Accessibility and Sustainability in Higher Music Education through Artistic Citizenship

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Introduction

Can music be both the expression and cause of social change? In what ways can more diversified approaches within higher music institutions – including a diversity of ideas, cultural expressions, peoples, and perspectives – inform and enrich the roles and goals of these institutions? Moreover, can increased and equitable accessibility to art and arts participation potentially lead to more democratic and sustainable societies?

UNESCO places particular emphasis on the value of culture in society. It is described as central to health, climate, economic, and development policies and approaches, but it is more than that, too. It is vital for ensuring "human-centred, inclusive and equitable" practices (UNESCO, n.d.). In their discussion of Sustainable Development Goals (ibid.), they advocate the promotion of cultural diversity by stressing its central role in "facilitat[ing] cultural understanding and peace" and "prevent[ing] conflicts" (ibid.). Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* expresses that "everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to share scientific advances and its benefits, and to get credit for their own work" (ibid.). In the Rome Charter of 2020, five aspects of cultural capabilities for more "inclusive, democratic and sustainable" cities are highlighted as factors for cultural democratisation. They are: the discovery of cultural roots, creating cultural expression, sharing cultures and creativity so as to deepen social and democratic life, enjoying cultural and creative resources and spaces, and protecting cultural resources so that more people can benefit from them (The Rome Charter, 2020).

As a cultural art form and social practice, music – for example – has significance not only for the individual, but also for the collective life of local and global communities. It is used as a means of building and sustaining community identity and engagement. It also provides a means for connecting these communities to larger social contexts (Westvall, Lidskog, and Pripp 2018). If music

as a cultural form plays a meaningful part in people's lives, then the education through/in music imparts our institutions of higher learning with a great deal of significance. This goes beyond just art as practice: increased access is an important democratic issue, as it may prevent cultural stratification and exclusion in a society. Helena Gaunt et al. highlight the importance of the partnering of artistic and social values in order to empower higher music institutions "to respond dynamically to societal need" (2021, 1) and Marissa Silverman (2024) emphasises that the valuing of ethics, civic responsibility, and empathy needs to be at the core of music education practices. Artmaking can provide opportunities and greater inclusivity, enabling people to engage with art in sustainable and multi-faceted ways.

In this article, we aim to connect these aforementioned questions of equity, inclusivity, access, and democracy to the concept of artistic citizenship in order to critique structural conditions and commonly held ideas of what is traditionally perceived as the role and potential of art and higher arts education in society.

The 'artistic' and the 'social'

The concept of "artistic citizenship" (Elliott 2012; Elliott, Silverman, and Bowman 2016; Schmidt Campbell and Martin 2006) has appeared in various contexts over the last decades, often with a focus on the artist(s) as (a) potential contributor(s) to the communities with and through their arts, and sometimes explicitly with an activist or artivist intent[1]. Common understandings of this approach have often characterised it as quite unidirectional, with a focus on the artist(s) 'sharing' their artistic expertise and practice with 'others'. This one-way approach has sometimes been used to legitimise artist practices as autonomous and self-evident within social contexts. However, recent literature has questioned the legitimacy of this unidirectional perception and has gradually moved towards what could be described as a more inclusive, participatory, and relational approach to involvement with the arts, through co-creation between those involved (see for instance Gaunt et al. 2021; Westvall and Akuno 2024; Turino 2016). These co-creative practices are evident in Thomas Turino's (2016) description of participatory performances with others, e.g. practices that include "participants with an eclectic range of abilities in the same performance to create a basis for inspiring and motivating participation

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1   The term "artivist" as a portmanteau of "artist" and "activist" is used in critical literature to capture the overlap between each role.

for all" (Westvall 2021, 102). This participatory approach relates to the concept of musicking that Christopher Small has introduced as a way of describing the practice, or the actual doing of music in multiple ways:

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. (1998, 9)

Musicking is portrayed by Small as a purposeful social act of music-making, in which performers, listeners, composers, and dancers are equally involved. Small's approach offers a critique of the limited scope of traditional (Western) music education, and he underscores the importance of an interplay and interconnection between the social and musical meanings of music in educational contexts. Lilliestam (2006) suggests an even broader definition of musicking and argues that musicking encompasses all activities in which music is incorporated, such as listening, singing, playing, composing, improvising, dancing, talking about music, reading about music, collecting music(s), constantly "having music on one's mind" or "remembering music within oneself" (ibid., 24).[2] Such a broader understanding of musical practices – as musicking – offers the potential to reimagine (higher) music education and its priorities.

Contesting Priorities in Higher Music Education

For higher arts education institutions – often with an identity and a reputation of being highly competitive – it might come across as challenging to consider how artistic and social meanings and values can be partnered in more impartial and constructive ways. A means to take on this challenge is to identify and defy some dominant narratives and binary divisions that surround these institutions, such as artistically committed vs. socially committed, targeting the elite vs. the community, practising excellence vs. contributing to the public good and presentational vs. participatory music-making, to mention but a few. Instead of enhancing these divisions by making artistic and social aspects competing priorities, we can consider the dialogic degree of quality between them. With these aspects in mind, Dave Camlin argues that,

> the quality of any given instance of musicking – including participatory music – needs to be measured by reference to an integrated and dialogic measure of quality across aesthetic, praxial and social dimensions. This

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2   Translated from the original Swedish by the current authors.

> same dialogic approach might also be pertinent to other artforms. (Camlin 2014, 115)

This approach is closely aligned with the concept of artistic citizenship, where the core tenet is co-creation, making it more about interactive practices and processes. Here, the key role of an artist is to create spaces for inclusive artistic practices (broadly conceived) that negotiate between the common influences, contexts, goals, and aspirations of the musical and social actors involved. This process can best be described as "artizenship" (Carson and Westvall 2024) wherein the artists' practices reflect their citizenship, while citizens' practice reflects their artistry.

Artizenship Defined vis-à-vis Artistic Citizenship

Some of the critiques of "artistic citizenship" as a concept rest in the concerns about its constituent terms. Artists, often reluctant to cede autonomy to larger institutions, may be reticent to join the term "art" with a term that is so closely aligned with governmental policy, as is the traditional understanding of "citizenship". However, our re-reading of the compound term addresses these concerns by expanding the parameters of both arts and citizenship in ways that reflect the lived experiences of both, thus making them more inclusive and empowering. Elsewhere, we have proposed the term "artizenship" as a concept that illustrates an interactive approach to, and overlap between, more traditional understandings of artist and citizen. It is characterised by more commonplace and quotidian artistic practices that may or may not engage in traditional modes of artivism. These modes often rely on clear divisions between arts and citizenship, but may still carry meaning and value for artist-citizens (Carson and Westvall 2024). Political scientist James Tully emphasises that citizenship is not only a fixed status, but is also a process of "negotiated practices" (2014, 35), in which actors and activities are immersed in a wide range of community engagement. Like musicking, such negotiated practices require a degree of responsiveness between all participants, wherein individuals must necessarily collaborate to create and share knowledge and to achieve collective goals. Artizenship does not, automatically address the kinds of far-reaching practices that many artists may feel are cutting edge – nor does it dismiss them outright. Instead, it considers them to be one of many possibilities amongst a broader range of existing and everyday forms of artistic practices, as a way of fostering a larger understanding of community engagement and collaboration. As such, it exists outside of an amateur/professional dichotomy, because the

focus is on the quality of meaningfulness of the integrated artistic and social experiences of those involved, rather than on the quality of the product/performance as such. Artizenship measures the value of art by its socio-cultural impact.

Instead of underlining the selectiveness often associated with the arts, artizenship is profoundly inclusive, as it highlights various experiences of art and the engagement with art in different ways. It encompasses the range of diverse artistic competences that have the potential to mirror our societies in a more enhanced way. Artizenship is a societal or communal practice that allows the individual to interact with their community both with and through the arts in multiple capacities, thus promoting a more active citizenry in novel ways. As such, the negotiated practices that Tully highlights require interaction and co-creation within and between communities and individuals in order to achieve their intended goals. By practising artizenship, we can be connected to each other and the world in numerous and various ways. The flow of art is thus not uni-directional. It radiates outwards in multiple directions, like a web. This web also has the added feature of being expandable, shaped by a complexity of influences of personal, educational and societal experiences.

Artizenship – as a position, a process and a lens – thus suggests opportunities for broader access to art and citizenship through an emphasis on co-creative relationships and manifestations. This perspective can also be useful beyond the higher arts education contexts by accentuating the broader potential that arts engagement can have in and for our communities.

So how then does artizenship relate to the realities of higher arts institutions? Most immediately, through the institutions' task of situating music and musical knowledge in its social context while simultaneously considering the democratic values musical knowledge represents for their students. It is this investment in a diversity of musical relationships and cultural practices that is directly related to ideas of cultural democracy or cultural equity (see for instance Belfiore et al. 2023; Matarasso 2000).

Stretching the Cycles of Influence in Higher Music Education

Sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1972; 1974) considers human interests that generate knowledge grounded in various aspects of social life. These can be defined as the technical, communicative or practical, and emancipatory aspects of interests (Månson 2003). Transferred to the musical realm, the technical aspects may represent people's interest in controlling, mastering and/or predicting music (skills, hands-on activities).

Communicative or practical musical knowledge is signified by a wish to understand and relate to each other and collaborate musically (social bonding, self-expression, co-creation). It follows then that the emancipatory aspects of musical knowledge may signify the individual's unique, creative, and frameless relationship to music (musical identity, musical autonomy), where any restrictive 'musical oppression' whether from family, friends, education, media or their communities is not accepted (Westvall 2007).

Our early socialisation determines our store of emotional and socio-cultural experiences of music. These experiences are affected by local and global representations of music and music education, the functions of music that we become aware of, and the value that is ascribed to various musics and forms of musical engagement in our communities. These experiences shape a web of musical experiences and implications that consist of interacting occurrences, experiences, influences, opinions, and representations of music (ibid.). The strong threads in our personal webs of musical significance can, on the one hand, represent security, thus enabling us to evolve; yet they can also represent inflexibility, which might hinder us from breaking patterns and developing in new directions. The thin threads symbolise influences that we internalise through unique experiences with music and co-musicians. It can be for instance one-off events or involvement in temporary musical groups and participation in various cultural contexts. The spaces between the strong and thin threads symbolise dual aspects of security and rooms for development in which we take on, shift, or develop new relationships to music (ibid.).

The professional tasks of higher music education institutions are, among others, to situate music in its contexts, to relate it to democratic values, and to encourage and display a diversity of musical experiences, understandings, and musical practices to their students (ibid.). This may be acquired when those involved (students, teachers, and leadership) develop an awareness of the structures and mechanisms within the interwoven relationship between music, educational factors and the societal aspects that are at play. Higher music education contains elements that consist of cyclical processes in which students are influenced by a transmission of certain understandings, values, and beliefs in relation to music and music education, as communicated by their significant educators, the (labour) market, as well as the general orientations of their institutions. This can lead to self-replicating cycles which could have a restraining effect on methods, values, and beliefs about music and music education. This cycle, however, can be challenged if the institutions encourage diversities of perspectives amongst its people and their practices to a greater extent. This focus on nurturing individuals with multiple perspectives, rather than multiple people – each with their unique perspectives – is key. This is

particularly effective if it is followed by discussions with regards to quality criteria (Camlin 2014; Gaunt et al. 2021) and an encouragement of co-creative method development, which might empower students to further experience and extend their relationship to music.

How Can Diversity Support Democratic Ideals and Goals?

One of the key tasks of education has historically been to transmit cultural heritage and codes of ethics to students. This process of enculturation remains an important undertaking of education institutions today; however, our societies rarely represent one homogeneous culture to be enculturated into. It is thus important for the institutions to investigate how people relate to various forms and contexts of music, and to provide broad representations of musical practices and a variety of possibilities for the recognition of musical expressions. Hence, music education also needs to include the *un*familiar in order to challenge individuals to extend and diversify their knowledge of music.

What do people mean when they say diversity? One reading of the controversies surrounding diversity might point out that many critics of diversity are, in fact, responding to the term itself, rather than the potentials it represents. The meaning(s) of the term are often quite culturally and socially situated. For example, in the Scandinavian context, two words – *diversitet* and *mångfald* (to take Swedish as one case) – may seem to overlap, but in fact attempt to distinguish between subtleties held by the concept. *Diversitet* translates more directly to the English word diversity, but seems to highlight difference in ways that it does not when used in the (American) English context. However, the related term *mångfald* – which might be more literally translated as multiplicity – perhaps best describes a more complex relationship, one that highlights variety in such a way that it invites more expansive and inclusive definitions of what might be more commonly understood as diversity. Diversity, then, has multiple angles, yet this complexity should be seen as a resource, not a limitation. It represents a more expanded sense of the norm, rather than deviations from or rejections of it. We can see diversity as highlighting potentials. It can offer pathways to new experiences and perspectives that might otherwise have gone unforeseen. Diversity (or a multiplicity) of ideas, peoples, and perspectives is key to developing and making substantive changes to the arts institutions by informing and enriching the educational and artistic approach. Increased diversity in higher education addresses various aspects such as student admissions, staff recruitment and retention, content and curriculum, as well as community and public engagement. Gaunt et al. (2021) highlight the importance

of addressing the systemic exclusion and marginalisation of people and ideas in higher arts education by questioning the roles that the institutions can play within their communities, especially where a main concern is the institutions' relationship with society (or the lack thereof).

Mediating Democracy Through Diversity

Although ideas and ideals of cultural democracy and cultural equity are present in many music-makers' realities, higher education institutions often focus more on a particular kind of democratisation of culture, one which aims to make 'fine arts' (or any art form and genre that is recognised and established in the institutions) accessible to more people (Matarasso 2023; Belfiore et al. 2023). In a previous publication we have advocated for "diversified normality" which aims at "shifting the center" in terms of the "who, what, and how" in higher music education, especially when new approaches to music are becoming more accessible, can enable greater flexibility in musical exploration, and are characterised by various forms of diversity (Westvall and Carson 2014; Carson and Westvall 2016). We suggest that students should be exposed to a wider range of musics and methods during their education in order to be encouraged to "continuously undertake new approaches to new repertoires beyond the borders of their knowledge" (Carson and Westvall 2016, 48). While perhaps concerns related to insecurity and defensiveness might prevent individuals from expanding their musical comfort zones, a decentring of their understandings and experiences of music might result in more self-assurance, curiosity, and knowledge development on their part. This kind of "diversified normality" in (higher) music education can highlight issues of democracy and equity and thus develop critical approaches to hegemonic and exclusionary structures in arts education and art practices (ibid.).

Democracy demands an openness towards, and a willingness to engage with, difference. Thus, diversity is an essential aspect of democracy. This common engagement with diversity is a threat to authoritarianism because it decentres power. Tradition or heritage is often employed as a discourse of protectionism. While tradition itself is not inherently negative, the means through which it is employed as discourse in order to gatekeep for the status quo (often at the expense of the marginalised) is questionable. This discursive move relies on the emotional impact of romanticised nostalgia in an attempt to unify the public. However, in practice, this nostalgic imaginary can actually alienate more people than it unites. So, the centre becomes concretised, and rarely reflects the reality of the larger community and society. In this

context, compromise can be seen as weakness; yet compromise, negotiation and flexibility are at the heart of the creative practices central to art making. Improvisation, creation, and co-creation are all generative acts of compromise. They imagine and create new ideas, perspectives, and realities. Instead of listening to what people have to say, or approaching new artistic expressions with openness, higher music institutions often fall back on gatekeeping, relying on conventional discourses of legitimisation – quality, appropriateness, 'high' standards, etc. We should try to avoid a top-down, prescriptive approach in favour of a sense of discovery and possibility. This can be empowering in other ways, since even though it sidesteps qualitative discourses, it allows us to make new connections and see broader potentials that might not have traditional qualitative value at first glance. This is not to neglect familiar or valued aspects, but rather to empower artists and audiences to decide how they wish to express or experience their art. This starts at the level of training, so it is key that we begin this conversation at the institutional level, but also continue it beyond just institutions of higher education.

Artizenship for Increased Accessibility and Sustainability in and of Higher Music Education

In this article we have shown how more diversified approaches within higher music education can enrich the roles and goals of the institutions. Consequently, we also considered the institutions' roles as musical mediators for their communities, initiating, fostering, and disseminating ideas and practices towards equitable accessibility to art and arts participation. In doing this, we advocated for the reconsideration of some aspects related to quality and the arts.

Lundberg, Malm, and Ronström (2000) suggest that music can be the expression of societal transformation processes, and at the same time be the cause of such changes. If that is true, it indicates that the ways in which we engage with music as an artform and cultural expression can potentially lead to more democratic and sustainable societies.

By expanding the concept of artistic citizenship, we have proposed the term "artizenship" that highlights aspects of co-creation in a diverse web of artistic competences. Artizenship offers a position, a process, and a lens that can mirror civic responsibility and empathy in inclusive ways. Beyond that, however, it can also be applied as a practice that allows individuals to endorse active citizenry through the arts by discovering, creating, sharing, enjoying, and also protecting the arts (The Rome Charter, 2020). This extended

notion of artistic citizenship can potentially increase the accessibility and sustainability in and of higher music education, while enhancing the relational and co-creational potential of critical democratic practices.

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