

REIMAGINING CAREERS IN UNPROFITIOUS CREATIVE FIELDS THROUGH THE META-CREATIVITY OF ALTERNATIVE CREATIVITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

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Abstract. Work by Abraham Maslow and others has proposed that a reasonable degree of fulfilment of various human needs is required for an individual to experience positive wellbeing. Given that an individual's occupation provides vital financial, social, emotional, and cognitive resources, it is a key determinant of the degree to which their human needs are fulfilled. Some fields of work, such as music, can be described as unprofitious due to the unfavorable conditions awaiting skilled creators who seek to establish a full-time career; consequently, the human needs of such individuals may remain compromised. Alternative creativity is proposed as a type of meta-creativity that supports creative approaches to creative practice, and offers a new conceptual approach to careers in unprofitious creative fields. Alternative creativity provides hope for the many highly skilled musicians who exist in a state of perpetual career uncertainty, freeing them from the heavy burden of unrealistic expectations and the ensuing sense of failure that emerges when these expectations cannot be met. Ultimately, alternative creativity offers musicians the opportunity to reconceptualize and develop their creative practice while maintaining positive wellbeing through the fulfilment of their human needs.

Keywords: alternative creativity, artists, creative industries, creativity, music, music industry, musicians.

Introduction

A dominant (though imperfect) model in the field of motivational psychology, Maslow's "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943) proposes that humans have a variety of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs. A satisfactory level of fulfilment of these needs forms the basis of optimal functioning, and therefore wellbeing (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). Maslow proposed the existence of a range of human needs, and the most recent manifestation of his model categorizes them into physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, cognitive, and aesthetic needs, as well as self-actualization and self-transcendence (di Domenico & Ryan, 2020; Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Subsequent authors have proposed varying models and sets of

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needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020), but regardless of the specific model, there is widespread acknowledgement that a reasonable degree of needs fulfilment is a critical component of achieving positive wellbeing (Kaufman, 2018).

Given the requisite resources involved in needs fulfilment and the proportion of waking hours that are necessarily devoted to work activities, an individual's occupation heavily influences their capacity to fulfil their human needs. This process of fulfilment may occur through the provision of financial resources to fulfil physiological and safety needs, the collegial relationships that offer a sense of belonging and support positive self-esteem, or the sense of self-actualization and self-transcendence that can be derived from work. However, some occupational fields can be described as unpropitious since they are characterized by a scarcity of sustainable, viable, and adequate work and career opportunities. Profound social and psychological challenges can emerge when individuals with significant domain expertise and a strong desire for a career are unable to establish a full-time career within the related field, and their human needs can remain unfulfilled. Music is one such field, and the challenges of establishing and maintaining a professional career in any genre of music are well documented (Gross & Musgrave, 2020; Hughes et al., 2016).

In response, the authors propose the concept of alternative creativity as a type of meta-creativity that empowers domain experts in unpropitious creative fields to establish meaningful careers while also fulfilling their own human needs and establishing a satisfactory level of wellbeing. Alternative creativity acknowledges the difficult realities of creative careers and replaces the conventional narratives with an alternative paradigm that interrogates and reframes core concepts, including artistic purpose, what constitutes a satisfactory level of needs fulfilment, conceptions of success, and platform development. In particular, alternative creativity offers hope to the many expert musicians of all genres who are currently experiencing serious career challenges that represent the convergence of many years of precarious employment and the devastating and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of holding to outdated and unrealistic conceptions of success, alternative creativity invites musicians to reconceptualize their futures and to discover ways to further their creative practice and nurture their musical abilities, while also establishing positive wellbeing through the fulfilment of their human needs.

1. Unpropitious fields

The context in which creativity takes place is recognized as an important component of the creative process; the systems model of creativity acknowledges the role of the field (alongside the domain and the person) in the creative process (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013). In some domains, the dynamics of the corresponding field inhibit an individual's efforts to establish a viable, sustainable, and fulfilling career. In particular, these fields may be devoid of equitable and unhindered access to a platform commensurate with an individual's level of expertise and ability, which is particularly problematic for those who seek to establish the requisite income streams to support a full-time career.

An unpropitious field can therefore be understood to be a field in which a significant number of expert practitioners cannot establish a viable and sustainable career, despite

sustained and skillful efforts to do so. Consequently, these people experience difficulty achieving a reasonable level of needs fulfilment. This is not just the result of a low income level, although the impacts of this alone are significant (Heyman et al., 2019); equally profound are the social, physical, and psychological impacts of career pursuits that, by all worldly measures of success, result in failure (Gross & Musgrave, 2020). Creators in unpropitious fields are therefore highly susceptible to poor levels of wellbeing, and poor psychological wellbeing in particular. The outcomes of creativity in these fields frequently offer audiences the opportunity to fulfil their various needs (de la Rosa Herrera & Pugliese, 2017; Schäfer et al., 2013), but the cruel irony of unpropitious fields is that the wellbeing of the creators is compromised as a result of their precarious work situation. Precisely why creators initially pursue and continue to persist with careers in unpropitious fields is a larger discussion than can be had in the present context. However, if we consider this phenomenon through the lens of human needs, it may be that at times the seduction of fulfilling the higher-order needs (in particular, self-actualization and self-transcendence) is more powerful than the drive to fulfil the lower-order needs, despite the practical challenges this presents for individuals.

Specifically, unpropitious fields can be understood to be characterized by several of the following criteria:

1. Domain skills that are highly specialized, require high levels of creativity, and, in some cases, are cultivated from childhood;
2. Participants' passionate commitment to the field over many years and the integration of domain ability into their personal identity;
3. Very high levels of competition and a component of luck in achieving success;
4. Aspirational models within the field that do not represent a likely career trajectory for the overwhelming majority of participants;
5. In many countries (e.g., Australia, the United States (US), and the United Kingdom) high levels of underemployment, a casualized or contract-based workforce, and the resultant financial precarity;
6. Significant gatekeeping by more-established field participants who are adversely impacted by the increased competition introduced by incoming field participants;
7. Workforce oversaturation and the willingness of field participants to work for little or no payment in order to establish their place in the field;
8. Societal resistance to acknowledging the economic value of the field as evidenced by the commonly held beliefs that domain output ought to be free or inexpensive to access, and that creators are simply undertaking a hobby and do not require an income that reflects their expertise and experience; and
9. Economies of scale that facilitate the mass dissemination of an individual's output, reducing the number of practitioners required to service the customer base and exacerbating many of the above challenges.

In some unpropitious fields, research has uncovered a pattern of poor wellbeing amongst participants (Moyle, 2019). Even where issues of wellbeing are identified and support measures are implemented, interventions frequently fail to address the root causes (Patkovic, 2020; Whippman, 2017) and consequently needs remain unfulfilled. The ongoing impacts

of poor remuneration, high levels of criticism, a lack of self-agency, and frequently deferred hope may be somewhat relieved by mindfulness or positive thinking. However, without addressing the underlying issue of working within a challenging field, serious personal difficulties have the potential to recur. Extant research supports the proposition that graduates emerging from creative and performing arts disciplines experience poor employment outcomes, and points to the need for change (Bennett, 2016).

While some individuals evidently manage to establish thriving, healthy, and financially rewarding careers in unpropitious fields, these individuals represent the exception and not the rule. Sustained and unsuccessful efforts to establish a viable career in an unpropitious field may result in increasingly diminished wellbeing – sometimes with profound consequences. There is, therefore, an urgent need to reconceptualize careers in such fields, and to support individuals who work in these fields to construct career models that balance domain work with needs fulfilment.

2. Alternative creativity: a solution for creators in unpropitious creative fields

2.1. Creativity and meta-creativity

Creativity has long offered solutions for the problems facing humanity and can similarly support the resolution of some of the challenges of unpropitious creative fields. The standard definition of creativity, as proposed by Runco and Jaeger (2012) and reiterated by Kaufman (2016), is that it involves the production of an artefact, idea or process that is both novel (sometimes called unusual or original) and appropriate (sometimes called accepted). Beyond the standard definition, there are a range of proposed types, conditions and processes of creativity. Some authors recognize the need for a third condition to be met: namely, the demonstration of high-quality output. These authors claim that creative output needs to be recognized as such by peers in a field, as well as domain experts (Daniel, 2022). Conversely, other approaches assert that there are varying degrees of creativity; the Four-C model is one such typology of creativity. This model proposes four types of creativity: Mini-C (such as a child at play), Little-C (everyday life tasks and hobbies), Pro-C (professional-level forms of creativity) and Big-C, or eminent creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). Some researchers have developed psychometric tests to measure individuals' capacity for creativity, while others have focused on the process of creativity; Wallas' (2015) proposed model involves four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification, while Rhodes (1961) suggested that product, press, person, and process represent the stages of creativity. Although the concept of creativity might lack widespread definitional and structural consensus, what is clear is the potential of creativity to provide solutions to difficult problems.

Runco offers the concept of meta-creativity as “being creative about creativity research” (2015, p. 295). Meta-creativity can additionally be conceived as being creative about creativity practice; that is, meta-creativity offers the opportunity to explore alternative conceptual approaches to establishing sustainable careers in creative fields that are unpropitious. Runco (2015) proposed that there are two particularly beneficial processes in meta-creativity: questioning assumptions and shifting perspectives. A form of meta-creativity, alternative creativity therefore seeks to apply these processes in order to uncover alternative models of careers in unpropitious creative fields.

2.2. Alternative creativity

Alternative creativity is a type of meta-creativity that seeks to construct divergent career paths in unpropitious creative fields, balancing the aspirations of skilled creators with the difficult realities of creative careers and ensuring that creators can fulfil their human needs. As such, it offers particular relevance to fields within the creative and performing arts. Alternative creativity is enacted as a process of reconceptualizing careers and lifestyles, reimagining the future, and foregrounding the wellbeing of creators, an aspect identified in recent literature (Ceci & Kumar, 2016). Critically, alternative creativity empowers expert practitioners in unpropitious creative fields to develop viable, sustainable, and rewarding careers that support them in fulfilling their human needs, so that their domain output can continue to offer needs-fulfilling creativity to their audiences. Alternative creativity offers validity to an individual who has Pro-C or especially Big-C level ability in a domain (and thus has the intention of working professionally in the field), but who has been unable to establish a full-time career as a creative practitioner. Additionally, it seeks to address the potential waste of human capital that occurs when highly skilled individuals who have invested a great deal of time, energy, and money into their domain training are forced to abandon their careers. Quite simply, alternative creativity gives people permission to find new ways to make life and careers function.

Alternative creativity acknowledges the realities and difficulties of working within unpropitious creative fields and, rather than offering an unrealistic narrative of overcoming that permeates so much of our culture, focuses instead on building alternative models of careers in the given domain. A priority in alternative creativity is a multi-vocational focus, encouraging the development of multiple meaningful careers, which may be in different domains. Further, alternative creativity invites people to understand their work in the field as only one component of their broader occupational and personal identities. Where it better supports their wellbeing objectives, it may even be pursued avocationally – that is, with dedication and expertise, and even in a paid capacity where appropriate, but without the reliance on a full-time (or even part-time) income from the domain. Further, alternative creativity rejects many of the dominant cultural narratives of success (and, in particular, the narratives surrounding the accrual of economic capital) and acknowledges that significant contributions to a field can be made by individuals who do not work full-time in that area.

Alternative creativity is not a prescriptive model and requires each individual to contextualize it within their own career; applications of alternative creativity will therefore vary between individuals and even between domains. There are, however, common threads that extend between individuals, and alternative creativity can be understood to rest on six key objectives that individuals can consider:

1. Defining artistic purpose: Beyond career, income, and recognition, what is the underlying passion that drives my creativity in my particular domain? What is the legacy I want to build?;
2. Understanding wellbeing: To what degree are my various human needs currently fulfilled? Are there needs that might not actually be able to be fulfilled through my participation in the field? How can I seek the fulfilment of these needs elsewhere?;

3. Reconceptualizing success: What is the dominant narrative surrounding success in my field? How realistic is it and how well does it serve me? How can I construct a new definition of success for my creative work?;
4. Determining priorities: What are my personal priorities in terms of my work and my life goals? In what areas might I be willing to make compromises so that I can further focus on achieving my goals?;
5. Undertaking training: What knowledge and skills do I need in order to achieve my goals and fulfil my artistic purpose? Are there areas beyond domain skills that I have not considered? In what areas do I need further training?; and
6. Building platforms: How can I release my creativity to the world, particularly if my previous attempts have been unsuccessful? Can I build an unconventional platform away from the traditional paradigm, given the latter is highly competitive and subject to extensive gatekeeping?

3. Music: an unpropitious creative field

3.1. Past

Music can be seen as an unpropitious creative field where sustained career success can be very challenging, be this in the traditional “classical” area or contemporary popular music. There is a constant stream of highly talented and well-trained entrants to the market each year, be this in performance, composition, music technology or any hybrid of these. Performing musicians are typically employed on the basis of their reputation, where a great performance can lead to further opportunities. Conversely, a poor performance can harm a career very quickly. Professional orchestras – one of the few avenues for job security – are renowned for having low staff turnover, with the common anecdote in the sector being that somebody has to “retire or pass away” before positions become available. Those without some form of job security have to fight for project or freelance work opportunities, where the competition is fierce due to the market being saturated with existing and new talent. Added to this is the influence of key gatekeepers, such as artistic directors, managers and agents, who have the power to direct employment and who bring their own personal views to the table. Audiences also play a significant part; ticket sales are seen in some circles as a measure of quality. Careers are therefore fragile and often impermanent, with countless musicians subject to the power of external agents and the often-chaotic ride inherent to the industry. These various realities all contribute to the numerous stressors that musicians face; apart from the difficulties in maintaining an expert level of performance, including physical and mental health challenges, they face the considerable stress of attempting to sustain a viable career while there is a constant flow of new and highly talented entrants to the market.

3.2. Present

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic essentially brought the live global performing arts industry to a standstill. All of a sudden, chief executive officers, artistic directors and managers of performing arts facilities were forced into the traumatic situation of having to defer or

cancel their programs, without having any way to explain to their employees and the general public how long this shutdown would last (Caust, 2020). In a matter of a few months, there were millions of unemployed musicians and support workers around the world who were in a state of panic, shock, and bewilderment that their livelihood, passion, and identity had been abruptly taken away. Musicians realized that something unprecedented was happening in their lifetime (Botstein, 2019). They joined the long queues of the unemployed, desperately trying to determine if they were eligible for any government support. In mid-2021, there is still no end in sight to this catastrophe. While a limited number of performing arts companies around the world have opened their doors, it is often with a reduced budget and for much smaller audiences, who are required to be socially distanced. The fallout, the damage, and the utter devastation that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused to musicians around the world cannot be underestimated. Attempts to shift to online performance models have been urgent and laudable, however these are merely stopgap measures, with musicians and audiences desperate to return to the excitement and magic of live performance.

3.3. Future

Even if and when life resumes some level of normalcy, several commentators argue that what we were used to in practice is unlikely to return, hence it may be time to rethink how the music sector operates. Botstein (2019), for example, suggests that in the US the COVID-19 pandemic will simply exacerbate the trend of ageing and declining audiences, further weakening of private philanthropy and a continued lack of government support compared to Europe and Asia. He also argues that, to survive, the sector must a) become intensely local, b) widen repertory and curate concerts, c) untether music from traditional venues, d) expand music education into new areas, e) alter concert formats, f) further encourage a love for music, and g) build bridges between different genres (Botstein, 2019, pp. 357–359). Tregear (2020) raises the possibility that, due to the economic downturn, opera houses will be unable to resume their city-centric and highly expensive business model, suggesting that any return to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic operatic culture would be unlikely. Midgette (2020) questions whether audiences will feel safe to return to the concert hall, where audiences were previously sitting in very close proximity to one another. While there are significant unknowns, at present the global music sector is, arguably, fractured. As is the case with the Japanese art of Kintsugi, which uses gold to repair broken ceramics, it may be that something new and beautiful will evolve and heal the fracturing, given music has survived and always will. What is arguably likely, however, is that the “new normal” will mean a very different music sector and the need for professional musicians and audiences to reflect on what is important, sustainable, and ensures a culture of wellbeing and creative reward.

4. Alternative creativity in music

As a sector that has experienced significant destruction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that was already an unpropitious creative field, the music industry (across the full range of musical genres) offers fertile ground for the reimagining of careers and a search for a more sustainable future that alternative creativity offers. The devastating reality

that professional musicians face, whether classical or contemporary, is that everything has changed, and the future that they had diligently prepared for over years or even decades no longer exists. The financial collapse notwithstanding, the human cost within the music industry is incalculable. Dreams have been shattered, voices silenced, and musicians left breathless as they watched everything they had worked for over so many years fall into the abyss.

An undercurrent of alternative creativity has long been evident in some approaches to music careers and lifestyles. Many well-known musicians enjoy careers outside of music, and even some of the greats including Frédéric Chopin and Johann Sebastian Bach engaged in work such as teaching that today would not be considered to be preferred work for an eminent artist. Alexander Borodin was both a chemist and a composer. More recent manifestations of this trend have been informal and run counterculturally to the narrative that success for a musician means deriving the entirety of their income from their domain work.

Under an alternative creativity paradigm, there are opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for musicians across all genres. The following six key objectives offer a framework through which individual musicians and the music field can begin to explore the options afforded by the meta-creativity of alternative creativity.

4.1. Defining artistic purpose

What if musicians framed their creative practice as an opportunity to help their audiences fulfil their human needs by providing music to facilitate connection with others, or to experience beauty and transcendence?

Musicians have the opportunity to construct a creative career around a passionate conviction of the purpose of their musical work, and to build a vision for their musical legacy. Further, musicians can be encouraged by the realization that their work is so much more than entertainment; they offer music to accompany a vast range of emotions and human experiences, and they express for others what they may not be able to express for themselves. Musicians demonstrate that people are not alone in their experiences and that there is a thread of humanity that runs through every nation, culture, demographic, and age. Music helps us to become more human and more humane. Musicians, therefore, exercise an important role within their communities and society at large.

4.2. Understanding wellbeing

What if musicians could clearly articulate their human needs and were able to construct a life where these needs were fulfilled to a reasonable degree – whether through their work as musicians or in external fields?

Alternative creativity prioritizes the wellbeing of musicians, recognizing that a significant component of establishing positive wellbeing is ensuring that musicians' human needs are fulfilled. Wellbeing tends to be conspicuous in its absence, and points to areas of unfulfilled needs. Alternative creativity gently invites musicians to abandon the veil of secrecy and, in a manner appropriate to their own situation, acknowledge the areas of their wellbeing that are compromised due to unfulfilled needs. Whether this is achieved

through discussing their financial precarity with a friend, by exploring their deep career disappointment in a professional counselling environment, or simply through being open with peers about career obstacles, alternative creativity positions musicians to address their human needs by offering them permission to articulate and further understand the specific challenges they are experiencing.

Relational connection is an important aspect of fulfilling human needs. As a fragmented and unregulated industry, the music sector lacks broad and formalized leadership structures – outside of teaching environments – that enable experienced musicians to mentor and support younger artists. Not only do early-career musicians miss out on the valuable benefits this support could provide, but late-career artists lack formalized pathways through which they can pass on their wisdom. Conversely, alternative creativity positions relationships as being at the heart of expert music-making. It is important to make space for the intergenerational exchange of ideas, wisdom, and encouragement, and for long-term collegial relationships to develop and be maintained.

4.3. Reconceptualizing success

What if success in music was not determined by *Spotify* streams, *YouTube* subscribers or income, but by the level of satisfaction that a musician derives from their work, the excellence of their music, and whether they use their musical ability for the common good?

To date, the dominant paradigms of success in music are built on status, reputation, and wealth. But with ever-increasing numbers of music graduates who are excess to the needs of the traditional music industry, perhaps it is time to rethink what it means to be an expert musician. Alternative creativity addresses the reality that most expert musicians will not be able to earn a living solely as a performer, recording artist or composer. These are highly sought-after roles and there are simply more talented musicians than there are available full-time work opportunities in music. However, one option is to pursue a fulfilling career outside of music while simultaneously adopting an avocational approach to music. A person's contribution to the field of music is no less significant nor less valuable because of the absence of a full-time career.

Another significant problem in the music industry is the superstar culture, which is pervasive in popular music and also exists, to a lesser extent, in the classical sector. Not only does this offer an entirely unrealistic career model for aspiring professionals, it results in a disproportionate amount of attention and money going to a select few, chosen largely by chance (Krueger, 2019). For every million dollars a superstar earns, at least 10 lesser-known musicians could have been provided with a year's salary – with the added bonus that our musical culture would be richer for this increased diversity of voices.

We do not foresee nor propose a future without professional full-time musicians. Alternative creativity does not discourage full-time creative practice, but simply acknowledges that, for many individuals, this is not a realistic career pathway. Where musicians can earn a full-time income purely from their creative practice, this is a wonderful outcome. Further, being paid a full-time salary as a musician does not preclude the implementation of other elements of alternative creativity into creative practice.

4.4. Determining priorities

What if the answer is not to learn how to make more money, but to thrive with less? What if musicians were empowered to embrace the artistic freedom that a lower-cost lifestyle affords?

Alternative creativity invites musicians to bring sharp intentionality to their life decisions, and to make choices that facilitate the creative lifestyles they seek. For some people, this means living away from a large city where housing is less expensive or commute times shorter. For others, it impacts decisions surrounding relationships, education, and major life milestones. Alternative creativity acknowledges the finiteness of money, time, and resources, and encourages musicians to evaluate the opportunities before them and select a path that offers them the best outcome in terms of the fulfilment of their needs.

4.5. Undertaking training

What if initial music education and ongoing training was approached with a long-term perspective regarding the depth and breadth of knowledge and skills that professional musicians need? What if multi-vocational approaches to creative practice were normalized in tertiary music programs?

As the engine room of tomorrow's music industry, the music education sector is vital in establishing a more sustainable future and challenging prevailing expectations. Some of the most important conversations around music careers take place between student and teacher (usually a studio teacher or private tutor). In these moments, teachers have the opportunity to give their students the gift of an alternative creativity vision for their future participation in the music industry. Rather than well-meaning but potentially unhelpful encouragement towards an unpropitious career, teachers can give an authentic account of some of their own challenges and encourage students to view their creative practice as just one component of their identity.

Perhaps the most important impact of alternative creativity in music education will be to further shape career preparation, especially in undergraduate music programs. Most arts entrepreneurship education focuses on the commercialization of musical skills; indeed, musicians working at a level expected of a professional ought to be paid, and training in the business skills required of professional musicians has a place in any modern degree program (Bell & Bell, 2016). Arts entrepreneurship education is certainly important, but alone it remains insufficient to adequately prepare music graduates for a functional post-graduation life. Instead, students should be encouraged to build a diverse set of skills that will allow them to work both within and beyond the music field.

4.6. Building platforms

What if musicians were able to build a platform where they could find their genuine fans? What if musicians created new scenes and transactional spaces for artistic expression?

Alternative creativity prioritizes finding appropriate settings for each individual musician, and a stage size that will allow them to perform unhindered and to the full extent of their ability. Expert musicians who do not work professionally are often encouraged to participate in community-based music. This is an important area of musical activity that brings the

benefits of music to large numbers of people; some expert musicians thrive in this environment and even take on important leadership roles. However, community-based music is not a suitable platform for all expert musicians, and it usually does not offer an equivalent alternative to the professional stage.

Alternative creativity champions localized expressions of creativity alongside those in more traditional and large-scale professional settings. In the post-COVID-19 pandemic world, the public's appetite for travel may be diminished, as well as the willingness of audiences to sit with large groups for extended periods in enclosed spaces, in close proximity to other patrons. This presents an opportunity to refocus on localized musical expression, encouraging communities to collectively discover and champion the voices and sounds that already exist within them. Localized music careers also facilitate authentic relationships with audiences, allowing fans the opportunity to journey with a musician over the long term.

5. Implementing alternative creativity

Individuals and organizations across the music sector have a wide range of opportunities to support the implementation of alternative creativity – to be creative about creativity practice. Cultural narratives form powerful and enduring mindsets, and in that regard alternative creativity begins in the home environment. Parents have the opportunity to shape the values and expectations of children in line with alternative creativity and to expose them to a wide variety of music and musicians (particularly beyond the dominant artists of the day). Further, private and school music teachers can guide their students in the development of musical identities and future plans that are informed by alternative creativity. Industry groups have the potential to play a significant role in promoting alternative creativity, through memberships and networking opportunities such as member meetings, conferences, and workshops.

In tertiary music education, realistic career perspectives can be offered across course marketing, curricula, and pastoral care; in particular, non-arts subjects provide a unique space to further unpack the meta-creativity of alternative creativity. Within the industry, newcomers need to hear the stories of not just well-known and established musicians, but also of lesser-known, part-time, and avocational performers. Alternative creativity can be embedded within a culture by constructing safe spaces where musicians can discuss career obstacles and heartbreak and start to build new dreams. A culture of authenticity and the genuine care of peers can therefore further support the aims of alternative creativity, as well as reinforcing the importance of each individual's pursuit of needs fulfilment alongside their creative practice. Ultimately, for alternative creativity to become widespread amongst musicians in the long-term, what is required initially is a few brave individuals who are willing to choose the road less travelled and explore the possibilities that alternative creativity offers for their career and their wellbeing.

Conclusions: a future with alternative creativity

Alternative creativity offers musicians a way to navigate their unpropitious creative field and to establish a creative practice that avoids many of the challenges currently experienced by

members of the field. For musicians already working in the music industry, or who have left the industry after years of frustration, alternative creativity offers a fresh start; admittedly, it may prove difficult for some to deconstruct long-held beliefs and challenge well-established self-perceptions.

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic world, alternative creativity offers a bold vision for the rebuilding of the music industry. What currently seems bleak may represent an opportunity to remedy the past mistakes of the music industry, and to build music careers that allow musicians to genuinely experience positive wellbeing through the fulfilment of their human needs. After all, if audiences wish to continue to enjoy life-giving music that helps them to fulfil their human needs, they would do well to ensure that the creators of that music are operating from a position of positive wellbeing. There are clearly many avenues for research that emerge from this conceptual foundation, such as conducting surveys or interviews with musicians to ascertain their views on alternative creativity. Further, field-based research where musicians apply the alternative creativity concept in practice and then offer reflections on its relevance and value would also yield insights into the application of this different way of thinking in an industry context.

To truly impact the music industry and the people within it, alternative creativity requires individuals within the industry to grasp the vision for a different future, and to courageously establish themselves as leaders who are committed to the long-term development and rebirth of the industry. Around the world, thousands – maybe millions – of expert musicians are waking up to the realization that the nightmare of 2020 was not in fact a dream. Their already precarious livelihoods and their very identities have been swept away by the COVID-19 pandemic tsunami, and the industry may well never be the same. Alternative creativity provides hope, empowering broken-hearted musicians to build sustainable careers and offering them the chance to wake up to a new future – one that takes the shattered pieces of their lives and reconnects them with gold, leaving beautiful and valuable fault lines that testify to the resilience of the human spirit and the indomitability of music.

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