CLASSICAL MUSIC FUTURES
PRACTICES OF INNOVATION

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6. Becoming a Classical Musician of the Future
The Effects of Training and Experience on Performer Attitudes to Innovation

Stephanie Pitts, Karen Burland and Tom Spurgin

Introduction

The classical music sector changes slowly, and usually with the audience at the heart of decisions, whether driven by concerns over diversity (or its lack) or the simple bottom line of needing to increase ticket sales and income. Recent innovations include shifting the concert location to an informal or unusual venue,[1] increasing the interaction between performers and audiences,[2] and making changes to the marketing, programme notes and presentation.[3] Performers are hugely impacted by these decisions, but have little agency over the direction of their organisations, and little training for the adapted roles and settings in which they might find themselves.

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1   Julia Haferkorn, 'Dancing to Another Tune: Classical Music in Nightclubs and Other Non-traditional Venues', in *The Classical Music Industry*, ed. by Christopher Dromey and Julia Haferkorn (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

2   Stephanie E. Pitts, 'What Makes an Audience? Investigating the Roles and Experiences of Listeners at a Chamber Music Festival', *Music & Letters* 86:2 (2005).

3   Pitts, Stephanie E. and Sarah M. Price, *Understanding Audience Engagement in the Contemporary Arts* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

The impact of innovation in classical music on performers' experiences and wellbeing is currently under-researched, with insufficient focus on the resultant changes that might be needed in conservatoire and university music education to equip performers for this new age.[4] In our collaboration between the Sheffield Performer and Audience Research Centre (SPARC), Manchester Collective and the Philharmonia Orchestra, we are raising questions about how performers in heritage and alternative classical music organisations are adapting to changing circumstances.

Our chapter draws upon twenty-seven survey responses and four interviews with musicians from our two partner ensembles, in which the musicians reflect on their training and the extent to which this prepared them for professional orchestral playing. We shared our findings and analysis with the then Manchester Collective Chief Executive, Adam Szabo, and his responses are included towards the end of the chapter, helping to set the agenda for future research and innovation. These exploratory findings raise questions about the role of conservatoires in supporting or inhibiting innovation in the profession, and highlight the challenges of work-life balance that were altered by the pandemic. We consider the implications of these findings for orchestras as workplaces, and for musicians as agents for change in the classical music industry.

Literature Review: Foundations for Classical Music Careers

The transition from training to working as a musician is widely considered to be complex and unpredictable,[5] and while this is true of career transitions more generally, this is particularly pronounced for

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4   Karen Burland and Dawn Bennett, 'Creating a Sustainable Performance Career', in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Performance: Insights from Education, Psychology, Musicology, Science and Medicine*, ed. by Gary E. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 135–153.

5   Burland and Bennett, 'Creating a Sustainable Performance Career'; Andrea Creech, Ioulia Papageorgi, Celia Duffy, Frances Morton, Elizabeth Haddon, John Potter, and others, 'From Music Student to Professional: The Process of Transition', *British Journal of Music Education*, 25:3 (2008), 315–31; Jerry C. Middleton and Jason A. Middleton, 'Review of Literature on the Career Transitions of Performing Artists Pursuing Career Development', *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* 17:2 (2016), 211–32.

performing artists who face diverse pathways through protean and portfolio careers.[6] Even before the global COVID-19 pandemic which began in 2020, the music industry was associated with precarity,[7] financial insecurity[8] and threats to work-life balance.[9] The pandemic has undoubtedly caused a great deal of anxiety for professional and aspiring musicians, particularly in relation to their working lives and the future shape of the music profession.[10] The suspension of live performance during lockdowns also became a source of identity threat to the musicians affected, whose sense of self is so intertwined with their musical activities,[11] particularly because music usually has been a dominant feature of their lives from a relatively young age.[12]

Such extreme disruption to the working lives of musicians is thankfully rare, and has never occurred before on the scale experienced during the pandemic. The new insights this collective disruption has provided into the impact of change within the music profession echo work which has considered the experience of redundancy for opera singers;[13] the psychological challenges faced by pre-elite, transitioning-elite and established-elite performers;[14] and the 'hidden injuries' experienced by rock-and-roll musicians frustrated by, and eventually

6   Jerry C. Middleton and Jason A. Middleton, 'Review of Literature on the Career Transitions of Performing Artists Pursuing Career Development', *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* 17:2 (2016), 211–32, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-016-9326-x

7   Norma Daykin, 'Disruption, Dissonance and Embodiment: Creativity, Health and Risk in Music Narratives', *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* 9:1 (2005), 67–87.

8   Melissa C. Dobson, 'Insecurity, Professional Sociability, and Alcohol: Young Freelance Musicians' Perspectives on Work and Life in the Music Profession', *Psychology of Music* 39:2 (2011), 240–60.

9   Charles Umney and Lefteris Kretsos, 'That's the Experience', *Work and Occupations* 42:3 (2015), 313–34.

10 Susanna Cohen and Jane Ginsborg, 'The Experiences of Mid-Career and Seasoned Orchestral Musicians in the UK During the First COVID-19 Lockdown', *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021), 645967–645967.

11 Glynis M. Breakwell and Rusi Jaspal, 'Identity processes and musicians during the COVID-19 pandemic', *Musicae Scientiae* 26:4 (2022), 777-798.

12 Middleton and Middleton, 'Review of Literature'.

13 Jane Oakland, Raymond MacDonald and Paul Flowers, 'Identity in Crisis: The Role of Work in the Formation and Renegotiation of a Musical Identity', *British Journal of Music Education* 30 (2013), 261–276.

14 Ellis Pecen, David J. Collins and Áine MacNamara, '"It's Your Problem. Deal with It." Performers' Experiences of Psychological Challenges in Music', *Frontiers in Psychology* 8:2374 (2018).

unsuccessful in achieving, their ambitions and attempts to work in music.[15]

The working lives of musicians have always demanded a certain amount of flexibility, requiring individuals to possess openness and agency in embracing change and seeking opportunities.[16] However, over the past two decades there has been a step-change in the ways that organisations have responded to demands to diversify, maintain relevance, attract new audiences, and meet the changing expectations of funders and the public more broadly.[17] Innovation often focuses on enhancing audience experience, by offering closer connection to the performers or curating performances in non-traditional venues, for example; research highlights the impact of such audience development strategies on the audience,[18] or the intended impact from the perspective of producers,[19] but rarely considers the players' perspectives.

Training as a musician has traditionally been associated with developing technical expertise alongside competitive distinctiveness[20] which means that as the music profession develops and transforms, some musicians may not feel equipped to take on new tasks such as leading education projects, talking to audiences or performing in a wider range of musics. Musicians, particularly those who have more recently completed their training, increasingly recognise the value of developing entrepreneurial skills in order to identify opportunities to be

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15   George Morgan and Julian Wood, 'Creative Accommodations: The Fractured Transitions and Precarious Lives of Young Musicians', *Journal of Cultural Economy* 7:1 (2014), 64–78.

16   Sini Juuti and Karen Littleton, 'Tracing the Transition from Study to a Contemporary Creative Working Life: The Trajectories of Professional Musicians', *Vocations and Learning* 5:1 (2011), 5–21.

17   Hilary Glow, Anne Kershaw and Matthew Reason, 'Leading or Avoiding Change: The Problem of Audience Diversification for Arts Organisations', *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 27:1 (2021), 130–148; Steven Hadley, *Audience Development and Cultural Policy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

18   Pitts, 'What Makes an Audience?; Pitts and Price, *Understanding Audience Engagement in the Contemporary Arts*

19   Christopher Dromey and Julia Haferkorn, *The Classical Music Industry* (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

20   Paul Hager and Mary C. Johnsson, 'Learning to Become a Professional Orchestral Musician: Going Beyond Skill and Technique', *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 61:2 (2009), 103–18.

creative or innovative in ways that align with their identities and values.[21] Such individuals may embrace change and challenge as an exciting opportunity.[22] However, other individuals, perhaps those without this kind of 'growth mindset',[23] may feel increasingly disconnected from their co-workers and organisation when trying to align with new expectations; they may become insecure about their abilities, or experience an unwelcome threat to their identity as a musician.[24] There are therefore potential negative psychological risks for individuals who are unable to meet changing expectations, particularly where there are low levels of perceived control and support.[25]

In their study exploring the psychological challenges experienced by aspiring and established musicians, Pecen et al. highlight that their elite performers demonstrated a range of positive behaviours towards their work, including those relating to health habits, strategies for coping with anxiety, and a reflective attitude towards performance, suggesting that these characteristics are essential in order to sustain work as a music performer.[26] In addition, all of their participants recognised the need for a range of professional skills relating to organisation, communication, and managing a business. This aligns with Vaag et al. who highlight that 'having adequate personal resources such as entrepreneurial skills, value-anchored flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity and dedication to music making were described as important for managing life as a freelance musician'.[27]

The evidence of the workplace challenges faced by professional musicians points to the need for greater understanding of how training can best equip players to be agile, resilient and open-minded without

21   Staffan Albinsson, 'Musicians as Entrepreneurs or Entrepreneurs as Musicians?', *Creativity and Innovation Management* 27 (2017), 348–357; Jonas Vaag, Fay Giæver and Ottar Bjerkeset, 'Specific Demands and Resources in the Career of the Norwegian Freelance Musician', *Arts and Health* 6:3 (2014), 205–222.

22   Karen Burland, 'Becoming a Musician: A Longitudinal Study Investigating the Career Transitions of Undergraduate Music Students' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2005).

23   Carol S. Dweck, 'Motivational Processes Affecting Learning', *American Psychologist* 41:10 (1986), 1040–48.

24   Creech and others, 'From Music Student to Professional'.

25   Daykin, 'Disruption, Dissonance and Embodiment'.

26   Pecen and others, '"It's Your Problem. Deal with It."'

27   Vaag and others, 'Specific Demands and Resources in the Career of the Norwegian Freelance Musician', p. 205.

losing the core values of classical music-making (usually assumed to include technical excellence and expressive performance). Pecen et al. highlight the importance of acknowledging the challenging reality of pursuing work as a musician, encouraging engagement with extra-curricular activities and raising awareness of sources of self-help.[28] A student-centred approach, which enables individuals to understand what future success looks like to them, is also vital. Other research highlights that students would benefit from exposure to a mixture of informal and formal learning opportunities,[29] as well as the 'provision of many and varied performance opportunities and support for developing self-discipline and autonomy in relation to the acquisition of musical expertise';[30] such activities may help to foster a more flexible approach towards music-making and the confidence to adapt to new challenges.

Social support from friends, family and peers during periods of transition and change is also important for managing the hurdles associated with trying to become established in the music profession and for managing life as a freelance musician.[31] Valuable support also comes from access to mentoring or multi-genre peer networks during periods of transition,[32] as well as opportunities to experience 'guided contextualising' through situated learning (e.g. the professional orchestra).[33]

It is clear that in order to best support the complex process of acquiring and sustaining work in a changing and opaque music profession, greater insight into the challenges and opportunities it affords for established and aspiring musicians is now needed. Our study aims to begin this work, considering the implications for music organisations and training institutions, and of course, for the musicians themselves.

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28 Pecen and others, '"It's Your Problem. Deal with It."'
29 Susan Coulson, 'Getting "Capital" in the Music World: Musicians' Learning Experiences and Working Lives', *British Journal of Music Education* 27:3 (2010), 255–70.
30 Creech and others, 'From Music Student to Professional', p. 315.
31 Umney and Kretsos, 'That's the Experience'; Vaag and others, 'Specific Demands and Resources in the Career of the Norwegian Freelance Musician'.
32 Creech and others, 'From Music Student to Professional'.
33 Hager and Johnsson, 'Learning to Become a Professional Orchestral Musician'.

Research Methods

The data for this study were collected from musicians working with two classical ensembles based in the UK with whom we had existing contacts: the Philharmonia Orchestra, a symphony orchestra based in London, and Manchester Collective, a smaller, flexible chamber ensemble. Both ensembles work with freelance musicians and so some of our participants had experience of working with both the smaller and larger classical music ensembles represented in this study.

The research was split into three stages:

1. *Survey:* An online questionnaire sent to all player members of the Philharmonia Orchestra and musicians who had performed with Manchester Collective during 2019, 2020 and early 2021. The survey sought responses on musicians' experiences of education and training, and the relevance of this training to their current practice; the effects of COVID-19 on their work; how the classical music profession has changed over their time in the industry; reflections on what they would do differently if they were to train again; and what skills they anticipate being required of classical musicians in the next twenty years.

2. *Interviews:* Follow-up interviews were conducted with four survey participants who had expressed a willingness to talk in more depth about their experiences. The interviews focused on participants' experiences of training and their willingness to engage in activities outside of their formal training curricula.

3. *Sector response:* Having analysed the survey results and interview transcripts, key themes and quotes were posed to Adam Szabo, the then Chief Executive of Manchester Collective, to gain his reflections on the findings to date. (We had originally intended this conversation to take place between the Artistic Directors and Chief Executives of both ensembles, but this proved difficult to schedule due to personnel changes and diary clashes.)

The survey received twenty-seven responses in total, of which thirty percent (n=8) were named participants from the Philharmonia

Orchestra and thirty-three percent (n=9) were named participants from Manchester Collective. A further thirty-seven percent (n=10) were unnamed participants. The surveys and interviews were all collected between March and April 2021. Four interviews took place, three with musicians working regularly with the Philharmonia Orchestra and one with a Manchester Collective player. Interviews were conducted online by Tom Spurgin, then Audience Development Manager at the Philharmonia Orchestra and currently undertaking a PhD in collaboration with Manchester Collective, supervised by Stephanie Pitts and Karen Burland.[34] Responses from the surveys and interviews were analysed by all three authors using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). They are presented anonymously in the discussion that follows, using participant codes for the surveys (S1-S27) and player interviews (P1-4).

The first two stages of data collection and analysis took place in 2021 ready for the paper's presentation at the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music (MCICM) 2021 symposium, and the final stage was completed in March 2022 in preparation for this chapter. Our data collection was therefore affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, taking place online and coming at a time in which participants were in a heightened state of reflection on their career choices and job security. The participant sample is small but the data generated was rich and detailed. Key themes were evident in the analysis of interviews and surveys, relating to the research topics of the future of classical music and the training required to support musicians' preparedness for sector change. We discuss these thematic findings in turn below, before presenting our discussion with Adam Szabo and the implications of the study for the classical music industry and for future research.

Research Themes and Findings

Undertaking this research after the pandemic lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 meant that our participants were facing uncertainty and anxiety about their futures, as freelance musicians suffered a devastating loss

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of income and lack of support.[35] In the survey and interviews, they gave detailed responses about the experiences of being an orchestral musician, including their preparedness for the profession, their understanding of the orchestra as a distinctive work environment, and the impact of these training and employment experiences on their musical identities. Woven throughout these discussions was a consideration of the purpose of orchestras and of classical music more widely, as participants' individual struggles to find a secure place in the classical music world were coupled with doubts about how that world might – or should – change in the future.

Preparedness for the Profession

The majority of our participants had taken a conventional route to becoming a classical musician, and reported having instrumental lessons privately (sixty-three percent; n=17) or through school (fifteen percent; n=4), and then progressing to undergraduate music degrees at a conservatoire (fifty-six percent; n=15) or university (fifteen percent; n=4), often followed by postgraduate study (conservatoire seventy-four percent; n=20; university eight percent; n=2).[36] For some, the route into professional playing had been similarly traditional: eight people had worked their way into an orchestral position through 'gain[ing] enough orchestral experience to audition and go for principal positions' (S24), while another seven had undertaken freelance work, such as in

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35   C.f. Paul Chamberlain and David Morris, *The economic impact of Covid-19 on the Culture, Arts and Heritage (CAH) sector in South Yorkshire and comparator regions* (University of Sheffield, 2021), https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/city-region/enhancing-cultural-vibrancy/covid-research-0; Ben Walmsley, Abigail Gilmore, Dave O'Brien and Anne Torreggiani, *Culture in Crisis: Impacts of Covid-19 on the UK cultural sector and where we go from here* (Centre for Cultural Value, 2022), https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVIresources/culture-in-crisis-impacts-of-covid-19/

36   Participants were asked to 'tick all that apply' from a list of multiple-choice options, but the increase in numbers towards postgraduate degrees suggests that many had reported only their highest qualification, and therefore numbers receiving instrumental lessons in childhood were much greater in reality. All four of those who began their instrumental lessons in school subsequently had privately funded tuition. This of course raises questions about access and privilege in professional music careers, which are beyond the scope of this chapter; for further discussion see Anna Bull, *Class, Control and Classical Music* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).

'numerous part time orchestras, slowly working up' (S5). In six other cases, the 'portfolio career' description was more apt,[37] and often viewed positively as a way of gaining a broader repertoire of musical skills: 'my diverse experience such as chamber musician, modern ensemble player, soloist and orchestral musician helped me in many ways when I was on trial' (S16).

While these participants had followed the expected educational route into the classical music profession, they were often critical of the extent to which it had prepared them for their working lives. The interviewees described the 'very narrow discipline' (P4) of the conservatoire curriculum and, like the survey respondents, felt that the emphasis on their instrument had been a limiting factor in their training:

> Often today's students prepare technically and musically but lack cultural awareness and exposure to the influences which could single them out for a successful career. (S2)

Some participants had taken musicianship or orchestral training classes, but still felt that they had been left to learn much of the craft of orchestral playing 'on the job', such as how to relate to other members of an orchestral section, both socially and musically. The most common mode of learning new skills was to 'make it up as you go along – watch what other people do and imitate them' (S17). While a few players lamented the lack of professional development offered by their ensembles, others felt this would be superfluous: 'It's common sense, and everyone should find their own way' (S2). This latter attitude highlights the qualities of being 'versatile and adaptable' (S3) that were felt to be essential for success in the classical music procession, but it also positions the need for help or training as a weakness, thereby creating a barrier to seeking such help.[38] Respondents were more likely to regret an absence in their initial training – such as the provision of improvisation lessons, recording technique, or guidance on how to avoid injury – than to express a desire for future development, reiterating that being a classical musician is 'a job you can only learn by doing' (S17).

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37 Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and others, 'Building Sustainable Portfolio Careers in Music: Insights and Implications for Higher Education', *Music Education Research* 21:3 (2019), 282–94.

38 C.f. Daykin, 'Disruption, Dissonance and Embodiment'.

Experience of Being in an Orchestra

Gaining a place in an orchestra had been the clear ambition for many participants throughout their training, and performing with others was at the heart of responses to the question 'What do you enjoy most about your job?':

> I love working with people to create something powerful in that one moment. Putting together programmes that have a gripping emotional arc and then giving everything to get as much of that across in performance as possible. It's about making the art come alive. (S13)

This deeply-felt satisfaction did not alter the fact that orchestras were seen as frustrating and problematic workplaces by many of the respondents, and the interviewees spoke in detail about not feeling heard by their section leaders or orchestral management. Taking on membership of committees was interesting but additional work, such that 'balancing [the] artistic process with meetings and admin can be tricky' (S13). Outside those official forums, where players could feel 'listened to in a way that might meaningfully alter the work' (P4), the mechanisms for influencing change were perceived as difficult or risky: 'often there is no opportunity to question without the risk of losing work' (S20). Likewise, the emotional labour[39] of ensuring smooth interpersonal relations within the orchestra and making new members feel welcome was acknowledged as an effort, and not always evenly distributed among the players: one interviewee felt the need for 'some kind of personal development workshop like how to deal with people you disagree with' (P3), while another had 'made a pact with myself to work harder to include people that I didn't know or that were new to the orchestra' (P1). These frustrations show that the players have insights on the orchestral workplace that are under-represented in decision-making, so diminishing their willingness to engage in conversations about the future direction of the ensemble.

Other challenges of pre-pandemic orchestral working life mentioned frequently were travelling, unsociable hours and relentless schedules, with several survey respondents describing the negative effects of

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39   C.f. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 3rd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

exhaustion, which can make it 'easy to stop caring' (S24). As the players resumed ensemble performance after the pandemic lockdowns, some described the pressure as even higher, with fewer performances meaning that 'the increased adrenaline is felt more keenly when it is not experienced regularly' (S10). The mental and physical strain of a busy performance schedule was mentioned by the majority of participants, and yet there was a high level of acceptance that these pressures were an inevitable part of the job:

> Sometimes (pre-pandemic) we could work for a month or longer without a day off (unless one deliberately takes work off to create free days), the working hours are somewhat unsociable (i.e. mostly when 'normal' people are free), and there can be a lot of travelling, both in the UK and abroad. But because I absolutely love my job, I don't necessarily see these challenges in a negative light! (S7)

In accepting the social challenges and working conditions of the orchestra, there was a strong sense of fitting into 'the way things are' (P2), showing an inertia about changing the culture. This could be related to the risks of questioning practices and therefore potentially losing work to a player seen as easier to deal with, but some participants noted the negative effects of being part of organisations whose success is directed by external markers of 'prestige and funding' (S20), meaning that 'as classical musicians we are in danger of our voice and creativity being stifled by the confines and traditions of the profession' (S26).

The pandemic had disrupted the routine of orchestral playing, and while some participants were eager to get back to 'normal' orchestral life, others had undergone a reappraisal of priorities and were aiming 'to strike a better balance in the future, post-pandemic' (S1). While the majority of the survey participants talked mainly about the loss of work caused by the cancelling of concerts, others identified new sources of income, including online teaching, and five gave examples of enjoying having family and leisure time that was usually unavailable to them: 'I'm a better and more spontaneous cook, know considerably more about Bordeaux and Burgundy wines, and the garden looks great!' (S2). Having interests beyond music was evidently a novelty to some of these players, and in some cases had helped them to cope with the losses and challenges of the pandemic lockdowns.

Whether the respondents were able to keep their resolutions to maintain these new interests once the pace of rehearsal and performance schedules quickened again was beyond the scope of our data collection, but some responses indicated that this was considered important, not only to personal wellbeing, but to the effective functioning of the classical music sector. Lack of cultural awareness and 'an interest in other parts of life' (S2) were noted as limiting factors for more traditional classical musicians, for whom 'the tunnel vision and specialisation of classical music can be limiting when diversifying one's portfolio' (S17). Some respondents hoped for change as the next generation of graduates joined their ranks: 'I think it will no longer be enough to be able to play your instrument very well, do a good audition, and settle into a comfortable job for life' (S26).

Musical Identity

The interviewees were all highly reflective about how their personalities and characteristics were bound up with their experiences of being classical musicians. The importance of emotional intelligence in the orchestral workplace (see 4.2) was evident in their descriptions of themselves as an 'over-thinker' (P3) or 'hypersensitive' (P4), with a capacity to 'read situations' (P4) that could be both helpful and obstructive to performance focus.

Participants also expressed views about which parts of their work were most important to their musical identity, with particular sensitivities around how they adapted to tasks for which they felt they had not been trained, notably learning and participation work with young people. This was often seen as an extra demand on players, who might 'never want that to be my job' (P3), though one survey respondent had identified the way to avoid this problem: 'I don't often agree to do work which I feel I haven't trained for, so I don't get asked for that very often any more' (S7).

There was some resistance from interviewees to describe themselves as a 'classical musician', since playing in other genres was also important to them, personally if not financially: 'that's not a majority of my income; that's probably quite a small amount but I see that as a big part of my identity as a musician' (P2). For this

interviewee, having skills beyond those of an orchestral player set them apart as having 'a different kind of flexibility that maybe classical musicians don't always have' (P2), so echoing some of the sentiments on managing people, which was felt to be an unevenly distributed skill (see 4.2). The fragility of musical identity is evident in the way that interviewees evaluate themselves – favourably or otherwise – against other orchestral players and assert their individuality. Alongside this fragility, however, the sense of being committed to the role was also present: 'you keep doing it because the thought of not doing it is a major life decision' (P4).

The Purpose of Orchestras

The focus of our questions was mainly on participants' own experiences as performers, but this prompted a number of spontaneous reflections on the larger purpose of their work, in relation to reaching both new and loyal audiences and promoting classical music in contemporary society:

> I think the ability to be a passionate advocate for our art form is important. We need to be evangelical about the relevance of the music we love. (S4)

Being an 'advocate' for classical music increased the connection between education work and performance for some players, with several interviews noting that the qualities of effective workshop leading were close in purpose and approach to effective performing:

> I think people think classical music is really serious, and it is but it's also fun and music should be fun and enjoyable and I always come from that perspective. It's also the way I play [my instrument] as well as like, you're not just playing it for yourself, you're trying to communicate something, so it's all about communication. (P1)

These qualities of fun, enjoyment and communication underpinned other responses that were concerned with advocating for classical music, and reaching audiences who might otherwise think it was not for them. Responses that talked of 'sharing a passion' for classical music were frequent, and showed a strong emotional drive: 'I genuinely have a deep, deep love of music and the fact that I get to hang out with music, think about music, hear and create music every day is a great privilege'

(S15). For P3, fostering new audiences for classical music was an important source of satisfaction in the player role: 'you often get a sense of bringing music out into the world which is really, really amazing, and reaching audiences who you probably wouldn't see in a concert hall, which is just really great.'

There were several mentions in the survey responses of a shift in attitudes towards diversity and inclusion, with it becoming 'less and less acceptable to programme solely music by dead, white men (and rightly so)' (S15). While individual players might feel relatively powerless to tackle the concerns that they mentioned in their responses, including a lack of racial diversity or support for female conductors, they welcomed the general shift of 'organisations [who] are starting to understand the importance in their role for change rather than always just passing the buck to education like they don't have any influence' (S10). As one player noted, however, the pace of change was slow and relied upon 'a small number of artists, ensembles and institutions who deliberately and outspokenly challenge the old norms and traditions' (S26).

A similar overview of the sector was offered by another survey respondent:

> It's much more open and adventurous now. I feel like I can see the chasm between the old school and new school deepening – there are some people that are very set in their ways, certain parts of orchestral culture that appear very unhealthy to me. I think it's only a matter of time until these cultures eat up these institutions unless something radical changes. There are also some really inspiring groups and people who are challenging the norm and forging new paths. (S13).

Manchester Collective are explicitly on the forward-thinking side of this 'chasm', with the stated aim on their website being to 'create radical human experiences, inspired by the music that we love' (manchestercollective.co.uk). In seeking responses to our findings from their Chief Executive, Adam Szabo, we revisited the themes of preparedness for the profession, the orchestral workplace, the musical identities of players and the purpose and future of orchestras, in order to gain additional insight on the role of the music industry in shaping classical music futures.

Discussion with Adam Szabo

In the months since we had undertaken the surveys and interviews, Manchester Collective had produced their first 'Winter Residency', described as a unique training programme for emerging string players that focused on 'flexibility, freedom, collaboration and musicianship'.[40] In doing so, Manchester Collective were positioning themselves as part of the solution to the problems raised in our discussions with players, stemming from a realisation that 'maybe it's completely unrealistic to think that anyone would come out fully-baked when they leave higher education' (all quotes in this section are from Adam Szabo, interviewed by Tom Spurgin). Like the players, Adam was ambivalent about the effectiveness of performance training beyond achieving high levels of instrumental skill, suggesting that what might be called stagecraft or musicianship was rarely taught in sufficient depth: 'I guess there's a difference between having one stage deportment workshop where someone says "sit up straight and engage your audience" and then actually doing it in a really profound way.'

A striking difference in Adam's management perspective, however, was the responsibility he placed on the players to tackle the challenges of the orchestral role themselves, rather than expecting those to be made easier at an organisational level:

> I'm here for the musicians but I generally don't have much sympathy for people feeling uncomfortable about things: life is a big succession of feeling uncomfortable about things that we all have to do. That's literally the nature of every single job. In a way, this is one of the problems is that there is a sense, even in younger musicians – I don't know whether it's a kind of entitlement or something, but there's a sense that work should be comfortable and should be predictable and you should know exactly what the parameters of that job are.

Adam talked about 'the job' in a way that was generally resisted, or self-corrected, in the musicians' interviews, and he suggested that this view

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40   The Strad, 'Building my confidence and developing as a well-rounded musician': Manchester Collective's Winter Residency for string players (2022), https://www.thestrad.com/education-hub/building-my-confidence-and-developing-as-a-well-rounded-musician-manchester-collectives-winter-residency-for-string-players/14440.article

of the orchestral player as pursuing 'a passion' rather than 'doing it to pick up a pay cheque' is unique to the orchestral profession (though viewed from the similarly emotionally invested workplace of academia, we might disagree on that point[41]). He sympathised with players who find themselves thrust into education work for which they do not feel fully equipped, likening this to a sushi chef who ends up working in a vegan canteen: 'it's a different thing [and] I do actually take some issue with the conflating of the orchestral profession and [learning and participation] stuff as if it was a natural progression.'

There are tensions between Adam's understanding of the musicians' practical and emotional challenges, which are similar to those reflected in our wider data collection, and the need to find a solution that fuels Manchester Collective's mission to bring classical music in new formats to new audiences. We reflected at the outset of our research that changes in the classical music profession generally have the audience at their heart, and the impact on players can be overlooked, with the risk of entrenching the attitudes of it being 'all about the instrument' as change is experienced as a threat to musical identity. Like some of our respondents, Adam felt that emotional resilience and support might be at the heart of including players in the transformation of the profession:

> In a way, I guess that is the whole project of the Collective in a sentence: trying to create an environment where it's okay for everyone to be uncomfortable together.

Conclusions and Implications

Our participants provided rich and passionate accounts of their motivations and experiences as professional musicians. They described strong musical identities and a calling to music, recognising the wider value of their work for audiences and communities, and aligning their own values with the organisational aims. This helped to sustain motivation to work, despite frustrations and negative experiences, and made many respondents optimistic and invested in the future of the classical music profession.

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41   See for example Emmanuel Ogbonna and Lloyd C. Harris, 'Work Intensification and Emotional Labour Among UK University Lecturers: An Exploratory Study', *Organization Studies* 25:7 (2004), 1185–1203.

There is a sense of acceptance woven into the stories presented above; acceptance that the role is associated with frustration, challenge, exhaustion, too much travel and long or antisocial hours. Daykin discusses the powerful influence of traditional narratives of hegemony and heroism in the development of creative practice, which can 'naturalize sacrifice' such that individuals do not feel empowered to pursue alternative approaches.[42] There are hints of this in the accounts above: feelings of not being heard, of poor management and relationships, and a lack of control in a workplace that has high demands and financial precarity. Such experiences have implications for the wellbeing of musicians, particularly because strong identification with music can mean they persist in their musical pursuits even when that may become unhealthy or negative. This in turn, can also affect their capacity to respond and adapt to new challenges.

The pandemic provided a space for our participants to reflect on their working lives, and it is interesting to note that many found new hobbies or interests that they were keen to retain. The managing of musical self-identity is also demonstrated by Burland, who discusses the ways in which musicians at the start of their professional careers seek out non-musical activities to offer balance and perspective to their lives.[43] Fostering healthy and positive behaviours towards physical and psychological health is crucial to ensure a sustainable and adaptable workforce,[44] and should be a part of musicians' ongoing training and an important feature of transitional support into working life.[45] Likewise, it needs to be part of the management of players in the orchestral workplace, since our research has confirmed that the focus on audiences in classical music innovation comes at a psychological cost to the players.

One of our interviewees highlighted a perceived shift in the skills and mindsets of younger generations of performers,[46] recognising the impact that this is having on cultural norms and expectations within organisations. This perhaps suggests that training programmes are

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42   Daykin, 'Disruption, Dissonance and Embodiment', p. 85.
43   Burland, 'Becoming a Musician'.
44   Pecen and others, '"It's Your Problem. Deal with It."'
45   Adele Teague and Gareth Dylan Smith, 'Portfolio Careers and Work-Life Balance Among Musicians: An Initial Study into Implications for Higher Music Education'in *British Journal of Music Education* 32:2 (2015), 177–93.
46   C.f. Albinsson, 'Musicians as Entrepreneurs or Entrepreneurs as Musicians?'.

broadening, but if organisations simply wait for the next generation to lead a change, this will be a very slow process. The alternative, already in evidence, of relying on individuals to proactively seek to change and develop new skills without any support or training, risks being maverick and unsustainable. However, if performers have several and diverse multi-genre opportunities to experience different musical practices, then this might reflect the changes already beginning, and afford new opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Adam Szabo suggests that it is unrealistic to expect performers to emerge from their training 'fully baked', and to some extent this is true, particularly in terms of the specific skills that performers may need as part of a portfolio career. However, there is undoubtedly scope for training programmes to adapt to support musicians more fully: to identify their personal and musical values and priorities; to reflect on abilities and skills in order to create plans to address perceived gaps; to develop appropriate psychological tools to manage the fluctuations associated with performance work; and to develop strategies for achieving a healthy work-life balance. Such strategies should empower musical performers to embrace the uncertain future which lies ahead, confident in their abilities to flex, adapt and learn new skills. However, the work involved in adapting to change also needs to be recognised as continuing professional development and supported by classical music organisations, in order to mitigate the class-related barriers of precarity and resilience in the profession.[47]

One of our survey respondents (S15) summarised the perspective of an engaged and reflective orchestral player in a way that offers a poignant end to our chapter:

Listen.

Know what makes you tick.

Know what kind of artist you want to be and boldly chase this ideal.

Take both triumphs and disappointments with a pinch of salt.

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47   Neil T. Smith and Rachel Thwaites, 'The Composition of Precarity: "emerging" Composers' Experiences of Opportunity Culture in Contemporary Classical Music' in *British Journal of Sociology* 70:2 (2019), 589–609.

If something doesn't feel right: move, change...don't get stuck in an unhappy artistic place.

You didn't become a musician to be rich so try not to be guided too much by money.

Keep practising, your education in some ways BEGINS at graduation.

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