

Health and Wellbeing:

A Snapshot of Current Literature

There is compelling evidence to suggest that a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits can arise from participating in music. To capture the latest developments in this field, Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) commissioned a literature review from researchers at the Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre, Griffith University.

The purpose of this review was to compile an evidence-base that could inform QSO's new Health and Wellbeing Program, and enhance the potential wellbeing benefits offered through the orchestra's health-related initiatives.

This brochure provides a brief snapshot of the findings from this review. If you'd like to read the full report it is available for free download here <https://www.qso.com.au/support-us/health-and-wellbeing>.

The field of Music, Health and Wellbeing is vast. Across the world programs are offered in a diverse range of contexts, including therapy, community, education, clinical, and everyday settings. Examples include schools, palliative care wards, community drop-in centres, aged care facilities, detention centres, prisons, mental health hospice facilities, and the homes of individuals.

This literature review uncovered a number of beneficial health and wellbeing outcomes from music making. These span the following personal and social domains:

1. Social (e.g. nurturing relationships with others, fostering of community)
2. Cognitive (e.g. self-esteem, memory, concentration)
3. Emotional (e.g. mood regulation, stress release, happiness)
4. Physical (e.g. motor coordination, muscle tone)
5. Spiritual (e.g. sense of meaning, feeling of transcendence)
6. Identity (e.g. place in community, connections to the past, celebration of culture)

This summary was compiled by Professor Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Dr Jack Walton.

To read the full report that accompanies this summary brochure, see: Walton, J. & Bartleet, B. L. (2021). *Health and Wellbeing: An Overview of Current Literature*. [Commissioned by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra]. Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre, Creative Arts Research Institute, Griffith University. You can download it for free from here <https://www.qso.com.au/support-us/health-and-wellbeing>.

Music, Health and Wellbeing at a Glance

This provides a snapshot of some of the most compelling insights from the field of Music, Health and Wellbeing over the past 5 years.

There is compelling evidence to suggest music can help in addressing:

- Therapeutic outcomes
- Social justice and health equity outcomes
- Public health outcomes
- Health promotion outcomes

Music is not only being used as a treatment or therapy, but also as a vital part of health prevention and promotion due to its protective factors.



Recent studies have identified over

500

potential wellbeing benefits of musical participation.



Music, Health and Wellbeing initiatives occur across a vast number of contexts, including therapy, community, education, clinical, and everyday settings.



Beneficial health and wellbeing outcomes from music participation include:



Music projects provide creative solutions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal #3, Good Health and Wellbeing.

The following resources were used to compile this snapshot:

- Ansdell, G. (2014). *How music helps in music therapy and everyday life*. Routledge.
- Bonde, L. O., & Theorell, T. (2018). *Music and public health*. Springer International Publishing.
- Krause, A. E., Davidson, J. W., & North, A. C. (2018). Musical activity and well-being: A new quantitative measurement instrument. *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 35(4), 454-474. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2018.35.4.454>
- Sunderland, N., Lewandowski, N., Bendrups, D., & Bartleet, B.-L. (Eds.). (2018). *Music, health and wellbeing*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Outcomes of Music, Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

Many music-related health and wellbeing outcomes have been reported in the literature. At the broadest level, these span both personal and social domains. A wide range of outcomes align with the three areas targeted by QSO's Health and Wellbeing program: aged care, communities, and special needs.

Personal wellbeing outcomes from music participation

Studies show that music participation can promote a positive sense of self (e.g. self-esteem and self-worth), pleasure, stress release and mood regulation, creativity and imagination, a sense of belonging, mental health, and overall wellbeing. In addition, there is also evidence for a range of physiological benefits, including motor coordination, immune system support, improvement of muscle tone, flexibility, and posture, and breathing. To learn more, you can read: Daykin et al., 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Krause et al., 2018; MacDonald, 2013.

Social wellbeing outcomes from music participation

Research shows that musical participation can enhance social interactions, bonding, and social inclusion. There is evidence to suggest that musical participation can reduce loneliness and promote connection with others, especially for older people. To learn more you can read: Clark et al., 2018; Daykin et al., 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Lee et al., 2010; Krause et al., 2018; Särkämö et al, 2014.

Health and wellbeing outcomes from music participation in aged care

Studies have examined outcomes of musical interventions in various aged care contexts (e.g. independent living units, hospice care) and populations experiencing varying degrees of health (ranging from healthy older people through to those with serious illnesses). Reported benefits include a sense of physical and mental wellbeing, the slowing of age-related cognitive decline, feelings of pleasure and enjoyment, pride and sense of accomplishment in the learning of new skills, creation and maintenance of social connections and self-expression. To learn more, you can read: Clift et al., 2008; Daykin et al., 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Lehmberg & Fung, 2010.

Health and wellbeing outcomes from music participation in communities

Research shows that health and wellbeing initiatives in community settings can provide psychosocial outcomes such as social connection, a sense of belonging, the regulation of emotions, mental health, and physical wellbeing. Community music programs can also provide access and inclusion opportunities that address economic and health equity aims. To learn more, you can read: Clift et al., 2008; Hallam & MacDonald, 2016; Krause et al., 2018; Sunderland et al., 2018.

Health and wellbeing outcomes in music programs for special needs

Music interventions have been explored within a wide variety of special needs settings ranging from special education, to the care of children and adults with cognitive impairments, to interventions for those that have developed special needs later in life. While music interventions have been observed to have positive outcomes for special needs populations, more research is needed to fully understand the neurological mechanisms by which these outcomes occur. To learn more, you can read: Brancatisano et al. 2020; Jacobsen et al., 2019; Ludwig, 2019.

An important note

This brochure provides a snapshot summary and is designed to provide a synthesis of relevant findings for the QSO community interested in the broad topic of Music, Health and Wellbeing. It is important to recognise that the finer grain details of this evidence base are significant. The reported outcomes will be dependent on a wide range of factors, such as the participants, the facilitators, therapists, and musicians involved, as well as the music-making contexts, modalities, styles, cultures, and methods used to research these contexts. This means that the findings of individual studies are not easily generalisable. That said, when viewed collectively, the vast body of evidence in this field demonstrates a powerful story about the vital role music can play in enhancing our health and wellbeing.



References

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