

Cultural Exchange, Social Action, and Community Engagement: Forming Your Own Studio Initiatives MTNA Webinar

**Dr. Scott Donald and Alison S. Barr
Friday, November 10, 2023**

Introduction and Incubation

- Growing over time, gradual unfolding;
- Searching for added meaning in our professional life;
- Searching for ways to give back to the community and the world;
- Leaving ourselves open to possibilities;
- Observing that “service” has become a vital part of most High Schools’ expectations;
- Understanding that music is a powerful conduit for social change;
- Thinking beyond the most accessible, such as the Playathon fundraiser or Retirement Home performance model.

Our Ideal Position as Studio Teachers and College Professors

- We are creative;
- We devote our lives to forwarding the culture;
- We love what we do;
- We have empathy;
- We work with children or young adults, many of whom are naturally open to giving back;
- We may already include this in our curriculum on a regular basis;
- We are (somewhat) autonomous, able to formalize curriculum components at will.

Preparation and Inspiration

- Taking “Music and Social Action” course at Coursera online: it’s free, completely online and taught by a Sebastian Ruth, Visiting Lecturer in Community Engagement at Yale

University; Founder and Artistic Director of Community MusicWorks in Providence RI;

- <https://www.coursera.org/learn/music-and-social-action>
- Asking - What is a musician's response to the condition of the world? Do musicians have an obligation and an opportunity to serve the needs of the world with their musicianship?
- And what is an educator's response to all the above?
- As a classical musician and teacher, I am "an important public figure, with a critical role to play in my society." (from "*Music and Social Action, Coursera*;))
- What can I do, first, in my own life, and next, within my studio, to give back?
- How can I help my students find fulfillment and meaning through musical expression, beyond standard performance models?

Identify Your Own Dreams

- What do you already contribute?
- What more would you like to do?
- Start by yourself first;
- Encourage your professional organization to become involved;
- Use accessible models: Playathon/Coffeehouse/Retirement Home performances;
- Take on one new project a year;
- Organize your studio curriculum around a theme/cause you support – "Caring for Our Oceans;"
- Let students know what you are doing, especially musically;
- Publish a weekly BLOG, promote on your website and/or Facebook page;
- Plan a Benefit Concert for a cause you believe in;
- Garner larger community to help and support - as in *One World, One Music Concert Series* at Studio A in Austin, TX.
- Engage your students in the process as you go along.

Moving Along

- Formalize what you already have in your studio – name your program and write a statement;
- For example - “*Music for Good*”

Music is a powerful force for good. People who hear music, especially those who may not have a lot of opportunity to hear live music, are given a chance to hum along, move a little, think of happy times they may have had, and enjoy being with others who are listening. Also, your music can benefit a good cause, as do our Playathons for Shelters. As a musician, YOU have the power to offer your music to someone who would benefit from it. This year, everyone in the studio will participate in an outside concert – either one I arrange or one you arrange yourself!

- Follow up with thanks, accountability, and assessment:
- “Congratulations on having completed this project. You have made a huge difference!”
- Students receive a poster with their photo at the event;
- Questions:

How do you think your project helped people?

What are the needs of the people being served?

Did you feel it was different playing for this project than in a regular recital?

Could you imagine doing a different kind of project now that you’ve completed this one? What kind?

Broadening Our Vision Beyond Our Studio

- How do we make private piano lessons accessible to students who may not have the means to pay?
- Many of us give scholarships at our own expense - a lovely gesture!
- Many of us give extra time and donate music, etc.

- Massachusetts Music Teachers Association started its own program: “*MMTA’s Music Connect*,”
- So far, over twenty deserving students have received FREE tuition, and their MMTA member-teachers have received a tuition reimbursement at a professional teaching rate.

The Sky’s the Limit

- Music is about expression, accessing emotions.
- Giving back taps into many of the same areas of our students’ humanity.
- Find concrete ways to help our students grow, expand their expression, and think beyond themselves!
- **Brainstorm new ideas that are appropriate and relevant to your own studio – conceive, plan, and implement!**

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