Creative and social intentions in research proposals of music performance students. A reality check of curriculum discourse in higher music education.

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ABSTRACT: Transformations in global culture and changing priorities in education policy have led to several waves of curriculum reforms in higher music education in recent decades. There have been attempts to integrate elements of research, entrepreneurship and student-centred learning into curricular frameworks that traditionally focused on achieving artistic excellence through master apprentice learning models. Recently, the emphasis in curriculum design seems to be shifting towards the potential role of performing musicians as creative and engaged 'makers in society'.

In this essay, I place recent attempts in higher music education to support a more creative and socially engaged profile of the performing musician within broader trends in cultural and educational discourse, and make a comparison with developments in artistic research and music performance studies. Based on an analysis of creative and social intentions in research proposals of 291 music performance students at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, I explore whether and how the proposed concept of the music performer as 'maker in society' resonates with the upcoming generation of classically trained musicians, and discuss what can be learned from this for the role of artistic research in curriculum innovation.

KEY WORDS: higher music education; artistic research; curriculum discourse; creative intentions; social intentions; maker in society.

Higher Music Education (henceforth HME) institutions today face unprecedented challenges. Classical music institutions, such as orchestras, concert halls and major record labels, which have long set the standards for artistic skills, competences and quality standards in the HME

curriculum, are no longer at the heart of public culture. Under the pressure of the waning support for art music, they have scaled down their activities or reoriented and diversified their fields of operation. For aspiring professional musicians, this means that the prospect of stable positions in symphony orchestras, contemporary music ensembles or even music schools has become uncertain. As a result, musical careers have become more hybrid and now often include a variety of roles in the most diverse contexts, inside and outside the concert hall. From an artistic perspective, musical creation processes have become more fluid and transdisciplinary, and digital and immersive technologies have an ever-growing impact on the production and reception of music. On a more existential level, values and beliefs that underpinned the cultural authority of classical music institutions, such as the belief in an intrinsic value of musical heritage and the autonomy of art music and musical works, can today be perceived as an obstacle to connecting music makers with society (Craenen, 2022). Moreover, the authority once attributed to musical works by these values, and thus implicitly to the composers of these works and the culture to which they belonged, has become the object of cultural criticism - for some, enough reason to push for decolonisation of and more gender equality in music curricula (Myers, 2016; Hess, 2019; AEC, 2021).

As a consequence, it has become inevitable for today's HME to expand its horizons beyond the confines of traditional Western art music performance. HME institutions are trying to reposition themselves by searching for ways to connect traditional values of excellence and craftsmanship with more versatile and engaged forms of music-making that matter to society. This also drives an expansion of the scope of HME curriculum: besides the traditional craftsmanship, there is growing focus on the role of musicians in society, the competencies needed in digitised environments and networks, and for interacting with diverse audiences and environments. This reorientation prompts the creation of new pedagogical frameworks for HME, such as those proposed in a recent article titled "Musicians as Makers in Society": A Conceptual Foundation for Contemporary Professional Higher Music Education' (Gaunt et al., 2021). This article problematises "the fundamental challenges in creating an appropriate education process, as well as the opportunities, and encourages institutions to rethink the nature of HME" (AEC, 2021).[1] The authors develop a discourse clearly aimed at convincing actors within HME to be part of the change. They not only emphasize a sense of urgency and acknowledge the precarity of the performing musician's profession, but also propose a more optimistic professional outlook, driven not so much by evidence-based adaptations to a changing reality, but a more speculative and activist attitude that is necessarily also of a political and ideological nature.[2] To support a new conceptual foundation, they construct a profile of the professional musician as a "maker in society" along different axes of "partnering values": canon repertoire and making new work, artistic imagination and social/cultural entrepreneurship, individual and ensemble instruction, group creativity and inclusive pedagogies.

In this text, I investigate the impact of the shifting perspectives in HME curriculum discourse on the future prospects of music performance students, and the role artistic

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[1] The Paper also sets the rationale for the European funded 'AEC - Strengthening Music in Society' project. https://aec-music.eu/project/aec-sms-2017-2021-creative-europe-network/ (accessed, 01/03/2023)

[2] It could be argued that the political is necessarily implied in every educational reform, since debates on education 'inevitably include alternative views on good education and good society' (Whalströhm, 2018).

research can play in this. I will limit my discussion to the two main components of the profile of the contemporary musician proposed in (Gaunt et al., 2021), and reinterpret them in a way that is useful for analysing the drives and motives among music performance students, which constitutes the main focus of this article: on the one hand, the notion of "making" which could be understood as a form of creativity (including artistic creation and entrepreneurial innovation), and on the other hand, a world-oriented, civic or social engagement that requires not only an awareness of the social and cultural situatedness of musical practices, but also the tools and competencies to act in accordance with this awareness. What potential do aspiring music professionals recognise in these two components to orientate their own artistic development? To what extent do they perceive them to be complementary values in art music? And what role do they see for artistic research to realise this reorientation?

To seek answers to these questions, I resort to a thematic analysis of 291 project proposals by Master students at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, submitted between 2021 and 2023. In these proposals, which are developed in the first semester of the Master programme, students must describe motivations and a concrete project plan, linking their artistic development to conducting artistic research and carrying out concrete artistic projects in the professional sphere. In doing so, they have the freedom to define a research topic and artistic activities of their own choice, as long as they can articulate their relevance for their future professional practice.[3] These project proposals thus offer a unique insight into the interests and future expectations of the youngest generation of aspiring music performers and the role they want to play in the professional field.[4]

The Master level is also relevant for another reason. Master students are expected to have acquired basic professional skills at the undergraduate level, and to focus on further developing their artistic identity in an autonomous and self-reflective way. Research skills and attitudes play an important role in this respect and have been integrated into curricula at most HME institutions in recent decades. At the same time, these students are often still strongly influenced by the teachers and musicians who surround and inspire them. My assumption, therefore, is that close listening to the research motivations and artistic choices of this (increasingly vocal) group can also offer insights into how the current discourse in curriculum innovation in HME resonates within contemporary music practice. For curriculum developers, this can act as a reality check, and inspire reflection on the role of artistic research in education. Before getting into this discussion, however, it is worth exploring the intersections between curriculum discourse in HME and broader developments in academia and the field of art music at large, first at a general level and then in relation to the concepts of creativity and social engagement.

CURRICULUM DISCOURSE WITHIN THE WIDER ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Curriculum development in HME is driven by changing views on musical training, employability and societal impact of the musical profession, and by the need to respond to

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[3] For a description of the Master Project in question, see Amaral (2021).

[4] Although it is impossible to claim representativity for my analysis in relation to other HME institutions, the international profile of the Master programme at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague is worth mentioning here. In 2020-21, only around 20% of the Master students were Dutch citizens. A majority came from other European countries, next to large cohorts from Asian and South American countries.

social, economic and political pressures. Curriculum discourse in HME is also always resonating with broader developments and discourses in the humanities, social sciences and national and international education policies. Many involved in curriculum innovation in HME are themselves active scholars in diverse academic fields; some have a degree in musicology, others have a background in educational sciences. An increasing number obtained doctoral degrees in artistic research or music performance studies. It is therefore possible and likely that there is ongoing cross-fertilisation between those fields; insights from music performance studies can inform curriculum development, and questions and issues from teaching practice in HME can fuel interest in specific topics in educational research. While it would be worthwhile to examine similarities and differences regarding the knowledge frameworks that support developments in these different domains, such as the widely accepted shift to constructivist and student-centred pedagogies in HME (Burwell, 2020; Gaunt et al., 2021; McLean, 2022), and the postmodern critiques of disciplinary knowledge systems that have underpinned the emergence of a "New Musicology" and the current expansion of the field of music performance studies (McCreless, 1996; McClary, 2002; Doğantan-Dack, 2022) it will not be possible to carry out such a detailed examination within the limited space of this article. Instead, I will limit myself to identifying some obvious parallels.

Musical inclusivity
Western classical canonical repertoire and one-to-one teaching are still strongholds in the curricula of most HME institutions. Although many institutions have integrated jazz, popular and traditional music departments in the past four decades, and despite the radical rupture of some HME institutions with the classical curriculum,[5] the landscape of HME as a whole clearly does not represent the musical diversity of the music industry. In the discourse of HME, there is currently great emphasis on musical diversity and inclusivity, and some HME institutions express their ambition "to change and overcome the hegemony of a classical mindset" (Gies, 2021, p. 152). Yet, this aspiration cannot easily be achieved through a radical overhaul of the curriculum (which would also require a complete change of the teaching staff). More indirect strategies can be found in the way HME institutions give students more creative leeway in their artistic choices, and also in the increasing focus on improvisation in music programmes.[6] In this connection, HME institutions have started to make room for valuing (and assessing) aspects of musical performance practice beyond the pursuit of ideal performances of canonical works. Here, a clear correspondence can be found with developments and discourses in (new) musicology, such as Lydia Goehr's influential critique of the western canon as an *Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Goehr, 1992), Bruce Haynes' call to leave the 'cover band mentality' in Baroque music and revive the ideal of the performer as an improviser-composer-arranger (Haynes, 2007), or Nicholas Cook's proposition to shift the focus from the musical score as the representation of music to the study of music as performance (Cook, 2014).

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[5] See, for example, the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Denmark that is focused on "widely diverse forms of expression in such genres as rock, pop, jazz, urban, metal and electronic music". https://rmc.dk/en/who-arewe (accessed 02/03/2023).
[6] See, for instance, the METRIC-project, funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme (METRIC, 2019).

Musicking

It has become commonplace in music scholarship to argue that the understanding of musical phenomena must include an understanding of the way they are situated in a specific material, cultural, historical, and social context. Scholars have long dismissed the idea that the formal sounding structure of music or the tone relationships that can be analysed from a musical score suffice to explain the perceived meaning of a musical performance, or of music as performed. Music finds its meaning in human activities and interactions: "it is not a thing but something people do" thus has become the mantra today in music sociology, music psychology or ethnomusicology, often accompanied by a reference to Christopher Small's notion of "musicking" (Small, 1998) and a sneer at ideals of universality and artistic autonomy that are often associated with 19th and 20th-century western art music.

In current curriculum discourse in HME, we can recognise the same tendency to approach musical events as socially and materially situated and networked phenomena. HME institutions, too, have become permeated by the awareness that every musical performance involves an interaction between the musician's personality, skills and perspective, a musical genre with its own history, the materiality of physical instruments and the acoustics of the space in which the music resounds, listeners or participants with their own cultural and personal histories, and, increasingly, digital technologies that alter our sense of presence, reality and creativity. In response, music curricula have become less uniform and standardised, making room for the exploration of the many possible interactions between the aforementioned elements. The result is a more student-centred approach in which a large part of the responsibility for the choices within the learning trajectory has shifted to the students themselves.

This trend towards a student-centred and project-based curriculum in HME institutions[7] marks a turning point in an educational model that was supported for approximately two centuries by the conservatoire model that saw the light of day in the early nineteenth century, starting with the Paris conservatory and later the Leipzig conservatory that set a model for conservatories throughout Europe and beyond (Navon, 2014; Gies, 2019, pp. 40-1). Several common features of this model are still recognisable in HME today, especially in performance departments: the role of individual instruction and the transmission of craftsmanship in master-apprentice relationships, and the central place of the musical repertoire and (recorded) performances of that repertoire that serve as a standard for artistic quality and excellence. Against this background of a highly reproductive music culture, there has also always lingered a more implicit expectation of originality and transcendence, primarily through a lived and personal interpretation that, paradoxically, had to be constantly balanced with the ideal of *Werktreue* (Goehr, 1992; Navon, 2020). The current emphasis on improvisation skills and the creation of new work alongside the preservation of canonical works (Gaunt et al., 2021) points to a growing realisation that this educational model falls short of equipping young musicians with the skills and competencies needed for the reality of a portfolio career (Bartleet et al., 2019).

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[7] See, for example, the Latimpe-website which gives examples of student-centred curricular reforms at European HMEIs. https://latimpe.eu/about/ (accessed 26/01/2023)

Artistic research

The clearest manifestation of the shift from an authoritarian model of music education to one centred on the agency of the learning musician can be found in the integration of artistic research into the HME curriculum since the early 2000s. At most HME institutions in Europe, artistic research has become a fundamental part of the curriculum, with also a prospect for musicians to further develop their research practice at doctoral and post-doctoral level after graduation. With the inclusion of performing and creative artists in the academic realm (Borgdorff, 2012), new types of practice-based research not only lead to a more diverse and equitable academic field (Doğantan-Dack, 2022), they also introduce new subjects and perspectives to music scholarship, informed and constituted by experiences and thinking in and through artistic practice.

In this respect, an analysis of research choices and motivations of music performance students at master's level may give us a hint of future developments in artistic research and music performance studies on PhD and post-doc level, but also invite a critical evaluation of recent curriculum innovations in HME. As will become clear in this article, there are indications of a gap between the discourse as we find it around curricular reforms in HME, and the opportunities young musicians see in it for their artistic development. Prior to this analysis, it is useful to first briefly discuss and define the two components of the newly proposed profile of the musician as a "maker in society", namely creativity and social engagement, and to provide a rough, though incomplete, survey of how both elements are present today in curriculum discourse, the professional music field and scholarly music studies.

SITUATED AND TRANSFORMATIONAL CREATIVITY

In discussions about the value and possible role of artists in society, the word "creativity" quickly comes up. In the art world, this public interest in artistic creativity is often viewed with some suspicion, because it seems to be directed not so much at the artworks that emerge from it, but at qualities that are transferable to other domains. For example, artistic creativity is often used as an example for "out-of-the-box" thinking that is rampant in industrial or commercial innovation processes (Griffiths, 2019; Sandberg, 2019). The underlying idea is that thinking like creative artists can introduce imagination and divergent thinking (Hale & Woronkowicz, 2021), and can break habits, routines and constricting ways of thinking that impede innovation.[8]

The assumption that the work of artists relies, more than in other professions, on discipline-breaking thinking certainly involves major caveats (Weisberg, 2009; Sweller, 2022). But it is often also artists and art educators themselves who underscore how artistic creativity is an asset in a rapidly changing world. Composer and activist Merlijn Twaalfhoven, for example, promotes "the artist mindset" to look at complex world problems.[9]

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[8] See Kamoche & Pina e Cunha (2001) for an example of creative thinking in jazz improvisation applied to product innovation.

[9] Twaalfhoven (2020, pp. 17-18) describes the artistic mindset as consisting of the four modalities of perceiving, feeling, thinking and making, while clarifying that these are not restricted to artists, but are available to any human being.

> Artists are able not only to see the surface, but beyond the here-and-now, to allow possibilities and fantasies to emerge and thus to discern a way forward, beyond the horizon. In addition, they can also design tangible forms and direct experiences through which their imaginations and visions become accessible and inspiring to others. (Twaalfhoven, 2020, p. 14. Author's translation)

Yet creativity is a slippery concept: there is a very large and diverse literature on creativity, and its definitions vary. I largely base my analysis on Margaret Boden's definition of creativity as the ability to *create new forms,* both in the biological and the psychological sphere (Boden, 2015, p. 354). My focus here is on the psychological sphere, where Boden further defines creativity as the ability to develop ideas and/or artefacts that are *new, surprising* and *valuable* (Boden, 2015, pp. 356-7). Newness or novelty is an element found in almost all definitions of creativity, although its meaning can differ depending on the context and perspective. My discussion of what counts as "new" has been guided by the perspective of the students whose Master project proposals I discuss below.[10]

Diverging opinions exist regarding the two other components of Boden's definition. I adhere to Boden's criterion of surprise, given the widely spread association of artistic creativity with experimentation and openness to the unexpected. The value criterion, although contested by some (see Weisberg, 2015), is also relevant to my analysis, in the sense that music students' choices are motivated by their potential value for their professional careers. Weisberg (ibid.) proposes intentionality as an alternative criterion of creativity, next to newness. I took this suggestion into consideration to differentiate between cases where students explicitly express creative aims in their project proposals and others that only hint at them implicitly. Boden also distinguishes three mechanisms of creativity: *combinatorial, exploratory,* and *transformational* (Boden, 2015, pp. 356-7)*.* This classification has been useful in recognising different creative methods in the students' proposals. Examples are new combinations of different musical styles or art forms (combinatorial), artistic experimentation (exploratory), and alternative models of music production, for instance through collaborative creation processes or a creative play with the conventions and codes of the concert format (transformational).

In the classical music tradition, creativity long remained associated with the work of composers or improvisers, clearly delineating their role from that of performing musicians. As in most popular and indigenous folk music traditions, in the performance of classical music, familiarity and stylistic conformity are more important values than novelty or surprise. While there is room for interpretation and variation, there is also an expectation of paying respect to the work, style and musical tradition. Even within those disciplinary boundaries, however, musical performances are always in some sense creative, since musicians at the moment of performance realise or bring to life something that was not there before. Also, in performances of known musical repertoire that adhere to performance standards, zooming in far enough into the details will make appear features that are "bound to differ from every

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[10] Although relevance beyond one's own practice is a clear goal and assessment criterion, the research projects of Master students are not required to make an original contribution to the professional field as is expected in doctoral research. Therefore, we are not talking here about a form of "historical" creativity ('H-creativity' in Boden's terminology, 2010, p. 71), but a more personal and psychological perception of newness, so-called P-creativity.

other performance in some way, somewhere" (Clarke, 2011). We can assume that the current interest in the profile of the musician as a "maker in society" refers to more than these mostly implicit and micro-creative processes. Therefore, in my analysis that follows, my primary interest has been on indicators of creative intentions to bring *transformational change* to the artistic practice of the student. This is in contrast to what could be called "intra-disciplinary creativity", which refers to the always changing performances described above or to highly idiomatic styles of composing or improvising.

Collective creativity and improvisation
As mentioned above, research into musical creativity has long focused on the musical ideas found in composers' scores and sketchbooks. Because of the conception of musical creativity as an individualised, and therefore difficult to access mental process, the study of musical creativity long remained an underdeveloped field of research (Collins, 2007), and, from a psychological perspective, there still is a dearth of literature regarding the cognitive processes in the activities of composing individuals, creating new music (Schiavio et al., 2022, p. 306). However, in the past decades, discussions on creativity have acquired a lot of traction in music performance studies by a gradual inversion of this individualised perspective. To paraphrase Nicholas Cook's description of the musicological field around 2000: the focus in music creativity studies in the past two decades shifted from the individual to the group (or network), from composition to performance, from text to context, from mind to body, from men to (the inclusion of) women, from the exceptional to the everyday (Cook, 2018, p. 6). Against the often autobiographical or autoethnographical nature of studies on creativity in composition, and the relatively low interest in this area outside the discipline itself, today stands the mushrooming literature on "emergent creativity" in collective and social processes of music making (Sawyer, 2006; Burnard, 2011; Clarke & Doffman, 2017; King & Gritten, 2017).

The focus on socially situated creativity can also be found in the "creativity turn" in music education at large (Bremmer & Verneert, 2023), characterised by a revaluation of improvisational forms. At conservatories, improvisation in the broad sense has been high on the agenda for some years.[11] In early music departments, ornamentation and variation techniques had already become in the late 20th century an integral component of historical performance practice, but today we also see in classical music departments a growing attention to creation in the moment, supported in part by new insights from historically informed artistic research (Mooiman, 2022). For HME institutions, revaluing improvisation in curriculum meets several objectives: it allows for a more flexible and appealing way of dealing with the musical repertoire in and outside the concert hall, facilitates collaboration among musicians from different backgrounds, and fosters a more holistic and embodied understanding of the musical language in which musicians express themselves. The latter is particularly true in idiomatic forms of improvisation, under which a significant part of the jazz tradition can also be grouped, in the sense that there, too, the ground for music performance is often internalised and consists of recognisable schemes on which musicians vary and improvise. An exception to this may be found in free improvisation, a practice which can be

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[11] See note 6.

defined as "a method of creating music whose style and structure, as well as its material, is brought into being collectively and/or individually at the moment of performance" (Barrett, 2023). According to this definition, free improvisation seems to fit strongly with all three of Boden's criteria, although the "surprise" criterion is better described in this context as "unpredictability". Interestingly, in free improvising ensembles this also requires "response-ability" of the musicians as a group (Cobussen, 2011)[12], generating a sense of collective creativity and, indirectly, a social engagement with each other.[13]

Technologies, materials and creativity
Classical music education has long depended on standardised instruments. While new instruments, "extended techniques" and the use of electronics have been a major driver of musical experimentation in contemporary composed and improvised music since the second half of the twentieth century, these remained absent in classical music education for a long time (Craenen, 2012). Today, digital and electronic tools for music creation and production are easily accessible to every musician, while artificial intelligence, machine learning and virtuality are inviting a rethinking of the fabric of the musical field as a whole, particularly in the context of its relation to cultural memory, material instruments and human effort, as well as autonomy and creativity. Some scholars engaging with these questions develop "post-human", "non-anthropocentric" and "decentralised" perspectives on artistic creativity, often inspired by New Materialist theories that are also beginning to seep into artistic research (Fairbairn, 2022; de Assis, 2023). To my knowledge, such theoretical models have not yet clearly influenced curriculum development in HME, except perhaps in disciplines more receptive to such theories, such as sound art and composition. Currently, in most HME institutions, digitisation is mainly limited to purposes of learning, presentation, collaboration, and dissemination. The question of how these technologies affect young aspiring musicians' vision of what musical creativity means has yet to be answered. And this question seems a pressing one, given the speed of recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and machine learning in all areas of society.

Creative formats and curatorship
Finally, a concept that entered HME in recent years is the notion of *curatorship*, a term coming from the visual arts but spreading recently in the music sector as well (Freydank & Rebhahn, 2019). In analogy to the function of the curator of an exhibition who takes care of the selection of artworks, the narrative and the presentation format, today performing musicians are increasingly engaged as (co-)curators of music series or festivals, extending their role from performing on stage to making connections between musical creations and repertoire, topical themes, environments, and other musicians and audiences. Interest in a curatorial role for the performing musician underscores the need to develop reflective capacities in aspiring professional musicians so that they can take responsibility for the choices of a musical

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[12] Cobussen (2011) refers not only to interaction between people, but also between musicians and instruments, audience, cultural memory, acoustics, and so on, thus invoking an ecological perspective of improvisation. See also: Cobussen (2017, pp. 57-64).
[13] For an extensive discussion and concrete examples of collective free improvisation in higher music education, see: Barrett (2023).

programme, for how and where music is performed, and for finding connections with audiences and the context in which the musical performance takes place. Artistic research offers a framework for many music performance students to experiment with music programming and alternative concert formats.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN MUSIC PERFORMANCE

In recent years, HME institutions have begun to pay closer attention to the possible role of social engagement in music curricula. Along with the emphasis in curriculum reforms on artistic flexibility, entrepreneurship and reflectivity, some HME institutions "have begun to promote forms of artistic citizenship in their graduate outcomes, and to explore how to combine ongoing practical craft training with addressing major societal changes including both social and environmental issues" (Gaunt et al., 2021). The turn towards the social value of the musician's profession can also be understood as a response to the unstable relationship between the arts sector and cultural policy in western democracies. Claiming a social function for musicians can be seen as a proactive appropriation of the discourse on the place of the arts in society, an appropriation that reverses a situation in which the arts constantly need to be legitimised. In my analysis, I examined the ways music performance students identify with this social orientation. By analogy with the discussion on creativity, I will first broadly outline some forms of social engagement that can be recognised in the professional music field, scholarly music studies and curriculum discourse today and clarify how I interpreted social engagement in my analysis.

Contextual awareness and relationality
In the most general sense, social engagement in musical practice could be defined as a world-oriented motivation that is distinct from an engagement that mainly focuses on artistic or aesthetic dimensions of music as a medium in its own right. Some authors argue that all musical practice is inherently social, even when it concerns an individualised activity like composition (see for instance: Cook, 2018, pp. 69-134). In my analysis, however, I reserve "social engagement" for a more specific social purpose that *intentionally* reaches beyond aesthetic and artistic dimensions of musical practice. Based on this definition, different forms and degrees of engagement are possible. At its most basic level, it manifests itself in the awareness of the social context and environment in which music takes place. In every musical performance context, listeners and participants bring their own identity and expectations, to which the performing musician can try to consciously relate (as far as their presence and identity are known to the musician). Cultural and environmental awareness may also play a role here, for instance when a conscious choice is made to have musical activities outside the traditional concert setting (such a choice is often in itself an indication of social interest).

A more active form of social engagement can be found in the pursuit to involve the audience in the preparation or performance of the music in some way. We find these practices in various forms of community music and non-formal music education (Higgins, 2008 & Higgins, 2012); most established classical orchestras and ensembles nowadays also focus a growing part of their activities on projects that integrate aspects of education and participation. The "educational turn" of orchestras and concert halls (Wimmer, 2021) today provides an important argument for integrating social, communicative and educational skills

into HME performance curriculum.

Examples of explicit social engagement of performing musicians can be found in music projects in neighbourhoods, hospitals, refugee camps, prisons or public spaces.[14] While there is often an aim to create aesthetic value for the participants, the social purpose of these projects is so obvious that the music is often perceived in such contexts as instrumental in achieving a social goal, sometimes relegating the importance of artistic qualities to the background. At the same time, HME institutions or professional music organisations involved in such projects are sensitive to the question of what the added value of artistic expertise can be in these contexts, and whether this in the long term also provides a role for highly trained musicians, in addition to the role of music therapists or music educators. Some HME institutions try to answer this question by offering specialised programmes or elective courses for performing musicians that focus on, for example, musicmaking in the context of health care (Smilde, 2019; Dons, 2019). At the same time, it should be noted that the number of students who choose these specialisations and electives remains relatively small. Musicians with a strong socially oriented perspective may be more likely to be found in programmes for music teacher training or music therapy. Music teachers or music therapists are often also classically trained musicians, but my focus in this article is on the social interests of music performance students who do not choose such a specialisation.

Music as a social mirror
Musical engagement with the world can also manifest itself in more indirect ways, for example by taking social themes or issues as a starting point for new musical creations, or by transformations in musical practice that represent engagement with these issues. Examples are projects involving themes of gender, cultural and ethnic representation in the classical music industry or decision-making processes in ensembles and orchestras. Music ensembles experimenting with alternating leadership implicitly or explicitly criticise the traditional, hierarchical power structures of traditional orchestra models.[15] Values of inclusion and diversity are also pervasive in the mission and vision of most HME institutions, and in some places are gradually being translated into concrete action plans that in time can also affect the curriculum (AEC, 2021).

Besides strictly social topics, engagement with environmental issues can also be seen as part of a world-oriented approach by music makers. References to climate change or ecology can be found in the work and artistic research of many composers and sound artists today (Christenhusz, 2020 & Christenhusz, 2021). These artists do not necessarily make direct statements about climate change but often aim to make something of the processes of current ecological crises audible in their music, metaphorically or more directly through processes relying on creative methods of data-sonification (Supper, 2014), or through the creation of site-specific works. Although such topics do not often find a concrete translation into specific curricular courses, environmental issues are increasingly mentioned as areas of interest in HME curriculum development (Jorritsma, 2019; AEC, 2020).

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[14] For a wide international range of examples, see the various presentations in the context of the SIMM-posia on the social impact of music making: http://www.simm-platform.eu/ (accessed 01/03/2023)

[15] See for instance the model of the Dutch Pynarello ensemble that performs without conductor or scores: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VhcJT7Kx7E (accessed 05/03/2023)

Musicians as socially-engaged personae

Finally, social engagement can also be expressed in statements of musicians who act as responsible citizens or activists and use their visibility on stage or in the media. Here the musical performance serves as an occasion to bring non-musical issues into the spotlight. Recent examples are Russian, Ukrainian, or Iranian musicians who spoke out against the war or the oppression in their countries or performed at places of devastation (Navickaité-Martinelli, 2022). HME does not have a tradition of social activism as part of education, as is more common in visual arts or theatre. Nevertheless, the concept of 'musical activism' is on the rise in HME and enters curriculum at some places as a tool for artistic research and social justice (Hess, 2019).

ANALYSIS, METHOD

For this analysis, 291 Master project proposals from Master students at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague between 2021 and 2023 were analysed thematically. The large majority of the students were from the classical department, with a classical instrument as their main subject. Students from Master programmes who focused on composition, music theory, education, electronic/digital music or opera were not taken into account, also because their programmes did not require them to submit a Master project plan at the time of writing.
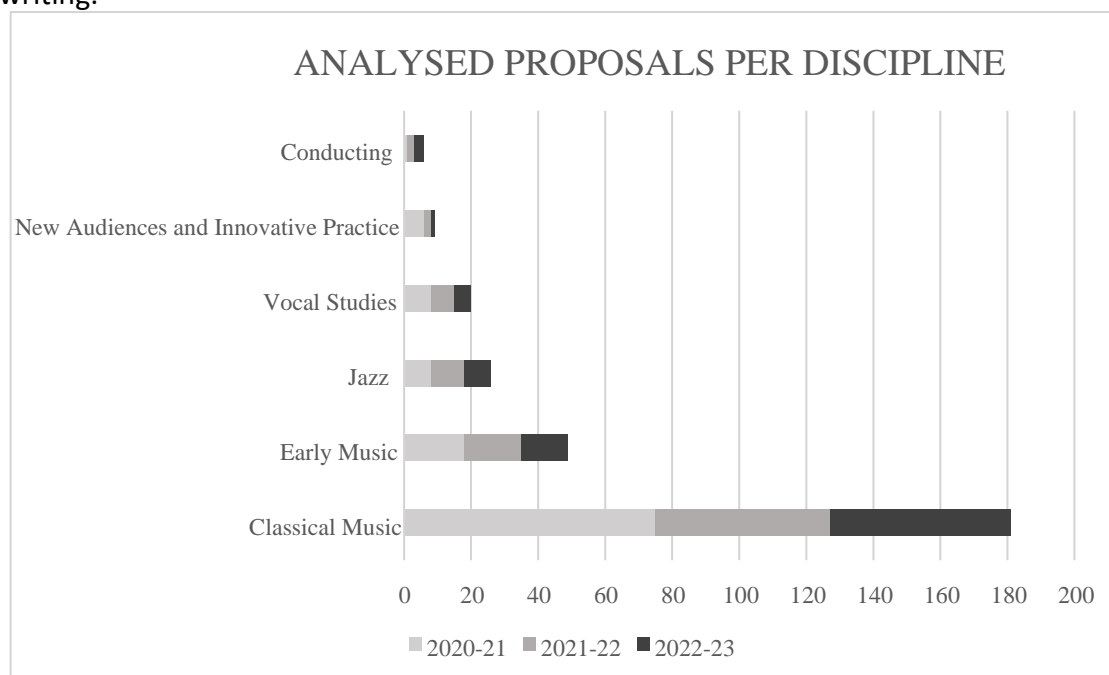
Figure 1. Analysed Master Project Proposals per discipline for three consecutive academic years.

In the proposals, students explain how they aim to connect their artistic development in the Master programme with a self-chosen research project and professional integration activities. The proposal is structured around a fixed set of questions related to their artistic vision and professional aspirations, their research questions and methods, and the purposes and design of their professional integration activities. The proposals are submitted after the

first semester, which means that students already took introductory courses on research and professional integration, but received little to no supervision with regard to the concrete elaboration and execution of their project prior to submitting their proposals. It is also important to stress that students are not explicitly asked about creative or social intentions in the proposal. Thus, the extent to which these aspects are covered in their proposals does not directly reveal how students consider and value them in relation to their future professional practice (students may be interested in socially engaged practice but choose to focus their proposal on other aspects of their artistic development). Nonetheless, I have taken the lack of explicit questions about creativity or social engagement as an asset to measure and evaluate the extent to which they emerge as an integral aspect of the students' artistic vision and professional aspirations.

All proposals went through several rounds of bottom-up and top-down semantic and thematic analysis, with a focus on the research proposal and the proposed professional integration activities. In the bottom-up approach, theme tags were used to code each project proposal in the first round of analysis. In the next round, correspondence was sought between themes of all proposals, and tags were grouped and reduced to 27 thematic categories that were assigned in a non-exclusive manner, meaning that proposals could combine different, often overlapping themes,[16] with a set maximum of four. Proposals had an average of 1350 words.

In the top-down approach, all proposals were analysed in accordance with indicators of creative intentions and social engagement. I recall here my definition of creativity as challenging disciplinary expectations, i.e., with an intention for transformation or innovation, and my conception of social engagement as a world-oriented engagement through musicmaking. Weighting has been applied to both categories, using a three-point scale: 0 means the absence of any explicit references to creative or social intentions, a score of 0.5 indicates a moderate presence of these elements without them being central to the project proposal, and 1.0 indicates a strong focus on or integration of these elements in the research and/or professional integration activities. Averages of these scores were calculated for the totality of the proposals and per discipline (see further under "Creative profiles").
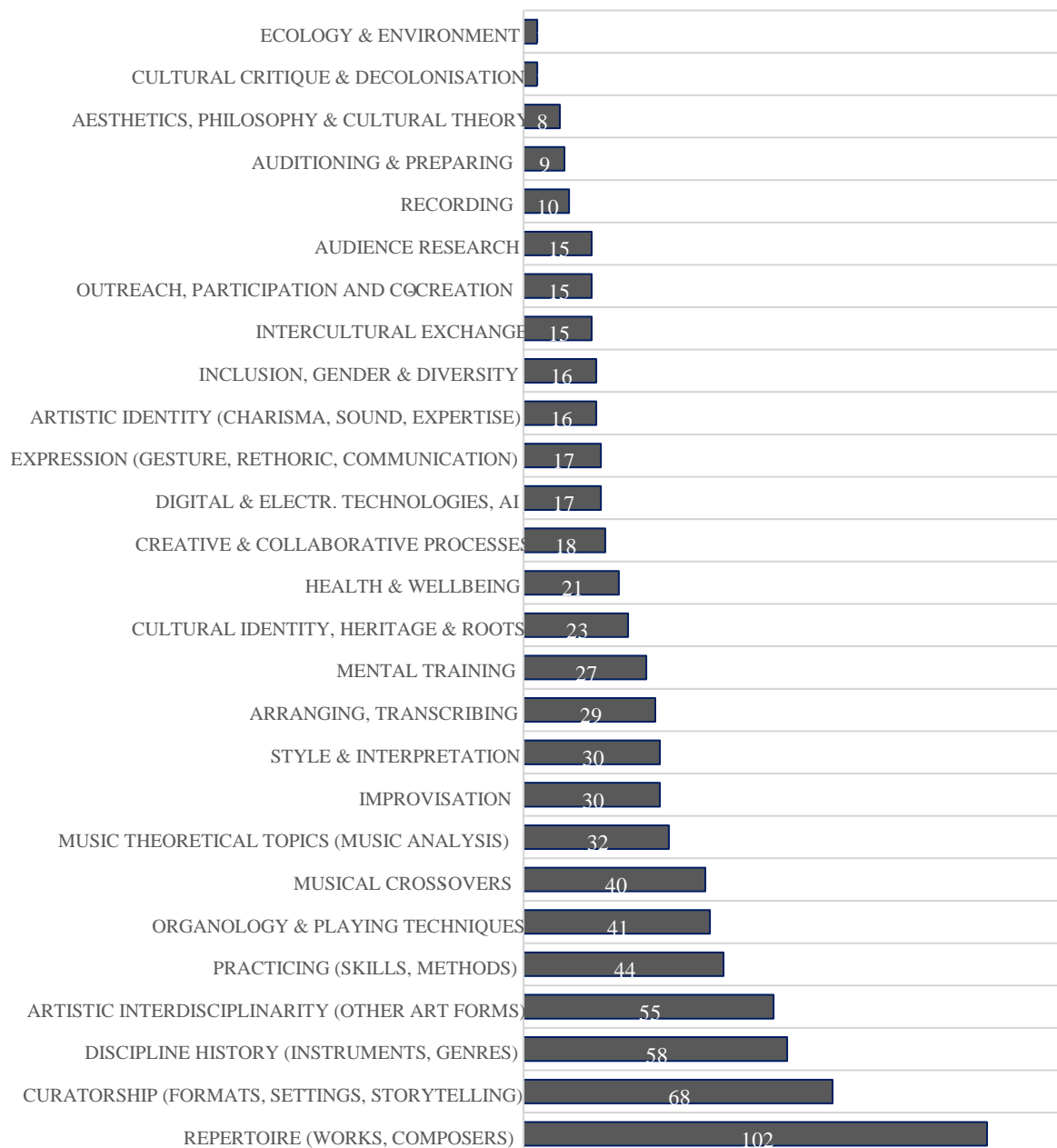
The analysis is based exclusively on what could be found verbatim in the proposals. However, it should also be noted that the proposed thematic categories are qualitative interpretations and groupings based on a semantic analysis. Some categories, such as 'curatorship', are not always referred to by the same terms, but are implied in the proposals. The feasibility, credibility or possible outcomes of the proposals were not taken into account, nor does the weighting express any qualitative assessment or evaluation of relevance.

For ethical and privacy reasons, all student's quotes have been anonymised. The proposals analysed are not public documents and therefore the source data cannot be shared. More concrete information on the data collection process can be requested from the author.

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[16] Typical combinations are 'Repertoire' with 'Discipline history' or 'Health & Well-being' with 'Mental training'.

THEMATIC CATEGORIES

Category	Value
ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT	
CULTURAL CRITIQUE & DECOLONISATION	
AESTHETICS, PHILOSOPHY & CULTURAL THEORY	8
AUDITIONING & PREPARING	9
RECORDING	10
AUDIENCE RESEARCH	15
OUTREACH, PARTICIPATION AND COCREATION	15
INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE	15
INCLUSION, GENDER & DIVERSITY	16
ARTISTIC IDENTITY (CHARISMA, SOUND, EXPERTISE)	16
EXPRESSION (GESTURE, RETHORIC, COMMUNICATION)	17
DIGITAL & ELECTR. TECHNOLOGIES, AI	17
CREATIVE & COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES	18
HEALTH & WELLBEING	21
CULTURAL IDENTITY, HERITAGE & ROOTS	23
MENTAL TRAINING	27
ARRANGING, TRANSCRIBING	29
STYLE & INTERPRETATION	30
IMPROVISATION	30
MUSIC THEORETICAL TOPICS (MUSIC ANALYSIS)	32
MUSICAL CROSSOVERS	40
ORGANOLOGY & PLAYING TECHNIQUES	41
PRACTICING (SKILLS, METHODS)	44
ARTISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARITY (OTHER ART FORMS)	55
DISCIPLINE HISTORY (INSTRUMENTS, GENRES)	58
CURATORSHIP (FORMATS, SETTINGS, STORYTELLING)	68
REPERTOIRE (WORKS, COMPOSERS)	102

Figure 2. Bottom-up analysis of themes in the proposals. Thematic categories are qualitative interpretations based on a semantic analysis. Categories often overlap or complement. At least 1, and maximally 4 categories were assigned to each proposal.

DISCUSSION

A first general outcome of the top-down analysis is that more than half of the students (n=186/291) formulate creative intentions that reach beyond what may be considered common practice in their main discipline.[17] These transgressive intentions dovetail with the "transformational" aspect of creativity as proposed in Boden's definition. A smaller group, partly overlapping with the first, (n=128) proposed projects that show various forms of social engagement, to varying degrees. An even smaller but still substantial group (n=78) mentioned no concrete elements of transformational creativity or social engagement.

Intra-disciplinary profiles

> "My biggest dream is to become the principal clarinet in an orchestra."
> (anonymous student, 2021)

It is worth examining first the areas of interest of the group of students who do not express explicit creative or social intentions. Professional aspirations in this group are often directed towards establishing a position in the professional music field. These students dream about playing in a renowned orchestra, creating their own ensemble to tour the world or develop a multifaceted career as a performing musician. Some of them are focussed on doing auditions, others want to be recognised as a specialist in their discipline, and the choices in their master projects reflect these ambitions. Students in this profile typically focus their research project on aspects of the musical repertoire: a specific work or composer (33), features and history of their musical or instrumental discipline (27), instrumental skills and playing techniques (16), efficacy and focus in practising (16), or methods of mental training (12). A related topic that receives considerable attention - not only in this group but amongst all students - is health and wellbeing, and more specifically with regard to performance anxiety (8).

To summarise, students who do not formulate explicit creative or social motivations in their proposals are primarily focused on aspects and issues directly linked to the musical profession: from deepening the knowledge in and about their discipline, to learning how to handle stage fright, to developing strategies to prepare for auditioning. Thus, we could describe the research interests of this group as 'intra-disciplinary focused'. However, in their quest to deepen their disciplinary knowledge and skills, they often also seek recourse to knowledge outside the musical domain: musicology and history when the focus is on repertoire, performance science and psychology when the focus is on musical training and performance. Hence, the intra-disciplinarity of this profile is relative and should be understood primarily as a focus on strengthening and deepening musical practice, which eventually may also lead to a transformation of their practice, even if this intention is not

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[17] Musical disciplines are not fixed and are always in flux; therefore, it is difficult to define what belongs to a musical discipline. For example, studying historical manuscripts has become an integral part of early music practice, whereas this is not common to classical music education. Learning to improvise or vary on a harmonic scheme is an essential part of jazz education, whereas in classical music education such a competence is still regarded by many students as adventurous and challenging, since many do not come into contact with this practice prior to their conservatoire training (see also: Hill, 2018). As a rule, in the analysis the student's formulations and disciplinary perspectives served as a yardstick for deciding whether proposals contained creative intentions.

explicitly stated in their proposals.

Creative profiles
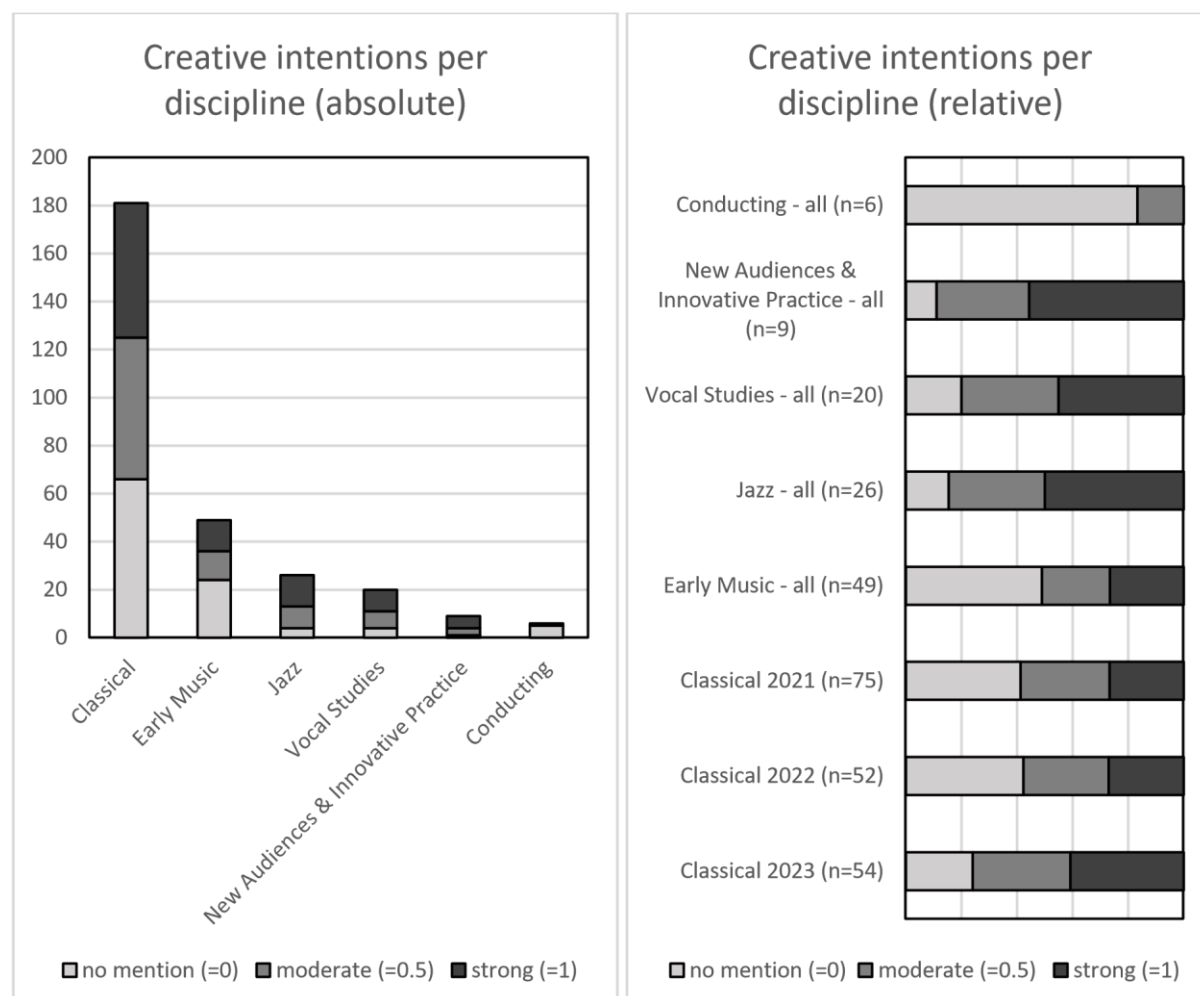
Figure 3. Creative intentions in master project proposals (top-down analysis)

Not surprisingly, students in a specialised master programme like New Audiences and Innovative Practice (average: 0.72) display strong creative intentions. Jazz students also score high on this criterion (average: 0.65), which is to be expected from the improvisational nature of their practice. What is also notable in this group is that jazz students strive more than others for crossovers to other genres, such as hip-hop, folk, classical and early music. The fact that jazz itself has hybrid origins and is, much more than classical music, a highly aural practice, may partly explain why jazz students seem to cross over to other genres with greater ease. The relatively high creativity score in vocal studies (0.58) is more surprising, but might be explained by the broader palette of skills and media they have at their disposal: next to their voice, their practice includes working with text and gesture, which invites many of them to engage creatively with other artistic disciplines like theatre or poetry. Students from Classical (0.48) or Early Music (0.39) departments express significantly fewer creative intentions, which is to be expected given the importance of repertoire and the focus on highly

specialised disciplinary skills in these disciplines. Yet, it is precisely among these students that some of the most adventurous research projects can be found (see below). Moreover, a steep increase in creative intentions can be observed among students in the classical department over the last three years (see Fig. 3), especially in the formulation of interdisciplinary and cross-genre projects and research themes.

Versatility and improvisation

> "Nowadays, surviving in the music scene requires more skills than just be [sic] a good performer of a musical instrument" (anonymous student, 2021)

Within the proposals of the large group of students that have (at least partly) an extradisciplinary focus, there is an emphasis on the need to become a "versatile" or "flexible" musician, which is clearly in line with the current discourse in HME worldwide (de Reizabal & Gomez, 2020). These students are aware of the necessity to develop a wide range of skills and competencies to "survive in the music scene". In many proposals, however, the motives for developing artistic versatility are formulated not so much as a reaction to the unpredictability of the music profession, but more as a desire to develop a distinct artistic identity and to better connect with audiences.

Musical crossovers, cultural identity and heritage

The emphasis on artistic flexibility is also reflected in the strong interest in improvisation (30 - among them 18 from the classical department), musical crossovers (40), and the making of arrangements (30). Within musical crossovers, there is remarkable interest in musical folklore or roots music, which also reflects the lure of topics related to cultural identity (23).

> "Since I am a jazz pianist with a Japanese and Austrian background, I felt always attracted to cultural mixes in music … I am investigating the possibilities of applying traditional Japanese music in Jazz or the other way around." (anonymous student, 2021)

Especially students with a mixed, non-European or South-European background use the freedom in the master programme to find connections with their cultural identity, often also with the purpose of giving back something to their home communities after their studies. Like the pianist who aims "to make an impact on Vietnamese piano culture after my graduation" (anonymous student, 2021), or the clarinet player who proposes research into different versions of a lullaby from the Canary Islands, her home country, with the aim of creating a new arrangement for clarinet solo that could be performed locally:

> "I see it as an opportunity to explore something different in my musician career and be able to make a connection to the place where I come from". (anonymous student, 2021)

Interdisciplinarity

> "I am really interested in the connection between visual art and music. I love modern music and I feel that it is often overlooked. I think that exploring modern music in conjunction with visual art could help audiences become more open to it and the music will also contribute to and bring another dimension to the visual artists' work." (anonymous student, 2021)

> "My main motivation as a musician is to have an active role in changing the paradigm of classical music concerts. I want to present audiences not only music from lesserknown

composers, but also different approaches to the performance through multidisciplinary collaborations." (anonymous student, 2021)

Next to musical crossovers, students also exhibit a great appetite for artistic research that integrates other artistic disciplines such as poetry, storytelling, acting, dancing or visual arts (55). The interest in storytelling and poetry is remarkable, and possibly hints at a desire to find meaningful connections between their musical practice and specific themes and topics that matter in the world. This tendency to make music "about something" can perhaps be interpreted as a symptom of the waning influence of ideals of "absolute" music, or even a declining attachment to ideals of musical autonomy. As referred to earlier, there is a long scholarly tradition challenging the ideals of the autonomy of musical works, and it is tempting to interpret the trend among students toward a more programmatic approach to music as a delayed effect of such developments in musicology and critical music studies in recent decades. It is doubtful, however, that musicological literature or cultural critique are what most inspires the trend toward storytelling in the students' proposals (if only because references to such literature are virtually absent). What emerges from their proposals is foremost a desire to connect their musical practice to the world they live in, and a realisation that the traditional classical music format prevents them from doing so. For many, musical crossovers, storytelling and interdisciplinary approaches seem to be promising avenues for overcoming these limitations.

> "I see myself not only as a violinist, but rather as a musical performer: I want to put music in relation with other forms of art, to create a broader sense of human experience, of inspiration, of life energy." (anonymous student, 2022)

Technology

Creative transformation in music is often driven by technological innovations. 17 students propose research or professional integration activities that make creative use of electronics, digital tools, virtual reality, or artificial intelligence. Students working with new technologies often have a hybrid background and have previously worked with electronics or are already scientifically trained. Like the singer with a Machine Learning background who wants to create an app that can tell what audiences experience when listening to music:

> "the undertested approach to expression bothers me; and I believe I can create a tool exactly for that purpose [...] An empathetic robot." (anonymous student, 2022).

For most classically trained music students, however, the orientation towards repertoire and traditional instruments does not seem to provide a strong invitation to integrate new technologies in a creative way. At the same time, students refer extensively to the use of social media, websites, blogging or vlogging for communication and dissemination purposes. The ubiquity of digital technologies in their daily musical practice raises the expectation that, in time, this will also profoundly change that practice. Digitisation means dematerialisation and makes possible more fluid and direct interactions between musicians and audiences in music production (Krohn-Grimberghe, 2021), independent of music programmers, music venues or "outside the constraints of a single dominant paradigm such as a major record label" (Bartleet et al., 2019).

Curatorship

Among both the moderately and strongly creative proposals, different forms and aspects of curatorship stand out. Especially in the classical and early music departments, students find motivation in the possibility of taking up a curatorial role to respond to the waning public interest in art music or to promote their instrument. To reach new and younger audiences, they propose mixed music programmes that integrate a wide range of musical and artistic disciplines, often in informal or alternative concert settings. Among the most adventurous proposals are combinations of music performance with culinary experience, or musical performances at unusual locations like prehistoric caves or high in mountains. One student proposes starting a series of summer concerts on specific spots in the Dolomites where persons lost their relatives or friends in an accident. Knowing that her proposal is also based on personal experience imbues it with personal and emotionally charged meaning:

> "In this occasion the family and friends of the missing person could walk together to the place and listen to a duo, quartet or a little chamber group. The concert would consist of repertoire but also a newly composed piece with the name of the lost person." (anonymous student, 2022)

Musical curatorship implies situational knowledge, social awareness and creative competencies to adapt and possibly transform music practice in ways that are appropriate to the situation. Therefore, in the curatorial, creativity and social engagement meet.

Socially engaged profiles

If students' social engagement is compared with their creative intentions, remarkably, not only are there fewer students that express social engagement in their proposals (128 against 186), but especially the group of strongly socially-engaged students is much smaller than the group of strongly creatively-engaged students (38 against 96). Social engagement for most does not seem to be the first motivation for building a professional music career, even though social considerations may play an important role in giving additional meaning to their practice.
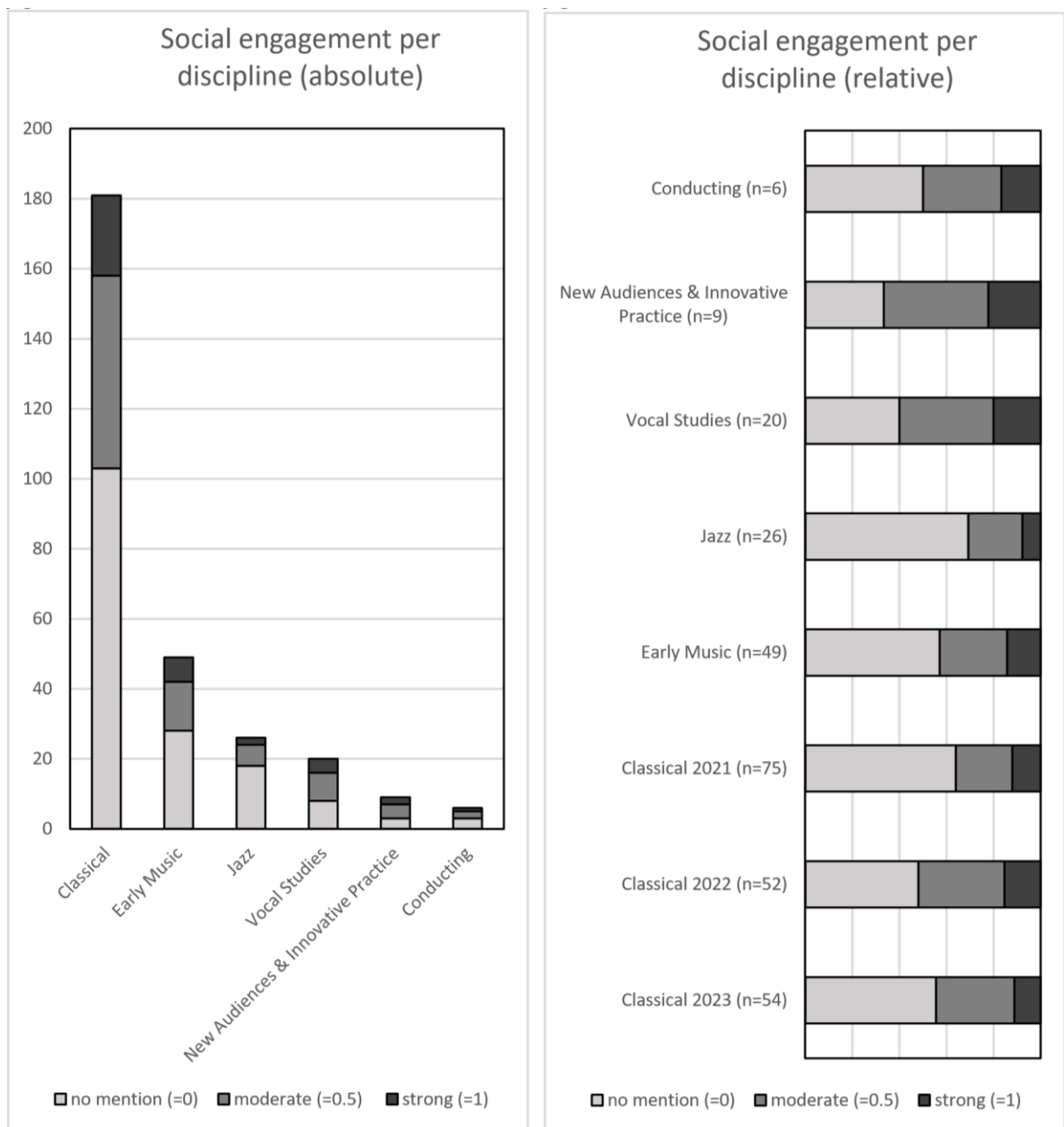
Figure 4. Social intentions in master project proposals (top-down analysis)

This does not necessarily mean social disinterest or self-centredness. Many students want to share the skills or insights gained during their master project with peers, and playing with others is often mentioned as an important motivation to become a professional musician. Students emphasise the invaluable experiences of togetherness that music practice offers, across language borders. Yet for most, the "passion for music" remains the primary motivation for choosing a musical career. The overall picture emerging from the students' proposals is that aesthetic and artistic motivations remain central. And while many are concerned about the sustainability of the music profession, this does not seem to affect their belief in the power and value of music itself.

The audience perspective

Within the proposals with social engagement, two main perspectives appear: one focussed on the audience, another one on the musical practice as a mirror of society. The audience perspective can manifest itself in different ways. In the most traditional form, students see themselves in the role of an ambassador trying to convince audiences of the relevance and beauty of the music they perform. Here, the artistic vision of the musician is the starting point and has a missionary character that in some proposals even resonates with 19th-century principles of *Bildung*. Although belief in the effectiveness and legitimacy of such an approach in the professional arts has dwindled in recent decades, it is noteworthy that some music students still express a motivation to educate audiences, and that phrases such as "my goal is to get more people to experience and realise the beauty of musical heritage" can be found in different variants.

A less performer-centred form of audience development can be found in proposals to make music programmes more accessible and attractive to diverse audiences through the curatorial approaches mentioned earlier: by mixing popular and classical music, by adding visual or narrative elements, or by seeking informal settings or unusual performance venues where the codes of the classical music concert do not apply. Such audience strategies are not at all new to the classical music sector, but the great interest of students to engage with them indicates a strong sense of urgency to address the issue of audiences in the art music field.

This becomes even clearer in a limited but growing number of students proposing topics of audience research where the perspective of the listener is central:

> "I would like to turn the attention to the experience of the listener instead of the performer." (anonymous student, 2021)

> "[…] I desire to move away from the model of placing the attention entirely towards the performer and shift it towards the audience" (anonymous student, 2022)

The radical change of perspective that appears here should not be underestimated. The fact that most of the proposals with a focus on audience research appeared in the last round (8 out of 15), may not only indicate a fast-growing awareness, but perhaps also an impact of the post-Covid period and an eagerness to (re)connect with audiences in more radical ways than before.

> "During COVID time, I guess we all experienced a hard time, we realized how important it is to be connected to each other. So, we came up with the idea that we share our feelings with the audience and we try to realise again how powerful music is and can connect us." (anonymous student, 2023)

We may also see a growing influence here of methods and approaches developed in research projects in the field of music and healthcare, such as the concept of 'personcentred improvisation' (Smilde, 2013 & Smilde, 2019).[18]

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[18] The Royal Conservatoire has been involved in several projects in healthcare contexts, most recently the research project ProMIMIC, led by the Lifelong Learning in Music research group of the Hanzehogeschool Groningen and Rineke Smilde, professor of Lifelong Learning in Music.

Finally, some proposals include participatory formats that are common in social-artistic practices and community music (15), such as actively involving listeners as co-creators in the music performance. Some students propose game strategies to induce active audience participation, such as the singer inviting the audience to influence the course of an opera scene:

> "the public would be introduced to a few key words which correlate with physical actions or emotional affects. People in the public would then be assigned a certain singer who they can shout these key words out to during the performance, gaining the ability to change the course of the story and the way that the characters behave." (anonymous student, 2022)

For most students, the objective to connect with audiences does not yet lead to fundamentally questioning their own artistic vision or balancing it with the needs and expectations of listeners or participants. Within the context of a master programme, doing audience research is a challenging and time-consuming task that requires rigorous (and mostly non-artistic) research methods. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that some students find ways to explore the audience perspective through artistic experiment in performance, like the violin student who wants to investigate "the influence of extremity in dynamic differences [loudness differences] on the involvement of the audience" (anonymous student, 2023).

Music as a mirror
Another perspective on social engagement can be found in proposals that deal with social representation in music. Gender, intersectionality and inclusion are themes students can relate to in a direct way through looking at their musical discipline as a mirror of society. A significant number of female students (10) propose research or musical activities focusing on female composers, or they want to establish an all-female ensemble or jazz band. An underlying motivation is often fighting prejudice. The professional music industry, especially the symphony orchestra, builds on instruments with a strong identity that somehow seems to rub off on their players, leading to a rich variety of stereotypes: the sophisticated violinist, the grounded percussionist, the virile trombonist. The following quote is from a female trumpeter:

> "My aim is to challenge instrumental stereotypes and show completely opposite traits of what we stereotypically expect. We are all guilty of stereotyping, but sometimes it can be harmful. They can be used to limit others on their full potential, or they can discourage us to break traditional barriers when performing or composing. I'm interested in knowing just how far we can push expectations into the opposite direction, and from this, seeing more representation in instrument versatility." (anonymous student, 2022).

Other big themes of social interest like ecological activism or decolonisation can be found in the proposals as well, but to a much smaller degree (3 and 2 respectively). This is a remarkable outcome, given the large amount of attention to such topics in cultural discourse and curriculum innovation programmes (ISME, 2020; AEC, 2021). A possible reason why classical music students might be less inclined to explicitly engage with decolonisation in music, is that

https://www.hanze.nl/nl/onderzoeken/centers/kenniscentrum-kunst-en-samenleving/projecten/promimic (accessed 08/04/2023)

they literally embody the canon; it has become part of their identity through years of intensive training,[19] and something they are proud of. The dominant framing of the decolonization debate might also feel unproductive for students who are much more inclined to promote the connective power of music, regardless of musical style or genre, while often leaning on their own experiences in this regard.

> "I had the chance to play and experience music in different contexts. I played J.H. Bieber in nightclubs and Tartini in a café. In Capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian cultural practice that consists of music, movement such as dance and fight, music functions as a tool of inclusion and an energy generator. Energy that is created and experienced together as a group our community. This energy, which I also experienced in different ways in different contexts, is something that always interested me and that I am searching for in my performances." (anonymous student, 2021)

Among the students engaging with environmental issues and climate change, one proposes the formation of a string quartet to commission and perform new works with climate change as their subject matter. Another one wants to commission and perform "eco-acoustic music" to raise awareness and incite support for radical change. In his proposal, it is notable that not only music will do the work, but that extra-musical information is added to explain what the music is about: "I hope to share an informational performance explaining the significances of the pieces performed and the real-life consequences of climate change." Both cases involve collaboration with composers to create new works about or based on climate change. The very low number of music performance students engaging with environmental topics, and their reliance on their composing peers, make clear that it is far from self-evident for them to credibly apply themes like climate change to musical performance.

Nevertheless, despite being a minority, students with strong social commitment seem aware that the classical music field is lagging behind when it comes to engagement with the problems of our time, and some of them are using their Master project to explore options to remedy this situation:

> "In theatre seasons, as in gallery exhibitions, it is nowadays very common to find explicit criticism and reflections on big themes our society is called to deal with: climate change, inequality, human rights, etc., while many in the music field have argued that the fact that music, being an abstract language, should not be taken to mean anything specific or be applied to more particular themes. I argue that this is a somewhat narrow vision, and my project will be directed at showing that music can indeed be used to convey meaningful messages about the society we live in." (anonymous student, 2023)

Mixed profiles

Is there an organic relationship between creative and social intentions to be found in the proposals of music students? Can both elements be considered "partnering values" as proposed in the article "The musician as a maker in society" (Gaunt et al., 2021)? The

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[19] Such a view is analogous to the one Leech-Wilkinson develops in *Challenging Performance* (2019, pp. 93-95). He explains and visualises how the policing of performance relies on a self-reinforcing system of gatekeeping where music teachers, record companies, artist managers, programmers and musicologists all play their role, leading to a system where everyone shares the same ideological values. But while the classical music field certainly proves to be very resilient through its way of internalising values, Leech-Wilkinson's model, in this author's opinion, relies too much on an assumed systematicity of power relations to take into account the diversity and idiosyncrasy of students' motivations that emerge from the analysis.

outcomes of my analysis give an ambiguous answer. Highly socially engaged students almost always resort to some form of creativity to realise their social goals, such as creative adaptations of the concert format to the needs of a specific context or audience. The reverse is not the case. Highly creative students often propose experimental and adventurous projects that do not mention any social motivation at all. Their enthusiasm for the aesthetic and artistic potential in these projects is central, even if this may include implicit values of togetherness and artistic interaction with others.

As explained before, it is especially in curatorial approaches that combinations can be found of creativity with social engagement. Curatorial approaches can also apply to traditional repertoire, like the Baroque singer who wants to combine "the heightened emotional nature of 17th century Laments with newly commissioned text to help communicate modern social issues" (anonymous student, 2021). An interesting observation to make here is that singers appear to have stronger and more mixed creative and engaged motivations than instrumentalists. As suggested earlier, an explanation might be the broader palette of skills and media they have at their disposal, not only to engage with other artistic disciplines, but also to engage in social interaction with their audience.

CONCLUSIONS

The interests and motivations of Master students at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague reflect and align with many elements of the current discourse on curriculum innovation in HME, such as the emphasis on versatility and openness to integrate aspects of other musical genres or artistic disciplines in their practice. Collaboration, creativity and musical inclusivity are recognised by students as important values for their professional future. As a side effect, the group of students who identify with a highly focused, disciplinary specialisation seems to be shrinking, which may indicate a shift in the profile of the trained musician from a highly specialised professional to that of an artist. As one student puts it:

> "For some time now, I've stopped thinking of myself as a violinist and [now I see myself]
> more as an artist or performer. I feel that my artistry wants to reach beyond the instrument,
> so I want to incorporate other elements' (anonymous student, 2022).

The growing interest in improvisational practices in classical music departments, as well as the tendency to question the boundaries between composition and performance, confirm the validity of the profile of the performing musician as a 'maker'. These developments align with recent studies of creativity in music performance (Clarke & Doffman, 2017; Cook, 2018) and support the shift in focus from music performance as the interpretation of musical works to music performance as creative events.

The interest of many music performance students to set up transdisciplinary[20] artistic research projects deserves extra attention here. Transdisciplinary art remains an underdeveloped field in scholarly music research. While musicology has become highly interdisciplinary at an academic level (Pettengil & Cook, 2013), research into transdisciplinary arts lags, and this is all the more true from the perspective of HME. Closely reading the master

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[20] I use the term "transdisciplinarity" here as a generic term, including inter- or cross-disciplinarity, but distinguish it from multidisciplinary approaches where participants stay in their disciplinary roles (as in a traditional opera production).

students' proposals, a clear hunger and enthusiasm to engage with other art disciplines (poetry, painting, theatre, choreography, installation art) appears, as well as an aim to expand their musical practice through digital technologies, media or the inclusion of other sensory dimensions. But often these proposals also show a certain naivety, or simply a lack of knowledge of the rich history of transdisciplinarity and intermediality in music. This may be due to the absence of practical and theoretical frameworks that can give context to transdisciplinary work in and with music in HME. Classical music education is traditionally strongly intra-disciplinarily focussed, and within the field it is the performing musician who is probably the most disciplined of all. Hence it is no coincidence that artistic research into transdisciplinary creation is mainly initiated by composers, improvisers or sound artists (Craenen, 2009; Ciciliani, 2016). Developing frameworks for transdisciplinary artistic research can become an important task for HME institutions, and a challenging one at that. After all, transdisciplinary research must reckon with highly idiosyncratic creative conditions as well as artistic outcomes, making it difficult to build on previous knowledge in a direct way or to extrapolate findings to other creation or research processes. A possible approach is to focus transdisciplinary research on creative processes rather than artistic results. By analogy with the shift in music performance studies from works to performances (Cook, 2014), this would also assign an important role to performing musicians who might be involved in such processes.

Even though the "making" component in the new profile of the performing musician receives strong support in my analysis, the conclusions about the social orientation of this "making", are less clear. Students repeatedly emphasise the value of sharing knowledge and playing together with peers, but a social mission beyond their own practice or domain is often lacking. This also resonates with the outcomes of a recent study by Nadia Moberg on the research theses of music performance students between 2013 and 2020 in Sweden. As the author concludes:

> To think of art and music as social action [...], and to move towards an inclusion of social issues and societal concerns would expand the scope in theses and promote (critical) reflection to a significantly greater extent. (Moberg, 2023, p. 9)

However, one trend that emerges from my analysis that is worth highlighting is the burgeoning interest in the audience's perspective. Most promising are propositions of students to explore the audience perspective *through artistic means*, which may provide complementary artistic research methods to the field of audience research that in itself is already highly interdisciplinary (Pitts, 2021; Peters et al., 2021).

While few proposals in my analysis show social engagement with a direct impact outside the musical domain, strong socially engaged positions can be found in project proposals that conceive the musical practice as a mirror of society. Most telling are the examples of students who take an activist stance to change gender representation in classical music. Here, I should add that there is also a striking tendency amongst classical and early music students to do research on forgotten or underrepresented works or composers. European students seem to lose interest in the canonical western repertoire, while this continues to attract clear interest from (especially) Asian students. From a musicological perspective, this not only raises interesting questions about the future of this repertoire, but also complexifies the questions of representation and identification in music that pervade cultural studies today.

It is worthwhile to look also at elements or themes in the proposals of students that remain relatively absent, despite the great attention given to them in cultural critique and curriculum discourse. Themes referring to (de)colonisation were only mentioned by two students, and climate change by three, which clearly contrasts with the much greater interest in topics related to gender inclusivity. A closer look at the research proposals of the two students engaging with the theme of decolonisation might help to understand differences found in my analysis more generally. One of two students is a Latin-American early music performer who aims to investigate relationships between European Baroque and Caribbean folk music.

> "[my aim is to] raise awareness about Latin-American cultural identities, to elaborate a postcolonial discourse about Latin-American music that focuses on praising musical "mestizaje" instead of playing Latin-American Baroque music from colonial archives, where mestizo and real Latin-American musical elements are completely erased, in accordance with the colonial power-discourse" (anonymous student, 2022).

Important for our discussion is also the personal motivation of this student:

> "As I was born in a family of politicians and social activists and intellectuals, I would like to go beyond pure music-making. I want to link my artistic career to politically critic values. As my homeland is still trapped in colonial socio-economical relationships and in a rather Eurocentric mentality, I would like to become sort of baroque Latin-Americanist. By looking for a way to express Latin-American identities in baroque music (first by exploring the research-line of missional baroque). I understood there is hardly a way to do this by studying historical sources, since the whole point of colonialism was to "erase the otherness." (ibid., 2022).

The second student is a singer who proposes to research the cultural, colonial and racial implications of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, "with a view as to how best to approach this iconic character in a respectful, yet authentic, manner in a modern world," and with a view to "clarifying aspects of cultural misappropriation". (anonymous student, 2022).

What becomes clear in both cases is that these students have a unique access to their research topics through their biographical, cultural and disciplinary background. The importance of access and "affordance" (Gibson, 1986) emerges as a general conclusion from my analysis: the extent to which students engage with creative approaches or world-oriented topics strongly correlates with their access to these topics afforded by their instrument, discipline or cultural background, or with the potential they recognize to find or force such access through a creative expansion of their practice. This aligns with the conclusions of a meta-analysis of studies on composition by Göran Folkestadt:

> The creative music making takes place in a process of interaction between the participants' musical experience and competence, their cultural practice, the tools, the instruments, and the instructions – altogether forming the *affordances* in the creative situation. (Folkestadt, 2004 in: Folkestadt, 2012, p. 197)

On the whole, creative expansions and discipline transformation seem easier to imagine for most students than socially engaged practices. A possible explanation is that they have a clear picture of what their practice entails and what is missing or could be different in an artistic sense, while their potential contribution to societal goals often raises uncertainty and a wide range of concerns and complexities that are difficult to handle in the context of a master programme: from the need for socially situated knowledge when operating within an

unfamiliar environment, to ethical issues when involving other people in their research projects. Moreover, there are plenty of inspiring historical and more recent examples of artistic experimentation that can be used or expanded upon in creative ways, while in general there are still fewer examples of social engagement they can relate to practically and with a prospect of artistically rewarding results. A possible lesson for curriculum innovators seeking to increase the social relevance of music curricula is that a student-centred or project-based approach is not enough. More guidance, specific instruction related to social contexts, and inspiring best practices are essential to stimulate music students in developing a socially engaged vision as performers. This raises the need for more socially engaged research from an artistic perspective, and it is clear that artistic research can play a crucial role here. As long as there remains a division between artistic and socially engaged research, the attraction to engage in such topics will remain low among students who have chosen musical careers primarily because of their musical passion, but are also receptive to the values of artistic excellence—a strong incentive for most of them to devote such a substantial part of their lives to practising and developing an artistic identity.

A more unexpected outcome of my analysis is the implicit or explicit belief of a significantly large group of students in the intrinsic value of their musical practice, and a felt responsibility to defend this value as musical ambassadors. Interestingly, such ambassadorship often relies on an intricate interplay between global classical music values and local cultural heritage that connects with their roots:

> "With this project I would like […] to disseminate and dust off the cultural treasure of traditional Spanish music. […] against a culturally globalized model, I intend to show other musical identities that seem less recognizable because they do not follow a commercial aesthetic, but, at the same time, I integrate avant-garde elements so that I establish a dialogue between tradition and modernity, between popular and classical music." (anonymous student, 2021)

This quote from a Spanish student illustrates the complex position of many students, attempting to find a balance between tradition and modernity, the local and the global, preserving heritage and opening up to other musics. It also clearly ties in with the current ambiguity in curriculum discourse in HME, where the wish to avoid antagonisms between values of western musical heritage and the urgencies of globalised societies is evident. As argued earlier, one possible explanation for the attachment of students to classical music values can be found in the intense and immersive nature of their musical training from an early age. However, if we listen more closely to the motivations of these students, we find a wide range of subtly different desires and convictions rooted in their diverse biographies and cultural backgrounds, as well as in their personal and often transformative experiences in relation to the impact and connecting power of music. Therefore, instead of disqualifying some of their value claims as romantic, outdated or naïve, my analysis also invites reflection on possibilities to rethink and perhaps reappraise music's boundary-crossing and resonating potential beyond the critical frameworks that have gained currency in the humanities and cultural studies in past decades. The motivations of a large and diverse group of students at HME institutions raise the need for an updated vocabulary, concepts and tools that can support them in their efforts to better connect their musical practice to the world, while doing justice to their often very different experiences of musical value. These may not only rely on internalised cultural values or disciplinary expectations, but also on the discovery of a

connecting and transforming musical power in and through their own practice.

For the field of artistic research, this may sound like an invitation to invest more in artistically informed perspectives on social engagement in music, and to raise interest for the social significance of artistic experimentation in musical performance. This may also motivate connections to research in art education. As explained at the beginning of this article, for practical reasons, I did not include in my analysis research proposals from students in music teacher training. But more fundamentally, there seems to be little crossfertilization between artistic research in music, usually conducted by performers or composers, and research in music education or community music. Possible reasons for this are different interests and profiles of researchers in these fields, but also more generally different research cultures that to some extent testify to the above-mentioned gap between artistic and socially engaged research in music. In essence, this gap could be understood as a difference in priorities: in artistic research, the subjectivity of the artist is central, whereas in educational research, the perspective of the music teacher or mediator must at least be balanced with the needs, perspectives and interests of the music participant or learner. Some of the findings in my analysis suggest a diminishing importance of differentiating between these priorities, which may invite more interaction and knowledge exchange between the two fields.

Finally, and in relation to all of the above, is the question what future musical performances might consist of. If today's music performance students' appetite for transdisciplinary approaches, curatorship and new connections with audiences give us a hint of what may be central to art music in the future, it is a spur for the field of artistic research in music, and music performance studies at large, to continue to expand its horizons. Beyond the score, but also beyond music performance as a discipline that can be defined exclusively in musical terms.

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