

Tertiary musical performance education: An artistic education for life or an out- dated concept of musicianship?

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Introduction

The place of classical music in society is changing, and careers in music performance are changing with it. How are music conservatories reacting to these changes? Can students gain knowledge that enables them to find their own way in the changed and changing world of classical music? This study explores whether German conservatories are providing their students with the knowledge and skills required by the current job market for orchestral musicians in Germany.¹⁾

Jobs in music performance

Germany has a centuries-old orchestral tradition; professional orchestras currently numbering about 130, of which 70-90 per cent are state funded.²⁾

Kulturfinanzen/Tabellen/AusgabenKunstKulturpflege.html (accessed 13 January 2015). The vast majority of public funds for music (95 per cent) are devoted to traditional institutions such as opera houses and concert halls.³⁾ But following German reunification, in 1990, a number of orchestras were dissolved or merged for economic reasons.⁴⁾ This resulted in a reduction in the number of jobs available for orchestral musicians, and this trend seems to have continued, with a 19 per cent decrease in the number of musicians employed in state financed orchestras between 1991 and 2012.⁵⁾ Concurrently, the number of graduates in the subject of music performance was reported by the Music Information Centre, Germany (MIZ), to have risen by 43 per cent between 2001 and 2005,⁶⁾ although it was acknowledged by the authors that such data is susceptible of some bias.⁷⁾ Reliable data seem to be lacking. Other data, supplied by the KSK (social security fund for artists in Germany) support the assumption of increasing numbers of music graduates in Germany, showing four times as

many applications for membership of the KSK submitted by musicians in 2012 than in 1991.⁸⁾ In particular, this represents freelance rather than orchestral musicians.

Thus, it is evident that increasing numbers of music performance graduates from Germany's 24 music conservatories must take up alternative occupations to the orchestral career for which they were specifically trained. Earlier studies conducted in Germany suggest that fewer than 20 per cent of such graduates currently secure a permanent position in an orchestra.⁹⁾

The occupations of graduates in performance programmes thus seem to be changing, suggesting that additional or alternative skills to those provided by traditional music performance curricula may be required. Indeed, it may also be pertinent to assess the suitability of the current curriculum to the minority of graduates actually obtaining an orchestral job.

Music performance curricula

The Bologna process (starting in 2004 in Germany) required music conservatories as well as universities to develop Bachelor's and Master's programmes to replace the former Diploma. According to the 'Kultusministerkonferenz' - the conference of all state ministers responsible for questions concerning the arts and culture - the predominant focus of the Bachelor's programme in music performance is to develop artistic disciplines along with their theoretical basics and practical skills.¹⁰⁾

In contrast, Master's programmes are to focus on a particular field of professional musical activity.¹¹⁾ So the main difference between Bachelor's and Master's programmes is a broader education during the Bachelor's that enables the students to further develop themselves, whereas the Master's provides specialization in a particular field of music performance. The Bologna process was seen by its advocates as a chance to reassess tertiary education in terms of the interrelation between the curriculum and subsequent professions.

State of the art in national and international literature

Research on higher education in music in Germany, and the proficiency of graduates of orchestral instruments, is limited and lacking in coherence, not least because the theory of practice remains a largely untouched field.¹²⁾ Germany warrants special attention, because no other country in the world supports as many state funded conservatories (24) and orchestras (133).

As research into higher music education has developed in other countries, initiatives such as the AEC (Association of European Orchestras) and the Innovative Conservatoire have been established to encourage international cooperation in developing higher music education. The AEC's project, *Polifonia*, focuses on issues that are pertinent to the situation in Germany, including curriculum reform, governance reform, possibilities for cooperation among institutions of higher education and organizations within the professional field, and matters concerned with the quality and attractiveness of musical education in Europe in general.¹³⁾ However, so far, these studies involve only three of Germany's 56 institutions, which suggests that further data are necessary.

An extensive overview of research in higher music education in general has been provided by Harald Jørgensen.¹⁴⁾ Peter Renshaw addressed the requirements for graduates in an increasingly freelancing job market in Britain very early on, Dawn Bennet has published some of the most elaborate research in the field, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and Heiner Gembris is so far the only scholar who has explored the situation in Germany.¹⁵⁾ Although these researchers come to slightly different conclusions, relating to the different countries under study, the underlying question, according to Jørgensen, is whether performance is 'so dominant in the minds and bodies of students in our institutions that they close their eyes to other opportunities in the music world'.¹⁶⁾

In the next section, a more detailed view is provided on research conducted by these and other researchers in Germany and Europe. Gembris and Langner published the first quantitative inquiry into the professional activities of musicians in 2005, and they found that a large number of music performance graduates who had trained to play in an orchestra had pursued other occupations after graduation. But this research is now over ten years old, and numerous practitioners have published observations on the state of higher education in music performance.¹⁷⁾ The aim of our study, therefore, was to develop an up-to-date assessment of musicians' professional occupations and their interrelationship with music in higher education, with particular respect to German tradition.

The basis of this study is the observation that the number of graduates is increasing while the number of permanent jobs in the state-funded orchestras is decreasing, resulting in an increasing number of freelance musicians in the music market. The questions addressed were therefore (1) how have the institutions of higher education in music have risen to the changes (2) what are the implications for the educational requirements of musicians within the Bologna process?

We hypothesized a discrepancy between the tertiary education of musicians in performance-oriented programmes and the knowledge and non-musical skills used in their professional

occupations. The hypothesis was tested using a nationwide questionnaire aimed at graduates of German music performance programmes over the past 10 years. Two specific questions were addressed:

- What are the professional occupations of graduates in musical performance?
- How were requirements for the professional lives of these graduates addressed by their education?

Methods

An online questionnaire was developed using the 'Unipark' software (QuestBack, Germany). It was limited to graduates of orchestral music performance programmes in Germany between 2004 and 2014. The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions, most of which were closed questions with a set of responses from which to choose. Multiple answers were allowed. The questions were subdivided into four major sets. In the first set, socio-demographic data were requested, to provide an easy entry to the questionnaire. The second set focused on the goals of music students and the image they have of the job of professional musician at the beginning of their performance programme. In the third set, participants were questioned extensively on their course programmes. The fourth set of questions were devoted to career development.

The questionnaire was available online between 1 April and 3 May 2014, and was distributed via multiple Internet networks. A formal letter was written to Alumni networks of the 24 German music conservatories and the 'Netzwerk Musikhochschulen' (which attempts to improve the cooperation and quality management between the different conservatories). The questionnaire was also uploaded to various music-related Facebook groups, whose members were asked to further distribute the document, to encourage a snowball effect. Youth orchestras were asked to distribute the questionnaire among their alumni, and personal contacts within the classical music scene were engaged. Several music associations were approached, and the 'ZAV-Künstlervermittlung', a German state institution that supports musicians in finding employment, sent an email to approximately 1,000 musicians. It was anticipated that the diversity of distribution channels would generate a valid sample. Two weeks into the online phase of the study, a reminder was sent via all the initial network contacts and the alumni offices of the conservatories were contacted by telephone. During the study period 912 persons accessed the questionnaire, and it was completed by 319 musicians. On average participants took sixteen minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Results

The ages of the participants in the sample were between 22 and 44 years. Sixty-three per cent were female and thirty-seven per cent male. The distribution of the sample approximates the ratio of music graduates in each of the sixteen German states and the size and number of Musikhochschulen per state. The distribution of instruments among the participants is similar to the seats available in an orchestra and congruent with the ratio of graduates per instrument and year per German state (Table 1).

Instrument	Frequency	Proportion of respondents %
Flute	31	8.2
Oboe	32	8.4
Clarinet	34	9.0
Bassoon	17	4.5
Horn	13	3.4
Trumpet	16	4.2
Trombone	9	2.4
Tuba	4	1.1
Violin	57	15.0
Viola	32	8.4
Violoncello	34	9.0
Double bass	12	3.2
Percussion	18	4.7
Harp	10	2.6

Table 1 The distribution of instruments among 319 ($n=319$) participants. Note that more than one instrument can be chosen. Overall, 67 per cent of the participants had graduated within the last five years.

Original career aims

Asked about their career aims at the beginning of their studies at the conservatory, more than two thirds (77 per cent) of the sample claimed to have wanted to be an orchestral musician (Table 2); 17 per cent were definite about their aim of becoming a freelancing musician from the start. Nine per cent wanted to either be an instrument teacher or were

not definite about their career aim to start with. Three per cent answered 'others' as the career they had aspired to. Among those were mainly school teachers (music) and a few potential conductors and sound engineers.

Initial career aim	Frequency	Proportion of respondents %
Orchestral musician	247	77
Freelancing musician	53	17
Instrumental teacher	47	15
Not yet decided	50	16
Others	8	3

Table 2 *The distribution of career aims at the start of conservatory education. Note that more than one category could be chosen.*

When asking the musicians about their reasons for changing career aims, 37 per cent replied that their aim had changed by the time they had graduated (Table 3). Of these, 47.3 per cent noted that the reality of the job was different from their expectations.

Reason for change of career aims	Frequency	Proportion of respondents %
Could not find permanent employment with an orchestra	33	19.8
Reality of the job was different to expectations	79	47.3
Payment was too low	21	12.6
Other reasons	34	20.4

Table 3 *Distribution of reasons for change of career aims for n=167 respondents. Note that more than one reason could be given.*

Current jobs of musicians

Participants were asked about their job situation. Overall 144 of n=319 replied that they

only held one job, whereas 175 had at least two. Fifty-three respondents were pursuing three or more occupations. Freelancing and teaching were the most frequent combination (108 respondents). Freelancing was combined with a non-music-related job in 28 cases (Table 4).

	Secondary Jobs								
	Orchestra perm.	Orchestra temp.	Freelance	Teacher	Intern	Non-musical job	Student	Apprentice	
Primary Job	Orchestra perm.	23.2	0.0	2.5	2.8	0.0	0.6	1.6	0.0
Orchestra temp.	0.0	12.5	6.0	4.7	0.3	0.6	4.1	0.0	
Freelance	2.5	6.0	58.6	33.9	1.9	8.8	8.8	0.3	
Teacher	2.8	4.7	33.9	41.4	1.3	5.6	7.8	0.0	
Intern	0.0	0.3	1.9	1.3	3.4	0.3	1.9	0.0	
Non-musical job	0.6	0.6	8.8	5.6	0.3	14.7	2.2	0.0	
Student	1.6	4.1	8.8	7.8	1.9	2.2	19.4	0.0	
Apprentice	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	

Table 4 Proportion (%) of participants with particular job combinations (n=319).

Perception of the musical profession

Another question asked was: ‘How realistic is the image of the professional job that students have at the beginning of their course?’ Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale (5=very realistic, 1=very unrealistic). Sixty per cent of the respondents perceived it as partly or very unrealistic (Table 5), whereas about 30 per cent perceived the image as realistic or very realistic.

	Very realistic	Partly realistic	Neutral	Partly unrealistic	Very unrealistic	Mean	SD
Score	5	4	3	2	1	3.38	1.11
%	3	29	9	47	13		
Frequency	9	91	29	149	41		

Table 5 The proportion of respondents stating how realistically music students picture the job of a professional musician (n=319).

Career planning

To investigate the previous question in more detail we asked how students informed themselves about their future employment perspectives. They were given three options: ‘By discussion with their professor as part of their major subject’, ‘from information provided in minor subjects’, or ‘through discussion outside the conservatory with others’ (Table 6). Again, these options were rated on a five-point Likert scale, from ‘very often’ (score=5) to ‘never’ (score=1).

	number	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	SD
Score		5	4	3	2	1		
In the principal subject	313	15	20	28	28	9	3.03	1.20
In minor subjects	303	2	5	21	40	33	2.02	0.93
Outside the conservatory	248	22	42	21	6	10	3.61	1.18

Table 6 The distribution of engagement with future perspectives in defined surroundings [%].

Almost two thirds of respondents (64 per cent answered ‘very often’ and ‘often’) informed themselves about future perspectives outside the conservatory. The teacher of the principal subject was a regular partner for discussion for about one third of the participants (35 per cent answered ‘very often’ and ‘often’), while 73 per cent answered ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ for their engagement with future perspectives in minor subjects.¹⁸⁾

Availability of career information

The following question focused on musicians’ sources of information about future work perspectives. With a mean of 2.24 on a five-point Likert scale (5=very good, 1=bad) the majority of respondents reported the level of information on future perspectives as insufficient (68 per cent rated 1 or 2, ‘insufficient’ or ‘bad’) (Table 7). Only 7 per cent rated that information had been ‘very good’, or ‘good’.

Very good Good Sufficient Insufficient Bad N Mean SD

Score	5	4	3	2	1	2.24	0.86
Frequency	6	16	80	163	54	319	
%	2	5	25	51	17	100	

Table 7 Availability of information on future perspectives among music students.

Perceived importance of classical music within modern society

To investigate the self-perception of classical musicians we asked: ‘What significance has classical music for society nowadays?’ It was found that only 15 per cent of the musicians feel that classical music is ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ for modern society. Instead, 31 per cent rated its significance as ‘little’ or ‘insignificant’. Fifty-five per cent of the musicians consider it moderately significant (Table 8).

	Very significant	Significant	Moderately significant	Of little significance	Completely insignificant	Mean	SD
Score	5	4	3	2	1	2.84	0.76
%	3	12	55	29	2		
Frequency	9	37	147	92	7		

Table 8 The stated significance of classical music in modern society (n=319), according to the musicians.

Engagement with audiences

With regard to the contemporary significance of classical music, the degree of reflection or intellectual engagement that music students invest in consideration of their future audience was assessed by asking, ‘How much and with whom have you engaged with the development of audiences during your studies’. Possible answers were ‘with professors’, ‘with student colleagues’, ‘through books’, ‘through newspapers’, ‘professional journals’,¹⁹⁾ and ‘outside the conservatory’. Again, the respondents rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 =very often to 1=never) (Table 9).

	With professors	Students	Books	Newspapers	Music journals	Outside the conservatory
N	314	313	365	307	310	314
Mean	2.2	2.9	2.03	2.66	3.06	3.17

SD 1 1.01 1.08 1.02 1.09 1

Table 9 Media through which music students have engaged with contemporary audiences (5=very often, 1=never).

None of the means was in the range 'often' (=4) or 'very often' (=5). Apart from 'through music journals' all means were below 3 ('rarely' and 'never') (Table 9).

Minor subjects in the eyes of musicians

The curricula of performance programmes were investigated. Music performance studies in Germany are primarily aimed at the development of instrumental skills that are conveyed by the teacher of the principal subject.²⁰⁾ The role of principal teacher has been studied and was found to be important if not dominant.²¹⁾ Still, whatever the importance of the principal subject, performance curricula also include various minor subjects, such as music history, aural training and chamber music, among others. In the survey, these were collected into subgroups labelled: music theory, career development courses, contextual subjects (political, philosophical and sociological topics, which offer explanations of the context within which professional musicians operate), pedagogical subjects, other art forms and internships. All courses listed in an overview of the German conservatories were considered, although none of them was found to offer all of the courses listed. Participants were asked how important they perceived the listed subjects/topics to be (5= very important to 1= completely unimportant) (Table 10).

Ranking	Subject	Mean	SD
1	Chamber music	4.85	0.5
2	Orchestral internship	4.79	0.56
3	Audition training	4.72	0.63
6	Mental training	4.61	0.71
5	Accompaniment	4.6	0.8
4	Aural training	4.58	0.64
8	Body techniques	4.47	0.8
7	Orchestra	4.46	0.88
9	Harmony	4.38	0.72
10	Music history	4.34	0.73
11	Law & taxes for musicians (KSK, GVL, GEMA)	4.11	1.05

12	Improvisation	4.1	0.99
15	Contemporary music	4.07	0.99
13	Musical syntax	4.05	0.88
14	Music conveyance	4.05	0.91
17	Historical practice	4.02	0.95
16	Musical form	4.01	0.9
18	Marketing, Business	3.98	1.15
19	Methodology	3.94	0.93
20	Medics for musicians	3.94	1.02
21	Didactics	3.86	0.94
22	Organology	3.81	0.92
23	Work shadowing	3.78	1.02
24	Acoustics	3.76	0.96
25	Choir/Singing	3.67	1.07
26	Sociology of music	3.67	1.02
28	Cultural politics	3.61	1.06
27	Internship at cultural institution	3.57	1.05
29	Counterpoint	3.51	1.05
30	Aesthetics, Philosophy	3.44	1.03
31	Instrument manufactory	3.39	1.05
32	Research on audience	3.34	1.06
33	Sound engineering	3.3	0.96
34	Theatre	3.21	1.08
36	Elementary teaching	3.11	1.1
35	Dancing	3.07	1.15
37	Visual art	2.88	1.05
38	Moviemaking	2.74	1.04
39	Creative writing	2.7	1.12
40	Internship interdisciplinary	2.56	1.25

Table 10 Preferences for subjects (1 = very important to 5 = completely unimportant).

The ten most important minor subjects deal with instrument competences. Competences related to the field of music business were ranked in eleventh place (law and taxes for

musicians), eighteenth place (marketing, business), and towards the end of the ranking ‘movie-making’ (thirty-eighth) and ‘creative writing’ (thirty-ninth).

The overview shows clear tendencies for contextual subjects such as ‘cultural politics’, ‘sociology of music’, ‘research on audience’ and so forth to be perceived as less important than practical classes or traditional subjects from the field of musicology, represented by ‘sociology of music’ (rank 26) and ‘research on audience’ (rank 32) – all in the last quarter of the ratings and thereby ascribed very limited relevance. All of the contextual subjects are rated considerably lower than traditional and practical subjects.

Significance of minor subjects

The importance of minor subjects was assessed by asking, ‘What significance did minor subjects have to you during your course?’. Forty-three per cent of respondents judged minor subjects as ‘partly’ significant. Another 34 per cent ascribed minor subjects ‘low’ or ‘very low’ significance (Table 11).

Value of minor subjects	Very high	High	Partly	Low	Very low	Mean	SD
Score	5	4	3	2	1	2.86	1.06
Frequency	24	52	136	70	37		
%	8	16	43	22	12		

Table 11 The value of minor subjects. Distribution and frequencies (n=319).

Characterization of the studies

A general assessment of curricula was made by asking, ‘How would you characterize your course?’. Participants were asked to describe the quality of their studies in terms of being ‘artistic’, ‘creative’, ‘manual/technical’, ‘multifaceted’ and ‘focused on a particular job’ (Table 12). Participants predominantly ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the characterization of their studies as being ‘artistic’ and ‘focused’. The level of agreement described by ‘multifaceted’ and ‘creative’ was lower.

Characterization of the studies	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Rather disagree	Disagree completely	Mean	SD
Score	5	4	3	2	1		

Artistic n = 317	125	126	52	10	4	4.13	0.88
Creative n = 315	35	89	111	67	13	3.21	1.03
Manual n = 315	110	125	56	18	6	4	0.96
Multifaceted n = 316	35	69	102	86	24	3.02	1.11
Focused n = 316	133	96	50	31	6	4.01	1.07

Table 12 *Characterization of the studies.*

These results emphasized that programmes are not perceived as multifaceted or creative but as focused on the manual instrumental competence.

Competences

The next cluster of questions compared competences - described as 'discipline', 'adaptability', 'autonomy', 'sensitivity', 'communication skills' and 'creativity' - between the level of achievement respondents had gained during their education, the level achieved in their current job and the level achieved by a typical orchestral musician. For 'current job' and 'orchestra musicians' participants were asked to rate the *importance* of the listed competences, while for the 'study programme', they were asked to what extent they had *acquired* these competences during their studies. Again, the respondents could choose from a scale of 'strongly agree' score 5 and 'disagree completely' score 1 (Table 13).

	Communication- skills (SD)	Discipline (SD)	Autonomy (SD)	Sensitivity (SD)	Adaptability (SD)	Creativity (SD)
Study course	3.3 (1.17)	4.2 (0.90)	3.9 (1.09)	3.6 (1.07)	3.6 (1.02)	3.3 (1.06)
Job	4.8 (0.59)	4.6 (0.66)	4.6 (0.68)	4.4 (0.85)	4.4 (0.87)	4.0 (1.1)
Orchestra	4.5 (0.77)	4.6 (0.63)	3.6 (1.08)	4.1 (0.99)	4.7 (0.50)	3.0 (1.14)

Table 13 *'Comparison of means for skills acquired in the 'study programme' and their importance in the 'current job' and for the 'ideal orchestra musician' (5=strongly agree, 1=disagree completely).*

'Discipline' was generally rated highly for both the 'current job' and the 'typical orchestral musician'. 'Adaptability' was rated as most relevant for orchestral musicians (4.7). A general discrepancy was apparent between the required skills for 'typical orchestral musicians', the 'current job' and the level of achievement from conservatory education. This difference was greatest for the category 'communication skills', deviating by 1.5 in respect to the skills

needed in the 'current job', or by 1.2 in the 'orchestra'. A similar outcome was observed with respect to 'sensitivity' and 'adaptability'. 'Autonomy' and 'creativity' were reported to be strongly required for the 'current job' of the respondents (the vast majority of whom were freelancers). In contrast, these competences were not reported to be as important for an 'orchestral position'.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess how the 24 music conservatoires in Germany have reacted to changes in the job market for professional musicians. To investigate this, we analysed the answers given by 319 respondents. All respondents were professional musicians having received a diploma, Bachelor's or Master's degree in the last ten years.

Current occupations vs. career aims

The original aim of the majority of musicians, to be employed by a professional orchestra, had not been achieved. At the start of their studies 77 per cent had aspired to an orchestral position (this points in a similar direction as the study by Gembris and Langner, in which 60 per cent gave orchestral musician as their career aim²²⁾), yet only 23.2 per cent – less than one third – had obtained a permanent position as an orchestral player at the time of the questionnaire (Table 3). In contrast, at the beginning of their professional education only 17 per cent of participants were aiming to be freelance musicians, but 58.6 per cent of the sample were found to work in the freelancing field. Similarly, 41.4 per cent are working as teachers today, whereas only 15 per cent had wished to do so while studying music. In contrast to the results of the study by Gembris and Langner, there were considerably fewer graduates with a permanent position in an orchestra in our sample.²³⁾

Portfolio careers in national and international literature

These findings are similar to those reported internationally, that graduates are engaging in so-called 'protean' or 'portfolio' careers.²⁴⁾ Despite specializing in a particular field of music (chamber music and/or contemporary music) graduates still engage in teaching. This suggests that teaching skills should be considered part of performance programmes, even in specialized Master's courses where teaching is usually not a part of the course at all. Assuming that freelancers occasionally perform as ensemble players, they also have to engage with all the issues of ensemble management and marketing, such as audience development, fundraising, budgeting, marketing, press work, and so forth.²⁵⁾ Not only the managerial but also the creative part of managing an ensemble becomes important. In

contrast to orchestral musicians, freelancers need to develop an artistic profile, design programmes, and develop a strategy for finding an audience or engaging funding boards to support their ensemble.²⁶⁾

Contextual knowledge and competences

The data suggests a lack of reflection on audiences and on the context within which professional musicians are acting. The very limited attention given to audiences (Table 9) is disappointing in terms of developing a modern approach to dealing with classical music. Still, the observed neglect of the audience as a determining factor of the musical profession is also present in the media discourse on how the field of classical music could be developed.²⁷⁾

Being a musician is often considered a privilege – a fulfilling and meaningful career. Yet, the responses suggest little self-confidence. More than 80 per cent of these young musicians, who can be seen as ‘ambassadors’ of classical music, consider their profession to be of little or no importance to our society (Table 8). The finding that young musicians do not perceive themselves as creative (Table 12) suggests that they are not ideally suited to finding inspired solutions to today’s problems. Considering these results in the light of the participants’ own descriptions of the requirement of creativity as an orchestral musician (Table 13), and noting the literature on the profession,²⁸⁾ an obvious disparity presents itself: the *real world*²⁹⁾ seems to demand skills that are juxtaposed to those required for the aspired-to employment, and that do not seem to be part of performance curricula.

The concept of the ‘reflective practitioner’ highlights the need for critical thinking and the ability to analyse situations at an abstract level.³⁰⁾ Yet, the aim here was to lay a scientific basis for determining which subjects provide students with appropriate knowledge, and for training their critical thinking so that professional musicians have the ability to reflect on their professional practice and the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Contextual subjects were considered by participants to be less relevant than practical ones (Table 10). It is suggested that the dominant influence of the teacher of the principal subject (instrument), with whom a music student builds an intimate relationship, influences this bias. Contextual subjects are becoming increasingly important in predominantly freelancing careers. Freelance musicians need to be entirely self-sufficient in terms of managing their enterprise. Important skills thus include the ability to find an audience by identifying interest groups, interpreting cultural policy and empathizing with aesthetic preferences.

Sources of information

As the level of information on future perspectives in general was assessed as 'poor' (Table 7), and a discrepancy was observed between the skills acquired during the course and those used in the current job (Table 12), it is important to assess the sources of such knowledge –the people and material that students consult. The study revealed that questions and issues related to future prospects of musicians are predominantly discussed outside the conservatory. This indicates that the resources they rely on for career planning are neither academic nor professional, and are thus unlikely to be provided by experts. This seems particularly disadvantageous for the vast majority of graduates now entering into diverse careers, leaving them underprepared for their eventual job. These challenges might be met in two ways. Orchestra academies might be developed so that students who want a career as an orchestral musician develop the required skills right with their future employer. Another possibility would be to diversify study programmes along the lines of the graduates' future perspectives.

We would not be doing justice to the complexity of the problem if the only result of these findings was the suggestion to change the curricula. It is legitimate to ask why it is that respondents still do not seem to lack contextual knowledge. Gembris and Langner observed that career development courses were often not available.³¹⁾ In a 2013 nationwide survey of all public conservatories in Germany, Martin Lücke showed that suitable courses are still not available in half of the programmes.³²⁾ Apart from the simple observation that career support is not available, the current study shows that the competences required by the graduates make up a minimal proportion of their studies. Still, as suggested by the survey, contextual knowledge should be understood not only as information about possible careers, but also as knowledge on politics societal changes, audiences, etc. as essential parts of higher music education.

Reluctance

The results highlighted a contradiction that is becoming apparent between the perception of a student's level of information concerning their future perspectives and their own willingness to deal with such issues. When the respondents were asked to rate subjects in terms of their necessity as part of a sensible performance-oriented curriculum (Table 10), practical and traditional subjects gained a significantly higher score than subjects such as culture politics or sociology of music, that would have the potential to inform students on the broader context and developments music within society and the classical music scene. Again, these findings are supported by international research.³³⁾

A degree of reluctance can be expected from undergraduate performance majors who are asked to expend valuable time acquiring the broader skills needed to sustain a career in music, especially when their intended career is entirely in performance, and students often do not understand the relevance of non-performance skills.³⁴⁾

Two matters need to be addressed in this context: first, the long musical journey students have already undertaken when they start at the conservatory, and second, the role of one-to-one tuition in tertiary music education. Magdalena Bork's very detailed analysis of the professional life of a musician has shown how children start on their path towards professional musicianship. Many players start very young and have parents who are professional musicians or who have a particular idea of their offspring becoming famous soloists.³⁵⁾ Just as often, a talented young musician is supported within the system of music schools, youth orchestras and competitions, which encourage expectations of life as a professional musician, but also limit expectations of what is possible.

One-to-one tuition is the dominant feature of music education. Strong bonds and dependencies evolve between students and professors, who serve as mentors and role models.³⁶⁾ This has been examined by several researchers outside Germany, and similar tendencies were observed in the current study. Table 12 highlights the focus of the study programmes on a particular job, namely as a permanently employed orchestral musician. As Tables 10 and 11 suggest, minor subjects have been perceived as less relevant, but could in theory deliver the required competences for establishing a successful career. To ensure a rounded argument, we generated a sample of the five conservatories of Baden Württemberg and assessed the weight given to the principal subject through credit points. With one exception, about half the credit points of a BA in music performance were granted for the principal subject (Table 14). In terms of broadening the students' horizon, then, it seems clear that there is room for improvement. This is relevant in the context of this study, because due to the strong relationship between teachers and students it is important to convince the professors of the necessity of an improved education. At the same time, professors cannot all be expected to be competent in career-development questions. This might be particularly pertinent to Germany, since most have been permanently employed in major orchestras before achieving their professorship, and have little experience of other employment. Allsup names this problem scholasticism³⁷⁾ - the challenge arising from musicians being educated to be experts in their musical craft, rather than developing independent and creative ideas for their own future.

Conservatory Course		Credit Points over all	Principal subject
Stuttgart BA	BA of Music	199/203	168CP
Freiburg BA	BA of Music	182	122CP
	BA of Music Performance and pedagogical profile	153	103CP
Mannheim BA	BA of Music	190/193	69CP
	BA of Music Performance and pedagogical profile	198/201	63CP
Trossingen BA	BA of Music Orchester	155	124CP (including accompaniment and orchestra practice)

Table 14 Overview over credit points for the principal subject in performance programmes.

Conclusion

The hypothesis of a discrepancy between tertiary education of musicians in performance-oriented programmes and both the knowledge and non-musical skills they use in their professional occupations, was supported by the data.

The numbers of the MIZ and KSK suggest an increase in the number of graduates undertaking freelance work, and were reflected by the findings of the current study, in which the majority of musicians completing performance-oriented programmes had become freelancers or teachers. They felt that they were lacking the practical or academic skills to develop a career. This deficiency is at least partly due to insufficient professional guidance, deficient academic courses and a reluctance of musicians to engage with such topics. It is noted that music education is very apprenticeship-like, in as much as it was characterized as very manual and non-academic.

This matter needs to be addressed urgently, by taking freelancing careers seriously and by considering their innovative aspects and importance outside the traditional role models of musicians. The following questions arise:

- What competences and skills do musicians need outside the state funded orchestra, working as freelancers with mixed portfolios?
- How can these competences and skills be incorporated into courses at the conservatory?
- How can the balance of the principal course (the instrumental skills) and the minor subjects be achieved so as to satisfy contemporary demands?
- How can the awareness of music students be drawn towards the question of their own future?
- What role models can professors provide and what role do the state conservatories play?

Higher education research often aims to address the 'employability' of graduates, and rates the success of a programme in terms of the time needed to find employment after graduation. This study took a different approach for two reasons: first, asking graduates whether their employment status is permanent is not entirely sensible, since a great proportion of graduates will work as freelancers, who are self-employed. Second, the educational ideal of Wilhelm von Humboldt, which is largely followed in Germany, aims at self-empowerment, enabling people to deal with changing situations, rather than focusing on the practical skills that fit one situation only.³⁸⁾ Especially in times where we observe the decline of traditional role models in the music industry, such as the classical orchestra player,³⁹⁾ it seems to be inappropriate to train young people just for this one task. Instead, they should be enabled to find their position and role as musicians. Therefore, success in this case is to be understood in terms of being able to create an existence as a musician by combining musical, creative, academic and business skills in a way that enables them to generate a living. Students need to be trained in a broader sense, where they learn to analyse their environment and use their tertiary education to position themselves in it.⁴⁰⁾ The typical role model of a successful classical musician should be broader in scope. This also influences reformation of the Bologna process. Instead of fostering specialization in the Master's studies, and thereby precluding an 'Artrepreneurship', the curriculum and mind-set of musicians should be broadened.⁴¹⁾ The role model should be transformed from a one-dimensional picture of the state employed orchestral musician, to multifaceted models, each focusing on the individual strengths of the musician, enabling them to make a living and to propagate classical music.

Endnotes

References

1. † We want to thank the two reviewers for their detailed comments on this paper. We also want to thank Nicholas Bishop for proofreading and invaluable support; last but not least we thank all the respondents taking part in this survey study.
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