, material resources
Active learning and learning strategies	Technology design and programming	Technology installation and maintenance
Creativity, originality and initiative	Critical thinking and analysis	Reading, writing, math and active listening
Attention to detail, trustworthiness	Complex problem-solving	Management of personnel
Emotional intelligence	Leadership and social influence	Quality control and safety awareness
Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation	Emotional intelligence	Coordination and time management
Leadership and social influence	Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation	Visual, auditory and speech abilities
Coordination and time management	Systems analysis and evaluation	Technology use, monitoring and control

(World Economic Forum, 2018, p. 12)

career as a musician. Another global report, the *OECD Learning Framework 2030* (OECD, 2018) acknowledges that education is vital in developing knowledge (disciplinary, interdisciplinary, epistemic, procedural), skills (cognitive and meta-cognitive, social and emotional, physical and practical), and attitudes and values (personal, local, societal, global). However, contrasting with the skills demand of the *Future of Jobs* survey, where “manual dexterity, endurance and precision” are considered to be declining skills, the *OECD Learning Framework* highlights “Manual skills related to the arts and crafts, music, physical education skills [are] needed for the future” (p. 17).

## Research approach

Content analysis of readily available documents was the chosen research approach for this study (Flick, 2014). As the chosen initiatives are current, information is available from personal communication, websites, published research, media presentations and advertising. Each of the activities under consideration involve partnerships with government and non-government entities and volunteers who provide professional services, financial and in-kind support to allow these activities to achieve their goals and remain viable. Each of organisations has an obligation to justify the professional and financial support they receive and to interpret with accuracy any written material associated with their activity. In approaching content analysis of data, the authors were guided by the theory of reflective thinking (Taggart & Wilson, 2005; van Manen, 1977). Three levels are described: technical, practical, and critical. Taking a broad view (rather than tying too closely to the classroom), the technical level, has a focus is on acquiring skills and knowledge to achieve objectives and solve problems. The practical level is more closely related to examining personal assumptions and beliefs and the critical level focuses on ethical and moral issues (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). A combination of practical and

critical reflective thinking levels was employed in the analysis.

## Initiatives

Many of the initiatives in this article focus on non-musical outcomes such as school academic improvement, participation and attendance rates, community music-making involving marginalised members of society and partnerships between multi-disciplinary teams, musicians and volunteers. A variety of institutions have initiated activities linking composers, performers, instrumental music teachers and commissioners of music compositions to illustrate aspects of the power of music and its value to humanity.

### 1. The Hush Foundation

The *Hush Foundation* was established in 2000 by renowned physician, Catherine Crock AM, in response to her work with children undergoing painful medical procedures at The Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH) Melbourne. Working alongside anaesthetists in the development of new pain relief systems for these young patients, she sought to reduce the stress and anxiety felt by patients, families and staff. Additional research was undertaken to transform the environment of the operating theatre and recovery rooms through the commissioning of especially composed music from some of Australia’s foremost musicians and composers and recorded by professional ensembles. Initially professional musicians played solo or as a duo in a corner of a hospital ward. Historically, the Hush collection has focused on a classical music offering with Australia’s most well-known and loved composers, conductors and orchestras donating their time and talent to produce the albums. The project has grown to 20 volumes of music, volume 18 being a National Composers in Residence project who engaged with young patients at children’s hospitals around Australia. The composed songs are inspired by the adolescent patients with chronic illness and mental health challenges who the composers

worked with during hospital residencies. An expansion has been into healthcare plays where the topics encourage those employed in the sector to focus on the culture of health care.

## 2. Choir of Hard Knocks

In 2005, homelessness was becoming more obvious on the streets of Melbourne's central business district. A television producer with the national broadcaster (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation) in association with a commercial media company (Fremantle Media) and a charity (RecLink) developed the idea of a series of television programs featuring a choir of members of this section of society. Jonathan Welch was invited to be the conductor. The choir members were users of alcohol, drugs, and had a range of mental health issues. Controlling the choir members' behaviour, caused by their medical and social problems overwhelmed the initial rehearsals. Jonathan Welch brought the individuals together through music and the choir performed 120 concerts in 18 months.

## 3. El Sistema inspired

### a. The Pizzicato Effect

Established in 2009 by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO), and initially funded by a large anonymous benefactor, *The Pizzicato Effect* is currently a twice weekly afterschool activity. It involves free (beginner, intermediate, senior) group string instrumental (violin, viola and violincello) and musicianship (singing, music theory and music appreciation) tuition to 70 children from year 3 in primary (elementary) school to year 9 in secondary school (8-16 years) who reside and attend school in the local government region of the City of Hume (in the north of Melbourne). This community music program with a strong focus on access and social inclusion involves students from 28 schools, 12 different cultures and 14 different language groups. It operates in partnership with the City of Hume, Meadows Primary School, Second Bite and Spectrum and is closely aligned with the principles

of *El Sistema*. The students pursue their passion for music and build cultural and social bridges within their community, through three aims:

- Social development of young people and their communities through musical accomplishments
- Access to musical instruction, without cost as a barrier to participation
- Provision of a safe, positive, inspiring, fun and high-aspiring learning environment that promotes engagement with school and community life (The Pizzicato Effect, 2019)

### b. Crashendo!

*Crashendo!* was established as a pilot program for Sistema Australia in May 2011 with the *El Sistema* principles at its core. The aim was to provide a music program for Australian children, particularly those within communities experiencing disadvantage and disassociation, using orchestral training and performance programs for children as a vessel for positive social change. Sistema Australia promoted the program as "Unique in Australia – Crashendo! enables children in disadvantaged communities to partake in a rich and powerful music program, specifically in instrument- and choir-based music in the context of an orchestra and ensemble" (Sistema Australia, 2017). *Crashendo!* is currently a twice weekly, after school music program for youth from the Hobsons Bay area, administered by the Director Erica Rassmussen, at Laverton P-12 College (a government school in Melbourne's outer west). Four hours of free tuition is provided on donated instruments (violin, viola, cello, flute and clarinet) for school-aged students from 7 to 15 years with a small amount of tuition available during school hours.

### c. Crescendo

In 2014 the West Australia Symphony Orchestra established an *El Sistema* inspired program for two primary schools in the culturally and linguistically diverse suburb of Kwinana, located in Perth's industrial heartland. Under the motto *From little*

*things, big things grow ...* the goal was to provide the students with opportunities “to develop confidence, resilience, emotional and social well-being”. Both schools have reported on improved concentration, self-confidence, behaviour and enthusiasm for learning (Crescendo, 2020). The programs at Medina Primary School and North Parmelia Primary School involve more than 400 students and weekly classroom music education is provided for all grades from Pre-Primary to Year 6. Older students have the opportunity to learn violin.

#### 4. Boîte Schools Chorus and Millennium Chorus

The Boîte was founded in 1979 and “supports excellent artists from diverse cultural communities, promotes cultural understanding through the dynamic presentation of unique cultural experiences, and nurtures creativity, collaboration, access to and active participation in the arts” (The Boîte). *Boîte Schools Chorus* is an annual event held since 2004 and is un-auditioned choir project open to all primary and lower secondary schools and community youth choirs in Victoria. Schools may form a choir or use an existing choir. “The project invites students into a new world through song, builds confidence, broadens horizons and develops valuable performance and interpersonal skills” (The Boîte, 2020). The Chorus has a different cultural theme each year, which is incorporated in teaching across the key learning areas. Following rehearsals in each school where the songs are taught by a teacher, performances take place in school time at the Melbourne Town Hall and large regional towns in Victoria. The students and teachers have opportunity to speak with the audience during their performance. Each school pays a registration fee and receives teaching materials in electronic and paper copy for approximately nine songs around the chosen theme. The materials are designed for teachers without experience and music knowledge and include the history of the

songs, backing tracks in different formats, and work sheets. The choir director is available to provide more advanced work if required. The combined group for each venue comes together twice with the choir director before the final performance. The participating students pay a fee for their theme-based performance tee-shirt and their artwork is displayed at the concerts (personal communication).

For 20 years the Boîte facilitated the *Boîte Millennium Chorus* (1999-2018) with a culminating concert held in 2019 as a celebration event for the 40th birthday of The Boîte in Melbourne. This activity was subsidised by Arts Victoria and brought together existing adult community choirs and individual adults (with invited singers and choirs) to sing in a massed chorus culminating in a concert in the Melbourne Concert Hall. On payment of a registration fee, participants received a tee-shirt, all resources, 10 weeks of intensive weekend rehearsals under the direction of choir directors and a performance (personal communication).

#### 5. Don't Stop the Music

With an influence from the UK, Artemis Media together with the national broadcaster - Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Musica Viva, Salvation Army's Just Brass, a campaign was launched to gather donated unwanted instruments and financial support. To coincide with AusMusic Month in November 2018, a three-part documentary featuring Challis Community Primary School in Armadale, Western Australia was televised. The series followed an underprivileged area of Perth as the students embarked on a music program and it highlighted the benefits of learning an instrument including higher school attendance and improved concentration among the students (Don't Stop the Music, 2020). As part of AusMusic Month in November 2019, an update of the campaign, detailing anecdotes of the history of the donated instruments and achievements at the featured school was available on ABC's streaming service.

## Discussion

The initiatives in this article focus on musical activity where the outcomes are non-musical. They target the Industry 4.0 elements of innovation and productivity, fusing technologies, security and conflict, inequality, and ethics and identity, mental health, values, arts and culture. They highlight the inaccuracy of the skills table listed in the *Future of Jobs Report 2018* and the importance of the *OECD Learning Framework 2030*. Issues raised in the *UNESCO survey of intercultural dialogue 2017* signpost the value of musical activities in the broader community. Participants can build and learn skills enhancing their own lifelong learning for employment opportunities, career development or personal hobbies.

Each of these examples involve marginalised members of society. Primarily the *Hush Foundation* was established to provide original music in an intense environment for seriously ill children at the Royal Children's Hospital (Victoria) as they underwent traumatic surgery. The music helped evoke a sense of calm and optimism for patients and their families in a noisy hospital environment. The Foundation has spread across all the specialist children's hospitals in Australia, with live performances taking place in suitable hospital spaces such as foyers and playrooms. The Hush Foundation has been the largest commissioner of independent music in Australia, winning awards and accolades for their contribution to the music industry. The outcome of the National Composers in Residence Project, *Collective Wisdom* features new and original works composed by six established and six emerging composers in Australia. Composers taking part in the project include Matthew Hindson and Katia Beaugeais (NSW), Paul Stanhope and Natalie Nicolas (NSW), Stuart Greenbaum and Caerwen Martin (Victoria), James Ledger and Olivia Davies (WA), Elena Kats-Chernin and Rachel Bruerville (SA), Maria Grenfell and Thomas Misson (Tasmania). This project marks Hush's first foray into working with artists, patients and hospitals on a national scale – reaching into

new geographical locations to address and profile Australia's growing battle with mental health through music. In a radio interview Catherine Crock (2020) remarked that the Composers in Residence Project has resulted in a composer's brief with suggestions that compositions should be in major keys, optimistic, and consistency in tempo and dynamic choices. Composers contribute their time and compositions on a voluntary basis and are paid an honorarium when funding can be sourced from non-government organisations and private donations. Participating hospitals included Royal Children's Hospital and Monash Health in Melbourne, Westmead and Randwick Children's Hospital in Sydney, the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, Perth Children's Hospital and Royal Hobart Hospital. The first residency started in Melbourne with Stuart Greenbaum and Caerwen Martin visiting patients at the Royal Children's Hospital and the Monash Children's Hospital. The *Hush Foundation* music has been shared with palliative care, nursing homes, general surgery in hospitals and overseas (Crock, 2020).

The *Choir of Hard Knocks* had a clear focus from the beginning and was fortunate in having stable staffing through the conductor, manager and accompanist. Initially music and the purpose of the choir was totally subsumed by the medical/mental health/social/behavioural demands of the choir members – a challenge for the conductor and the choir members. They needed the skills to bring these people together – to understand their medical and health issues, while working with health professionals of many specialisms including GPs, psychologists, social workers, as well as funding and support from local and state governments and charities. While the experience was positive for the members and gave them a goal to attempt to seek help for their many ingrained health issues, the choir was thrust into the limelight performing 120 concerts in 18 months. The rough patch for the choir came when the donations that poured in from the community was not shared with the choir, as expected. ReLink used all the money to set up

other choirs around Australia. The name, *Choir of Hard Knocks* was licensed to ReLink via Fremantle Media. The conductor resigned and all parties went their separate ways. The conductor established another choir (*Choir of Hope and Inspiration*) (financed by himself and his partner), the choir members moved and after six years, the original name was returned to the choir (and now licensed to the choir) (Shea, 2019).

The accomplishments of this group demonstrate that community music groups (including guide dogs, assistance dogs, people with disabilities) can be successful in rehearsal and performance and may involve competitions and interstate travel. A conductor needs to consider the physical and social disabilities of the ensemble members and accommodate these with modifications. Based on many years of teaching experience and community music-making some suggestions are:

- In learning music (home practice) - a recording of their part or of the work where the part is clear, braille notation and words, one on one conversation with the player explaining the style, sound, and music structure
- In rehearsal – visually impaired players may record the rehearsals (expect the replay button to pressed unexpectedly), give clear auditory signposts for tempo changes, starting points (8 bars before...), more talking (than normal) during rehearsal to accommodate players, speak more slowly and directly to players (back row players naturally hear less)
- In performance (formal and informal) – a count in for the visually impaired player who opens with a solo. May not be conventional however that competent semi pro/amateur musician could not participate.

The three activities for school-aged students that are promoted as being inspired by El Sistema: *The Pizzicato Effect*, *Crashendo!* and *Crescendo* are targeted at specific populations, providing an opportunity for a small cohort of participants with access to minimal resources. Their capacity to grow (and even continue to operate) is very limited. The

direction which these programs take is bound by potential access to resources, finance and in-kind support from a variety of partners which cannot be forecast and planned in the long term. The desire to focus on the social justice issues of children from families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds living in a circle of disadvantage (unemployment, low income, refugee status) sustains inequality and injustice for humanity on a broader scale as the target populations will always be small. Osborne et al. (2016) published research exploring the academic and psychosocial impact of *The Pizzicato Effect* and *Crashendo!* concluding “that for a proportion of young children, exposure to formal music learning opportunities offers numerous personal and social benefits, through improved problem solving skills, academic achievement in language and maths, self-esteem, self-regulated behaviour and social responsibility, which may be particularly beneficial for students at risk of social and educational disadvantage” (p. 172).

*The Pizzicato Effect* has had a chequered history primarily through a lack of initial focus and planning for the program and financial constraints, including insecurity of funding (Watson, 2016). Initially delivered and promoted as the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's flagship community music program it has had a number of iterations, including two pilot phases. Misleading interpretation of the Osborne et al. (2016) research “cites *The Pizzicato Effect* as a proven pathway to enhanced academic performance and social-emotional well-being for participating children” (MSO, 2020).

When the program commenced all stringed instruments were taught, however double bass is no longer listed and restrictions are placed on what strings can be taught depending on availability, when students leave the program. Enrolments take place at the beginning of the school year, and sometimes in mid-year. There have been yearly changes in Program Manager (employed by the MSO) since 2015 and a rotation of teaching artists, not all of whom have a teaching qualification. Teaching Artists vary in number, in the early years



there was one Lead Teaching Artist and in 2019 there was a number classified in this position. Some have been permanent members of the MSO. Work experience placements for graduate students undertaking Master of Music Performance Teaching at The University of Melbourne are available with *The Pizzicato Effect*. In 2016 Monash University, in collaboration with the MSO introduced a Pizzicato Effect Prize for Composition. Composition students in third year at Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, undertook to compose for *The Pizzicato Effect*, resulting in a wonderful array of fresh and innovative new works that were composed specifically for the programme (Winners announced, 2021).

Sistema Australia worked together with Laverton P-12 College, Hobsons Bay City Council and Victoria Police (Hobsons Bay) “to provide children - mostly from low socio-economic backgrounds – with exceptional music education to promote youth development” (Sistema Australia, 2012). Sistema Australia transformed into another organisation in 2018, however as a key player in the establishment of *Crashendo!* there is no reference to this fact on the current websites. Foundation documents were published with the launch of *Crashendo!* and these are no longer available. These were a mission, social and artistic goals, and principles. In addition to providing tools to enhance self-esteem, the initial goals place a focus on learning a musical instrument. In a 2012 survey, over 90% of parents reported an increase in their child’s confidence and general happiness and they feel more positive about their child’s future, as a result of their participation in the program (Sistema Australia, 2012). The venue remains as Laverton P-12 College, where initially 30 primary school children aged 7 to 10 (grades 2 to 5) were offered six hours of free tuition on stringed instruments, musicianship and in a choir, as well as performance opportunities and cultural excursions. A senior constable who was the community liaison officer for Hobsons Bay Police always wanted to learn the violin and was one of the original program organisers, and she

attended rehearsals. Flute and clarinet tuition were introduced in 2017 following a request for donated instruments and in pursuit of expanding to a full orchestra.

The weekly lesson offered as part of the *Crescendo* program is complemented with opportunities for students to attend WASO performances at Perth Concert Hall and school-based performances by WASO musicians and local and international guest artists (Crescendo, 2020). Significant publicity has been given to the improvement in academic achievement and students wellbeing. Strahle (2018) comments that both schools have acknowledged that *Crescendo* has contributed to their successful NAPLAN [National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy] and ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) scores. He continues, “The evidence coming out of this program is heartening news, and it confirms that Sistema programs do indeed work”.

The North Parmelia Primary principal Peter Elsegood attributed the school’s improved NAPLAN results to the *Crescendo* program; “We’ve found that our NAPLAN results are tracking very well against like schools, but also we use an ACER - social and emotional wellbeing survey - and our results in relation to that have been extremely positive,” he said. The school’s NAPLAN writing and numeracy results rose above the national average within a year of starting the *Crescendo* program in 2014. In 2017, 7.8 per cent of the school’s students scored in the top band of the ACER social and emotional wellbeing survey, compared with an Australian average of 3.6 per cent (Garlett, 2018).

The program is managed and coordinated by Cassandra Lake, WASO’s executive manager of community engagement. She comments:

I am hugely impressed with the kids’ achievement and improved NAPLAN scores and ACER rating,” she says. “For me NAPLAN is one of the measures, but ACER scores are just as important by measuring children’s social and emotional development. We have some kids who have responsibilities and difficulties that are well beyond their years. The program works to make

them happy, resilient and well-rounded members of the community.

WASO itself monitors the progress of *Crescendo* by using a 'button feedback' method. In this, the child presses a happy, neutral or sad face after each teaching experience. It is a simple method, but one that creates a consistent baseline of data. "The purpose is to track a happiness scale if you like," explains Lake.

It is now tremendous to discover how NAPLAN results are also showing the program is working," she says. "The teachers often say to us that the level of concentration children acquire in *Crescendo* is wonderful and that they are able to take that back into other areas of the classroom. (Strahle, 2018).

With a small number of paid employees and many dedicated volunteers, the Boîte facilitates a range of performing arts activities for the community, including the *Schools Chorus* and *Millennium Chorus*. Through a developed support network they access financial grants and in-kind sponsorship from the Victorian Government (Creative Victoria, Victorian Multicultural Commission), local government councils (Melbourne and Yarra City Councils), and a community bank (Bendigo Bank). They obtain one-off grants of \$1000 to assist disadvantaged schools to pay for a bus to transport their students to the performance venue for the Schools Chorus. They assist individual schools to write letters and make DVDs to obtain sponsorship to pay school registration and student's fees from networks connected to The Boîte or community service clubs. The Boîte administers both Choruses including obtaining large Government grants to pay for venue hire, booking venues, selecting and hiring choir directors, development of themes and associated resources and general needs.

When the *Don't Stop the Music* campaign closed in January 2019 more than 7,000 instruments had been donated. Prior to the close of 2018, 2,500 instruments had been given to approximately 100 schools; and in 2019 the remainder were distributed by the Salvation Army and Musica Viva

to disadvantaged schools all around Australia. Australians also generously donated over \$100,000 through programs affiliated with Music Viva and the Salvation Army's Just Brass. Several Australian businesses made generous instrument donations (Instrument Donation Campaign, 2019). The hidden agenda of the *Don't Stop the Music* donation drive was to draw attention to the lack of musical education in Australian schools – "63% of which offer no music lessons in the classroom" (Sebag-Montefiore, 2019). For schools wanting to establish a music program, the cost of instruments is one difficulty to overcome and the campaign was considered successful. Another obstacle is a lack of training, as classroom teachers may only receive a few hours of music education training in a four-year degree. As part of the *Don't Stop the Music* initiative, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation teamed up with Musica Viva and Sydney University to provide free professional learning (Building a musical school, 2018) and a web-based kit to support teachers to develop their skills in teaching music.

## Concluding comments

Our society and our world are changing rapidly. With the immense technological change that surrounds our life we are confronted with ever changing and emerging ways of work, and ways of engaging with music and the arts. Each initiative in this article operates in partnership with external multi-disciplinary groups and they highlight non-musical attributes as outcomes. Although the focus is on music as a central point for achievement, the outcomes are not musical, either by design or through lack of planning. It is acknowledged that music has a significant role in the community for therapy, for healing, for well-being, and to support other academic goals. These initiatives illustrate the strengths of musicians, through their musical practices, to contribute significantly to the community. They provide some insight into the way musicians

work with different aspects of engagement. They provide opportunities for lifelong learning for the participants in aspects of their individual lives. The initiatives cross cultural boundaries and highlight the value of music in creating unity between community and humanity.

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