

# Investigating Wellbeing Outcomes: The Melbourne Recital Centre

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## Executive Summary

Cultural value refers to outcomes that are unique to arts and culture and emphasises cultural encounters, rather than narrowly stressing economic benefits. One critical outcome that drives cultural value is the enhancement of personal wellbeing for audiences. The limited research that exists evidences improved wellbeing from listening to music, albeit in the short-term and in artificial laboratory conditions. However it is unclear to what extent wellbeing is enhanced in a real cultural context. The Melbourne Recital Centre is a unique venue in which musicians and audiences co-create inspiring and meaningful experiences.

The purpose of this project is to examine the individual impact on audiences of experiences provided by the Melbourne Recital Centre. The research project has two primary objectives. First, to identify the impact that experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre have on audiences in terms of wellbeing outcomes (immersion, enrichment and community). Second, to identify the relationship between wellbeing outcomes and audiences preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre and their associated advocacy behaviours.

The research involved focus group discussions with 9 staff from the Melbourne Recital Centre and a survey was emailed to audience members that had recently attended a performance at the Centre. In total, 474 audience members completed the online survey.

We examined three key aspects of wellbeing: immersion, enrichment and community. Immersion captures the degree to which audience members are absorbed in the experience and engaged cognitively, emotionally and imaginatively. Enrichment reflects the degree to which audience members' perceive that their life has been enhanced and is more meaningful as a result of their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. Community captures the extent of personal connection and social bonds with other audience members, the performers, staff, venue and cultural precinct.

The findings reveal that 92% of audience members participating in the survey feel that their personal wellbeing had been significantly enhanced as a direct result of their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. The personal wellbeing of audience members is enhanced most when they are significantly immersed in and enriched by the experience.

Preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre and likelihood for audience members to share positive stories about their experience and recommend it to family and friends is increased by immersion and enrichment. An experience that fosters deep levels of immersion provides a basis for compelling stories that audience members can share with friends and family. Leaving audiences with a sense of joy, fulfilment and excitement increases the likelihood that they will recommend the experience to friends and family.

The key factor in audience members' preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre is the sense that they feel personally connected to the performers, other audience members, staff, the venue and the cultural precinct itself. The stronger these bonds, the more audience members demonstrate their preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre through their advocacy behaviours.

## Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	3
Partners .....	3
Project Team.....	4
Background.....	6
Project Aims.....	7
Project Approach .....	7
Internal Stakeholder Perceptions Phase .....	8
Audience Experience & Perceptions Phase .....	8
Findings: Institutional Stakeholders' Perceptions .....	10
Enrichment .....	10
Immersion.....	11
Connection with community and place .....	11
Findings: Audience Experience & Perceptions .....	13
Individual impact.....	13
Wellbeing.....	14
Preference and advocacy.....	17
Conclusion .....	19
References.....	20

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## The University of Melbourne Research Partners

### **The Faculty of VCA & MCM**

The Faculty of the VCA&MCM combines two of Australia's leading arts schools, incorporating both the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (MCM) and the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) under one creative and performing arts banner. The MCM is Australia's oldest and most prestigious music institution. As the largest community of music students and academics in Australia, the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music plays an important role in the future of our art form. Research into the relationship between Music, Health and Wellbeing is our strongest area of research focus, where scholars examine how emotions, relationships and identities can be impacted through therapeutic and everyday uses of music with healthy and vulnerable people.

### **Faculty of Arts, School of Culture and Communication.**

The School of Culture and Communication (SCC) in the Faculty of Arts is a leading research centre for critical thinking in the humanities, with world-class researchers who are renowned for their interpretation of the historical and theoretical archive; analysis and practice of new modes of aesthetics and communication, and; informed interventions to debates on contemporary culture. The School leads a number of research projects covering a wide range of cultural production, including mass, digital, and print media, visual art, literature, performance, cultural policy, film, television, and public events including festivals. Funded research concentrations include: the Australian Research Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, the Research Unit in Public Cultures and the Australian Centre.

### **Melbourne Business School**

Melbourne Business School (MBS) is the University of Melbourne's graduate school in business and economics, and one of the leading providers of executive education in the Asia Pacific region. Established in 1963, MBS is jointly owned by corporate Australia and the University of Melbourne. MBS offers a portfolio of programs to meet the business challenges of individuals and organisations. Our activities equip emerging leaders with the knowledge and skills to make an impact in their organisations and society. MBS has a particular focus on harnessing business principles for social change. MBS Faculty implement a range of activities including research, knowledge transfer and skills development that lead to significant social change.

## Project Team

### **Associate Professor Jody Evans**

Dr Jody Evans is Associate Professor in Marketing at Melbourne Business School, The University of Melbourne. Jody's professional expertise and research interests include branding; arts marketing; not-for-profit marketing; economic and social impact; international marketing; retailing; and marketing strategy. Jody's work has been published in a range of journals including the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management* and *International Marketing Review*. Jody has extensive experience as a consultant and as an executive educator for organisations in the retail and arts sectors. She leads market research, strategic reviews and management development seminars and workshops. Clients include Tesco, BP Australia, Australia Council for the Arts, Creative Victoria, Museum Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria, Public Galleries Association of Victoria, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Ian Potter Museum of Art, and Koorie Heritage Trust. Current projects examine a range of issues including: best-practice models of economic and social impact in the visual arts; the role of arts and culture in regenerating regional communities; building audiences for Indigenous arts; investigating wellbeing outcomes of arts experiences and developing a collective impact approach to repositioning the Goulburn Valley. Jody is a board member of the Public Galleries Association of Victoria and the Shepparton Art Museum Foundation.

### **Professor Katrina Skewes McFerran**

Dr Katrina McFerran is Head of Music Therapy and Co-Director of the National Music Therapy Research Unit, a research milieu established in 1999 to support a balance of empirical, theoretical, critical, clinical and musical research by graduate and academic researchers that investigates the health and wellbeing benefits of musical participation. Dr McFerran has been awarded three Discovery Projects and one Linkage project by the Australian Research Council to investigate music and wellbeing in schools, and has authored two books: 'Adolescents, Music and Music Therapy' and 'Building Music Cultures in the Schools', as well as co-edited a text on "Life-long engagement in music: Benefits for health and well-being." Her research has been published in over 60 refereed journal articles published in international and interdisciplinary journals, as well as 20 book chapters and numerous professional publications in print and on-line. She is Co-Editor in Chief of 'Voices: A world forum for music therapy', an open access peer reviewed journal that invites interdisciplinary dialogue and discussion about music, health and social change with a critical edge that focuses on inclusiveness, socio-cultural awareness and social justice.

## **Dr Tabitha White**

Dr Tabitha White is a Senior Research Fellow at the Melbourne Business School, The University of Melbourne. Tabitha has research expertise in areas including social, intrinsic and economic impact and arts management and marketing. Tabitha has worked on projects supported by local Councils including the City of Ballarat and the City of Melbourne and organisations such as the Australia Council for the Arts, Australia Post and VicHealth. Tabitha's PhD research was funded through a nationally competitive scholarship from VicHealth and explored how individuals define, experience and are impacted by art through an international study involving participants from Australia and the United States of America. Tabitha's work in this area was highlighted as a key piece of literature in the 2014 Arts Council England overview, *Understanding the impact and value of arts experiences*. Key recent projects that Tabitha has managed include the Australia Council for the Arts supported project *Building audiences: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and From 'Disadvantaged' to 'thriving': Repositioning Shepparton through collective impact*. Tabitha's current research interests focus on both place image and impact. She is currently undertaking research exploring the impact of arts experiences in Victorian arts institutions and a collective impact approach to repositioning the image of the Goulburn Valley. She is a founding member of the University of Melbourne's Goulburn Valley Strategic Working Group. Tabitha's work has been presented at international conferences and published in journals including *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, *International Journal of Arts Management* and *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*.

## **Associate Professor Audrey Yue**

Dr Audrey Yue is Associate Professor in Cultural Studies (School of Culture and Communication) and Director of the Research Unit in Public Cultures (Faculty of Arts). Her research covers the fields of Sinophone media cultures; cultural policy and development, and; sexuality studies. She has published 6 scholarly book collections and more than 80 refereed journal articles and book chapters, including in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*; *Urban Studies*; *Theory, Culture and Society*; *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, and; *Global Media and Communication*. She has established 16 industry partnerships across the sectors of migrant youth, multicultural arts and cultural development. She was appointed by the State Government of Victoria to the Multicultural Arts Policy and Advisory Committee (2010-2012), and for the last five years, has conducted longitudinal evaluation of the arts and culture programs of the Australia Council, Creative Victoria, Federation Square, Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, and the City of Whittlesea. She teaches an annual masterclass on Cultural Evaluation, and is Chief Investigator in three current Australian Research Council funded projects on multicultural arts governance; youth cultural participation, and; Asian Australian media flows.

## Background



The ways in which the arts has the potential to impact individuals and communities and produce intrinsic, social and economic outcomes is the increasing focus of much research (Carnwath & Brown, 2014; Holden, 2004; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004).

The outcomes of these investigations address wide-ranging domains such as health and wellbeing, social

inclusion and community connection, and emotional and intellectual stimulation. The ability of arts organisations to ‘conceptualise and present programs that are culturally valuable, impactful experiences’ has also come to the fore (Carnwath & Brown, 2014: 105). Carnwath and Brown (2014: 105) refer to this as the ‘creative capacity’ of an organisation. In participating in this research, the Melbourne Recital Centre has a specific interest in the organisation’s creative capacity to deliver programs that are impactful within the domain of individual wellbeing.

Individual wellbeing is identified in studies as a key domain of impact that may result from arts experiences (Walsmley, 2013, White and Hede, 2008). Engagement with arts and culture is reported to have a positive impact on individual wellbeing (The value of arts and culture; Creative Connections, 2003; Hill, 2013; Mills & Brown, 2004). There is evidence that in multiple artforms there is a connection between arts engagement and wellbeing, but also that attending classical and pop music performances are associated with strong satisfaction with life (Hill, 2013).

Our inquiry into the impact on individual wellbeing resulting from engaging in experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre focuses on three key areas: *Immersion*, *Enrichment* and *Connection*. Immersion relates to how deeply engaged a person is in an experience. This is also referred to in prior studies as absorption, captivation, escapism/reprieve or flow (Carnwath & Brown, 2014). Enrichment relates to the potential for people to feel enhanced or stimulated emotionally or intellectually through the experience. Emotional enrichment refers to the capacity of an experience to impact a person’s empathy, mood or feelings (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013, Walsmley, 2013, White and Hede, 2008). Intellectual enrichment involves the ability of an experience to provide opportunities for learning new things, being challenged or expanding a person’s understanding or perspective of an idea or issue (White and Hede, 2008, Walsmley, 2013, McCarthy et al., 2004, 2008, Fiske, 1999). Connection in the context of our research refers to connection to a wider community, such as the artists or other audience members. Social connection to other people is identified as a key impact in prior studies (Capturing the audience experience, 2008; Brown & Novak, 2007; Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2013). Connection in our research also refers to the connection of audiences to place through engagement in musical experiences. Place-based connection,

such as the social practice of attending a concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre or coming to the cultural precinct surrounding the Centre, has been identified by scholars as having the potential to enhance civic engagement, community life and cultural vitality (Jackson, 2003, Crossik and Kasznka, 2014, Walker et al., 2002).

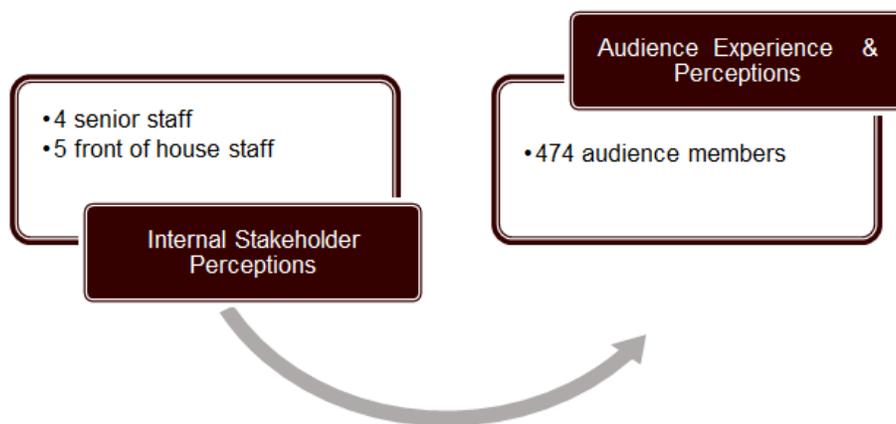
## Project Aims

The overall aim of the project was to examine the individual impact on audience members of experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre. The research project has two primary objectives:

- To identify the impact experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre have on audiences in terms of wellbeing outcomes (immersion, enrichment and community).
- To identify the relationship between wellbeing outcomes and audience preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre and their associated advocacy behaviours.

## Project Approach

The researchers adopted a multi-method approach to examine expectations and experiences described by members of the MRC community, including staff and audience members. The investigation was grounded in knowledge of research in the arts sector and then refined to the particular community under investigation through analysis of discussions with internal stakeholders that were then developed into survey questions in order to test the perspectives from a larger number of audience members.



**Figure 1. Project approach & data**

## Internal Stakeholder Perceptions Phase

The first phase of the research involved qualitative analysis of the perspectives of key organisational stakeholders to explore the organisation's understanding of individual wellbeing and the three aspects of *Immersion*, *Enrichment* and *Connection*. Two focus groups were conducted. The first focus group canvassed the views of senior staff and explored their priorities and beliefs about the creative potential of the Melbourne Recital Centre. The second focus group involved front of house staff and gathered their descriptions of the impact of the experience on audience members. The analysis of these perspectives informed the second phase of the study.

## Audience Experience & Perceptions Phase

The second phase of the study involved a survey of audience members. All audience members who had bought tickets online were emailed a link to the survey after attending a performance at the Melbourne Recital Centre from November 2015 to January 2016. Four hundred and seventy-four audience members completed the survey.

The majority of audience members who responded to the survey were female, married and over 45 years of age (see Table 1). They were asked to answer questions about their attendance specific to attending live music and then profiled according to five different categories.



**Arts Crowd:** Live music is very important to me intellectually and emotionally. I'm happy to see music on my own and don't have much interest in the social aspects.

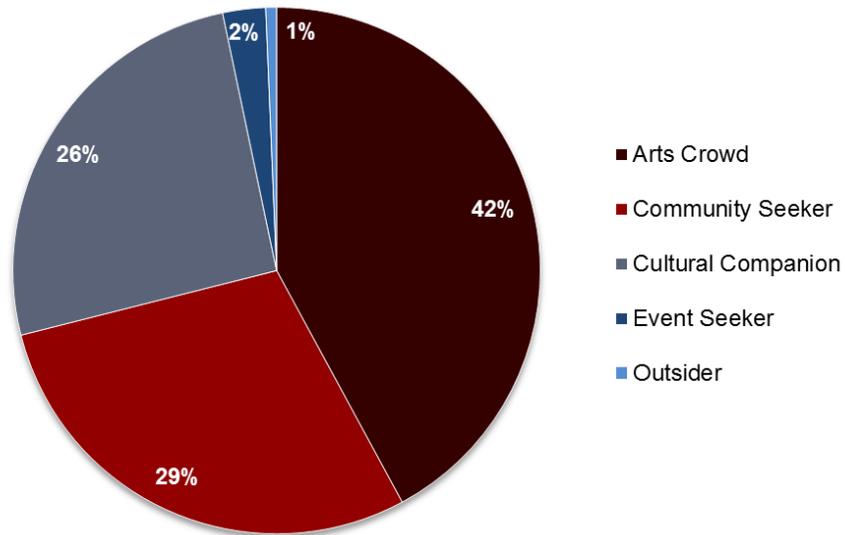
**Community Seeker:** Live music is important to me. I enjoy the social aspects of being amongst like-minded people at musical performances.

**Cultural Companions:** I like live music, especially when shared with friends or family as part of a social outing that we can enjoy together.

**Event Seeker:** I mainly go to music performances when there is a major performance. I like the atmosphere of the big performances – it's like taking part in a major event.

**Outsider:** I don't normally have anything to do with live music.

The majority of audience members surveyed described themselves as either part of the Arts Crowd or Community Seekers (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Audience segmentation**

**Table 1. Participant profile**

Gender					
Male	28%	Female	72%		
Age					
18-24	2%	25-34	7%	35-44	16%
45-54	21%	55-64	24%	65+	30%
Marital Status					
Single (Never married)	21%	Single (divorced/separated/widowed)	18%	Married/Defacto	60%
No. Children in Household					
None	42%	One	12%	Two	27%
Three	12%	Four or more	7%		
Accompanied Attendance					
With a family group	13%	With a partner or spouse	37%	With friends	33%
Alone	17%				

## Findings: Institutional Stakeholders' Perceptions

The findings identify that the staff of the Melbourne Recital Centre clearly prioritise the wellbeing of its audience members, staff and performers. The Melbourne Recital Centre also has a strong awareness of the organisation's creative capacity and a keen interest in a deeper exploration of this capacity. As one staff member notes:

*One of the things I'm interested in is wellbeing and how we can improve the lives of Victorians who come to the Centre and beyond...what our role is as an arts organisation in 2015 in a city like Melbourne? I think that's probably a constantly changing thing, but I guess our priority really also needs to be about understanding what our audiences respond to and delivering that, but also then acting to some extent in a directional way to expose audiences to something more challenging or different or something that actually creates a conversation or a space for audiences to move into.*

The organisation understands its potential for wellbeing outcomes that extended beyond entertainment.

*It's all underpinned by the value of music is profound, but unmeasured. We believe it's not only got these cultural benefits or these entertainment benefits, but it's got some fundamental benefits of audiences coming together and the opportunity to increase learning and enrichment.*

Across the three key areas of wellbeing that we explored, Enrichment, Immersion and Community, there are a number of manifestations of impact perceived by staff as resulting from an experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre.

### Enrichment

Staff members believe that audience members are regularly enriched both emotionally and intellectually through experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre.

*I think that intellectual stimulation is also a big part of the experience. Certainly some repertoire is much more sensuous but a lot of what we present here is quite intellectually challenging and I think that also for a certain segment of our audience is also something that...for example, that's why people come to contemporary classical music as well.*

Audiences expanding and enhancing their musical understanding and repertoire through the diversity of programming at the Centre is seen by staff as a key impact resulting from engagement with the Centre.

*They don't want to hear Brahms and Beethoven all the time. They want to be challenged; they want to be invited to experience something different. They know that we do contemporary classical music and they think I'm going to give this a go.*

## Immersion

Immersion in listening to the music performed at the Melbourne Recital Centre is perceived as a key impact of the experience. It is seen as allowing audiences to feel transformed or moved by their experience and facilitating a reprieve for audiences from the everyday.

*I do think it is partly because of the construction, but partly also because it's specifically an auditory experience rather than anything else. You actually do clear your mind of work, of stress or problems or whatever it is that made you go in there and it's partly because the door is closed and you are...[in another space]...*

*People also talk about being transported, that they're no longer in their everyday mental state or physical state. [An audience member] says he walks in and he feels like he's taking off an overcoat, just a sense of relaxation than anything from somewhere else.*

Staff identified a number of enablers of deep immersion and engagement by the audience in their experiences of the Melbourne Recital Centre. These enablers are across two key determinants. One is the venue itself and the other is the performances within the venue. In terms of the venue, staff perceive that the aesthetics or architecture of the venue coupled with the approach of front of house staff creates a space of intimacy and warmth for audiences that allows them to become more deeply immersed in the experience. A senior staff member explained:

*I think in addition to the intimacy, I think the aesthetic gives you a feeling of warmth as well, I think that's a really important point.*

To which another senior staff responded:

*People have described us as [like] being inside a walnut, particularly on those cold, wet, windy Melbourne nights.*

This sentiment was also expressed by front of house staff, with one commenting:

*My word is warmth. I find the physical, the wood and the colour of the seats, the colour of everything just to be warm.*

## Connection with community and place

*Feeling part of something that's bigger than you is a really important human need that can be fulfilled in a lot of different ways, but certainly communal concert or theatre going is, like a sporting event is.*

Experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre are seen to have the potential to connect audiences to other members of the community (including other audience members, the musicians performing or staff) and to a lesser extent, place.

*In the sense of belonging to a community of like minded people even if you may not know them personally, the feeling of belonging to the same and an institution and a group of people that share your values.*

In terms of other audience members, one senior staff member described that:

*There is that almost intangible quality that you get when you're sharing a great performance. Because on Monday night, you can tell that the audience individually felt that they were in the presence of greatness, but actually how lucky they were to actually be together in that same experience. You become the community that was there on that night.*

A front of house staff member explained that:

*People just loving to come to concerts, loving to hear music and it being a social experience as well...We have lots of regulars that actually attend on their own. Part of their enjoyment of coming to concerts is interacting with the staff, having a drink in the foyer beforehand, meeting regulars that come. I think with the Salon Local Heroes there are a lot of individuals that come to all of them or most of them and they now know each other and it becomes part of their week.*

Connection to place is also described by staff members who believe that audiences become attached to the Melbourne Recital Centre. This connection includes the primary venue of the Melbourne Recital Centre and the cultural precinct surrounding the Centre. Place-based connection is also contingent on programming, such as the genre of music being presented, with some genres being more likely to foster connection to both audience and venue than others.

*Because the contemporary audiences are coming to hear a particular artist that they're interested in and they would probably go to whatever venue it's on to hear that artist. But what we hope is that after they've experienced a concert here they'll be interested in coming back or become more attached to the Centre. Whereas with the classical audience, it is less about the performer, more about the experience or repertoire or something else that they're interested in.*

Some staff believed that audience members may also have a connection to the cultural precinct surrounding the Centre, and further development of the precinct is an interest of the Melbourne Recital Centre.

*A lot of our regulars who attend lots of performances have a connection with the Southbank precinct definitely. I think if we were somewhere else it would change things entirely. The fact that we're part of that precinct and that community makes us very accessible.*

The positioning of the Melbourne Recital Centre within the precinct was seen to foster a greater connection for audiences to the Centre, due to accessibility and proximity to other cultural venues.



## Findings: Audience Experience & Perceptions

The second phase of the project involved a survey of audience members. The survey sought to capture audience members' perceptions of their experience, the extent to which their personal wellbeing had been enhanced by attending the performance and their attitude towards and preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre.

### Individual impact

*I felt very lucky to see this band perform in such a beautiful venue. I felt enriched from the experience, as I experienced the performance as a piece of art. I have seen this band before, but the venue really changed the atmosphere to something more serene.*

Individual impact focuses on the arts as a means of: feeling; social bonding; aesthetic development; creative and cognitive stimulation. Audience members were asked to briefly describe the effect of their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre on them personally. Using a word frequency data analysis technique, the word cloud figure below identifies the words used most frequently to describe audience members' experiences. The larger the word, the more frequently it was used by survey participants. It is evident that audiences derive a high degree of enjoyment and pure pleasure from their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. They made statements about the experience being uplifting, inspiring and moving, and being filled with wonder and beauty. They described the environment as uniquely intimate, relaxing and comfortable, providing a safe place to experience exciting and exhilarating performances. Overall, audiences feel a great sense of love for the Melbourne Recital Centre.



Figure 3. Intrinsic impact

## Wellbeing



***I come up from Geelong by train. I call it sheer joy to have no other purpose than to be entertained for an hour of Mostly Mozart or another performance. Leave everything behind and count my blessings.***

Audience members were asked to indicate the extent to which their personal wellbeing had been enhanced by their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. Almost all respondents (92%) indicated that their personal wellbeing had been significantly enhanced as a direct result of their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. To understand this further, we examined three key aspects of wellbeing: immersion, enrichment and community. Immersion captures the degree to which audience members are absorbed in the experience and engaged cognitively, emotionally and imaginatively. Enrichment reflects the degree to which audience members' perceive that their life has been enhanced and is more meaningful as a result of their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. Community captures the extent of personal connection and social bonds with other audience members, the performers, staff, venue and cultural precinct.

Table 2 depicts the results of a multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression is used to understand which independent variables (in this case immersion, enrichment and community) are related to a dependent variable (wellbeing), and to explore the magnitude and direction of these relationships. The results presented in Table 2 indicate that approximately 50% of the enhancement in wellbeing is explained by immersion, enrichment and community. In particular, enrichment and immersion significantly enhance the personal wellbeing of audience members.

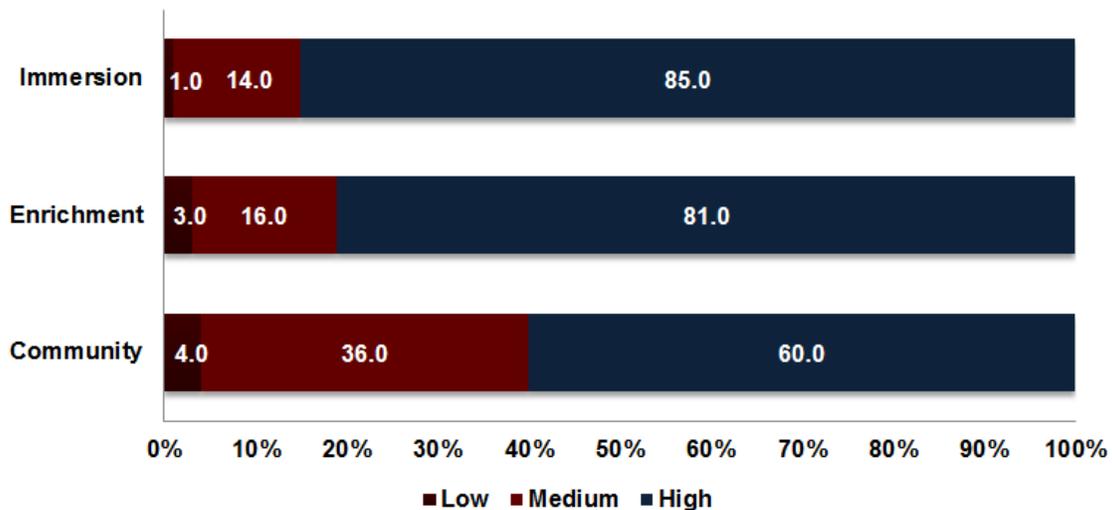
***It was a highly meditative experience. For me music is like another language that explains things to me that make me understand the world better, so I have to see live music all the time.***

**Table 2 Multiple regression – Enhancing wellbeing**

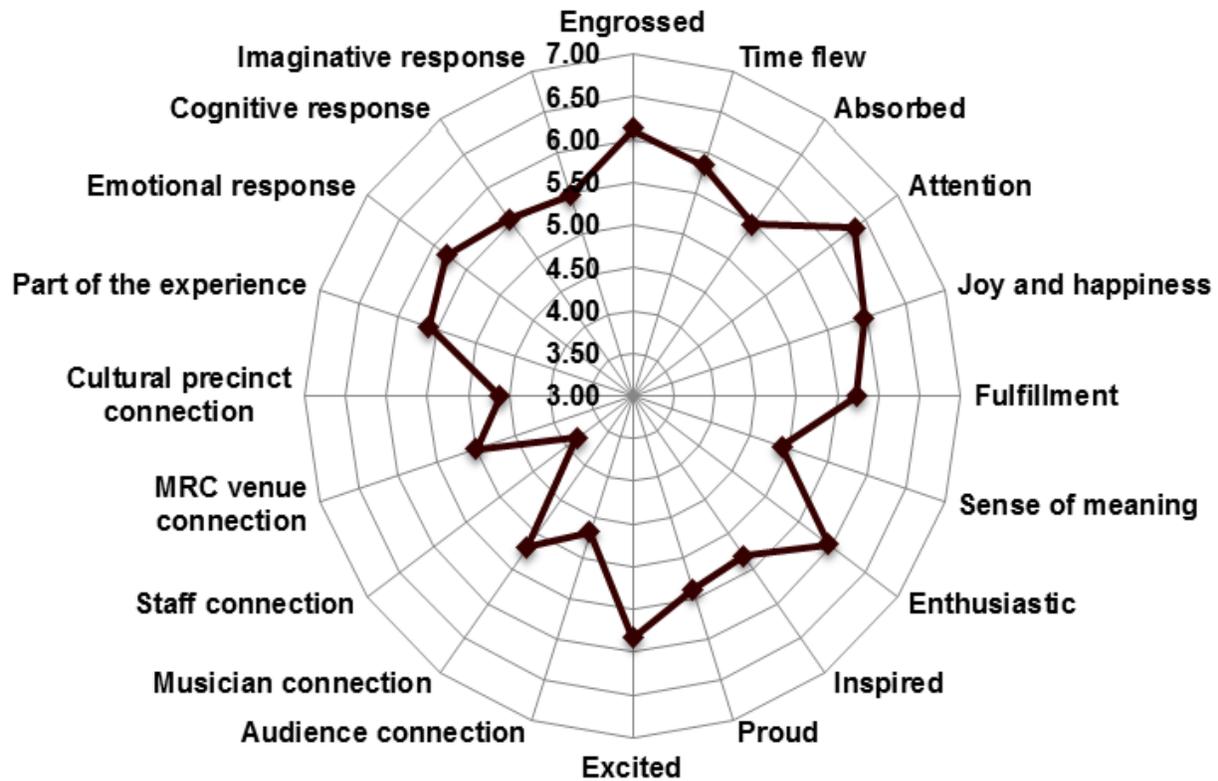
	Wellbeing
<b>Immersion</b>	.31***
<b>Enrichment</b>	.40***
<b>Community</b>	.03
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.51
<b>Adj R<sup>2</sup></b>	.50
<b>F-Ratio</b>	155.82***

\*\*\*p<.001

Of the three factors, audience members were most strongly immersed in their experience, with a mean of 5.8 (measured on a 7-point scale), followed by enrichment (mean of 5.6) and community (mean of 4.8). Responses were categorised as low, medium or high and are depicted in Figure 4. The level of immersion and enrichment are both extremely high (85% and 81% of participants rating their level of immersion and enrichment as high). Still noteworthy, but less exceptional, is that 60% of participants rated their sense of community as high as a result of their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. Figure 5 provides further detail on the components of immersion, enrichment and community.



**Figure 4. Drivers of wellbeing**



**Figure 5. Dimensions of immersion, enrichment and community**

It is evident that the strongest impact of the experience on audience members is in the area of immersion. Audiences pay a high level of attention to the performance and are deeply engrossed in the experience. Such a deep level of immersion suggests that the experiences offered by the Melbourne Recital Centre offer a great escape from daily life. Audience members are also emotionally enriched by the experience. In particular, experiences at the Melbourne Recital Centre engender feelings of enthusiasm, joy, happiness and excitement. The weakest aspects of wellbeing relate to personal connections and community. Audiences do not describe as strong a sense of connection to other audience members, the cultural precinct or the staff at the Melbourne Recital Centre, which contrasts with the staff members' perceptions. Moving forward, the Melbourne Recital Centre could consider ways of reinforcing the importance of social interaction and creating opportunities for audience members to connect with each other and staff. Helping audiences to realise that their experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre also connects them to the broader cultural precinct could help foster a greater sense of community. This is particularly important when we examine the role of immersion, enrichment and community in driving brand preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre.

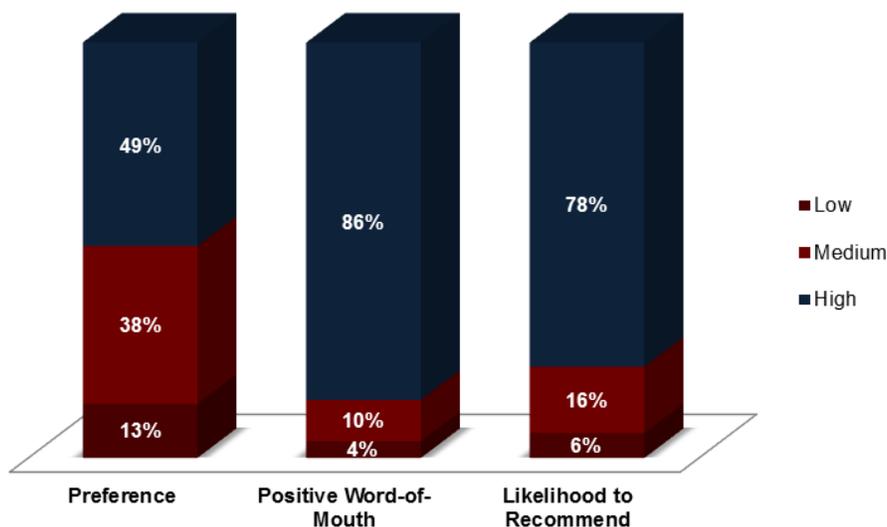
***It was a transportive experience as well as highly emotive, from tears to exhilaration. I was totally involved emotionally, physically and cognitively.***

## Preference and advocacy



*The playing of the young pianist was awe inspiring, completely lifted my heart, made me feel so proud of our young musicians. I felt a tremendous privilege in being part of the community that evening.*

Brand preference refers to the degree to which audience members prefer the Melbourne Recital Centre to other cultural attractions. Word-of-Mouth captures the extent to which audience members will say positive things about their experience to other people. Likelihood to recommend relates to the Net Promoter Score and is indicative of audience members' likelihood to recommend the Melbourne Recital Centre to friends and family. Responses to questions related to preference and advocacy were categorised as low, medium or high and are depicted in Figure 6. The advocacy behaviour of audience members is strong with the majority of survey participants highly likely to share positive stories about their experience and recommend the Melbourne Recital Centre to friends and family. Brand preference is not as strong with only 49% of survey participants exhibiting a strong preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre over other cultural venues.



**Figure 6. Preference and Advocacy**

The findings reveal a strong significant relationship between aspects of wellbeing, brand preference and advocacy behaviours. Table 3 indicates that 26% of brand preference, 30% of word-of-mouth and 16% of likelihood to recommend is explained by wellbeing indicators. It also shows that community is the most important driver of brand preference. This suggests strengthening the sense of personal connection that audience members have with the Melbourne Recital Centre, its staff, performers, other audience members and the cultural precinct more broadly, will increase audience members' preference for the Centre over other cultural venues. Community is also a significant determinant of positive word-of-mouth and likelihood to recommend.

The degree of immersion in the experience is the most important factor driving positive word-of-mouth. This suggests that audience members believe that they have more positive stories to share with people when they are absorbed in the experience and cognitively and emotionally engaged. However, immersion in the experience does not influence the likelihood for audience members to recommend the Melbourne Recital Centre to friends and family. Enrichment is a key factor in relation to this advocacy behaviour. Experiences that engender feelings of enthusiasm, joy, happiness and excitement increase the likelihood for audience members to promote the Centre to others. Overall, the Melbourne Recital Centre has a Net Promoter Score of 73, which suggests that the audience members are active advocates for the Centre.

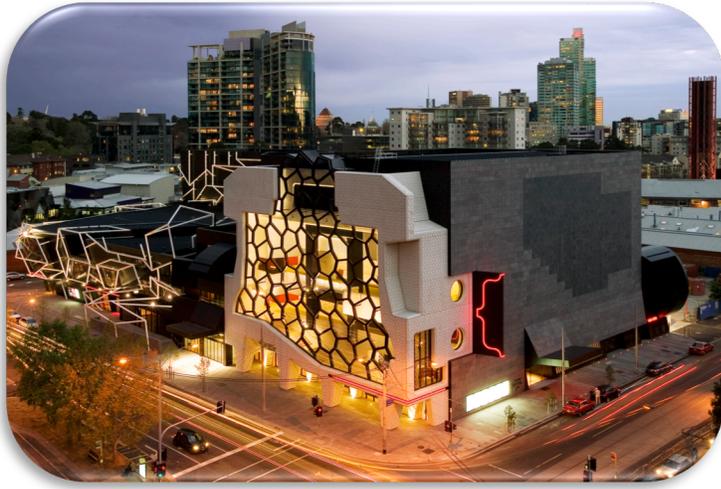
**Table 3. Multiple regression - wellbeing, preference and advocacy**

	Preference	Word-of-Mouth	Likelihood to Recommend
<b>Immersion</b>	.04	.27***	.09
<b>Enrichment</b>	.13†	.08	.18***
<b>Community</b>	.38***	.25***	.18***
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.26	.30	.17
<b>Adj R<sup>2</sup></b>	.26	.29	.16
<b>F-Ratio</b>	55.23***	65.84***	30.89***

† p<.10, \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

*The affect of my experience was to crystallise time. I will remember those hours in a way more vividly than whole months or years of recorded music.*

## Conclusion



*I love the Melbourne Recital Centre, the building is beautiful and inside, the woodwork on the walls, makes it quite magical.*

It is evident that the experience provided by the Melbourne Recital Centre significantly enhances the personal wellbeing of audience members. Audience members describe the experience as uplifting, inspiring and moving, filled with wonder and beauty. They appreciate the uniquely intimate, relaxing and comfortable environment. All of which help to create an exciting and exhilarating experience. Audiences feel a great sense of love for the Melbourne Recital Centre, which is evident in their advocacy behaviours. They share stories of their uplifting experiences with friends and family and recommend that others visit the Melbourne Recital Centre.

Immersion, enrichment and community are all key aspects of the audience experience at the Melbourne Recital Centre. The results of this study indicate that the personal wellbeing of audience members is enhanced when they are significantly immersed in and enriched by the experience. Immersion and enrichment are also strong predictors of the advocacy behaviour of audience members. An experience that fosters deep levels of immersion provides a basis for compelling stories that audience members can share with friends and family. Leaving audiences with a sense of joy, fulfilment and excitement increases the likelihood that they will recommend the experience to friends and family. The key factor in audience members' preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre is the sense that they feel personally connected to the performers, other audience members, staff, the venue and the cultural precinct itself. The stronger these bonds, the more audience members demonstrate their preference for the Melbourne Recital Centre through their advocacy behaviours.

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