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**TRACING THE TRANSITION FROM STUDY TO WORKING LIFE: THE
CREATIVE TRAJECTORIES OF PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS**

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Abstract

The classical music academy is a site dominated by traditional meanings of creative practice and an image of professional creative careers as solo performers only fully available to a very few students after graduating. The purpose of the study reported in this paper is to explore career-young professional pianists' talk about the transition from study within a music academy to working life. The focus is on the ways in which they characterize the nature and significance of this transition from very traditional practice, and how they (re)negotiate their professional identities as working musicians and pianists in contemporary working lives. Four classical pianists were interviewed in-depth about their musicianship, including their transition from studies to working life. The qualitative analyses presented here suggest that, as they talked about their transitions and developing musicianship, the speakers constructed, re-constructed and oriented to notions of professional trajectories. Such trajectories are emergent and relational, and are contextually constituted (Sawyer 2003; Miell and MacDonald 2002; Moran and John-Steiner 2004). Crucially, the transition from study to working life is implicated in the process of assuming agency in respect of one's own musicianship and career. Agency in terms of one's identity as a professional musician involves (re)negotiating one's own pathways, narrations and trajectories. We suggest that such trajectories are not 'canonical' - being fixed or dependent on communal expectations, but reflect creative freedom and independence, encompassing multiple influences.

Keywords Identity work, musicians, research interviews, transition

Musicians and transitions

The characterization of musicians' development as a process involving progression through a fixed sequence of developmental stages (see for example Sosniak 1985; Manturzevska 1990; MacNamara et al. 2006) has emerged from a long tradition of music research concerned with theorizing musicians' development and identity construction. However, the process of becoming a musician is not simply about sequentially passing through particular developmental stages. Rather, the process of becoming a musician entails the negotiation of significant, complex transitions involving changing contexts. Some of the most notable macro transitions that occur during many musicians' early adulthood are those associated with gaining admission to an institution, such as a music academy or conservatoire, with the intention of studying to become a professional musician and those associated with negotiating the passage from such study to working life (see MacNamara et al. 2008, 2006). With respect to the transition into study Burt and Mills (2006), have argued that, in order to help students manage this transition smoothly, we need to understand the multiple tensions and conflicts that music students encounter and struggle with. For example, notions of personal competence as compared to other students, and managing relationships with others, pose substantive challenges for students early in their advanced music studies (for example Burt and Mills 2006; Kingsbury 1988). Juuti and Littleton (2010), in their study exploring the significance of entering the music academy, also underscored the challenge of reconciling what is personally meaningful with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations whilst negotiating membership of the established music culture. The focus of this paper is this different transition of musicians, specifically solo piano performance students, moving into working life having completed a programme of formal study. Musicians entering the

professional field of music are confronted with dilemmas in weaving together established and personal meanings, such that their ongoing musical identity negotiations are often challenged and troubled. These processes are explored through an analysis of interviews with participants who had studied classical music at the prestigious Sibelius Academy in Finland.

Creative identities in transition

As indicated above, the significance of transitions, both into the music academy and conservatoire in terms of what it means to move successfully into working life, has only recently been acknowledged in music research. Although there is an important body of work focusing on musicians' career aspirations/orientations and the careers of musicians (for example Corkhill 2005; Miller and Baker 2007; Mills 2004a, 2004b), this work has not tended to explore the meaning and significance of transitions for musicians, even though such transitions appear to be salient in respect of future career development (MacNamara et al. 2006). That said, such work does acknowledge the transition to working life as a period of intense flux and change. Furthermore, the role of teachers, parents and peers have been construed as vital for the development of coping strategies and the kinds of positive experience needed for successful transitions into music professions (Burland & Davidson 2004; MacNamara et al. 2008). Recognizing the paucity of work examining musicians' own accounts of the nature and significance of the transition process (Burt and Mills 2006; see also MacNamara et al. 2006), the research reported here was designed to investigate, in the context of an ongoing longitudinal study, how musicians' professional identities are (re-)negotiated in the context of transition from study to working life.

We explore how professional pianists discuss their transition from their study context, within the Sibelius Academy, to working life and how this is implicated in their musical identity work. Our research centres around the analysis of the accounts given, in a semi-structured interview, of their transition experiences as well as broader characterizations of their career paths to date. We are particularly interested in the ways in which the musicians characterize the processes of transition, their developing musicianship and their career paths and how they orient to their future as professional musicians. We also explore the dilemmas they encounter in negotiating their creative paths and shaping their lives as musicians as well as how relatively novice professional musicians situate their prior study experiences.

The Research Approach

The participants in this study are a part of an on-going research project concerning musical identities. Ten solo piano students had been interviewed once during their studies in the Sibelius Academy. We were able to follow up four of these original participants around eight years after the original interviews. This enabled us to investigate the transition experience utilizing longitudinal data. Participation in this second round of interviews was voluntary. Three of the original ten participants were temporarily abroad and unavailable during the follow-up interview period. One declined to be interviewed on account of a busy work schedule and the remaining two could not be traced.

During their studies at the Sibelius Academy, these four participants had concentrated on solo performance as defined in the degree requirements. Their studies were

predominantly focused on solo work, but also included relatively brief sessions of work pertaining to chamber music (art music written for a small group of instruments), the Lied (art song written for one voice with piano), and piano pedagogy. At the time of the interviews all the participants had completed their instrumental studies by giving the obligatory diploma concert and had entered professional working life. One of the participants in the follow-up interviews had only recently entered working life, while three had been working for a few years. Despite the fact that their studies focused on solo performance, these four interviewees reported that they were not currently pursuing a full-time international performance career. Instead they were devoting themselves full-time to more national performing activities as well as a wide range of other music-related professional activities. Two of the participants were committed to working as teachers in a music school or conservatoire as well as playing chamber music and performing as a soloist. In addition to playing chamber music and teaching, two of the interviewees were accompanists and involved in the development of music technology and music education curricula.

The analyses reported here explore the question: How do career-young professional pianists characterise their transition from study to working life and how do these accounts resource their identity negotiations as working, professional musicians? Methodologically the design of this study was informed by the study of musicians' career aspirations conducted by Miller and Baker (2007) who used biographically-oriented research interviews as research material. The design of the study has also been influenced by MacNamara et al. (2008) qualitative interview approach to the study of how music students negotiated their transitions from studies to working life. Taylor and Littleton's (2008) interview study of artists and designers also proved

influential in respect of highlighting the challenges encountered whilst constructing oneself both as a creative and ‘responsible’ person in the context of the transition to working life.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews in which participants were given the opportunity to talk about their transition from studies to working life. The interviews began with a short shared retrospection concerning the interviewee’s circumstances and future visions (e.g. ‘Can you remember your situation at the time of the first interview?’, ‘You said that...’ etc.), at the time of the first interview, while they were still studying. The interviewer also re-capped some of the interviewees’ general orientations to the key topics discussed during the interview as well as their visions and hopes for the future at that time. This initial phase of the interviews was specifically designed to put the interviewees at ease, to enable them subsequently to describe their experiences in their own terms as well as refresh their memory. In this respect the interviews were also planned to be biographically oriented.

Following this ‘review’ the interviewee was encouraged to speak freely about their personal journey from the time of the first interview, to their circumstances at the time of the follow-up interview. The interviewer aimed to both give them both encouragement and space to talk (e.g. ‘That sounds interesting’ etc.). Each interview was based on an interview guide with key topics specifying themes to be covered during the interview (see Patton 2002; Fielding 1993). Two broad topics of significance in respect of the focus of this paper were ‘completion of study’ and ‘the transition to working life’. Each interview was conducted so that the participant could freely talk about their experiences regarding the transition from their studies to working life. The interviews were also designed to allow space for reflection and

opportunities for revision of their accounts. The interview situations were thus designed to function as conversations within which meanings were constructed via the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (see Grossen and Pochon 1997, p. 269). The result was a: 'joint product, shaped and organized by asking and answering questions' (Mishler 1986). The interviewer played a facilitative role - picking up issues raised during the interview and by asking additional questions related to those issues ('Could you tell more about that?' etc.). Additional prompting questions were also asked in order to obtain additional information about a certain event or to advance the account through time. Based on discussions arising from each interviewee's accounts and descriptions, a chronology of the interviewee's transition from studies to working life was obtained and explored.

Confidentiality was assured and participants were informed that their interviews would be used for research purposes only. Participants were informed that extracts used in publications would be edited to exclude any details which might enable them to be recognized. Two of the interviews were conducted in the first author's office in a university building, one took place at the interviewee's work place (in a silent practicing room) and one was undertaken in a conference room near the interviewee's summer cottage. Interviews lasted approximately 2-4 hours and were conducted on a one-to-one basis by the first author.

Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts included such non-verbal utterances that had a communicative function such as laughter and emphasis (see Wooffitt 2001, pp. 61-65). Any material that would identify the participants was removed from the transcripts. Participants were also given pseudonyms.

The analytic approach adopted was initially developed by MacDonald and Miell (2002) and MacDonald et al. (2005). This approach involved the initial identification of key themes, with detailed analysis then focusing on the particular ways in which participants were talking about their process of transition from studies to working life. The interviews were analyzed as a single body of data. The analytic process began with immersion in the recordings and transcripts. We listened to the recordings repeatedly and transcribed them. Transcriptions were as detailed and authentic as possible in order to allow transparency and access to the data on which analysis is based (Nikander 2008). While studying the transcripts, we made notes about their content. Thereafter, we made notes about previous ideas, possible themes and tentative interpretations. These initial themes were then organized into meaningful groups following the ideas that we had identified. After a careful review of the themes in the light of our research questions and theoretical considerations, we then selected the most salient for further analysis. The extracts presented in the Findings section exemplify broader patterns detected in the analysis of the themes. The extracts were translated from Finnish into English by the researchers and these translations were checked and further refined by a bi-lingual Finnish/English music psychology specialist. The extracts were chosen as illustrative of some key patterns which emerged across the data, although the other occurrences were not necessarily equally succinct or readily quotable. The themes were given their present form while writing the report of the study.

The analyses presented in this paper explore how professional musicians characterize their transition from studies to working life. The following discussion focuses on two key themes: (1) 'Musicianship: one's own playing in transition' and (2) 'Situating

oneself as a working musician anew'. Theme 1 focuses on *how* career-young professional musicians characterize the significance of the transition from study to working life for their development as musicians and pianists. Theme 2 considers the negotiation of multiple identities as working musicians and situating one's musicianship in wider life context beyond the Academy. In both themes, we are concerned with how musicians orient to the multiple and diverse influences that confront them in the context of transition from studies to working life, as well as their changing practices and trajectories as musicians. The following extracts, which have been translated from Finnish to English, were chosen because they exemplify some key patterns which emerged across the broader data set.

Negotiating transitions and taking up new identities

Our analyses suggest that the transition musicians make from formal study to working life necessitates that they redefine their accounts of their musicianship. This involves recontextualising their prior study experiences and giving a situated account of their musicianship in respect of their own playing as well as their present and future career aspirations as working musicians. Having relatively recently completed a lengthy period of formal study, the participants' accounts exemplify the salience of the transition involved in leaving the Sibelius Academy and moving into professional working life. Below, we examine (re)negotiation of professional identities and trajectories of musicians.

Musicianship: one's own playing in transition

The first participant we discuss here, Aino, had recently completed her instrumental studies and told us, in Extract 1, that since having done so she had found her own voice and ‘way’ as a musician - listening to herself and letting go of the culturally sanctioned notions of achievement and success set by the academy and the wider community of musicians (see also Juuti and Littleton 2010). Aino’s talk in Extract 1 is located in original interview in the heart of talk about her transition from studies to working life. According to Aino, you lose your way by not listening to yourself. Aino characterized a successful transition into working life in terms of undertaking her own activities, responding to her own feelings and thoughts, so that it no longer mattered what other people did and how well they played.

Extract 1.ⁱ ⁱⁱ

I: What have been the critical insights...?

A: Possibly it is just letting go. It is surely the key word - I feel [whispering I feel]. Letting go... like you must achieve something [sigh].

That you must achieve a certain mark or that you must go to some competition. Like, I have let go of *all* that. (Aino)

I: That achieving that happens along a certain path.

ⁱ Interviews were conducted in Finnish, transcribed in Finnish for the initial analysis (by Juuti) and translated into English for further analysis by both authors. The transcripts presented here have been translated to retain details of wording relevant to the analysis. We have avoided the larger changes that would be necessary to reproduce the style of colloquial spoken English. Some translations may therefore appear slightly stilted.

ⁱⁱ Transcripts include the following features:
[words in square brackets] to indicate manner of speaking e.g. [sigh]
Italics to indicate emphasis
-- -to indicate words omitted from the extract presented here
...to indicate long pause

A: It happens another way I have thought. Yeah, yes. Like, it needs to happen the way of ... listening to yourself, not from the outside, the way that you respond to some other person's wishes or school's or community's or anyone else's wishes. It *can't go* that way, because you like lose yourself in that. However some, there are *certainly* those people in the Academy and wherever in music education, whose own targets and school's targets are in accordance. And in these cases the package is perfect. But I think that this crowd is rather in a minority [laugh].) --- And then I had *consciously* decided, that I don't, I don't participate in *anything*, I just do my own stuff. I was practicing quite a lot at home, a heck of a lot like so selfish, like *terribly focused* only on my own thing and not *at all* caring about my surroundings. It didn't work always and I always got the shivers when somebody played really well. But somehow in strengthening yourself, it was not any more important what the others did. The main thing is how *I* feel and how *I* think.

(Aino)

In this extract, we see Aino's way of characterizing and situating her prior experiences and trajectory as a musician. Aino suggested that her formal studies within the Academy had offered her a path that had been in opposition to her own feelings and needs. After leaving the Academy, it was only through making her own choices and developing her own meanings did she understand what it means to be a musician. In this process of renegotiation, she emphasizes 'letting go' while at the same time suggesting that she is finding something by listening to herself. Aino's agency as a musician is achieved through listening - using her own inner resources, not by relying on external resources such as traditional expectations and 'shoulds'

(see Juuti and Littleton 2010). Aino orients to the idea of being 'selfish' as something positive, acceptable and necessary - protecting herself and developing by establishing clear boundaries, by not taking the path she has previously been told she should take when she was in the Academy.

In association with the use of her inner resources Aino stressed her feelings of becoming stronger. This seemed to her to be a key point in her development as a musician. Furthermore, by making a point of 'losing' herself, Aino underscores her wish to define her musicianship, not in terms of other people's ideas and expectations, but by following her own visions, through a process of discovery. Maturing as a musician, as well as redefining one's trajectory in respect of becoming a musician as agentic, should be, from her point of view, more like 'finding' crucial elements - as opposed to 'losing' something - as well as being independent enough to make your own decisions.

In contrast to the confidence and agency that Aino's talk is highlighting, Wirtanen and Littleton (2004) reported the difficulties music students can encounter inside the Academy in finding their own voice and establishing personal confidence in the context of the teacher-student relationship. Wirtanen and Littleton (2004) argued that the struggle between personal meaningfulness and communal/cultural expectations and sanctions can be implicated in students' lack of confidence as solo pianists. A sense of a loss of self was reported, especially when students had multiple music-making interests and had to, for example, hide their interest in folk music from their teacher in order to sustain the image of a diligent, respectable piano student concentrating on their solo work under the guidance of the teacher (Wirtanen and Littleton 2004, pp. 36-38).

The next extract indicates how Kati characterized finding her own way as a musician along her transition from study to work as a core from the perspective of negotiating her professional identity. She focused particularly on the way in which she diversified her music making through the playing of chamber music, lieder and modern music, as well as through playing different musical instruments. Kati talks about proceeding in her own way, rather than trying to follow a prescribed path. She described her own ways as those that included both atypical choices of music style outside the mainstream and playing unusual instruments. She also mentions her concert in which she played atypical instruments, but still got very positive feedback. Kati characterizes her process of finding confidence as being strongly mediated by one crucial person, a teacher, whom she described during the interview as being a kind of ‘outcast’ teacher at the Academy, a teacher, who follows her ‘own ways’ and also supports her students to do that. This teacher also functioned as a link between Kati and the international community of players of her new instrument. From the perspective of her identity as a musician and successful transition to working life, Kati found the finding of a new teacher, with the associated new influences, towards the end of her studies ‘revolutionary’.

Extract 2.

K: Then I somehow found my own way, even though it did not happen *quickly*. I began to realize that *I wouldn't even attempt* the way of the *young stage lion*.

I have *also earlier* gone down some unusual *paths*, like all kinds of chamber music and lieder and modern music, in which my teacher Tiina

gave me an awful lot of inspiration, and also old music, like everything out of the mainstream. (Oh, I had a concert, it was like [date] then. I played in that both [named instrument] and piano as a combination, [little pause] hobbies [laugh].)

So, somehow like I begun, I got the feeling that it is fully *accepted* that you do not carry out, perhaps like such, surely just such what has been *expected*, that there is such a miracle way written in the stars that you have to follow and to do certain things with the right teachers.

(Kati)

Kati reported that she gained confidence as a musician by choosing another path from that which was generally ‘expected’. She gave up the expected life trajectories and ‘shoulds’ of Academy students and solo pianists (see Juuti and Littleton 2010), and embraced plurality. This is how she wanted to define her musicianship. For her there was not just one miracle path. Kati stopped basing her identity as a musician only on solo work and incorporated a variety of ways to make music.

Kati’s emphasis on finding her own way and making her own choices was strongly supported by the realization, after receiving positive feedback after her debut, that it was acceptable to make her own choices, with the support of her teacher and others outside the academic community, even if her decisions were unconventional. The support given by significant others related to opening up new directions for her, as well as enabling her to find a balance between negotiating one’s independence from and dependence on authorities. Kati did not appear to find her way as a result of deliberate planning. Her remarks gave the impression that this happened through serendipity and chance.

In contrast to the participants in extracts 1 and 2, the third participant we quote, Susanna, characterizes, in extract 3, her transition as a process of distancing herself from the Sibelius Academy - of 'getting rid of' it . In doing so she utilizes the language of riddance and resignation. For Susanna, following her own way is freedom to do whatever. Susanna describes herself at the time of her studies at the Academy as being 'strait-jacketed' because she was sitting in her 'cell'. Susanna describes this transition as a process of liberation and independence to do whatever she wanted, especially the freedom to pursue her own musical projects. Toward the beginning of the interview she talked about learning new instruments and new genres of music in order to expand into new musical activities.

Extract 3.

S: I think I have earlier been terribly 'strait-jacketed'. Well, supposedly so. So, during the Academy times. There I was sitting in the cell. I think it's great that I have got rid of that clique.

I: Why?

S: Well, just because of [laugh], you have the freedom to do whatever. --- I also had a dream to play piano duets. It has also come true now. --- And also it has come true that I do chamber music and lieder. It is an awful lot of fun.

(Susanna)

During the interview Susanna strongly distances herself from the Academy. 'Getting rid of' refers literally to total alienation and rejection. She wants to distinguish in her

account between her time at the Academy, with solo practicing, and being a musician outside it. They seem to be two separate worlds and trajectories. She does not want to see herself as a 'strait-jacketed' person without autonomy. Instead she redefines herself, after completing her studies, as a professional musician who has freedom and whose musical identity is more diverse, including chamber music not only solo work. She connects her freedom and independence to the ability to be actively engaged in several different kinds of musical expression, not only solo work. Kati also touched on this tendency toward diversity in her interview (Extract 2). By emphasizing freedom, the fulfilment of her dreams after her studies, and the accompanying experiences of fun and joy, she implicitly highlights her musician's identity as self-made, voluntarily, based on her own feelings, and re-constructed without the influence of the Academy.

Taken together, the transition from the Academy into working life seemed to be propitious for reassessing one's path as a musician. The transition period resourced intense identity work round one's own playing and musicianship in that. Extracts 1-3 show that these three musicians had different orientations vis-à-vis their experiences while maturing as a musician and becoming independent from the Academy. In all three extracts participants speak of finding their own way and voice. The desire to move away from or rid oneself of something, while orienting toward new influences and ways, seemed to lead students to reflect actively on their learning process and to become active agents in defining themselves as professional musicians. The emergence of agency appeared to be especially strong in these extracts. Interviewees in Extracts 1 and 2 especially, defined the use of their inner resources in terms of attempts to listen to their own voice and their own thoughts and to make their own decisions in the process of becoming professional musicians. This involves presenting

oneself as mature, multi-faceted and creative as a musician. This was construed as representing significant progress in participants' pathways of musicianship. Becoming agentic in constructing one's musicianship was supported by 'meaningful others' without Academy conventions. All three of the extracts indicate speakers' efforts to reconcile their own biographical accounts with traditionally shared norms and expectations (see also Juuti and Littleton 2010). By redefining their relationships and paths as musicians, these students oriented toward changed ways of seeing themselves as professional musicians.

Situating oneself as a working musician anew

If we compare the different stages of interviews in our study, In the interviewees accounts, the transition from studies to working life seems to have been accompanied by a transformation of their whole expectations of professional musical life. In the first round of interviews, the students were more inclined to accept the traditional communal and cultural 'shoulds' as well as the expected trajectories of music students and musicians (see Juuti and Littleton 2010). Clearly the transition to working life led them to create new narratives that embraced and privileged their own individual, unique and multiple trajectories. In the extracts which follow we focus on exploring professional musicians' orientation to multiple and diverse influences in working life. Within this context of change, multiple, plural and creative paths and ways are highlighted in the process of re-defining and re-constructing one's identity as *an agentic professional musician*.

In the next extract Aino is orienting to a specific context where she has been working recently. She is telling the interviewer about doing more varied 'things' nowadays as

a musician and no longer feeling 'black and white' - having to choose just one thing. During the interview Aino describes both the founding of her own, new, piano trio as well as how she works as an accompanist in a music school. She is wondering retrospectively why she pushed aside the possibility of making her own choices in respect of multiple contexts of and for music making - trying instead to orient to something intangible, working hard towards something that does not exist (unbalanced solo work) and trying 'hard to be something that you don't even know what it is'.

Extract 4

A: (I don't see, that I could work only as a teacher. It feels a bit too bad [lower voice with too bad]. It feels too narrow for me. I don't feel it any more so black and white, that 'now I have to choose only one thing'.). I do diversified things, I do many things, and it simply suits me better [happily] than just playing piano. This is the way I have found it. I don't understand. It is so funny, that why you then like push it aside by trying to adopt something that doesn't even have a concrete tangible position. That you somehow try hard to be something that you don't even know what it is. But now I feel for the first time that I do many things.

(Aino)

Instead of choosing just one thing, Aino highlights the meaning of musical projects other than solo playing as sources of her identity position - appearing for her now as something not unreachable and out of her world, but concrete. She also wants to avoid being someone who is under illusions regarding her future working life or someone

who is a 'black and white' person - choosing just one narrow thing. This kind of agency, through embracing multiple influences, indicates a big change from her period of formal study, where Aino was struggling deeply with expected life trajectories (see Juuti and Littleton 2010, extract 10).

During their studies the students had oriented to teaching as a kind of 'second best'. The musicians participating in this study had expressed this in many ways during their initial interviews. For example, Meri expressed and 'predicted' this dilemma already during her studies by saying that 'I think that someone who gets in to the soloist department hardly thinks to aim to be a piano teacher. I don't believe in that'. It is perhaps not surprising then that teaching emerges as one of the most challenging things to negotiate in respect of professional musicianship in the context of transition to working life.

In the next extract, drawn from the interview after her transition from studies to working life, Kati is talking about her teaching work. Kati had secured a permanent job as a teacher shortly after completing her studies. In addition to this work she is also playing in chamber music groups and has also undertaken some solo work. She promotes her career as a player during the holiday periods. In extract 5 she suggests that teaching affords the most realistic vision for her future - you have to have some money if you are living in Helsinki and need to pay rent on your flat. However, she also explains that teaching is not something she is forced to do, but that she is interested in it. That said, she would not like to only teach.

Extract 5

I: Do you think you want to be a piano teacher?

K: I suppose it is the most realistic future view. It is not such an alternative that I am forced to do, but I like, at this moment I am ever so interested in teaching little children. But I couldn't stand it if that would be the only thing to do. --- I have that much sense of reality and understanding. Especially if living in Helsinki and paying rent, so, you have to earn money somehow, so, I have always been in a certain way so realistic.

(Kati)

Kati's case exemplifies the potential identity trouble musicians encounter if they work as a teacher. Her account also coheres around the challenges of constructing her identity creatively - balancing the dilemma of making work and earning money (Taylor and Littleton 2008). Kati is appealing to realism as a resource in accounting for her stance to teaching. For Kati realism is something positive and sensible - you need to teach in order to earn money. She does not want to be seen as a poor person who cannot pay her bills. Claiming an identity as a realist seems to be very successful way to resolve the challenge posed by her teaching work. Furthermore, Kati's identity work around teaching reconciles her artistic work and responsibility. She does not want to be a narrow person, rather someone who is open-minded and well-rounded. She attempts, in her talk, to accommodate both her artistic work and her teaching as important elements in her life. It seems that Kati is in a situation where she is balancing between earning money by teaching and working in other musical activities such as accompanying and playing chamber music. There needs to be space not only for teaching, but for other musical projects and diversity also. This kind multiplicity through 'double-life' commitments was reported also in Taylor and Littleton's (2008)

study in which young artists were reconciling their ambition in respect of their artistic work and earning money through teaching or other kinds of work. In addition to realism, Kati orients to teaching through her talk about 'interest'. Thus, through her talk about realism in respect of her personal finances and her personal interest in teaching, she is able to accommodate and reconcile teaching in her present path as a musician. These two resources function to legitimate a musician's trajectory that also incorporates teaching. Making decisions in respect of one's identity as a professional musician is thus also influenced by a broader, holistic view on one's life.

In the next extract Kati points to the significance of feelings of safety and clarity alongside teaching. She explains how feelings of safety arise when she feels clarity and a kind of stability. Kati cannot understand how some of her friends (from her time at the Academy) are still living a kind of student life - 'hanging around'. Her suggestion is that she needs the kind of clarity which comes with having a permanent job as a teacher. She connects the decision to teach with her way of life and her need for safety and clarity more generally. She refers to her tendency to worry about all sorts of things, both large and small, and suggests that life as a freelancer would not suit her. She thinks that teaching gives her safety and balance in respect of this.

Extract 6

K: I don't even *as late as now* understand that *some* of my age people or those with whom I have been studying, that they like 'hang around' here and live such an *eternal* study life. I would get *anxious* because of that. You also get anxious when trying to keep two professions running at the

same time. And you get anxious because of *different* things in that, but like *kind of* clarity. I require it.

I: What you mean by clarity?

K: That it is *really* a nice thing that you know that you have that job to the end of your life. ---?

I: How do you explain the feeling of clarity?

K: There is a certain safety. Because I am such a ‘worrier’, I stress that I surely wake up early enough, so, I must be at nine in the railway station and like such little things and big things. So, such an ongoing freelancer-life would *not suit me*, that I am *not able to know* what is going to happen in two months. So, certain things would be stable.

(Kati)

During the interview, Kati constructed a holistic view of her life as a musician. She negotiates her identity as a well-rounded person and balanced person by listening to and orienting to her personal needs and goals in life whilst making decisions in respect of her working life. She speaks of wanting to have balance in her life in order to balance a dual profession as a teacher and performer that otherwise would cause her some anxiety. Because she is a person who easily worries about things, she wishes to avoid anxiety and stress. Having a permanent job as a teacher gives her a feeling of safety and an opportunity to have a double commitment. She uses her awareness of this to make appropriate long-term decisions for her life as a whole. This helps her to obtain the stability she wants and needs to have, not just continuous change. Kati’s account highlights the balanced fusion of the diverse influences in respect of her fulfilment as a musician and in her personal life in general. This extract shows then how teaching appears as a resource for negotiating one’s identity as a ‘realist’ and a

'holistic' person, which means placing music in the broader context of one's life. As reported in a study by Burland and Davidson (2004, pp. 243), this need for a balanced life style shows centrally how one's notions of self- can influence one's fulfilment as a professional musician.

It seems that in the period of transition from the Academy a space for creative, musical identity negotiations, trajectories and career paths opens up and students concerns with agency come to the fore. Acceptance of, preparation for and talking about more holistic career underscores the significance following one's individual needs and creative paths and trajectories - instead of fixed paths and communal expectations and 'shoulds'. Career-young professional musicians used the resource of realism as a way of legitimating their own multiple ways of diverse music making and choices in respect of a balanced, holistic life style. Educated solo pianists emerge here as flexible and committed musicians. The musicians in this study clearly position themselves as accomplished novices (see Bransford and Brown 2000), whose identity negotiations are based on being ready for diverse opportunities, playing with new chamber music groups, teaching and even taking over new instruments if that is what is needed in order to go forward and negotiate one's identity as realistic, holistic and in balance (see also Mills 2004a, 2004b). Thus, their expertise is not based on specific subject matter or restricting oneself to one position.

Conclusions

Early-career professionals' talk, and accounts of their experiences, constitute an important site for exploring how the identity of 'professional', in this study 'professional musician', is negotiated and taken up and how the multi-faceted

working practices of a professional musician (for instance, balancing work as a teacher with being a chamber musician) are utilized to negotiate possible career paths and trajectories. The process of identity construction in the context of transition is very intense and complex, as there are a variety of potential choices and pathways to musicianship to be negotiated. In talking about their musicianship in transition, individuals construct and re-construct in their talk notions of professional trajectories which incorporate, and resist, multiple and diverse elements arising from culturally established trajectories, current context and future visions (Wenger 1998, pp. 153-156)

Our analyses show how the transition from studies to working life enabled young professionals to actively reconstrue their musical and work identities as well as their learning processes. Notions of one's own musicianship and work identity were in a process of intense re-construction and re-configuration. Furthermore, the period of transition seemed to be very influential in becoming agentic in respect of one's musicianship and career planning. Agency was evidenced strongly in the students' construction and re-construction of their own creative ways - these not being fixed or dependent on communal expectations, but reflecting freedom, widening perspectives, independence, embracing multiple influences and anchoring individual lives in more holistic ways. All this underscores the significance of following one's individual needs and creative paths and trajectories, instead of fixed paths, communal expectations and 'shoulds'. This movement from constraint to freedom appeared to be a very challenging process, but one that afforded novice professional musicians a means to re-construct anew their narrations and trajectories as musicians to suit their work contexts and their lives more generally. Furthermore, within this process a growth in confidence was evident. Professional identities were (re-)constructed then

in a negotiation processes, at the interaction between personal agency and social. Having agency means being able to make choices concerning own work based on own interests and motivations. It means that in relation to cultural practices (constraints and opportunities) one is able to act in a way that corresponds to personal values and hopes (Eteläpelto and Saarinen 2006).

As our analysis shows, identities are not negotiated in a vacuum. In the process of becoming agentic the relations between the individual and cultural norms appear to be central - social relations such as independence from authority figures, whilst being supported by meaningful others, seem to be especially critical in this process. Becoming agentic is thus a deeply socio-cultural process. It necessitates a continual balance between the individual and social. The process of negotiating one's professional identity was therefore implicated in the agentic construction and re-construction of creative and holistic career trajectories (see also Wenger 1998, pp.153-156). In order to negotiate and re-define one's personal and professional identity, there have to be mutually constitutive spaces for developing-professionals that offer resources for realizing personal goals and plans (Eteläpelto and Saarinen 2006). The transition from studies to working life seemed to offer clear opportunities for this. And, if we accept that subjects have agency within studying and working communities, then subjects' personal interests and choices are of central importance and should be implicated in the subjects' learning within communities of professional education and working life experiences.

As argued above, transition seems to be propitious for reassessing one's identity and trajectories. It seems that the transition to working life produces qualitatively different kinds of identity work in comparison to the period of transition to studies or studying (see Juuti and Littleton 2010; Wirtanen and Littleton 2004). The period of transition

into working life challenges the concept of the professional pianist as a solo performer. It seems rather that a working musician is someone who practices within the profession of music in one or more specialist fields. This diversity of roles had however, not been reflected in the curriculum at the time of participants entry to the academy. Thus, professional musicians are facing, after their studies, an unknown, precarious future where their career scripts need to be written again to adapt to real working life context.

Bennett (2007) has come to quite similar conclusions arguing that ensuring students' preparedness for diverse careers and wide-ranging artistic practices seem to pose significant challenges for music institutions. Acceptance of, and preparation for a more holistic career, would enable more music students to find their own way and realise their musical aspirations in doing music. However, we argue that in order to help musician manage transitions smoothly, we need to understand more about the multiple tensions and conflicts that they encounter and struggle with by supporting their 'identity-work' such as enabling them to tell their own stories and construct creative and multiple trajectories.

This study has been conducted in relation to just one music institution, which affords its' own specific historical and cultural resources for the negotiation of professional musicians' identities in the context of transition from this specific institutional and cultural context. This makes the situated and context-specific character of identity negotiations especially evident. Our analysis has shown musicians' (specifically solo pianists') identity work and the processes through which musicians' identities and career trajectories come to be constructed creatively. Creativity in this context is needed in (re-)negotiation of career

trajectories - especially in respect of transition into contemporary working life from traditional practice. Creativity is thus not only visible as an aspect of musicians' identities, it is fundamental to the process of becoming agentic and negotiating one's identity as a musician at work. Creativity becomes a necessary tool for these career-young musicians' enabling them to (re-)negotiate their work identities creatively in order to manage in contemporary work circumstances in music.

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