Academic musicians

– How music performance students in Sweden re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence

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ABSTRACT

As a result of reforms across higher education in Sweden, music performance programs have been subject to processes of academization. As professional education programs are located within academic structures, the question of balance between practical and 'scientific' knowledge is crucial. Expected learning outcomes at a national level now include statements concerning students' insight into current research, critical reflection, an ability to formulate new questions and to contribute to the development of subject-specific knowledge. Students find themselves caught in the midst of these changes, where tensions rise between craftsmanship, artistic performance skills and scholarly knowledge. The aim of this study is to investigate how music performance students re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence in the light of processes of academization. By using methods associated with critical discourse studies, the specific objective here is to analyse and explain how tensions are discursively manifested as students re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence. The result is based on interviews with six master students with a classical music study-orientation at three higher music education institutions in Sweden. Results show that tensions arise primarily from ideas of musical autonomy versus adaption, between what the education provides versus what the labour market demands and between musical craftsmanship versus scholarly tasks. It is argued that ideals within higher education, in general, versus values and traditions associated with a master-apprentice tradition is one source of such tensions, which risk creating a perception of a fragmented education. Keywords: music performance students, critical discourse studies, academization, higher education, knowledge and competence

Introduction

Music performance programs have historically been regarded as purely professional programs with one and only one distinct mission; to educate 'good' musicians. Within these programs, the main focus has been on musical craftsmanship and artistic performance skills, and learning experiences have largely been characterized by a master-apprentice tradition. In Sweden, unlike numerous other countries in Europe, higher music education institutions are not 'merely' conservatories, rather they have academic status (Georgii-Hemming et al., 2016). Furthermore, following the Bologna declaration, higher education in Sweden has been reformed considerably. With goals of promoting mobility, employability and European competitiveness the endeavour to harmonise education has, amongst other things, led to a new degree structure. Since 2007, a degree in the fine, applied and performing arts has been offered which has specific 'expected learning outcomes' attached to it. Simultaneously, demands on research activities within music institutions have increased.

Because of these changes, music performance programs within higher music education (HME) constitute an environment where musical craftsmanship, artistic performance skills and scholarly knowledge are put in direct confrontation with each other. As such, there is a need to understand what the consequences of these changes are and what problems or issues they may bring up for students, as they are directly affected by new demands.

This article aims to investigate how master students within music performance programs re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence. The intention is to understand *what* constitutes important knowledge and competences for students with a classical music study-orientation in order to explain *how* they re-/negotiate their beliefs. The specific objective is to analyse and explain how tensions are discursively manifested as students re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence.

In explicitly exploring processes of academization, the underlying assumption here is that changes in society and higher education policies influence students' educational practice. Through this empirical study, re-/negotiations within music performance programs will be analysed and explained. Students who find themselves amidst these changes provide valuable insights into how educational reforms are received within higher (music) education.

Background

Processes of academization, have been observed across a number of professional education programs, such as nursing, teaching, social work, journalism and librarian programs (Laiho, 2010; Borg, 2007; Soydan, 2001; Bromley, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010). Such studies have largely observed that these processes, sometimes initiated as an endeavour to professionalize certain programs, often raises a question of balance between practical and scientific knowledge. This is a core problem in the academization of professional education programs and consequently creates tensions between universities' perceived purpose to promote knowledge development and external pressures to develop skills which are instrumentally geared toward the market.

However, academization has received limited attention within music research. There are some studies concerning how, why and what happened as jazz, popular music and rock music became part of HME (Olsson, 1993; Tønsberg, 2013) given that they were previously considered antithetical to 'serious' study. More recently, Söderman (2013) has investigated and argued that universities have taken and should take an interest in hip-hop. Popular music study became an integrated part of higher music education institutions during the 1980s (Olsson, 1993), which, until then, were institutions for the exclusive study of Western classical music. However, when it comes to HME, questions of balance between artistic, practical and scientific knowledge have mainly been discussed in relation to music teacher education (Georgii-Hemming, 2013; Burnard & Holgersen, 2013; Nielsen, 2011). Here, it is largely assumed that music teachers' professionalism depends on an ability to integrate different forms of knowledge and that such diversity thus should be viewed as a resource rather than an obstacle.

Aspects of learning and teaching within music performance programs have been studied from different angles. Some have considered these in relation to training for future professions and one-to-one tuition, which is characteristic of much instrumental and vocal teaching in HME, has received specific attention (see for example Gaunt, 2008; Gaunt & Westerlundh, 2013; Johansson, 2012; Nerland, 2003; Nielsen, 1998). In fact, the one-to-one tuition model commonly used in HME, understood as a master-apprentice relationship, has been discussed at length. Whilst some have been critical towards this model for being authoritative, resulting in imitative and reproducing learning, rather than promoting independence and critical reflection, it has also been idealized as an exclusive learning practice carried out by active musicians as teachers, an opposite to what is sometimes called mass teaching (Nielsen & Kvale, 2000). Additionally, Nielsen and Kvale (2000) argue that students within art

music learn in many different contexts and encounter several teachers which enables them to shape their own musical style.

In Sweden, specifically, the state assumed responsibility for the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and for the conservatoires in Malmö and Gothenburg in 1971 (Prop. 1971: 31), just as a national governance surrounding this education was beginning to take shape. Subsequently, the first higher education ordinance was introduced in 1977, meaning that all higher education institutions had to conform to the same regulations. In 1993, a graduate description was added for each degree (SFS, 1993: 100) meaning that, for music performance students, there were now artistic degrees in music offered which involved three associated 'national objectives'. In summary, these meant that students had to: (1) acquire skills and knowledge to be able to work independently; (2) be able to convey musical experiences and (3) build a foundation that gave them good opportunities to develop further as creative artist within a collective.

The current qualifications ordinance was implemented in 2007 (SFS, 1993:100, Amendment to the Higher Education Ordinance 2006: 1053). As a result, expected learning outcomes are now, currently, tied to three different headings: *Knowledge and understanding*; *competence and skills;* and *judgement and approach*. For a degree of master of fine arts there are nine objectives by which candidates are judged. These include amongst other things that students shall:

> demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including both broad knowledge of the field and a considerable degree of specialised knowledge in areas of the field as well as specialised insight into current research and development work

> demonstrate the ability to formulate new issues autonomously and creatively and contribute to the formation of knowledge, solve more advanced problems, develop new forms of personal expression as well as to reflect critically on his or her artistic approach and that of others in the main field of study

> demonstrate the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant artistic, social and ethical issues (SFS, 1993:100, annex 2).

These changes are also linked to the fact that in Sweden, as in many other European countries, there has been an increasing focus on quality assurance and employability

within the higher education system (Ek et al., 2013). Requirements placed on developing a more 'scientific' education coexist with expectations of meeting market and consumer demands. Furthermore, the public authority which carries the task of evaluating quality in higher education has been described as having a narrow view of knowledge where professional expertise and practical knowledge are set aside (Buhre, 2014). The need to describe and control higher education has been derived from an international tendency toward neoliberalism more broadly, which treats education as a commodity to be bought, sold and traded, rather than a process (Wickström, 2015).

Methodology

The study here is based on semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interviews with master students undertaking music performance programs in Sweden. The material was collected during the autumn and winter of 2016 with six master students with a classical music study-orientation, at three different HME-institutions. By choosing students from different institutions, their statements were more likely to portray commonalities amongst HME students in Sweden, generally, rather than being limited by a specific institutional discourse.

Questions were structured around students' educational concerns, with the main focus centred on what kind of knowledge and competence the students felt they attain as music performance students and require as professional musicians. Each informant was interviewed separately at their respective institution for approximately fifty minutes. The conversations were recorded and later transcribed in full and a denaturalized approach (Oliver et al., 2005) was used in the transcription. This means that, as the study concerned itself with conversational substance, transcription thus excluded speech elements such as laughter and pauses. Five of the six interviews were conducted in Swedish and one in English.

The study adopts a critical discourse framework, partly inspired by a discourse-historical approach. A distinctive feature of this context-dependent approach is the attempts of the researcher to "integrate as much available information as possible on the historical background and the original historical sources in which discursive 'events' are embedded" (Wodak et al., 2009: 7–8). The concept of context thus includes both an analysis of the immediate text internal co-text, intertextual relationships, institutional frames as well as broader historical and socio-political conditions. Therefore, in this

study, the analysis involves relating student's individual utterances to the history of music institutions in Sweden, to traditions therein and to changes in higher education policy. As a result, the study asks: what are the patterns in the re-/negotiations and how are these embedded in social contexts?

Discourse, in this context, is understood as a social practice which is both shaped by, and shapes our world. The way we talk does not simply reflect reality, but rather constructs how we perceive the world (Fairclough, 1992). We organise groups and individuals and construct meaning around objects, actions and events through discourse. Language is therefore a site where relations, ideology and power are made visible and can be challenged (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Thus, tensions between different ideas about what constitutes valid knowledge, can be found in collective or individual statements about different phenomena. Discourses also include and exclude different aspects of the described reality and, as such, always serve a specific interest (van Leeuwen, 2016). For example, students may have different ideas than those expressed in a qualification ordinance or by teachers, since there are diverse opinions about what an education should offer. However, some ideas are validated or at least supported by institutional practices meaning that it is important to pay attention to questions of power in understanding how discourses operate. By focusing on practices, in this case students discourse, the advantage is that they "...constitute a point of connection between abstract structures and their mechanisms, and concrete events – between 'society' and people living their lives" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999: 21). Utterances should therefore be regarded as representational realizations of beliefs, always coloured by experiences and contexts, of institutional traditions, social structures and prevailing ideas. To perform an analysis of naturally occurring language not only provides knowledge about individuals and their personal conditions but, instead, generates a comprehensive understanding of where such articulations are embedded. This, in turn, works to reveal power relations and hegemonic ideas.

Analysis

The interviews centred around four specific themes: 1) *perceptions of HME;* 2) *work and the labour market;* 3) *research and master thesis;* 4) *perceptions of being a classical musician.* As the overarching themes, or so called primary discourse topics were provided for interviewees, the first-level analysis involved a search for sub-topics. This first-level analysis enabled a mapping of what kind of knowledge and competences

the students talked about, in what immediate text-internal context and how they related these to one another. A guiding question in this thematic analysis was: what is this discourse concerned with (i.e. what is the content)? Here, the interest lies in mapping the discourse topics, not topics in a singular text (Krzyżanowski, 2010).

Following this, thematic interconnections were examined to understand where specific issues became prominent in the discourse (Krzyżanowski, 2008). A 'second-level' analysis entailed analysis of lexical and semantic features focusing specifically on explanations of how students re-/negotiated their notions through different discursive strategies. Discursive strategies themselves can be understood as "...more or less intentional plan(s) of practice" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016: 33) which are used to reach certain goals. Lexical choices, arguments, expressions of involvement or strategies of distancing, construction of social actors and events were some of the discursive features in focus.

Furthermore, the analysis paid special attention to intertextuality (i.e. how students draw upon prior texts through reported speech for instance and thereby reproduce what someone else have articulated in another context). This aids in understanding the historicity of texts as these always have the property of "being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (Fairclough, 1992: 84). Using this broad definition of 'text', as above, captures both speaking and writing as a material activity, as different ways of making texts (Fairclough, 2015). The in-depth analysis thus sought to investigate how students position themselves and others and how they construct and re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence. To be able to explain how tensions are manifested, their statements needs to be understood in relation to prevailing and historical ideas. Through analytical movements from context to language and vice versa, contextual knowledge was utilized in the interpretations and explanations of the results.

Results

The themes presented below emerge as a result of how interconnections between different sub-topics align using a critical discourse approach. Key findings are presented under the following overarching topics: *Autonomy and adaption*; *Education and the labour market;* and *Musical craftsmanship and scholarly activity.*

Autonomy and adaption

I will not jump merely because someone tells me to jump…

From the interviews, tensions arise between a desire to have autonomy and notions of how one needs to adapt to the education in various ways are prominent throughout the interviews. Students assert importance in the ability to make independent decisions, to take responsibility for learning and performances and to be unique as musicians. However, such notions are set against ideas about historically-informed performances and teachers' positions and influence. Personal expression or uniqueness as a musician are considered vital. It is noticeable however that there are frequent tensions between norms connected to how one *should* play, and managing to attain a personal expression. Students describe this in terms of an individual responsibility which can only be accomplished over a long period of time suggesting that these are not competences learnt directly from the education itself:

> It's not anything you're encouraged to, to think freely, or 'what do you want to say?'. It's more traditions I think, that's what you learn.

> Some teachers say 'yes, but you get to decide for yourself', but usually you get the framework for how it should be. And then to put a personal touch on it, I think… that you must do by yourself.

In the first statement above, the room offered within HME to develop personal expression appears limited. The question posed illustrates something which is felt to be lacking during the education. The second statement suggests that there are well-defined frames in terms of how music "should" be played, yet, simultaneously, artistic freedom and personal expression is seldom articulated as unconditional, but rather as something achieved by building up a particular cluster of pre-understandings. First, according to the interviewees, one should know their instrument and be familiar with the history of the music and code of practice. After this, artistic freedom could be considered as having been earned. The concept of artistic freedom is re-/negotiated into a knowledge-dependent competence:

> I think that's where your own personal expression develops when you do what you want but there's a justification for that which stems from subject knowledge, rooted in the past, in a tradition which one can relate to and

that you really master. Otherwise I would not have to go to school at all if I say 'no, but I play as I feel like because it feels good'.

But also, artistically it means acquiring a lot of background information, listening to a lot of music, getting to know the music, getting to know the composers. It makes it easier; the more you know, the easier it becomes.

In articulations concerning gaining personal musical expression and being independent, reported speech is recurrent. These intertextual voices belong to teachers and are used as a positioning strategy by the students. The intertextuality of teachers' ideas indicates that students often view the relationship in a traditional master-apprentice way, where observation and imitation form the basis of musical development. However, there is a resistance towards this asymmetric relationship in many utterances:

I find quite often that it feels like there's a right way to do things. And if you do something in another way there's someone telling you that 'this should be done like this', 'this genre is interpreted in this way'... it can be tempos, 'this should be done this fast' even if I think that 'I think it's prettier this way' […] So, in that regard I think that there's quite a small place for artistic freedom and your own personal expression.

Explicit talk about this relationship and the role and expertise of teachers is a central subject in the discourse. There is an expression of concern over the fact that "…you listen so much to what your teacher says, and then you take that as a truth". However, students display opposition to this asymmetric power relationship, as well as autocratic tendencies in institutional logics, through language such as teachers who "points out errors". Lexical choices such as "throne" and "hierarchies" are further examples of how an antagonistic relationship towards the notion of the master as a domineering and infallible source of knowledge is constructed. There are also a few examples where student's utterances show ambivalence, rather than opposition:

Because it's so easy to fall into this kind of trap, to simply try to satisfy the wishes of others during the education […] But at the same time you must do it to some extent to learn something, if one is to truly embrace a teacher's knowledge, one must indulge it. Tricky.

The noun 'trap' in the above excerpt suggests students are lured into certain modes of performance against their wishes by the teacher. Students both express that they

rely on teacher's knowledge and competences on many occasions, but simultaneously assert that they themselves must be active and let their own opinions guide them in order to attain independence and by extension, their own personal expression. The student-teacher relationship is also articulated in terms of what it should *not* be. By using negations as a strategy in their argumentation students seek to refute opposing viewpoints, offering counter-arguments to presupposed ideas about the master-apprentice relationship. One person, for instance, comments that it is important "… that you're not dependent or checking with your teacher all the time, for example: am I allowed to do this?". Another remark that: "You shouldn't have to ask permission" when talking about selecting repertoire before a concert. These illustrate a notion of the teacher-as-master and how this is not seldom problematized in students' discourse. Utterances are thus frequently articulated as emancipations from this tradition and relationship:

> One must, I think, at the master's level, get rid of this feeling of being a pupil. You're not all the time supposed to be a pupil to that great teacher who sits up on the throne…

> I will not jump only because someone tells me to jump, I want to know why I should jump. If I have a good reason for it, then I'll jump and see how it feels.

In this respect, the tensions presented above are primarily attached to notions about the relationship between a master and her apprentice. Teachers are abundantly present in several ways as students describe what their relationship and learning experience should and should *not* be like. They use reported speech to invigorate their utterances and frequently express opposition towards an asymmetric relationship where basically all knowledge can be possessed. A recurrent use of the modal word 'must' emphasize the necessity in emancipating oneself from the teacher to gain independence as a musician. This suggests that the relationship, at least at some stage, involves musical limitations for students, which is portrayed as a natural condition during the education. In addition, it is noteworthy that as the students talk about independence, freedom or *autonomy*, it is almost exclusively connected to musical activities. This is a significant finding, as the following fields of tension rather contain ideas about *adjusting* to market principles and *accepting* processes of academization.

Education and the labour market

…it's not enough that you're really good at your instrument, if you don't find ways to access the market…

Tensions in articulations lie between what knowledge and competences the education provide and what students perceive the labour market demand. Particularly, there is talk about an increasingly competitive 'market' where one needs to engage in "marketing", "PR" and being an "entrepreneur". For instance, one student observes that: "You can sell yourself as a concept in another way today" and "I think perhaps you need to make yourself into a brand more today than you had to before. And maybe be a little more driven yourself." This essentially indicates that the students conceive of themselves as both a product and a salesperson, i.e. they figure as both social actors and as objects in the discourse. Through the education, knowledge and competences to become good 'products' are obtained. Nevertheless, the skills required to become good salespersons are judged to be attained elsewhere:

> You should be able to advertise for yourself. Yes, be good at promoting yourself, I think, that's something that we're quite bad at, we don't get much training in it. How to get contacts and so on.

> There's a course about freelancing that was offered last year, but I don't think… what they said then was that it is good to be able to freelance, as I understood it, but not how you actually do it.

Consequently, students express an insecurity when it comes to having knowledge and competence that allow them to be salespersons. Lexical choices, here, highlight a market-orientation and appear as a natural way of speaking, rendering 'marketization' of higher education visible in the students' discourse. It is not enough to be a good musician, one must play by the rules and terms of how the market for musicians' work, even if it is expressed as something far from the core of what it means to be a musician:

> How do you, if you are to freelance, how do you do that? How do you promote yourself? How do you send invoices? All those purely practical things that don't have anything to do with the music… but I think it's very important, because it's not enough that you're really good at your instrument, if you don't find ways to access the market…

> You should have everything ready, all the PR and it is a bit like, 'right, that as well'. It's not only that you should be good at your thing, or the musical part, but you must also have these other things.

Students' education is described as an expert education where they have a great opportunity to immerse themselves in their field of expertise but, simultaneously, they express that musicians need to have a wide set of skills and be prepared to work within different genres. One observes that "…it's not possible to only do one thing and nothing else anymore". Another student notes that you need to "…be open to other things as well". Such statements often have temporal dimensions and suggest changes for musicians in society more generally. Yet, the concept of a "limited market" is something new which requires other types of competences and, for some, this also means developing musical breadth, rather than specific expertise:

> In those kind of gigs, you must have a breadth or otherwise, you stand there and feel completely incompetent […] How can you justify that if you have attended higher education for five years? If I think that we get it here at this school, those skills I'm talking about, that's another thing.

Freelancing is connected to notions about physically writing; being able to maintain a homepage, to write e-mails and "enticing sales texts". Freelancing is here described as a kind of survival knowledge which is essential for professional musicians. However, at the same time, the education is not seen to provide these tools to any significant extent, but neither do the students expect it to; they identify more perfunctory skills to be necessary, but how knowledge about these types of activities are obtained is unspecified. In this way, there appears to be an acceptance of what the demands from the market are, but also an acceptance of the fact that the education does not provide them with these kinds of skills.

Simultaneously, there are differences dependent on specific forms of training, as the students that aim at becoming professional orchestra musicians are more concerned with auditioning and getting an employment, while other students talk about "creating" or that they need to "come up with" their own jobs. Some want their education to provide them with skills connected to freelancing and to widen the musical repertoire to other genres. What they understand as labour market demands is accepted as a new order and skills connected to freelancing, something which is articulated as unavoidable, yet hard to attain. The most visible discourse pattern here is the discrepancy articulated between what the students acquire from their education and

what the market demands. However, this discrepancy does not appear to constitute a particular dilemma for students in a way that would be expected.

Musical craftsmanship and scholarly activity

Because I'm not a researcher, I'm a trumpet player.

In articulations about activities connected to developing scholarly writing and attaining insight into research, tensions, again, are prominent. Whilst talking about writing a master thesis, for instance, students express their belief that this is something which takes time away from what someone really should invest time in to become a good musician; such activities are described as a disruption of acquisition of essential knowledge and competences.

Students are not convinced that the thesis has anything to do with generating knowledge, either for themselves or for others. There is a suspicion that one main reason for the master thesis is that the institutions receive financing dependent on students finishing the courses. As one interviewee put it: "...it's money for the school" and there are no specific, individual social actors mentioned as responsible for this being a part of their education. By this process of de-agentalization, students clearly articulate how market principles govern the education, yet the thesis was also seen as an inevitable part of a marketised education system:

> It doesn't really feel like it makes us better musicians. That you must say. It takes a lot of time from what we actually need to invest our time in. But I know that it is needed, for financial reasons.

> I would guess that it's for the school to allow it to qualify as an academic education, and you get lots of grants if you've examined people from an academic education. I think. Because I don't think it's for the students who go here... should, yeah, if you think it's good to practice on writing a thesis, but I don't think it has so much to do with that.

At the same time, developing competences such as critical self-reflection on practice and musicianship is something students desire more of during their education. Reflection is, first and foremost, intertwined with their own musicianship and primarily done in conjunction with performances. Expressions about analysing oneself and examining mistakes to improve one's craftsmanship is common. As one student

highlights: "... that you not just do things, but that you're able to analyse a little bit. Above all, if something was good or bad that you can determine why it went well." But this is also about reflection over music as a societal phenomenon and over musicianship in society. One person notes specifically that "it would have been good to have more reflection on what it is we do" whilst another state that "I would like to have more reflection, over all. Writing, talking about music as well, and what it is that is... why we are doing this."

In addition, when the students talk about research activities and researchers as people, they distance themselves from these through different mechanisms. One of them suggests that "it sounds a bit diffuse with artistic research". Another student reason that artistic research: "[may] not be concrete... you do not necessarily arrive at results, it might just be a thought. You research within a thought. I don't know, it's really difficult". This distancing is most evidently revealed through metaphors and figurative expressions; research is frequently described as something which is extremely far away, even out of reach on some occasions. An encounter with a doctoral candidate is described as "...very off and very far up in the air for us sitting there, it's several levels far away [...] I think people find it quite out of space" whilst another student portrays an encounter with a researcher by indicating different ways of thinking: "So, it was... it was interesting, but it was a bit difficult to reach him. He was, like, on a different wavelength." To this end, students talk about their master thesis and writing as a wholly new area of expertise which is far removed from the musical skillset/experience. However, this new and foreign area also has potential:

> And I've written a little bit, but it's not much and so I ought to really sit down and write, but it's difficult. To get that into your work routine, to have it... it's somehow like adding a whole new dimension of how to work. But I think it's great.

The articulated distance between scholarly tasks and musical craftsmanship is clearly not static. Students assert that this distance can be reduced by educators. One expresses that "a lot of people feel" that the master's thesis is "irrelevant" and that the students need more foundation as to why they do it and more "motivation" from the institution, whilst another person expresses that the institution should "lay better foundations for it". Students in general are described as showing an aversion towards writing a master thesis, but the interviewees simultaneously express how it could benefit them under the right circumstances:

> You learn most things by getting good feedback. Good feedback and through raising awareness about things that occur in your own playing I think. So, if you were to take this task seriously, give it the priority that is needed to do it, I think it could be very good. But most people choose to spend that time with the instrument instead, with exercises. As, perhaps as a cop-out from it because they think it's boring, but I think there's potential to do a lot of good things with it but they... the educators, as I have understood it, they have not passed on that connection clear enough and in a good way for people to understand it.

Another statement contains a plea for the institution to give students the "desire" to write if they want to "bring music education in to this new... turning more towards research and so on". There are some positive mentions around the benefits of the thesis as it has the potential to give "new insights", to work as a "ventilator", to give a "helicopter view" and to provide an "opportunity to immerse yourself into something". However, there is more often a noticeable scepticism towards it as a mean to improve musical craftsmanship and artistry:

> If I were completely honest, I don't think it benefits us as musicians [...] you become a little more university competent, if you have accomplished that. But does it make us better musicians? No, I don't think so. Perhaps a little bit more aware, a little bit. But not really.

> It doesn't feel like there's any connection... if you imagine that the majority of the work is to do a concert or a recording or something, then it becomes more, then you just have to write it down. It doesn't feel like it will help so much. It's only something you must do.

As indicated above, this view is often clearly articulated from a 'we' or 'us-perspective' and in their statements students frequently talk about "the students" or that "many people feel". Students thus construe themselves as a relatively homogenous group who share the same perceptions of scholarly activities in contrast to other actors within the institutions. One interviewee, for instance, describes how the master thesis work is presented by educators (them) and received by 'the students':

> I don't know how they expressed themselves, but they want you to connect it to your own persona. To your own ego. So, you yourself should be part of some process, you as a musician[...] And I perceive that as so fuzzily formulated

that people, the students perceive that as they themselves should write some kind of diary. That's an un-academic diary, really... a novel, that is.

It is clear, that students perceive their teachers to be engaged in how students perform their musical craft. However, some aspects of the education, primarily visible in articulations about their thesis, are commonly judged to be of lesser interest to teachers who expect students to submit something in order to get a degree but that "...they've got no time to get acquainted with what you are doing." This is neatly summarised in the following statement:

The instrumental teacher doesn't care at all [about the thesis] ...it feels like they just want you to manage it. That it gets done... of course they want it to be good, but it doesn't feel like we have such high expectations on us. They know that we want to do other things. Yes, sad but true.

All throughout the interviews, the one-to-one tuition teacher is considered to be the main actor, rather than the institution or external actors. Nevertheless, whilst students accord their teachers great importance and influence during their education, teachers' perceived disinterest and lack of time in the thesis, seem to constitute one of the most significant reasons for disappointment among students.

Discussion

This article set out to analyse and explain how tensions are discursively manifested as students re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence within HME in Sweden. Tensions were identified within three main areas. Firstly, in terms of *autonomy and adaption,* ideals about reflection, personal expression and artistic freedom collide with notions of a tradition were teachers are viewed as being in possession of what is right and what is wrong. Students oppose this order through different discursive strategies. Secondly, with respect to *education and the labour market*, tensions appear because of discrepancies between what the education actually prepares students for and what they perceive to be the needs of the labour market, primarily in terms of entrepreneurial competences and musical breadth. Thirdly, in the area of *musical craftsmanship and scholarly tasks* tensions were mainly observed between opportunities to practice one's instrument versus spending time on scholarly tasks, especially in writing. This included conspicuous processes of distancing and a tension

between students as musicians and researchers as 'the other'. These findings cannot be extrapolated to all music performance students. However, they indicate clear patterns in music performance students discourse within HME in Sweden. Here, as in other work, marketization and demands on a more 'scientific' education (Ek et al., 2013) reveals to influence not only on higher education as a system, but also translating into expectations on knowledge acquisition among students.

Music performance students have strongly-held notions of what they need and want to learn during their education. It is between these notions, traditions within institutions and external demands where tensions arise. The re-/negotiations around what kind of knowledge and competences are required, are mostly tied to what a musician needs in society, to a lesser extent it is a negotiation of what the education should provide. In general, therefore, it is possible to assume that there is a satisfaction of what the education offers, but that it does not provide everything needed in order to be able to work as musicians in the future. Additionally, some aspects of the education were recurrently expressed as unnecessary; chief amongst these being academic writing in connection with the thesis. Whilst albeit potentially rewarding, the institutions were not seen as prioritizing and valuing these according to the students, which results in a view that the thesis is just something students have to do to get a degree. Similar views of writing have been expressed by students in a previous study on doctoral theses in visual and performing arts (Starfield et al., 2012) and the present article further reveals how students articulate a distance to both research and to writing in HME. Arguably, music performance programs could strive towards reducing such a distance, perhaps by involving main teachers more in the process and by explicitly introducing research earlier on during the education. Consistent with findings in this study, Gaunt (2008) demonstrates that teachers in conservatoires whose responsibilities are limited to one-to-one tuition, do not engage in nor have a full understanding of student's wider education context. As such, the risk may be that these circumstances create a fragmented education, which will not be beneficial to students.

Peter Tregear and colleagues suggests that music institutions (conservatoires) can, in addition to fostering good musicians through focusing on student's personal development and growth, also include societal aims. They state that a research culture, which is gaining ground within HME, could be used to stimulate a critical approach in teaching and learning and thereby make students become 'co-researchers' in addition to being apprentices (Tregear et al., 2016: 287). In this study, researchers and research as an activity are regarded as something distant from students everyday practice. One must

pose the question; is there such a thing as a 'research culture' within HME in Sweden? And, if so, why do students perceive themselves as detached from it?

In line with expectations, craftsmanship and artistic performance skills were seen to constitute the base to become expert musicians. Nevertheless, while musicians need to have performance skills, increasingly, they must also know how to create job opportunities, how to run a business, how to communicate in different settings, how to network and have knowledge about the music industry (Bennett, 2007). Consequently, it is not enough for classical musicians to become experts, to solely train as performers (Johansson, 2012). Bennett (2007: 186) claims that "...students often do not understand the relevance of non-performance skills." On the contrary, this study shows that students in Sweden nowadays are acutely aware of these conditions and furthermore seem to have clear understandings of what kind of additional skills are required. However, it is expected, first and foremost, that the education gives time and possibilities to refine craftsmanship and artistic performance skills. Developing other competences, which for the most part seems to be instrumental, is something which they themselves must take the bulk of responsibility for. This is partly because institutions are not seen as providing pertinent teaching in other areas; such as marketing, developing personal expression or musical breadth.

The one-to-one tuition, or 'master-apprentice relationship', which in many ways is based on observation and imitation clash with student's ideas about independence and reflection. It has been argued that students in art are able to develop their own personal expression as they meet different teachers during their education, permitting them to select and mix influences (Nielsen & Kvale, 2000: 37). From this study, this seems to be a simplified way of looking at the master-apprentice relationship within HME. The data above indicate difficulties in achieving, or at least in gaining through one's education, a personal expression. According to students, teachers reinforce a rigid distinction between a right and a wrong way to play and perform. Thus developing a personal expression is something students have to do by themselves, and sometimes the teacher can even be an obstacle. A new teacher could of course, under the right circumstances mean new influences and inspiration which can be mixed with earlier musical expressions. But, it can also be understood as a new musical room with new, yet equally limiting frames. If assertions about how meetings with different teachers automatically lead to students developing personal expression are made within the institutions, they risk prohibiting development, both for students and teachers.

Concluding remarks

The findings in this study imply challenges for educators within HME in Sweden, with implications for HME institutions across the world. This article clearly demonstrates tensions between music performance students' discourse about knowledge and competence and political, institutional frameworks. The aim of the study was to investigate how students within HME re-/negotiate notions of knowledge and competence with the specific objective to analyse and explain how tensions were discursively manifested. Inter alia, this study shows that research and scholarly tasks are described as something detached from the main education, with perfunctory skills tied to marketing and freelancing also separated to a large extent. The former is often seen as potentially worthwhile, but at this point in time appears as something obligatory without function in relation to students' structural concerns. The latter seems to be necessary, but mainly acquired outside of their education. Craftsmanship and artistic performance skills are still seen to be the fundamental basis for students in their endeavours to be expert musicians.

These institutional tensions, to a large extent, can be connected to ideals within higher education in general versus ideas and values associated with a master-apprentice tradition within HME. Since national objectives were introduced in the higher education ordinance in 1993, the formulations for music performance programs have changed only once, in the wake of the Bologna process (2006: 1053). Yet in contrast with, for example, (music) teacher education, there is not a widely published public debate and incessant reforms influencing musician programs. Nevertheless, considering the scale of the changes implemented, it is important to ask similar questions as those posed in the debate surrounding teacher education: what kind of musicians do we want to educate? What should they know and be able to do?

This article aims to enhance an understanding of the academization of music performance programs, specifically in terms of what kind of knowledge and competences are at stake for students. To further deepen understanding, different actor's perspectives across HME institutions, should be compared. Furthermore, research specifically regarding the role of scholarly activity and research would also be interesting as there appears to be a struggle over what role it should play and because of the distance articulated by students. Academization and the environment within which tensions between traditional goals in one-to-one tuition and state formulated objectives arise, also raise questions surrounding assessment and examination.

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