

The Musician Artist as Entrepreneur

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So we have called today's talk, "The Musician Artist as Entrepreneur." So, what does that mean? In the title of this talk there are actually 3 important concepts: the Musician, the Artist, and the Entrepreneur. In this short talk, I would like to explain how we connect these 3 concepts to guide our students through their training here. This 'triangular link' between musician, artist and entrepreneur, in many ways, represents the essence of our educational philosophy.

Concept #1 The Musician

First, the musician. The School of Music at HKAPA is committed first and foremost to training students to become top-rank musicians. Whether you are an instrumentalist, a vocalist, or a composer, we make sure that you receive the best musical training – musical training that is comparable to that offered by any top conservatoire in the world. After all, in the current QS ranking by subject, we are ranked 10th in the world and 1st in Asia. For this, we have a team of internationally-renowned teaching faculty – you need only to check out our website to find out who they are. Not only do we have some of the best instrumental, vocal and composition teachers, the faculty teaching contextual studies (such as music history, aural skills, music theory, music analysis) are all first-rank educators whose commitment to developing our students' musicianship is exceptional.

Concept #2 The Artist

Now we come to the artist. Training to be a solid musician and performer is our first goal, the first layer of training. But at the same time, the students would be guided to develop themselves to be an artist. By this, we mean that we aim to open our students' minds to all kinds of artistic creativity, and not be a blinkered-musician, restricting their interests only to music and blind to other art forms, let alone the rest of the world.

We are best placed at HKAPA to do this – because aside from the School of Music, we have 5 other schools specialising in 5 other art disciplines under the same roof. Our students are constantly exposed to performance activities by those in other schools, and we encourage students – as part of our curriculum – to collaborate with students in other schools in productions and performance projects. These opportunities are rarely found in other music conservatoires, and particularly rare that collaborations across schools are embedded in our curricula – in other words, it is a requirement for our students to open their minds, reach out to artistic endeavours beyond music, and gain an even deeper understanding of music through the eyes of other art forms. In doing so, they hone their creativity and artistic potential, and grow to become artists in their own right.

Concept #3 The Entrepreneur

While it is of foremost importance that we train our students to be excellent musicians and artists, it is of equal importance that we guide them in how to apply these acquired skills in their professional lives. This is where “entrepreneurship” comes into play. By entrepreneurship, we do not mean “business training” or “arts administration or management”; rather, we mean a kind of training to guide the student to gain self-knowledge, to fully understand their individual potential, where their passion truly lies and thence to apply this knowledge to carve their individual, unique career path and life path. We care about how they manage themselves in the professional world in the next 40 years, not only in the 4 years of their degree course! In doing so, they would also gain a clear understanding of what their educational needs are, while they are studying at HKAPA; and they would be much more informed when choosing electives for their studies and be more engaged in everything we offer within our curricula.

To give a few examples of what we mean by guiding students to bring out their best potential and utilise their true passion, there are students who have been through our ‘creative entrepreneurship’ course who discovered, for instance, that they are natural leaders, and we have encouraged them to form their own individual, unique ensembles performing repertoire that are close to their hearts, not something prescribed by teachers or the syllabus – and that happens while they are still students here, even before they leave the HKAPA. Others have discovered that besides being an excellent musician, they are also excellent visual artists and have devised unusual means of presenting their performances combining their own playing with their drawings. Some may have strong aspirations to sustain a performing career as soloists or chamber musicians; but even for these students, they need to learn to manage themselves, to plan every step of their development, as well as to learn to promote themselves in the right way. Many unique projects have been created as a result of the ‘entrepreneurship’ courses; even if students cannot or have not implemented their projects professionally when they graduated, they would have had their minds opened to many more possibilities of career pathways that are true to their own heart. In short, our ‘entrepreneurship courses’ are designed to support students in acquiring the skills to make that vital transition from studentship to a professional life. We recognise the need for every student to start preparing him-/herself, while they are studying here to meet future challenges by unlocking their individual potential, finding their audience and realizing their dream. From the academic year 2022/23 onwards, this (creative entrepreneurship) course will be offered to all students within the Music School.

This completes the idea of the “Musician Artist as Entrepreneur.” We would like to suggest that this is how we nurture our talented young musicians at HKAPA. The education is holistic, helping them grow not only musically and artistically, but also to grow to become confident, fulfilled individuals who are clear about their own goals, their own vision, their own paths; and who are able to be fully responsible for their own future and from there to contribute to the society and to others.