PANORAMA SCHOLARLY GROUP

Resonance: Journal of Global Music Studies

https://grhas.centraluniteduniversity.de/index.php/Resonance



The crosscheck of the necessity of music learning

Lei Xiang[a,] *

[a]*Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA*
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.63802/resonance.V1.I1.128*

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Music education, Career development, Music students, Violin learning, Cultural consumption

ABSTRACT

Music education is a growing market in China and many developing countries. As living standards rise, more citizens are spending on recreation, cultural services, and equipment such as musical instruments. This trend reflects an increasing recognition of the value of music education in personal and cultural development.

This paper will first discuss the benefits of learning music. It will then examine the reasons why many music students do not continue to pursue careers in the music field after graduation. The following chapter will explore how music students can find employment related to their studies and skills. At the same time, the author will outline a personal career plan as a music student, presenting personal reasons for the study of music and verify the necessity of learning the violin based on personal experience. Finally, the paper will conclude with a summary of the research findings.

* Corresponding author. e-mail: xiangle1@msu.edu

There are many reasons that can be discussed about students learning music. Some people, especially children, are encouraged to learn music, because learners can satisfy their curiosity and interest, improve their quality, and achieve aesthetic concepts throughout a long period of music learning. Besides that, learning music is practical in life, it not only expresses learner's emotions, but also helps them find part-time jobs and get admitted to the high-ranked universities easily, accordingly music is worthwhile to be explored and learned.

Learners like to learn music, especially the instrument. Music or instruments may provide learners'entrance to review the history and think about the future of music, and to observe the society of the international world, to explore the mysteries of life. because they can understand the history background of music and precise the precedents' struggle by learning. Meanwhile, music or instruments can help learners find and adopt the cultural heritage and enhance this career magnificently. It is not an opportunity for learners to enrich the knowledge and broaden the horizon, but provides learners an international vision to face music learning. When it comes to music, instruments occupy most of it. So, I can take violin learning for instance. The predecessor of the modern violin is the fiddle which was developed in Europe in the 10th century. The fiddle was the most popular by far with traditional musicians originally from Scotland and Ireland. The fiddle music was the "ideal traveling companion for migrations"[1] of the Scottish throughout their long history due to the fiddle was "portable, adaptable to bring for dances and perfect both for soloists and playing partners"[2]. Long ago, the group of people who came from Germany, England and Wales to the region were the Scotch-Irish (people from Scotland and people from Ireland had merged over the course of about 100 years). They began streaming into the Appalachians mountains of America in the 1730s. The fiddle eventually followed the Scottish emigration trail all the way to the southern Appalachians[3]. When violin music was brought to America by European immigrants, many different folk violin styles evolved. Therefore, fiddle music loaded with much history and culture from the old country eventually became one of the most important instruments in America.

The other reason is that learners can connect their individual opinion with the international diversities through the learning period. It allows learners to spend much time studying different kinds of culture and customs, which can assist them in integrating into international music society. Learning music, especially one instrument which can help learners know the similarities and differences between many fields, such as geography, history or literature. Here I want to illustrate how musical instruments (e.g., violin/fiddle) serve as cultural bridges. For example, fiddle and violin. These two instruments may look the same, but in fact, they are different playing in different eras and regions. The Appalachian fiddle carries the sound of the South of the USA; people across the Appalachian mountains play the fiddle in art, music, and community celebration, because music in Appalachia was created for participatory social events for generations, where a steady, compelling beat was essential. In isolated mountain communities, music was a primary source of entertainment and a way to build community. Informal gatherings, such as front-porch jam sessions, relied on upbeat, rhythmic tunes to foster a sense of togetherness. Although classical music plays an important role in violin learning, fiddle music is less complex than the classical violin. Therefore, the musicians want to create rhythmic melodies that satisfy audience appreciation and desires in the Appalachian area of America. Most fiddle players use the first position of the string and focus on folk music through the rhythmic drive and a steady flow of melody (Swift, 2006)[4]. Fiddle players create the positive, allegro rhythms of a jig[5] or reel[6] or the adagio, sad movements of a country waltz[7].

However, classically trained violinists are playing in higher positions and use broad slides, vibrato, tremolo, and pizzicato in accord with the improvement of violin skills[8]. The performers also perform spiccato[9] and pizzicato[10] in

[1] Ritchie, Fiona, Orr, and Parton. *Wayfaring Strangers: The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia*(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 29
[2] Ritchie, Fiona, Orr, and Parton. *Wayfaring Strangers: The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia*(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 29
[3] Ritchie, Fiona, Orr, and Parton. *Wayfaring Strangers: The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia*(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 29
[4] Swift. "Learn the Difference Between Violin and Fiddle," *Strings Magazine*, April 1, 2006.
[5] jig: "A traditional dance tone, most commonly played in 6/8 time, older than all other Irish-style dance tunes" (Ritchie, Fiona, Orr, & Parton, 2014, p.296).
[6] Reel: "A traditional dance tune in 4/4 time, originating in Scotland and most popular in the set and step dancing" (Ritchie, Fiona, Orr, & Parton, 2014, p.296).
[7] Reitz. "The Fiddle," *Carolina Classic*, May 13, 2014.
[8] Swift. "Learn the Difference Between Violin and Fiddle," *Strings Magazine*, April 1, 2006.
[9] "spiccato"is a bowing technique for string instruments in which the bow appears to bounce lightly upon the string.
[10] "pizzicato" is a playing technique that involves plucking the strings of a string instrument.

the fast excerpt, compared with displaying vibrato [11]in the adagio excerpt. Some works are elegant and fantastical, and include the European renaissance elements.

From a different perspective, music has practical use in life. At the beginning, it is a good way for people to express their emotions, especially for these young students. A few students like to play the instruments because they hope to go on the stage and show off their personalities. For example, a number of students make up string bands to perform on the campus, and then they achieve happiness and reputation. Secondly, learning music can help students to find part-time jobs around the campus, hence they earn some money to support themselves. For example, some students make good use of the summer vacation to join the symphony orchestra as instrument players and get salaries after several rehearsals or performances. In the end, learning music can help students to get admitted to the high-ranked universities. For example, learning musical instruments and having a grading test certification is a stepping stone for entering better conservatories or universities, because the Ministry of Education in China and private universities in the USA both provide these students who have high-level artistic skills with special channels for college entrance examination[12], such as lowering the grades of the college entrance examination or SAT grades. That's why many students who choose music as their major in conservatories and universities, even if quite a few musical students can not find a decent job in the music field.

In the end, it is necessary for learners who have interest to learn the music, because learners may learn many kinds of knowledge and skills throughout the music learning period.

1. Why do music students not continue to work in music?

Research data indicates that those majoring in the arts have some of the lowest income levels, especially among recent college graduates[13]. Although many students get bonuses in learning music as a major, many music graduates do not go on to work in the music field because they cannot find a job that allows them to live. In this part, I will demonstrate the reasons why many former music students do not enter the music industry or become a professional musician.

Firstly, there exists a large gap between the costs of music education for music graduate students and income along with the social status they obtain in the field of music (teacher, player, therapy). The imbalance between the experience of joy and the earning of an income is too large. The problem of making a profit, and not living as a poor musician is a significant one. However, the circumstance is that music majors are widely considered in the popular press to be "worthless" in terms of income and employment[14]. Hence, many music players invested much including instruments and private personal teaching in their music education, but they could not earn it back when they became a teacher or a performer. The reason for this circumstance is that one's career can provide just as much, if not more, of a rewarding experience as can the traditional measures of income and prestige, especially in fields like the arts that are not generally associated with higher career earnings. After that, some students are in the predicament of no stable jobs even if they have further learning in music. For example, when students pursue a music degree, they face to have no some improvement on their generalizable skills, including higher-order thinking[15], but there exists a definite disconnect between what currently enrolled students find to be most important for their careers and what is prized in the academy[16].

The second reason is that some international students in music have no possibility of competing in the other countries. It's hard for music students to get a working visa in the other countries' job market due to the fact that they are international students. Taking America as an example, the policies limit the number of people who can stay in their countries and get permanent residency. Because the Trump administration announced in September that

[11] "vibrato" is a musical effect consisting of a regular, pulsating change of pitch.
[12] Allison, "Discovering Chinese Music Education Industry," *Daxue Consulting - Market Research and Consulting China*, April 25, 2022, https://daxueconsulting.com/music-education-industry/
[13] Carnevale & Strohl. *College majors, unemployment, and earnings: Not all college degrees are created equal*(Washington, DC: Center ofEducation and the Workforce, Georgetown University, 2012).
[14] Matt Cantor. "The 13 most worthless majors," *Newser*, April 23, 2012.
[15] Sheldon. "Comparisons of higher-order thinking skills among prospective freshmen and upper-level preservice music education majors, "*Journal of Research inMusic Education*, 53(1), 40-50(2005): https://doi.org/10.1177/002242940505300104
[16] Johnson. "Undergraduate Perceptions of Music Degree Program Value, Pertaining to Future Careers." Master's thesis, Ohio State University, 2014.

every new H-1B[17] visa would come with a $100,000 fee each year. An H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in "specialty occupations" that require a bachelor's degree or higher. These occupations are in fields like science, medicine, education, and technology, and the visa provides a path for skilled workers to come to the U.S. to fill these positions. The visa is employer-sponsored, with initial stays of up to three years, which can be extended for a maximum of six years. Students usually have a one year OPT[18] visa after their music study period and then they can find a company to apply for an H-1B visa to work in America. The $100,000 fee each year H-1B visa policies make the employer consider hiring the international employee carefully to escape the heavy risk. And the employees also need to balance the benefits and disadvantages to work in America. Because H-1B employees are tied to the employer who sponsors their visa. The new fee intensifies this "indentured" relationship because an employee who reports abuse or seeks to leave a poor work situation knows that a potential new employer faces a massive financial penalty to hire them. Secondly, some employers may offset the $100,000 fee by capping or reducing salaries and bonuses offered to H-1B workers. While regulations require paying prevailing wages, critics allege loopholes and exploitative practices persist. Despite the employer paying the large fee upfront, there is no guarantee the visa will be approved. Although the fee is refunded upon denial, the employee loses the opportunity, and there is a high-stakes competition for a limited number of visas through the lottery system. Entry-level or recent graduates, whose salaries may be significantly lower than the $100,000 fee, are especially unattractive candidates to sponsor. This disproportionately harms young professional musicians seeking to start their careers in the U.S[19]. Although some students majoring in music do not need to go through the H-1B lottery, or choose another visa to apply, the Trump administration's tightening of immigration policies and its unfriendly attitude toward foreign immigrants have led many music students to reconsider their decision to stay in the United States for work.

So, some learners have to go back to their hometown or find other jobs that can make them have permanent residency easily to stay in those countries. For example, many students find jobs in other industries, like movies, insurance, car dealers or real estate.

At last, the practicability of the music players and the market in China or Asia caused students not to find jobs in the music field easily. In China, a great number of audiences do not understand or appreciate western classical music, so this kind of music is not well marketed. This exacerbates the situation of classical musicians in China or Asia. Besides that, classical music only has a market in the metropolis and some biggest cities in China, such as Beijing or Shanghai. So, once the income of these classical music players couldn't pay the expenses they stayed in that city, the risk of losing jobs will be higher, they have to change their career and find some ways to make them able to earn a financial reward.

2. How should music students find music related jobs?

Besides that, there are 3 approaches/tasks music students can take/do to better prepare themselves for a career in music. These solutions may make some changes in society so that music students can actually choose to work in their field, and become at least modestly successful(able to earn a living wage).

First, the government should promote the sense of learning arts to promote the value of classical music and musicians in America. There are many different actions the government takes to improve the quality of the public. I think the key is to urge learners to know how to appreciate the arts and music aesthetically. Therefore, the government can push a revolution in music education in school to make more and more students be schooled in music instruments and vocals. The first thing is that the ministry of education can register some new examination requirements to make music into the schools more integrated. For example, they can divide the extra exam into 2 parts, the first one examines students' physical exercises, the last one can measure the levels that students learn music. The government may encourage the school to try to do a serious program that all children must be involved in, such as a symphony

[17] An H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in "specialty occupations" that require a bachelor's degree or higher.
[18] OPT, or Optional Practical Training, is a work authorization for F-1 student visa holders in the U.S. that allows them to gain temporary employment directly related to their major area of study. The standard OPT is for 12 months and can be used either before or after graduation (pre-completion or post-completion)
[19] "$100,000 H-1B Fee Causes Chaos, Likely Unaffordable for Many Companies," American Immigration Council, September 26, 2025.

orchestra or choir. Some students who are not in good economic condition can use instruments that do not cost that much or use their voice to learn or join the activities.

Second, globalisation has had a greatest influence on the level of interaction between the music industry and the wider cultural sphere. This situation predicted that some music graduates can find jobs in other countries which lack musical talent. Besides that, they can make good use of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road(B&R)[20]. The initiative would create a cohesive economic area by building both hard infrastructures such as rail and road links as well as soft infrastructures such as the trade agreements and a common commercial legal structure with a court system to police the agreements. The most important thing is that it would increase cultural exchanges, and broaden trade. Through long-period cooperation and assistance between China and these countries, some Chinese music students can seize the opportunity to go to other countries to perform. Perhaps they're willing to stay in other countries' local places to educate students about international music and Chinese culture during this trip. Meanwhile, the ministry of culture can invite other musicians from these countries to perform in China, becoming the workers and volunteers who devote the effort to cultural exchange and integration.

Last but not least, because some arts programs lack preparation in dealing with the "real world" of work, many higher education institutions have begun to scrutinize whether they are effectively teaching necessary skills within their degree programs[21]. Therefore, musicians should learn to run a small business, the confidence to create new opportunities, pedagogical and communication skills for use in educational, ensemble and community settings, industry knowledge and strong professional network in their universities and conservatories[22]. Music graduates may possibly choose to do some part-time jobs or skilled secondary jobs in addition to performance skills to gain more financial reward after their graduation. For instance, they may do unskilled or unrelated work as available. Besides that, a large number of activities including the cultural industries focus some opportunities provided for skilled music players to improve their salary. In my opinion, graduate music students should learn more skills outside of technical music knowledge and theory, they need many skills similar to those in other degree programs, including networking and administrative skills[23] to increase possibilities to access skilled secondary or alternative positions with higher financial rewards and self-satisfaction[24]. To achieve this, conservatories and music schools in universities need to make a good preparation for the communities in which schools' operate, and in which students will work in the future.

3. As a music student, my career plan

At last, I want to share my experience to find my career and reflect on the advantages of music learning from the side. I hope to help more people to find their own suitable options for their future career in music. This part will discuss learners who are on the music career path and how they decide to choose that path. There are several factors influencing my career choice. Passion is the largest factor whereas. Another factor is the new interest. Except for these two reasons, there are some reasons about the pressure of life expenses and society. As mentioned from the last part,I may introduce many careers in the music field as well as some part-time jobs or flexible positions in other fields I may choose.

Firstly, passion guides me to find a career. I want to be a violin teacher or violin performer, and so on, because I have practiced the violin for 18 years and the violin provided me with the personal opportunities to display my talent. I'm sure that I love playing the violin on the stage. So, I may find a way of doing what I love. Then, identify my skills and weave them into my passions in a way that will have a highly differentiated, high-value "brand." as an

[20] Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road（B&R): The initiative was unveiled by Chinese paramount leader Xi Jinping in September and October 2013 during visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia and proposed jointly building a new economic area, the Silk Road Economic Belt (Chinese: 丝绸之路经济带) Essentially, the "belt" includes countries situated on the original Silk Road through Central Asia, West Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.
[21] Cantor. "The 13 most worthless majors," *Newser*, April 23, 2012.
[22] Dawn Bennett. "Utopia for music performance graduates. Is it achievable, and how should it be defined(2007)?" *British Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 2 (2007): 179–89.
[23] Creech, Papageorgi, Duffy, Morton, Haddon, Potter, de Bezenac,Whyton, Himonides & Welch. "From music student to professional: the process of transition,"*British Journal of Music Education* 25(3), 315-31 (2008): https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051708008127.
[24] Dawn Bennett. "Utopia for music performance graduates. Is it achievable, and how should it be defined(2007)?" *British Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 2 (2007): 179–89.

establishment[25]. It's not difficult for me to become a violin teacher and violin player. I'm willing to share the teaching methods and music theory with my students and friends. I wanted to learn more new skills about violin , chamber music, and some masterpieces of a symphony orchestra with passion and curiosity.

I also find some new positions pushed by the new interest, such as education or some music related learning programs. The first field I want to try is education. I also wanted to be a teacher who taught American Chinese. I may tell some stories and explain the differences between Chinese culture and American culture. I think the pathway program is a good way for me to learn. I appreciate some learning methods in the daily courses which give me the motivation to rethink the significance of learning. I was good at organising multi-cultural events in Xiamen before, and I can do it better now. The second is Singing. I want to be a singer more than the violin. I liked to sing songs when I was a high school student, so I can perform some traditional and classical songs. I hope to perform on the stage because of having some singing experience at home or on the mountains which makes me very happy. I'd like to experience taking a vocal class at campus. The third is music composition. I want to create music by myself. In fact, I have some softwares to do this work but because I have no courses on how to use it, I gradually forget this technique. I also want to try to make digital music. Besides that, I'd like to teach myself from some software, such as Youtube or some video website. Meanwhile, finding new positions are sustainable for youngsters, because It provided best opportunity to nurture these interests into passions, to study and build extracurricular activities around them, to meet new people and seize opportunities for careers in their field, and to develop resume that will give them an advantage over less prepared applicants for scholarships, fellowships, internships and jobs for young people[26]. I may want to find some alternative jobs to have a living wage as a consequence. I'd like to be a food taster. I want to be a food taster because I'm good at appreciating the beauty and charm of the food. I also want to describe the feeling of some kinds of food. I dreamed of being invited to a TV show to narrate these feelings. The period of Life is like many options for food, trying to taste is the best policy.

Furthermore, I want to become an uber driver and drive the car sometimes which can make me relieved and relax. I can make my mind be easy and focus on driving. However, we still look to professionals as primarily singularly focused in the United States. If someone asks a music learner what she/he does and someone says: "I am a concert pianist, a writer, a teacher, a career consultant, a mother, a wife, a friend, and a political activist," well, most people will wonder. Some music learners are a nation of specialists, experts who know more and more about less and less. This model does not serve the entrepreneur who must expand his/her skill set, think with the whole brain, and be ready for change and self-reinvention[27]. Although finding many different kinds of jobs is mostly because of learners' passion and new interest, it also concludes some reasons about the pressure of life expenses and society. Thus, some music graduate students may gain more knowledge to get more opportunities which can give them some flexible positions with higher financial rewards and more self-satisfaction to deal with new unknown circumstances in the future[28].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, although some learners may face both real and virtual challenges when pursuing a career in music, there are many ways to help them transform their passion into a profession. With the advancement of society and the growing aesthetic awareness of the public, music study is likely to become increasingly mainstream. Therefore, music education is expected to be recognized as a valuable and practical initiative in China and other developing countries.

Author Contribution

[25] Tom Kucharvy. *Creating a Pathway to Your Dream Career : Designing and Controlling a Career around Your Life Goals*. First edition. New York, New York (222 East 46th Street, New York, NY 10017): Business Expert Press, 2014.
[26] Tom Kucharvy. *Creating a Pathway to Your Dream Career : Designing and Controlling a Career around Your Life Goals*. First edition. New York, New York (222 East 46th Street, New York, NY 10017): Business Expert Press, 2014.
[27] Jill Timmons. *The Musician's Journey : Crafting Your Career Vision and Plan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013,
[28] Dawn Bennett. "Utopia for music performance graduates. Is it achievable, and how should it be defined(2007)?" *British Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 2 (2007): 179–89.

Lei Xiang(Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA) is the sole author of this article and independently completed all stages of the research and writing.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Not Required

Funding

None

Competing Interest declaration

The author declare that, to their knowledge, they have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be construed as a potential competing interest regarding the work described in this manuscript.

Acknowledgments

None

References

1. Allison, “Discovering Chinese Music Education Industry,” *Daxue Consulting - Market Research and Consulting China*, April 25, 2022,https://daxueconsulting.com/music-education-industry/.
2. Cantor, Matt. “The 13 most worthless majors,” *Newser.* April 23, 2012. Retrieved from www.newser.com
3. Carnevale, Anthony P.; Cheah, Ban; Strohl, Jeff. *College majors, unemployment, and earnings: Not all college degrees are created equal.* Washington, DC: Center of Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University, 2012. Retrieved from https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/static/flexpaper/template.html?path=/bitstream/handle/10822/559308/Unemployment.Final.update1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
4. Creech, Andrea, Ioulia Papageorgi, Celia Duffy, Frances Morton, Elizabeth Haddon, John Potter, Christophe de Bezenac, Tony Whyton, Evangelos Himonides, and Graham Welch. “From Music Student to Professional: The Process of Transition.” *British Journal of Music Education* 25, no. 3 (2008): 315–31. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051708008127.
5. Bennett, Dawn. “Utopia for Music Performance Graduates. Is It Achievable, and How Should It Be Defined?” *British Journal of Music Education* 24, no. 2 (2007): 179–89. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051707007383.
6. Johnson, William. “Undergraduate Perceptions of Music Degree Program Value, Pertaining to Future Careers.” Master's thesis, Ohio State University, 2014. Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu
7. Kucharvy, Tom. *Creating a Pathway to Your Dream Career : Designing and Controlling a Career around Your Life Goals*. First edition. New York, New York (222 East 46th Street, New York, NY 10017): Business Expert Press, 2014. http://portal.igpublish.com/iglibrary/search/BEPB0000278.html.
8. “$100,000 H-1B Fee Causes Chaos, Likely Unaffordable for Many Companies.” American Immigration Council, September 26, 2025, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/100000-h1b-fee-unaffordable-companies/.
9. Reitz. “The Fiddle,” *Carolina Classic*, May 13, 2014. Retrieved from https://www.ourstate.com/the-fiddle/
10. Ritchie, Fiona, Douglas M. Orr, and Dolly Parton. *Wayfaring Strangers : The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia*, 29. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014. Retrieved from https://uncg.on.worldcat.org/oclc/875742371.
11. Deborah A. Sheldon and Gregory DeNardo. “Comparisons of higher-order thinking skills among prospective freshmen and upper-level preservice music education majors.” *Journal of Research in Music Education, 53*, no. 1(2005): 40-50. https://doi.org/10.1177/002242940505300104
12. Swift, Gorden. “Learn the Difference Between Violin and Fiddle,” *Strings Magazine*, April 1, 2006. Retrieved from: https://stringsmagazine.com/learn-the-difference-between-violin-and-fiddle/.
13. Timmons, Jill. *The Musician’s Journey : Crafting Your Career Vision and Plan.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10703955.
14. Wikipedia contributors. Belt and Road. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Accessed April 12, 2020. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belt_and_Road_Initiative

Submitted on: 2025-10-11

Revised on: 2025-11-27

Accepted on: 2025-11-30