

Performing your self? Autonomy and self-expression in the work of jazz musicians and classical string players

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents research on the demands made on musicians by performing classical music and jazz respectively, drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with 18 young musicians. The participants (nine freelance classical string players and nine freelance jazz musicians) ranged from students at the end of university and conservatoire training to those in the first 10 years of their professional careers. They were interviewed about the levels of control they experienced in their work; asked to discuss their experiences of freelance work and lifestyles; and asked to identify any ways in which working or living as a musician had affected their well-being. The interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Key differences were identified between the demands imposed by the performance of classical music and jazz, with classical performance characterized by the pursuit of accuracy, while jazz musicians focused on developing a sense of exploration and freedom. A strong emergent theme was the degree to which performance was viewed as a vehicle for self-expression, with string students, string professionals and jazz musicians all responding differently to the idea of investing oneself in performance. This was intrinsically related to the musicians' conceptions of their roles as performers, and in some cases was linked to a difficulty in separating work and life. The implications of these findings for the education and training of musicians are discussed.

Keywords: Performance, freelance musicians, accuracy, improvisation

Listeners and consumers typically view music as a positive force in their lives: an entity that can be controlled and manipulated to meet their daily requirements (DeNora, 2000). Amateur musicians, too, find the processes of practice, rehearsal and performance valuable and enriching (Pitts, 2005). Yet existing research has shown that working as a professional musician holds distinct patterns of demands, stressors and challenges (Brodsky, 2006), as indeed do other occupations in which self-employment is the norm (see, for example, Dex, Willis, Paterson, & Sheppard, 2000). In literature concerned with classical musicians, studies of the stress and demands of working in the music profession have obtained data almost exclusively from musicians holding positions in symphony orchestras. In one study, symphony orchestra musicians were found to exhibit extremely high levels of internal motivation, but only moderate levels of job satisfaction (Allmendinger, Hackman, & Lehman, 1996). Steptoe (1989) found that orchestral musicians cited separation from their families, irregular hours and the monotony of rehearsals as their greatest sources of stress. Featuring commonly in studies of stress in orchestral musicians are the effects of a lack of control over their work environment (Steptoe, 2001), and a lack of individual autonomy over the nature of their performance “even though they are highly specialized experts in their work” (Mogelof & Rohrer, 2005, p. 104).

In addition to a lack of control over performance-related decisions, orchestral musicians are also caused distress by the difficulty of the tasks they are required to execute (Parasuraman & Purohit, 2000; Piperek, 1981; Schulz, 1981). As Brodsky (2006, p. 687) points out, “though on any given night a player might decode 20,000 to 200,000 graphic symbols on his/her instrument, it is always the wrong note or entrance that is embedded in the memories of adjudicators and audiences.” Orchestral musicians, and particularly string players (who work within a section of players all playing the same part), thus suffer from the combined stress of meeting listeners’ and colleagues’ expectations of consistent accuracy, while relinquishing control over interpretative decisions to a conductor and/or section principal (Parasuraman & Purohit, 2000; Piperek, 1981).

While the conductor is the most visibly controlling force in an orchestral concert, the role of the composer must not be forgotten as the creator of the musical score, described by Kingsbury (1988, p. 167) as “a script whose directives are not, ideally, to be violated”. The requirement for technical accuracy in classical performance is thus in one respect paramount, arising from what Cook (1998, p. 26) has described as “an authoritarian power structure” in Western musical culture, resulting from “the idea that the performer’s role is to reproduce what the composer has created”. This imbalance of power – and the requirement for technical accuracy which lies within it – is also propelled by the proliferation of recordings, and their constantly increasing accessibility. Live performances are likely to be compared by audiences to recorded versions they have previously heard – a practice which Davies (2001, p. 328) argues decreases “[the listener’s] sensitivity to aspects of the work, to its demands of the performer, and to the performer’s response to those challenges.”

But these issues do, on the surface, seem to be unique to classical music performance. So what kinds of demands do other musical idioms make on their performers? Jazz is a genre in which performers exhibit technical skill arguably equal to that of classical performers (Schlesinger, 2003), but ostensibly makes quite different demands. The creative roles of composer and performer lie on a more equal footing (Kingsbury, 1988), meaning that jazz performance is more frequently characterized by notions of spontaneity and creativity

rather than of accuracy and perfection (Brown, 2000). But from the jazz musician's perspective, this distinction is not necessarily so clear-cut. Wilson and MacDonald (2005, p. 346) identified two different repertoires which jazz musicians used in focus group discussions on improvisation: a 'mastery' repertoire, which emphasises the importance of knowledge and skills in improvisation; and a 'mystery' repertoire, in which improvisation is contextualized in terms of "instincts" and "inspiration". Again, the issue of performers' control and autonomy is resonant here: Wilson and MacDonald (2005, p. 350) argue that the mastery repertoire is presented as favourable and dominant by their participants because it "underlined the agency of musicians, while a repertoire of mystery cast the musician as in the grip of music."

As the nature of jazz musicians' work is predominantly freelance, it could be argued that jazz musicians exert more control over their working routines than their classical counterparts in symphony orchestras. But while symphony orchestra musicians are paid to perform the musical idiom in which they were trained (and with which, presumably, they hold an affinity), research on jazz musicians has consistently highlighted the need for jazz players to also perform in other genres and styles in order to supplement the income they receive from badly remunerated jazz gigs (Becker, 1951; MacDonald & Wilson, 2005; Stebbins, 1969). Interestingly, while jazz musicians believe that jazz performance involves "greater practical and musical difficulties" than other musical idioms (Wilson & MacDonald, 2005, p. 358; see also Schlesinger, 2003), jazz musicians have also been found to exhibit very high levels of devotion to (and fulfilment from) their work (Wills & Cooper, 1988).

The present study obtained data from freelance classical string players and jazz musicians, seeking to explore the challenges and demands presented by their work. By gathering data from freelance string players, the research aims to explore whether the stressors faced by symphony orchestra musicians also transfer to classical musicians who perform in a greater variety of settings and ensembles. The sample also includes a mix of students and professionals, attempting to glean additional insights into whether potential problems are related to the ways in which musicians are trained. In particular, the study aims to address the following research questions:

- What demands and challenges are placed on musicians by classical and jazz performance?
- Do freelance string players suffer from a lack of autonomy when practising and performing?
- Does this differ from jazz musicians' experiences, and if so, how?

METHOD

18 participants (11 male and seven female) were interviewed for the study. The participants consisted of two groups of nine musicians each: jazz musicians (coded as J1-J9) and freelance string players (S1-S9). The jazz group consisted of seven men and two women: finding female jazz musicians to interview was difficult and this imbalance is therefore taken as typical of a profession in which women are often under-represented (cf. Brown, 2000). The ages of participants in the jazz group ranged from 21 to 34 with a mean age of 25.9 ($SD = 4.48$). The string group consisted of five women and four men; their ages ranged from 21 to 28 years with a mean age of 23.3 ($SD = 2.29$).

Within each group a continuum of educational and professional status is represented (see Table 1), beginning with music students at the University of Sheffield who intended to pursue performance careers and who were already taking on freelance work. Mid-way along the continuum are postgraduates and final-year undergraduates studying at London music colleges, culminating with fully professional musicians at the end of the continuum. The conservatoire student musicians had considerable experience of professional freelance work. This was particularly the case with the two final-year conservatoire undergraduates (participants J3 and S3), who at the time of their interviews had just finished their degree courses, and so were literally in transition between student and professional states. Where distinctions are made in the analysis between the views of string students and professionals, participant S3 has thus been included as a professional: his views were extremely concordant with those of the professional group, and he was already undertaking a significant amount of high-level professional work.

TABLE 1: Participant profiles

Group	Code	Age	Sex	Status	Instrument(s)	Others ¹
Jazz	J1	21	Male	University UG ²	Trumpet	Classical trumpet
	J2	22	Male	University PG ³	Piano	Classical composition, French horn
	J3	21	Male	Conservatoire UG	Drums	Classical percussion
	J4	28	Female	Professional	Singer	Jazz piano
	J5	25	Male	Professional	Bass guitar	
	J6	31	Male	Professional	Saxophone	Classical clarinet (no longer plays)
	J7	26	Male	Professional	Piano, bass	Classical piano, viola
	J8	25	Male	Professional	Piano	
	J9	34	Female	Professional	Piano	
Strings	S1	22	Female	University UG	Violin	
	S2	22	Male	University PG	Cello	Classical composition
	S3	21	Male	Conservatoire UG	Violin	Jazz drums
	S4	22	Female	Conservatoire PG	Cello	
	S5	23	Female	Conservatoire PG	Viola	
	S6	22	Male	Conservatoire PG	Violin	
	S7	26	Female	Professional	Viola	
	S8	24	Male	Professional	Violin	Baroque violin, inc. improvisation
	S9	28	Female	Professional	Cello	

¹Other instruments or musical activities with which participants had a significant involvement (although not necessarily including paid work).

²Undergraduate

³Postgraduate

The data presented in this paper come from a larger study that originated from an interest in exploring a link between creativity and psychopathology in performing musicians, but which also aimed to explore the effects of lifestyle and autonomy on the musicians' emotional well-being and mental health (Dobson, *in press*, presents other data from the larger study). Relating to this paper, the interview schedule included questions on the levels of creativity and control in the musicians' work, and also asked them to think about how the demands of their music differed from those involved in the performance of other genres. The participants were asked about aspects of their lifestyles that they particularly appreciated or found detrimental, and they were asked to describe any instances where their lifestyles or the nature of their work had affected their emotional well-being or emotional state. The student participants were asked about their current experiences, but were also asked to anticipate what the demands of their work and related lifestyles might involve once they had left higher education and were working full-time in the music profession.

The interviews were transcribed, and repeated readings provided familiarity with the data. The transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA aims to provide an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and beliefs surrounding a topic (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999) and so seemed an appropriate analysis tool for this study, especially as the interview schedule covered potentially sensitive areas regarding the participants' emotional well-being and mental health. The use of IPA to research a range of health settings (see Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997) indicated that it would be effective in foregrounding the participants' individual experiences and perceptions surrounding the effects of their work on their well-being and health.

After repeated readings of a transcript, emergent theme categories were noted in the margin, and were then grouped together under a number of master themes (Smith, 1995). The process was repeated on the next transcript, using the same theme categories where possible and appropriate. Where new categories were generated, previously analysed transcripts were checked periodically for instances of these new themes. A summary list of master themes and indicative quotations was created for each participant's transcript; these were referred to frequently throughout the analysis process to ensure that an understanding of the participants' "individual narratives" was retained during the creation of higher-order themes (Smith, 1995, p. 22). Once all transcripts had been analysed, a matrix was devised from the cumulative list of themes, illustrating which master themes applied to each participant. Theme files of quotations were compiled for each master theme, organised by sub-theme. In addition, a more detailed matrix was produced for each master theme, with sub-themes listed in the same order as the theme file so that the two could be cross-referenced. These matrices were particularly useful in identifying patterns and relationships in and between the participants' responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Music-related demands

The majority of jazz musicians felt that performing jazz supplied them with sufficient levels of autonomy (both in terms of choices over the music played, and the way in which it was played), with some even stressing that jazz as a medium enables almost full control over the music. However, many of the jazz musicians pointed out that this was situation-specific: rarely could they earn a sufficient income by playing only jazz, frequently having to take on function engagements (i.e. providing music at weddings, parties and so on) where they often felt they were merely fulfilling the requirements of the performance situation by playing “music in a box” [J7].

The string players also consistently regarded autonomy as a strongly situation-specific feature of their work. They saw function work as an easy way of earning money during university or college years, before reaching a transitional point where the majority of playing ideally became concert-based: the professional string players in the sample were all making a living exclusively from concert performances rather than function engagements. While solo and chamber performances were generally perceived as providing adequate levels of interpretative input, a lack of direct autonomy in musical decision-making was in most cases accepted by the string players as simply an inevitability within orchestral performance – they often seemed resigned to the fact that this performance context did not provide them with high levels of creativity or control, and that these were placed primarily in the hands of the conductor (cf. Steptoe, 1989). However, problems did emerge concerning autonomy on a finer scale: over the exact nature of the music itself. These problems arose from a number of tensions that were evident in the accounts of both groups, essentially concerning the different demands that jazz and classical music make on a performer.

Accuracy versus freedom

An emphasis placed on accuracy in evaluations of classical performance (by the musicians themselves, and by fellow performers and audiences) was a theme that emerged in two-thirds of the string players’ accounts, and was only mentioned by the jazz musicians in reference to their experiences of playing classical music. The string players talked about the effects of being constrained by the score, and by the ingrained expectation that they must reproduce it as faithfully as possible:

on a daily basis you have to get up, and you have to play a meticulously difficult Strauss symphony, or Mahler symphony or something, to audiences of a couple of thousand people, and it’s got to be right – these days, it’s got to be increasingly right. [S8]

I think jazzers are more laid-back, because there’s not the same feeling of right or wrong. I mean, there’s even, with jazz, people say that you can’t sort of, there are no mistakes, or a mistake you turn into something that’s not a mistake. And I think classical music is more objectively right or wrong. So I think that probably has an effect on your state of mind. [S3]

The prevalent use of the words “right” and “wrong” in these accounts clearly demonstrates the restrictions and pressure imposed on classical string players by the socially and culturally constructed belief that a score must be played perfectly, note for note. S8 continued by attributing the need for complete accuracy to the critical nature of colleagues and to

pressure from orchestral management to produce flawless performances. This must to some extent be fuelled by the expectations of audiences, who are primed by hearing 'perfect' recorded versions of the works: according to Robert Philip (2004), even 'live' recordings are frequently engineered so that they do not contain mistakes.

Two of the jazz musicians with extensive experience of performing classical music put forward their views on its restrictive nature very strongly. One described jazz as a "completely different way of thinking" [J1], while the other explained how his frustrations arose with classical music because "it locks me into having to do a certain thing at a certain time" [J6]:

I'm not saying that's an inferior way of making music, but to me, I want something which is more spontaneous and more idiosyncratic, and less about having to do things in a particular way to fit into a certain idea of how things should sound. [J6]

The jazz musicians demonstrated vastly contrasting views on their own idiom, however, with the majority stressing the need for a sense of limitless exploration and experimentation in their work by being "prepared to try new things" [J8]. They concurred with the depiction of their work in S3's quotation above, namely that jazz performance is less constrained by objective standards. For these musicians, restrictions and accuracy were not such a concern:

[playing jazz is] definitely not about a desire to replicate what other people have done in the past, and it's definitely not about limiting yourself in any way. And it's just about being as open as you possibly can. [J9]

However, they also acknowledged that this way of working entails consequences, placing greater emphasis on other features of performance over the pursuit of accuracy (cf. Wilson & MacDonald, 2005):

things in jazz music will suffer, for example maybe tone, yeah the tone of the instruments, accuracy, yeah definitely accuracy suffers a lot in jazz, because people are concentrating more on the process of choosing the notes, and the actual pattern of notes rather than specific attention to [how they're played]. [J8]

Accuracy and engagement

There was an emergent tension from the accounts of both jazz and string players between the perceived requirement for technical accuracy in performance, yet the need also for emotional or creative engagement. One professional viola player, for example, spoke of how "you can get so far playing on autopilot" but also stressed the need to be engaged and "connected to what you're doing": "that's when the music comes alive, and that's when it means something...it's when you're just worried about doing it right, that it's not alive, it's just...technique" [S7]. Her account therefore suggests that the pursuit of accuracy can actually stifle the production of engaging performances. Some of the jazz musicians again expressed unease about the nature of classical performance: J6, in reference to his experience as a classical clarinettist, questioned "how much of a lot of classical playing, especially orchestral playing, is about creativity on a personal level, and how much it is about jumping through very specific hoops."

But the jazz musicians did not exclusively voice these concerns in reference to classical music. A female jazz pianist argued strongly that the pursuit and demonstration of "knowl-

edge” in jazz inhabited a similar role to that of accuracy in classical music, describing the value some jazz musicians attributed to performative demonstrations of “knowledge” as a “misconception”:

it’s not about how many notes you play and how fast you can play things, how many chord sequences you know – it’s not about *knowledge*. It’s about an emotion and about response, to the audience, to the music, to other people on stage. [J9]

Her account in this instance echoes Wilson and MacDonald’s (2005) identification of the ‘mastery’ and ‘mystery’ repertoires that their participants used to discuss improvisation. But while Wilson and MacDonald suggest that the ‘mystery’ repertoire characterizes performers as “passive” (p. 346), J9 instead presents the practice of “knowledge”-based improvisation as an inflexible paradigm, where the player is unable to respond with agency to the musical situation in which they are participating. Importantly, Wilson and MacDonald’s participants used ‘mastery’ to emphasize group membership, but as they point out, their participants were all male musicians talking about a male-dominated idiom, therefore framing ‘mastery’ as a masculine construction of (group) identity. In one sense, then, J9’s rejection of the “knowledge” paradigm in jazz performance could be interpreted as unease with (or commentary on) the dominance of masculine-based culture in the jazz community (see MacDonald and Wilson [2006] for a more detailed consideration of the role of hegemonic power structures in female jazz musicians’ constructions of identity).

In addition, J9’s quotation above draws strong links with Kingsbury’s (1988) finding that American conservatoire (and predominantly classical) students distinguished between what they called ‘chops’ (technique) and ‘soul’ (musicality). Kingsbury stresses the importance of this distinction, arguing that it is the “single most fundamental [a]esthetic issue for conservatory musicians” (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 137). Arguably at the root of the tension surrounding this distinction is the fact that, to some extent, technique is necessary in order to enable effective musical communication: the most interesting and engaging musical ideas are of no use to a performer unless they actually possess the technical facility required to execute them. This point is exemplified by the views of one conservatoire violinist, who stood out amongst the sample with his opinion that jazz and classical musicians “are not as different as people make out” because both genres require “the kind of technique that is just limitless so that you can achieve anything you want...anything you can sing, you should be able to play” [S3].

Kemp (1981) finds evidence of the need for an effective balance between technique and musicality when identifying the factors of introversion, pathemia (sensitivity) and intelligence in the personality structure of the performing musician, and concludes that these factors “suggest an ability to withdraw into a colourful and imaginative inner mental life, at the same time providing the single-mindedness necessary for the acquisition of technical skills” (pp. 11-12). It is perhaps easier to reconcile the dual demands for chops and soul, when, as in jazz improvisation, a player is directly in control of the means by which they demonstrate and exhibit both technical ability and creative engagement, and are less concerned about ‘going wrong’ at the same time. This increased tension in the performance of classical music was evident in the account of violinist S3, who advocated the primacy of ‘soul’, through the means of “improvising” the score:

I think that the most successful classical musicians are improvising all the time. I mean I think the score is only a guide, and I think if you're just going to play, play the score perfectly then you might win a competition, but it's not really going to capture the hearts of the audience. So I mean I feel when I play that I am, that I've sort of internalised the score, and this is you know, my goal, that I've sort of internalised the score and got as much information out of it as I can, but that I'm improvising the line, from within me. [S3]

Nicholas Cook (1998, p. 36) describes a similar practice when he writes:

the convention of memorizing music is not an entirely arbitrary one: it seems to have developed in tandem with the idea that solo performance should appear to be spontaneous, that it should give the impression of an improvisation that just happens to coincide note for note with the composer's score. In other words, rather than just reproducing something you have carefully memorized, you should give the *impression* of being in some sense possessed by it. [Emphasis added.]

Returning to Wilson and MacDonald's (2005) terms, Cook refers to an aesthetic which prizes the depiction of 'mystery' over 'mastery', where, despite the pursuit of accuracy inherently involved in the practice process leading to memorization, the ability to perform from memory is intrinsically associated with an image of sublimation to the work. But again, S3's account seems to suggest that more agency is involved, and that the point of "internalising" a score is to facilitate spontaneity of expression, enhancing the degree to which he can respond to the live performance situation. As will be discussed later, this participant held strong reservations about the notion that performers must 'immerse' themselves in the performance of a work, although perhaps to "capture the hearts of the audience" [S3] it is necessary at least to *look* as though one is possessed by the music (Cook, 1998; cf. Auslander, 2006).

The challenges of negotiating these music-related demands

String players: accuracy, guilt and self-investment

The effects of the emphasis frequently placed on accuracy and perfection in classical performance were manifested in string players' descriptions of feelings of guilt: "I do feel that it's a world of rules, really, classical music. You know, and when you go wrong, you go wrong, and it's *wrong*...you feel awful, because you've messed up" [S9]. Guilt was in some cases intertwined with a sense of pressure "to create this kind of unattainable...piece of art" [S5], resonating with Dews and Williams' (perhaps slightly over-inclusive) belief that "every aspect of music is directly related to a search for perfection" (1989, p. 46). This was exhibited in participants' attitudes towards practising, sometimes exerting damaging effects: one participant spoke of her past practice routines as "almost like harming yourself", reflecting on her experience of an ingrained institutional pressure to achieve high levels of accuracy and technical perfection at the expense of her emotional welfare:

I think loads of classical musicians are pressured into it by their parents and stuff, and, well not even necessarily parents, but institutions and things, and like only recently – there's a lot of guilt, like if you're not practising all the time for example [...] I realised when I was practising, that I was going on for too long every time I was practising, and I wasn't having enough breaks. And so I was going on to the point where I would feel, I wouldn't feel good, and actually that's really detrimental to your playing, and then you

remember that when you play, you know. And actually, you're almost like harming yourself, and it's like, no, you can't do that, however important the music is, it's much more important that your well-being is good. [...] But it's difficult when you're taught for years, like "you must practise, you must do this right, get it right." [S7]

This account draws links with Kemp's (1996, p. 186) view that a "search for perfection can be very intertwined with [musicians'] perceptions of their own self-worth and, if taken to excess, can amount to a very damaging form of self-punishment".

The effects of the necessity for technical accuracy were most evident in the accounts of the student string players, three of whom exhibited a troubled involvement with music. This took shape in a number of ways: one university violinist described experiencing what she called "the musician's guilt" if she had not met her self-imposed practice requirements each day, and also spoke of the demanding nature of her practice sessions, describing having to "put so much mental and physical effort into it" [S1]. All three of these string students held negative feelings towards the practice process, combined with a sense that being involved with music made strong (and often detrimental) demands on their emotional or physical states. They often found rehearsing or performing emotionally demanding or draining – this was put into the context of solo playing by participant S4, a postgraduate conservatoire cellist, who at several times during her interview drew upon her recent experiences of preparing for a concerto performance:

I was doing the Dvořák [cello concerto] back home at Easter – it was just such a mammoth undertaking to do it. It was just, for like eight months of my life, I lived and breathed it. [Laughs] And that's not – it's not very healthy, actually, to do that. [S4]

She qualified her intense involvement with the work in terms of the degree of preparation required in order to perform confidently, and continued by commenting on what she perceived as the stressfulness of life as a soloist, again highlighting the sense of pressure created by accuracy-related judgements: "there's no time to schlep, because if you do anything wrong, someone's going to be like 'Oh, you're rubbish'" [S4].

S4's account also illustrates some of the problems the string students reported concerning the degree of self-investment that was involved both in the act of performance and in the preparation and practice required to perform. Further demonstrating a tension between 'chops' and 'soul', they felt that they were expected to be as technically accurate as possible, but were also expected to be expressive – and they believed that expressivity or engagement in performance involved considerable emotional investment. S6, a conservatoire postgraduate violinist, described performance in these terms:

you've got to go and portray something of yourself, and put that on: emotionally you have to deal with like all your issues all the time. That's very stressful and not very nice. [S6]

These effects were perhaps exacerbated in these students by a tendency to regard music as an integral, and sometimes inescapable, part of their lives. They described how music – and the feelings of guilt and pressure they associated with it – were "always there in the background" [S1] and "always on your mind" [S4].

Emotional distance and self-preservation: the 'professional' approach

Significantly, none of the professional string players demonstrated any of the difficulties constituting what I have termed a 'troubled involvement', despite their prominence in discussing the requirement for accuracy and its effects. This might purely be a result of maturity and experience: Watson and Valentine (1987) suggest that levels of performance anxiety may diminish the more years of experience a musician gains. It is possible, then, that experience also helps string players to deal with the demanding nature of their work. However, in stark contrast to the string students, and without specific prompting, all of the professional string players expressed a need for emotional distance in performance, or at least a limited amount of self-investment. The former was usually regarded as necessary in order to retain 'control', arguably over technical accuracy (cf. Parncutt, 2007):

I don't really think about the emotional content of the piece when I play it. Maybe you can argue "well how can you possibly be putting any emotion into it if you're not really aware of it?" But...I don't know how to explain this, but there's no point in getting too carried away, because you still need to be in control of what you're doing. [S8]

you have to give a lot, yeah, a lot of yourself, your energy and...hmm, but in a way that's why you have to in some ways be in control of your emotions. Yeah, it's weird, yeah, you have to be in control of your emotions so you don't...It's like you have to be completely involved in the music, but at the same time, you need a certain amount of not distance, but you need to give yourself space, you can't completely...I don't know, immerse in it I was going to say. Well you can, but...it's tricky. You can't lose your self, I suppose, yeah. [S7]

Several of the professional string players spoke of the need for active self-preservation when performing, describing how "you've got to keep a bit of yourself for yourself" [S3], suggesting that the act of classical performance holds some potential to eclipse the performer's sense of self. After all, this idea that performers are "somehow removed" [S3] from the music they play contrasts considerably with the image of intense involvement that is usually projected by performers, and therefore expected by audiences. This is particularly the case for string players who arguably engage in what Kemp (1996, p. 146) describes as a "deeply sensuous mode of communication" with their instrument.

I think that it's possible to give a very good performance, while still being somehow removed from it. I mean I think that...it's not, I mean, if you go to a Vengerov masterclass, then he'd tell you to really put yourself into the piece, and you know...your cat's just died, and you're finding a storyline for everything. And really sort of imbuing the music with personal, rich personal significance. But I think that, I rarely do that, and I think that it would be difficult to tell actually. [S3]

The views of these professional players raise issues of how to successfully perform expressively, and also of how expressivity should be taught (see Woody, 2000). The participants' views suggest that in the case of string players, too much involvement in the music may make the experience of performing more stressful, by relinquishing a degree of (technical) control. Perhaps the problems of the string students arose from not having completely discounted the "myth" that "you must feel the emotion in order to convey it to your listeners" (Juslin, Friberg, Schoonderwaldt, & Karlsson, 2004, p. 248). For example, Lindström, Juslin, Bresin and Williamon (2003) found that 60% of the conservatoire students in their study believed that it was necessary to experience a given emotion when performing

in order to communicate it effectively, despite the fact that a piece of music may require a performer to move between emotions in rapid succession (Juslin et al., 2004).

The idea of emotional distance and self-preservation seems to be a corollary of the professional string players' perceptions of performance as just their 'work' – rather than being the primary defining feature of their lives. Perhaps the key to the professional string players' comfortable involvement with music lies in the ability to regard 'performance as work' as being qualitatively different from 'playing as life'. This point was a salient feature within two participants' discussions on the topic of distance and self-preservation:

I think the difference between being a professional musician and an amateur musician is you're not really playing for yourself, you're just providing a service really. I mean, it's a rather exclusive service, but you're still providing a service and, you know, you just have to perform, so in a sense you sort of switch off. [S8]

I mean you can give a deeply committed performance where all the emotions are kind of a step removed, you know it's not actually you in the piece, it's just you sort of...presenting the emotions of someone else. And I think that...I think it does, it becomes a job...So I mean, I think that to be a real professional, you know, however shitty your day has been, no matter what's happened, you go on stage and you give a good performance for the people who have paid...it's like acting – you just get on with it and do it. [S3]

The effectiveness of this strategy of treating performance as the provision of a service is highlighted by the contrasting views of student participant S6. He regarded performance as requiring problematically high levels of self-investment, finding that in performance "you always have to put something in of yourself" or "put a version of yourself through the music" [S6]. His responses consistently signalled a belief that the underlying purpose of performance was achieving a sense of self-reward, stating that "it is all about what you get back from it" [S6]. Importantly, however, he was also the only participant for whom a theme category of 'frustrations' was created, due to the number of different instances and contexts in which accounts of these arose. This case certainly resonates with Kemp's (1996) concerns over the way professional musicians are trained:

One is left to consider whether it is the fact that musicians have been brought up and trained to mobilize so much of their energies and invest an unduly large proportion of themselves in music that results in untold psychological damage. This would be particularly so if the individual's investment of energy does not appear to be offering the kind of return (musical perfection) that was envisaged. (Kemp, 1996, p. 251)

Personality and personae

In stark contrast to the professional string players, the jazz musicians held strong beliefs that performance required a considerable level of self-investment, without expressing any concern over a need for self-preservation. Importantly, unlike the string players, many jazz musicians regarded music, and particularly improvisation, as a "manifestation of people's personalities" [J7], suggesting that "the way [people] improvise is to do with who they are": "when you're playing music, if it's an improvised music, or if it's creative music, you are asked to impose some of your personality on the music – that's what you're doing, you are manifesting essentially yourself" [J7].

Singer J4 described how her tendency as a person to oscillate between introspection and what she called her "crazy outbursts" was reflected in the nature of her improvisation,

adding colour and character. In a similar way, performance served as a valued means of self-expression for a number of the jazz participants. A student jazz trumpeter, for example, described how he felt most “at home with music” and continued by saying:

that’s one reason that I always come back to jazz because it’s probably my best way, in everything, in life, of expressing myself. I always think that I’m especially bad with explaining myself with words, but give me a horn and a piece to play, and it’s a completely different story. [J1]

The presence of improvisation in the jazz musicians’ work might therefore explain the difference in the degrees to which the jazz and string players felt able to successfully invest themselves in performance. Auslander (2006) suggests that in performance musicians present not themselves, but a persona; and that these personae are inevitably shaped by social interaction with the audience, and by performance context. Therefore, dependent on genre and context, “some presentations of self may be perceived as personally expressive while others may not” (Auslander, 2006, p. 103). Participant J7 suggested something similar when he noted:

Jazz musicians are allowed to be relaxed, and are allowed to manifest their personalities on stage, whereas classical musicians are not – they’re supposed to be, you know, according to the stereotypes, anonymous in DJs [and] be very serious. [J7]

Taking Auslander’s perspective, it could be argued that the degree to which performers invest themselves in (and express themselves *through*) performance is constructed around audience expectations. Audience members attend jazz performance in order to see musicians improvise, and therefore expect to see evidence of musicians’ personalities within the performance event. Taking orchestral concerts as an example of classical performance, the primary foci here are the composer’s work, and the interpretations of that work performed by a particular conductor or soloist. Part of a string player’s performance persona in orchestral performance, then, is that of anonymous functionality: “the musicians’ very obscurity is a defining characteristic of the personae they perform” (Auslander, 2006, p. 102). While the professional string players appeared to have accepted that there is not always scope to impose (or even display) their personalities when performing, the string students perhaps suffered from a tension stemming from years of training in which musicality has been equated with high levels of self-investment. In jazz, conversely, even in large-scale ensemble performance (such as big band concerts), there is usually some space for each player to improvise, and therefore to communicate a performative expression of self.

Music ‘as life’ and related troubles: consequences of fewer restrictions

The extent to which jazz musicians felt they were able to invest themselves in performance held consequences in that they had little need, as the professional string players did, to separate music as ‘work’ and music as ‘life’. Some demonstrated an active avoidance of the potential for performance to become work: one described how she had decided to become a professional musician “because of the love of it” and so had to keep “trying to detach from the professional side of it” [J4]. Robert Stebbins has written extensively on the blurring boundaries between the amateur and professional, describing how “the jazz job erases the line between work and leisure and transforms jazz, as professionally performed, into a continual pursuit of aesthetic values” (Stebbins, 1968, p. 322). This is certainly in line with

Wills and Cooper's (1988, p. 85) finding that "the jazz musician most closely approaches the profile of the 'sensitive, dedicated artist'. He finds significantly more enjoyment in his work as a musician than other popular musicians". While for some participants this was characterized by a sense that work and enjoyment were inevitably intertwined, for others it was more pervasive, in the case of the jazz pianist who stated: "I don't go to work and then come home and turn off. I am a musician twenty-four/seven" [J7]. In some cases this created problems, as any difficulties the musicians experienced with performance or music were exacerbated, because their work was intertwined with their identity and their lives as a whole. One pianist was particularly aware of the potentially subsuming dangers of musical involvement, stressing the need for a "balance between loving your passion, and it being a part of the way you earn your living" [J8]:

because it's something so close to you, and it's a kind of passion that you've always loved doing, if it's not going particularly well then, yeah, because it's both your passion *and* what you're doing for a living, it can really get you down if it's not going well. [J8]

A significant disadvantage of the blurring between work and leisure in the jazz musicians' lives was their complicated (and not always positive) relationships with musical listening. The jazz musicians believed that their listening habits should be as inclusive as possible, as in theory anything they listened to held the potential to inform or influence their work: music-making was viewed holistically by one saxophonist as "an ongoing process of learning and absorption" [J6]. However, these attitudes fostered a situation in which many found it difficult not to analyse music, and they particularly struggled with an inability to listen to music other than "as a player" [J7]. This was a problem that the string players also reported, but they only related this tendency to watching classical performances. This problem was more wide-ranging for the jazz musicians, and some reported finding recreational listening highly problematic at times, especially in social situations where live music was provided by others. This was particularly the case when watching live performances of other jazz musicians, where two participants (interestingly, the only two female jazz musicians) mentioned watching and listening specifically to learn from the performer's presenting skills and verbal rapport with the audience.

Meanwhile, another jazz musician spoke of feelings of frustration and almost claustrophobia that he had experienced while watching live performances:

it's just a vague strange feeling that I've had at a couple of gigs, that I just need to kind of get out...I think what it is, is that if I hear some really great music, I actually then want to go and not recreate that music, but I want to go and either engage with it or go back to my music...I guess on one level it inspires me, but also when you're in a concert you can't do that – you can't just get up on stage, so I guess it's also slightly frustrating. So I have had that feeling on the odd gig where I think "ok, actually, I want to go home and practise, or get up and play right now, and I want to get out." [J7]

From the perspective of ecological theory, J7's account demonstrates an extreme example of the "interruption or suspension of the perception-action cycle that characterizes some forms of aesthetic engagement" (Clarke, 2005, p. 20), whereby listeners instinctively want to identify and explore the sources of the sounds they hear in a concert, but are restricted by the social conventions of the performance event. This musician does not just wish to investigate the sources of the sound he hears, but experiences difficulty with his enforced status as 'listener' rather than musical 'contributor'. The string players, for a number of rea-

sons, did not experience such difficulties: unlike the jazz musicians, they did not regard having a wide musical appreciation as an integral requirement of their work. The musical genres the string players encountered in their work also tended to be much more specific, unlike the jazz musicians who were generally required to be as versatile and adaptable as possible. This perhaps meant that the string players associated themselves less with the music surrounding them in everyday life, arguably resulting in a greater ability to delineate 'life' and 'work'.

CONCLUSIONS

The results have shown that the performance-related challenges experienced by this sample of musicians were complex and varied, depending on their genre and level of experience. The freelance string players suffered from too little autonomy, particularly over the direct nature of the musical score, and the demands for complete accuracy to it. This caused some student string players to experience a problematic relationship with performance and practice processes, especially when combined with the belief that performance must involve considerable levels of self-investment. The string professionals appeared to have developed ways of coping with these challenges: by treating performance as a 'job', and by detaching emotionally when playing so that they could be more effective in maintaining technical control. This is consistent with Levine and Levine's (1996) finding that orchestral musicians strongly distinguish between life and work, suggesting that freelance string players are in some ways subject to the same stressors as their counterparts with jobs in symphony orchestras. Future research might assess whether other types of classical musician encounter similar difficulties to string players in relation to a lack of autonomy, and given the success of qualitative methods in this research, it would seem appropriate to use them as an exploratory tool.

The effects of the jazz musicians' relatively high levels of involvement in shaping the music they perform were double-edged. For some, performance was a valued means of self-expression, but many also voiced concerns about no longer being able to enjoy watching other musicians perform without assessing the ways in which the performance could inform their own work. They frequently did not differentiate between life and work, at times causing difficulties in relating to music aside from their own playing, particularly in the form of problematic listening experiences.

The findings suggest that the degree to which performance is treated as an expression of self is an issue which musicians need to actively consider during their training. In many cases, those who saw expression of identity as an integral part of performance in some way found that their work or training was detrimental to their well-being. Perhaps at the root of this issue is an underlying tension between the way students are encouraged to engage with music during their education, and the realities of their engagement with music once working professionally. In some senses the current nature of conservatoire training treats musicians as 'artists', encouraging them to develop a strong and individual musical identity which can be expressed in performance (while simultaneously requiring the acquisition of technical skills so that the artist's musical ideas can be effectively realized). But in many contexts in which professional musicians perform (for example, orchestral perform-

ance for classical musicians, or function engagements for jazz players), musicians are required to behave more like 'workers' than 'artists', providing accurate and musical performances while imposing relatively little of themselves onto the musical product. At some point during their training, then, musicians need to reconcile the differences between musicality and self-expression, to enable an awareness that while performance *can* be a vehicle for self-expression, their primary function when working is to perform for others, rather than performing for themselves.

There are further implications of these results for the education and training of musicians, particularly for string players, whose experiences lend support to Brandfonbrener's (1988) concern about the balance of emphasis in classical music training between perfection and creativity. There is scope for improvisation to be incorporated more strongly into classical music curricula, so that classical musicians can develop a sense of freedom and competence away from the demands of the musical score, as Parncutt (2007) has already recommended. If string players were encouraged to engage with improvisatory forms of music from the early stages of learning, they might be provided with a greater creative outlet and form of self-expression. This might serve to dampen feelings of frustration created by a lack of autonomy, and may put into perspective the current expectations surrounding the requirement of accuracy to the musical score. The findings of this study also add weight to literature questioning the practice of training musicians as potential soloists instead of preparing them more realistically for their future work (e.g. Brodsky, 2006; Kemp, 1996), and highlight a need for more research into student musicians' conceptions of expressivity.

The results of this study add credence to those advocating the implementation of health promotion programmes at conservatoires (Kreutz, Ginsborg, & Williamon, 2009; Williamon & Thompson, 2006), but make clear that there is also a need for professional skills courses for conservatoire students to provide advice and strategies for handling the realities of professional life. Given the increasing likelihood that conservatoire graduates will embark on a 'portfolio career' rather than secure a contracted orchestral position (e.g. Mills, 2007), it would be advisable for such courses to provide guidance on effectively managing a balance between work and life within a freelance lifestyle; therefore there is scope for future research to explore ways of successfully implementing this element into professional skills training.

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