

MacPhail Music for Life 2022-23 Evaluation Results

“I joined for the music, but it’s not only the music that has kept me going. It’s the community of people in that choir that have kept me going.”

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Introduction

Since 2005, the Music for Life program at the MacPhail Center for Music has been offering music classes for older adults to provide the opportunity to learn and practice music skills and socialize with other adults who are interested in music. MacPhail teaching artists lead Music for Life sessions at senior living facilities in the Twin Cities metro area; MacPhail partners with more than 30 locations to offer these sessions. In addition to these sessions, MacPhail offers registration-based classes at a limited number of sites; these sites are in Minneapolis and Austin. MacPhail partnered with Wilder Research to conduct an evaluation of their activities in program year 2022-2023.

Methods

Wilder Research worked with the MacPhail Center for Music to develop a survey to gather perspectives from Music for Life participants at the end of their participation in the program. The survey asked questions about participants' satisfaction with the program; the impact the program had made on participants' emotional and physical health, socialization, and musical skills; their favorite aspects of the program; and areas for program improvement. Eighty-four participants completed a survey at the end of their program.

In addition to the survey, for this year's evaluation we conducted 13 conversational interviews with Music for Life participants. We developed the interview questions in partnership with Music for Life staff, and then MacPhail identified around 20 potential interviewees. MacPhail then connected us to all potential interviewees. In interviews, we asked about participants' musical background, their connection to MacPhail, and the impacts that they have experienced due to their participation in the program. We present quotes from these interviews throughout this report to provide more nuance to the survey findings.

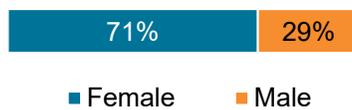
Evaluation results

Participant survey results

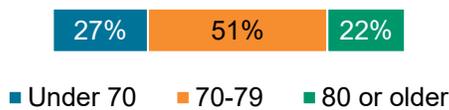
Participant characteristics

Music for Life participants were asked to share a bit about themselves when completing their survey. The majority of respondents identified as female (71%; Figure 1) and White (98%; 1% identified as Asian or Asian American, 1% as Black or African American). About 3 in 4 participants (73%) reported that they were age 70 years old or older (Figure 2).

1. Participant gender identity (n=80)

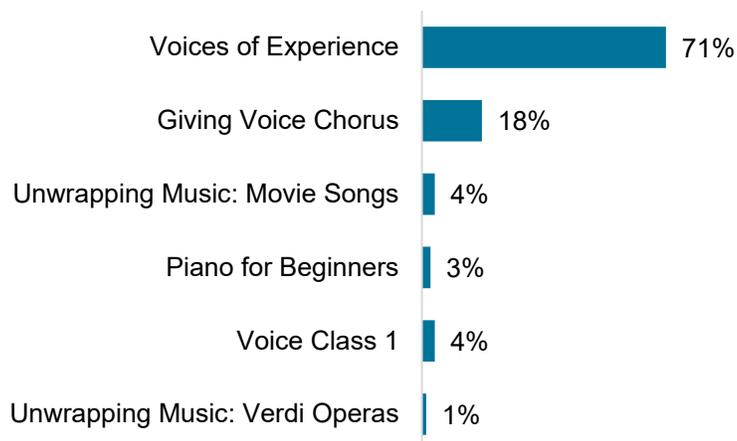


2. Participant age (n=78)



Respondents most commonly participated in the Voices of Experience Choir (71%) and the Giving Voice Chorus (18%). Please see Figure 3 for the breakdown of survey respondents by Music for Life offering.

3. Music for Life class participants were involved in (n=83)



Rationale for participation

Participants were asked about their previous experiences with music and Music for Life and why they decided to participate in Music for Life. Nearly 3 in 4 respondents (71%) had participated in a Music for Life class previously and decided to return to the program (Figure 4).

4. First-time and returning participants (n=76)



In the survey, respondents were asked how they heard about Music for Life and were given a list of options to choose from. About 1 in 3 participants heard of the class from friends, family, or acquaintances who had previously participated in a Music for Life class (Figure 5). A little more than 2 in 5 respondents (43%) mentioned another way they had heard of Music for Life, such as through news or media coverage (e.g., Star Tribune).

5. How participants heard of Music for Life (n=80)

	%
Friends, family, or acquaintances who had previously participated in Music for Life	33%
Online search	19%
Social media (Facebook, etc.)	6%
Friends, family, or acquaintances who had not previously participated in Music for Life	5%
Another way	43%

We also asked interview respondents about how they learned about Music For Life. Respondents commonly talked about the ways that music was a part of their life when they were younger, such as in high school or college, and wanting to revisit their musical interests during retirement—which prompted them to seek out Music For Life. Some respondents said that they had first heard about MacPhail through their children or grandchildren taking music classes, with one respondent saying that they first learned through MacPhail when they themselves were a toddler and took piano lessons.

I first learned of MacPhail when I moved down here. I live quite close to it. But my grandson, when he was five months old, my daughter and I took him to some of the infant classes. I was so impressed with the teachers, that they could keep the attention of 10 five-month-old children for 40 minutes! That was my first introduction to MacPhail itself. Sometimes I go to concerts over there. Then when [MacPhail teaching artist] started giving her classes I must have started getting emails from them after beginning classes with my grandson. ... I signed up and I've taken every course she's given.

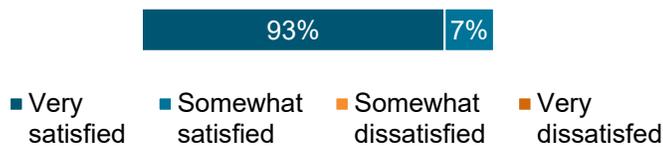
Well, all of my working life, I had told my wife that I was going to start playing the piano, taking piano lessons when I retired. So she very nicely kept our piano tuned for years. And when I turned about 72, I just called MacPhail and I said, "I'd like to start taking piano lessons. I have never played the piano before."

Almost 9 in 10 survey respondents (86%) reported that they plan to sign up for another Music for Life course. These participants noted their enjoyment of the classes and the music and relationships with other members and teaching artists as why they would like to continue their participation. Of the respondents who said they might sign up for another course, some reasons included not having enough time at the moment, just wanting to relax with unscheduled time, or not having enough expendable money to join a class.

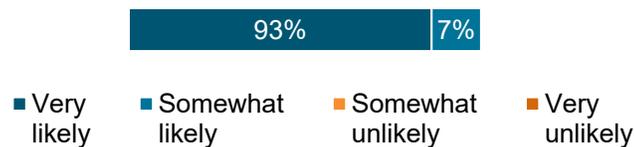
Participants find classes enjoyable and valuable

All respondents (100%) were satisfied with the course they participated in and that they were either satisfied or very satisfied overall with their Music For Life experience (Figure 6). Likewise, all respondents (100%) said that it is somewhat likely or very likely that they will recommend Music for Life to a friend or family member (Figure 7).

6. Overall satisfaction (n=76)

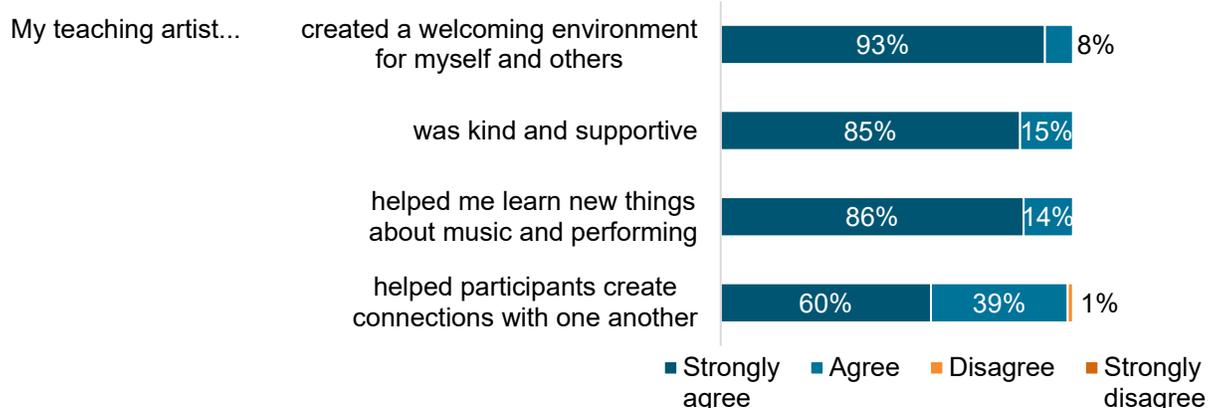


7. Likelihood of recommending program (n=79)



Respondents were very positive about the teaching artists who led their classes. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their teaching artist created a welcoming environment for them and others, was kind and supportive, and helped them learn new things about music and performing (Figure 8). While this feedback is overwhelmingly positive, one area for improvement is ensuring that teaching artists help to create connections between participants, with a substantially smaller percentage of respondents saying that they strongly agreed with this statement.

8. Satisfaction with teaching artists (n=80)



Participants develop music skills

Respondents reported developing their music skills through their participation in the Music for Life program. The majority of participants reported increasing their musical skills (84%), learning more about music (71%), and growing in their appreciation of music (65%; Figure 9). Further, participants were asked what aspect of their Music for Life class was the most satisfying for them. Among the musical outcomes, they reported enjoying learning new music (74%), learning musical techniques (61%), and singing or playing familiar songs (19%; Figure 10).

9. Accomplishments – musical (n=83)

What did you accomplish by participating in this music class?	%
I increased my musical skills	84%
I learned more about music	71%
I grew in my appreciation of music	65%

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because participants could select multiple response options.

10. Best parts of participation – musical outcomes (n=78)

What are the most satisfying aspects of participating in MacPhail Music for Life?	%
Learning new music	74%
Learning musical techniques	61%
Singing or playing familiar songs	19%

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because participants could select multiple response options.

In interviews, numerous respondents talked about improving their musical skills in ways that felt comfortable and encouraging, learning more about music that was new to them, and generally enjoying being able to spend time engaged in musical activities.

I feel a lot more competent, even though I'm taking very beginner classes. I have gotten confident enough in the classes and I am pulling out some of the pieces of music that I used to play years ago that are a bit beyond beginner level. I've got the confidence to pull those out and try it. I am not only practicing what we're assigned, but also my own music. ... It's been fun! I'm doing better with them than I thought I would—definitely better than I would have a year ago.

I think it's easy to get hooked into things you're familiar with. I am mostly familiar with classical music from my own background and jazz and singer-songwriter from doing a concert series in those genres. [Music For Life] keeps widening the repertoire of what you like and what you want to hear more of and what you're curious about going even further in a direction. In that respect, this class has been very meaningful for me. It shakes me out of what I'm used to.

I've learned to be a more critical listener. [MacPhail teaching artist] is very good about digging into—in simple terms, you don't need to be a professional musician—how the music is built, put across by the performers. It's not just thinking, "Oh, what a lovely piece of music"—but recognizing the time it came from, the composer, the culture. The composer is playing with you, really. ... We had a class this morning on opera and sensuality. There were things that I wouldn't have listened to before or heard before, like how the composer used meter, rhythm, chromaticism to create characters and to contrast characters. You could really hear the conversation below the music. For example, one character is very on-beat. Another character starts like that, but then going off beat and then it just disintegrates. It's the other character who has taken another out of control. I wouldn't have gotten that without knowing to listen for those certain musical elements.

Participants are happier and healthier because of their participation

Participants reported numerous benefits of participating in a Music for Life class for their health, wellbeing, and social lives. They commonly reported that through participating in Music for Life, they socialized with others (69%), expressed themselves in a creative way (69%), were more active mentally (68%), made new friends (65%), and improved their mood (65%; Figure 11). Less frequently, they reported that participation in music classes allowed them to be more physically active (21%).

11. Accomplishments – non-musical (n=83)

What did you accomplish by participating in this music class?	%
I socialized with others	69%
I expressed myself in a creative way	69%
I was more active mentally	68%
I improved my mood	65%
I made new friends	65%
I was more active physically	21%

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because participants could select multiple response options.

The aspect of Music for Life that participants found most satisfying was the opportunity to sing and learn with other people (78%; Figure 12). Following this, respondents reported that they liked getting to know new people (25%), performing (24%), and expanding their social activities (15%).

12. Benefits of participation – Non-musical outcomes (n=80)

What are the most satisfying aspects of participating in MacPhail Music for Life?	%
Singing or learning with other people	78%
Getting to know new people	25%
Performing	24%
Expanding my social activities	15%
Physical warm-ups	8%
Other	3%

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because participants could select multiple response options

In interviews, respondents supplemented these survey findings, saying that they appreciated the chance to engage themselves in Music for Life classes because they could socialize with others in the class. More generally, they said they appreciated Music for Life simply as an opportunity to do something fun outside of their house.

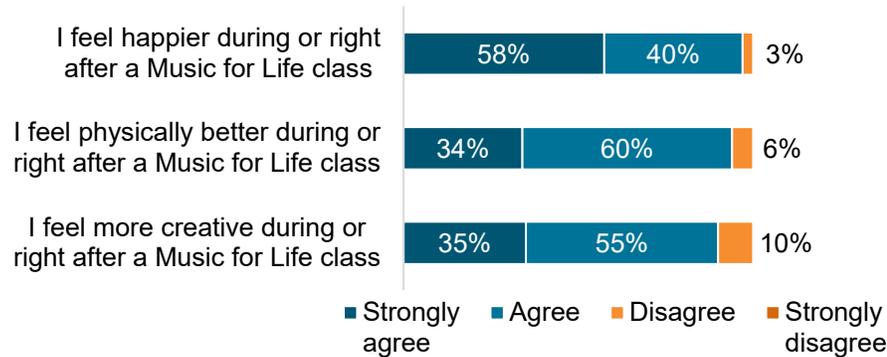
When you work with a group or sing with a group, you develop a lot of personal connections with people, and so it kind of adds to your social life. ... We'll have parties at the end of a semester—we all get together and have a party someplace. Everybody brings stuff, it's kind of a potluck thing. ... Even during rehearsals, when we take a break, we want to find out about other people, so I think the social interconnections really help.

Really, I just like going downtown every week. It's been forever since I've been downtown for anything. It's been fun to be there—I have enjoyed being in the MacPhail building and seeing others. Sometimes there's a class of real little kids, it's fun to look through the windows and see them. I also enjoy having access to what's going on at MacPhail—concerts or events on the bulletin board or via email. ... One of the other Music For Life students and I have been going out for coffee after classes and getting to know each other, too.

I joined for the music. But it's not only the music that has kept me going. It's the community of people in that choir that have kept me going. They're interesting people. They want to try new things. We share things about the books we're reading now, a concert that you went to, a play that you saw. ... As you get older, it's easy for your life to get narrower and narrower for a variety of reasons. It's not just the music that's keeping me there. It's what brought me there, but it's not only what's keep me there.

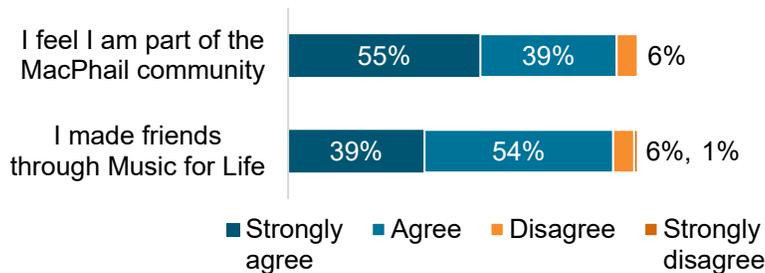
Building on these findings about socialization and wellbeing, almost all survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed they felt happier (98%), physically better (94%), and more creative during or right after a class (90%; Figure 13).

13. Impact of classes on participant happiness and on how participants feel physically (n=77-80)



Further, almost all participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel they are a part of the MacPhail community (94%; Figure 14). Almost all participants (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that they made friends through Music for Life.

14. Impact of classes on participant’s sense of social connection (n=77)



Suggested improvements from participants

In interviews, Music for Life participants were asked what would make the program better. Many respondents used the opportunity to say that they had no suggestions. Those who did provide suggestions mostly talked about how more people should know about these classes because they’ve been so beneficial for them. They suggested that MacPhail do more traditional advertising, such as print media or radio, and a few suggested that MacPhail pursue even more partnerships with organizations that serve older people to recruit for their classes and offerings.

In the survey, participants were asked whether or not there were additional types of classes they would like to see MacPhail offer. Most commonly, participants said they thought MacPhail offered a nice variety of classes and did not have suggestions. Those who offered suggestions requested that MacPhail offer classes on chamber music, early music, music theory, and sight reading.

Recommendations for program improvement

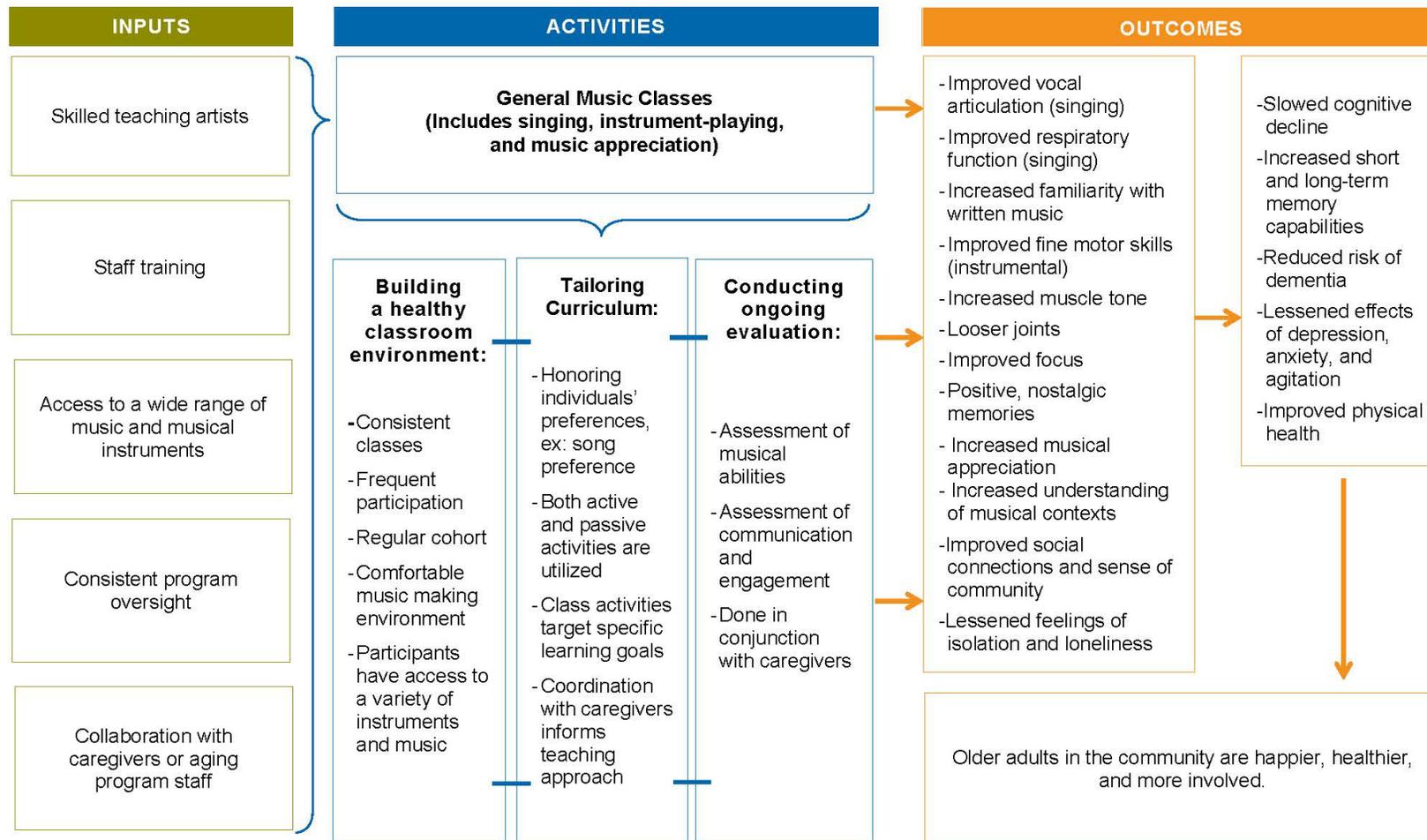
Staff at MacPhail who are involved in program design and implementation should consider the suggestions given by survey respondents mentioned above. Given the findings of this evaluation, Wilder Research recommends the following:

- **Continue facilitating social connections among participants.** Especially since the pandemic, the Music for Life survey has generally shown that participants want more time and focus on social connection in Music for Life offerings. This year's survey showed some promising findings in this regard, with nearly all respondents agreeing that they made friends through Music for Life (compared with about 3 in 4 respondents last year). We recommend that MacPhail continue building on this success, making sure that all Music for Life offerings—in-person or virtual, large or small—includes focused time for relationship-building and making connections between participants.
- **Consider ways to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion more fully into the program, and pursue opportunities to serve more participants of color.** Some participants reported enjoying music from different backgrounds and a few said they wanted to learn music that originates from outside North America and Europe. A few program participants said that increased diversity among topics covered as well as among participants could help improve the Music for Life program. Similar to last year's evaluation, the vast majority of Music for Life participants identify as White. MacPhail should dedicate time and resources to identifying ways to provide programming to older adults of color and low-income individuals. For instance, a number of interview respondents suggested that MacPhail partner with more organizations that serve older adults; perhaps focusing on culturally specific organizations that serve older adults who identify as BIPOC could be a way to improve, expand, deepen, or extend the program.

Appendix

A. Logic model

Overview: The MacPhail Music for Life program aims to provide music education to older adults, giving them an outlet of creative expression, connecting them with other older adults who share their passions, and providing the opportunity to improve their physical and mental health conditions through musical activity. They do so with classes specifically focused on singing, learning to play instruments or improving their instrumental abilities, and music appreciation.



MacPhail Music for Life™ Participant Post-Program Survey

Thank you for participating in MacPhail Music for Life™ classes! The Teaching Artists and staff at MacPhail appreciate your time completing this brief survey as we end our time together. Please check the appropriate boxes.

Name: _____

1. Where did you participate in MacPhail Music for Life™? Please check all that apply.

- ¹ Minneapolis
- ² Apple Valley
- ³ Austin
- ⁴ Online

2. What MacPhail class did you participate in?

- ¹ Giving Voice Chorus – Minneapolis, morning
- ² Giving Voice Chorus – Minneapolis, afternoon
- ³ Giving Voice Chorus – St. Paul
- ⁴ Giving Voice Chorus – Online
- ⁵ Piano for Beginners
- ⁶ Back to Basics Group Piano – Austin
- ⁷ Voice Class 1
- ⁸ Unwrapping Music: Movie Songs
- ⁹ Unwrapping Music: Verdi Operas
- ¹⁰ Voices of Experience

3. Was this your first MacPhail Music for Life™ course?

- ¹ Yes → What made you decide to join the class? _____
- ² No → What made you decide to participate in the class again? _____

4. What did you accomplish by participating in this music class? (*Check all that apply*)

- ¹ I learned more about music
- ² I increased my musical skills
- ³ I made new friends
- ⁴ I socialized with others
- ⁵ I was more active physically
- ⁶ I was more active mentally
- ⁷ I improved my mood
- ⁸ I expressed myself in a creative way
- ⁹ I grew in my appreciation of music
- ¹⁰ Other: _____

5. What are the most satisfying aspects of participation in MacPhail Music for Life™? (Check up to 3)

- ¹ Learning musical techniques
- ² Learning new music
- ³ Singing or playing familiar songs
- ⁴ Physical warm-ups
- ⁵ Singing or learning with other people
- ⁶ Performing
- ⁷ Expanding my social activities
- ⁸ Getting to know new people
- ⁹ Improving my mood
- ¹⁰ Other: _____

6. Approximately how much additional time (in minutes) per week outside of rehearsal or class do you spend reviewing or practicing Music for Life™ materials? _____ (minutes)

7. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I feel happier during or right after a Music for Life class.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
b. I feel physically better during or right after a Music for Life class.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
c. I feel more creative during or right after a Music for Life class.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
d. I made friends through Music for Life.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
e. Participating in Music for Life increased how frequently I socialize with friends.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹

8. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My Teaching Artist was kind and supportive.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
b. My Teaching Artist helped me learn new things about music and performing.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
c. My Teaching Artist created a welcoming environment for myself and others.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
d. My Teaching Artist helped participants create connections with one another.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
e. I would recommend Music for Life to my friends and acquaintances.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
f. I feel I am a part of the MacPhail community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹

9. Did you participate in Music for Life™ online this semester?

¹ Yes

² No

10. [If yes to Q9] Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. It was easy to participate in the online Music for Life classes.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
b. Music for Life gave me a way to socialize with others more during the pandemic.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
c. Participating in Music for Life helped me feel happier during the pandemic.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹

11. [If Yes to Q9] Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statement.

MacPhail staff provided me with the technological support I needed to participate fully in the online classes.

¹ Strongly agree

² Agree

³ Disagree

⁴ Strongly disagree

⁻⁸ Not applicable

12. What did you enjoy most about MacPhail Music for Life™?

13. What could make the class better, such as different class content, making it more convenient to participate, and improving your experience overall? Please be specific.

14. What other types of classes or activities should MacPhail provide?

15. How did you hear about Music for Life?

- ¹ Friends, family, or acquaintances who had previously participated in Music for Life
- ² Friends, family, or acquaintances who had *not* previously participated in Music for Life
- ³ Social media (Facebook, etc.)
- ⁴ Online search (Google, etc.)
- ⁵ Another way, please describe: _____

16. How often do you visit the MacPhail website?

- ¹ Once every week or more often
- ² Multiple times per month, but not every week
- ³ Once every month
- ⁴ Multiple times per year, but not every month
- ⁵ Once every year or less often than that
- ⁶ I have never visited the MacPhail website

17. [For any response other than “I have never visited...” to Q16] Why do you visit the MacPhail website? Check all that apply.

- ¹ To learn about offerings like classes, ensembles, and events
- ² To register for classes or ensembles
- ³ For Student QuickLinks (e.g., class or ensemble schedules, building hours, contact information)
- ⁴ To view archived performances
- ⁵ To explore the “Read, Watch, Listen” content
- ⁶ Something else. → For what other reason(s) do you visit the MacPhail website?

18. How likely are you to recommend Music for Life™ to someone else?

- ¹ Very likely
- ² Somewhat likely
- ³ Somewhat unlikely
- ⁴ Very unlikely

19. Overall, how satisfied are you with the class?

- ¹ Very satisfied
- ² Somewhat satisfied
- ³ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ⁴ Very dissatisfied

20. Do you plan to sign up for another MacPhail Music for Life™ course in the future?

- ¹ Yes
- ² Maybe
- ³ No
- ⁻⁸ I don't know

Why?

21. Please share any other comments you might have about MacPhail Music for Life™ here.

Now, we'd like to know a little more about you.

22. With what gender do you identify?

- ¹ Female
- ² Male
- ³ Prefer to self-describe: _____
- ⁴ Prefer not to answer

23. What is your age (in years)? _____

24. How do you identify your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply.)

- ¹ American Indian, Native American or Alaska Native
- ² Asian American or Asian
- ³ Black, African American or African
- ⁴ Hispanic or Latino/a
- ⁵ White or Caucasian
- ⁶ Multi-racial or other (please describe: _____)
- ⁷ Prefer not to answer

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Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

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