

"I didn't know I could use my music for others": Community Music as Transformative Education at a South African University

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ABSTRACT

In response to South African higher education's transformation agenda, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) introduced community music (CM) as a BMus degree subject in 2012. In this article I examine the potential of CM to realise community engagement (CE) within higher education transformation policy mandates. From my perspective as researcher-practitioner, I consider CM as a curriculum transformation; its impact on student learning, and how CM transforms their musicianship to enhance the music degree. Using data from students' reflective essays, students' applied drama-facilitated reflections, and focus groups, I describe students' transformative learning in the Wits CM courses, focusing on their service-learning (SL) experiences and reflections, over the past eight years. The findings suggest that CM re-orientates South African music curricula towards social engagement and artistic citizenship. I argue that integrating CM in the academy constitutes transformative education that changes students' ways of knowing, learning, and being, and in so doing, develops critically aware, responsible citizens who can use their musicianship to benefit others. The research offers a model of CM in a South African university that speaks to higher education CE, and which is intended to highlight the significance of CM in the academy more broadly.

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Transformation in South African higher education

Post South Africa's democracy in 1994, transformation became "the key political term denoting social change" (Reddy, 2008), incorporating mechanisms for redressing the injustices of apartheid that, 30 years after democracy, are more critical than ever. The rhetoric of 'transformation' remains firmly entrenched in South African higher education policy and discourse (Van Schalkwyk, Van Lill, Cloete & Bailey, 2022), entailing equal access to tertiary education, inclusivity, and transforming curricula, so that universities "serve the public good and produce critical citizens for a vibrant democratic society" (Reddy, 2004: 5).

Curriculum transformation is a core component of higher education transformation, but remains an area of contestation. In music education, curriculum transformation is typically interpreted as decolonising music studies by replacing Western with African music content (Struwig, 2020; McConnachie, 2021; Bruinders, 2024; Yende & Zulu, 2024). This paper offers a different perspective of music curriculum transformation, focusing on CM as a form of CE. While some music education research examines CE as a means of transforming university music curricula (Cloete & Erasmus, 2012; Harrop-Allin & Hume, 2016; Harrop-Allin, 2017), the literature seldom speaks of pedagogical transformation. My paper is intended to address this research gap.

Community music in the academy

Internationally, CM has developed significantly in practice, scholarship, and academic programmes (Higgins, 2012; Higgins & Willingham, 2016; Willingham, 2016; Bartleet & Higgins, 2018). Applied arts programmes like CM are becoming more prominent as issues of inclusivity and relevance are increasingly critical for higher education worldwide. In South Africa, the need for social responsiveness in higher education, within a transformation policy framework (National Department of Education, 1997), prompted Wits to introduce CM in the BMus degree in 2012.

Definitional ambiguity

Introducing CM in the academy does, however, present several epistemological and conceptual challenges. Firstly, CM resists definition as its practices are "closely welded to the environment in which it takes place" and understood in a "variety of ways reflecting a myriad of possible contexts and musical situations" (Bartleet & Higgins, 2017: 2). Hence, "the question 'what exactly is

community music?’ is a complex one” (Higgins & Willingham, 2017: 3). Secondly, in South Africa, the term ‘CM’ is ambiguous as the meanings of both ‘community’ and ‘music’ are contested.¹ Music projects outside formal music education seldom call themselves ‘CM’, although they may display features of international CM practices.² Nevertheless, establishing CM courses and degree programmes “gives rise to discourse about the fundamental principles of CM” (Willingham, 2016: 60). Rather than defining CM, the scholarship emphasises its key characteristics: “people, participation, places, inclusion and diversity”, underscored by a commitment to social justice and cultural democracy (Higgins & Willingham, 2017: 4).

The CM courses at Wits were founded on the concepts and principles in the international field. We examine CM practices from three perspectives: CM as “music of a community”; CM as “communal music making”; and “community music as an active intervention between a music leader or leaders and its participants” (Higgins, 2012: 3). These active music interventions are broadly referred to as CM worldwide (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018: 2) and shape CM higher education curricula internationally.

Challenging conventional music degrees

Premised on the idea that “everyone has the right to make music” (<https://www.isme.org/our-work/commissions/community-music-activity-commission-cma>), CM may be anomalous in music degree programmes. Principles like ‘musical access for all’ are diametrically opposed to the music conservatoire model, from which music education values are largely derived (Willingham & Carruthers, 2018: 596-604). CM’s participatory pedagogies diverge from the ‘studio model’ of individual instrumental or vocal instruction, with “instructor-driven and designed curricula, evaluated and assessed according to examining, testing and performing” (Willingham & Carruthers, 2018: 603). CM contrasts with formal, academic music training that emphasises excellence, competition, and specialisation, based on conceptions of artistic and performance excellence (Daria, 2018: 93).

¹ In South Africa, the term “community” is used politically and strategically to mean “disadvantaged groups” signifying the Black majority oppressed under apartheid. In contemporary discourse “a community” implies Black, working-class people in a rural or township urban area, seldom white people, or the middle class (Thornton & Ramphele, 1989). It is contentious using the term ‘community music’ in relation to South Africa’s diverse musical practices, but necessary for connecting university programmes to the international field.

² In South Africa, music-making of diverse kinds may be called ‘cultural’, church, gospel, or traditional music. These are closer to “music of a community” as one of CM’s three perspectives (Higgins, 2012).

Integrating CM can be resisted, primarily as it challenges the elitism associated with higher music education institutions. CM represents different epistemologies and pedagogical practices to music degree subjects such as performance, music history, music theory, and composition. CM challenges the hegemony of music subjects that value individual professional practice, because it places social justice and responsiveness at the centre of artistic practice. However, I argue that CM's anomalous position in the academy potentially transforms the music curriculum, student learning, and musicianship. This paper examines how such transformation is made possible.

In this light, Glen Carruthers' provocation is especially relevant:

University performance programmes tend to focus on developing human capital – on creating better musicians – who may or may not be better people for it (2008: 127).

His statement prompts music degrees to integrate community and civic engagement into curricula to become integral to musicians' professional and academic development.

What might it mean, then, to develop the person and the musician, to develop knowledge skills and students' sense of civic and social responsibility in music education? And why should this matter? This paper is concerned with these critical questions for higher education music education.

Community music in South African universities

CM was introduced as a 4th year major subject in Wits University's professional BMus degree in 2012; in the honours degree in 2018; and as a compulsory third-year academic course in 2022. This paper focuses on the major 4th year and honours' year-long courses. These consist of parallel theoretical and practical streams that converge in the applied course components, which comprise student placements in community arts organisations and participation in service-learning (SL) projects.

Wits CM courses were the first in South Africa to consciously articulate with the international field, followed by the University of the North West, which introduced CM courses in 2018.³ It is important to distinguish these academic courses from the CM model typically practised in South

³ The international field of CM developed through the International Journal of Community Music (from 2006) and in the International Society of Music Education (ISME)'s Community Music Activity Commission (<https://www.isme.org/our-work/commissions/community-music-activity-commission-cma>).

African tertiary music departments and usually conceptualised as “community outreach”.⁴

However, the outreach CM model has been criticised for the differential power relations at play, and can be accused of ‘neo liberalism’ and reinforcing colonialism (Bartleet, Bennett, Marsh, Power & Sunderland, 2014).

The shift in higher education policy discourse from “community outreach” to “CE” implied a more equitable, reciprocal relationship between communities and universities. CE was embedded in higher education to become a core responsibility alongside teaching and research (Council on Higher Education, 2004). CE became part of “an overarching strategy for the transformation of higher education” that aimed to educate graduates who can:

make a contribution as citizens to nation-building, to developing a more just and humane society, particularly in the aftermath of apartheid, and graduate professionals who are able to apply their knowledge and skills in a way that can uplift society, in a practical, usable sense... (Osman & Petersen, 2010: 409).

Wits University’s CM curricula were designed and implemented to articulate with higher education transformation aims and incorporated SL pedagogies as means to realise CE.

Research aims, questions, and methods

Using the framework of higher education CE, my paper examines the transformative possibilities that CM affords. From my perspective as teacher-researcher, I examine the significance of CM as a form of CE by discussing four ‘transformations’, namely of: music curricula; student learning; students’ musicianship; and the students themselves. The paper addresses the following questions: “What is the Wits CM programme’s impact on curriculum change, student learning, musicianship, and the music degree more broadly? And “In what ways can a CM course be understood as ‘transformative’ education?”

Wits’ CM curricula are designed to be responsive in several ways. They aim to respond to South Africa’s university transformation project, particularly in an increasingly complex, challenging higher education political context. Each iteration of the CM course responds to students’ learning needs and is altered in content and structure according to student course evaluations and the learning

⁴ Many South African CM projects are attached to university music education teacher training programmes as a site for students’ teaching experience (Kyakuwa & Vermeulen, 2013; Meyer & van der Merwe, 2017; De Villiers & Oellermann, 2023).

outcomes of their SL and placement projects. Students' voices are therefore integral to CM course implementation.

The article draws richly on data from students' reflective essays, focus group responses, and 'embodied' reflections during applied drama facilitation sessions. We employed "applied drama methodologies" (Athiemoolam, 2018) as they elicited different forms and qualities of learning, providing further insight into students' personal learning and 'becoming' community musicians.

I consider the impact of CM on student learning, focusing on their experiences of three SL projects as key components of the curriculum from 2012 to the present. Student learning described here is self-reported, in self- and group reflection tasks; written reflective essays and focus groups, for each year's CM student cohort.

Ash and Clayton's reflective framework in applied learning (2009: 31) is used to analyse students' "personal, academic, and civic learning" - categories that also framed students' reflections in their academic writing. I recorded students' embodied and verbal responses to applied drama reflective sessions, focusing on what I observed of their personal learning. I then reflected on recorded focus group conversations, in relation to students' experiences as musicians in SL projects. In student essays and focus group data, I also looked for evidence of changes to students' attitudes and dispositions in the context of becoming CM facilitators.

This article draws on data gathered over the past eight years. All students gave either written or verbal consent to utilise their essays, drama sessions, or focus group recordings as data sources, and remain anonymous in my reporting.

Community music students

The student body at Wits represents a wide range of educational, class, social, and national backgrounds and hence, diverse perspectives and insights into their own learning. Different students position themselves very differently in the SL projects. For some, under-resourced rural areas, or the inner city are deeply familiar, for others, totally foreign. Depending on their identities and backgrounds, students are positioned in communities as insiders, or outsiders, or somewhere in between. Preparing students to engage ethically in culturally sensitive contexts therefore necessitates flexible teaching approaches, in response to students' identities. Critical reflection is key

for developing students' ability to examine their assumptions and articulate their expectations before SL experiences; and reflect on their impact both during and afterwards.

CM's pedagogical practices are adapted to ensure that out-of-classroom opportunities are accessible to all CM students, regardless of their socio-economic background. SL is resource-intensive, but no student is excluded. Funding is externally sourced, and in the case of the first SL project, directly benefitted the community.

Conceptualising service learning

In the literature, SL is understood as "a form of engagement where students receive academic credit for addressing human and community needs" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2004; Osman & Petersen, 2010: 410). As a pedagogy, SL is a mechanism for "integrat[ing] community engagement in teaching and learning" (Osman & Petersen, 2013: 4) and is designed to benefit both students and community participants. SL espouses "a reciprocal and dialectical relationship among partners" (Osman & Petersen, 2010: 410), and is therefore closely allied with CM principles:

Service learning is an apt pedagogy for Community Music firstly because it is defined as an activity designed to meet community needs; and second, the emphasis on applied knowledge and reflection is congruent with Community Music's concern with developing practitioners' reflective capacities and applied musicianship (Harrop-Allin, 2017: 3).

Nevertheless, SL can be contested, particularly in post-colonial contexts (Bartleet et al., 2014). As a form of CE, SL is critiqued for the "power relations implied when the components of service learning come together in a relationship between communities and universities" (Osman & Attwood, 2007: 16). While it is not within the remit of this paper to address these issues directly, I recognise that implementing CE in South Africa is complex. The Wits Music Department is acutely aware of differential power relations between universities and under-resourced communities far from the institution; between students and learners; and epistemological hierarchies - whose musical knowledge and skills are valued, and how this is done.

While structural power dynamics and inequality cannot be avoided, or overcome, they can be interrogated. South Africa's critical social, political, and identity issues are therefore embedded in all CM courses, particularly in relation to social justice in music education (Benedict, Schmidt, Spruce & Woodford, 2015). We consistently reflect on our practices as musicians and teachers, using critical reflection frameworks (Ash & Clayton, 2009), and participatory pedagogies that include students.

However, I argue that as an approach to SL, CM can afford opportunities to develop reciprocity and overcome power differences because musicking, as the form of engagement, enables equitable participation, based on CM's core democratic principles.⁵

The three community music service learning projects

CM students participate in at least one of the three SL projects that Wits Music has initiated over the past 13 years. All projects partner with community-based organisations: the HaMakuya CM engagement project in a rural Limpopo province, working with community-based organisation Tshulu Trust (2012-2019); Music in Hospitals (2015-2018) at the Wits Donald Gordon Academic hospital in Johannesburg; and, since 2021, the Vuyimbeleri CM project in Mpumalanga province, collaborating with four primary schools in Acornhoek and Wits University's Rural Knowledge Hub (WiRKH) (<https://www.wits.ac.za/wirkh/>).

i. HaMakuya community music engagement project

The Wits School of Arts initiated a cultural development project in 2008 in HaMakuya, a Venda chieftaincy in north-eastern Limpopo province, partnering with Tshulu Trust. Initially the project involved fieldwork research on Venda music (Harrop-Allin & Salant, 2022), but with the introduction of CM, the project was re-conceptualised as SL and framed as CM engagement. Our positions therefore changed from researchers to teachers and learners. From 2012-2019, students participated in annual, week-long trips to HaMakuya that encompassed three activities: students' five-day workshop facilitation in six primary schools; musical collaboration with local musicians; and participating in Tshulu Trust's homestay programme in rural villages (Berman & Allen, 2012).⁶

Homestays became an important source of income for local families, while accommodation and catering provided by Tshulu Camp directly financially benefitted Tshulu Trust and its employees. As a form of "cultural immersion", homestays provided students with an experiential understanding of daily life in a rural area, changing their conceptions of "otherness", of privilege and perceptions of poverty and resilience of ordinary South Africans (Harrop-Allin, 2017). A sustained project like this

⁵ The term musicking was coined by Christopher Small in 1998, to emphasise music as human action.

⁶ The Wits School of Arts received funding for the HaMakuya project from the National Lottery Fund (2013 – 2018); and from the author's research grants and teaching awards (Wits University and the National Research Foundation). All university payments for student/ staff accommodation and catering at Tshulu Camp, students' homestays, community musicians' teaching, interpreters, and project administration were paid to Tshulu Trust, directly benefitting the HaMakuya community.

afforded opportunities for students to forge relationships with musicians and families in HaMakuya and to connect to the lived realities of the communities they served, seeing them less stereotypically as deprived locations that need changing and fixing.

Framed as “a community music intervention” (Higgins, 2012), the second activity involved students facilitating creative arts workshops for learners aged between 10 and 14 in six HaMakuya primary schools, co-teaching with local musicians.⁷ Creative arts workshops were held over five days with groups of 20–40 children and addressed aspects of the Life-Skills, Creative and Performing Arts curriculum (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Including local musicians was critical for ensuring community participation. They were all known to the children, assisted with translation from TshiVenda to English, and enabled university students to learn and incorporate indigenous musical content into the workshops. Employing a music storytelling methodology called “creating musical worlds”, student and community musician facilitators co-created musical stories with children that addressed themes and social issues identified by participating schools (Harrop-Allin, 2014). Informal activities comprised improvisation and musical collaboration with the local musicians and music students. These were important moments of co-learning and sharing new musical styles. Informal musicking combined with the school workshops, culminated in a celebration where participating schools, community members, and hundreds of children shared their musical stories, performed traditional Venda dances, and sang together.

Reciprocity and impact

An important outcome of the HaMakuya project was initiating a “Musicians in Schools” project, where the same musicians became teachers in three haMakuya primary schools.⁸ Over several years, the HaMakuya musicians began to lead the workshops and applied the musical storytelling methodologies in schools where they taught. Their new roles as teachers elevated the musicians’ status to educators, who are valued in this community.

⁷ In South Africa, children enter their first year of schooling (Grade 1) in the year they turn seven. In the ‘intermediate phase’ (Grades 5-7) of primary schooling, children are between 10-13 years old.

⁸ The National Arts Council supported the “musicians in schools” project for four years. Three musicians in HaMakuya were employed part time to teach in the same primary schools with which Wits Music had worked for 12 years.

The fact that graduate students returned to participate in this SL project several years after graduation, and remain in contact with the musicians, is testament to the fact that CM engagement can have a meaningful impact. One of the musicians still teaches tshikona pipe ensembles at HaMakuya primary schools. His tshikona groups win traditional music competitions annually, thus elevating the status of the schools and enabling recognition of his teaching and musical expertise in the community (Harrop-Allin & Salant, 2022).

ii. Vuyimbeleri community music project

With the demise of Tshulu Trust and the HaMakuya project during the Covid-19 pandemic, Wits Music piloted a similar SL model in Acornhoek in Mpumalanga in 2022 and one with the Norwegian Academy of Music in 2023. This pilot project was initiated in consultation with five primary schools and the WiRKH. Educators in participating schools in Acornhoek named the project Vuyimbeleri - a Xitsonga word that refers to music and song.

Project activities involve university students and staff facilitating creative arts workshops, using the musical world's storytelling methodology that worked so effectively in HaMakuya. Over five days, students teach groups of 30 to 40 Grade 6 and 7 learners in four primary schools and explore themes from the social science curriculum that educators identify as important.

The project focuses on inclusion and participation for all, particularly as learners tend to be 'chosen' for school choir or traditional music groups, and many are excluded. Students plan their three-day workshops in pairs, aiming to achieve excellence in their group's social and musical experience – a central characteristic of CM interventions (Howell, Higgins & Bartleet, 2018). Like the HaMakuya project, creative arts workshops culminated in a concert attended by community members, where all participating schools and learners shared their musical learning, sang, and performed their traditional Xitsonga dance music.

The impact of Vuyembeleri is significant for Wits and Norway Music Academy students, transforming the ways they see themselves as musicians and teachers, and challenging their assumptions about under-resourced rural areas. However, positive impact for participating schools is yet to be formally evaluated. We are fully aware that short interventions like this are problematic and sustainability difficult to achieve without strong community partnerships. We are therefore working towards

establishing a more permanent community music project in Acornhoek and conferring project leadership to partner schools.

iii. Music in hospitals

The third SL project, 'Music in Hospitals', ran from 2015-2018 in partnership with Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre, a private teaching hospital in Johannesburg. Representing an alternative model where students were performers, the project nevertheless aligned with SL's characteristics of applying theory to practice, experiential learning, and critical reflection (Bringle & Hatcher, 2004; Harrop-Allin & Hume, 2016). The purpose was to make a positive impact on patients', carers', and nurses' wellbeing, through listening to and participating in live music. Collaborative research with academics, students, and clinical researchers examined the benefits for participants, and the effects of live music making in hospital spaces (Harrop-Allin, Hume, Fabian, Etheredge & McCallum, 2017).⁹

An arts and health specialist trained and prepared students academically and musically beforehand. Students mostly performed popular music, semi-formally, as a group of singers and instrumentalists, moving through paediatric, oncology, geriatric, and surgical hospital wards. Students then introduced a greater degree of participation and improvisation as they became more confident and skilled in participatory music making (Harrop-Allin et al., 2017: 8). Critical reflection was essential for eliciting students' learning and growth. Students engaged in group reflections after each hospital visit; kept personal diaries where they recorded their experiences, challenges, and successes; and participated in focus group interviews to discover what, and how, they learnt, and why it mattered in a CM context.

Community music and four transformations

The remainder of this article is structured in five parts: SL as curriculum transformation; transforming student learning in two projects; transforming student musicianship in the third; and how students themselves were transformed through "ontological engagement" (McMillan, 2013), evident in all three SL projects. The article ends by examining how CM may be construed as transformative education, arguing that CM can re-orientate the music degree towards social responsiveness and artistic citizenship (Elliott, Silverman & Bowman, 2016).

⁹ Ethics clearance for a mixed-methods study of the music in hospitals project was approved by the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee (Medical) in 2016. 'Music in Hospitals' was funded by Wits University's strategic fund and Surgeons for Little Lives NGO at Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital (between 2015 – 2017).

1. Service learning as curriculum transformation

Introducing CM SL in Wits University's music degrees constituted curriculum transformation as it was the first time CE was integrated into the academic programme, rather than as an extra-curricular activity. CM SL transformed the music curriculum by meaningfully incorporating CE as the course content, both practically and academically.

As a central component of SL, critical reflection is incorporated into all aspects of the CM curriculum and has significantly enhanced student learning. Critical reflection is the crucible around which learning occurs, and a key prerequisite for "transformative learning" (Mezirow, 2003), which occurs "when frames of reference are experienced as not serving us well in some existential situation", and "are transformed by a process of critical reflection" (Fleming, 2018: 123).

Over a six-week period prior to each SL experience, students are prepared for ethical CM engagement in culturally sensitive contexts. Before SL fieldtrips, we tackle difficult questions in relation to both CM interventions, and SL.

Reflective exercises require students to examine their assumptions about where they are going. Students are encouraged "to see people living in poor communities as sources of knowledge rather than needy clients of a service agency or the university" (Osman & Castle 2006: 68). Through preparatory research and reading, students "become knowledgeable about the economic, social and political forces that shape lives – theirs and others" (Osman & Castle, 2006: 68). Preparatory activities include students' own research on the people, social context, and musical cultures particular to each area where SL activities take places. Thorough preparation enables students to approach the SL experience with prior knowledge.

Reflective tasks occurred before, during, and after SL experiences, to encourage students to think about what and how they learnt. Written reflective activities comprise journal-keeping, where students articulate their expectations and potential difficulties 'working in communities'; what they feel confident doing or are unsure about. Reflection as a class requires students to consider the project's purpose; their personal and teaching aims; their roles as teacher-musicians; and as learners, exploring what they can potentially learn throughout the SL experience.

Reflection also encourages ethical conduct in contexts where there are unequal power relations between the university and community organisations; between lecturer, students, schoolteachers, and learners; and between patients and musicians (in healthcare settings). During SL experiences, it was crucial not to shy away from difficulty, but to learn and grow in moments of discomfort for transformative learning to occur. ‘Learning through discomfort’ is evident in several students’ responses outlined under personal learning.

2. Transforming student learning

All three SL experiences enhanced students’ academic, personal, and civic learning (Ash & Clayton, 2009) (reported in Harrop-Allin & Hume, 2016; Harrop-Allin, 2017). Although all three learning categories are present in all SL projects, I discuss that which was most prominent in each. I examine students’ academic and civic learning in the first two projects; transforming students’ musicianship in ‘Music in Hospitals’; and students’ “ontological engagement” in all three SL projects.

Academic learning

SL enables students to consolidate and contextualise CM principles in practice (Harrop-Allin, 2017: 233). Several students articulated their academic learning as applying course content in practice: “The HaMakuya experience solidified the theory we had learnt ... transforming that theory into practical ability”. Another student remarked, “Suddenly the CM theory made sense in HaMakuya.” Musical learning, and learning to be a CM facilitator, were two aspects of academic learning.

Being exposed to unfamiliar musical practices was prominent in HaMakuya. Students experienced the cultural, musical richness of Venda communities, as they observed, listened to, and participated in traditional music and dance. Musical participation enabled an appreciation of indigenous music and its complexity, so that students began to question the hierarchy of western music present in the university.

Musical learning also involved collaborating and co-teaching in the classroom with Venda musicians. In their written and verbal reflections, students expressed how collaborative experiences changed their thinking about music’s place in culture; its educative purpose, and how musicking can cross social barriers. Informal impromptu musical collaborations with local musicians were significant learning moments as they gave students an embodied

experience of how participation surpasses being musically ‘correct’. A student in 2017 recounted: I just joined in and learnt the guitar part as we jammed with the HaMakuya musicians, didn’t feel judged. It really felt like we were creating a small musical community.

Another said:

It isn’t about singing perfectly in tune, it’s about just getting involved and participating even when you don’t ‘know’ this music, because you feel welcome, you can just do it. Students expressed their joy of just joining in.

Students’ reflections demonstrate how their understanding of music changed from professional performance to participatory social practice. CM’s participatory ethos is encapsulated in the theory of hospitality (Higgins, 2012), which explains the meanings of ‘community’ and ‘the welcome’ in musical engagement (Higgins, 2007: 289) Hospitality emerged as an important concept that framed how students learnt to become community musicians.

Community music facilitation

Becoming a community musician implies learning to be a facilitator who practises inclusion and responsiveness. Focusing on pedagogy, a student in the Vuyembeleri project in 2023 realised the impact of his and his co-facilitators’ teaching on his learners:

When we came with a pedagogy that was more flexible and inclusive, a pedagogy that put the learners at the centre, this brought so much excitement and connection between the facilitators and the group.

Realising the authoritarianism and rote-learning that persists in many South African schools¹⁰, a student in the same project articulated the social aim of her workshops as:

Creat[ing] a safe space ... [where] children could explore their own creativity and musicality without fear of judgment or of being somehow “wrong”. We wanted to broaden their understanding of what music is, and how teaching can occur – in a way that would probably be very different to what they were used to.

Co-facilitation was a further aspect of students’ academic learning. Through working together preparing and implementing their music workshops, students began to realise each other’s strengths, to support and trust each other. Together, they aimed to respond to each group’s musical

¹⁰ Research demonstrates the prevalence of authoritarian teaching practices and high levels of corporal punishment in many government schools, despite it being outlawed from 1997 (Moyo, Khewu & Bayaga, 2014).

and social needs. Their teaching plans were constantly adjusted, as they experimented with a range of musical activities, songs, and dances, according to a group's musical interests and abilities.

Creating a safe space for musicking is an important characteristic of the "community music workshop" (Higgins, 2007). In 2022, one student in the Vuyembeleri project described how he and his co-facilitators created a safe learning space. He was struck by a moment of musical learning, and his own positive impact on one learner:

As I stood next to him, I played the rhythm on the *djembe* drum [so] he could imitate [me] ... Within a minute he was able to play the rhythm and became more confident. At the end of the workshop ... [he] placed a lollipop in my hand and with a smile on his face he said thank you and walked away. This made me realise the positive impact which music had on this learner. It ... made him feel more confident ... encourag[ing] him to not give up even when something may be challenging.

This student demonstrates his development as a CM facilitator who provides opportunities for musical engagement that are accessible and inviting (Howell, Bartleet & Higgins, 2017: 8). Students' reflections in both SL projects show how they began to develop key attributes of a community musician, such as trust, problem solving, flexibility, responsiveness, and empathy. These attributes extend to the self. In 2017 in HaMakuya, one student's revealing reflection illustrates her becoming a community musician. Initially anxious about 'being perfect' as both performer and teacher, she disclosed how:

You have to be willing to make mistakes and trust the process ... I learnt how to take musical risks, as I co-created a musical story with the learners ... to respond to what the children need, and what they have to give, rather than sticking to a lesson plan. I learnt I could trust myself and not be scared when I don't know...

Her growth as a musical leader was highlighted as she acted as the master of ceremonies (MC) at a concert during the same trip, leading over 200 children in singing and dancing. I have witnessed how music students grow as musical leaders able to trust each other; negotiate complexity with resilience and flexibility; and create musical opportunities in diverse social and educational contexts.

Civic learning

Ash and Clayton (2009: 33) contend that the goal of civic learning is to "become more effective change agents". This is rooted in students' capacity to embed themselves effectively in community. The development of their sense of community is grounded in students' primary community of their peers (described under personal learning) and expands into their encounters with others, whether it be in healthcare or SL contexts (Harrop-Allin & Hume, 2016: 200-201). In becoming change agents 'in

community', students' civic learning further implies becoming "socially responsible as active citizens" (Ash & Clayton, 2009).

A student in the Vuyembeleri project highlights how epistemological inequalities between communities and universities emerged during her SL experience. She demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of complex issues:

The service learning and civic learning approaches ... [in] this community music project, [are] inextricably tied to ideas of social justice with a South African context. Projects such as this one are integral to the undoing of harmful systems of thought which devalue community-based knowledge, and present university-based knowledge as being superior and more valuable.

In all three SL projects, students have to engage critically with societal challenges. Three comments suggest that engaging critically changes students' perceptions of their role in society:

Hamakuya experience opened my eyes to the educational and social realities in S. A.
I realised that my privilege comes with responsibility.
Students can potentially take on more involved transformative leadership roles.

Here, students' 'civic learning' prompted future action. After her experience in Acornhoek in 2022, a student wrote that SL

...has the potential of being transformative, not in the context of the communities that we went to, but for us the students ... It also has help[s] us think of ways to better ... our communities back home.

Another student in the same project said she felt empowered to

...create my own community music project to empower a community. One way that I could take my sense of citizenship and social responsibility forward in the future is by volunteering at less fortunate schools and offer music as a subject. As a music student the service-learning experience was very valuable to me.

Students' responses suggest that they envisage a future where they create music participation opportunities for others, and in doing so, become 'change agents' in society.

3. Transforming students' musicianship

Civic learning links with students' realisation that "I can use my music for others" – a transformation from individual to applied musicianship. CM is an applied practice, where practitioners use their musicianship to develop musical engagement for others. The concept of 'applied musicianship'

emerged from students' practice and their insightful reflections in the 'Music in Hospitals' project.

Two students demonstrated their understanding of this concept:

Whatever you can bring to the table, musically, is what you apply in "applied musicianship".

You have to apply everything you've learnt from first year - in music literacies, performance, composition – when you do CM in 4th year; it consolidates previous learning.

Applied musicianship entails communication and connection when students perform as a group in a hospital. Three student reflections convey an awareness of music's communicative and relational affordances:

It's more than performing a piece. It's not about talent anymore, it's about *relating*. You have to connect; you can influence patients, nurses, caregivers in profound ways. You have to connect directly through your communication medium, language of music, to the human, 'well' parts of patients in a hospital.

A punk-rock guitarist student in 2016 termed the hospital experience "Finding empathy in and through the music", saying:

Performing for, and with patients in the hospital, forges direct communication, and empathy with others; it changes your perspective of performance, because now you are looking at the connection, you have to consider, 'how do I relate'? Instead of 'how am I going to put out my 'talent' out there? You can't identify with the ego.

His poignant comment suggests that applied musicianship as a community musician entails cultivating an "ethics of care" (Morrelli, 2022). Empathy extended to group dynamics in musical collaboration. Several students in 2016 mentioned that group performances felt safe and non-judgemental, in contrast to "competitive, assessment-based performance courses in the BMus degree." Another felt "safe in applying musicianship in CM when working with my group", referencing 'safety' and 'the welcome' articulated in CM's theory of hospitality (Higgins, 2012). SL experiences resulted in expanding conceptions of musicality to encompass "using my music for others", which suggests that "doing CM" (as my students put it), potentially changes their ways of knowing, learning, and being.

4. Personal learning as ontological engagement

I return to students' personal learning, as the third category in Ash and Clayton's reflective framework (2009), to propose that personal learning in a CM context is transformative, such that students themselves are changed. "Transformative learning" (Mezirow, 2003) is:

...more than learning a skill, or gaining knowledge, but learning that represents ontological engagement - engagement in a task or activity being about more than completing a task;

where commitment to the task is such that the engagement can change the person. It involves questioning assumptions and frames of reference such that one's life trajectory is changed (McMillan, 2013: 40).

Students' "ontological engagement" changes perceptions of the self, as a student who participated in the HaMakuya project expresses:

I learnt so much about my own abilities; I thought I couldn't teach before, now I realise my own strength. In attempting to create a space where the *children could feel empowered through participation*, I felt empowered myself.

In response to my question, "What was an eye-opening experience for you?", a student in the Vuyelembere project in 2022 remarked:

I didn't realise that I would learn more from our lovely students than we could ever teach them in that week ... we go into these environments thinking that we are going to be agents of change (which, in some ways we are) [but] we do not go back the same way we came.

5. Possibilities for community music as transformative education

Presenting a South African case of CM demonstrates its transformative possibilities in music education. The four transformations in three CM SL projects described in this paper articulate with access, inclusion, and social responsiveness as key components of the higher education transformation project. They further highlight how CM aligns with some of the core principles of transformative pedagogy. After re-examining ways in which CM can be construed as transformative, and challenges for doing so, I conclude by arguing that CM can re-orientate music curricula towards social engagement and artistic citizenship.

CM generates epistemological and pedagogical changes because it challenges prevailing notions of music and musicianship in higher education music education (Triantafyllaki, 2014). CM can actively decolonise musical practice by questioning the privileging of certain types of music or musical knowledge over others. For example, in SL projects, students begin to value and recognise indigenous music, musicality, and musicians. Students' musicking together, and with communities, also broadens their understanding of music as participatory, social practice.

CM's inclusive pedagogical approaches enable educational access for a diverse student cohort in several ways. Firstly, acknowledging students' musical identities and incorporating, for example, popular music and rap into CM courses and SL interventions recognises a wider range of musicianship and increases student access. Secondly, student evaluation focuses on very different skills and competencies to other music subjects, including communication, resilience, adaptiveness,

and empathy. Students are also assessed for their collaborative competencies, such as musical co-facilitation and co-learning. Changing assessment from the individual to the group is transformative for students, taking the pressure off “being perfect” as a solo performer. Instead, CM emphasises applied musicianship and students’ ethical engagement in community contexts. Finally, CM is transformative because it develops students’ active citizenship so that they can become agents of change.

In music education the concept of “artistic citizenship” encapsulates student agency, which “involves civic-social-humanistic- emancipatory responsibilities, obligations to engage in art making that advances social ‘goods’” to “make positive differences in people’s lives” (Elliot et al., 2016: 7). There is an important distinction between artistic proficiency and artistic citizenship that implies ethical action and commitment.

Ethical action and commitment extend the concept of being flexible regarding CM curricula and SL pedagogies. To be construed as transformative education, it is critical to reflect on our own practices as teachers and researchers, altering curricula and pedagogies accordingly. We are cognisant of the critiques levelled at CM SL (Bartleet et al., 2014). Over the course of 12 years’ CM engagement, many lessons have been learnt. We consistently learn with and from colleagues, students, and the communities with which we engage. The Wits Music department is involved in “curriculum design cycles” to transform music curricula (Laurillard, 2010). We adjust the CM curriculum and nature of SL projects to incorporate student voices, feedback from communities, and our learning as teachers and researchers. Our vision remains CM engagement that practises reciprocity for mutual benefit, acknowledging that realising this vision may be impossible in our unequal, unjust society.

I argue, though, that arts CE is advantaged for its ability to harness the transformative power of the arts and capitalise on culture as a resource. There are ways of mitigating power differences between universities and communities through focusing on the affordances of music as the mode of engagement. Insights from music therapy confirm music’s communicative power. Making music - music of any kind - together, in the moment, with the clear intentions to welcome and include, is a generative process that can create new music communities. My students and I observed and experienced this in HaMakuya, in the hospital, and in Acornhoek, with learners, teachers, and community musicians musicking together, as equals in community. Capitalising on music as the mode of CE, I argue that CM can re-orientate music curricula towards social engagement and artistic

citizenship. I therefore advocate that music degrees integrate CM as CE in higher education, to create a music education for the public good.

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