

# CAREER VIEW

## MUSIC

Music has always played a part in our daily lives but it is now a lot more accessible and portable so that everything we do has a soundtrack. With open systems for creation, production and distribution, music-making is now a very broad field, offering opportunities for many different kinds of musicians. However, the demand for music is driven by increasingly sophisticated and culturally diverse audiences who use a wide range of platforms. The unique skills of the musician are becoming increasingly marketable in a world where communication, confidence, creativity and innovation give graduates an edge. Music plays a central part in the games we play, our social media and our real-life gathering places.

### WHY STUDY MUSIC?

There is a strong connection between passion and commitment to music and the study of music, which indicates that graduates tend to be strongly connected to their subject. Dedication, enthusiasm and focus are the hallmarks of music students and these employability factors are important to prospective employers.

The lines between musical genres are blurring and music graduates may find themselves a long way from performing or working in the arts sector. Music combines well with other disciplines of study and can enhance your learning in areas such as film, media, Māori studies, Pacific studies, anthropology, history, law, English literature, psychology, marketing, mathematics, physics or software engineering. As a result this can lead to a wide range of employment opportunities.

### WHAT SKILLS DO MUSIC GRADUATES DEVELOP?

Music graduates, whether performance, composition, music studies or music therapy not only have well developed technical skills and knowledge but also unique transferable skills that are sought by employers. These include the ability to closely analyse, critique their own and others' work, manage events, manage complex projects, and present and perform confidently. Many Music graduates are able to demonstrate resilience, collaborative excellence and leadership qualities.



Confident and polished **presentation skills** are a key part of music studies. A good deal of preparation is required along with a strong work ethic, concentration and focus. Students learn to present ideas and market themselves by building strong networks; key skills which are sought after by employers.

Career View explores how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities and to life/work planning. It includes graduate destination information and current employment issues. Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

Wellington Careers and Employment.  
[wgtn.ac.nz/careers](http://wgtn.ac.nz/careers)



**Interpersonal and communication skills** and an understanding of group dynamics are drawn on in leading or participating in small and large groups. Excellent verbal and written communication is just as critical as highly tuned listening skills. Giving and receiving feedback from others is a key part of developing as a musician or studying music. The ability to empathise with others and to share feeling is developed and fine-tuned in music-making at all levels. Empathic connection is the foundation for healthy collaborative practice, which is essential in today's workplaces.

**Creativity and the ability to innovate** are increasingly sought after by employers. Composition and the sonic arts particularly encourage stylistic freedom, experimentation and the expression of individual creativity. Interpretation of the work of others in performance still demands a high level of originality and creative ability. Music students sometimes work on projects or gain internships that help them to apply these skills in a practical way in the creative industries, such as in film post-production.

The music student or performer is also highly mentally agile. For example, in any kind of **problem solving**, as well as being skilled in defining problem areas and their components, the music student is accustomed to having to think quickly on the spot and take multiple approaches to problems.

**Technical capabilities** such as reading and writing music can facilitate the learning of other systems and codes. The study of music hones the ability to perceive patterns, structures and sequences easily and manipulate sets of complex data. In addition, the ability to project one's voice, manual dexterity and agility can be helpful in more than just performance, for example in facilitating events, working with

sound equipment, gaming or designing prototypes.

**Research and analysis** skills such as accessing relevant information, thinking critically and evaluating information are developed from music studies. The music student considers the historical perspectives of a work and compares interpretations, while also recognising cultural differences and similarities. This **historical and cultural awareness** is becoming increasingly critical to success in today's fast-changing work environments.

Musical performances and events would never go live without highly developed **project management skills**. This means the ability to set goals, plan, manage time and produce high quality outcomes within tight deadlines. Often **leadership skills** are essential in bringing others along with you towards achieving shared results.

## WHERE DO MUSIC GRADUATES WORK?

Graduates with degrees in Music find employment in diverse fields. Careers range across all aspects of the music industry, and other industries such as film, theatre, social research, communications, arts and culture administration, events management, finance and law. A few graduates achieve international and national recognition, becoming full-time performers and composers. It is common for graduates to have portfolio careers that combine various professional music roles with other work.

## Performance and Composition

Passion, talent, discipline and high levels of technical skills characterise successful vocal and instrumental performers. Orchestras, chamber ensembles, bands, choirs and operatic companies remain important employers of classical and jazz performers at international, national and regional levels. To pursue a career in music performance it is highly likely that you will need to apply for residencies, scholarships or positions overseas. As a gigging musician, you also need to invest significant amounts of time and energy to touring and promotion.

**NZSO** seeks graduates with a good academic record, knowledge of and passion for symphonic music, good communication and teamwork skills, and a reliable, positive attitude. Regional orchestras, such as **Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony**

and **Orchestra Wellington** also have paid positions for musicians. Roles in the artistic team can include: artistic planning manager, artistic administrator, artistic assistant, education programme manager and music librarian. **NZ Opera** offers internships for recent Performance graduates as well as recruiting for the NZ Opera Chorus from production to production. Employment opportunities in marketing and communications or programme management often require further qualifications and/or relevant experience.

**Composition and the sonic arts** require considerable rigour, talent and a burning desire to create music. A good ear is also necessary as is the mental ability to contain and work with a lot of complex information at once. New Zealand composers are producing music that pushes the boundaries and are successful internationally. Composers may work on commission for live performances given by national and international organisations such as choirs, orchestras, music ensembles and bands. They also produce their own work. Others combine music composition with performance and/or teaching music. It is increasingly common for composers to work in highly collaborative areas such as **film, web and game development as they can also be adept in writing, data interpretation and creative coding.**

## Self-employment

Freelancing, contracting or portfolio work comprising a number of part-time positions are frequently options for people in the music industry. Band members, soloists, composers, agents, recording artists, sound technicians and music writers are among those who work on a freelance basis. Some establish their own companies. Many music teachers work from home and others have a business relationship with a school or organisation to which they contract their services. Business skills are essential for those considering self-employment.

**Music funding** support for performers and composers is available through several organisations. Crowd funding and social media platforms transform the funding structures for music, making it easier to fund one's own music projects, but conversely more

competitive. Music graduates have successfully applied for funding through organisations such as **NZ On Air, Creative New Zealand** and the **New Zealand Music Commission**. These organisations are themselves reliant on funding and occasionally offer opportunities for employment.

## Education

**Secondary teaching.** Many students teach a musical instrument on the way through their degree and some continue on to gain a primary or secondary teaching qualification that enables them to work in schools. To become a full-time music teacher in a school, graduates need to have a professional teaching qualification. Most private music teachers or itinerant teachers (part-time music tutors who work in schools) have a certificate or diploma from a recognised music examination board, such as the Trinity Guildhall Examinations Board, New Zealand Music Examinations Board or the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

**Tertiary.** Music graduates may also teach or tutor full or part-time in polytechnics or universities. A PhD qualification is usually required for research and/or teaching positions at tertiary level along with overseas experience.

## Music Therapy

Music therapy uses the special qualities of music to bring about healing and change through a shared relationship with clients. Music therapists are qualified, registered clinicians. To be accepted for the Master of Music Therapy, prospective music therapists must be accomplished performers with life experience



and qualities of empathy and compassion. They use music to support the development and wellbeing of people with emotional, intellectual, physical or social needs. Their work settings include special schools, inclusive mainstream schools, paediatric units of hospitals, adolescent mental health services, hospices and elder care, and community units for adults with neurological disorders and mental health challenges. The [Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre](#) in Auckland, [Wellington Early Intervention Trust](#), [Therapy Professionals](#) in Christchurch and the [Music Moves Me Trust](#) in Hamilton are examples of ongoing employers of registered NZSM music therapy graduates.



## Public Sector

Government departments, ministries and government agencies may employ Music graduates in roles such as policy analyst, policy advisor, ministerial writer, communications officer/advisor, researcher and research assistant. Some ministries have graduate development programmes, depending on their recruitment needs and the economic climate. Organisations where Music graduates have been recruited into such roles in the past include [The Treasury](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#) and the [Department of Internal Affairs](#).

**Music librarians, historians and archivists.** Music graduates with a passion for the history of music may bring their specialist interests and knowledge into library and information or historical research roles. A conjoint or additional postgraduate qualification in History as well as Library and Information Studies would be helpful. Employers may include [Te Papa Tongarewa](#) and regional museums, [Archives New Zealand](#) including the New Zealand audiovisual archive, and [Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision](#).

## Creative Industries

**Arts administration.** For music programmes, concerts, festivals, tours, gigs and other musical events to happen, a huge amount of creative planning and organisation can be required. Work in this area includes activities such as event planning, venue hiring, scheduling and touring of players/ band members, artist selection, organising auditions,

securing sponsors, budgeting, marketing, advertising and music promotion across different platforms. There are also other **operations, project management and human resources** roles in arts and music organisations. Previous experience in these areas and/ or a business and commerce qualification can be useful.

**Film and television production.** Music graduates have secured internships or roles with studios such as [Park Road Post Productions](#), [POW! Post](#), [Munki Studios](#) and freelance film and TV composers as sound engineers, sound mixers or composing and performing.

**Broadcasting, journalism and media** is a fast-changing sector and music graduates are well placed to contribute their unique skills especially written and verbal communication, networking and promotions. It is common to have a portfolio of roles in this field that may include publicity and communications, online content development and social media coordination. Public radio, such as [Radio NZ National](#) or private radio such as [MediaWorks](#) can recruit people with a tertiary level music qualification or relevant experience, and proven research skills. A deep interest in repertoire, especially in New Zealand music is very helpful. With the move to new platforms to engage a fast-changing audience, additional qualifications in writing and journalism, sound engineering, web design or development are generally required for most roles.

**SOUNZ** is a music information centre whose purpose is to provide, foster and promote music by New Zealand composers. The small team is made up of musicians and composers. The people in their

## GRADUATE PROFILES

team need to understand how music is delivered and how professional performers and composers think, perform and interact. APRA/AMCO via the OneMusic website, administers the rights of the world's composers, songwriters and publishers in Australia and New Zealand. Knowledge of music is important as well as research and data analysis skills, and an understanding of technology and its impact on copyright.

### JOB TITLES

There is a wide range of work opportunities available to music graduates. Following is a selection of titles taken from our graduate destination surveys. Some roles may require postgraduate or conjoint qualifications and training:

Accompanist • arranger • artistic planning manager  
 • arts administrator • audio/sound engineer •  
 background vocalist • band member • blogger •  
 business manager • choir director • composer •  
 commercial music producer • communications  
 advisor • conductor • consultant • cruise ship  
 entertainer • education programme manager •  
 ensemble player • film scorer • foley artist • itinerant  
 teacher • journalist • lecturer • luthier/instrument  
 repairer • lyricist • marketing co-ordinator • music  
 archivist • music critic/reviewer • musical director •  
 music historian • music librarian • music publisher/  
 editor • social media adviser • music librarian  
 • music therapist • music distributor/retailer •  
 orchestrator • piano tuner • policy analyst • producer  
 – theatre, film • programme director (recording,  
 radio, TV) • programmer (music software, virtual  
 sound environments) • public relations advisor •  
 announcer/programmer • recording engineer • road  
 manager • sales representative/manager • session  
 musician • social media adviser • software developer •  
 soloist, vocal/instrumental • songwriter • sonic artist •  
 sound designer • sound engineer • sound technician  
 • studio director or manager (recording) • symphony  
 orchestra member • teacher, secondary/primary •  
 Tour coordinator/manager • transcriber • web content  
 developer • writer.

### Fiona Boddy

History and Music Secondary  
 School Teacher  
 St Catherine's College



Music started being a huge part in my life in high school and when it came to deciding what to study at university it was an obvious choice. As I went through my degree I started adding musicology and history papers which gave me another aspect to my studies. I graduated with a Bachelor of Performance Music – Jazz and a Bachelor of Arts in History and Music Studies.

What I enjoyed most about studying music was the fact that I could spend all my time and energy doing what I loved the most while developing my performing skills, learning from talented tutors and like-minded peers. There were so many opportunities to perform in various groups and bands and being able to attend workshops and performances with some spectacular guests that the university brought over from around the world.

I learnt a lot about myself and who I was as a musician during my studies. There was the academic challenge throughout the degree, and then the challenge of being a musician and the experiences you gain from performing (the successful and the slightly less successful performances). I was able to develop skills in time-management, research, analytical skills, how to listen and communicate with people and critical reflection. All skills that proved valid for my first job at a media company, then teaching English as a second language in Korea and now as a high school music and history teacher. The skills of performance, communication and listening that I gained in my music degree have enabled me to work in a range of fields to the best of my ability and are used every day while teaching.

It is good to see your music degree in its broadest context. It's not just about what instrument you play, or what history you may be interested in; it's about the wide range of transferable skills that you gain from studying music. Choose what you are passionate about and what will hold your interest for the duration of your learning.

### Keriata Royal-Taeao

Waikato, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngā Puhī  
Business Services Co-ordinator  
Toi Māori Aotearoa



I have always enjoyed music. Listening, playing, watching, making, learning - all facets of music. Throughout my years at school it was the one subject that I really connected with. I had a fantastic music teacher, who encouraged me to give it a go at University. Fast forward five years (and one child) later, I was graduating with a Bachelor of Music with a major in Instrumental/Vocal Composition. I decided on this major because I felt that I wasn't proficient enough in any one instrument, and I always seemed to like piecing music together. I enjoyed learning from some truly inspirational people about the work ethic of a successful musician. A particular interest was film composition and understanding how to compliment with music an emotion that may have just been delivered through spoken word and gesture.

I chose to switch majors to Music Studies for my Honours year, because I knew that exploring the music of my own people would help to ingrain my understanding of my identity in a deeper way. I decided to focus most of my energy in my postgraduate year to researching aspects of Māori music. This was the highlight of my entire academic career and has led directly to my current work in arts administration. I work for Toi Māori Aotearoa, a Māori arts organisation. We are involved in a number of events and projects that help and enable the creation, experience and education of Māori arts in Aotearoa. I manage new contracts with producers, presenters and curators of Māori art and I also manage a few projects through Toi Māori. One project of interest is the Māori Arts Internship (MAI) Programme, which is tailored to Māori who have a background in the arts and have an interest in arts administration. Coincidentally, I undertook this programme as an intern during the course of my Honours year, which made my learning that much more fulfilling.

I encourage anyone to also step out of their shell and always ask for help if you need it. There are many people who are there to support you!

Kia kaha, kia manawanui.

### Christian Thurston

Opera singer  
Manhattan School of Music



I was always going to do acting, and loved musical theatre at school. Initially I auditioned for drama school and got a call-back, but they said I needed to build up some more life experience. I was so keen to perform that I went ahead with a Music degree, majoring in performance. I had a lot of catching up to do as I had never studied theory of music, so a crash course was needed along with a lot of extra work for the first couple of years.

I haven't stopped working and performing since finishing my music studies. I'm also currently studying towards a Master's in Musical Performance at Manhattan School of Music, having recently completed an internship with New Zealand Opera as a Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artist and a Postgraduate Diploma in Classical Performance-Voice. I have just been accepted for a year as Resident Artist with the Minnesota Opera which is really exciting as there was a lot of competition for the residency.

Training for opera performance is a long and rigorous process. It requires a commitment to hard work and further postgraduate learning. It can be lonely on the road, being away from family and friends, but there are so many highs in performing in some of these amazing spaces with top musicians. It's all about maintaining balance. Right now I am juggling roles in three opera productions and good time management is essential.

There are so many really great singers so you need to have a point of difference and mine is acting ability. Plus I'm a baritone, which is in demand. The singing teachers were so skilled at bringing out the best in us; they had all had their own professional careers and understood musicality and techniques as well as what the profession expects. It's like any workplace – you need to be a good employee and colleague. This means being a people person, being assertive and having confidence in high pressure situations. Being able to market yourself is about twenty percent singing and eighty percent getting yourself hired. New Zealand singers are highly valued by companies overseas because we have versatility and a can-do attitude. Because it's a small country we can try a greater diversity of roles and get more stage-time.

## Nolan Hodgson

Music Therapist  
Music Moves Me Trust



I was determined to become a registered music therapist after a gap year spent in the UK where I worked at a school for children with disabilities. I worked as an assistant in the classroom and alongside a few different therapeutic teams whilst there. While doing my undergraduate studies in English Literature with a Psychology minor, I volunteered at the Raukauri Music Therapy Centre in Auckland. I also had a fantastic time working at Kimi Ora special needs school before beginning my postgraduate study in Wellington.

As there was only a small cohort of Master in Music Therapy students we had a real sense of camaraderie which helped us all to get through our studies. We were able to support and learn from each other with our various skill sets and just generally enjoy ourselves and our work. The support provided to me through Māori student organisations led my research in a direction that I was very passionate about. My Tūhoe and Ngāti Awa whakapapa led me to research the relationship between my music therapy practice and Māori models of health. It has been wonderful continuing to explore and experience these through a local Waka Ama programme and joining the Ngāti Koroki Kahukura kapa haka group. In my music therapy work I also draw on my experience as a musician, playing piano, mandolin and guitar.

Since qualifying I have lived in the rural community of Pukeatua in Waikato and have been very fortunate to have found work with the Music Moves Me Trust. This involves working individually with people living with dementia. I also work privately. Gaining confidence as a therapist takes real practical experience and the course is very hands-on and focused on practical explorations of different techniques as well as practicum experience as a student music therapist. The insight into the different ways I approach and understand my own work was really valuable to help me reflect on and develop my practice. The research component also equipped us with valuable skills which we can apply in the future to further music therapy research here in Aotearoa.

For anyone interested in music therapy getting some experience working or volunteering alongside a music therapist familiarises you with the role and what it will be like after graduating. You can find out where there is work and which group of the population you might end up working alongside.

## Jim Murphy

Lecturer in Sonic Arts  
Victoria University of Wellington



If you were to tell me back at the start of my undergraduate studies that, ten years later, I'd be working full-time in musical robotics and kinetic sound sculpture I would have been equal parts thrilled and sceptical. I now develop and explore new instruments and teach others about the art of designing and composing for these instruments. I found my undergraduate studies (at California Institute of the Arts) to be a fascinatingly chaotic time, studying as many different disciplines as I could. I found Music Technology to be the only subject that coincided with what I wanted to do on the weekends - make music, develop new noisemakers and share compositional ideas with others.

My PhD studies in Wellington combined composition and sonic arts studies with engineering techniques, allowing me to build and test new robotic musical instruments with a degree of rigour that hadn't been accomplished in many other projects worldwide. These were some of the most engaging and compelling years of my life. I was invited to stay on at Victoria University of Wellington in a Visiting Lecturer capacity, allowing me not only to continue down my research avenues but also to begin teaching others about sonic arts and music technology. I continued in this role for two years before being brought aboard as a lecturer in sonic arts at the New Zealand School of Music. In this role, I continue interdisciplinary collaboration between music and engineering, and continue my personal research projects toward the development of ever more expressive mechatronic instruments.

If you are considering going on to postgraduate study in music, I suggest taking every opportunity during your studies to fine-tune your teaching skills. This makes you stand out from the crowd when applying for positions, not just academic ones. Seek out as much interdisciplinary study as possible. I found the exposure to different ways of thinking and approaching problems a very enriching experience. Most of all, find something that not only contains research potential but also gives you goose bumps, thrills you and draws you in. This will mean the more-than-full-time study and employment to develop a body of work showing you are an expert in your niche will be worth it.