

# Becoming a musician in practice: a case study

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## Background

This article presents results from a case study exploring forms of professional work placement in specialist higher music education. The case study is carried out at the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH) and is one of several research and development projects located within NMH's Centre of Excellence in Music Performance Education (CEMPE). A main aim of CEMPE is to develop knowledge about learning and teaching in music performance education contexts, in order to contribute to enhancing the quality of their educational programmes. The present case study is part of the research project *Together for better learning*, a collaborative project involving several Bergen University Faculties and CEMPE.

The *Hammerfest project* is one of several elective projects within a compulsory course in the Master's programme. These projects give students an opportunity to plan and carry out demanding interdisciplinary, collaborative projects, according to the Master's programme curriculum. The main aim is to stimulate reflection around the role and function of music and musicians in society. The project takes place in Hammerfest during one intensive week in February. Hammerfest is one of the northernmost cities in the world, and the project is a collaboration between the Norwegian Academy of Music, several partners in Hammerfest municipality and the multinational Oil and Gas Company *Statoil*. During one week more than 300 children, 100 adults and 15 Master's degree students perform and collaborate in making music. The project is driven by five interconnected principles. First, a high degree of collaboration pervades the whole project, both among the students and with amateur musicians, children and disabled people across different disciplines. Second, the project includes artistic presentations in traditional venues such as churches or concert halls, where the students assume full responsibility for curating the events. The third element is artistic presentations in less traditional arenas for performance, such as private homes or workplaces, where the students are challenged by the intimacy between audience and performers. Fourth, conscious contemplation of the relationships between performers and audiences is encouraged: students are hosted in private homes when they are in Hammerfest, and dialogues between musicians and audiences take place in the performance venues. And finally, the fifth element is a high degree of reflection through dialogues with and among the students, to make sense of and evaluate their experiences.

The *Professional orchestra placement programme* is an elective course at the Master's level, to which students are admitted by audition. Over a period of two years, students participate as orchestra musicians in professional orchestras during 12 week-long rehearsal and concert projects. The students are paid, and they receive 18 ECTS on completing the

placement programme. Each student is appointed a supervisor from the orchestra, normally one of the orchestral musicians. Two professional orchestras are involved in the programme. The programme is described on the NMH webpages, but the description does not include information about aims, objectives or content.

**by Brit Ågot Brøske and Jon Helge Sætre**

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Musicians of the future? (Photo: Zbigniew Ziggi Wantuch).

## Introduction

There seems to be increased scholarly debate about development in higher music education (HME) institutions. A central point of this debate is highlighted by the framing of the current issue of *Music & Practice*: What are the characteristics of musician of the future, and are current educational practices helping students develop these characteristics? Some research studies advance the view that the labour market for musicians is changing.<sup>1)</sup> According to these studies, the future musician, as well as the majority of today's music graduates, will have to combine a range of work positions and settings. They will become what is described as the portfolio or protean musician,<sup>2)</sup> with only a few having the traditional role of orchestral musician. Bishop and Tröndle claim that specialist HME has had trouble adjusting to these changes.<sup>3)</sup> Yet several ongoing initiatives are focusing on innovation within HME, including ICON (The Innovative Conservatoire), NAIP (New Audiences and Innovative Practices)<sup>4)</sup> and CEMPE. And a number of research studies explore both traditional and new forms of aspects of musical learning such as one-to-one tuition, group tuition, peer learning, self-reflective practice, mentoring, and assessment and digital technology.<sup>5)</sup> These contributions discuss and challenge the *relevance* of current HME practices, and they stimulate a scholarly debate that aims to understand and employ different approaches to *learning and teaching* in HME.

The benefits of work placement are quite thoroughly described by research studies in a number of higher education settings, such as teacher education.<sup>6)</sup> Work placement is thought to link on-campus activity to professional practice, and thereby to increase the relevance of the educational programmes. Systematic use of work placement is probably less frequent in specialist HME,<sup>7)</sup> but music students may still be deeply involved in off-campus professional or semi-professional practice. Students enter HME as aspiring musicians; they may already be involved in a number of self-initiated projects and may even have experience from the professional field of music. An institutional survey carried out at NMH shows that specialist music students spend considerable time in various off-campus professional settings, and they spend time developing their own artistic projects. Furthermore, the survey indicates that students find these activities highly relevant for future work,<sup>8)</sup> and that more than half of the students would welcome an increase of professional practice and work placement as parts of their study programmes. Still, there are few studies investigating what students actually learn in and from such activities.

The present study contributes to this debate by investigating the potential of work placement and professional practice as part of specialist HME. The aim is to explore what students learn in and from two different placement settings, both of which are parts of the

Master's programme at NMH. Among the questions addressed here, the most important is that of what, precisely, students learn in and from these contexts of practice. We examine the ways learning takes place in the two selected cases and the factors influencing and contributing to students' learning. Further, the article includes discussion about the differences between on-campus and off-campus learning and possible deficits in current educational practices.

## Two cases of practice



**Figure 1** Students and teachers collaborating in the Hammerfest project. (Photo: Eybjørn Paulsen).

Students and teachers collaborating in the Hammerfest project. (Photo: Eybjørn Paulsen).

To explore what students learn in different placement settings, the project was designed as

a case study.<sup>9)</sup> The overall case context is the Master's programme in music performance at the Norwegian Academy of Music, and the study is therefore best understood as a single case study. Within this programme, two units of analysis are selected. These particular units are selected because of their many differences. The rationale for emphasizing difference as the criterion of selection is to make room for contrastive and comparative perspectives on students' perceptions of learning in work placement contexts. The two units are the *Hammerfest project* and the *Professional orchestra placement programme* (see text box for details).

Since the aim of this study is to explore the students' perceptions of learning in the two placement settings, the focus group interview was selected as the method of collecting empirical data. Focus group interviews are well suited for creating an exploratory dialogue, and for making room for both agreement and disagreement on the selected topics.<sup>10)</sup> The group setting also makes room for an effective, descriptive conversation, since the interviewees have the opportunity to correct, adjust, supplement and add perspectives to the joint conversation.<sup>11)</sup> Five students were selected from the Hammerfest project (four females and one male), and four from the professional orchestra placement programme (two females and two males). All students had taken part in these activities recently. The Orchestra group members were selected in such a way as to represent more than one orchestra and more than one type of instrument. The students are called Student A, B, C and D in the transcripts.

Both focus group interviews were conducted by the same researcher, and the other took the role as an observer. The interview guide consisted of four main themes: description, ways of learning, responsibility and outcomes. When the main interviewer was about to end the interview, the observer was asked whether he had additional questions. This strategy turned out to have some benefits, since the observer could add questions based on his interpretation of the entire interview dialogue. The interviews were transcribed in the original language (Norwegian), and the transcripts were subjected to coding and collaborative interpretation by the two researchers.

The first level of coding followed the main themes of the interview guide (description, learning, responsibility and outcome), and the data was further analysed to reveal the variety of perceptions of value, relevance and ways of learning.

## **Learning in practice**

The present study takes a socio-cultural view of learning, emphasizing the relational, social

and cultural features of learning and learning situations, and the importance of understanding the relationships between learning and tools.<sup>12)</sup> From this theoretical point of view, the Hammerfest project and the orchestra programme should be different in many ways. They take place in different cultural arenas (orchestras, schools, family homes, etc.), they involve collaboration between students and different groups of people (musicians, conductors, fellow students, pupils, teachers, audiences), and they include different tools in the Vygotskian sense (e.g. language and psychological and physical artefacts). Social relations are also at the core of the concept of collaborative learning. Gaunt & Westerlund see collaborative learning as the most powerful way to deal with today's challenges in HME, such as the imperative for networking, innovation, negotiating cultural differences, developing professional flexibility, and to be able to meet new situations and social contexts imaginatively and with empathy. According to them, this goes 'hand in hand with the increasingly accepted understanding of learning as social endeavour, and of teachers being facilitators and co-learners rather than doorkeepers of learning'.<sup>13)</sup>

The interplay between the roles of social relations and cultural tools in learning is a central premise for the concept of the proximal development zone, which denotes the distance between what a learner is capable of achieving on his or her own, and what the learner is capable of achieving with help from others.<sup>14)</sup> According to Wittek, in a learning relationship, the more experienced person contributes with ways of conceptualizing the learner's understanding and provides cultural artefacts which the learner uses to create learning experiences and develop his or her constructions of knowledge.<sup>15)</sup> In this sense, it is of interest to study whether and how social relations are apparent in students' stories about learning experiences. Social relations may take the form of informal social interaction or formal arenas for supervision and reflecting in and on practice, which Schön identifies as an important part of developing professional knowledge.<sup>16)</sup>

Several research studies on higher education advocate bridging the gap between on- and off-campus learning by emphasizing pedagogies of enactment in higher education and allowing students to practise a set of core practices.<sup>17)</sup> A central point is that on-campus practising of professional core practices (approximations of practice) can be carried out in low-risk settings, where students are allowed to experiment and falter.<sup>18)</sup> In comparison, real-life professional practice is a more complex high-risk learning setting. Further, the concept of core practices identifies two major questions for HME. First, what can be defined as core practices for higher education music graduates? And second, is practising these core practices the best way of developing professional competence? From the viewpoint of socio-cultural theories of learning, meeting different contexts of practice (activity systems) may have the potential of providing learning 'new forms of activity which are not yet there',

in the words of Yrjö Engeström.<sup>19)</sup> The contexts of professional practice selected in the present study can still both be defined as core practices for musicians, the Hammerfest project representing the portfolio musician<sup>20)</sup> and the orchestra programme representing the professional orchestral musician. It is of interest to find out how students perceive the value and relevance of these different practices, and to examine in some detail what students actually learn from them. This may give some hints about the potential of these forms of practice for the development of future musicians, as well as the differences between on-campus and off-campus learning in HME.

## **Interview findings: Learning and levels of risk**

According to the interview data, the students perceived the Hammerfest project as an expansive form of practice, a project characterized mainly by its large number of *unfamiliar activities*, which took the students out of their comfort zones. They were involved in many artistic productions, and aimed at the same time at high artistic quality. The students reported that 'this was a mind-opener, in a way, as we were tossed into many different challenges', and 'we were entrusted with teaching and things we don't usually do'. Activities and tasks entailed performing in various and unfamiliar types of concerts, collaborating with children and amateurs, improvising, collaborating with and performing for unfamiliar audiences, collaborating extensively with other students and participating in everyday reflection sessions. The students did not prepare specific things in advance, though:

We were told that it would get intense and that we should be ready for whatever turned up. We should also be prepared to play a lot of different pieces; that we could be challenged to jump headlong into it, and that happened as well.

These unfamiliar and somewhat 'scary' high-risk activities were, however, embedded in a low-risk atmosphere. The students were all 'in it together' and the people in Hammerfest were 'so open'. As one student put it: 'We are all in the same boat, that is the feeling'. A feeling of openness - due to having to cope with different challenges, where the students had to move out of their comfort-zones - was valued by several of the students. One student would have liked to be forced into such situations more often, 'for it to become more natural. But ideally, I think everyone wishes they could be this open when playing any concert'. This feeling is also something they want to bring with them to other projects and situations:



The next time you find yourself in such a situation – then – from here, everything can happen. I am ready. I am open. Always open, always ready. So maybe that is what is the most important.

Another important component of the Hammerfest project seems to be the limited time for planning and rehearsal, which is seen as both a high-risk feature and a fruitful experience.

What I have learned for later is that, although I normally plan and rehearse for a concert long time in advance, it is also possible to prepare a concert in half an hour. It's not dangerous, it's fine, and it will be good! That is something I will remember.

Another student says:

It feels like we got a new perspective on concerts when we were there. Or, we knew that there were so many concerts and too little time to prepare, so you didn't even have the time to get nervous. And then you could care for the moment on stage. It might be the same pressure there as here, but there we could better see the things that went on around us.

Students also comment on being generally more open and free in Hammerfest. Participating in unfamiliar activities contributed to turn the focus away from themselves and their own performing. This is clearly seen as different from the life on campus:

I think we limit ourselves on campus. You have your field of expertise, and think that we should not move outside it.

You are in a bubble at the Academy. You stay in the rehearsal room five hours a day, and everything is about your sound, ... but there is so much more to it than just the playing.

The Hammerfest project seems therefore to represent a rather special practice context, since it represents the complex, high-risk features of professional practice while at the same time presenting this complexity in a low-risk setting.<sup>21)</sup> Apparently, the students also need to

enter practice in order to understand that musicianship is more than 'just the playing'.

The high degree of collaboration seems to be an important feature of the low-risk setting. Collaborating with fellow students pervades the week in Hammerfest. In particular, it seems to have led to positive social relations between the students.

Something really positive this year, was the unbeatable mood among the students, which made everything easy.

Students say that they normally have a low interest in collaborating with other students on campus: 'But there, something about the mood just changed me. I became more motivated to collaborate'. The low degree of collaboration on campus is commented by another student: 'We have not had any projects like this one, or at least I have not participated in any. I have been here for five years'. In the Hammerfest project collaboration is twinned with a high degree of responsibility, as well as freedom. This is seen as a positive thing, since the students appreciate the feeling of being in charge, as well as being challenged: 'We had quite a lot of freedom', 'we could choose what to participate in', and

I think of the project with the young kids. We just got two days, no plan or instructions, but 12 or 10 persons just have to create something together. I have never done that before. We started from nothing - what shall we do? It turned out well in the end.

This degree of responsibility is also described as almost too high, 'everybody got a bit shocked'. But another student answers:

They may have tried to show us that you have something in you, trust that, try to challenge yourself, explore it. The fact that we didn't have any frames scared everybody. But then creativity kicks in and you get to know yourself. So, through this project, I think everyone tasted a bit of that.

In comparison, the Orchestra programme seems to be a 'single-activity' or focussed form of professional practice. Asked to describe the programme, one of the students responds briefly: 'Rehearsing and performing orchestra repertoire, in a professional orchestra'. This

type of activity is familiar to the students; it is perceived as the 'most obvious form of practice' there is. However, the context is described as high risk, with little room for failure. To be allowed a place in the programme is described as 'a dream come true', 'to get to work with some of the best musicians in this nation, work closely with them'. Yet it is accompanied by a feeling of anxiety: 'After being granted a place in the programme ... it became more a sense of nervousness than me having great expectations'. The rest of the students agree. Student A adds: 'You know, there is only me playing my part', and another follows up with saying 'It is a bit frightening if there is a lot to do [musically]. You get a bit nervous. But that is a good thing [laughs]'. One student describes the meeting with the orchestra like this:

Student B: I tried not to be visible at all, because in my first week the programme was so crazy that I was just terrified [several students laugh]. So I tried just to enter and sit down and play the as softly as I could.

Students A and B add that it was really not much different than being a regular freelance substitute, and even that many orchestra members probably think that's what they are.

The students report different experiences of the degree to which they have influence over which productions to participate in and hence over repertoire. Student C reports having a great deal of influence over which weeks he worked, and says he selected the weeks in order to perform a varied repertoire and meet different conductors. He even had a week with the chief conductor, he says. Students A and B say they had no influence over these matters, and they seem to be quite sorry about this. Student A says she did not have a week with the chief conductor. The researcher asks the students whether they have influence over other issues, and Student C answers: 'There isn't much to influence, is there?' Further, all students say that they are 'taken seriously' by the orchestra and the orchestral musicians. However, they also say that many in the orchestra seem not to know that they are placement students. The students also have different experiences with the degree to which they are given musical responsibilities. Student D seems to content. Student B seems to be happy with a rather limited position, while Student A reveals disappointment with not being trusted more, musically:

Student B talks about the difference between the solo and tutti position, and seems to be more confident with the tutti position.

Student A: But - that is different from person to person, how we see that issue.

Researcher: Of course.

Student A: I like to have responsibility.

Researcher: You would like to have more?

Student A: Eh. Yes, personally, I have worked as solo many places, and I think that is perfect. ... It would have been great to try that once, to actually have responsibility [in the placement orchestra]. But then they have to trust me [laughs].

In sum, both forms of practice are perceived as high-risk contexts, the first because of its unfamiliar, non-typical features and the second because of its high professional level. Both are valued highly, but Hammerfest seems to stimulate an open discourse on the possibilities of musical activities, while the Orchestra programme seems to stimulate a focussed, traditional musical discourse. The Hammerfest context is manageable because the positive social relations between the students create the necessary low-risk atmosphere. Moreover, they learn and experience that it is okay if they don't always perform (or solve the tasks) at their best, and if they try new things. They are allowed to experiment, in other words, to explore and falter. In the orchestra placement, the tasks are all familiar, but firmly placed in a high-risk context. The fact that there is little room for failure seems to be one of the reasons why the practice context is seen as such a valuable learning arena for these dedicated future orchestral musicians.

## **Interview findings: supervision and reflection**

Both groups of students seem to find supervision and feedback (from teachers, peers or experienced musicians) an important factor stimulating learning in practice, in addition to the very experience of practice itself.

Participating in reflective sessions is experienced differently in Hammerfest than in regular, on-campus sessions. The students find it more important and easier to participate in reflection in Hammerfest. One student says that she just isn't used to reflecting during her everyday life, but here in Hammerfest everything was so different and unfamiliar that reflection became more necessary. In the beginning, the everyday reflective sessions were seen as something new and unfamiliar, but they turned out to be a predictable daily session: 'We did many things that were new and unfamiliar. But we always sat down and reflected on it'. Collaborating with, and getting to know the other students, is seen as a condition for participating in the reflective dialogues. This contributed positively to the social relations among the students, which led to high motivation for participating in the everyday reflective

meetings:

I find it difficult to present ideas in the regular classes, when I don't know who is listening. So, it felt more comfortable to talk and think, knowing who the others were.

The high degree of collaboration in Hammerfest is a central part of the students' positive experiences, which is in keeping with the socio-cultural view of learning, including research on collaborative learning. Thus, social relations - with peers and audiences both - seem to be central to the way students learn in the project, and the collaborative, reflective approach seem to be a key factor in making these learning experiences explicit. The students reported that their need to reflect on activities in which they themselves were participating, along with high-quality questions from the project leader, motivated them to participate actively in the reflective meetings. One student says:

Maybe the fact that we reflected on something that we, ourselves, were a part of, was important. Meaning that we were actively participating in something, and then talking about it afterwards, and it felt important to talk about it, since we were going to do the same thing the next day.

Participating in reflective dialogues contributed further to a continuously higher degree of reflection during the days:

The daily meetings of reflecting together and listening to what the others had to say contributed to making reflection a part of my own work. We discussed the meaning of what we were doing, and we carried it with us during the day, keeping in mind what to bring to the meetings.

All the students assigned high value and significance to reflection. One student describes it this way:

I really believe that being in a dialogue with others speeds up your own development. In a dialogue, you receive, it is like talking to yourself, only much,

much faster, you get input like this [snaps], like we do now. I get a bunch of different views at the same time, as a supplement to my own thoughts - which doesn't happen very often.

This student mentions another, quite similar project, where she very much needed to reflect with others, without any allocated time to do so: 'I didn't have anyone to reflect with there. If we would have sat down like here, reflecting everyday - that is true. It's brilliant!' This is underscored by another student, who relates the high degree of interest in reflection to the fact that the project was unfamiliar and challenging: 'When we have an orchestra project and play together for a week, it's only that - we've always done it. We don't need to reflect as much, since we've played in orchestras and been used to that since childhood'. Another student agrees: 'I think I am just not used to reflecting. It is just a habit. But here, everything is so unusual, that you more or less have to reflect, or else you become crazy, and you will not understand what is going on'.

The orchestra students find supervision and feedback important, but they describe a context in which this happens both in less formal ways and less frequently. They have different experiences with how *formal supervision* is handled by the orchestras. Student C reported not knowing that he was entitled a supervisor or contact person, and Student D is happy not having one. Student A has had fruitful one-to-one lessons with an orchestra musician - quite traditional lessons focussing on repertoire. The students agree that there is a need for better communication between NMH and the orchestras on the matter of supervision.

However, the students find that different types of *informal supervision* and *feedback from fellow musicians* are the most positive experiences in the placement programme:

Student A: The best part is when the one who sits next to me offers constructive feedback. This has taught me so much, for instance how incredibly loud you can play when you're playing second on your instrument ... You don't get that [kind of feedback] as a freelancer.

The degree of feedback the students receive varies. Some orchestra musicians provide a lot of feedback, 'while others don't say a thing'.

The students identify constructive feedback from experienced fellow musicians (mainly individual feedback from the person 'next to me') as a highly valuable way of learning in orchestra practice. Again, social relations play an important role, this time very much in line

with the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development.<sup>22)</sup>

## **Interview findings: value and relevance**

Both groups of students seem to find the programmes valuable and relevant, but for quite different reasons. A main difference is that the Hammerfest project seems to challenge the identity of the student musician, while the Orchestra programme seems to confirm it. One of the Hammerfest students says: 'This inspires me to reflect more about the presentation of music, more than playing with the correct sound'. And another: 'Here, the attention was directed at creating something together. This made me turn the focus away from myself, and think more about the audiences'. Several of the students talk about how the connection with, or the focus on, audiences made them more aware of how to present their music: 'From now on I will perhaps think differently about all of my concerts'. This is linked to a shift in focus:

Now I have realized that a concert is about the music and playing together. I got to play in the big band with the locals here in Hammerfest. It was all about getting a grip of the music and make a good show.

The Hammerfest students start to question the reasons for becoming a musician, and what kind of musicians they would like to become. The project 'made me start thinking' about the future. A student questions whether 'how I look, how I sound' is all there is to it. 'Should I just keep doing that for the rest of my life? ... If I start teaching, what will my role be?' and she adds: 'Shouldn't we expand the expectations?' The students may not want to continue doing all of the activities they did in Hammerfest, but they find the experiences coming from the project important for their development as future musicians.

All the Orchestra students also find the programme highly valuable. Student A says 'I am big-time satisfied', and Student D says that the programme is the very reason he applied for the Master's programme in the first place. It is the single most important thing for him, he says, because it is about what he wants. There are several reasons the students value the placement programme. One is as a pathway into a professional, high-level orchestra. 'It is a way in', the students say. A second, related issue is networking. The students find this highly valuable: 'You get the chance to talk to people. And boom, you are in. In a way, that is what the Master's programme is about'. Third, the students are grateful for the work experience the placement programme gives them, to be given the chance to play in a real orchestra for two years. And they state the importance of working in the same orchestra

with the same people during an extended period of time. This gives them the chance to get to know the orchestra culture, to understand what kind of musicians the orchestra is looking for, and to pick up some hints about what to focus on in auditions. According to the students, things are more difficult to understand as a freelancer, as freelance work means shorter contracts in a number of orchestras. When asked about whether the placement programme has changed their view of their professional role, Student B says that it has. Her goal is no longer to become the solo player on her instrument (in the orchestra). She has realized that she rather would play second. She likes to follow, to blend in, she says, and is happy to avoid the stressful solo position. Her colleague, Student A, maintains that her goal is still to become the solo player.

In the last part of the interview, the students start discussing another course in the Master's programme, in which students develop their own projects in creative ways. Student B is critical, or even ironic, and describe the idea as «these creative projects that preferably should be with cool lighting, smoke on stage or at places with no people, and the best is perhaps if you don't play a single note'. These students seem to be devoted to the idea of becoming orchestral musicians, and talks about this as Plan A. The Master's Programme, however, seems to «start with Plan B from the very beginning', according to Student D. That is, to prepare students for a job situation *outside* the orchestra.

In sum, the two contexts of learning could be seen as core practices,<sup>23)</sup> due to their resemblance of real life musicianship. The Hammerfest week seems to have raised a range of questions: about the role and tasks of the students as future musicians, about musicians' identities, about music itself, about working as a portfolio musician, and about 'expanding the frames'. In this sense, the Hammerfest project is probably more capable of developing the kind of innovation, professional flexibility and understanding of cultural differences and social contexts that Gaunt and Westerlund identify as the way forward for HME.<sup>24)</sup> And it may have the potential of providing 'new forms of activity which are not yet there'.<sup>25)</sup> In comparison, the orchestra students highlight the importance of getting a chance to understand the orchestra culture, and of networking, getting an entrance into the orchestra, a 'way in'. The students perceive their participation as a dream come true and as experience with real life. These statements hint at the strengths, or powers, of the social mechanisms at play in these rather different social contexts, the local, cultural municipality and the professional orchestra, which seem to affect both the learning outcomes and the ways of learning.



## Interview findings: learning on campus and learning in practice



**Figure 2** Understanding the orchestra culture. (Photo: Zbigniew Ziggi Wantuch).

Both groups of students compare the experiences from practice with ‘normal’ on-campus learning. As we have seen, the Hammerfest students see the project as different because of the emphasis on collaboration, reflection on action, the wide range of professional tasks, and the way in which they are taken out of their comfort zones.

The orchestra students also describe differences between on-campus learning and learning in practice. Student D says that there is less ‘direct feedback’ in the orchestra. It is more a matter of ‘learning by doing’. He continues to describe the way he learns in the orchestra, by using phrases such as ‘you pick up things during extended periods of time’, ‘you just learn things every time that you are not necessarily conscious about’, ‘you just get it’, ‘You learn to listen, you learn to follow. And I think you are more attentive’. These experiences are contrasted with quite critical comments about the student orchestra at The Norwegian Academy. The main critical points are the extensive rehearsal periods, the focus on ‘just

playing in time', and the limited attention to how to act, listen and communicate musically as orchestral musicians, for instance 'knowing that you may need to listen to the trumpet in order to start correctly along with the clarinet'. Student B describes these contrasts as follows:

Student B: Well, [in the professional orchestra] it is not just about a conductor standing there repeating the same section for 15 minutes because people haven't prepared, or because people don't know how to listen, or don't know how to count. In a professional orchestra, everyone knows what to do. And I, as a student, who is also well-prepared, will, I think, learn more from knowing how to act and behave in the orchestra. Or how to better connect [musically] with other instruments. Or when to listen to the second oboe player. And how to hear the second oboist at all, way over there. Those things. There is no focus on such things in the orchestra at the Academy.

A main difference between the professional and school orchestra contexts is the higher level of professional orchestras, according to the students. And this high level demands serious practising of the orchestral repertoire, which again makes possible another way of acting in the orchestra:

Student B: You are in a way not so focussed on just practising, practising, practising. You are more focussed on how to be in the orchestra, in a way. How the attitude is supposed to be, how to work as effectively as possible.

Student A: Like listening, for example. Where to listen? Who to watch? Not many know that on the bachelor level [laughs].

Student D: Nobody tells you have to do those things.

Student B: Nobody tells you how to do those things. It isn't until I have worked professionally that my attention has been drawn to this.

Researcher: Can you give any examples of such things?

Student A: Yes, for example that no one has ever said 'now you should look at the double basses, they have the rhythm there'. Or if you are playing unison with the violins: 'don't look at the conductor, look at the concert master'. And things like

that, which no one tells you.

The students describe how they learn ways of listening, ways of watching and of acting in the orchestra. They even talk about 'learning how to *be* in the orchestra'. These ways of learning, or these learning experiences, are probably best understood as results of taking part of a community of practice,<sup>26)</sup> as being enculturated in a specific, professional orchestra culture, with its codes, procedures, musical and bodily actions, and, of course, spoken statements and feedback. The orchestra offers the students a range of tools for understanding orchestral playing and acting. The students are onto this themselves, when they underline the importance of being allowed a long-term placement programme in a specific orchestra. They get to know the desired ways of acting musically in this particular orchestra, while acknowledging that orchestras are not all the same. Their critique of the student orchestra is perhaps due to the lack of such a developed orchestra culture, with its extensive rehearsal hours and the perceived narrow focus on 'just playing in time'. The learning that takes place, is in other words highly situated and contextual.<sup>27)</sup>

## **The potential of professional work placement**

Based on the findings of this empirical study, professional work placement has the potential of playing a major part of HME Master's programmes, as it has in other higher education settings. Interestingly, both contexts of practice described in this article are valued highly by the involved students, despite the many differences between the contexts. The Hammerfest context is characterized by high degrees of collaboration, reflection, responsibility and freedom, and by the number of unfamiliar musical challenges and tasks. The unfamiliar challenges and the high degree of responsibility and freedom creates a high-risk setting, which students handle through collaboration and reflection. The project seems to stimulate students to develop their understanding of the role and identity of the musician, the role of music in society, the relationship with audiences, and their confidence in facing an expanded array of musical tasks. The students seem to have learned a number of things they did not expect, and to have discovered aspects of musicianship of which they were not yet aware. In comparison, the Orchestra context is valued primarily for its relevance, in the sense of representing the very professional arena for which these particular students prepare. High-risk features, in particular high musical quality, high expectations and little room for failure, also characterize the context. The students therefore experience a great deal of responsibility, but less freedom. The students learn ways of performing, listening and acting in a professional setting, and this learning takes place because the students are included in a highly experienced community of practice.

In sum, both forms of practice seem to complement on-campus teaching and learning in important ways. The Hammerfest context offers a collaborative, reflective and explorative practice setting in which students can experiment with different components of musicianship, and in which they are given freedom to falter. The orchestra students are given an entry into a professional, high-quality community of experienced musicians who can guide the students in developing high-quality orchestra musicianship. The fact that both contexts are found valuable and relevant makes it difficult to suggest that one context should be preferred to the other. This article has shed some light on the details of these differences, however, and on the details of the different foci, ways of learning and types of outcome in these forms of practice. In that respect, the Hammerfest project seems to meet the requirements of what is described as features of future musicianship the best.<sup>28)</sup> Still, the orchestra placement students are devoted to the idea of becoming orchestral musicians, and for these particular students the placement programme is of vital importance. The findings of this study suggest that instead of choosing between such forms of practice, higher music education institutions should find ways of including a range of professional practice settings precisely because of their differences. The findings underline the importance of learning in and through practice, and of the role of practice also when it comes to developing professional musicianship. At their best, these forms of practice have the potential of bringing dedicated people together in order to discuss, reflect on and develop the multifaceted reflective and craftsmanship dimensions of becoming a musician for the future.

## Endnotes

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