

Ellen Mikalsen Stabell

## Being talented – becoming a musician

*A qualitative study of learning cultures  
in three junior conservatoires*



Norges  
musikkhøgskole  
Norwegian Academy  
of Music

NMH Publications  
2018:5

# **Ellen Mikalsen Stabell**

## **Being talented – becoming a musician**

**A qualitative study of learning cultures  
in three junior conservatoires**

Thesis for the PhD degree  
Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo 2018  
NMH Publications 2018:5

NMH-publikasjoner 2018:5  
© Norges musikkhøgskole og Ellen Mikalsen Stabell  
Icon p 205 made by Freepik from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

ISSN 0333-3760  
ISSN 2535-373X (online-utgave)  
ISBN 978-82-7853-254-6 (trykt)  
ISBN 978-82-7853-255-3 (pdf)  
Norges musikkhøgskole  
Postboks 5190 Majorstua  
0302 OSLO

Tel.: +47 23 36 70 00  
E-post: [post@nmh.no](mailto:post@nmh.no)  
[nmh.no](http://nmh.no)

Trykk: 07 Media, Oslo, 2018

## Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank the Norwegian Academy of Music for giving me the opportunity to study music specialist education in-depth for all these years. It has been very stimulating to take part in the research community at the Academy, both among the PhD-fellows and the senior staff.

This project could not have been carried out without the willingness to engage in the project shown by the three junior conservatoires and the teachers and students observed and interviewed. I am most grateful to the teachers participating in the study for opening their studios to me, for sharing their thoughts on music specialist education and for their time and engagement in the project. It has been hugely inspiring to observe lessons and rehearsals with you through this project! Thank you also to all the students who generously participated in the project; I have taken great pleasure in listening to both your stories and your wonderful playing, and I wish all of you the best for the years to come, as music students or as students studying something completely else.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my two supervisors, professor Geir Johansen at the Norwegian Academy of Music and professor Helena Gaunt at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Your help and guidance have been invaluable for finding my way through a work that at times has seemed insurmountable. Thank you Geir for believing in the project from day one, for your insightful comments and for providing me with inspiring and detailed feedback. A huge thank you to Helena as well for asking the right questions

at the right time, for encouraging creative thinking around the project and for sharing your unique insight in the field of specialised music education.

My dear PhD-colleagues at the Academy and in particular the 'Office' have been highly important in the process. Thank you to Aslaug, Merete and Jon Helge who I shared with the first year, and to Anne, Bendik and Ingvild who have been my companions up until submitting the thesis. I have truly appreciated our friendship, lengthy discussions and your support. I cannot imagine this journey without this community. In this respect, Anne deserves a special thanks for being both a dear friend and a critical peer, depending on what was needed. Thank you also to Camilla for asking knowledgeable questions that have led the project onwards and to Alison for our stimulating discussions about conservatoire culture. I would also like to thank the group of PhD-fellows at the Academy for all our social and academic meeting points during these years, and for the supportive and constructive environment to which you all have contributed.

Janne, Yngve, Aslaug, Alison, Bendik and Anne have all contributed with commenting upon earlier drafts of the thesis, providing invaluable feedback that have helped the project onwards. Thank you! Thank you also to Laura Macy for proofreading everything in the end.

Finally, I want to give a huge thank you to my family and family in-law for supporting me and caring for both my family and me during these years. A special thanks goes to my dear husband Arne Kristian for your love and for cheering on me along the way. Last but not least: thank you Vilma and Eva, my dear daughters, for reminding me that the most important things are right here and now, not somewhere in the future.

Oslo, 4 February 2018

Ellen Mikalsen Stabell

## **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to shed light on specialised music education at the pre-college level, a hitherto under-investigated aspect of music education. The years leading to higher music education are highly important ones for a student's musical and instrumental development, as well as for his or her motivation to pursue a career within music. There is thus a need to know more about music education in the important pre-college years, when students are making the decision whether or not to enter higher music education. This study contributes to our understanding of pre-college music education through an exploration of learning cultures in junior conservatoires.

The junior conservatoires included in the study are run by higher music education institutions and offered to children and young people up to the age of 18 years. They are all extra-curricular and entrance is regulated by competitive auditions. Students receive main instrument tuition and opportunities for ensemble playing in orchestra and/or chamber music groups, as well as opportunities for performing in and attending concerts. The level of the students is in general very high and many junior conservatoire students later qualify for higher music education.

The study's main aim is to explore the characteristics of the learning culture and the kinds of learning and knowledge that are facilitated in junior conservatoires. The main aim is elaborated through investigating the cultural assumptions and values characterising the learning culture, the central learning

resources and students' engagement with dominating assumptions, values and learning resources. I use learning cultures as a key concept in line with its application in the project *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (TLC) (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2007, 2008; James & Biesta, 2007) and by Perkins (2011) in her study of learning cultures at a UK conservatoire. Like these studies, the present study combines the theoretical lens of sociocultural learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998) with Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Methodologically the study is designed as a qualitative, instrumental case-study (Stake, 1995) of learning cultures among string players in three junior conservatoires: two in Norway and one in England. Each junior conservatoire represents a case. Data has been gathered through observation of various learning activities inside the three programmes, informal conversations during fieldwork and semi-structured individual interviews with six teachers and 16 students combined with document studies of regulations and web pages from the programmes. The empirical data are systematised using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The study identifies assumptions about talent, about success, about the value of various activities and about the relationship between student and main instrument teacher. Further, it identifies the learning resources students are offered for developing technical competence, autonomy and ensemble competence. Through analysis of six students' learning trajectories (Wenger, 1998), the study shows how students both position themselves and are positioned in the learning culture, and how this is interrelated with their engagement and their ambitions.

The study finds that the learning culture as a whole is characterised by dedication, specialisation, hierarchy and musical capital. Students are expected to be dedicated to the music, and dedication is closely associated with being talented. Specialisation is evident in students generally being offered tuition within a single genre on a single instrument, and a majority of instrument lessons are spent on polishing technique, intonation and interpretation of pieces from the Western classical canon. Hierarchy is evident in assumptions about students having different degrees of talent and assumptions about what constitutes success and thus what is not considered as success; it is also in play in the asymmetric relationship between main instrument teacher and student and the hierarchy created among students. Talent, performance competence and

dedication to making music and achieving a performance career all emerge as important forms of musical capital. These forms of capital influence both students' access to learning resources and their strategies for engaging with them. Performance competence appears to be particularly significant, as those students who struggle with anxiety have a strained relationship to central learning contexts in the learning culture. This causes them to engage to a lesser degree with learning resources found in activities such as playing concerts, entering competitions or having leading roles in the orchestra. These students also express more uncertainty about whether they want a performance career or, indeed, whether they are suited for such a career.

The study offers insight into which kinds of knowledge and learning are valued and promoted in the learning culture of three junior conservatoires. In this way, it also illuminates the kinds of knowledge and learning that are overlooked or devalued. The thesis concludes with a discussion of how junior conservatoires might further evolve – among other ways by broadening the specialisation by allowing and encouraging knowledge of a wider variety of genres, aptitude on more than one instrument, and competence in various music related areas beyond performance. This might give students a more realistic picture of what being a musician entails, better preparing them to meet both the challenges and the exciting possibilities facing musicians who enter the professional music world today.





## Sammendrag

Formålet med studien er å belyse en tidligere lite utforsket del av musikkutdanningen, nemlig talentutviklingsprogram for barn og unge opp til 18 år. Årene før studenter starter på høyere musikkutdanning er avgjørende for en elevs utvikling, både musikalsk og teknisk. Tiden er også viktig for om en elev er motivert for å satse på en musikkarriere eller ikke. Det er derfor et behov for å vite mer om det tilbudet elever får før de eventuelt starter på høyere musikkutdanning, noe denne studien ønsker å bidra med gjennom å undersøke læringskulturer på talentutviklingsprogram.

Talentutviklingsprogrammene i denne studien er drevet av institusjoner for høyere musikkutdanning, og betegnes derfor på engelsk gjerne som *junior conservatoires*. Programmene som inngår i studien har opptaksprøver, og undervisningen foregår på kvelds- og ettermiddagstid. Elevene får individuelle hovedinstrumenttimer, samspillmuligheter i form av kammermusikk og/eller orkester og muligheter for å spille konserter samt høre medelever spille. Nivået på elevene er jevnt over svært høyt, og mange kvalifiserer seg senere for høyere musikkutdanning.

I avhandlingen undersøkes det hvilken type læring og kunnskap som fremheves som viktig og verdifull i læringskulturene på de tre talentutviklingsprogrammene. Dette gjøres gjennom å undersøke kulturelle antagelser og verdier, sentrale læringsressurser og hvordan elevene deltar og forholder seg til både de kulturelle antagelsene og verdiene og de sentrale læringsressursene.

Læringskulturer er et nøkkelbegrep i avhandlingen og brukes i tråd med hvordan det ble brukt i prosjektet *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2007, 2008; James & Biesta, 2007) og av Perkins (2011) i hennes studie av læringskulturer på en britisk musikkhøgskole. Studien kombinerer teoretiske perspektiver fra sosiokulturell læringsteori (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998) med Bourdieus praksisteori, og da spesielt begrepene felt, habitus og kapital.

Metodologisk er studien en kvalitativ, instrumentell case-studie gjennomført blant strykere på tre ulike talentutviklingsprogram, hvorav to er i Norge og ett i England. Hvert talentutviklingsprogram utgjør et case. Empirien omfatter observasjoner av ulike læringsaktiviteter på de tre programmene, uformelle samtaler under observasjonene, semi-strukturerte individuelle intervju med seks lærere og 16 elever og dokumentstudier av offisiell informasjon fra programmenes hjemmesider, internsider for elever og programmenes forskrifter og regelverk. Materialet er analysert tematisk (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for å komme frem til de funnene som presenteres i avhandlingen.

Studien har identifisert antagelser om talent, om hva som regnes som suksess, om hva som regnes som verdifulle aktiviteter å delta på og antagelser om relasjonen mellom elev og hovedinstrumentlærer. Videre pekes det på hvilke læringsressurser som tilbys elever for å utvikle teknisk kompetanse, musikalsk selvstendighet og samspillskompetanse. Gjennom å analysere seks elevers læringsbaner (Wenger, 1998) peker studien videre på hvordan ulike elever både posisjonerer seg og blir posisjonert, og hvordan dette henger sammen med deres deltakelse i læringskulturen og deres ambisjoner for fremtiden.

Karakteristiske trekk ved læringskulturen på de tre talentutviklingsprogrammene er identifisert som dedikasjon, spesialisering, hierarki og musikalsk kapital. Dedikasjon omhandler primært det å være dedikert til musikken, noe som forstås som nært knyttet til det å ha talent. En spesialisert læringskultur viser til at elevene hovedsakelig tilbys opplæring innen én sjanger og på ett instrument, der mye av tiden på hovedinstrumenttimene brukes til å finpusse teknikk, intonasjon og interpretasjon av verk fra den vestlige kunstmusikkens kanon. Hierarki blir tydeliggjort gjennom antagelsen om at elever har ulik grad av talent, antagelser om hva som er suksess og dermed hva som ikke er det, den asymmetriske relasjonen mellom hovedinstrumentlærer og elev og gjennom hvordan elever posisjonerer både seg selv og andre i et hierarki. Viktige former for musikalsk kapital er identifisert som det å bli betegnet som et talent, å håndtere prestasjonssituasjoner og det å være dedikert både

til musikken og mot å oppnå en utøverkarriere. Disse kapitalformene bidrar alle til å posisjonere elever og gi dem forskjellig tilgang til læringsressurser så vel som ulike strategier for å benytte seg av læringsressursene. Spesielt viktig var det å håndtere prestasjonssituasjoner, da de elevene som slet med prestasjonsangst hadde et anstrengt forhold til flere sentrale aktiviteter på talentutviklingsprogrammene og derfor i mindre grad fikk benyttet seg av læringsmulighetene som ligger i det å spille konserter, delta på konkurranser og ha ledende oppgaver i orkesteret. Disse studentene ga også uttrykk for ambivalens knyttet til om de ønsket å bli profesjonelle musikere og om de følte seg egnet til en slik karriere.

Studien bidrar med innsikt i hva et talentutviklingsprogram inneholder og hvilken type kunnskap som fremheves som viktig og verdifull. Dermed sier den også noe om hvilken type kunnskap som overses eller anses som uvesentlig. I konklusjonen diskuteres det hvordan talentutviklingsprogrammene kan utvikles videre, blant annet hvordan spesialiseringen kan gjøres bredere gjennom å ikke bare inkludere, men gjøre det verdifullt å beherske flere sjangre og flere instrument og være kompetent på andre områder innen musikk utover det rent utøvende. Det kan gjøre at fremtidsdrømmen om å bli musiker fremstår mer realistisk, og gjøre elever bedre forberedt på å møte både de utfordringene og de spennende mulighetene som finnes for musikere i dag.



# Contents

	<b>Acknowledgments</b>	iii
	<b>Abstract</b>	v
	<b>Sammendrag</b>	ix
1	<b>Introduction</b>	1
1.1	Background and motivation for the study	3
1.2	Aim and research questions	5
1.3	Introducing the field	7
1.3.1	The Norwegian context	8
1.3.2	The English context	10
1.4	Construction of the thesis	11
2	<b>Situating the study in the research field</b>	13
2.1	Searching for literature	13
2.2	Expertise and gifted education	14
2.2.1	Musical talent	16
2.2.2	Practice	18
2.2.3	Psychological factors	21
2.2.4	Social context and significant others	23

2.3	One-to-one tuition	24
2.4	Learning in conservatoires	27
2.4.1	Sociocultural perspectives on learning in conservatoires	28
2.4.2	Conservatoire culture	29
2.5	Summary	31
3	<b>Theoretical perspectives</b>	33
3.1	The world as socially constructed	34
3.2	Combining sociocultural learning theory with Bourdieu	35
3.3	A sociocultural perspective on learning	36
3.3.1	Learning as participation in social practice	37
3.3.2	Cultural tools and learning resources	38
3.3.3	Learning as trajectories	39
3.4	A cultural perspective on learning	41
3.4.1	'Culture' in learning cultures	41
3.4.2	Defining learning cultures	42
3.5	A Bourdieusian perspective on learning cultures	44
3.5.1	Social space, fields and sub-fields	44
3.5.2	Habitus	49
3.5.3	Capital	52
3.5.4	Musical capital	55
3.6	Bringing the theoretical perspectives together	56
4	<b>Methodology</b>	59
4.1	Research design	59
4.1.1	A qualitative case study	60
4.1.2	Selecting methods	61
4.1.3	A reflexive researcher role	62
4.2	Selecting programmes and informants	64
4.2.1	Three cases in two different countries	64
4.2.2	String players	65
4.2.3	Sampling criteria for informants	66
4.2.4	Negotiation of access and recruiting informants	67
4.3	Data collection	68
4.3.1	Pilot study	69
4.3.2	Time schedule	69
4.3.3	Observations	70
4.3.4	Semi-structured interviews	73
4.3.5	Documents	75

4.4	Analysing the data	76
4.4.1	An ongoing analysis	76
4.4.2	Abductive coding	77
4.4.3	Using software for data analysis	77
4.4.4	Thematic analysis	78
4.4.5	Triangulation of findings	80
4.4.6	Language and translation	80
4.5	Ethical considerations	81
4.5.1	Ethical approval	81
4.5.2	Member-check	82
4.5.3	Researcher role	83
4.5.4	Maintaining anonymity	83
4.6	Trustworthiness of the study	84
4.6.1	Credibility of the data	85
4.6.2	Credibility of the research process	86
4.6.3	Transferability	88
4.7	Delimitations	89
4.8	Presentation of the findings	90
<b>5</b>	<b>Introducing the programmes</b>	<b>91</b>
5.1	The three junior conservatoires	91
5.1.1	Programme 1	93
5.1.2	Programme 2	94
5.1.3	Programme 3	96
5.2	Formal structures and regulations	97
5.2.1	Recruitment information	98
5.2.2	Programme regulations	99
5.2.3	Learning contexts	101
5.3	Summary	106
<b>6</b>	<b>Cultural assumptions and values</b>	<b>109</b>
6.1	Assumptions about musical talent	110
6.1.1	Talent as innate and unteachable	110
6.1.2	Talent can be graded	112
6.1.3	Musicality as opposed to technique	113
6.1.4	Talent must be nurtured	114
6.1.5	Summary	115



6.2	Assumptions about success	116
6.2.1	Becoming a solo performer – the paradigmatic trajectory	116
6.2.2	Becoming a portfolio musician – an alternative trajectory	117
6.2.3	Undesirable trajectories	118
6.2.4	Summary	120
6.3	Assumptions about teacher–student relationships	120
6.3.1	The value of trust	121
6.3.2	The value of loyalty	123
6.3.3	An asymmetric relationship	124
6.3.4	Tensions	125
6.3.5	Summary	127
6.4	Assumptions about valuable activities	129
6.4.1	The value of being in a junior conservatoire	129
6.4.2	The value of practising	131
6.4.3	The value of having goals	134
6.4.4	The value of performing	135
6.4.5	The value of participating in competitions	137
6.4.6	Summary	139
6.5	Summary	140
7	<b>Central learning resources and access</b>	143
7.1	Resources for developing technical competence	144
7.1.1	Etudes and exercises	144
7.1.2	Processes of embodiment	145
7.1.3	Summary	148
7.2	Resources for developing autonomy	149
7.2.1	Understanding tradition and style	149
7.2.2	Developing an artistic interpretation	150
7.2.3	Being loyal – seeking inspiration	156
7.2.4	Summary	157
7.3	Resources for developing ensemble competence	158
7.3.1	Chamber music	158
7.3.2	Access to chamber music	161
7.3.3	Orchestra	162
7.3.4	Access to orchestra positions	166
7.3.5	Summary	169
7.4	Summary	171

8	<b>Students' engagement</b>	173
8.1	Jacob – a 'superstar' student	175
8.1.1	Factors affecting engagement	175
8.1.2	Ways of engaging	178
8.1.3	Summary	180
8.2	Sarah – an anxious student	180
8.2.1	Factors affecting engagement	181
8.2.2	Ways of engaging	184
8.2.3	Summary	185
8.3	Evelyn – a versatile student	186
8.3.1	Factors affecting engagement	187
8.3.2	Ways of engaging	188
8.3.3	Summary	189
8.4	Andrew – an outsider student	191
8.4.1	Factors affecting engagement	191
8.4.2	Ways of engaging	193
8.4.3	Summary	194
8.5	Benjamin – an academic student	195
8.5.1	Factors affecting engagement	195
8.5.2	Ways of engaging	197
8.5.3	Summary	198
8.6	Christine – a star student	198
8.6.1	Factors affecting engagement	199
8.6.2	Ways of engaging	200
8.6.3	Summary	203
8.7	Bringing the six student cases together	204
9	<b>Learning cultures in junior conservatoires</b>	209
9.1	Key findings	210
9.2	A culture of dedication	212
9.2.1	Dedication to the music	213
9.2.2	Dedication as reciprocal	214
9.3	A culture of specialisation	215
9.3.1	Valued knowledge and ways of learning	216
9.3.2	Excluded knowledge and ways of learning	217
9.3.3	Versatile students and a specialised culture	218
9.4	A culture of hierarchy	220
9.4.1	Being positioned and positioning oneself	221
9.4.2	A stimulating culture or a source for distress?	223
9.4.3	A hierarchy of careers	224
9.4.4	The teacher as gatekeeper	226

9.5	A culture of musical capital	230
9.5.1	Talent as capital	230
9.5.2	Dedication as capital	232
9.5.3	Performance competence as capital	234
9.6	Summary	236
10	<b>Concluding remarks</b>	239
10.1	Contributions of the study	239
10.1.1	Theoretical contributions	240
10.1.2	Methodological contributions	240
10.1.3	Empirical contributions	241
10.2	Implications of the study	242
10.2.1	Broadening conceptions of valued knowledge	242
10.2.2	Challenging the hierarchy of musical trajectories	244
10.2.3	Making performance competence into a trainable skill	245
10.3	Reflections and suggestions for future research	246
	<b>References</b>	251
	<b>Appendices</b>	269

## List of tables

Table 1:	Final sample of student participants	68
Table 2:	Time schedule of fieldwork	69
Table 3:	Observed activities during fieldwork	71
Table 4:	Overview of the three junior conservatoires	92
Table 5:	Overview of learning contexts in the three programmes	102

## List of figures

Figure 1:	Students' learning trajectories	205
Figure 2:	Key findings chapter 6 and 7	211
Figure 3:	The learning culture of the three junior conservatoires	237



# 1 Introduction

My years at the programme were very important for my artistic development. The foundation it gave me will always be with me in my life as a musician. I was lucky to get in at an early age in a group of students who were amazing people with remarkably high ambitions. Playing together, listening and discussing were all central activities, and we grew from that. (Excerpt from a newspaper interview with a Norwegian trumpeter, my translation)

These words come from a professional Norwegian musician who received her pre-college training at a junior conservatoire for young, talented<sup>1</sup> instrumentalists.<sup>2</sup> She emphasises in this extract the community that was created among the student group, and that playing and engaging with her peers became a major learning resource for her. This thesis will explore the learning culture constructed inside classical junior conservatoires, and more specifically, what kind of learning resources students have access to through participating in these programmes.

The trajectory towards becoming a professional musician is a long one, and for classical musicians it often starts when a child is between four and ten years old (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Jørgensen, 2002; Manturzewska, 1990). Children normally begin learning an instrument at home, through a private teacher or at a music school, organised as individual or group tuition.

---

1 The concept of talent will be discussed in chapter two.

2 'Instrumentalists' will be used as a collective term in the thesis to describe singers and instrumentalists.

Of all those children who start playing an instrument, a small percentage are recognised as ‘special’ or ‘talented’, compared to peers in their local community, a recognition made by their local teacher, their parents or their wider family (Sosniak, 1985a). What this ‘talent’ consists of is hard to explain, but there is a common belief, also among music teachers (Davis, 1994), that musical talent exists and can be recognised by experienced musicians or music teachers at an early stage (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998). These children are then often encouraged to apply for a specialist music programme or move to a more experienced teacher, where they can receive specialised tuition and be part of a larger music community than that offered by the local music school or teacher. For some, the progression might lead them to a nearby specialised music school, while others will apply for a junior conservatoire or perhaps a compulsory school with opportunities for music specialisation (AEC, 2007; Johansen, 2018). Such specialist programmes are intended for children and adolescents who want to study music in depth as part of their general education, and some of these will continue into higher music education and aim for careers as professional musicians.

The present study will focus on specialist music education as it takes place in junior conservatoires, meaning junior departments at the pre-college level organised by conservatoires.<sup>3</sup> In England, such programmes are called ‘Saturday Music School’, ‘Junior Academy’ or ‘Junior [name of institution]’. In Norway, the junior conservatoires have the collective term of ‘talent development programmes’ (talentutviklingsprogrammer). Entrance to junior conservatoires<sup>4</sup> is usually regulated by competitive auditions intended to select children who display both a high level on their instrument and potential for development. Those students allowed to enter these programmes thus already have achieved a high level on their instrument compared to their age. The transition from a local school or local teacher into a junior conservatoire can be a highly motivating and significant experience for the new students. Once inside the programme they receive instrumental lessons with an experienced teacher, they have the opportunity to listen to other students’ performances and to play together with young instrumentalists in orchestras and perhaps in chamber music groups. Considering the amount of practice needed to become a professional musician,

---

3 ‘Conservatoire’ refers to institutions for higher music education centred on music performance and belonging to the European Conservatoire Tradition. Many European conservatoires have a junior department for young people up to the age of 18 (Conservatoires UK, 2016; Unge Musikere, 2016)

4 Junior conservatoire and ‘programme’ will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

and that this practice is something students in general do alone in a practice room (Ericsson et al., 1993; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & Moore, 1996; Sosniak, 1985a), it might be inspiring to be part of a community where practice is a required and natural part of everyone's life. Students in junior conservatoires have access to a range of learning resources, but the access and the extent of these opportunities may vary, according to factors like how the programme is structured, the teacher to whom a student is assigned and how the student's performance level is perceived by teachers, administrators and other students (Kingsbury, 1988; Perkins, 2011). In what ways students engage with the resources offered will also presumably vary according to their different backgrounds, aims and experience.

Many students in junior conservatoires spend their time there preparing for the entrance auditions to higher music education, aiming for a career as musicians. However, junior conservatoires might also be valuable for students without professional musical ambitions, as playing an instrument and participating in a junior conservatoire can offer students an 'understanding of culture and the music and arts' as well as contribute to developing 'creative, personal and interpersonal skills' needed in other areas of society (AEC, 2007, p. 27). One can thus expect to find students with various backgrounds and motivations in junior conservatoires.

## **1.1 Background and motivation for the study**

I started playing the piano at the age of six, starting on a trajectory that 12 years later would bring me into higher music education. On this journey I did not participate in any specialised music environment like those offered by junior conservatoires. Specialised music education on the pre-college level is a rather new phenomenon in Norway, and when I was growing up they existed only in the capital region, far from where I lived. My first encounter with junior conservatoires was therefore through an administrative position at a Norwegian conservatoire where part of my job was to organise the conservatoire's junior department. What amazed me most in this first encounter with a junior conservatoire was the high performance level displayed by the students, as well as the amount of learning opportunities offered through the programme. They received main instrument lessons from some of the best instrumental



teachers from the senior department,<sup>5</sup> they played in chamber groups and an orchestra, and they had opportunities both to perform in concerts themselves and to hear their peers do so. Just as important, the students had access to a community of musicians and opportunities to engage in social relations with both peers and teachers.

As a coordinator of the programme, I was present on the Saturdays when the students came in for lessons, and I observed concerts as well as some orchestra rehearsals and group tuition. I furthermore had formal and informal contact with teachers, students and parents as their contact person in the administration. Through this position I became curious about how the students themselves perceived the learning resources to which they had access through the programme. Did they find them as extraordinary as I did? How did participating in the programme bring them closer to their personal musical aims? What learning resources did they access, and how did they themselves navigate and utilise the resources available to them? Being part of the programme from an administrative position also made me aware of some of the tensions existing in the field: Instrumental teachers wanted more time with their students for individual lessons and ensemble playing, while musicology teachers and the management argued that time should be devoted also to complementary subjects, such as music theory, conducting and composition. There was also the issue of 'talent', and whether or not this was a concept we should use, due to its exclusive connotations as something innate and limited to a few (Howe et al., 1998). One thing that surprised me was that there were attitude problems with certain students, who occasionally were absent without giving notice or even intentionally skipped orchestra and theory classes. This struck me, as I found these children to be very privileged, and it was hard for me to understand that not all of them were motivated to get as much as possible out of the resources offered through the programme. Problems with absence hampered the students' individual progress, as well as the progress of the ensemble or orchestra, which the students attended. This was only a problem reported in ensemble and theory classes, never in main instrument tuition.

My own background and experience with this one programme was an important part of my motivation for applying for a PhD position. When I started looking into the existing research on the field, I found a large amount of research on talent and gifted education, within both music and other fields such as chess,

---

5 *Senior department* refers to the bachelor and master level of the conservatoires to which the junior conservatoires belong.

sports and mathematics (Ericsson, 1996, 2006; Williamon, 2004). These studies provide insight on the characteristics and skills that distinguish experts from novices and the amount of practice necessary to become an expert (Ericsson et al., 1993), as well as arguments both in favour of and against innate talent as a crucial ingredient of success within a field (Gagné, 2004; Gardner, 2007; Howe et al., 1998; Sloboda et al., 1996) among other things. I was interested, however, in exploring the junior conservatoires as educational programmes, what kind of knowledge and learning was valued and promoted, and how students engaged with the learning resources available. These kinds of perspectives have been applied in studies of higher music education (Kingsbury, 1988; Nerland, 2004; Nielsen, 1999; Perkins, 2011) which have explored in various ways the cultural, musical and social practices of conservatoires, and how these practices influence and regulate what is possible for students to learn. I found no studies, however, applying such perspectives to junior conservatoires or other kinds of pre-college specialist music programmes, although some studies have addressed factors in the social context of gifted individuals, such as teachers, parents and peer group that appear to influence why some become professional musicians while others drop out (Gruber, Lehtinen, Palonen, & Degner, 2008; D. Moore, Burland, & Davidson, 2003). This research gap, combined with the questions I had started asking myself when I was coordinating the conservatoire's junior department were the main inspirations for the present study.

## 1.2 Aim and research questions

The study has the title: 'Being talented – becoming a musician'. 'Being talented' points to the young students in the junior conservatoire who have passed an entrance audition and, in doing so, have been recognised as 'talented'. 'Becoming', the other central word in the title highlights that the students are on a trajectory towards becoming musicians, although not all students in the programme dream about becoming *professional* musicians.<sup>6</sup> The overall aim of this study is to shed light on a previously under-investigated aspect of music education, namely specialised music education on the pre-college level. This will be done through exploring the learning cultures in the three junior conservatoires (James & Biesta, 2007; Perkins, 2011), with a specific focus on values

---

6 The term professional musician is used for persons who earn a living as musicians, as compared to amateur musicians who might play at a high level, but who have income from other sources.

and assumptions, learning resources and students' engagement with these resources. The main questions asked in this study are:

What characterises the learning cultures of junior conservatoires and what kind of learning do these cultures facilitate?

Without dismissing the individual, cognitive sides of learning, I direct the attention in this study towards learning as an integrated part of individuals' participation in social practice through the perspective of sociocultural theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998). The concept of learning cultures puts learning at the centre of attention, and provides ways of understanding how certain kinds of knowledge and learning are made possible, while other forms of knowledge are made less natural or even forbidden (James & Biesta, 2007; Perkins, 2011)

The main questions above are elaborated in the following three research questions:

- 1 What cultural assumptions and values characterise the learning cultures of junior conservatoires?
- 2 What are the central learning resources made available for students through the learning cultures?
- 3 In what ways do various students engage with dominant assumptions and values as well as central learning resources in the learning cultures, and which factors can shed light on their engagement?

Central concepts in the research questions above are *learning cultures*, *cultural assumptions and values*, *learning resources* and *students' engagement*. I draw on sociocultural learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998), Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' (Wacquant, 1989) of field, capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b), and learning cultures (Hodkinson et al., 2007; Perkins, 2011) to shed light on these questions. Learning cultures are perceived as socially and historically constructed, meaning that they are a result of the tradition to which they belong and the ways in which people before us have participated in them (James & Biesta, 2007; Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, they are fluid and changing, as members with different backgrounds engage in them and with them (James & Biesta, 2007). In a learning culture, various assumptions and values are shared and taken for granted by those involved in the same culture. Through the first sub-question, I want to address what these cultural assumptions and values include in the junior conservatoires. The second sub-question draws attention to the kind of learning that is promoted inside the learning

cultures of the three junior conservatoires, through exploring central learning resources and students' access to them. Drawing on Bourdieu (1977, 1990b), James and Biesta (2007) emphasise that learning cultures position various learners differently, and that these various positions influence students' access as well as their strategies for improving their position. The third sub-question aims to analyse how students engage with the learning resources they are offered and which factors that influence their ways of engaging. Students enter the programmes with various personalities, experiences, competencies, aims and learning strategies, or with various habitus, to speak in Bourdieu's terms (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b). This will in turn affect both how students are positioned inside the learning cultures, and how they seek to position themselves. Both the conceptual tools of habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1990b) and the concept of learning trajectories (Wenger, 1998) will be applied to explore this third question. I will elaborate further on the theoretical perspectives in chapter 3.

### **1.3 Introducing the field**

In the introduction, I presented junior conservatoires in terms of what they include, how they select new students, and for whom they are intended. I will now position the junior conservatoires within the larger field of music education, first as belonging partly to the field of general music education and second as belonging partly to the field of specialist music education and to the field of professional music performance.

Junior conservatoires are programmes for young people up to the age of 18 or 19. The age at which students are admitted varies, but in general, beginning students are not accepted at the programme, as a certain level is required. On one hand, junior conservatoires belong to the general field of instrumental education on the pre-college level together with music schools and private studio teachers (AEC, 2007). As is typical in this field, the tuition in junior conservatoires is extra-curricular, in general, and students have not yet committed themselves to a performance career. Junior conservatoires are distinguished from other institutions in the general field of instrumental and vocal education, however, by the auditions, the focus on specialisation and the effort and dedication required in terms of practice and time. The junior conservatoires are therefore a form of *specialist* music education together with conservatoires,

which Nerland (2004) described as belonging to the larger field of professional music performance.

The field of general instrumental education typically holds ideals of being inclusive, reaching out to the whole population and giving children and teenagers opportunities to become familiar with a number of genres as well as develop their skills and abilities in the direction they want (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2016; Sharp, 2015; Stabell & Jordhus-Lier, 2017). Meanwhile, there are other values at play in the field of professional music performance. This field is highly selective, as evident from the entrance auditions to higher music education, the auditions for positions in the music industry and the awareness that not everyone will succeed as professional performers (D. Bennett, 2007). The relations of junior conservatoires to this field is evident first in that junior conservatoires are organised by conservatoires, whose main mission is to prepare students for a music career. Moreover, teachers in the junior conservatoire are often musicians themselves and thus belong to the field of professional music performance, and a performance career is the dream of many students inside the junior conservatoires. Values at play in this latter field might thus be more prominent inside the junior conservatoire than values from the general field of instrumental education.

This study includes three junior conservatoires: one in England, and two in Norway.<sup>7</sup> The field of pre-college music education is large and multifaceted in both countries, with an array of local initiatives and formal and informal opportunities for learning music. Below I will try to draw a picture of some central characteristics related to pre-college music education in the two countries with an emphasis on typical learning trajectories for children starting to learn an instrument. It must be stressed, however, that the description does not aim to be an exhaustive list of *all* opportunities in the two countries for learning to play an instrument.

### 1.3.1 The Norwegian context

A Norwegian child who wants to learn an instrument will often start in the municipal schools of music and performing arts, which are the main provider of instrumental and vocal tuition in Norway, with schools located in all municipalities. It is a goal to keep the fee in these schools low enough to include

---

<sup>7</sup> In 4.2.1 I will describe the selection criteria used in choosing these three junior conservatoires.

children from families with a lower income. Still, in Norway as in England, the majority of children taking extra-curricular music lessons come from middle and upper-middle class families (ABRSM, 2014; Gustavsen & Hjelmbrække, 2009). In addition to the municipal schools, private music schools and private studio teachers are major providers of instrumental and vocal education in Norway.

Pupils who want to have more time on their instrument than is offered through their local school have various opportunities, depending on where in the country they live and whether they attend a private music school or the municipal schools. Extended lessons can normally be accommodated in private music schools and with private teachers at an extra cost. Some of the larger municipal schools of music have in-depth programmes that include extended main instrument lessons, ensemble playing and music theory for a selected portion of the students. Such in-depth programmes will be introduced in most municipal schools around the country in the following years, as stated in the new curriculum (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2016). On the upper-secondary level, students interested in music can choose to specialise in music through 'Musikklinja', which offers a specialisation in music alongside a general, academic education (Ellefsen, 2014). 'Musikklinja' is offered across the country.

There are two different programmes defined as junior conservatoires in Norway. The first one is the 'National Programme for Talent Development – Young Musicians' (det nasjonale talentutviklingsprogrammet Unge musikere) located at the six state institutions offering higher music education in Norway. These institutions are located in the largest Norwegian cities, and students from the surrounding areas are invited to apply. This programme has been running since 2004, and has about 110 students in total across all six institutions. The second junior conservatoire is 'Young talents' (Unge talenter), run by a private institute of music that also offers undergraduate music studies. This programme is located in the two largest cities in Norway. The age limit for entrance to both these junior conservatoires is 13 years, although younger students are admitted occasionally.

In sum, there is a challenge in Norway of too few student places in specialist music programmes compared to the number of students taking instrumental lessons and the number of students starting higher music education each year (Barratt-Due, 2013). This is about to change, however, as more municipal schools are offering students an in-depth programme. Furthermore, a new government initiative called 'Talent Norge' has opened new opportunities by granting money to projects for talent development within the arts (Talent Norge,

2015). This reflects a growing belief in the need to start a music specialisation early in order to achieve a level that enables students to compete in a globalised music market with few permanent positions (D. Bennett, 2007). These recent structural changes will hopefully result in formalised progression routes leading into a musical career for a larger number of young musicians in Norway than what is the case today.

### 1.3.2 The English context

The closest comparable organisation to the Norwegian municipal schools of music and performing arts is the Music Education Hubs that were created in 2011 (Sharp, 2015). This initiative aims both to support children's first access to music education and to ensure 'clear progression routes, and enabling talent and excellence to develop' (Sharp, 2015, p. 6). These progression routes should be both 'available and affordable to all young people' (Sharp, 2015, p. 10). Another opportunity for children who want to play an instrument is to take private lessons, which often can be arranged during the school day. In addition, some junior conservatoires have beginner classes, mainly for string players, as a preparation for entrance to the junior conservatoire. Although students, in general, have opportunities to apply for bursaries, the fee for private tuition and junior conservatoires might prevent certain segments of the population from taking lessons. The report *Making Music*, which addresses teaching, learning and playing of instruments in the UK (ABRSM, 2014, p. 29) points out that, although more children play instruments now than did 15 years ago, there is still a disproportion of children from middle and upper-middle class families who take lessons. This is especially true for tuition on piano, strings, brass and wind instruments. There are thus still challenges to making music tuition available to a larger proportion of the population (Henley, 2011; Sharp, 2015)

Students who are especially interested and accomplished on their instrument should have progression routes available through the Music Education Hubs, according to their policy (Sharp, 2015). Another opportunity is to apply to a junior conservatoire, as all the English conservatoires have a junior department of a considerable size. The Norwegian problem of too few places in junior conservatoires compared to number of places in higher music education is not found in the English context.

An important difference between the music education system in Norway and England is the English system of ABRSM exams and similar qualifications offered by other examination boards. The ABRSM exams are graded from level one to eight, where students perform set pieces in front of an examiner, who also tests them on sight-reading<sup>8</sup> and aural skills. About half of the pupils who have *private* instrumental lessons in England take the exams, while the proportion is smaller for those who learn instruments through other types of schools (ABRSM, 2014). The significance of these exams is shown, for example, in the information given to prospective applicants at different Junior conservatoires (see information given at e.g. GSMD, 2012; RNCM, 2015) where applicants are expected to show a level corresponding to grade four or five with distinction.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, grade exams give a student extra points that will increase the chances of getting in to a university. There is no equivalent to these exams in Norway, and having studied an instrument for several years therefore gives a Norwegian student no extra credentials over the actual competence he or she has acquired musically.

Music is a mandatory school subject in both countries, generally taught for one hour per week. In England, however, it is quite usual for schools to have a school orchestra or ensemble, something that is rare in Norway. It can thus be expected that students in the English programme have more music activities during their regular school day than do Norwegian students.

## 1.4 Construction of the thesis

The thesis consists of three parts:

### Part 1 – Foundation

- Chapter 1 introduces junior conservatoires, my own background and motivation for doing the study and the research questions.
- Chapter 2 situates the study in relation to previous research, with a particular focus on research on talent and development of expertise, on one-to-one instrumental lessons and on conservatoire culture.

---

8 'Sight-reading' is the ability to perform a piece of music that the performer has not seen before. This is a valued skill among musicians and is often tested in entrance auditions.

9 ABRSM-exams are graded with *fail*, *pass*, *merit* and *distinction*. To get a distinction a student need to have 130 out of 150 possible marks (ABRSM, 2013)



- Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical perspectives applied in this study and how the main perspectives contribute to shed light on learning cultures and students' learning in junior conservatoires.
- Chapter 4 concerns the methodological decisions made for this study, the process of gathering empirical data and how these data have been analysed.

### **Part 2 – The results from the analysis**

- Chapter 5 presents the three cases and an analysis of the espoused values and beliefs found in programme documents.
- Chapter 6 addresses the first sub-question: What cultural assumptions and values characterises the learning cultures of junior conservatoires?
- Chapter 7 deals with the second sub-question: What are the central learning resources made available for students through the learning cultures?
- Chapter 8 discusses the third sub-question: In what ways do various students engage with dominant assumptions and values as well as central learning resources in the learning cultures, and which factors can shed light on their engagement?

### **Part 3 – Discussion and concluding remarks**

- Chapter 9 brings the findings-chapters together to discuss the main questions of what characterises the learning cultures of junior conservatoires, and what kind of learning is facilitated through these cultures.
- Chapter 10 offers concluding remarks, discussions of the study's contributions and suggestions for further research.

## 2 **Situating the study in the research field**

This chapter serves to introduce the reader to the research field and to situate the present study within this field. I will emphasise those studies that have been particularly influential for the methodological and theoretical perspectives I have chosen for this study. I have included research on learning within conservatoires because there is a lack of studies connecting learning and social context in *junior* conservatoires, and because the practices in junior conservatoires are closely related to the practices of conservatoires, as described in chapter 1.

Some of the studies described below have drawn on Bourdieu, and I will return to these in chapter 3 as illustrations of how his concepts have been used in previous research.

### 2.1 **Searching for literature**

I searched for literature in two phases. The first phase was explorative, aiming to get an overview of the field and previous studies that could contribute to refine my research questions and inform the methodological choices. This phase was carried out by searching in databases and online resources (RILM, JSTOR, Google Scholar) for the keywords of *talent development/gifted education/specialist education/talent programmes* combined with *music*.

After having decided that I would apply *learning cultures* as a main concept, that I would use Bourdieu's thinking tools (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) to analyse students' positioning and access, and that I would use a sociocultural perspective to explore learning resources, I refined my database searches. New keywords were now *learning cultures/conservatoire culture*, Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, *field* or *sociocultural learning/learning communities/learning trajectory* and *talent development/gifted education/specialist education/talent programmes* combined with *music*.

## 2.2 Expertise and gifted education

Research on expertise and gifted education is relevant for this study, both because students in junior conservatoires are considered as gifted and because junior conservatoires offer specialised education directed towards the development of expertise. Expertise is a fruitful research focus for a number of areas, such as chess, mathematics, sports and other art forms, and there is an immense literature, including several handbooks on the field (see e.g. Colangelo & Davis, 2002; Ericsson, 2006; Heller, Mönks, Subotnik, & Sternberg, 2000). However, I have confined the literature review to studies related to the education of the *musically* gifted and to development of *musical* expertise. Furthermore, I have chosen to concentrate on studies of *classical* musicians within a *western classical* music tradition,<sup>10</sup> as I acknowledge that musicians within jazz and popular music might have very different routes to expertise than classical musicians (Green, 2002; Smilde, 2009).

The majority of studies within the field of musical expertise and gifted education have studied people who already were professional musicians at the time of the research. The preferred method has been retrospective interviews with experts within their field, intended to uncover significant events and practice patterns combined with characteristics of the social context, including teachers and parents in an individual's trajectory (Bloom, 1985; Manturzewska, 1990). Attempts to remedy the limitations of this method, for example faulty and inaccurate memory and lack of accuracy, have included complementing it with participants keeping a diary (Ericsson et al., 1993; Sloboda et al., 1996), and interviewing parents (Bloom, 1985).

---

<sup>10</sup> Western classical music will in the following be abbreviated to classical music.

A focus area within research on expertise and gifted education has been to explain why some musicians are more successful than others. One debate regards whether expertise is mainly explained by innate *talent* (Gagné, 2004; Gardner, 2007) or by the quality and quantity of *practice* (Ericsson et al., 1993; Sosniak, 1985b). Other studies have concentrated on *psychological factors* (Burland, 2005; MacNamara et al., 2006) or looked for explanatory factors in the *social context* (Burland & Davidson, 2002; Lehmann & Kristensen, 2014; Sosniak, 1990). I will address these areas in the following, but first I will introduce three larger research projects of special interest within musical expertise and gifted education.

The first one is Bloom's 1985 study in which he and colleagues interviewed several exceptional performers within a number of fields, and supplemented this with interviews with the performers' parents. Especially interesting for the present study is a chapter dedicated to concert pianists (Sosniak, 1985a). Sosniak emphasises the complex development of expertise, described as an interplay between the performer, the home environment, teachers and the social environment surrounding the performer. In a later chapter in the same book, Sosniak (1985b) describes how expertise development appears to go through certain phases, a critical one of which is the transition to a master teacher who is a performer, which normally takes place when the student has decided to aim for a performance career. Sosniak (1985b) estimated this phase to occur between the age of 14 and 16 years old, which thus makes this phase relevant for the students included in the present study. A second large project is 'Biographical determinants of musical excellence' carried out by Sloboda, Howe and Davidson (Davidson, Howe, Moore, & Sloboda, 1996; Howe et al., 1998; Sloboda et al., 1996). They interviewed 257 children between the ages of 8 and 18. The students were divided into five groups based on their latest ABRSM exam achievement. The least accomplished students had played for one year, and then stopped, while the 'top group' included students who attended England's leading specialist music schools. One finding was that the groups varied a great deal in their amount of practice, with the top group having practised significantly more than the other groups (Sloboda et al., 1996). Moreover, the students in the top group had more involved parents, more dedicated and stable teachers, and friends who showed interest in their playing, again compared to the other groups. This study furthermore highlights the importance of being in an environment with peers who share one's interest in music, as well as the importance of a qualified teacher and support from one's family. The

third study to be introduced here is Manturzevska's interview study with 165 Polish professional musicians (Manturzevska, 1990). Manturzevska describes various critical stages in a musician's development where the stage from around age 14 to graduation – the age of my student informants – was described as critical for developing an artistic personality (Manturzevska, 1990, p. 134). The studies of Manturzevska (1990) and Bloom (1985) were both based on interviews with musicians who already were professionals, and their findings are thus only partly relevant to students in junior conservatoires who have not yet chosen whether they want to become professional musicians. Even with those who might be determined to pursue a performance career, much is still unknown about whether they will maintain their motivation and be able to make a successful transition through the various phases described by Manturzevska (1990) and Sosniak (1985b) into higher music education and on to establishing a career as a musician.

### 2.2.1 Musical talent

In research on expertise, there appear to be two contrasting views about musical talent, which is either seen as innate, inherited and limited to a few or as something that 'is inherent in all of us, but that [it] needs to be brought out and developed' (Stollery & McPhee, 2002, p. 91). Research on talent is of interest to the present study because notions of talent is anticipated to influence what kind of learning that is facilitated in junior conservatoires.

Gagné (2004) is one of those who have argued strongly for the role of innate abilities as a prerequisite for developing excellence within a field. In his 'differentiated model of giftedness and talent', he describes how several components work together in a complex pattern when persons develop their giftedness into competencies or talent. Gagné defines talent as natural abilities that have developed into 'the skills that define competence or expertise in a given occupational field' (Gagné, 2004, p. 125). Most important in the development process, according to him, are chance and innate abilities, whereas practice and environmental factors are positioned as the least important ones – quite the opposite of what is argued, for example, by Ericsson et al. (1993) and Howe et al. (1998). Gagné's definition of these gifts is extensive, including intellectual, creative, socio-affective and sensorimotor aptitudes, which he says are possible to identify when children progress with more facility and speed within a field compared to their peers. His model is exclusive, as only 10 per cent

of the population is considered gifted, and giftedness is furthermore often domain-specific (Gagné, 2004, p. 120).

Renzulli (2003) has also developed a model for how giftedness develops, called the 'three ring conception of giftedness'. Renzulli includes *above average ability* in his model together with *task commitment* and *creativity*. All three are equally important, according to him, to develop expertise within a field. To Renzulli, '[G]ifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance' (2003, p. 90). Instead of talking of *gifted* people, he wants to draw attention to the *potentially gifted*. In Gagné's model, giftedness appears to be a static concept, while Renzulli sees it as a dynamic one. Following a dynamic understanding of the concept, Renzulli disregards the division lines occasionally drawn between those who are 'truly gifted' and those who are ordinarily gifted, as these lines solidify the belief in giftedness as a static once-and-for-all ability. A third model has been proposed by Simonton (1999), who defines talent as 'any innate capacity that enables an individual to display exceptionally high performance in a domain that requires special skills and training' (Simonton, 1999, p. 436). He sees talent development as a multidimensional and dynamic process, in line with Renzulli (2003).

It is easy to agree that expertise develops in a dynamic way, influenced by a number of factors. There is a question, however, whether it is possible to make a model that takes all these various factors into account, as Simonton (1999) attempts to do. The strength of these models is that they include a number of factors that might be significant in the development of expertise. Still, only Gagné (2004) describes how talent can be identified at an early stage, saying that it can be seen when children progress rapidly. The models are also vague on what innate capacities are important for success within specific fields. Gagné's theory has been criticised for not being concrete about how to identify giftedness in abilities that are 'untrained or spontaneously expressed' (McPherson et al., 2012, p. 96), and furthermore that an early attempt to identify innate musical gifts will exclude children from music education (Howe et al., 1998). The understandings of talent as an innate gift, limited to a few and developing in a complex interplay between various factors, as presented above, is of interest for the present study, as it can inform perceptions of talent held by teachers and students in the junior conservatoires.

An understanding of talent as innate is what Howe et al. (1998, p. 399) name the *talent account*. The belief is commonly held among ordinary people, they

argue, and surprisingly enough also among educators and researchers (Davis, 1994). However, through drawing on previous research, Howe et al. (1998) make an argument that there is more evidence contradicting this belief than supporting it. The motivation behind their critique of the ‘talent account’ is its social implications: that based on assessment of assumed talent or giftedness some children are given opportunities above others. The authors see this as a discriminatory practice, as it prevents a large percentage of the population from pursuing a musical trajectory. They argue that the rapid progression made by some children might be a consequence of early experiences with music, or of being perceived by those around them as talented or special, while the slow progression of others can be explained by low expectations of the child (Brophy, 1983; Sosniak, 1985a). Howe et al. (1998) conclude that the real determinants for excellence are found in ‘early experiences, preferences, opportunities, habits, training, and practice’ rather than in innate abilities (Howe et al., 1998, p. 399). They do not rule out the possibility that there might be innate capacities that influence the development of certain abilities, but suggest that these capacities are not what is commonly understood as *talent*, and point to that predictors of later exceptional performance within music have been hard to find. The concert pianists in Sosniak’s study had not been recognised as ‘talents’ before reaching young adulthood (Sosniak, 1985a), and the students studied by Sloboda, Davidson and Howe had not shown any early indications of talent, beyond that the most advanced group of students had started singing recognisable tunes at an earlier age than the rest (Sloboda et al., 1996). What they did find, however, was that the advanced students had practised substantially more than the less accomplished groups, they enjoyed greater family support and more positive and stable teacher–student relationships than the other student groups (Sloboda et al., 1998). These factors were also reported by the professional pianists in Sosniak’s study (1985a).

I now turn to additional ways of explaining why some musicians succeed and others do not, first addressing the importance of practice.

### 2.2.2 Practice

Right from the outset of learning an instrument, a considerable amount of individual practice is expected of students between each lesson. Earlier research has shown that successful musicians have had parents who supported and structured their practice in the early years, and that students gradually took

over the responsibility themselves when reaching adolescence (Manturzevska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985a).

The age at which a child starts playing the instrument, the accumulated hours of practice over the years and the current amount of practice are all seen as predicting the level attained (Jørgensen, 2002). Such correlations between amount of practice and level of expertise are noted by Sloboda et al. (1996) who found that those in the top group of pre-college students had practised significantly more than students in the other groups. The pianists in Sosniak's study had played for 17 years on average before they had an international breakthrough (Sosniak, 1985a). There is also a tendency for professional musicians to have started playing their instrument at an earlier age than those who do not end up as musicians. Manturzevska (1990) argues that an early start age is particularly significant for pianists and violinists, claiming that a start after the age of nine 'will not lead up to the mastery regardless of the musical abilities and degree of motivation' (p. 124), in part because those musicians who started later were more troubled by stage fright and insecurity. And while quantity of practice seems to be highly important, the quality of practice is equally so (Jørgensen, 2008). Ericsson et al. (1993) introduced the concept of *deliberate practice* to describe practice that is goal-directed and highly structured. Their findings were based on a study of 40 German violinists divided in four groups of 10 each, where 10 were considered as the *top violinists* at a conservatoire, 10 were regarded as *good violinists*, 10 were violinists from the music teacher department and 10 were professional violinists. Based on retrospective interviews and diaries of current activities, they made a statistical analysis that showed how the top violinists had accumulated about 10,000 hours of deliberate practice by the age of 20, compared to 7,500 for the good violinists and 5,000 hours for the music teacher violinists. The authors further claimed that the level achieved on an instrument corresponds directly to time spent on deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is not inherently motivating or enjoyable, and consequently the learner needs to be motivated by long-term goals, such as winning a competition or being accepted at a music conservatoire. The authors argue that it is an effortful activity that can only be sustained for a certain number of hours per day, and it requires access to teachers as well as material such as instruments and music (Ericsson et al., 1993). Their explanation for why only a tiny proportion of the thousands of children who take music lessons become professional musicians is that individuals differ in their willingness to engage in deliberate practice and have varying degrees of access to teachers and materials (Ericsson et al.,



1993). Another interesting aspect in their study is the significance of the age a child starts playing: it is important for a child or young student to stand out from his or her peers early, in order to gain the access to teachers and materials which they describe as important for sustaining deliberate practice.

There is little doubt or argument over whether extensive practice is necessary to acquire musical expertise (Ericsson et al., 1993; Sloboda et al., 1996; Sosniak, 1985a). The discussion is rather whether practice is the *most* significant predictor of later achievement. Ericsson et al. (1993) and their work have been heavily criticised by, among others, Hambrick et al. (2014) who conclude that ‘deliberate practice does not explain all, nearly all, or even most of the variance in performance in chess and music’ (p. 8). Instead they underscore the importance of an early starting age and cognitive abilities and intelligence, which are considered as highly heritable. Thus, they call for further research on whether there are certain ‘genetic effects on objective measures of performance’ (Hambrick et al., 2014, pp. 9-10). Other studies have also questioned the monotonic relationship between acquired level and time spent on deliberate practice suggested by Ericsson et al. (1993). Sloboda and Howe (1991) found that the ‘most able students’ in their sample of 42 students in a music specialist school had not practised significantly more than the group of ‘average students’. A difference between them and the others were, however, that they had spread their practise time across various instruments. In a follow-up study of the most successful group of students from Davidson and colleagues’ study (Davidson et al., 1996; Howe et al., 1998; Sloboda et al., 1996), D. Moore et al. (2003) found that those students who eight years later were successful adult performers had improvised more and played more concerts than the others. McPherson et al. (2012) apply the term *deliberate play*, a term derived from the sport psychologist Côté (1999), to describe the ‘loosely structured activities aimed at increasing motivation and enjoyment rather than technical skills’ in the first stage of musical development (McPherson et al., 2012, p. 113). This does not underplay the importance of deliberate practice, but points to additional factors that appear to be crucial for a successful transition into becoming a musician. Skills such as sight-reading or listening might be better developed through playing for enjoyment, improvising or playing other instruments than through deliberate practice, as is pointed out by Hallam (1998)

### 2.2.3 Psychological factors

Psychological factors have been addressed as important in determining whether or not a person chooses to pursue a performance career. Such psychological factors include the ability to cope with pressure (MacNamara & Collins, 2009; MacNamara et al., 2006), commitment and motivation (Hallam et al., 2016; MacNamara et al., 2006) and degree of anxiety (Burland & Pitts, 2007; Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003). These psychological factors become especially important in the transition between different developmental phases, as described by Sosniak (1985b) and Maturzewska (1990).

MacNamara and Collins (2009) conducted a qualitative interview study with eight professional musicians, drawing on psychological characteristics for developing excellence (PCDEs) inspired by sport psychology (Abbott & Collins, 2004).

PCDEs are not just mental skills such as imagery, goal setting or pre-performance routines, but also include the attitudes, emotions and skills young musicians need to successfully negotiate the pathway to excellence. (MacNamara & Collins, 2009, p. 378)

They found that important PCDEs for the musicians interviewed were dedication and commitment, social skills, an ability to set goals and an inner drive to achieve. In an earlier study they emphasised the importance of developing relevant PCDEs for musicians alongside musical and instrumental skills as this would help students with 'maximising practice time, managing their time and performing consistently' (MacNamara et al., 2006, p. 390). Burland (2005) conducted a longitudinal interview study where she compared music college students to music students in university,<sup>11</sup> and found several significant differences. Music college students were in greater control of their own learning process, and could keep up their practice habits even with no immediate goal to strive for. This group also displayed greater levels of dedication and intrinsic motivation, as well as higher levels of mastery-oriented learning behaviour. A crucial difference was also found in their career aims. In general, music college students wanted to become professional musicians, while university students perceived music more as a hobby. The university students furthermore experienced greater performance anxiety than music college students, and appeared to be more reliant on others for building self-efficacy. Burland's study included students who were already in higher music education, while the

---

<sup>11</sup> The music college she studied was similar to conservatoires with a focus on educating specialised performers, while the university music department was a broader education including performance, music theory, history and teaching skills.

present study focuses on students who are still on the pre-college level. It is nevertheless likely that a number of students in junior conservatoires will keep music as a hobby, or study music at a university instead of at a conservatoire. Therefore, both groups in Burland's study are likely to be represented among the participants in my study.

Performance anxiety is something that troubles a significant number of professional musicians, as well as music students, as reported by Papageorgi et al. (2010). Papageorgi, Hallam, and Welch (2007) describe a conceptual framework for understanding musical performance anxiety as a 'multidimensional construct' that unfolds in time, and is affected by the individual's vulnerability to anxiety and task efficacy as well as the performance situation itself. They suggest that how a performance situation is evaluated afterwards will affect a student's confidence, motivation and future levels of anxiety, and they argue that educational programmes should 'offer psychological preparation and support, with formative feedback where possible' to help students cope effectively with anxiety (Papageorgi et al., 2007, p. 101). A survey study by Fehm and Schmidt (2006) targeting performance anxiety among students in a music specialist school in Germany, found that students had few strategies for overcoming performance anxiety. Their study reported that performance anxiety troubled one third of the students. Furthermore, there were no correlations between number of performances and level of experienced anxiety, and anxiety was increased during solo performances or when high status persons were part of the audience. Also, in a study of undergraduate music students, Papageorgi et al. (2010) found that students experienced significantly more anxiety in solo performances compared to group performances. These studies, together with among others Kokotsaki and Davidson (2003) address performance anxiety as a common problem for music students; they furthermore state that students are offered no specific help to overcome this problem (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006). Furthermore, students who experienced music performance anxiety were less likely to aim for a performance career (Burland, 2005; Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Kenny & Osborne, 2006). With performance anxiety being such a common problem among musicians, it is likely that a portion of the students in junior conservatoires will experience it as well.

#### 2.2.4 Social context and significant others

Several earlier studies have pointed to the importance of family support as essential for musicians' development (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007; Davidson et al., 1996; Maturzewska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985a). Typically, it is parents who initiate the instrumental tuition, accompany the child to lessons, follow up practice at home, and support the child after both successes and failures. Parents also provide children with essential economic support by paying for lessons, instrument, grade exams, master classes and travel expenses to activities such as competitions, concerts and summer courses (Sosniak, 1985a). McPherson (2009) emphasises the parents' role as highly important for the children's musical development. The child's family environment mediates certain values and beliefs that over time are likely to become the child's own. Furthermore, parents have aspirations for their child, as well as various parenting styles and practices that will affect the child's musical development (McPherson, 2009, p. 94).

Another important factor acknowledged by different researchers is the role of the teacher (Davidson, Moore, Sloboda, & Howe, 1998; Maturzewska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985b). While the first teacher of successful musicians is often described as warm, friendly and encouraging, later teachers are described as demanding and critical, and lessons as being long and concentrated (Sosniak, 1985a). The importance of teachers is also pointed to in the study conducted by Gruber et al. (2008) on the 'Persons in the shadow'. The concept refers to the early teachers of children and their significant contribution to the child's musical development, as well as to the importance of other persons in the close social context, such as parents and peers. Creech and Hallam (2003) see the parent-teacher-pupil relationships as intertwined parts of a microsystem, where behaviour and attitudes from one of the parties affect the others. This microsystem is in play, for example, when a teacher identifies a child as 'very talented'. This can be an important motivator both for parents to invest in the child's education and the child to invest time in practice. Increased practice by the child and increased commitment from the family can lead to higher performance levels, which can strengthen a special relationship to the teacher and lead to access to performance opportunities in high-profile venues and opportunities to engage with more advanced music students. This might result in increased levels of motivation and a still higher level of playing (McPherson et al., 2012). This is described as a possible positive outcome of the belief in an innate talent, as described in section 2.2.1.

We also recognize that being told by parents and teachers that they are talented, that is, genetically endowed with unusual gifts, most likely increases motivation, boosts self-confidence, and protects young performers against doubts about eventual success during the ups and downs of the extended preparation. (Ericsson et al, 1993 p. 399)

Previous studies have pointed to peers as important learning resources and role models (Burland & Davidson, 2002; Presland, 2005; Sosniak, 1990). A major aspect of a junior conservatoire is that students sharing a musical interest are gathered in the same programme with opportunities to socialise, listen to each other and play together in various constellations. Burland and Davidson (2002) suggest that being surrounded by 'like-minded peers' is important to stimulate and motivate a gifted child, and that having role-models close in age and expertise often will lead to a faster progression (Burland & Davidson, 2002, p. 122). Sosniak (1990) notes that peer role models might function to 'set an agenda of skills to be mastered and goals to be achieved' and serve as a 'regular reminder that the individual was not really alone, despite the hours spent in solo pursuit of one sort of mastery or another' (p. 160). Conservatoire students have been reported to consider peers as 'invaluable' (Presland, 2005), while the students interviewed by Gaunt (2010) described peers more as a 'fact of life' than a learning resource. In Dahlberg's study (2013) of conservatoire students' learning trajectories, he describes students who were proactive in their own learning process, drawing extensively on peers as role models, and engaging in learning contexts, such as ensemble playing, to develop various sides of oneself as a musician. Slette (2014) studied chamber music group rehearsals, to explore how the groups made use of shared tools in their problem-solving processes. Although the groups varied in their use of strategies, she found several examples of cooperative problem solving where knowledge was constructed during the rehearsals. There are thus reasons to argue that peers might be valuable learning resources, even though students in some of the studies appear to be unaware of the subtle things one might learn from playing together with, listening to or discussing with one's peers.

### **2.3 One-to-one tuition**

One-to-one tuition has traditionally been the predominant way of educating classical musicians, assumed to be an 'indispensable' part of the education (Gaunt, 2008, p. 230) and considered as the primary method for achieving

‘practical skills and performance based training’ (Carey, Bridgstock, Taylor, McWilliam, & Grant, 2013, p. 357). In the junior conservatoires involved in this study, all students get individual one-to-one tuition with a main instrument teacher. The teacher–student relationship is a significant one that often lasts for many years, and its central importance for the kind of learning resources that are made available to a music student has been noted by Nerland (2004), among others. The studies referred to in this section have mainly been conducted in higher music education. I still find them relevant for the present study, considering that students around the age of 14 often move to a master teacher, where they meet more serious demands in terms of practice, focus and dedication (Manturzevska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985a), as referred to in section 2.2. I thus anticipate the main instrument lessons of junior conservatoire students to share similarities with main instrument lessons in higher music education.

Young, Burwell, and Pickup (2003) have described one-to-one lessons as a ‘secret garden’, as it, when the article was written, still was a relatively un-researched area in music education. Since then, many studies have been conducted. Nevertheless, within an institution each teacher’s practice can still be considered as secret, as the lessons in general take place individually behind closed doors, in what has been described as a ‘culture of concealment’ (Carey et al., 2013, p. 359). Several methods have been used for investigating this learning context. Video-observation, either with the researcher present or not, has been a frequently used method both for qualitative microanalysis of the interaction taking place in the lessons (Burwell, 2005; Nerland, 2004; Young et al., 2003) and for quantitative analysis (Carey et al., 2013). Participant observation without a video camera has also been used (Perkins, 2011; Persson, 1996), often when the research questions have not required a microanalysis of the lessons, or where the presence of a video camera was considered too disruptive of the natural situation. Such observations have in the studies referred to above been supplemented by interviews or questionnaires with students and/or teachers. Another method that has provided valuable information about the significance of this particular learning context is qualitative interviews focused on students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the one-to-one lessons (Carey & Grant, 2015; Gaunt, 2006; Presland, 2005). Interview studies have the limitation that they can only tell us on how persons *express* themselves regarding a topic, and as Persson (1994) found, there can be great discrepancies between a teacher’s teaching philosophy and what takes places during the lessons. By interviewing students and teachers, as Gaunt (2006) did, this limitation is partly remedied, as one can

know how the tuition is experienced from both the student and the teacher's perspective and triangulate findings from the two sources. An aim for many of the studies of one-to-one tuition has been to discover examples of 'optimal practice' for educating musicians (Carey et al., 2013; Mills & Smith, 2003). The one-to-one tuition is a costly model for the conservatoires, and studies that can justify its effectiveness are thus valuable.

The relationship between teacher and student has been described as an 'expert–novice dyad' (Kennell, 2002) and a 'master–apprentice relationship' (Jørgensen, 2000), characterised by an asymmetric power relation (Hanken, 2007; Nerland, 2004). Teachers interviewed by Gaunt (2008) described it as a parent–child relationship, as a friendship, and as a doctor–patient relationship. The parent–child and doctor–patient labels emphasise the asymmetric relation in which one has greater knowledge than the other, while the labels of parent–child and friendship highlight the closeness that is created between two persons who meet weekly for individual lessons, in an arrangement that often last for many years, and that often stretches beyond the borders of the actual lesson and into the private sphere as well. The asymmetric power relation between teacher and student has been flagged as problematic in several studies for its authoritarian quality, which is said to produce students who are too similar to the teacher (Sagiv & Hall, 2015) and to leave little room for students' independence (Persson, 1994). Sagiv and Hall (2015), however, note that although main instrument tuition might appear as oppressive on the superficial level, with a great deal of focus on technique and details, 'one cannot ignore the possibility that learning body mechanics [is] the source of an emotional experience for the student' (Sagiv & Hall, 2015, p. 118). They argue that this kind of teaching might be empowering for the student, as the learning process demands a conscious rearrangement of students' bodies that makes the learning significant and that goes beyond the boundaries of discipline. Burwell (2005) studied how teachers' use of questions could help foster student independence. She observed lessons and interviewed both teachers and students combined with a questionnaire. Her main findings were that teacher talk dominated lessons and that most questions were disguised instructions, rhetorical questions that did not require an answer or interrogative questions intended to control the student's knowledge. Yet, there were also examples of teachers who applied explorative questions to develop and foster students' independence, and Burwell (2005) claimed that other kinds of questions might also help to develop reflection in

the students. This could happen when a teacher answered a question, and in this way modelled problem-solving strategies, or helped students direct their attention to where it needed to be.

Students interviewed in these studies do not, in general, describe the main instrument lessons as oppressive or their teachers as controlling. A common finding is rather that most students are highly satisfied with their teacher (Gaunt, 2010; Nerland, 2004). If anything, some students even complained about the teacher's lack of authority, and wished he or she would give less room for student's talk and reflection (Nerland, 2004; Nielsen, 1999). Nerland (2004) argued that the teacher's authority in the cases she observed functioned as a 'productive learning resource', constituted by a student's motivation to learn from a particular teacher and the position a teacher holds in the field of professional music performance. One of the students she interviewed believed that if one did not 'surrender' ('gi seg over') in the lessons, it would not be possible to learn all there was to learn from the teacher (Nerland, 2004, p. 224). Instrumental teachers thus appear, in general, to have a natural expert authority as performers and teachers in the relationship, as a person who is more knowledgeable and experienced than the student. However, when tensions arise, the power relations appear to become more evident. Haddon (2011) reports that students often took lessons with other teachers without their main teacher knowing about it. This was problematic for some of the responding students, as they felt they had to adjust to the teacher's style when playing for the different teachers. Gaunt (2010) described students who wanted to change teacher, but found it difficult and anxiety producing and something they could not discuss openly with their teacher. That students are still, in general, enthusiastic about their current main instrument teacher, can be seen as a characteristic feature of this relationship.

## **2.4 Learning in conservatoires**

I will in this section discuss studies that have explored learning in conservatoires, and in particular studies that have explored the complex relation between the learning environment and music students' learning.



### 2.4.1 Sociocultural perspectives on learning in conservatoires

There are three studies applying a sociocultural perspective to students' learning in conservatoires that have been particularly influential for the study's theoretical perspective on learning. The first is Nerland's thesis (2004) on instrumental tuition as cultural practice. She used video-observations of three conservatoire teachers' studio tuition, followed by semi-structured interviews held individually with the observed teachers and their students. By applying a theoretical lens of discourse theory, she identified various discourses in play in main instrument tuition and described how subject positions were offered, accepted and rejected by teachers and students in this context. The kind of subject position the teacher occupied and thereafter offered to the student had consequences for what learning resources – students accessed, and thus what opportunities they were given for developing their musical competence. Another interesting aspect in Nerland's work is her descriptions of inclusive and exclusive mechanisms in the main instrument lessons. When one aspect is included and emphasised, other aspects are excluded or devalued (Nerland, 2004). This can be linked to the way learning cultures 'permit, promote, inhibit or rule out certain kinds of learning' (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p. 424), which I will discuss in section 3.4.

The second study is Klaus Nielsen's thesis on musical apprenticeship inside a Danish music conservatoire (Nielsen, 1999). Nielsen studied piano students, and observed and interviewed both teachers and students. Through the lens of apprenticeship and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), he found that students learned through participation in various contexts, and that the learning trajectory students were on gave meaning to their ways and modes of participating. I will draw on his ideas about trajectories as those that give significance and direction to a person's activity, and his notion that persons construct their trajectory by drawing on available resources within the social context. Nielsen (1999) defines the teacher–student relationship as central for the students and as one characterised by trust and teacher authority. Furthermore, his study brings valuable insight to how students are socialised into a context and how knowledge becomes embodied through learning processes of observation, imitation, discussions and performances.

Also drawing on sociocultural theory, Dahlberg (2013) investigated conservatoire students' construction of learning trajectories across contexts. He shadowed two conservatoire students for a semester, following them in learning

activities both inside and outside the institution. He found that there is indeed an agentic space for conservatoire students, where students use available learning resources to pursue their personal musical goals. For students who were engaged in their own learning process, there appeared to be numerous learning resources available inside the institution as well as outside. I will draw on Dahlberg's use of learning resources, as well as his sociocultural perspective on learning as an intrinsic part of participation. The focus of our studies and the students' age and situation are different, however, and I assume that students in junior conservatoires will not show the same degree of agency as the students Dahlberg shadowed, both because they are younger and because the number of choices are not as great within a junior conservatoire as within the conservatoire Dahlberg studied. Neither is the design of my study to follow particular students across contexts, as I will draw my attention to the learning cultures formed among the string players *inside* the junior conservatoire.

#### 2.4.2 Conservatoire culture

There are a limited number of studies devoted to conservatoire culture (Jørgensen, 2009), making it a 'largely unresearched and, crucially, relatively unchallenged' field, as argued by Carey et al. (2013, p. 358). Still, those studies that do exist are of high quality and of great importance to this study.

One study that has been particularly influential regarding choice of methods and theoretical perspective is Perkins' study of the constructed nature of learning cultures of one UK conservatoire, seen through the lens of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field (Perkins, 2011). It is an ethnographic study comprising observation, interviews, document analysis and participant self-documentation. Even though her study is of learning cultures in one *conservatoire*, her findings might be partly applicable to junior conservatoires as well, as these are strongly influenced by the conservatoire tradition (see section 1.3). Perkins identified four intertwined learning cultures – *cultures of specialism*, *cultures of social networking*, *cultures of musical hierarchies* and *cultures of vocational position taking* that regulated which learning opportunities students could access (Perkins, 2011, p. 183). Furthermore, she found that learning cultures were constructed in different ways for different students, depending on a student's position within the learning culture. This position resided on a student's habitus and amount of capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b) and gave students various accesses to learning opportunities (Perkins, 2011). Her findings are important

as a point of reference, although I assume that the learning cultures of *junior* conservatoires will have other characteristics than those Perkins found in an institution for higher music education.

An earlier important study is the ethnographic study of an American conservatory conducted by Kingsbury (1988). Kingsbury gathered material for the study through a position as a 'mock student', where he observed the life inside a conservatoire for six months. In *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System*, he brings up a number of salient characteristics of the specialised conservatoire tradition and of Western classical music, characteristics to which many subsequent researchers have related their work. Kingsbury found talent to be the 'most pervasive phenomenon and the biggest issue in conservatory life' (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 59). He furthermore described talent to be a social phenomenon ascribed to a student by someone else and in this way part of a social relationship. Moreover, he described the centrality of the relationship between teacher and student, where teachers are described as 'nodal persons' for their students and where a teacher's prestige is 'augmented by their student's success' and vice versa, leading to 'reciprocal prestige-lending' between the two in 'patron-client relationships' (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 41). His findings of reciprocity between student and instrumental teacher have also been noted by Wagner (2015) and Nielsen (1999).

A third study on conservatoire culture is Landes's comparative study of student culture in one conservatoire and one university school of music (Landes, 2008). It is a case study, drawing on participant observation, interviews and document analysis, seen through the lens of Schein's three layers of culture (Schein, 2010) and Kuh's national, institutional and subcultural levels (Kuh, 1993). Landes found that students in general described the social environment as supportive, where students and teachers shared a 'focus and dedication to music' (Landes, 2008, p. 197), and where commitment was considered a core value. An interesting difference between the two institutions in which she conducted her study, was that students from the university to a much larger degree were preparing for a versatile future as 'twenty-first century professionals' (Landes, 2008, p. 190), while the conservatoire students mainly aimed for permanent orchestra positions.

A central issue that has been addressed in relation to conservatoires is that of musical hierarchies (Davies, 2004; Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995; Perkins, 2011). Nettl (1995) conducted an ethnomusicological study, based on observations of and experiences with various American schools of music. He describes several

musical hierarchies inside higher music education, the most prominent of which is that between composers, and thereafter the hierarchy between different instrument groups with the string players and pianists ranging on top, as he described it. Furthermore, he provides interesting descriptions of the significance of having studied with famous teachers, as that is a sign that one has been recognised as talented (Nettl, 1995). Davies (2004) describes the conservatoire not only as a hierarchy, but also as a meritocracy. She bases her arguments on a discourse analysis of one conservatoire's prospectus combined with student interviews. In line with other studies, Davies (2004) highlights performance as a crucial learning arena and 'the most effective preparation for the realities of the music profession' (p. 813). What she found to be problematic was that those students recognised as 'talented' got more performance opportunities – and more prestigious ones – than regular students. This led to a cumulative process in which a small portion of the students received the most valuable learning and performance opportunities, and thus became better prepared for a performance career.

By rewarding the most 'talented' and 'committed' students with the most public, frequent and high-profile performing opportunities and students with the least 'ability' and 'effort' with merely 'training experience' and fewer performances, the Conservatoire reveals that its assumptions are organized meritocratically. (Davies, 2004, p. 809)

This resembles Perkins' description (2011) of 'superstar' students who received both more and better performance opportunities inside the conservatoire compared to those who had not been given this label.

## 2.5 Summary

Much research has been done within the field of expertise, as well as in the field of learning inside conservatoires. One-to-one lessons, which used to be a 'secret garden' within research, have been opened up in several studies, with various focus areas and methods. Of particular interest to my study are those studies that have connected learning with social or cultural aspects, such as Perkins (2011), Nerland (2004) and Nielsen (1999).

The research on development of expertise shows the importance of practice, psychological factors and the social context surrounding the talented individual. Various models for how talent or giftedness develop (Gagné, 2004; Renzulli, 2003; Simonton, 1999), have in common that they show it to be a complex process

involving a number of factors both internal and external to the individual. In general, research on expertise and gifted education have studied individuals, and not particular social and educational contexts. The focus of these studies has been on the individual's trajectory towards expertise, searching for common characteristics in these trajectories. Even though these studies recognise the importance of the social context, they have not studied *particular* social contexts. Thus, there appears to be a need for studies that explore the social context in which students develop musical expertise on the pre-college level, to investigate how a learning culture facilitates certain kinds of learning and knowledge and how students make use of the available learning resources inside the culture to develop their musical competence.

### 3 Theoretical perspectives

This project aims to explore the kinds of learning and knowledge that are valued within the learning cultures of junior conservatoires using the theoretical lenses of sociocultural learning theory and Bourdieu's thinking tools of field, habitus and capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this chapter, I discuss both of the theoretical strands and define central concepts for the study, as well as discussing how the two theoretical lenses can work together to explore learning cultures.

I have derived the term 'learning cultures' from the project *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (TLC) (Hodkinson et al., 2007, 2008; James & Biesta, 2007). Their theorisation of the concept has been highly influential for this project's choice to combine sociocultural learning theory with Bourdieu's theory of practice, while Perkins (2011), who also draws on the concept, shows that such a lens holds great potential for exploring learning in music specialist education. The attractiveness of the concept of learning cultures is that it places social learning at the centre of attention, and enables us to ask what kind of knowledge is valued, promoted, prohibited or hidden inside a social field (Hodkinson et al., 2007; James & Biesta, 2007).

The chapter is divided in three sections. First, I will first examine the concept of 'learning', together with the concepts of *learning resources* and *learning trajectories*, through a sociocultural perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998, 2007). Then follows a section in which I address the concepts

of ‘culture’ and ‘learning culture’. From there, I will move on to discuss how Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus and capital can contribute to enlighten the research questions posed in the present study. The chapter closes with a discussion of how the two theoretical lenses can contribute to explore learning cultures in junior conservatoires. However, before addressing any of the above, it will be useful to describe the study’s ontological perspective.

### 3.1 The world as socially constructed

Ontologically this study takes a social constructionist stand (Burr, 2003), conceiving of music specialist education and the learning cultures existing within the programmes as socially constructed. This implies that junior conservatoires could have been constructed in various ways, and that there is nothing ‘natural’ about their being constructed as they are in the three cases observed. There are conditions in the larger social field that enable junior conservatoires to take shape in the ways they do and that make them a ‘necessary’ and natural part of the larger field of music education. There is thus, from this perspective, no objectively ‘true’ way of organising music specialist education. This study, however, aims to highlight some of the ways it *can* be done, and the kind of learning that can then be made possible for students.

Social constructionism derived from the cultural and intellectual ideas of postmodernism and especially its incredulity towards meta-narratives and its critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge (Burr, 2003, p. 10). According to Burr (2003), social constructionism is a theoretical orientation, but so widely used that it is difficult to give any precise definition of it. Burr (2003), however, tries to sum up some common features shared by different branches of social constructionism. First, knowledge is seen as historically and culturally specific. What is held as valuable and important knowledge in one culture is not necessarily valid in another, and will not necessarily be held as valuable 20 years from now. Furthermore, social constructionism opposes the belief that things or people have an essence, and thus questions the belief that we can know something about the world as it ‘really is’. An important point to add is that, although learning cultures are understood as social constructions, they nevertheless make up a *reality* for the students, teachers and staff who participate in them. What is interesting in a social constructionist perspective

is thus not whether people's understanding of their reality is more or less correct, but how their understandings come into being:

And in so far as all human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted 'reality' congeals for the man in the street. In other words, we contend that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 15)

The focus of interest within social constructionism is thus often on interaction, social practice and processes rather than on individuals or isolated events (Burr, 2003). The interrelatedness between learning cultures and the individuals belonging to them is a central point for this study, something I will return to later in this chapter when discussing both learning cultures and Bourdieu's concept of field, capital and habitus.

Epistemologically, this project holds a constructivist view of knowledge as socially constructed through continuous negotiation of meaning. This has implications for the research process, as it influences my perspective on what it is possible to know about the world, and the status and validity of the material gathered. The findings arrived at through the study must also be considered as social constructions, constructed in an interaction between me and the informants as well as in the analysis process between my presuppositions, theoretical knowledge and the empirical data (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). This is something I will return to in the methodology chapter.

### **3.2 Combining sociocultural learning theory with Bourdieu**

The conception of learning cultures draws on sociocultural learning theory in combination with Bourdieu's theory of practice (James & Biesta, 2007). Sociocultural learning theory contributes in this study with tools to analyse and understand students' learning in junior conservatoires as a process of participation and engagement with available learning resources. However, this theoretical strand is frequently criticised for downplaying issues of inequality and power relations both within and between fields (James & Biesta, 2007; J. Roberts, 2006). Although Wenger (1998) states that communities of practice consist of disagreements, competition and tension, he does not elaborate on how disagreements and tensions appear or what consequences they might



have. Neither do Lave and Wenger (1991) or Wenger (1998) provide tools to analyse power relations in a community or how negotiations of meaning are influenced by agents'<sup>12</sup> different positions in the community (J. Roberts, 2006). As discussed in section 2.4.2, hierarchical structures as well as the power relations between teachers and students have been emphasised as central characteristics of conservatoires in previous studies (Kingsbury, 1988; Nerland, 2004; Perkins, 2011). As Perkins (2011) notes:

The issue of power [in a conservatoire] is one that cannot be overlooked; it is not sufficient simply to view learning as embedded *in* a social context, rather it is enabled or disabled by this context. (Perkins, 2011, p. 36)

The inclusion of Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b) provides theoretical tools for taking a critical stance towards what different students can learn in a junior conservatoire. Bourdieu has been criticised for placing too much weight on the structure side of the agency–structure problem, leaving little room for agency and agents' opportunities to change the conditions of the field to which they belong (DiMaggio, 1979; King, 2000). Bourdieu argues, however, that habitus does not determine agents' behaviour, it only structures it, and hence there is always some 'vagueness and indeterminacy' in how people act in a situation (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 77). I understand habitus, in line with Reay (1995), as possible to change under certain circumstances. However, Bourdieu's theory of practice reminds us that there are certain limitations in the choices available to an individual, and in this study I will try to point out what these limitations consist of and how they influence students' opportunities for learning.

### 3.3 A sociocultural perspective on learning

A shared premise among the many strands of sociocultural theory is that the social world is not an objective, neutral arena. It is constructed in a historical and social context, by a mutually constitutive interrelationship between the social world and the individuals belonging to it (Säljö, 2001; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 2007). Humans are seen as fundamentally social beings and learning is understood as an integrated part of social practice. In this section, I will discuss the present study's perspective on learning, drawing on Lave and Wenger (1991), Vygotsky (1978), Wenger (1998) and Wertsch (1998), among others.

---

<sup>12</sup> Agents is a sociological concept that here refers to individuals or institutions that might exercise influence (agency) in the learning cultures of junior conservatoires, including students, teachers, management, parents, musicians or external institutions.

### 3.3.1 Learning as participation in social practice

There is no such thing as 'learning' *sui generis*, but only changing participation in the culturally designed settings of everyday life. Or, to put it the other way around, participation in everyday life may be thought of as a process of changing understanding in practice, that is, as learning. (Lave, 1993, p. 5)

Sociocultural theory emphasises the need to see learning as embedded in social practices, acknowledging the mutually constitutive relation between individuals and their social context. In the extract quoted above, Lave points out that learning is a result of participation in everyday life, and that learning is what has happened when an individual changes his or her understanding and modes of participation. Learning is thus not an activity set apart from other activities. When learning and participation in social practice are seen as inseparable, learning becomes not solely directed towards acquiring knowledge, but an essential part of becoming a person and developing an identity (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). This stands in contrast to a view of learning as an individual, cognitive activity that can be measured and to a certain degree controlled (Sfard, 1998), and to a dualistic view of learning, where the tendency has been to focus either solely on individuals' cognitive processes, on tuition or the social environment (Billett, 2001). Instead, in this study learning is understood as a result of a complex interaction between various factors, dimensions and influences in a sociocultural context (James & Biesta, 2007).

Lev Vygotsky (1978), who was perhaps the first to systematise and apply socio-cultural approaches to learning, described learning or development as 'the transformation of socially shared activities into internalized processes' (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192). To Vygotsky, a child's stage of development is first represented in social relations as an inter-psychological category and afterwards within the child as an intra-psychological category (Vygotsky, 1978). It thus follows that researchers interested in learning and development should explore the cultural context where knowledge is 'internalized, appropriated, transmitted, or transformed in formal and informal learning settings' (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 196). The cultural contexts of junior conservatoires are conceptualised in this thesis as '*the social practices through which students learn*' (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 28, my italics). It is these practices that together can be seen as defining one or more learning cultures inside the junior conservatoires, and it is within these practices that knowledge is 'internalized, appropriated, transmitted or transformed' (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 196).

### 3.3.2 Cultural tools and learning resources

The process of internalising knowledge and skills is seen from a sociocultural point of view as mediated by the use of cultural tools, meaning physical objects and signs or symbol systems (Wertsch, 1998). Tools are specific to a sociocultural context and have derived their meaning through the use to which they have been put throughout history. Different cultural contexts will thus have different central tools with specific meaning ascribed to them (Wertsch, 1998). The music score is an example of a central and culturally specific tool that makes it possible for musicians today to interpret pieces written hundreds of years ago. As objects, music scores can be analysed, discussed and disagreed about (Nerland, 2004). Tools have both affordances and constraints built into them (Wertsch, 1998, p. 187). A typical example of a tool culturally specific to the field of music that affords opportunities as well as constraints is the musical instrument (Kennell, 2002). A violin or a cello has inscribed in it certain traditional ways of playing, sound ideals and techniques that have developed and been cultivated over many years, and that will regulate how the social contexts are structured (Nerland, 2004). To become a skilled practitioner, in this case a professional musician, it is necessary to develop knowledge and skills to use the cultural tools central to the learning cultures. As Wertsch (2007) puts it:

Becoming more expert means being socialized into an existing social order, characterized by an existing set of cultural tools, and expertise is reflected in the ability to use these tools flexibly and fluently. (Wertsch, 2007, pp. 189-190)

For this study, I have chosen to use the concept of learning resources rather than tools, pointing to the ‘collective “reservoir” of resources’ in a community or a social context (Slette, 2014, p. 44) that students engage with to learn and develop their musical competence. I understand learning resources as resources that *might* be used to reach a particular goal, similar to Wertsch’s description of cultural tools as having a potential, but as ‘powerless to do anything’ unless used by an agent (Wertsch, 1998, p. 30).

Lave and Wenger (1991) note that ‘learning come[s] from a variety of sources, not only from pedagogical activity’ (p. 94). As described in the previous section, learning is embedded in social practice, and resources for learning can be found both in the physical artefacts of the practice and in a teacher’s teaching strategies, as well as in the social interactions students engage in with teachers and peers. Access to opportunities for observation and participation in central practices is, according to Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 99), a crucial resource for learning. Students in junior conservatoires have access to observe their peers

in concerts, ensemble and orchestra rehearsals and master classes, and some teachers allow students to observe other students' main instrument lessons. Arenas where students have opportunities to socialise with peers will probably contain important resources for learning and development as well. The learning taking place in these social, informal settings might be crucial for a student's sense of belonging and identity development, as well as his or her understanding of the learning culture he or she is part of.

The kind of learning resources that are promoted and valued inside a learning culture, and how members engage and use these resources to act, think and develop, can be informative about the culture one is studying (Daniels, Cole, & Wertsch, 2007, pp. 197-198). Like a tool, a learning resource is not neutral; it has 'inherent affordances materially and historically inscribed in it' (Daniels et al., 2007, p. 373). Sewell (1992) argues that resources are 'media of power' that are 'unevenly distributed' in society (pp. 9-10). Through a Bourdieusian perspective, resources can be used to accumulate capital, something that again can be used to improve one's position inside a field and gain access to other kinds of resources. I would thus like to apply a broad understanding of resources, where *resources for learning* also include *resources for accumulating capital* that can be used as 'media of power' (Sewell, 1992) – that is, as media to improve one's position. I understand resources for accumulating capital as a part of resources for learning: a higher position within the learning culture will probably make other learning resources accessible, as is noted in previous studies (Davies, 2004; Perkins, 2011).

### 3.3.3 Learning as trajectories

They [trajectories] provide a context in which to determine what, among all the things that are potentially significant, actually becomes significant learning. A sense of trajectory gives us ways of sorting out what matters and what does not, what contributes to our identity and what remains marginal. (Wenger, 1998, p. 155)

The concept of learning trajectories, or trajectories of participation,<sup>13</sup> is used by Nielsen (1999) and Dahlberg (2013), among others, to describe that which connects individuals' present actions and participation with both the past and the future, and it can contribute to an understanding of why individuals act the

---

13 The two concepts, 'learning trajectories' and 'trajectories of participation' are used interchangeably in the literature. In the following I will use 'learning trajectories' or only 'trajectories'.

way they do (Wenger, 1998, p. 154). In the third research question, I ask how students engage with the learning resources offered and what factors that influence their engagement. I will use learning trajectories as one conceptual tool to shed light on this question, together with habitus and capital (see section 3.5).

In 3.3.1, I defined learning as the result of participation in everyday life. When learning is seen as embedded in social practice, there is a risk that learning becomes ‘absorbed in social practice’ or even erased (Nielsen, 1999, p. 55). People living under the same conditions, or taking part in the same tuition, do not, however, end up with the same competence. In the passage quoted in the beginning of this section, Wenger (1998) argues that it is our sense of trajectory that defines what we engage in, and with what intensity and effort we engage in it. Students in junior conservatoires enter the programme with different experiences, different learning styles and different goals, and will thus engage in various ways inside the junior conservatoire.

There are, however, certain constraining factors to what learning trajectories a learner *can* construct, as construction draws on available resources in the social context (Dahlberg, 2013). Thus, not all trajectories will be possible or socially acceptable within a learning culture. Wenger (1998) describes how ‘paradigmatic trajectories’ play an important part for what is possible or thinkable for persons inside a community. These paradigmatic trajectories are institutionalised trajectories of what a successful trajectory inside a community can look like, and are emphasised by Wenger as ‘the most influential factor shaping the learning of newcomers’ (p. 156). Paradigmatic trajectories are ‘living testimonies of what is possible, expected, desirable’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 156), made evident through how successful members of a culture have previously constructed their trajectories. Such paradigmatic trajectories might be powerful stories of what a successful career can look like for young instrumentalists in junior conservatoires, and may represent important material for negotiating and renegotiating identities. The way in which the learning cultures are constructed within the junior conservatoire will give room for certain trajectories, while hiding others that might be just as relevant in relation to, for example, what the job market for music workers look like (D. Bennett, 2007). It will be important to analyse what constitutes the paradigmatic trajectories in junior conservatoires in order to understand the room available for students’ individual construction of learning trajectories.

### 3.4 A cultural perspective on learning

As previously described, the present study will use learning cultures as an analytical tool to explore a social field, inspired by the TLC-project (Hodkinson et al., 2007; James & Biesta, 2007) and Perkins' study of learning cultures in a UK conservatoire (Perkins, 2011). For this section, I will first elaborate on the *culture* part of the concept, and then delineate how learning cultures have previously been defined and discuss which entrance points I want to apply in order to study learning cultures in junior conservatoires.

#### 3.4.1 'Culture' in learning cultures

'Culture' is a concept employed in widely different contexts with widely different connotations, and it is therefore difficult to grasp and define. It is used in everyday speech to characterise groups of people who 'have culture' as civilised, in comparison with other groups who lack it (Bishop et al., 2006). Culture is also used to describe a high social level, where it is associated with activities like going to the opera, classical concerts, galleries or the theatre (T. Bennett et al., 2009). Such cultural activities were identified by Bourdieu as distinguishing the social classes from one another in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984). Furthermore, 'culture' is used by anthropologists to describe a 'way of life' or the customs and rituals of communities, both in foreign cultures and in our own society (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Clifford Geertz describes culture as 'webs of significance', and argues that an exploration of cultures should be an 'interpretive one in search of meaning' (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). An exploration of a culture can thus be a search for what is meaningful and significant for its members. Culture can also be considered as a 'set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions [ ... ] – for the governing of behavior' (Geertz, 1973, p. 44). Common to definitions of culture is that it consists of patterns, shared understandings, underlying assumptions and rules to maintain a social order:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts. (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181)

Nevertheless, D'Andrade (1995) notes that when culture is described as 'a complex whole', 'integrated', 'structured' or 'patterned', this is 'an article of faith, since no one ever offered an empirical demonstration of any culture's

structure' (p. 249). This is also a reminder that it is never possible to describe a culture as it *really* is or in its totality. A description of a culture will always be limited to a certain part of a culture and from a certain point of view. Bearing this in mind, I will rely on an anthropological way of approaching culture in this study as a 'set of values, assumptions or taken-for-granted understanding that are shared by the members of a social group' (Bishop et al., 2006, p. 3).

Schein (2010) reasons that a culture consists of three layers, where the most visible layer includes the artefacts of the culture: its language, technology, products, style and ceremonies. Although such artefacts are easy to see, their meanings are often difficult to decipher. The next layer is made up of 'espoused beliefs and values', often found in strategic plans and in information brochures (Schein, 2010, p. 25). Espoused beliefs and values that are accepted and incorporated in the culture might later become part of the 'basic underlying assumptions', meaning assumptions that are taken-for-granted and tends to be 'nonconfrontable and nondebatable' (Schein, 2010, p. 28). This includes perceptions of what is good and bad, what is rational behaviour and what is not, similar to Bourdieu's description of *doxa*, a concept I will return to in section 3.5.1. The premise that there is generally an invisible level of unquestioned assumptions, which manifest themselves in visible practices, artefacts and espoused values and beliefs will be adopted as a premise of the present study.

From this perspective, it is assumed that the cultural assumptions and values of learning cultures in junior conservatoires influence what can be learned and how it can be learned. Underlying assumptions and values are furthermore used as entrance points to understand the *doxa* working inside the field of junior conservatoires or the presuppositions that work to make something self-evident, taken-for-granted and agreed upon (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164).

### 3.4.2 Defining learning cultures

Hodkinson et al. (2007, p. 419) define learning cultures as 'constituted – that is, produced and reproduced – by human activity', and as such, products of sociocultural and historical conditions. As learning cultures have a history, there is often agreement among members about certain ways of doing things and certain ways of being:

[L]earning cultures are governed by values and ideals, by normative expectations about good learning, good teaching, good leadership, and so forth. (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p. 420)

Such assumptions and values ensure that learning cultures have a certain stability, even though they should not be considered as frozen practices. Since they are 'produced and reproduced – by human activity' (Hodkinson et al., 2007), there will be constant shifts caused by ongoing negotiations of meaning between agents both within the learning cultures of junior conservatoires and in other tangential learning cultures.

Using learning cultures as a conceptual lens, offers the opportunity to place *learning resources*<sup>14</sup> at the centre of attention, and to analyse how learning cultures 'permit, promote, inhibit or rule out certain kinds of learning' (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 28). This emphasises the interrelatedness between the social context and the individual learner. Learning cultures are thus not only the contexts in which people learn, but rather 'the social practices *through* which people learn' (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 28, my italics).

James and Biesta (2007) build on Bourdieu's understanding of individuals as always relationally positioned within a field (Bourdieu, 1990b). Students enter a learning culture with a habitus, consisting of embodied dispositions developed through previous experiences in social practice. They have various experiences, competences, attitudes, ambitions and ways of acting in the world, and they hold various amounts of capital symbolically efficient inside the learning culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Differences in habitus and capital regulate both how students are positioned inside the learning culture and how they seek to position themselves, including how they engage with the available learning resources.

My entrance point into exploring learning cultures is slightly different from that applied by Perkins (2011) and James and Biesta (2007). Like Perkins, I want to emphasise the importance of capital more than was done in the TLC-project (James & Biesta, 2007). Perkins explored learning cultures through investigating the various practices of the conservatoire (Perkins, 2011). I have chosen to investigate learning cultures from a slightly different angle, looking at *learning resources* and basic *cultural assumptions and values*. Such learning resources are made available to students *through* the practices of the junior conservatoires,

---

14 James and Biesta (2007) use the concept of *learning opportunities*. As I understand them, they use 'learning opportunities' in a way similar to my learning resources (defined in 3.3.2), and I will in the following use learning resources.



but rather than describing these practices, I will direct the focus towards the learning resources themselves, and furthermore towards how students engage with these resources, as well as towards the basic assumptions and values that appear to lie underneath these learning resources. These perspectives are gathered from the same two theoretical strands that James and Biesta (2007) build on, however, namely sociocultural theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice. Based on the discussion so far in this chapter, learning cultures are understood as *socially and historically constructed, consisting of visible and less visible layers that make learning resources available in different ways for various learners based on their positioning inside the learning culture.*

To sum up, this study will investigate learning culture from three angles:

- through identifying cultural assumptions and values,
- through identifying central learning resources and how access to these resources is regulated,

and

- through exploring students' engagement with learning resources.

### **3.5 A Bourdieusian perspective on learning cultures**

I have already touched upon some of Bourdieu's central concepts, as his theory of practice is central to the understanding of learning cultures delineated above. For this section, I will discuss his concepts of field, habitus and capital in greater depth, and articulate how these concepts will be used for this study.

#### **3.5.1 Social space, fields and sub-fields**

A central theme in sociology has been the relation between agency and structure, or the relation between free choice and objective structures regulating agents' actions (Aakvaag, 2008). Bourdieu wanted to break with the opposition between objectivism, where humans' actions are understood as determined by social structures, on one side, and subjectivism, where humans are considered as being in a position to make free, rational choices independent of their social surroundings, on the other side. This opposition was regarded by Bourdieu as the 'most fundamental, and the most ruinous' in social science (Bourdieu,

1990b, p. 25). His 'solution' is his theory of practice, centred on the concepts of field, habitus and capital; concepts that must be seen as intertwined and mutually constituted (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b; Grenfell, 2012).

Fields are defined as a network of objective relations between positions located in a particular social space and defined by one or more conflicts (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). They are considered as relatively autonomous, meaning that the conflicts and oppositions inside a field are largely independent of conflicts outside the field (Sestoft, 2006). All fields, however, are related to the *field of power* in some way, referring to the dominating groups in society, such as the government, leaders of organisations, board directors and so on. To say that relations between positions are objective is not to say that they are more true than other possible relations, but it implies that they exist independent of agents' subjective experience of them. It is furthermore to emphasise the field as a relational one, and as a 'system of differences' (Sestoft, 2006, p. 165, my translation). Bourdieu argues that 'to think in terms of field is to *think relationally*' in his written dialogue with Wacquant (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96, italics in original). The relational nature of fields implies that a field cannot be analysed as a closed unity. To understand why it has the form it has and works the way it does, it must be seen in relation to other fields to which it is associated. What happens in the field of power, for example when the Norwegian government decides to grant money to specialist education within the arts (Talent Norge, 2015), affects the practices of junior conservatoires. The recent developments in the municipal schools of music and arts in Norway, with a greater focus on in-depth programmes (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2016), or the introduction of Music Education Hubs in England (Sharp, 2015), are other examples of changes in the larger field of music education that might influence the learning cultures of junior conservatoires. The students and teachers themselves also make connections between different fields as they move between fields. Teachers might have multiple work places combined with a performance career, while students belong to a compulsory school and perhaps a local orchestra, along with attending the junior conservatoire. Relations between fields are also made, for example, through collaboration projects with local or professional orchestras or cultural institutions. Several tangential or overlapping fields will thus influence the practices taking place within the learning cultures of junior conservatoires.

## Comparing fields with games

Bourdieu frequently compared fields to games, where there is something to win or lose and where there are certain rules that determine what players can do based on their position within the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). Moreover, in both fields and games, agents are positioned differently vis-à-vis each other, and the position one holds make some actions natural or possible, while others are not reasonable or even thinkable.

The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital, and on the perception that they have on the field depending on the point of view they take *on* the field as a view taken from a point *in* the field.” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101)

A person’s position within a field thus regulates his or her perception of it and the strategies available to him or her. These different positions are based on agents’ habitus, together with their amount and type of capital, according to Bourdieu. Fields, like games, are inherently competitive: agents either seek to ‘safeguard or improve their position’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). This struggle can be both conscious and unconscious, and an agent’s strategies and opportunities depend on his or her position in the field, which in turn relies on his or her habitus and distribution of capital (see section 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). I will apply this aspect of Bourdieu’s theory to explore how students’ engagement might be affected by students’ positioning and whether this influences their aims, and their access to learning resources.

Nevertheless, while comparisons between fields and games are useful, they have their limits. Fields are much more complex than games; their boundaries are unclear and rules will be much more in flux than they would be in a game. Furthermore, while players enter a game consciously, aware of its artificiality and its rules, agents do not consciously enter in a field:

[O]ne is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 67)

## ***Doxa and illusio***

Agents belonging to a field hold a belief in the game as worth playing and accept its fundamental premises – what Bourdieu calls the *illusio* of the game (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 66). *Illusio* is the opposite of disinterestedness or indifference and can be understood as a commitment to and investment in that which is at stake in a field:

[I]t is to be invested, taken in and by the game. To be interested is to accord a given social game that what happens in it matters, that its stakes are important [ ... ] and worth pursuing. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 116)

Only agents belonging to a specific field can understand completely the *illusio* of the field, as it might be hard for others outside to understand what is at stake and what might be gained through investing in the field. Classmates of the young instrumentalists in junior conservatoires, for example, might have trouble understanding why it is so essential to spend hours a day practising an instrument, while the necessity of practice is a taken-for-granted inside the field of specialised music education (see e.g. Ericsson et al., 1993; Jørgensen, 2002).

Agents involved in the field adhere, according to Bourdieu, to the *doxa*, or the rules of the game, which 'effectively forbids questioning of the principles of belief, which would threaten the very existence of the field' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 102). In *Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1990) defines *doxa* as:

[T]he relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal, taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 68, italics in original).

According to Bourdieu, an immediate understanding of the world of which the habitus is the product can appear when the incorporated structures of the habitus and the objective structures of a field are aligned. *Doxa* is defined by the presuppositions that exist within a field, for all that is unsaid, self-evident and taken for granted by members (Bourdieu, 1977). The *doxa* is not arbitrary, meaning one possible order among others, but 'a natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 166). This is not to say that fields are without disagreements, but that members of a field share a belief in underlying assumptions that are seldom addressed.

## **Learning cultures and fields**

Learning cultures and fields are similar concepts, but they are not synonyms. Like fields, learning cultures are conceptualised as 'constructed and reconstructed through the forces of one or more fields' (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p. 423). Also taken from Bourdieu's understanding of field is that it is difficult to define the boundaries of a learning culture. Compared to a learning site with clearly defined boundaries, 'the factors that constitute the learning culture of any particular site' are not bounded (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p. 421). Subsequently,

one might find similar learning cultures in the three junior conservatoires, as all three belong to the field of specialised classical music education.

In the TLC-project, Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital were used to explore how learning cultures 'permit, promote, inhibit or rule out certain kinds of learning' in various ways for various learners depending on their position inside the learning culture (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p. 423). Their understanding of learning cultures is based on Bourdieu's definition of fields as inherently competitive, where an agent's strategies depend on his or her position within the field. The concept of learning cultures is, as I understand it, a way to zoom in on a *particular aspect* of a field. In this way it is suited to exploring how learning is regulated and facilitated within particular learning sites. Learning cultures can then be seen as sub-fields, belonging to larger fields. In the case of learning cultures in junior conservatoires, these larger fields are likely to be the field of professional music performance (Nerland, 2004), the field of pre-college music education and the even larger field of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993).

James and Biesta (2007) allow for more possibility of change in their understanding of learning cultures than one finds in Bourdieu's definitions of a field. While for Bourdieu the opportunities for individuals to change their circumstances are limited, as habitus is structured by fields and regulates an agent's dispositions to act (Aakvaag, 2008), James and Biesta define learning cultures as '(re)produced by individuals, *just as much* as individuals are (re)produced by cultures' (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 23, my italics). Indeed, one of the aims of the TLC-project was to *improve* learning cultures in further education (James & Biesta, 2007), although they acknowledged that such changes take time and persistence. The two views are not necessarily contradictory, but might rather be the consequence of a difference in the level of focus. When Bourdieu describes, for example, the field of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993) or the academic field (Bourdieu, 1988) with their historical and cultural roots, lines of conflict, positions available and relations to other fields, this is at a macro level compared to the TLC-project's descriptions of further education in the UK.

Bourdieu's understanding of fields as relational social spaces, where agents are positioned differently based on their habitus and amount of capital, and where there is something at stake, is one I will apply in order to understand learning cultures as well. I will explore what kind of capital is valued within the learning cultures, what kind of presuppositions and taken-for-granted truths

characterise the learning cultures in the three junior conservatoires, and how these influence students' access to resources for learning.

### 3.5.2 Habitus

Habitus is Bourdieu's conceptual tool for bridging the dichotomies he describes as the 'most ruinous' in social science: agency–structure, objective–subjective and micro–macro (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 25). A field structures the habitus, at the same time as 'habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 44). This is in line with the emphasis on the interrelatedness between individuals and social practice in sociocultural learning theory, although sociocultural learning theory emphasises to a greater extent the ability of individuals to produce changes in their social context (Nielsen, 1999).

Bourdieu described habitus as a socialised and structured body that has:

[I]ncorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 81)

Habitus is embodied and expressed in durable ways 'of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 70). In emphasising embodiment, Bourdieu is building on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of knowledge and experience as corporeally constituted (Merleau-Ponty, 1996). Habitus is further shown in individuals' actions, meaning that a certain habitus equips agents to behave in certain ways in certain circumstances (Reay, 2004). Reay furthermore describes habitus as a complex interplay between past and present, shaped through earlier experiences, such as socialisation within the family or through schooling. At the same time, 'current circumstances [ ... ] are internalized and become yet another layer to add to those from earlier socializations' (Reay, 2004, p. 434). Reay pictures habitus as a set of matrices that

demarcate the extent of choices available to any one individual. Choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds himself/herself in, her external circumstances. However, within Bourdieu's theoretical framework he/she is also circumscribed by an internalized framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable. (Reay, 2004, p. 435)

This demarcation of choices available to an individual is what Bourdieu describes as a dialectic between an agent's objective chances, and his or her

aspirations, creating a '*sense of limits*' or a '*sense of reality*' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164, italics in original):

[A]gents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not 'for us', a division as fundamental and as fundamentally recognized as that between the sacred and the profane. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64)

I anticipate that students in junior conservatoires will also have a clear perception of what is possible for them and what is unrealistic to hope for, and that this might depend upon their position within the learning culture. Being attuned to a field, meaning that the *doxa* has become a 'state of the body' more than a 'state of the mind' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 68) is what gives agents a practical sense or a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 66). Early experiences are particularly important for the formation of habitus, because one's earlier experiences will influence what kind of information one seeks out and what kind of information is rejected because it calls into question what the individual already knows and believes (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 60-61). A field-specific habitus is acquired in early years, often without the person's awareness.

The earlier a player enters the game and the less he is aware of the associated learning [ ... ], the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 67)

Many of the young instrumentalists in junior conservatoires have started playing their instrument at a young age, some of them even as early as the age of four. The instrumental tuition is in general organised as one-to-one lessons with an experienced teacher, according to the master-apprentice model commonly found in specialised music education (Gaunt, 2010; Hanken, 2007; Nerland, 2004). Bourdieu saw apprenticeship as ideal for producing a field-specific habitus, because apprentices learn through participation in practice, working alongside an experienced teacher and learning not only the skills, but the attitudes and values of the craft as well (Priour & Sestoft, 2006, p. 211).

Furthermore, habitus is conceptualised as consisting of both a person's individual history and the collective history of family and class to which he or she belongs (Reay, 2004). This explains why members of a social class share dispositions without having exactly the same habitus. There will thus be diversity among members belonging to the same social class, but this diversity is understood by Bourdieu as a 'structural variant of the others' or a 'deviation

in relation to the style' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 60). In light of this it might be possible to talk about a class habitus shared by classical musicians, or a musical habitus, shown in 'certain ways of performing, playing, practising, engaging with different music, our listening preferences, as well as ways of talking, dressing, walking and exercising' (Burnard, Trulsson, & Söderman, 2015, p. 3, referring to Reay, 1995).

'Musical habitus' is a concept used by Rimmer (2010), amongst others, to zoom in on the part of the habitus formed through people's experiences with performing, playing, practising and in other ways engaging with music. Part of a musical habitus is also 'apprehension, appreciation and discernment' of musical pieces, genres and traditions, as well as an orientation towards action in sociomusical practices (Rimmer, 2012, p. 307). Wright (2008) links musical habitus to personal identity, including a person's self-perception as musical or not musical, and one's affiliation with certain genres and artists. Sagiv and Hall (2015) describe how a *classical* habitus is formed over years through main instrument lessons and a close interaction with a master teacher, where correct posture, movements and interpretation, together with bodily awareness, are trained. The chances are good that students in junior conservatoires have a well-developed 'feel for the game', meaning that they know what is natural to do in a given situation, how to address teachers or peers and how to play in a manner accepted as stylistically correct, as a result of several years of training. In this often-cited quotation, Bourdieu describes the situation when the objective world and the subjective structure of the agents' habitus are aligned as being a fish in water:

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127)

An early socialisation into the life of classical music education might thus provide students with a musical habitus that gives them a sense of being a 'fish in water' when entering a junior conservatoire. This involves the technical and interpretative instrumental skills, of course, but it also involves more subtle knowledge of how to act and speak in order to be recognised as a member of the field. Learning an instrument is a highly bodily experience, as emphasised by Sagiv and Hall (2015), and thus the concept of habitus is especially useful for understanding learning processes for classical musicians. This study is not designed to explore students' musical habitus in detail. It is, however, a



theoretical premise for the study that students do have a musical habitus that together with their capital serve to position them in the learning culture.

### 3.5.3 Capital

Capital can be understood as the ‘types of assets that bring social and cultural advantage or disadvantage’ (R. Moore, 2012, p. 101). As described in section 3.5.1, a field is inherently competitive, with agents constantly seeking to improve their position within the field. The position an agent can occupy within a field, as well as available strategies for improving his or her position, depends on accumulated capital and his or her habitus (Wacquant, 1989, p. 40). Central to the understanding of capital is that some people have both more and other kinds of capital than others and that by putting the capital into play, they are able to gain advantages in the field. Bourdieu describes economic capital, cultural capital and social capital as the three main forms, all of which can be exchanged with each other. He also describes a fourth form, *symbolic capital*, which is a transformed and disguised form of the other types of capital (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 183)

Briefly put, *economic capital* is assets that are directly convertible into money and might be institutionalised in property (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47). *Cultural capital* can be found in at least three different forms: embodied in dispositions of the mind and body, objectified in cultural goods such as musical instruments or books, and institutionalised through educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital as embodied in habitus is the one that is most likely to function as symbolic capital, according to Bourdieu:

[T]he transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital, and it therefore receives proportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies, as the direct, visible forms of transmission tend to be more strongly censored and controlled. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 49)

This embodied form of cultural capital can also be said to characterise music students who have grown up in families where classical music has been an integrated part of everyday life since birth. When these children start music lessons they are often recognised as talented, as they already have practical knowledge about music through listening, observing and playing with their family (Howe et al., 1998). Bourdieu discusses this issue in relation to scholastic achievements, and notes that studies of the relationship between ability and investment often fail to see that ‘ability or talent is itself the product of an

investment of time and cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 48). Musical talent is thus, as is the case with other types of talent, 'predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence', because it is transmitted through a person's early encounters with music and the family's cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 49).

*Social capital* is the 'actual or potential resources' found in a person's network and in social relationships with individuals, groups or institutions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). Social capital can be derived from a family name or by connecting one's own name to the institution or group one wishes to be associated with. In the world of musicians, there are families where several family members are professional musicians, and music students belonging to one of these families already have a significant amount of social capital derived from their name when entering a junior conservatoire. In addition, they will presumably also have embodied cultural capital from growing up in a home with musical parents, and are likely to get a favourable position inside the junior conservatoire based on their already accumulated social and cultural capital. Social capital depends, however, on the amount of capital held by those one is connected to: the status of one's teacher, the name of the institution one attends or, potentially, the musical status of one's parents. Social capital is also evident among musicians in their 'pedagogical lineages' (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 45), meaning the teachers and musicians one can connect one's name to. This can be seen in concert programmes or CD liner notes where musicians write a biography naming teachers and high-status musicians with whom the musician has been in contact (Kingsbury, 1988). Participating in summer courses or participating in master classes can therefore be a way for young instrumentalists to build their network and increase their social capital. In an earlier study (Stabell, 2010), I found that, while conservatoire students had manifold reasons for participating in master classes, building social capital stood out as an important factor, in some cases more important than the presumed learning potential in receiving instructions from the teacher holding the master class. Social network and social capital are emphasised as highly important by Perkins (2011) and Cottrell (2004) as well, as ways to get work as a musician. One of the students in Perkins' study (2011) describes explicitly the importance of making contacts, being available and being friends with everybody in order to get musician jobs. This is echoed by Cottrell (2004) in his study of professional musicians in London, where jobs and temporary positions were often only communicated through a person's social network. A final point to be made about social capital is that it needs

to be activated in order to work as social capital, and hence social capital also includes skills in how to activate and maintain the network (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 52).

*Symbolic capital* is characterised by no longer being recognised as capital, although it still gives the holder privileges (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 183). Symbolic capital can be seen at work, for example, in reputation or prestige (Jenkins, 2002, p. 85), evident through processes of *consecration* or celebration of successful agents (Bourdieu, 1993). This may be winning a prize, being asked to play in a prestigious festival or achieving public recognition from high-status persons inside the field. Paradigmatic trajectories (Wenger, 1998), as referred to in 3.3.3, are likely to be the trajectories of former students who have been consecrated as musicians within the field. As referred to in chapter 2, Perkins (2011) found that winning competitions was a means for conservatoire students to achieve a ‘reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 291). Symbolic capital is also at play in the entry requirements found in classical music education, which privilege students with certain forms of cultural and social capital through the assessment process in the entrance auditions (Perkins, 2013).

The relation between field and capital is essential, in that ‘*a capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field*’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101, italics in original). Bourdieu describes the ‘reversed economy’ that is operating within the field of arts as a ‘generalized game of “loser wins”’, which ‘excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39). Accumulating cultural, social and symbolic capital has therefore been described as more important than making money within the field of art (Jenkins, 2002, p. xiii). Accordingly, those considered as the most successful musicians are not necessarily those that make the most money. Having economic success as an artist might even lead to discredit from important agents within the field (Bourdieu, 1993). The students in Nielsen’s study (1999) used ‘soup, steak and ice’ concerts to refer to those events where they only played for money, as opposed to concerts where they were making artistically interpretations of classical works. Doing too many of those soup, steak and ice-concerts was considered as ‘degrading yourself’ (Nielsen, 1999, p. 191). Economic capital, however, is in play in junior conservatoires, even though it is not addressed as a main source of motivation for students. Participating in a junior conservatoire is costly for the family,

which must support lessons,<sup>15</sup> master classes, courses, travels and instrument. Wagner (2015) describes how the young virtuosos she studied were constantly looking for a sponsor or someone who could buy or loan them an instrument. There are economic gains, in addition to symbolic ones, in winning competitions and receiving grants or scholarships that enable young musicians to travel, participate in courses and enter competitions. Furthermore, there are close links between the economic world and the art world when it comes to instruments. For example, private foundations often own old, very expensive string instruments<sup>16</sup> that they loan out to promising musicians or to those who are already consecrated within the field.<sup>17</sup> As is suggested by Nerland (2004, p. 78), the divisions between the art field and the economic field may no longer be as clear as they were when described by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1993).

### 3.5.4 Musical capital

Previous authors have described *musical capital* as a part of a person's *cultural capital* (Coulson, 2010; Wright, 2015). Wright (2015) defines it as self-perceptions of being musical combined with having skills and knowledge within music (p. 96). Coulson (2010), however, defined it more broadly, as compounded of social, cultural and symbolic capital:

I propose the term 'musical capital' as a useful shorthand for the interconnected cultural, social and symbolic assets that musicians acquire and turn to economic advantage in the music field. These include resources such as musical training and skills, network building and reputation gained through participation in particular musical events. (Coulson, 2010, p. 257)

Musical capital is here defined as assets that can be turned to economic advantage. I believe this is too narrow a definition, as symbolic assets such as prestige achieved through winning competitions will not necessarily result in economic advantage. Still, it can give other forms of advantages within the learning culture, for example access to ensemble partners or to high profile performance opportunities. Coulson's study is based on in-depth interviews with 17 professional musicians from all genres, working in England. She found that being surrounded by music from an early age in an environment where

---

15 The exception is programme 1 where there are no fees.

16 Italian string instruments handmade in the seventeenth century are still considered as the best instruments, and are sold for up to three million euros (Wagner, 2015)

17 Dextra Musica is a Norwegian example of a foundation that loans out valuable string instruments to talented musicians (Sparebankstiftelsen DNB)

informal musical learning was integral ‘provides a substantial contribution to musical capital’ (Coulson, 2010, p. 261), by fostering a feeling of being ‘musical’ and giving the musicians confidence in performances later on. An important part of musical capital is to be perceived as talented, something that is more likely to happen when a child has had rich access to informal musical learning experience from an early age, as Bourdieu also addresses (Bourdieu, 1986). At later stages in a musician’s development, Coulson (2010) links musical capital to the ‘collection of skills, performance experiences and contacts [ ... ] that enhanced their ability to become professional musicians’ (p. 264), as well as to ‘adapting to the norms and conventions of the music world, learning the value of collaboration and building networks’ (p. 265). She concludes that ‘those with the most opportunities for acquiring musical capital have a better chance of becoming professional musicians’ (p. 267). What is appealing about the concept of musical capital, and Coulson’s (2010) definition of it, is that it encompasses musical skills, social network, performance experience and a familiarity with the conventions of the tradition, as well as other knowledge and competencies that might strengthen a student’s ability to succeed as a musician. This concept will be used to explore which competencies are valued within the learning cultures and what kind of musical capital students are offered resources for accumulating. I will draw on Coulson’s definition, but I see musical capital as ‘cultural, social and symbolic assets that musicians acquire and turn to advantage in the music field’, and not only as a means for economic advantage.

### **3.6 Bringing the theoretical perspectives together**

Sociocultural learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998) contributes to this study with a broad perspective on learning as an ongoing activity, embedded in a social context (see section 3.3). This theoretical perspective furthermore brings to bear the concept of learning trajectories, which explains why not all members of a community make the same choices and attain the same level of competence: each person constructs her or his own learning trajectory by engaging with the learning resources and cultural tools afforded through the social context. Furthermore, learning cultures were defined as *socially and historically constructed, consisting of visible and less visible layers that that make learning resources available in different ways for various learners based on their positioning inside the learning culture* (see section 3.4.2). The concept of learning cultures directs attention towards learning resources

and how cultures 'permit, promote, inhibit or rule out certain kinds of learning' (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 28). The concept is informed by both sociocultural learning theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice.

Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital are crucial to the understanding of learning cultures as hierarchically constructed, where a student's position will influence his or her access to resources and ways of engaging with them. I have also introduced musical capital as a potentially fruitful concept for analysing what competencies are valued in junior conservatoires, and how various amounts of capital might influence students' access to learning resources.

The combination of sociocultural learning theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice is not a new one (see e.g. Nielsen, 1999; Perkins, 2011). In some ways, the two strands complement each other, as is the case in relation to power and hierarchies, of which Bourdieu writes explicitly, and on which theorists as Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) are more vague. Another example is habitus, where Bourdieu has been criticised for not explaining how individuals develop their habitus or how durable it is (DiMaggio, 1979). In this aspect, sociocultural learning theory can contribute with concepts for understanding individuals' actions and how 'intersubjective action and negotiation play a significant role in determining what kind of people we become' (Nielsen, 1999, p. 22).

There are also conflicting perspectives in the two theories, and I want to address in particular the issue of the relation between habitus and field, related to the concept of learning trajectories. As already mentioned, Bourdieu has been frequently criticised for underemphasising agency in favour of structure and leaving little room for the possibility of change (DiMaggio, 1979; King, 2000). Bourdieu argues that habitus does not determine agents' behaviour, it only structures it, and hence there is always some 'vagueness and indeterminacy' in how people act in a given situation (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 77). Later researchers have studied changes in habitus, as Wright (2008) does in her article 'Kicking the habitus', where she found that through reflecting upon one's own background and competence, there are possibilities for altering one's habitus. Reay (2004) understands habitus as 'generating a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on *transformative and constraining* courses of action' (p. 433, my italics). Processes of learning, or changes in knowledge and action (Lave, 1993), *might* lead to changes in habitus, Wright (2008) argues. However, in order for it to be a factual change in habitus, it needs to involve a change in the person's dispositions, meaning ways of acting in the practices he or she engages in. It also presupposes that the changes are

durable, and it thus takes some time to realise whether there has been a change in habitus or not. My study is not set up to analyse whether students' habitus changes through participating in the junior conservatoires. But I want to apply a view of learning and participation in the junior conservatoires as something that *might* alter students' habitus. Still, there are constraining factors in the objective structure, and not all actions are thinkable or possible within all fields, or for all students.

Learning trajectories are understood to give us 'ways of sorting out what matters and what does not, what contributes to our identity and what remains marginal' (Wenger, 1998, p. 155). They situate the individual learner as an active agent who constructs his or her trajectory through drawing on available resources in the social context. There are still constraining factors related to which trajectories can be constructed within a community, as noted by Dahlberg (2013). With Bourdieu, another perspective can be added: *not all trajectories will be possible for all agents* inside a learning culture, as that would depend on both students' habitus and field-specific capital. In this way, various trajectories will be possible and thinkable for various persons inside a junior conservatoire. When this perspective from Bourdieu is added to the sociocultural understanding of trajectories, habitus and learning trajectories can also be seen as supplementing each other.

## 4 **Methodology**

This is a qualitative case study carried out at three different junior conservatoires. The empirical data analysed for the project consist of fieldnotes from 91 observed events at the three programmes, notes from informal conversations during the observation period, transcriptions of semi-structured individual interviews with 16 students and six teachers, and selected documents from the three programmes.

This chapter begins with a description of the research design and the reasoning behind the choice of a qualitative methodology. Then follows an account of the sampling criteria used for selecting programmes and participants and an account of how data were collected. The chapter closes with a report of the analysis process and a discussion of ethical considerations together with the study's trustworthiness.

### 4.1 **Research design**

The choice of research design was based on the research questions (see section 1.2) along with the theoretical underpinnings of the study, as accounted for in chapter 3. On those premises, a qualitative case study design was selected as the most suitable, a choice that will be accounted for in the following section.



#### 4.1.1 A qualitative case study

This study is informed by qualitative methods, carefully chosen to explore the learning cultures of junior conservatoires in-depth. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out, 'qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (p. 3). This quotation emphasises the interpretative aspect of qualitative research, where the aim is to investigate what things mean to people. Further characteristics of qualitative research are that it generally uses multiple sources of data, focuses on participants' meanings, aims to take a holistic account of a phenomenon and uses a theoretical lens to understand the empirical data (Creswell, 2009, pp. 175–176). These are all descriptions that fit the present study: it draws on multiple sources of data, focuses on participants' meanings, and applies the theoretical lens of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' combined with a sociocultural perspective on learning in order to explore the questions posed. Moreover, in qualitative research the researcher functions as the research instrument (Creswell, 2009). It is the researcher who gathers the empirical data and then turns the world into 'a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). This situates the researcher in a physical way in the world he or she is studying and makes a reflexive approach important in order to make the research process transparent to the reader (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 69). I will return to this in section 4.1.3.

In order to gain an understanding of the research questions posed, three different junior conservatoires were selected, each constituting an 'instrument' (Stake, 1995) for developing knowledge about the central issues of the study. This is what Stake (1995) calls an 'instrumental case study', in contrast to an 'intrinsic case study', where the goal is to understand a specific case in depth with all its particularities and distinctive qualities. I chose to do a case study, as this design is especially suitable for investigating a 'contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009, p. 18). For this project, it is moreover exactly the relation between the social context of junior conservatoires and how this context makes learning resources available to students in various ways that were at the core of my research interest.

This study thus draws solely on qualitative methods for gathering data. Quantitative methods were considered to supplement the qualitative ones,

but were eventually rejected, for three reasons. Since there are still only a few research studies that have focused on institutional culture or learning cultures in music education programmes (Jørgensen, 2009; Perkins, 2011), the study was designed as exploratory rather than explanatory. As is observed by Patton (2015, p. 229), '[q]ualitative methods are especially appropriate for inquiries where no acceptable, valid, and reliable measures exist'. Second, I wanted to investigate how students engaged with the learning resources offered through the learning cultures, and observations of students in their natural settings combined with interviews was considered as those methods best suited to explore this issue. Third, the study seeks to explore that which is taken-for-granted by members of the learning cultures, and which thus would be difficult to elucidate through a questionnaire.

#### 4.1.2 Selecting methods

The study draws on four methods for gathering data: observation, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews and document studies.

*Observation* was chosen to gain insight into the social practices as they unfolded in their natural setting inside the junior conservatoires. According to Fangen (2004), observation is an effective means for obtaining information about issues that informants are not aware of or not interested in discussing. Following Bourdieu, I assumed that there were several aspects of the learning cultures that I would not discover by only interviewing participants. The logic of a field is often perceived as self-evident and natural to the persons involved in it, as a 'natural order which goes without saying' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 166). Consequently, I chose to spend a considerable amount of time observing various activities in the junior conservatoires. Observation was also intended as a way to 'tune-in' to the practices and to the informants. I assumed that spending time with students and teachers in main instrument lessons, orchestra, theory lessons and concerts would help build rapport and establish a sense of familiarity with the participants.

*Informal conversations* were something I hoped would be an integrated part of the observations, although such conversations are not something one can plan for in detail. What I did plan for, however, was allowing for time before and after scheduled events to have the opportunity to chat with students, teachers and parents informally.

*Interviews* were chosen to reveal the perspectives of students and teachers on the learning resources offered and their experiences as well as their values, beliefs and ambitions.

The aim of using qualitative research interviews is to grasp the meaning persons, things and relations holds for the informant [ ... ]. The aim is to catch the perspective of the agent, meaning his cognitive and emotional organisation of the world. (Fog, 2004, p. 11. My translation)

Based on the centrality of the teacher–student relationship shown in the literature review, I assumed that the main instrument teacher would be significant with regards to the values a student encountered, and which learning resources a student could access. I thus chose to interview students and their main instrument teachers. I wanted to conduct the interviews individually, in order to give informants the opportunity to speak of issues that might be sensitive in the relationship with their teacher, or issues that they would not feel free to address in peer groups or with the teacher present.

*Documents* from the programmes were also included in the empirical data. Through documents, one can get information on espoused values and beliefs in a learning culture, defined as ‘articulated publicly announced principles and values that the group claims or tries to achieve’ (Schein, 2010, p. 14). Documents are not simply official accounts, however, as they are ‘learned and constructed in, through and as a part of the business of everyday life’ (Jenkins, 2002, p. 69). I thus found that available documents from the programmes would be informative about the kinds of learning that was promoted and valued inside the learning cultures of junior conservatoires.

My entrance point to exploring learning cultures has accordingly been through observations of the social and cultural practices of the junior conservatoires, informal conversations with teachers, students and parents, interviews with both students and teachers combined with analysis of available documents from the three programmes. The four methods were chosen because they each enlighten the learning cultures from various perspectives, enabling a triangulation of the data, which I will return to in section 4.4.5.

### 4.1.3 A reflexive researcher role

As soon as we observe (*theorein*) the social world, we introduce in our perception of it a bias due to the fact that, to study it, to describe it, to talk about it, we must retire from it more or less completely. This *theoreticist* or *intellectualist*

*bias* consists in forgetting to inscribe into the theory we build of the social world the fact that it is the product of a theoretical gaze, a 'contemplative eye'. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 69)

The importance of researcher reflexivity is thoroughly discussed by Bourdieu, who emphasises the significance of constructing a researcher's relation to the object under study to avoid ending up discussing not the object, but rather one's 'relation to the object' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 69). While it is difficult to find all the blind spots and taken-for-granted knowledge in one's own culture, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p. 9) argue that the researcher's reflexive and critical position is essential to the quality of qualitative research. They define reflexive research as a combination of 'careful interpretation and reflection' (p. 9), where interpretation is a crucial characteristic to all stages of the research process. Findings arrived at through qualitative research are thus to be considered as social constructions, where there can be no mirroring relationship 'between "reality" or "empirical facts" and research results' (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9). Because of this, they claim that reflection is needed to be aware of the interpretations that are always present in the research process, and the kind of assumptions and other circumstances that form the interpretations one makes (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). The following section is a reflection upon two sides of my own background that might have influenced the research process: my background as administrative coordinator of a junior conservatoire and my background as a classical pianist and music student.

Before I started my doctoral work, I held an administrative position at the Norwegian Academy of Music, where part of my job for two years was to coordinate the Academy's junior department. I had daily contact with teachers, students and parents and I was present at meetings with the management of the Academy and in occasional meetings with other institutions regarding possible collaboration projects. This background stimulated my research interest to engage in this study, as accounted for in section 1.1. Since two of the programmes are located in Norway, some of the teachers and students interviewed in this study knew me beforehand from my former position, although not on a personal level. However, I did not experience that the quality of the information I obtained from those I knew partly beforehand differed from that which came from those I met first through the observation period.

The second aspect of my history that has influenced both my research interest and my relations with the students and teachers with whom I engaged during fieldwork, is my background as a classical pianist and music student. I have

personal experiences of being a conservatoire student, taking instrumental lessons and performing in concerts and exams, experiences that might resemble the ones of the junior conservatoire students. My own education included individual lessons with a master teacher for several years, studying core repertoire from the classical tradition with a focus on technical exercises aimed at an upcoming performance. However, I entered a conservatoire culture only at the age of 18, and I have no first-hand experience of being part of a specialised music programme at a young age. This second part of my background might still be the greatest obstacle in order to objectivise the object of study (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As I have been part of a conservatoire culture for many years, it might be that certain features of the culture still are natural and taken for granted to me, and therefore more difficult to recognise. I will elaborate further on how I have dealt with researcher reflexivity throughout the research process when addressing the study's trustworthiness in section 4.6.

## 4.2 Selecting programmes and informants

In this section, I will elaborate on the sampling criteria I used for choosing cases, instrument groups and teachers and students, as well as the recruitment process in the three programmes.

### 4.2.1 Three cases in two different countries

This study focuses on learning cultures in *junior conservatoires*. I chose junior conservatoires, as opposed to, for instance, general music schools, because I was interested in the specialised pre-college level of music education, and in how these programmes are influenced by, yet still distinct from the conservatoire culture that has been described in previous studies (Nerland, 2004; Nielsen, 1999; Perkins, 2011). I wanted to investigate junior conservatoires that were successful both in terms of attracting many applicants and in terms of qualifying students for higher music education. Another criterion was that the programmes had to be large enough to make it possible to ensure participants' anonymity. In Norway, only two junior conservatoires met this latter criterion. I chose to include both of them since they are organised very differently, and I assumed that these structural differences would be reflected in different underlying assumptions and values prevalent in the learning culture. The two

programmes were thus purposefully selected because of their *divergences* (Patton, 1990) within the relatively small pool of junior conservatoires in Norway. Following the criteria of divergence, I wanted to include a programme in another country as well, as I anticipated that a junior conservatoire located in a different country would be characterised by cultural assumptions and values other than the ones found in the Norwegian programmes, and therefore would offer the students other learning resources. Yet although I expected to find differences, I did not want these to be too great, as extensive differences would make comparison difficult. Western classical conservatoire culture in various countries has previously been described in quite similar ways, exemplified by Perkins' study of a UK conservatoire (Perkins, 2011), Kingsbury's study of an American conservatoire (Kingsbury, 1988) and Nerland's study of a Norwegian institution (Nerland, 2004). Thus, I reasoned that junior conservatoires in Norway and another Western country would be similar *enough* to include them in the same study. I ended up inviting a junior conservatoire in England to take part in the study. Language was an issue that influenced this choice, as it needed to be in a country where I understood and could communicate in the language spoken. Furthermore, the Norwegian Academy of Music already collaborated with the chosen institution, which made it easier for me to get access to conduct the study there. The English programme selected met the criteria of being successful and large enough to ensure anonymity. Furthermore, it appeared to be a 'typical' English junior conservatoire, in terms of size, activities and frequency of tuition.

After deciding which junior conservatoires I would like to include in the study, I made a formal contact with each of the programmes by email with a brief overview of the study and information regarding what participation would imply for the programme. The three programmes were all willing to take part in the study. I had one or two contact persons in each programme who helped me find relevant documents and who facilitated contact with teachers and students that met the sampling criteria described under 4.2.3.

#### 4.2.2 String players

Since I was interested in how learning cultures promote and value certain kinds of learning and knowledge, and I anticipated that the cultures might differ between the various instrument groups (Gaunt, 2008), I decided to focus on a single instrument group in the three programmes. I chose the string section, and more specifically violin and cello, for three reasons: most importantly,

all three programmes had a large string section, and hence I could keep the anonymity of the participants by choosing this instrument group. The student population on viola, bass, piano, wind or brass instruments was not large enough on all programmes to ensure anonymity. Second, I had an assumption that string players might represent an 'extreme case' (Patton, 1990) inside the programmes, as both cello and violin are instruments children often start to play early, where studies have shown that violinists are the instrumentalists who spend the most time practising their instrument (Jørgensen, 2002). The third reason for choosing string players was that string players meet regularly for orchestra rehearsals and chamber music, something that would give me the opportunity to observe students interacting with peers in ensemble playing. I thus assumed that string players would provide information-rich cases (Patton, 1990) for exploring learning cultures in the three junior conservatoires.

#### 4.2.3 Sampling criteria for informants

As discussed in section 4.1.2, I wanted to observe and interview both students and their main instrument teachers. I wanted to recruit student informants who were in the upper age range and had been at the programme for at least a year. If possible, I wanted a gender balance in the sample to make it representative of the student group as a whole, which was about evenly balanced between boys and girls in the programmes. My preference for older students, preferably between the ages of 14 and 19, was based on previous research showing that musicians enter a phase around this age in which they become more dedicated to the music, and begin to take responsibility for their individual practise (Manturzewska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985b). This is also often the period when students decide whether they want to pursue a career as musicians, or whether they prefer to study something else at university. When selecting teachers, a criterion was therefore that they had a number of students in that particular age range. Furthermore, I sought teachers who had been teaching in the programme for two or more years and thus had extensive experience with teaching young people. These criteria were set in order to recruit teachers who had an understanding of the structure of the programme and its regulations, values and beliefs, as well as an understanding of what it meant to teach young people.

#### 4.2.4 Negotiation of access and recruiting informants

Negotiation of access and recruitment of informants proceeded differently in the three programmes, and I will thus describe them separately.

In programme 1, I obtained access to a list of students and teachers, and I selected two teachers who met my sampling criteria. I then contacted the teachers in person and asked if they were willing to participate in the project. They both were, and together with the teachers I decided which of their students that would suit the project based on the sampling criteria. I then sent the students and their parents an email in which I invited them to join the project and attached information about what participation would imply together with the consent form (see Appendices 1 and 2). All students asked were happy to participate. As it turned out, I could not find a cello teacher who had three cello students in the relevant age span that had been at the programme for at least a year. Thus, I recruited two cello students from programme 1 and not three as I initially planned.

In programme 2, the management suggested teachers for me, based on my sampling criteria, and made sure that these teachers were interested in taking part. When I first contacted the teachers, they had thus already agreed informally to participate in the study. I talked with both of them on the phone and explained what participation would imply and then sent them the information sheet and the consent form through email. The teachers suggested students for me based both on my selection criteria and what was convenient in terms of time and place for the students' tuition. The teachers made the first contact with the students, and I followed up by an email to students and their parents containing information of the project and the consent form.

In programme 3, my contact persons in the programme recruited teachers and students based on the sampling criteria I had given them. According to the programme's privacy protection policy, they were not allowed to hand out email addresses. My contact persons thus distributed the information sheet and consent form to teachers and students through email on my behalf. In this programme, the main instrument tuition of one cello student and one violin student took place at the same time, and I could thus not proceed with both of them. Since I had only two cello students in programme 1, I chose to follow the cello student above the violin student in programme 3 and thus ended with only two violin students from this programme.



There is a danger, when the programmes select informants, that the researcher is being ‘shepherded’ towards practices and informants that will set the programme in a positive light (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 51). In programmes 2 and 3, I was ‘shepherded’ towards certain main instrument teachers and students, and in programme 3, also towards certain activities, as the management made a schedule for my visits. However, it was my impression that they had set a schedule that enabled me to see as many learning contexts in the programme as possible, rather than allowing me to only see their ‘show window’. I did not feel that programme 2 and 3 had recommended teachers and students that would show an idealised image of the programmes. The teachers I was allowed to observe were beyond a doubt highly qualified and experienced, but I did not get the impression that they were regarded as being ‘better’ than other teachers at the programme. The students represented a range of playing levels, age, personalities and an even gender balance.

### Final sample

Table 1 shows the instrument, age and gender of the participating students:

	Programme 1	Programme 2	Programme 3	In total
<b>Cello students</b>	2	3	3	8
<b>Violin students</b>	3	3	2	8
<b>Age span</b>	15–19	14–19	15–19	14–19
<b>Gender</b>	1 boy, 4 girls	3 boys, 3 girls	4 boys, 1 girl	8 boys 8 girls

**Table 1:** Final sample of student participants

Of the teachers in the study, there were four women and two men. All of them had several years of experience with teaching young students. Three of them also taught at a senior department, and the other three had specialised in teaching students on the pre-college level. All of them had background as performing musicians, and five of them were still active performers.

### 4.3 Data collection

The data collection included observations of the practices inside the junior conservatoires, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews with students

and teachers and studies of relevant documents. In this section, I will describe the different phases of data collection, starting with the pilot study.

### 4.3.1 Pilot study

Before the actual data collection started, a small-scale pilot study was undertaken. This involved a visit to one of the Saturday gatherings at programme 1 and a pilot interview with a teacher in this programme plus observation of two main instrument lessons as well as a student interview with the student I had observed in lessons. The teacher and the student interviewed were invited to share their thoughts about the interview afterwards, and I particularly requested their opinions on the relevance of the themes and their experience with being interviewed. Their feedback, combined with my own reflection afterwards, spurred me to make minor alterations to the interview guide, as well as giving me more confidence in the interviewer role.

### 4.3.2 Time schedule

The period of data collection lasted from the observation started on programme 1 and 2 in April 2013 until the last interview was held in January 2015. Table 2 gives an overview of the data collection period on each programme.

Programme	Observations	Interviews
1	April 2013–June 2013 and March 2014–November 2014	June–July 2013 and June 2014–January 2015
2	April 2013–July 2013	June 2013–August 2013
3	June–July 2014	June–July 2014

**Table 2:** Time schedule of fieldwork

In programmes 2 and 3, I observed the instrumental lessons at intervals of two or three weeks, while the observations were spread out over a longer period in programme 1. This was partly due to the fact that the students only met every third week and partly to my maternity leave between August 2013 and March 2014. By meeting students more frequently, I was able to follow the development of their work on individual pieces over time, and I found it valuable to concentrate the observations and the intense experience of meeting them

once or even twice a week for lessons and rehearsals. The more infrequent observations in programme 1 had other benefits, as it gave me the opportunity to follow students over a longer period, something that gave us more issues to address in the interviews.

### 4.3.3 Observations

In the observations, I used the student participants as my starting point, following them around in the learning contexts in which they participated. Based on the prominent position of the relationship between instrumental teacher and student exposed in the literature review (see section 2.3), it was important to get access to observe the practices taking place in main instrument lessons. I observed three lessons with students in programme 1 and 2, and two lessons with students in programme 3. The main instrument lessons have been described as a *nodal point* for students in higher education (Nielsen, 1999), and for me they became a nodal point for the observations. Since the lessons were mostly held individually, observing them gave me opportunities for developing a closer relationship with the participating students and teachers. It was furthermore an opportunity to find out about students' upcoming performances.

In addition to main instrument lessons, I observed four to six orchestra rehearsals in each programme. In programme 2 and 3, I observed symphony orchestra rehearsals, and in programme 1, I observed chamber orchestra rehearsals, as this programme did not have a symphony orchestra.

A third learning context observed was concerts. I wanted to observe all students in at least one concert, either solo or with their chamber music group. This was not possible for all of them, however, as not everyone played concerts during the observation period. I thus ended up observing some of them in solo performance, some with their chamber music group, and all of them in orchestra concerts. Observing students in concerts gave me information about concert rituals and routines. Just as important, however, was that the students appreciated my attending their concerts, and this appeared to strengthen my relationship with them. Attending concerts also provided opportunities for informal conversations with students, teachers and parents.

Additional learning contexts observed were lessons in musical awareness (all programmes), composition (programme 3), concert production (programme 1) and master classes (programme 2). I initially wanted to observe chamber music

rehearsals as well, as I assumed these would be highly important for the students' learning, but it proved difficult to do this for all students. Some chamber groups worked rather well, with regular rehearsals, while others had more seldom ad hoc arrangements, about which I was not always informed. After trying to attend chamber music rehearsals in programme 2 for a period without succeeding, I decided to not include this learning context in the observations. Still, chamber music was an important issue addressed in the interviews.

Table 3 shows the activities observed in each programme.

	Programme 1	Programme 2	Programme 3	Total
<b>Main instrument lessons</b>	15 (3 lessons per student)	18 (3 lessons per student)	10 (2 lessons per student)	43
<b>Theory and elective courses*</b>	3	3	3	9
<b>Concerts – solo and chamber music**</b>	3	6	4	13
<b>Master classes</b>	0	3	0	3
<b>Orchestra rehearsals</b>	6	4	4	14
<b>Orchestra concerts</b>	3	3	2	8
<b>SUM</b>	30	37	23	91

\* This included musical awareness classes, composition and concert production.

\*\* Numbers showing number of students observed in concerts.

**Table 3:** *Observed activities during fieldwork*

Master classes were only held regularly in programme 2 at the time of observation. I observed more orchestra rehearsals in programme 1 because I was present at more Saturdays to observe instrumental lessons in this programme than the others, and I thus had the opportunity to observe more orchestra rehearsals as well. I observed two lessons per student in programme 3, compared to three in programme 1 and 2. This can be justified by the visit I did to programme 3 in 2013 where I sat in on lessons with the five students as a preparation to the actual observations. Thus, I had already met once with all informants from programme 3 when the observation period started in June 2014.

## Observer role

A researcher can take different roles in observation, depending on how actively involved he or she is and how transparent the role as a researcher is to the people being studied. Being a 'fly on the wall' can be seen as one end of a continuum and the researcher who becomes fully absorbed in the culture under study as the other, though neither of these are really attainable (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 17). I took the role of what Bryman (2012, p. 442) calls a *partially-participating observer* (my italics). That meant in my case that I was physically present in the contexts, chatted with the participants before and after lessons and sometimes during a lesson if the teacher addressed me. I aimed to place myself in the room so that I could observe the lessons without interfering with their normal routines more than necessary. In orchestra rehearsals, concerts and master classes I participated as a regular member of the audience, and thus felt that I interfered less with the natural situation in these contexts than in the main instrument lessons.

## Fieldnotes

I developed observation guides for all contexts I planned to observe (see Appendix 3). These guides ensured that I gathered information that could later be used to make *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) such as size of room, repertoire played, time used for different activities and how students and teachers were positioned in a room; they also helped me structure the observations and divide between observations and interpretations. I was particularly concerned with the verbal and musical communication between students and teachers in the learning contexts I observed, noticing what kind of questions teachers asked, inspired by Burwell's findings that questions could be used to foster students' independence (Burwell, 2005). As is encouraged by Fangen (2004), I had three categories of fieldnotes: factual observation notes, my interpretation of what happened and a reflection on the quality of the observation and on myself as a research instrument. This was a valuable partitioning, as I could distinguish afterwards between descriptions of what had happened, and my reflections upon what I had seen, although still acknowledging that what I noticed and focused on in the observation is already an interpretation of an event (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009).

At main instrument lessons, theory lessons, and orchestra rehearsals I made notes on my computer as the tuition went along. Typing on my computer is very quiet, and thus it was possible to do this without interfering more than I would

have with a notebook. It also enabled me to write down verbatim accounts of parts of the communication between teacher and student. In the fieldnotes, I highlighted moments that surprised me or appeared significant in order to analyse them more closely afterwards. At the end of the observation guide, I had a space for reflective notes that I wrote as soon as possible after the lesson. In concerts and master classes I did not bring my computer, but took short notes on the concert programme or on my phone regarding, for example, audience size, whether there was any introduction and the routines of the concert. As soon as possible after the concert, I wrote out a detailed fieldnote.

To record such fieldnotes is, in Geertz's words, to turn it from 'a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted' (Geertz, 1973, p. 19). Since I made no video or audio recordings of what I observed, these fieldnotes became my entrance into making sense of the social and cultural practices I had observed. I thus aimed to make them as rich and nuanced as I could. Still, they are my interpretations of what happened, fieldnotes taken from where I sat in the room, with my pre-understandings, aware that while I focused on certain things, other things might have gone by unnoticed by me. Fieldnotes are thus, as is pointed out by Ellefsen (2014, p. 76), above all '*analytical constructions*': they are already interpreted and coloured by the researcher's analytical perspective and pre-understandings.

### **Informal conversations**

After lessons and rehearsals, I sometimes had informal conversations with teachers, students or parents. As soon as possible afterwards I jotted down themes from these conversations as accurately as I could. These informal conversations were highly important, both for understanding what had taken place during an observed event and for getting to know the participants better. In interviews, I tried to bring up interesting themes that had been discussed informally during the observation period, and these informal conversations thus benefitted the interviews as well.

#### **4.3.4 Semi-structured interviews**

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that I had an interview guide that allowed for adapting the order of questions based on what seemed

appropriate in the situation, while questions that were not relevant could be omitted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interviews were conducted individually with the participants after the observation period had ended, at a place chosen by the participant where we could talk without being disturbed. Most of the interviews were held in rehearsal rooms in the institutions where the programmes were located, often after or before the students' lessons. Two teacher interviews were held in the teachers' homes. These interviews became significantly longer than the other teacher interviews held in offices, probably due to the relaxed atmosphere created by being in someone's home as well as the fact that there was no time limit for these two interviews. Two other teacher interviews were held in lunch cafeterias, due to the teachers' busy schedule. One student interview was held in two parts because we ran out of time on the first interview. In one teacher interview, the recorder failed, and we had to do a second interview by phone. The interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes, with an average of an hour. The length of each interview was partly determined by how talkative the informant was and partly by whether they had something scheduled straight after the interview.

All interviews were audiotaped, using a Zoom Handy Recorder that I placed on a table between the interviewee and me. The recordings were then transferred to my computer for transcription.

### **The interview guide**

I had one interview guide for students and one for teachers (see Appendices 4 and 5). The interview guides were developed drawing on previous research as well as the theoretical framework accounted for in chapter 3, with the aim of informing the research questions. In the student interviews, I included questions about students' background within music education, their future ambitions and their experiences with participating in various learning contexts such as main instrument lessons, concerts and orchestra. I also invited students to reflect on what they learned by participating in various contexts, and which activities they considered as important and valuable. Lastly, I asked how they perceived the concept of talent and how they would define their own talent.

In the teacher interviews, I started with some background questions regarding their experience with teaching young people and their current work position, followed by questions regarding the philosophy underlying their teaching and their perception of programme activities. I also asked teachers of their understanding of 'talent'. These questions were intended to bring out the

activities they encouraged students to participate in, what they expected of their students and what they believed was needed to succeed as a musician, all themes I anticipated would inform me about assumptions and values in the learning cultures, as well as what were considered as central learning resources. In addition to these common themes, I adjusted each interview to be able to address events that had occurred during the observation period.

### **Transcription**

I transcribed the interviews using the computer software HyperTranscribe, a programme that divides the recording into short segments that can be repeated as many times as needed, and where it is easy to move between segments. This facilitated repeated listening to interviews, which was necessary to hear and understand what the interviewees were saying. For some of the transcriptions, and in particular those held in cafeterias, I occasionally needed help from the interviewees to recall parts of a sentence, as it was hard to hear from the recording due to background noise during the interview. If I did not hear back from them, or if they could not remember, I left the specific sentence with a question mark and did not use in the analysis. Like writing fieldnotes, transcription should be considered as an interpretative act (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). I first made a working transcription (Mondada, 2007, p. 810) where I aimed to do a verbatim transcription, close to the recorded interview with marks where there was laughter, um-s and long pauses. This helped me recall the actual conversations in the analysis process. Next, I made a version intended for the informants, where I prioritised readability and removed marks of laughter and silence as well as segments where text was repeated or where the informant stopped midway through a sentence. The transcriptions I ended up with are therefore not interviews on paper, but 'secondary products of representation and annotation practices' (Mondada, 2007, p. 810). The transcriptions were then sent to the interviewees for a member-check, which will be described in section 4.5.2.

#### **4.3.5 Documents**

The first group of documents includes official information found on the programmes' web pages (all programmes) as well as documents from internal web pages (programme 2) and regulations for students (programme 2 and 3).<sup>18</sup> The

---

<sup>18</sup> Only programme 2 and 3 had written regulations for students.



official web pages of the programmes were mainly directed towards those who wanted to know whether the programme was suitable for them or for their child or their pupil. The internal web pages and the regulations were intended for those already accepted in the programmes, and included detailed information on practical aspects of the programme such as course structure, rules about absence, content, requirements and assessments.

The second group of documents were those gathered during the observation period, such as photographs, concert programmes or sheets handed out in musical awareness classes. Concert programmes and music theory sheets were essential supplements to the fieldnotes. Photographs taken during fieldwork were used as an aid for recalling how a location looked, or remembering content posted on the message board. I did not photograph people or learning contexts.

## **4.4 Analysing the data**

The research design I chose for this study, with four different methods for collecting data, produced a large amount of empirical material. As is recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), I developed a rigorous system to keep track of the different empirical material. I had a spreadsheet with dates and sites for all conducted and planned observations including involved participants. I made a similar sheet for the interviews, containing date and length of interview, and potential feedback after member-check.

The analysis was done as a thematic analysis, described by Braun and Clarke as ‘a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In this section, I will discuss the different phases of the analysis process to make as transparent as possible how I have arrived at the findings presented in part 2 of the thesis.

### **4.4.1 An ongoing analysis**

As Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) strongly advise, I started the analysis process during fieldwork. Starting the analysis early allows the preliminary findings to inform the data collection process by exploring interesting issues and blind spots and perhaps most importantly, it can make the analysis an ‘ongoing, lively enterprise’ (Miles et al., 2014, p. 70). Fieldnotes from each observed event

included reflection notes that worked as a preliminary analysis of what I had observed. I also worked on personalising the interview guides as the observations went along by adding questions based on things that surprised me or struck me as interesting in observed events and informal conversations. After each interview, I wrote down immediate thoughts regarding what I perceived to be important themes in the interview as well as a reflection on my own performance as an interviewer and a research instrument. After transcribing the interviews, I once more reflected on important themes from each interview, and wrote down additional ideas to take into the analysis.

#### 4.4.2 Abductive coding

There have traditionally been two ways of identifying themes in a data material (Miles et al., 2014). One is through *inductive coding* or data-driven coding, where the data is coded ‘without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). This is typical, for example, in research drawing on grounded theory. Its counterpart is *deductive coding*, where the theoretical framework guides the analysis. However, as is argued by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009), most qualitative research is *abductive*, rather than strictly inductive or deductive. This is also characteristic of my process. I arrived at the analysis process with a set of theoretical understandings, based on my own background, the theoretical perspectives elaborated on in chapter 3 and what I knew from earlier research discussed in chapter 2. When I commenced the analysis process, I therefore had certain ideas about what I thought would be important codes and themes in the data. However, while some of these codes and themes remained throughout the analysis process, several were altered or replaced with new ones. As I chose to focus on new perspectives in the data material, reading of new literature was needed as well. The analysis process was thus characterised by an ongoing dialectical process between the data material and the theoretical perspectives.

#### 4.4.3 Using software for data analysis

I used Nvivo, a software for qualitative data analysis, to analyse the empirical data. All fieldnotes, interview transcriptions, notes from informal conversations and documents selected for analysis were uploaded into the software. Given

the extent of the material, Nvivo proved invaluable in conducting a systematic analysis and a thorough review of the whole data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The software made it possible to assign to segments of texts as many different codes as I needed to, and to organise these codes into larger themes, creating a code hierarchy. Nvivo further enabled the writing of annotations related to specific data items, as well as larger memos or ‘analytical and conceptual notes’, alongside the coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 217).

#### 4.4.4 Thematic analysis

The empirical data were analysed after the six phases described as thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the following, I will describe how the stages proceeded in the analysis process.

*Becoming familiar with the data* is the first phase described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Through having interviewed and transcribed the interviews and written and re-written fieldnotes after observations, I was already familiar with the data corpus. Reading through fieldnotes and interviews once more before starting the analysis in Nvivo was nevertheless helpful in recalling situations from observations and interviews and starting to make connections between them by looking for patterns.

The second phase described by Braun and Clarke (2006) is *generating initial codes*. This phase was characterised by what Miles et al. (2014) call descriptive coding and it was closely linked to themes I had from the interview guide, such as ‘descriptions of teacher’, ‘definition of talent’ or ‘future ambitions’. I chose to include long text segments within the same code as this enabled me to keep the larger context in view while going deeper into the analysis of shorter segments.

The third phase is *searching for themes* (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase can begin after all data have gone through an initial coding. An important part of searching for themes was drawing mind maps alongside coding of the material. The movement between coding close-up to the material and taking a step back and drawing mind maps based on the whole data corpus proved fruitful. The first themes I identified were broad themes such as ‘access’, ‘talent’, ‘practice’, ‘attitudes’, ‘motivation’ and ‘tension points’. These themes included various sub-themes. For access, it was for example ‘teacher as gatekeeper’, ‘problems with access’ or ‘criteria for selection’. Under the theme of ‘attitudes’ I had sub-themes such as ‘negative attitudes’, ‘teacher philosophy’ and ‘attitudes

towards competitions'. This process involved integrating the codes made from fieldnotes with those made when coding interviews, going through all codes and checking if any of them would make more sense if grouped together or placed under different themes.

The fourth phase, *reviewing themes*, began when I had a set of candidate themes that could be further refined. In this phase, writing became an essential part of the analytical process. It was not until I had elaborated on the themes, dug deeper into the codes, and contextualised them that I was able to evaluate whether a theme really was a theme or not. An aim of phase four is to end up with themes that 'cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). When I chose to use 'assumptions and values' as a central theme, themes formerly categorised as 'attitudes' and 'beliefs and norms' found their place within this newly formed theme. Patton (2015) emphasises the importance of keeping the analysis connected to both purpose and design, to ensure that the 'analysis is serving the purpose of the inquiry' (p. 660). Integrated in this fourth phase was checking for alternative and rival themes to those I had found. This process strengthened some themes, such as 'assumptions about talent' and altered others, such as 'assumptions about human relations', where I chose to focus on 'assumptions about the teacher-student relationship', while some themes – for example 'assumptions about developmental stages' – were discarded in this process.

Phase 5, *defining and naming themes*, began when I had arrived at a satisfactory thematic map (see Appendix 6). This process progressed alongside writing and refining the findings-section. The names I chose for the themes also became the headings for Part 2 of this dissertation.

The last and sixth phase is *producing the report*. In my case, the 'report' is the second and third parts of the thesis, where the findings are presented and the research questions discussed. I have carefully selected extracts to exemplify the ways a theme was represented in the data set. I have chosen to include many extracts in the report to keep the analysis close to the empirical material and with the aim of making the analysis process as transparent as possible to the reader.

#### 4.4.5 Triangulation of findings

One advantage of a research design that includes multiple sources of evidence, is the opportunity it offers for triangulating the findings between data sources (Yin, 2009). The strength is not simply in the combination of multiple data sources, however, but in the choice of data sources with different strengths and weaknesses, which thus complement each other (Miles et al., 2014). While acknowledging that '*interpretation precedes data in all research*' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 287, italics in original), and that my fieldnotes are also social constructions based on my pre-understandings and research questions, observations gave me access to people's actions, rituals of the practices and language in everyday use. Observations did not give me access to students and teachers' thoughts, perceptions and perspectives, however – and this is where interviews proved valuable. Documents, in turn, gave a perspective on an idealised version of how students should behave, what was required and expected of them, and what they could expect from the programme. By analysing all sources using the same coding scheme, I was able to explore how teachers expressed themselves compared to their students, and further compare their statements to what I had observed during fieldwork and what I found in the documents. Thus, the analysis benefitted from triangulation between my fieldnotes, documents, teacher interviews and student interviews, enabling me to find 'convergence of evidence' (Yin, 2009, p. 117).

The different data sources are not simply brought together for the analysis, however, but have enlightened each other during the research process. The early document studies informed what I looked for in observations, while the observations and informal conversations informed what I asked for in the interviews, and data gathered from one of the programmes informed what I looked for and asked for in the other programmes. I thus agree with Yin (2009) that '[w]ithout such multiple sources, an invaluable advantage of the case study strategy will have been lost' (p. 118).

#### 4.4.6 Language and translation

I gathered the empirical data in Norwegian for the Norwegian programmes and in English for the English programmes. All excerpts from fieldnotes and interviews used in the thesis from the Norwegian informants have thus been translated. Translation is never a straightforward process, as a word-for-word

approach would make many expressions lose their meaning. To render the meaning through these translations, I have conferred with an English proof-reader who has helped me find good English replacements for the Norwegian expressions.

In conducting a study in a language and culture other than my own, I encountered dialects, proverbs and expressions that were unfamiliar to me together with unfamiliar structures both in the society and the school system. I thus had to ask participants to explain certain things explicitly in interviews or observations. I also received support from my English supervisor and English friends when I had questions related to the culture or structures in the school system or the English society.

## **4.5 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are ‘how values and moral principles are integrated in the actions and reflections of research’ (Stige, Malterud, & Midtgarden, 2009, p. 1511), and they involve both formal aspects, such as obtaining approval to do the research, and more informal but just as important, ethical considerations during the process. Researchers have a responsibility to treat those who participate in research respectfully and to produce research that has integrity, is available, and benefits – or at least does not harm – those who have participated (The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics, 2014). In this section, I address both the formal process of obtaining ethical approval to conduct the research project and the other ethical considerations that arose during the research process.

### **4.5.1 Ethical approval**

All Norwegian research projects that collect personal information must be approved by the Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Social Centre for Research Data (NSD). NSD approved the project in January 2013 (see Appendix 7). In England, I needed ethical approval from the Ethical Research Committee at the institution where I was going to conduct the research. As the project includes individual interviews with minors, I also needed a DBS certificate to prove that I had no police record. The institution’s research committee approved the project in November 2013 (see Appendix 8).

All participating students and teachers were informed both in writing and verbally, in an initial meeting before the observation period began, about what their participation would involve and how anonymity would be treated; they were informed that they could withdraw from the project at any time without negative consequences of any kind from me or from the programme. Together with the information letter, they received a consent form that had to be signed by students or students and guardians for students under 18 years in England, and students under 16 years in Norway. Silverman (2006) suggests that informed consent should be considered as a 'process of negotiation, rather than a one-off action' (p. 324), something that became salient in the member-check, where three of the participants asked me to remove certain parts of the interview before they gave their consent. This renegotiation was necessary because of the unpredictable nature of the research process, in which neither the participants nor I could know beforehand what would be said and done in the observed events and interviews.

The research process involved me being present and observing learning contexts that included students and teachers who did not participate as informants in the study. All students, parents and teachers in the programmes were therefore informed by email about the ongoing project and told that I would take fieldnotes that might contain descriptions of them or their child, but that this information would be without any identifying information. They were furthermore informed that they could ask me to not record anything about themselves or their child. No reservations were expressed about my observations.

#### **4.5.2 Member-check**

All interviewed participants received a transcription of their interview with an invitation to comment or suggest alterations to ensure the accuracy of the content. I sent the transcripts from student interviews to students' email addresses, and I left it up to them to decide whether or not to show it to their guardians or not. Five participants either asked about how anonymity would be ensured or requested minor alterations to the text to make it more accurate. Together with those who were concerned about anonymity I altered the transcriptions to satisfy the participants' need for anonymization while retaining significant points in the interview material. Those participants who gave most feedback in the member-check process were those with whom I built the closest relationship during the observation period. A consequence of this

good relationship was that many of them felt able to speak quite freely in the interview. Some of them would, for example, say that ‘this is not intended for the recorder’ or ‘you have to delete this of course’ during the interview. Thus, at the same time as these interviews proved especially rich in information, it is no wonder that it was particularly strange for these informants to see our conversation in print.

#### 4.5.3 Researcher role

Partially participating observer is a complex role, which involves combining engaging socially with persons over time, while fulfilling a researcher role (Fangen, 2004). How overt my role as a researcher was to people, changed from situation to situation. When I sat with my computer during rehearsals and instrumental lessons, my role was defined and clear. The teachers and students knew I was there gathering material that would later undergo analysis. My role was less clear, though, when teachers, students or parents engaged me in conversations outside the formal lessons. Fog (2004) describes the qualitative interview as a Trojan horse, and I find that to be a good analogy for how I felt during some informal conversations as well as in some of the interviews. The analogy points to the way in which what might appear to be a reciprocal conversation between two equal parts, in reality is a tool used by a researcher with a professional aim. I eventually chose to leave some of the information I obtained through informal conversations out of the data material, as I felt it had been shared with me as a private person and not as a researcher.

#### 4.5.4 Maintaining anonymity

When agreeing to take part in the study, all informants were promised that no information that could identify their identity would be published. But identifying information is not limited to gender, age and place of birth. For those who know the milieu, information regarding the age a student started playing, repertoire, or specific concerts or events are all bits that can break the anonymity of a participant if cobbled together. Although I had a good sense of the kind of information that should be omitted, the responses I received in the member-check helped me to protect the participants’ anonymity.



I have given the students and teachers pseudonyms, which are used when presenting excerpts from interviews and fieldnotes. In most cases, interview quotes or fieldnotes are linked with the programme to which it belonged. I made this choice because the programme a student or teacher belong to can contribute to contextualise the excerpt and enable the reader to connect excerpts from the various programmes. However, in the cases where I felt that an excerpt could risk the participants' anonymity, I have omitted the pseudonym and written only which programme it belongs to. For certain excerpts, I have even omitted the programme in order to ensure participants' anonymity.

The anonymity of the participating junior conservatoires was harder to maintain. As there are few junior conservatoires in Norway, a reader familiar with Norwegian music education can easily recognise the two Norwegian programmes. The programmes were aware of this when they agreed to be included in the study, and I have been careful not to include information that could potentially be harmful to the programmes in any way. Since junior conservatoires are more common in England, and there are more programmes of similar size, the risk for identifying the programme is not as large as in Norway. Still, I have followed the same principle as with the Norwegian ones of not giving up potential harmful information.

#### **4.6 Trustworthiness of the study**

There are various terms used for ensuring that qualitative research yields high-quality, credible results that can be transferable to other contexts. The trustworthiness of the study can be evaluated based on whether the fieldwork carried out was systematic and produced data of high quality and whether the analysis has been systematic and thorough, as well as on my credibility as a researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). The aim of this methodology chapter is to make the research process transparent to the reader, as it is ultimately the readers of the text who will decide whether my findings appear credible (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). In this section, I will discuss the credibility of the data, as well as the credibility of the research process and potential transfer value of the findings.

### 4.6.1 Credibility of the data

The credibility of the data gathered, or the epistemological validity (Fangen, 2004), is crucial to the quality of the analysis and consequently to the ultimate findings. As is suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), a *prolonged engagement* in the field is important, both to become familiar with the field and to obtain a relationship of trust with those persons observed. Before the interviews I had already spent several hours with the instrumental teachers and their students in observed lessons, rehearsals, concerts and theory lessons. We therefore had several common experiences to draw upon, refer to and discuss in the interview. I found the fieldwork preceding the interviews as crucial to ensure a high quality of the following interviews. Other aspects that influenced the quality of the interviews were how talkative the informants were, combined with my ability to pose relevant questions, follow up on certain topics and be sensitive to the informant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 194). Because the observations, interviews and documents are all produced in a sociocultural context, interpretation is central to the research process, as accounted for in section 4.1.3 (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). With interviews, the researcher is moreover making a ‘secondary interpretation’ (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 178) of the interviewee’s interpretations: The interviewee interprets the questions being asked, the whole interview situation and even my intentions in asking these questions when giving an answer. Interviews are thus a social situation, where knowledge is socially constructed in an interrelationship between the researcher and the informant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). They are furthermore produced in a particular context, which suggests that another context might have produced other results. This has implications for the way interview data should be treated in the analysis:

Informants’ accounts must be treated not as true or false but rather as constitutive – as themselves producing one of many possible versions of events. From this point of view, reality is constructed in and through the telling, rather than having characteristics that are independent of this (Hammersley, 2005, p. 12)

In a few cases, I felt that an interviewee appeared to be ‘speaking for posterity’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 110). However, with informal conversations and fieldnotes to complement the interviews, such self-representations became interesting deviants from what I had interpreted from other sources and thus enriched the material and gave food for discussion.

The question of credibility also needs to be addressed in relation to observations. I cannot be certain of how a situation would have unfolded without my

presence and in this way know the degree to which I affected the situation. However, students and teachers both said that the lessons I observed were as usual; and the personal and direct way in which teachers occasionally spoke to their students while I was present leads me to believe that they were acting as they would if I had not been present. A couple of teachers seemed a bit uncomfortable with having me there in the first lessons, and I suspect that they played less piano than they usually would because they knew I was a pianist. One of them, for instance, commented on how terrible it was that I was there observing her lousy accompaniment. Prolonged engagement, however, also helped with this issue; because I observed many lessons with the same teachers, they became accustomed to having me there. Regarding other contexts, such as concerts, orchestra rehearsals, master classes and theory lessons, my presence did not interfere with the natural occurrence of the event, as these contexts normally had audiences or at least many students present. Another aspect of the credibility of the observations is an acknowledgment that the fieldnotes I ended up with were a result of my interpretation of what I had observed, rather than raw data mirroring an objective reality (see section 3.1).

As is argued by Atkinson and Coffey (2004), documents should be seen as “social facts”, in that they are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways’ (p. 58). Following this, the documents were explored through questioning how and why they were written, how they were used and referred to in social settings, what other texts they related to, and who the intended readers were. Through documents, I could learn about the programmes’ espoused values and beliefs. It was through observations and interviews, however, that I could explore how such espoused values and beliefs were enacted in the social and cultural practices of the learning cultures.

#### **4.6.2 Credibility of the research process**

Trustworthy findings rely on credible analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By undertaking a thematic analysis, giving equal weight to the different sources of data, staying close to the empirical data throughout the analysis process and searching for alternative explanations and negative cases in the construction of a thematic map, I have aimed to make the analysis process systematic and transparent. Also, when presenting the findings I have kept a closeness to the empirical data by allowing space for interview extracts and fieldnotes, as well

as constantly referring back to where in the material the themes derive from – what Lincoln and Guba (1985) have termed confirmability.

The last point I want to address regards my credibility as a researcher. A central characteristic of qualitative research, as well as this project, is that the researcher functions as the research instrument (Creswell, 2009). I have aimed to make my choices as a researcher transparent through adopting a reflexive researcher role, in which I have discussed those aspects of my background and experience that might have influenced what I have looked for in the material, as well as the access I achieved and the relationships I was able to form with students and teachers. As discussed in section 4.1.3, my background as a classical musician and music student influenced the research process in various ways. I would probably never have been interested in music specialist education in the first place if it had not been for my own background as a music student. I would also, for example, probably have seen other things in the main instrument lessons if I had not been familiar with this type of tuition, and I might have seen more instrument-specific nuances if I had been a violinist and not a pianist. This background was something I felt positioned me with the participants as a partial insider, and it facilitated both the observations and the conversations with the participants. I was frequently asked during the fieldwork whether I was a musician, and if so, what my instrument was. My background as a pianist appeared to be important for how the teachers addressed me, and I experienced that they felt they could bring up more specific issues related to playing and to music than they would have if I had not had a musical background.

To become aware of some of my preconceptions and biases, I wrote a self-reflective note about my pre-understanding of specialised music education, before embarking on the fieldwork. I followed up with a similar note before I began the analysis process, in order to reflect on how my perceptions had changed after gathering data. During the research process I also kept a research diary, including reflective notes on situations where I reacted emotionally to something I observed or something said in an interview, and I tried to explore why these feelings arose. I could be provoked, for example, by a teacher who was very harsh with a student in a lesson, or surprised by one student who started discussing an issue with his teacher, when I would have expected him to do as the teacher instructed. These surprises informed me of biases that I had not always been aware of when starting the process. As Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) remind us; one can never reach the point where all taken-for-granted

knowledge in one's own culture has been revealed, but this should not stop one from trying.

### 4.6.3 Transferability

Transferability of the findings is Lincoln and Guba's (1985) answer to external validity in quantitative research. Stake (1995) claims that the 'real business of case study is particularization, not generalization' (p. 8). Still, case studies have the potential to describe specific cases in great depth through giving rich descriptions (Geertz, 1973) that can provide the reader with sufficient information to compare these cases to other similar cases. The multiple case design of this study also offers an opportunity for seeing the particularities of each case as well as characteristics shared by the cases. As Miles et al. (2014) put it:

One advantage of studying cross-case or multiple cases is to increase generalizability, reassuring yourself that the events and processes in one well-described setting are not wholly idiosyncratic. At a deeper level, the purpose is to see processes and outcomes across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions, and thus to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations. (Miles et al., 2014, p. 101)

According to Stake (1995, p. 86), readers make 'naturalistic generalisations' based on similar cases to the ones described that they are familiar with themselves. To support such generalisations, the researcher should provide personal accounts and narratives and emphasise time and place when presenting the findings (Stake, 1995). By giving thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) in the findings section, I aim to enable the reader to make such generalisations based on the similarities and the peculiarities between the contexts I have investigated and the contexts to which one wants to generalise.

The three cases were chosen as typical examples of junior conservatoires, and I chose string players as I anticipated that they would represent a critical case within these junior conservatoires (see 4.2.2). The findings might be transferable to other instrument groups in these junior conservatoires, and some aspects might be transferable to other kinds of specialised music education; there may also be some information that is transferable to higher music education.

## 4.7 Delimitations

The research design of this study is delimited in the following ways. The study is a *qualitative study* of learning cultures and the learning resources made available to students through these learning cultures. It does not include any quantitative measures; rather it seeks to examine the learning cultures in depth, through a qualitative analysis of the social and musical practices among string players in three junior conservatoires. It is neither a study designed to measure how *effective* instrumental training in junior conservatoires is, nor is it an attempt to find *the best way* to teach young people. Rather, it is a study that seeks to *explore* what kind of learning and knowledge is valued and promoted in the learning cultures of junior conservatoires. The study is furthermore restricted to *students playing cello and violin*. I have chosen to focus on two teachers in each programme and two or three of their students. This allows me to describe characteristic features of the learning cultures found in the string department of the three junior conservatoires, and the learning resources made available for students through these learning cultures. I have chosen to follow five or six students on each programme closely, to give some examples of particular cases. It is through observations and interviews with in total 16 students and six main instrument teachers that I primarily understand and describe learning cultures, learning resources and students' engagement.

The study focuses on specialist education of *classical musicians* in junior departments. Although there might be some common ground between a classical education and that offered to young people playing jazz, pop, rock or folk music, this common ground, as well as the specificities of specialist education in other genres, will be an arena for further research.

A last limitation is the *theoretical gaze* chosen for the present study. I will explore how participation in a junior conservatoire contributes to students' musical development through the lens of sociocultural theory and Bourdieu's notions of field, habitus and capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). To choose a terminology is, as Burke (1966) reminds us, to direct the attention to one field rather than to another, and moreover, '*many of the "observations" are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made*' (p. 46, italics in original). By identifying and defining the central concepts for the study, delineating how they will be applied, and by approaching the research process in a reflexive manner, I hope to have made the theoretical perspective and the methodological choices as transparent as possible to the reader.

## 4.8 Presentation of the findings

The findings section of the thesis comprises chapters five to eight. Chapter 5 introduces the reader to the three junior conservatoires involved in this study and the most central learning contexts together with the programmes' regulations and recruitment procedures. Then follow three chapters, each of which sheds light on one of the three research questions posed in section 1.2.

The study is a case study, in which the cases work as *instruments* to explore learning cultures in junior conservatoires and the learning resources offered through these cultures. In chapter 5, the three cases are presented one by one, giving room for their distinctive characteristics. In chapter 6–8, however, I draw on material gathered from all three programmes to analyse basic assumptions and values, learning resources and students' engagement with these resources. This decision was based on the similarities I found in the material gathered from the three programmes. On themes where there were important dissimilarities between the three cases, I will make this explicit under each theme, as well as in the discussion in chapter 9.

## 5 Introducing the programmes

At the entrance a friendly receptionist meets you. The small foyer is busy, with teachers and students on their way to and from lessons and with parents waiting for their child to finish an activity. You can hear parents talking to each other, asking about how the competition went last weekend or whether they've found a new bow for their son. Two students in the programme stand in one corner, asking 'what piece are you playing now?' and 'are you going to play at the concert tomorrow?' (*Fieldnotes from observations in the foyer of programme 2*)

This chapter aims to introduce the reader to the three junior conservatoires and draw a picture of the visible layer (Schein, 2010) of the learning cultures in the programmes. These descriptions will provide both a backdrop and an entrance point to a discussion of the deeper layers of the learning cultures in the following chapters. It also aims to give the reader who is unfamiliar with junior conservatoires an introduction to the social and musical practices taking place within them.

### 5.1 The three junior conservatoires

The junior conservatoires included in this study offered students a number of learning contexts, such as main instrument lessons, ensemble playing and tuition in music theory. The programmes had many features in common, but there were also some distinctive differences in the size of the programmes, the



courses offered and the frequency of tuition. Table 4 gives an overview of the three junior conservatoires:

	Programme 1	Programme 2	Programme 3
<b>Country</b>	Norway	Norway	England
<b>Total number of students</b>	About 70	About 60	About 240
<b>Number of string students</b>	20–25	40–45	90–100
<b>Age of students</b>	13–19	13–19	8–19
<b>Genres</b>	Classical, jazz, folk music	Classical	Classical, jazz,
<b>Frequency</b>	Every third week*	Every week	Every week
<b>Common activities</b>	Main instrument lessons, orchestra, theory lessons, concert opportunities		
<b>Special activities</b>	Elective courses	Master classes, chamber music, annual assessment, conducting	Elective courses, chamber music, annual assessment, choir, master classes

\* Students in programme 1 could audition to have instrumental lessons every week

**Table 4:** Overview of the three junior conservatoires

The three junior conservatoires are all junior departments of conservatoires, and all programme activities were located in the conservatoire buildings. These buildings are constructed to serve the needs of conservatoire practices, centred on performance and one-to-one instrumental tuition and individual practice, as described in earlier studies (Dahlberg, 2013; Nerland, 2004; Nielsen, 1999; Perkins, 2011). In order to provide space for main instrument tuition and students' individual practice, the conservatoire buildings include a significant number of small studios, in general equipped with a piano and a music stand with space for one or two persons. Conservatoires are furthermore a place for performances for all kinds of ensembles, and all conservatoire buildings in the present study had at least one large concert hall in addition to some smaller halls suited for solo and ensemble concerts. There were also ordinary classrooms spacious enough to teach 10–20 students, often used for teaching theoretical music subjects.

Entry to the programmes was by competitive audition, where a jury accepted applicants based on an assessment of 'potential as well as achievement and dedication' (*documents from programme 3 website*). Students accepted into the programme were thus already accomplished on their instrument for their age.

In the following section, I will describe the programmes individually.

### 5.1.1 Programme 1

Programme 1 is located in a large city in Norway. It had around 70 students between the ages of 13 and 19 studying various instruments in the genres of classical, jazz, popular music and folk music, though the majority belonged to the classical department at the time of fieldwork. The programme was free of charge, and had started in 2004 as part of a national effort to improve specialised music education on the pre-college level around the country. Different from the two other programmes, this programme gathered its students only every third Saturday, which amounted to approximately 12 gatherings every year. Students were expected to continue lessons with their local teacher alongside the tuition in the junior conservatoire. The instrumental lessons and the other programme activities were thus considered to be a supplement to the students' local and regular music tuition.

The tuition ran from 9 am to 4 pm on Saturdays, although some students had shorter days depending on their instrument and choice of activities. There were no annual performance assessments in this programme, and while students were encouraged to play in internal concerts, they were not required to do so. There were no written regulations for students in the programme, but the admission letter informed students that absence from more than two gatherings per semester<sup>19</sup> would put their place at risk.

The conservatoire building included two large concert halls, a floor dedicated to rehearsal rooms for students, classrooms of various sizes, a library and ensemble rooms set up for electronic instruments in addition to offices for administrative and academic staff. When students arrived in the morning, they signed an attendance list and checked the notice board in the foyer for any

---

<sup>19</sup> In the two Norwegian programmes, the first semester lasted from August to December and the second semester from January to June. The English programme had three semesters: the autumn term from September to December, the spring term from January to March and the summer term from April to mid of July.

special notifications or information about the day's concert. An internal concert was held during lunchtime every Saturday, and there were larger concerts at the end of each semester. Occasionally students played in external concerts arranged by the programme as well.

The junior conservatoire (JC<sup>20</sup>) students had access to both the library and the rehearsal rooms, which they frequently used between lessons. The foyer in this programme was spacious, including a cafeteria, some sitting groups and entrance to the two main concert halls. Couches were spread around the foyer with a large sitting area connected to the cafeteria. The cafeteria was closed on Saturdays, but students nevertheless gathered there to eat their lunch.

An example of a student's schedule:

- 9.00–9.45: Music theory lesson
- 10.00–11.00: Instrumental lesson
- Time for individual practice and lunch
- 12.00–13.00: Internal concert
- 13.15–16.00: Chamber orchestra rehearsal

### 5.1.2 Programme 2

Programme 2 is located in a large city in Norway. It had around 60 students, from 13 to 19 years of age playing classical orchestra instruments or piano at the time of fieldwork. In addition to the junior conservatoire, the institution had a children orchestra for the youngest string players and a junior ensemble in which most of the interviewed JC students had played before they started at the junior conservatoire. The programme offered weekly tuition on main instrument, music theory, chamber music with a coach and an elective course in conducting. All string students interviewed played in a string chamber orchestra and the programme's symphony orchestra. Students paid a fee of about 1300 NOK (about 135 euros) per year. As a minimum, students were required to play in one internal concert and one master class per year, but they were encouraged to do more than this minimum. The programme arranged master classes regularly with both internal and visiting musicians and teachers. Students were required to have an annual performance assessment where they performed

---

<sup>20</sup> The abbreviation JC for junior conservatoires will be used in the following text when referring to JC students, JC teachers or JC orchestras.

two prepared pieces plus a sight-reading test, followed by oral feedback from a jury. This gave students a goal to prepare for, it ensured that students made progress, and furthermore gave the management an opportunity to listen to all students at least once a year.

Many of the programme activities, such as instrumental lessons, music theory and master classes, were held on afternoons during the week. The programme had its own series of concerts, held about twice monthly on a weekday. Weekends were in general used for orchestra and chamber music rehearsals. Some of the students therefore came to the programme three to five times a week, depending on whether they had any concerts or master classes that week.

The building of programme 2 encompassed two concert halls, classrooms, and studios for instrumental teaching and offices for administrative and academic staff. The foyer represented an important meeting place in this programme, as this was where parents and students waited for lessons to begin or end. There was no cafeteria in this building, but students used the foyer for eating their packed lunch. JC students also had access to a building across the road, housing more available rehearsal rooms.

An example of a student's schedule:

- Tuesday 16.30–17.15: Music theory lesson
- Tuesday 19.00–20.00: Instrumental lesson
- Thursday afternoon: Internal concert
- Saturday 10.00–16.00: Orchestra rehearsal and chamber music rehearsal
- Sunday 10.00–13.00: Orchestra rehearsal

The schedule is more approximate than the ones set up for programmes 1 and 3, as it varied how long orchestra rehearsals in the weekends lasted, depending on whether there was a concert coming up, and whether it was a string chamber orchestra rehearsal or a symphony orchestra rehearsal. What was special in this programme compared to the two others was how activities were spread over the week, requiring students to come in to the programme several times every week.

### 5.1.3 Programme 3

Programme 3 is located in a big city in England, and was the largest programme of the three included in the study. It had 240 students between 8 and 19 years of age at the time of fieldwork, and offered specialist education at a range of instruments within the genres of classical and jazz. The programme gathered students from all over the country, but most of them lived within a travel distance of two to three hours. Students came to the programme every Saturday during the term, and activities run from 8 am to 6 pm. As all students had an individual schedule, the length of the day varied based on the number of activities a student had chosen. The mandatory activities included instrumental lessons, one ensemble or workshop activity and one musical awareness class. Most string students had two hours of chamber music with a coach every Saturday. In addition to the mandatory activities, students could choose between a number of elective courses, including choir, composition, electronic studio, an extra instrument or individual tuition in Alexander technique. Students paid an annual fee of about 3280 pounds (about 3700 Euros) and an extra fee for additional individual lessons, such as an extra instrument or individual Alexander technique lessons. The programme had multiple ensembles: the younger students played in chamber orchestras, and moved up to the symphony orchestra at age 15 or earlier if they auditioned for it. The programme also had a top string chamber orchestra with entrance regulated by competitive audition.

Each Saturday, there were internal concerts for which students could sign up. All students underwent a required annual performance assessment, organised as a 10-minute performance in an internal concert followed by a written feedback from a small committee. In addition, students had a formal assessment after their first year as well as the year they turned 15, which were intended to monitor their progress. These formal assessments resembled the audition processes in the programme, with a performance of prepared repertoire, scales and sight-reading.

When students arrived in the morning, they wrote their name on an attendance list, and checked the notice board showing the day's schedule, programme for the day's concerts, information on annual performance assessments and seating in the orchestra. Just inside the entrance, there were large wooden boards showing the names of prize-winners from the institution's yearly competition. Administrative staff was available at a reception desk all through the day, helping students and teachers with questions and practical issues. The foyer

was an important gathering place, where students, staff and parents stopped by during the day to buy lunch, coffee and tea in the cafeteria, and with space to hang around and wait for the next activity to begin. Upstairs there were small studios used for instrumental lessons. Students did not have access or time to use these studios for practising during the Saturdays, due to a rather packed schedule and few available studios.

An example of a student's schedule:

- 09.00–10.00. Musical awareness class
- 10.20–11.00: Boys choir
- 11.00–12.00: Instrumental lesson
- 12.00–12.30: Second instrument
- 13.00–14.00: Composition
- 14.20–16.30: Symphony orchestra
- 16.30–18.00: Chamber music

Activities in the programme were scheduled back to back, and consequently, students were allowed to be a few minutes late to the next activity. This led to most activities starting five to ten minutes after scheduled time. The student informants from this programme had six or seven different activities each Saturday, and all five students received tuition on a second instrument in addition to their main instrument. Extra instrument study was not offered in the two Norwegian programmes.

## 5.2 Formal structures and regulations

In this section the structural conditions of the junior conservatoires are discussed, drawing on the recruitment information on the programmes' webpages and the programmes' regulations. I will also introduce the central learning contexts inside the programme. The formal structures and regulations of the junior conservatoires are considered here not merely as the *frame* for a learning culture, but rather as an important *part* of it. My intention in presenting these structural conditions is to give the reader a contextual understanding of the programmes' aims, and to begin to explore what is valued inside the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires.

### 5.2.1 Recruitment information

‘Recruitment information’ here refers to the information on the programmes’ web pages, aimed at prospective applicants. This included information on the junior conservatoires’ offerings, as well as on the performance level expected from prospective applicants. All quotations below are from the programmes’ web pages.

Programme 1 places the ‘student at the centre’, and aims to give students the help they need to become ‘whole musicians’.<sup>21</sup> Students have opportunities to make music with others and to develop their abilities through participating in ‘the most stimulating musical environment in Norway’, also described as a ‘healthy and safe social environment’. In contrast to programmes 2 and 3, the programme does not state explicitly that it aims to prepare students for higher music education. Regarding information on the entrance auditions, it is required that applicants show a high proficiency level on their main instrument, although what constitutes a high level is not explained. Three main instrument teachers are mentioned by name to exemplify the level of teacher competence students will meet inside the programme (*documents from programme 1 website – my translation*).

Programme 2 aims to give students a ‘solid foundation for music studies in higher education’ as well as to ‘accommodate for each student’s individual development through offering a rich and inspiring environment’, experienced as ‘inclusive, respectful and safe’. Like programme 1, they aspire to develop ‘whole’ musicians, capable of ‘independent and critical thinking’. The programme advertises itself as a ‘greenhouse’ for future musicians, for those who are ‘especially interested, talented and already accomplished on their instruments’. It is expected that applicants perform pieces ‘from the classical repertoire that is thoroughly prepared both technically and musically’ in the audition (*documents from programme 2 website – my translation*).

Programme 3 ‘prepares students for access to higher music education’ at the same time as the education ‘can contribute with valuable life skills and opportunities for developing one’s talent’. It promises both an ‘exciting curriculum’ and

---

21 The concept of ‘whole musicians’ found in programmes 1 and 2 is a general aim for the compulsory school education in Norway, as well as for tuition in the municipal schools for music and arts. It stands in contrast to a one-sided development with a strict focus on technical skills or solo practice alone on your instrument (Norges musikkhøgskole, Barratt Due Musikk institutt, & Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2008). To develop ‘whole musicians’ is thus to let students develop a number of sides with their musicality and their personality.

a 'unique environment'. From the information on the web pages one can read that former students go into the profession as performers as well as in various other roles in the music industry. This is the only programme of the three that promotes career alternatives besides a performance career. It furthermore informs that applicants should be willing to 'devote a considerable amount of time' to individual practice and that they should hold a level of about grade 5<sup>22</sup> distinction at the age of 10 and grade 8 distinction by the age of 16 (*documents from programme 3 website*).

To summarize, all three programmes promised a stimulating and inspiring environment, where students could develop their potential. Programmes 2 and 3 stated that participating would prepare students for auditions to undergraduate performance studies. All three programmes were competing with other programmes in geographical proximity to attract students with a high performance level on their instruments, and they thus needed to make their programme look as attractive as possible. However, the entrance auditions were costly to the programmes, because everyone who applied was invited for an audition. It was therefore not only a question of attracting many applicants, but of attracting a high number of *qualified* ones. To achieve this, recruitment information should on one hand attract qualified applicants likely to pass the audition while still be informative enough to make students who are not of a high enough standard recognise the gap between their level and what was requested. This is what Johansen (2018) has described as a *recruitment filter*. Students applying to programme 1 needed their current teacher's signature and recommendation; a rule intended to ensure a better fit between applicants and programme requirements. Programme 3 used the filter of the grade-level advice, while programmes 1 and 2 both advised that a high level was expected and that pieces should be well prepared. These two Norwegian programmes did not, however, give any concrete examples of what a high level meant, leaving it up to students, teachers and parents to understand whether they were suited to apply for the programme.

### 5.2.2 Programme regulations

Regulations are descriptions of what Hofstede (1984) calls *the desirable* form of values inside a culture. Such regulations are intended to regulate students'

---

22 These grades refer to the ABRSM grade exams (ABRSM, 2013)



behaviour in a desirable way by stating what consequences certain actions can have for the student. Bourdieu argues that 'juridical or customary rules is never more than a *secondary principle* of the determination of practices, intervening when the primary principle, interest, fails' (Bourdieu, 1977 p. 76). Thus, if the *doxa* were strong enough, meaning the tacit, implicit rules working inside the programme, the programmes would not need to have written regulations. An exploration of what kind of action the regulations exist to regulate can thus tell us something about what is implicit and expected, and what needs to be articulated.

The programmes differed in the degree of detail in their regulations, as well as in the areas included in the regulations. Programme 1 informed the students in their admission letter that no more than three absences per year would be accepted. Programmes 2 and 3 had separate written regulations that included payment of fee, codes of conduct and attendance requirements, as well as procedures in cases of breaches of the regulations. Programme 3 had the most extensive and detailed regulations, which might be explained by the size of the programme. Three aspects of the regulations are discussed below.

First, attendance requirements were central to all three junior conservatoires. Students therefore had to make a commitment to participate in all mandatory activities when they accepted a place in the programme. In all three, unauthorized absence could lead to loss of the student's place in the programme. In programmes 2 and 3, students and guardians both needed to agree that students would attend the scheduled tuition and rehearsals and prioritise activities in the programme above external activities. Permission for absence had to be granted by the management in programmes 2 and 3, the regulations of programme 2 specifying that 'only illness or approved application for leave are valid reasons to be absent from a mandatory activity' (*documents from programme 2 website*). Programme 1 did not require any written application from their students, but asked students to give notice if they would be absent.

A second characteristic of the regulations was that, in various ways, they all attempted to ensure that students made progress. In programme 3, new students were accepted on a one-year probation period. At the end of the first year, a formal assessment was held, and if the student had not shown good progress it could result in an informal or formal review, based on how concerned the evaluation committee was. This review process included a meeting between the student and leader of programme and perhaps also instrumental teacher and parents, aimed at uncovering the problem and resolving it to everyone's

benefit. The same procedure was followed if the annual performance assessment showed unsatisfactory progress or if a student had too much absence. The two other programmes also allowed for the possibility of withdrawing a student's place in the programme if there were serious issues with progress or absence.

The third feature of interest was regulations that were intended to control students' musical activity outside the programme. This was found only in the regulations of programme 3. The regulations stated that students were not permitted to participate in master classes or take instrumental tuition outside the programme without permission from leaders of the programme. Students furthermore needed permission from their main teacher before they gave public performances, played in competitions or entered music examinations, such as the ABRSM exams, according to the regulations. In programme 2, students explained that they normally would decide on performances together with their teachers although this was not regulated by explicit rules. In programme 1, where students were expected to continue to study with their local teacher as well as a JC teacher, it varied whether they told their JC teacher of all performances they had or only those related to the junior conservatoire.

### 5.2.3 Learning contexts

Table 5 shows the learning contexts in the programmes, divided into mandatory scheduled activities, mandatory non-scheduled activities, elective courses and optional activities in the three programmes. For programmes 1 and 2, the list includes all learning contexts offered. Since the list of electives in programme 3 was extensive, I have only included those learning contexts in which the observed students participated during fieldwork.

All students interviewed had main instrument lessons, played in an ensemble and received tuition in music theory or another elective subject. Chamber music was central to programmes 2 and 3, while this was not formally organised in programme 1 for string students. Students in programme 1 were allowed only one elective course, while students in programme 3 could choose as many as their schedule allowed. Students in all three programmes could play with an accompanist, something they normally did in the lessons preceding a performance.

	Programme 1	Programme 2	Programme 3
<b>Mandatory scheduled activities</b>	Main instrument A morning lecture (various themes) Chamber orchestra Musical awareness*	Main instrument Musical awareness Master classes Chamber orchestra Symphony orchestra	Main instrument Musical awareness Symphony orchestra or string ensemble
<b>Mandatory non-scheduled activities</b>	None	1 concert per year 1 master class per year Annual assessment	1 concert per year Annual assessment
<b>Elective courses</b>	Composition Improvisation Conducting Concert production Music theory	Chamber music Conducting	Chamber music Electronic studio Viola club (for violinists) Choir Extra instrument Composition Chamber orchestra (by audition)
<b>Optional activities</b>	Play concerts Symphony orchestra** Accompanist	Play more concerts Master classes Accompanist	Play more concerts Accompanist

\* Musical awareness was a mandatory subject for new students and for students in their last year before college as a preparation for higher music education

\*\* This symphony orchestra was organised together with another institution.

**Table 5:** Overview of learning contexts in the three programmes

As accounted for in the methodology chapter, I observed main instrument lessons, orchestra rehearsals, concerts and musical awareness classes.<sup>23</sup> The descriptions below of these learning contexts are based on fieldnotes taken during observations.

## Main instrument lessons

The lesson takes place in a studio on the second floor, equipped with a grand piano, two music stands and a couple of chairs. The student enters at the time his lesson is supposed to begin, although the student before him is not yet finished. He is welcomed into the room and asked to unpack his violin while the other student plays the last bars of a piece. The teacher finishes the preceding lesson, and turns her attention to the next student, asking him how he has been since

23 These classes were called musical awareness in programme 3 and music theory in programmes 1 and 2. The classes in all programmes included aural training, music history and music theory. In the following, I will use musical awareness, and then refer to both these classes in programme 3 as well as music theory classes in programmes 1 and 2.

they last met and how the open house-assessment last week went before they go on to discuss what they need to do this lesson to prepare for an upcoming audition. Then the student tunes his instrument, followed by bowing exercises and scales. After that he plays through a Bach piece that he will play on tomorrow's audition. The teacher praises his playing and brings in some general comments, and then starts working on the piece from the beginning. She demonstrates phrasings, she sings along while the student plays, she knocks the rhythm, uses metaphors such as 'inspiring' and 'hopeful', and praises him when she likes what he is doing. They work through two movements of Bach before the time is up, and the next student knocks on the door. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson P3*)

Main instrument lessons were organised according to a master-apprentice model, in which each student received individual tuition with an experienced musician-teacher. The exception from this was one teacher who alternated between group tuition and individual tuition. Lessons were built up in much the same way as described in the fieldnote above. There was some time for chatting in the beginning, followed by warm-up and technical exercises. Then followed work on repertoire. How this part progressed varied depending on how long the student had played the piece and whether there was a performance coming up. The student described in the fieldnote above, was allowed to play through the whole movement before the teacher gave instructions, while, in most of the other lessons observed, the teacher might stop the student halfway to start working on details. Teachers used a number of teaching strategies, with demonstration followed by students' imitation being the most frequent one. Furthermore, teachers sang a lot, they conducted the rhythm, played along with students, asked questions or provided metaphors. They also told stories from their own life or other musicians' lives, apparently meant to inspire students and perhaps give students role models to strive for. A characteristic feature of the communication in the main instrument lessons observed was that students communicated mainly through their playing and facial gestures, while teachers did most of the talking. This is in keeping with descriptions of main instrument lessons in previous research (see section 2.3). The more talkative students observed spoke a lot in the beginning and the end of a lesson, but even with these students, the instruction process was dominated by teacher talk. A second characteristic was the detailed work teachers demanded of their students in order to improve the pieces to as high a standard as possible. Teachers focused on intonation, on being relaxed, on projecting the sound, on effective bowings and fingerings and on mastering rapid passages. There were differences in teachers' approaches to the tuition, but in general, the lessons I observed resembled lessons in higher music education, as I know them from

my own experience and from how they have been described in previous studies (e.g. Gaunt, 2006; Nerland, 2004).

## Orchestra

The orchestra rehearsal takes place in the grand concert hall at the school. The rehearsal is supposed to start at 10.30, and from 10 am the students start arriving. They pick up their instruments, find their seats, which have been arranged beforehand, pick up their music, start to warm-up; some go to fetch water, some talk to their friends, some sit down and start practising the pieces. At 10.30 everyone has found their seats, the conductor stands up in front of the orchestra, lifts a flat hand and the orchestra immediately turn silent. 'Let's take it from the top', the conductor says, he lifts his arms and the orchestra starts to play. (*Fieldnote, orchestra rehearsal P2*)

Orchestra was a central part of all three programmes. Students from programme 1 played in a chamber orchestra, students in programme 2 in a chamber orchestra and a symphony orchestra and students from programme 3 played in a symphony orchestra and had the opportunity to audition to play in a chamber orchestra. Only one of the observed students from programme 3 played in this orchestra. In order to see all students observed in an orchestra setting, I prioritised observing the symphony orchestra in programmes 2 and 3 and the chamber orchestra in programme 1.

In programme 1, a violin teacher who also played in the ensemble led the chamber orchestra. The orchestra had a second leader on violin plus a principal for second violins, one for violas and one for cellos and basses. The leader's instruction strategies had much in common with those found in main instrument lessons. He would play to demonstrate, and from his position as a member of the orchestra, he could instruct the orchestra through physical gestures as well as through his playing.

The symphony orchestras in programmes 2 and 3 were led by a conductor. There was also one concertmaster<sup>24</sup> as well as principals for all sections. The principals all sat in the front row of the orchestra, and were responsible for leading their section, similar to the arrangement in professional orchestras. The focus in most of the rehearsals observed was on preparing a repertoire for an upcoming performance. A rehearsal would normally last from two to four hours with breaks midway.

---

24 The concertmaster is principal for the first violins and second in command after the conductor. The person has the responsibility for leading the string section, and for playing any violin solos in the piece.

## Concerts

It is the end-of-term concert, located in the grand hall of programme 1. The audience include parents, family, friends, students and teachers. One of the programme leaders wishes everyone welcome, and introduces the junior conservatoire itself, as well as the concert programme of the day. Since it is an end-of-term concert, it is a long concert, including various ensembles as well as solo performers. Students performing enter to applause, take a bow, play their piece, take another bow and leave the stage again. Some minutes later, the students who just played enters the hall from the back to hear the other students' performances. Some students are dressed in black, others in their ordinary clothes. Except for one student, none of them introduces what they will play, and the printed programme received at the entrance comes in handy. (*Fieldnote, concert P1*)

There was an array of concerts in the three programmes, such as lunch concerts, orchestra concerts, end-of-term concerts, chamber music concerts and concerts held in external locations. Students thus had many opportunities for performing in various settings. Programmes 2 and 3 required that students played in at least one concert per year. These two programmes also had a dress code of all black for the more formal concerts. In programme 1, clothing appeared to be left to the individual choice of the student. In some concerts, often the internal and less formal concerts, students introduced themselves and the piece. In the more formal concerts, as the end-of-term concert referred to in the fieldnote above, students would play their piece without any introduction, or with an introduction from a master of ceremonies.

## Musical awareness

There are 19 students, sitting in two rows at desks in a classroom. The boys have gathered together in the front row and the girls in the back. The teacher stands in front, with a blackboard and a piano easily accessible. It is the last lesson before the annual test, which can explain the large number of themes the teacher goes through. First there are chords. The teacher plays chords that are major, minor, diminished and augmented, and asks students one by one to identify them. Then follow intervals, and again he asks students individually to identify the ones he is playing. I get the impression that he is adapting the level of difficulty of the interval he plays, based on what he already knows of the student's level. He then plays various scales before they practice sight singing and sight reading rhythms. There is a lot of giggling and chatting among students, and the teacher struggles to keep the students' concentration on the tasks by reminding them of the upcoming test. (*Fieldnote, musical awareness lesson P2*)

Musical awareness was taught in all three programmes. The lessons included aural training, music theory and some music history as well. In programmes 2 and 3, students had annual exams<sup>25</sup> that they needed to pass to move on to the next level. Musical awareness was not a very popular subject among students interviewed, and several of those I interviewed often skipped them when they could, even though they acknowledged that knowledge of music theory was an important skill for a musician.

### 5.3 Summary

This chapter has served to introduce the reader to the junior conservatoires that will provide the three cases included in the study. The three programmes were similar, in that they offered specialised music education, centred on tuition in main instrument, ensemble playing and music theory, to a selected group of young students. The most significant difference among them, as I see it, was the frequency of tuition. Students in programme 1 met only once every third week because the junior conservatoire tuition was considered as a supplement to students' local tuition. Students in programme 2, on the other hand, travelled in to the junior conservatoire from three to five times *every* week. Students in programme 3 had about the same volume of tuition as students in programme 2, but a key difference was that everything took place during one day instead of being spread on several weekdays. Another important difference was the number of activities available. Programme 3 was able to offer a larger array of elective courses than the other programmes, due to both the size of the programme and the extra fee students paid for additional individual tuition.

All three programmes were selective, admitting only students who were already accomplished on their instruments. The programmes' web pages sought to attract applicants by promoting the programmes as a 'stimulating environment', while at the same time informing prospective applicants of the level and commitment required for admission to the programme. In the regulations for students, there were attendance and progress requirements, ensured through attendance lists (all programmes) and annual assessments (programmes 2 and 3). Lack of attendance or progress could result in students losing their place in all three programmes.

---

<sup>25</sup> Annual exams in musical awareness have since been introduced in programme 1 as well.

During fieldwork, I observed main instrument lessons, orchestra rehearsals, concerts and musical awareness classes. These activities focused on the development of various musical skills. In main instrument lessons, there was room to focus on the student's individual playing, and the teacher could adapt both teaching strategies and repertoire to suit the individual needs of each student. The lessons included technical exercises and etudes, as well as work on solo repertoire. In orchestra, on the contrary, the emphasis was on creating a group sound and being part of a large ensemble led by a conductor. Orchestra had a significant position in all three programmes, and all students were required to play in one. Students furthermore had the opportunity to perform in various types of concerts that offered opportunities to develop performance skills in more or less exposed situations. In musical awareness classes, students were able to develop skills in music theory and aural training intended to benefit their playing and overall musical competence.

The education of musicians is often described as a form of apprenticeship, where students learn through participating in central practices of the music profession (Nerland, 2004). However, instead of letting students play in professional orchestras and professional concerts during their education, the programmes organise 'imaginary practices' (Popkewitz, 1994, see also Bernstein, 1990) to give students experiences similar to the ones they will meet in professional life. As Nerland (2004) points out, one of Popkewitz' points is that such practices will always be something else than the practices they are simulating because the social context of the practice is different, with different rules and different issues at stake. An internal programme concert, for example, is organised primarily to give students performance experience, while a concert elsewhere in society would be organised to attract and satisfy an audience that often have paid to listen to it. The expectations of an audience in a real-life concert are therefore likely to differ from those that parents and peers have when attending a lunch concert in one of the programmes. In the same way, the expectations of members of a professional orchestra will differ from what one can require from a JC student. In the JC orchestras one can thus imitate the rules of a professional orchestra to prepare students for the reality they will meet. Still it is *something else* than a professional orchestra, one main difference being that students had not auditioned to be part of the JC orchestra, but were required to be there in order to keep their place in the programme.



Having introduced the three cases and the most central learning contexts, I will move on to discuss which cultural assumptions and values I found to characterise the learning cultures constructed in the three junior conservatoires.

## 6 Cultural assumptions and values

This chapter addresses the first research sub-question:

- What cultural assumptions and values characterise the learning cultures of junior conservatoires?

Cultural assumptions and values are used as analytical tools to explore the *doxa* of the learning cultures, or the presuppositions that work to make something self-evident, taken-for-granted and agreed upon (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164).

The main criteria for identifying something as an assumption has been that it was a belief generally agreed upon within the learning cultures. I have looked for assumptions in the routines of the social and musical practices in the junior conservatoires, in that which was expected and presupposed in utterances made and actions observed, and in students and teachers' perceptions of valuable activities, knowledge and competencies. The belief that something is valuable is for this analysis understood as an assumption. I consider the belief that talent is innate to be a cultural assumption, for example, as is the idea that it is valuable to perform frequently. To say that something is an assumption is not to say that it is wrong or without foundation. It does, however, emphasise that beliefs are sociocultural constructions that evolve and change over time, just as the learning cultures themselves are constantly changing. The cultural assumptions and values presented below are those that I identified as especially

influential for the forms of knowledge and ways of learning available to students inside the junior conservatoires (James & Biesta, 2007).

I have grouped these assumptions into four categories: assumptions about musical talent, assumptions about success, assumptions about teacher–student relationships and assumptions about valuable activities.

## 6.1 Assumptions about musical talent

I have chosen to divide assumptions about musical talent into four sections based on the different perspectives found in the material: assumptions that talent is *innate and unteachable*, that it *can be graded*, that *musicality is something other than technique* and that *talent must be nurtured*. These assumptions represent various understandings of talent identified in the material, and they should be considered as complementing each other rather than representing contrasting views.

### 6.1.1 Talent as innate and unteachable

**Ann:** *You need to hear that the music comes from within, that it's a realness, and of course that it's technically solid. But first you must hear that the student is musical, that it is not too rehearsed in a way. You must hear that it's natural.* (Interview, teacher P2)

Students and teachers interviewed generally perceived musical talent to be an innate capacity necessary in order to become a musician. Interviewees described talent as having 'a natural spark for what you're doing', 'a natural intuition', as something that 'needs to be nurtured' and 'most people don't have', something that 'comes naturally' and is 'unconscious' and can be identified when students are 'progressing fast' or have 'a characteristic sound quality' (*interviews, students and teachers*). The division between a natural, innate talent and that which was learned, was emphasised by several students and teachers:

**Barbara:** *I would say talent is a quality that you can't actually put in. You can't teach it.* (Interview, teacher P3).

Juliet, one of the students, echoed this, saying 'musical talent is not something you can practise to achieve, and it's not something a teacher can teach you' (*interview, student P2*). Interestingly, there was a further assumption that even

though musical talent could not be learnt, it could be *developed* if students already were talented:

**Barbara:** *It's an awful lot about music you can't put into words. I remember when I was learning, when someone demonstrates you are picking up information on so many levels, and I mean, if someone is receptive that is, not everyone is, but you are picking up some quite subtle stuff which often aren't actually expressed in words.* (Interview, teacher P3)

This teacher thus found that although she could not teach anyone to be talented, students who were 'receptive' could sense the subtle things that were not said and this ability was something she and other teachers interviewed identified as a characteristic of talent. That is, talented students were able to develop their musicality in main instrument lessons, while those who were not 'receptive', would not be able to do the same. This underscores the importance of strategies of demonstration and imitation, used frequently by most teachers, as 'talented' students through this were able to imitate and pick up subtle nuances often lost in a verbal explanation.

Furthermore, Juliet and other students believed that musical talent is something 'most people don't have'. Even though several of the students shared Juliet's belief that talent is innate and limited to a few, none of the students interviewed expressed concerns about whether or not *they* had musical talent. Musical talent was rather something they found to distinguish them from non-musicians, such as friends in their school class, local community or family. It was in many ways taken-for-granted, both by students and teachers, that all students inside the junior conservatoire were talented.

Even though the assumption that talent is innate was a strong qualitative theme in the data, not all teachers and students interviewed described it in this way. There were two students who, without discarding innate talent, emphasised the need for hard work as far more important than any possible talent. One teacher emphasised that *all* students were talented in various ways, while another said: 'I'm not too concerned with talent, what I care about is providing students with good tuition' (*interview, teacher P2*). Nevertheless, when discussing other subjects during the interview, even these two teachers described students in ways that showed a belief in an innate talent, as the quotation below from one of these teachers exemplifies:

*[B]ut the musicality and the intuition is just present in him. And he always shines in performances and people say 'it's amazing to listen to him', so that's really a talent he has.* (Interview, teacher P2)

The discursive use of talent by informants when we discussed other subjects than talent, thus served to strengthen the assumption about talent as an innate gift.

### 6.1.2 Talent can be graded

Even though all students interviewed perceived themselves as talented and were perceived as such by their teachers, talent still appeared to come in various degrees. Both students and teachers expressed themselves in ways that implied a differentiation between various degrees of talent. One teacher described a student as ‘really exceptional’, while another teacher referred to the special responsibility he felt when he taught ‘super talents’. These distinguished talents were characterised by teachers as ‘being intelligent’, ‘understanding things right away’ and ‘being advanced for their age’ (*interviews, teachers from all programmes*). On one occasion, a teacher described a student as ‘not being among the most distinguished talents’; but more common than negative descriptions such as this one was to hear teachers foreground those students perceived as particularly talented.

The assumption that talent comes in various degrees was furthermore present in the ways students described their own talent. Several of them did this by emphasising their musicality as something that distinguished them from their peers:

*I think I have quite a lot of that stuff, I don't know, talent, musicality, whatever, basic musicality, instinctive musicality, like more than most people even at [the programme] in many ways. (Interview, student P3)*

Another student also emphasised her musicality, ‘and most people have told me that I have a good tone quality, something that is special because a lot of people need to work on their tone quality, and I don't’ (*interview, student P2*). These two students equated being talented with having musicality, an equation echoed by several of the other teachers and students interviewed. The emphasis on musicality leads to the next assumption, that musicality is something other than technique, and that it is possible to make a division between the two.

### 6.1.3 Musicality as opposed to technique

**Jacob:** *Technique is something you can learn, but with musicality, you either have it or you don't.* (Interview, student P2)

Both students and teachers drew a line between *technical proficiency* and *musicality*, where technique was assumed to be something you could learn and perfect, while you needed to be born with musicality. To master technical difficulties in a piece was important, but not necessarily considered as a sign of musicality, exemplified by the following comment from a teacher:

**Barbara:** *[T]here are people who might have been taught to fly around the instrument with extraordinary efficiency, but frankly I'd rather go and have a cup of coffee, because they have no voice, there's nothing there.* (Interview, teacher P3)

A paradox was that much of the repertoire played by the observed students was indeed technically demanding, and much of the instrumental lesson time was spent working on overcoming technical difficulties (see section 7.1). Still, a flawless technique was not considered as particularly impressive:

**Jacob:** *I'm not particularly impressed, or it does impress me, but I'm not as impressed by those who just stand there and play completely in tune and technically correct, but who just stand there and play. I'm more touched by a performer who tries to communicate a story through the music.* (Interview, student P2)

Many of the students drew on the opposition between technical skills and musicality when they described their own talent. One student made a distinction between what he tried to do, which was to 'communicate music to an audience', and other performers, who might be technically more advanced than he was, but who he described as 'really boring to listen to' (*interview, student P2*). This is as way of distinguishing oneself as belonging to a selected group and as having something special compared to others.

Other students described having technical problems on the instrument. Charlotte and Hannah found that they lacked 'technical talent' (*interview, students P1*) because they needed to practise a lot on technique. Both experienced that technical constraints occasionally got in the way of communicating their musical ideas:

**Hannah:** *I need to practise technique in order to be able to communicate the musical things. When I think I'm communicating my musical ideas, my teacher doesn't always hear it because I lack the technical abilities.* (Interview, student P1)

Intriguingly, students did not experience lacking technical talent as a serious problem, as technical skills were perceived as something they could improve

through practice, while it was considered as much harder, if not impossible, to improve one's musicality. Furthermore, technique was considered as a means to communicate a story through the music, but if a performer 'just stands there and plays', as the student from P2 stated in the excerpt above, the technique becomes meaningless. Students and teachers thus ascribed musicality as far more important than technique, although students had an understanding as well that they needed technique in order to express their musicality.

#### 6.1.4 Talent must be nurtured

Students were aware that having talent was not going to be enough to become a musician. Teachers had told them that work discipline was necessary, and most of them had experienced this as well. Charlotte, for instance, said that her accomplishments on the instrument had come easy to her so far because of her talent, but she had come to realise 'that it's those who work hardest who get furthest' and that she would have to practise much more than she was currently doing to become really good (*interview, student P1*). Andrew had likewise been 'relying on his talent over the years', but acknowledged that:

*I could be a lot better on the violin if I had focused more in practice instead of just relaxing and just relying on [my natural musicality]. So I think definitely, positively, to become a musician you have to have both of that and exploit the talent by practising a lot, and I haven't really done that I guess. (Interview, student P3)*

Even though all students recognised the importance of work, there was only one student in the material who regarded his ability to work hard as his 'greatest talent', defined by him as being able to practise every day even though he did not always feel like it.

Ann, one of the teachers, perceived work-discipline and being able to organise one's own practice as an essential part of a student's talent, and Christopher emphasised that 'musical talent alone won't help you if you don't have a working talent that makes you strive towards learning new stuff and becoming better than you were yesterday' (*interview, teacher P1*). A third teacher stressed the importance of evoking a love for the slow learning processes in her students:

*There are just slow processes, and if one doesn't like the slow processes, violin is simply the wrong instrument. (Interview, teacher P2)*

However, emphasising work discipline as essential in order to succeed as a musician did not make musical talent less important. Musical talent had to be

the starting point, but without nurturing it, it was considered 'worthless', as elaborated on by Sharon:

**Sharon:** *In this report [Tid for talent<sup>26</sup>], they have defined talent as a person with special qualifications and a special motivation for doing music. And I like those two things together, but talent is actually quite heart-breaking. Because a lot of people have the motivation, but then it is these special qualifications and that is something you should not sneeze at. For some people it comes more easily. The fact that someone needs to work incredibly more than others is actually quite hard for some to handle ... but hard work is really worth more in the long run. So, you can have good prospects, but if you do not use them and don't work hard, it's worthless. (Interview, teacher P2)*

Even though she in this quote highlights the importance of work, she also strengthens the assumption about talent as innate by recognising that some students need to work more than others.

### 6.1.5 Summary

In this section, several assumptions about musical talent have been addressed:

- Musical talent as innate and impossible to teach although possible to develop
- Musical talent as possible to grade
- Musicality as possible to divide from technique
- Musical talent as something that must be nurtured to fulfil its potential

Talent was thus strongly linked to something natural as opposed to that which is learnt, and furthermore to something unconscious as opposed to that which is conscious. While musicality was positioned as the most important part of a student's talent, the concept of talent was also used to describe *technical talent* and *work talent*. Both students and teachers found it difficult, however, to define what they meant by talent even though it was frequently used to describe students. It is thus likely that defining it was not often required, as members of the learning cultures had an implicit understanding of what it meant to be talented, as parts of that which was self-evident (Bourdieu, 1977).

---

26 Tid for talent [eng: Time for talent] (Norges musikkhøgskole et al., 2008)



## 6.2 Assumptions about success

In this section, I will first explore the paradigmatic trajectory in the learning cultures (see section 3.3.3), and then move on to a discussion of alternative trajectories as well as more undesirable trajectories to shed light on where the limits of ‘the thinkable’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 97) seemed to be drawn.

### 6.2.1 Becoming a solo performer – the paradigmatic trajectory

Students and teachers expressed similar assumptions about what it meant to be successful. The trajectory that stood out as especially valued and attractive was the one leading towards a performance career combining solo performances, orchestra and chamber music. This celebrated trajectory is an example of what Wenger (1998) calls *paradigmatic trajectories*, representing ‘living testimonies of what is possible, expected, desirable’ (p. 156) inside a culture (see section 3.3.3).

*[I]t's an inspiration to know that you're going to play with an orchestra. That is everyone's dream! Even though they might say that they're going to be orchestra musicians or something, of course, everyone is dreaming of playing with an orchestra. (Interview, student P2)*

In the quotation above, the student asserts that solo performance is not only *his* dream, but that it is *everyone's* dream, whether they admit it or not. That it might be difficult for some students to state their dream of being a soloist was confirmed by two of the other students as well. Christian, together with a group of students, had been asked about their musical aspirations at a summer course. No one, he said, including himself, admitted what their *real* dream was:

**Christian:** *I think that even though everyone said they wanted to become orchestra musicians, I think most of them dream of becoming a solo cellist, that is kind of the Dream with a capital D.*

**Ellen:** *But why don't you think anyone said it? Is it scary to say it aloud?*

**Christian:** *I don't know. It's kind of like you don't dare to say it. (Interview, student P2)*

Within a performance career, there appeared to be a hierarchy of positions. For many of the students, being a soloist was the highest position one could achieve, while a second option was to work as an orchestra musician or play chamber music. Anna would like to ‘work as a performing musician, preferably in an orchestra’; David ‘would like to be a violinist’ and do chamber music and solo

work; Hanna wanted to do ‘something with performance’; while Juliet dreamt of ‘performing as a soloist with different orchestras around the world, playing on music festivals and doing a lot of chamber music’ (*interviews, students*).

While the soloist dream was a significant theme in the material, there were examples of students who explicitly distanced themselves from the goal of becoming a soloist. Emily, Charlotte and Andrew found it more enjoyable to play together with others compared to playing alone and were thus not attracted by a solo career. Charlotte was also attracted by the security and stability an orchestra position could offer, as echoed by Emily who also dreamt of an orchestra position:

**Emily:** *My dream-dream would be to play in an orchestra, to be an orchestral musician. Not a soloist, but an orchestra musician. That’s the dream.* (Interview, student P2)

By explicitly stating that they wanted something other than a solo career, these students acknowledged the assumption that a solo career was the ultimate goal to strive for. This contributes, in my opinion, to strengthening the position of the soloist trajectory as the one assumed to be the most attractive one for JC students.

### 6.2.2 Becoming a portfolio musician – an alternative trajectory

**Evelyn:** *I think the main thing for me is being a versatile musician, so not just going down one route, that’s really important for me [ ... ] I’m just going to try as many things as possible, and then go down some route, and I’m not really sure what that is yet. Hopefully I’ll find out.* (Interview, student P3)

Becoming a portfolio musician, like Evelyn in the quote above aims to, is also directed towards a career centred on performance. However, while the first trajectory is directed towards a traditional performance career consisting of secure orchestra work supplemented by soloist jobs, a portfolio career includes being self-employed and making a living from doing a number of music-related jobs such as composing, teaching, and playing in other constellations and genres than the classical one (D. Bennett, 2009). Only two of the 16 students interviewed pictured such a career and both of them belonged to programme 3. Nicholas quoted below wanted to try a number of various things inside the music business, and was not quite sure yet what he would end up doing:

**Ellen:** *So if you picture yourself ten years from now, what do you think you will be doing?*

**Nicholas:** *People say it's really hard to make money in music; it is obviously, so I'm going to be doing a number of different activities probably, although it's impossible to tell exactly what I'll be doing. I hope it will be in the performing world, but obviously, I might decide that it doesn't suit me. I can use my degree to apply for broadcasting or whatever. I have the option to do other things, but I would like to perform definitely. I have to try things out, I have to try out being a soloist, do some solo performances, I have to try playing in orchestras, do chamber music, and I probably teach as well, get a teaching diploma and take on some younger students, and then at the end of the day you can make a career out of just getting around. (Interview, student P3)*

Nicholas and Evelyn's teacher recognised that being a musician would include a number of skills in addition to the 'playing bit'. This teacher's career had included solo performances, chamber music, playing in various orchestras as both tutti member and principal, doing session work and teaching on various levels. Since she had led a successful career as a portfolio musician, this probably stood out as a possible career trajectory for her students as well. The resemblance between students' and instrumental teachers' attitudes regarding future careers was striking, also in the case of students who considered a portfolio career undesirable, which I will address in the following section.

### 6.2.3 Undesirable trajectories

Alongside the desired trajectories, were those that were rejected by students and teachers as undesirable. Some of the students interviewed from programmes 1 and 2, interestingly, placed a portfolio career, described in the previous paragraph, in this category. These students recognised that the music industry was competitive and tough, but instead of aiming to become versatile musicians as Evelyn, or explore various music activities like Nicholas, four of the informants from programmes 1 and 2 instead distanced themselves from pursuing a music career at all:

**Ellen:** *Do you think you will do anything with music in the future?*

**Jack:** *I'm not sure. The competition is really tough, and there are few jobs. So it must be a hard life, to travel a lot. So, I'm not sure. (Interview, student P2)*

Emily and Sarah's teachers and family had even warned them against a freelance<sup>27</sup> career. Emily had heard a 'lot of warnings' from various teachers in the

---

27 Freelance and portfolio are used interchangeably in accordance with how the interviewees used them to describe self-employment compounded of various jobs and shorter contracts, in contrast to having a permanent position in an orchestra/ensemble.

programme. Sarah had heard from family and friends currently working as musicians that the most likely future was an 'insecure freelance career', although 'one might get lucky and get an orchestra position' (*interviews, students P2*).

In addition to peers, family and friends, instrumental teachers appeared to be highly influential in what kind of future students envisaged, as pointed to with Nicholas and Evelyn in the previous section. Sarah's teacher perceived freelancing as something a student might have to do in the beginning of a career, although this should only be a temporary solution:

*Being a freelance must be terribly difficult. How long can you manage to do that? How long are you even attractive as one? Because I guess the orchestras will want new musicians, so I don't know how long you can be a freelance, and what do you do then? Perhaps you can do something with a music degree in other positions inside the culture industry, without performing, it's possible to find another vocation, but ...* (Interview, teacher P2)

This teacher had been in an orchestra for large parts of her working life. This can contribute to understand why a permanent position in an orchestra was what she wanted for her students as well.

In addition to portfolio careers, some students interviewed were reluctant to picture themselves as future *teachers*. Anna did not feel like a 'teacher type of person' while Benjamin could imagine teaching in higher music education, but not in the municipal schools of music, something that was echoed by Christine:

**Christine:** *My biggest fear is, it happens to so many, they play wonderfully, excellent, and then they get pregnant and become a music teacher in the municipal schools of music because they need the money. That's a complete disaster!* (Interview, student P1)

These two students positioned being an instrumental teacher in the Norwegian municipal schools of music and performing arts at the bottom of the hierarchy of possible future trajectories. 'It's not that it's a bad profession or anything', one of the students assured me in the interview, but this was obviously not a future the students envisaged. Teaching in the Norwegian municipal schools of music and arts involves teaching mostly children. An understanding, repeated in interviews and observations in the Norwegian programmes, was that these schools offer too-short lessons, and that the pupils are often not motivated to play.

Among those students interviewed who wanted to become musicians, Nicholas, Evelyn and, to some degree, Emily and Benjamin, were the only students who included teaching as one possible future activity. Andrew and Sebastian

considered doing some teaching in the future, but then as a way to keep in touch with music, as they both planned to study other subjects than music in university.

#### 6.2.4 Summary

The dream of achieving a performance career appeared as a central part of the *illusio* inside the learning cultures as that which made the game worth playing for many of the students and inspired them to invest in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The paradigmatic trajectory in all three programmes appeared to be the one leading towards a career as a solo performer, combined with a position in an orchestra or as a chamber musician. Still, there were significant differences between students from programmes 1 and 2 located in Norway and programme 3 located in England. Compared to students from programmes 1 and 2, who in general envisaged future careers as soloists, orchestra musicians or chamber musicians, students from programme 3 had more diverse musical aspirations. While two students from programme 3 pictured themselves as self-employed portfolio musicians in the future, students in programmes 1 and 2 were frightened by the insecurity and the competition associated with a freelance career. Some of them would therefore rather choose a career within another field than music if they were not able to get a permanent position in an orchestra. Furthermore, students belonging to programmes 1 and 2 generally considered teaching children as an unattractive career, where one even considered it as a sign of failure and as her ‘biggest fear’, while students from programme 3 anticipated that teaching would be a natural part of their future career. Studies of the job market for musicians note that there has been a decrease in permanent positions and thus a growing need for musicians to be versatile and prepared to take on a number of different roles in the music industry (Beeching, 2010; D. Bennett, 2012). It is thus noteworthy that a majority of the students interviewed positioned freelancing and teaching as undesirable.

### 6.3 Assumptions about teacher–student relationships

Students formed relationships with several teachers and instructors at the junior conservatoires, such as the orchestra conductor, the musical awareness teacher and the chamber music coach. However, both at the structural level and

from students and teachers' perspective the most central of these relationships was the one between student and main instrument teacher.

I have identified characteristics of the relationship as being *trust*, *loyalty* and an *asymmetric power relation*. I will first discuss these three, and then shed light on issues that caused tension in the relationships observed.

### 6.3.1 The value of trust

**David:** *[S]he knows how to teach me the things that I need so I can play the way I want to play, and the way I'm feeling it. She knows how I feel about the music almost, so she's then able to help me play the way I want to play it even if I don't yet know how to do that. So yeah, I really admire that. (Interview, student P3)*

Trust was identified as a key value to most of the teacher–student relations I observed. I focus here on *students' trust in the teacher's methods* and *students' trust in the teacher's feedback*, as these forms of trust appeared to be crucial for a well-functioning relationship.

*Trust in the teacher's methods*, relates to a student's belief that the teacher's choice of repertoire, strategies and activities would benefit the student's musical development. This trust was evident in the way students readily, most often without questions, tried to incorporate the teacher's suggestions into their playing, as is seen in following fieldnote extract:

**Teacher:** 'I want you to activate the core and belly musculature the whole time.' (She sings the part with activated core musculature to show the intensity she wants the student to aim for)

The student plays, trying to activate the musculature.

The teacher stops her: 'You are giving up a little too soon, it's a slow diminuendo.

The student plays a longer part of the piece, trying to incorporate the diminuendo.

The teacher stops her again: 'That's a tough one. Can you rotate the bow a little to manage the stroke down?'

The student plays, trying to rotate the bow.

**Teacher:** 'I think it's a little slow'. (She sings the tempo she wants the student to play in). 'Once more!'

The student plays the whole part once more in a quicker tempo. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson P2*)

In this lesson, the teacher made various suggestions, which the student tried on the spot and received feedback on. This trust has been emphasised in previous

studies as necessary to ‘enable significant learning’ (Gaunt, 2010, p. 188), as students cannot always know the meaning behind a teacher’s suggestions or where it eventually would lead them. There were a few examples in the material, however, of students who did question their teacher’s suggestions, or who were unwilling to try what the teacher suggested. I will return to these in section 6.3.4.

Second, students emphasised the importance of being able to *trust the teacher’s feedback*, meaning that students were confident that the teacher was honest in his or her feedback. This kind of trust as well appeared to be essential for a sound teacher–student relationship:

**Nicholas:** *I think it’s really good to have someone’s that’s honest and tough, and who doesn’t say that something’s good when actually it could do with improvement. And I don’t know, I think [name of teacher] is very honest. She wouldn’t sort of not highlight a problem with your playing because she was worried about offending you or something. And I bet she will tell you if something doesn’t sound good, but I think that’s the way it has to be. You have to be direct. Because if you tell someone something’s right when it’s not, then everyone who’s hearing their performance will hear that it’s not right, so you have to be direct in the end of the day. I think that’s a good thing, it works well.*

**Ellen:** *So you trust her?*

**Nicholas:** *I trust her yeah.* (Interview, student P3)

Several of the students brought up the importance of being able to trust the feedback from the teacher. ‘She never tries to hide things. If it’s bad, it’s bad’, Jack said in the interview. Evelyn found it useful that her teacher did not ‘go around things’. Juliet said her teacher knew ‘immediately what’s wrong and what I need to do to fix it’, while Emily emphasised that her teacher ‘explains things really well so you understand it right away’. It is also noticeable that students did not express a need for compliments for their playing. On the contrary, they valued their teachers’ ability to give concrete feedback on what they could do to improve their playing further. As Nicholas said, ‘praise is not what makes you progress and develop’ (*interview, student P3*). When teachers on the other hand were giving overly positive feedback, some of the students found it to be untrustworthy:

*She is almost too kind with me and just thinks everything I do is good. I think that what she’s actually saying is honest and she does give me criticism, but I think she could have said a lot more, and when she doesn’t do it, I don’t know whom I can turn to.* (Interview, student P2)

This lack of trust in the teacher's feedback was impairing this particular student's relationship with the teacher, and was furthermore accompanied by the student doubting her own experience of whether a performance went well or badly. The quoted excerpt underlines the central position of the instrumental teacher, as the student said that she did not know whom to turn to when she could not trust her teacher. Honest feedback from the teacher appeared to be crucial for a trusting relationship and additionally an important source of information for students informing them both on that which needed to be improved and that which worked well.

### 6.3.2 The value of loyalty

The value of loyalty is linked to an assumption of the teacher–student relationships as exclusive, meaning that students should not take lessons with other teachers without their teacher's permission, and that teachers should be informed about a student's musical activities. In the regulations for programme 3, it was articulated that students needed to seek permission from their instrumental teacher before taking part in master classes or instrumental lessons outside the school as well as in performances and competitions (see section 5.2.2). Even though this was explicit only for programme 3, teachers in programme 2 still expected students not to play for others without them knowing, an understanding shared by students as well. Ann thought it would be problematic for students to have more than one teacher, 'because who is the student then supposed to listen to?' (*interview, teacher P2*). Most students interviewed had not even considered taking lessons with others:

**Ellen:** *Have you had lessons with other teachers meanwhile you have studied with her?*

**Emily:** *No, I've only studied with her.*

**Ellen:** *Do you know if that's an option, to study with more than one teacher?*

**Emily:** *Maybe by time ... but not right now, I think. (Interview, student P2)*

In programme 1, the situation was different, because students were *supposed* to continue to play for their local teacher while taking lessons with a teacher in the programme. Loyalty was still at stake, and four of the students experienced the relationship either with their local teacher or with their JC teacher as difficult. This will be addressed in section 6.3.4. Interestingly, loyalty was



not at stake when students were playing for other teachers in master classes and summer courses, as I will return to in section 7.2.3.

### 6.3.3 An asymmetric relationship

The relationships between teachers and students observed were strongly asymmetric, with the teacher as the natural and taken-for-granted authority. To say that a teacher has authority must not be confused with the teacher being authoritarian, however, as is pointed out by Nerland (2004). The teacher's authority has rather been described as a 'crucial and productive resource' in the relationship (Nerland & Hanken, 2002, p. 168). Like the conservatoire students interviewed by Nielsen (1999), the students in the present study did not complain about the teachers' exercise of authority. Students rather used strictness as a compliment when describing their teacher:

**Christian:** *When I started playing for her, my technique was quite bad, so she was strict with me right away, and I'm very grateful for that, because that has benefited my technique a lot.* (Interview, student P2)

Most teachers appeared to have a natural authority in the teacher–student relationship both as musicians and as experienced teachers. But where did this natural authority rest?

First, the teachers were all great musicians, and many of the students expressed an admiration for their teacher's performance abilities. For Sebastian, it was for example important that his teacher was 'amazing at the cello' (*interview, student P3*). Charlotte said of her teacher that:

**Charlotte:** *[H]e plays so beautifully, and it makes you want to practice and really improve your own playing.* (Interview, student P1)

Second, teachers' authority appeared to lie in teachers' competence and knowledge of how to interpret a musical work in accordance with the style in which it was written and in line with interpretative traditions. In this way, teachers had the role of intermediary between composer and student. There were many examples in the material where teachers instructed students on unwritten aspects of the music, according to tradition and style, which I will return to in section 7.2.1.

Third, teachers' authority is often derived partly through 'heritage' – the line of the teachers they themselves had studied with, and their teachers' teachers (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettle, 1995). Teachers carry with them a lot of competence and

experience from their lives as music students, performers and, later, teachers. This was brought into the lessons explicitly on several occasions, for example through personal narratives told by teachers. George for instance frequently told stories of his former students' successes, as well as stories from his own life, including places he had taught or performed. Another way the heritage line was brought into the lessons, were through fingerings and instructions from the teacher's former teachers. In one of the lessons observed, a teacher gave the student fingerings of a piece she had from her former teacher, who had studied with a famous violinist. In this way, the student had access to a lineage of great violinists through his teacher.

Fourth, teachers' authority rests on the teacher's position inside the larger field of music performance. Teachers sit in juries of competitions and entrance auditions to higher music education, they run summer courses and master classes, and they have a large network consisting of other musicians and teachers holding powerful positions within the field. I will return to teachers' role as gatekeepers in the discussion in section 9.4.4.

### 6.3.4 Tensions

There were occasionally examples of tensions between teachers and students in the observed main instrument lessons. Although these relations are complex, tensions seemed to arise mainly due to one or both of the following: a lack of trust in the teacher's methods, or a lack of loyalty caused by having two teachers, with neither having the role of 'main' teacher.

Lack of trust became evident in the lessons when students questioned the teacher's instructions or refused to try them out:

It is the second lesson I'm observing with this student and they are working on a piece. 'You need to be very accurate with the rhythm here', says her teacher while he demonstrates how she can play it. The student says she doesn't understand what the teacher is doing. 'I did it like you did', the teacher replies, 'until my mother said it sounded like I was sneezing'. He plays two different versions, one where he 'sneezes' and one idealised one. 'I find it kind of cool' [referring to the 'sneezing' way of playing it], the student comments, still not attempting to try out the teacher's suggestion. The teacher then shows her a video clip of how a famous violinist interprets the phrase they are working on. However, the student says she 'finds it a bit slow', and still does not lift her violin to try it out. 'Okay', says the teacher, 'it might have been a little too much. But steal what you liked about it'. The teacher leaves it there and continues working on other parts of the piece. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson*)

In this case, the teacher used demonstration and ridicule ('sounds like sneezing') to try to get the student to change her playing, and then showed her a renowned musician's way of phrasing it. When the student still did not want to change her phrasing, the teacher decided to leave it and continue. The student thus rejected the possible learning resources found in the teacher's phrasing suggestion. In informal conversations following the lesson described above, both teacher and student described the relationship as tense, something they attributed to the student having two teachers. The student said she considered her local teacher as the main teacher, and when the JC teacher then suggested changes to what she had learned from her local teacher, she often refused to try it. On his side, the JC teacher was frustrated because he perceived the student as not interested in what he had to offer. Similar examples were found in one of the other relationships observed, where the student for instance argued about whether a note was supposed to be C sharp, and whether the teacher's fingering suggestions were worth trying. In one of the lessons with this particular student, the teacher, tired after trying to get the student to change the fingering, said: 'Just be kind and do the fingering I have written, at least when you're with me' (*fieldnote, quote from teacher in main instrument lesson P3*).

The second source of tension in the relationships observed was a lack of loyalty, caused by having more than one teacher. Five of six students from programme 1 and two students from programme 2 had two teachers, while all students in programme 3 only played for one teacher. When there were two teachers involved, students were in many cases faced with the problem posed by one of the teachers: 'who is the student then supposed to listen to', both regarding how to interpret a piece and what pieces to practice. Students often had difficulties prioritising what to practice, often with the result of not being able to meet the expectations from one of the two teachers. One student from programme 1 felt his local teacher was irritated with him for prioritising the pieces he got from his JC teacher. One of the other students in programme 1 was 'not very satisfied with' the local teacher. The student perceived her JC teacher as the main teacher, and disagreed with the local teacher's instructions on both technique and interpretations:

*I follow the plan of my teacher here and what we're doing here, and then I'm doing different things with him, and I find the lessons with him [local teacher] really boring and not motivating at all, while [JC teacher] is truly motivating as a teacher. So, the result is that I don't practise on the things I'm playing with my local teacher, and he has not been pleased with that [ ... ] It has just been a solid crash, and I feel very sorry for that. (Interview, student P1)*

Another student played different repertoire for the two teachers, because ‘it would be too messy for me to remember that for this teacher I need to play this way, and then with the other teacher I need to play like he preferred’ (*interview, student P1*). The JC teachers in programme 1 also experienced sharing students with another teacher as problematic.

**Christopher:** *It’s not always easy to relate to a JC student, because they have two teachers. Should I start with new repertoire that I think is right for the student and important to play at the stage he’s at, or should I continue with what the student is doing with the local teacher? [ ... ] If you’re being too ambitious on your own stuff, it might become frustrating for the students as they do not know what to prioritise in practice, and both teachers should be satisfied, both should be happy.* (Interview, teacher P1)

This teacher recognised that students would often try to please both teachers, and it might be stressful for students if he demanded that students prioritised repertoire he had given them. He did not feel completely satisfied as a teacher with this arrangement, and did not quite know how to relate to students he shared with another teacher.

The loyalty conflict experienced by many of those who studied with two teachers raises questions of agency. While some students in programme 1 found that they had to change their playing according to the teacher they were playing with, there were students in programme 2 who experienced that having two teachers helped them develop their musicality and take independent choices on how they wanted to play a piece. Different from programme 1, the teachers sharing students in programme 2 knew each other and had a common understanding of who had the role as the main teacher. There were thus examples in the material of students who successfully had two teachers, and where both teachers and students experienced it as a favourable solution that did not challenge the trust and loyalty of the relationship. However, when the teachers did not know each other, and when neither was appointed as main teacher, problems and conflicts could arise, as was the case for several of the students in programme 1.

### 6.3.5 Summary

I have addressed three aspects with the teacher–student relations observed through the study:

- the value of trust
- the value of loyalty
- an asymmetric power-relation

The relationships that were apparently tension-free and that worked efficiently were characterised by the student's trust in the teacher's methods and feedback. Teachers were in general very matter-of-fact in their feedback, leaving little time for praise, but nevertheless being polite and clear about what the student needed to change. Most students appreciated this way of giving feedback, and some complained of previous teachers who had been too kind or had put too little pressure on them. The trust and loyalty aspect of the relationships were not only directed from the student to the teacher. The relationships were reciprocal, meaning that teachers invested in the relationship with trust and loyalty when they felt that students offered this back to them. I will return to the reciprocal nature of the relationship in the discussion (see section 9.2.2)

It must be emphasised, however, that of the 16 relationships I observed, no two were identical, and the same teacher related to various students in different ways. What strengthened the three aspects described above was the tension that arose in the relationship when any of the three were at stake. When a student was not willing to try the teacher's instructions, or questioned the validity of the teacher's suggestions, he or she stepped outside what appeared to be the expected student role. This challenged the teacher's authority, implicitly saying that 'I do not completely trust you to give me the right instructions', or 'I do not like your ideas and I'm not willing to try them out'.

The tensions arising from students having two teachers were felt by students and teachers alike when the teachers did not collaborate. This finding is in line with Haddon (2011), who found that teachers who shared students with other teachers felt less committed and responsible for the student, something that led teachers to be less inclined to plan for long-term developments for a student. Those who studied with teachers who did not collaborate, were thus in danger of having neither of their teachers involve themselves totally in the student's musical development.

## 6.4 Assumptions about valuable activities

In this section, I will address activities students and teachers assumed to be valuable for students' musical development. Their status as valuable activities must be seen in relation to assumptions about success addressed in section 6.2. The activities discussed below are thus assumed to be valuable for students who wanted to achieve a performance career.

### 6.4.1 The value of being in a junior conservatoire

**Ellen:** *How important would you say that it is to be in an environment with students who are both more and less advanced than yourself?*

**Ann:** *It is important that one plays together with people who are better than oneself, because then you hear the level all the time, and you know that 'that is how good I can become one day'. (Interview, teacher P2)*

The three junior conservatoires offered advanced young musicians opportunities to play together and listen to other students with a high standard of performance. Teachers interviewed expressed a belief that being exposed to a musical environment of such high standards from an early age would inspire and motivate students to practise more and thus become better than they would have if they had not been part of a music specialist programme.

Teachers arranged their tuition in various ways to ensure that students had access to opportunities for socialising and listening to each other play. George occasionally arranged his lessons as group tuition with two to four students together. Christopher had an open-door policy, in which students could come in to listen to other students' lessons when they had time for it in their schedule. Sharon and Elisabeth tried to arrange student concerts every term, followed by a social gathering for students and parents. In addition to being a safe arena to practise performance skills, these concerts had the effect, according to Elisabeth, of teaching her students 'something about standards':

**Elisabeth:** *It gives them the opportunity to practise performing in a protected environment, and in a respectful and supporting one. And I think my pupils can play anywhere now because of that. One of my students has not been part of that, and I'm not going to push. But I thought it would really show him something about standards, because I have a six-year-old and a seven-year-old who are both really advanced, and – not that I wish to shock him – but I think it would be good for him to know what the level can be. (Interview, teacher P3)*

The need for students to understand what the standards were was also expressed by George, who said that during their years in the junior conservatoire students needed to achieve the level required to get in to higher music education. In order to achieve this aim, George found that knowing your level as well as having more advanced role models to reach for was important:

**Ellen:** *You often gather your students for group lessons or lessons where more than one student is present. Can you say something about why you choose to organise it like that?*

**George:** *Yes, it's always good to know what level you're at. Even though one shouldn't compare oneself too much, you have to know your level. But also as inspiration, when you hear someone who's better than you, and think 'oh, that sounded really beautiful', or 'that piece was really good, I want to play that after I've done this one, but then I might have to practise a little more', so it's also a way to get them to reach for one another. (Interview, teacher P1)*

In addition to arranging group tuition, he also tried to create arenas where JC students could meet students in the senior department of the conservatoire. For instance, he invited JC students in to master classes for senior students and arranged concerts where both senior students and JC students played.

Several students confirmed during the interviews that they did indeed experience the social environment of the junior conservatoire as inspiring and motivating, and many of them had fellow students as role models:

**Jacob:** *She [name of a fellow student] is a huge source of inspiration. I really admire her playing, and she's always been someone I have looked up to. She has always been some steps ahead of me, giving me something to reach for. (Interview, student P2)*

Anna was inspired both by her fellow students, and by being inside the walls of the conservatoire: 'both the place, being here at the Academy, and being together with a lot of other skilled people makes you want to practice and become good yourself' (*interview, student P1*). Jacob described it as 'really motivating to be in an environment that encourages you to work and become good', and that being in the programme had 'meant everything really for being at the level I am today' (*interview, student P2*).

However, not all students experienced it as motivating to be in an environment with accomplished young musicians all around. Some of the students experienced it instead as rather stressful. These downsides of a stimulating environment were not something any of the teachers recognised as problematic in the interviews. I will return to possible negative effects of being in a high-achieving environment in the discussion (see section 9.4.2).

## 6.4.2 The value of practising

Most days are practice days, so the better those days are, the faster you will develop, and the more enjoyable it becomes. (*Fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2*)

Along with the importance of having musical talent (see section 6.1), practice was emphasised by students and teachers as crucial to making progress on the instrument.

The regulations of programme 3 states that students are expected to spend a considerable amount of time on individual practice each week, and that this is essential in order to make progress (*documents from programme 3, 'Regulations'*). Programmes 1 and 2 had no written practice requirements, but practice was nonetheless expected of students. These expectations most often remained tacit, and only became explicit when teachers were unsatisfied with the amount of time the students were devoting to practice. Expectations of practice can therefore be seen as belonging to the taken-for-granted presuppositions of the game (Bourdieu, 1977).

### What is practice?

In general, the informants understood practice as *time spent alone practising deliberately on the instrument*, working on difficult parts in pieces, technical exercises and etudes. Something that surprised me was that students distinguished practice from activities such as playing concerts, playing chamber music, playing for fun, listening to records, going to concerts or composing music. Practising was thus understood as something else than *playing*:

**Benjamin:** *I try to practise ... For the moment I play a lot, I have these concerts coming up, and this competition and stuff like that, so I play a lot with others and then you don't have that much time to practise.* (Interview, student P1)

Jacob found it hard to find time for two hours of *practice* per day because he spent a lot of time travelling to tuition, and *playing* in ensembles and orchestras. In order for playing to count as *practice*, it seemed to require individual concentrated work on solo pieces.

Students described the content of their individual practice in various ways. Some of them described a scheme that in general started with technical exercises, followed by detailed work on pieces, similar to the routine of most instrumental lessons observed. David, for instance, started with scales, and then moved on to etudes to implement the things he had worked on together with his teacher,



and then ‘usually move to one of my pieces’ (*interview, student P3*). Andrew drew a distinction between what he knew he should be doing, which was scales and studies, and what he often ended up doing, which was ‘going straight into pieces’ (*interview, student P3*). Other students also admitted to spending less time practising their scales and etudes than they knew they should, because they found playing pieces more enjoyable, a theme I will return to in 7.1.1.

### **How much practice is enough practice?**

Teachers expected their students to put in a considerable amount of instrumental practice between each instrumental lesson. Ann found one and a half and up to two hours per day as suitable for a child around the age of 10, but said during the interview that older students had to figure this out by themselves, although ‘it’s not possible to do anything less than two hours in my opinion’ (*interview, teacher P2*). Sharon expected her students to practice at least two hours and preferably more, although she acknowledged that students ‘also have to rest, take care of themselves and have a social life, so I’m not fanatic about practice’ (*interview, teacher P2*). The other teachers specified no particular number of hours, but still expected students to come prepared to their lessons; and they let students know when they had not done enough. In one of the lessons observed, for example, the teacher stopped the student and said: ‘I’m not satisfied. It seems like you haven’t practised this part sufficiently. Do you agree?’ (*fieldnote, main instrument lesson P2*). The student then nodded and said yes, followed by the teacher giving her new strategies for how to practise it. Another student said his lessons could be ‘quite negative’ if he had not had time to prepare properly that week (*interview, student P3*). One student who often did not find enough time to practise said his teacher could ‘tell immediately’ whether he had practised or not (*interview, student P3*). Thus, although students were not informed in detail on how much they should practise per day, they had a clear understanding of what teachers expected, and knew when they had done too little.

Most students expressed a discrepancy between how much they aimed to practise, and how much they in reality were able to do. Some of them struggled with a feeling of not living up to the expectations of their teacher or themselves. Students reported practising from 10 minutes per day up to three or four hours, with most of them aiming to practise one or two hours per day. It was those who practised less than an hour per day, in particular, who experienced that they were not able to live up to their teacher’s expectations. The teachers of

these students also expressed dissatisfaction with these students' amount of practice, either in the observed lessons or in the following interviews. Time spent on practice was not the sole goal in itself, however; several student and teachers raised the importance of keeping a high quality of practice:

**Sharon:** *For the students you have observed it is two hours or more. I actually hope that they find time for more, but I also realise that high-quality practice can be more effective, so, it's not always the case that three hours are more effective than two.* (Interview, teacher P2)

Quality of practice, or 'deliberate practice' (Ericsson et al., 1993), was addressed by all six teachers during lessons, and was evident when they asked students to practice 'slowly', 'in small parts', 'with control' or 'without making mistakes' (*fieldnotes, quotes from main instrument teachers*). Increasing the quality of practice was especially emphasised by some of the students in programme 3, as a way to spend their limited time on the instrument more efficiently.

### **Resources for practising**

Occasionally, teachers explicitly described how and what they expected the student to practise before the next lesson. At the end of one of the lessons observed, the teacher told the student to 'write all fingerings. Maybe play with a recording. Check fingerings and rhythms' (*fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P1*). Even when teachers did not give any such explicit messages, they still expected students to practise what they had worked on during the lesson. A classical piece of music is often built up of quite comparable parts where similar difficulties arise. When a teacher had spent a considerable amount of the lesson with working in detail on one part of a piece, students were then either told, or simply expected, to transfer what had been achieved in the lesson to other parts of the piece at home.

None of the teachers, in any of the lessons observed, addressed how students could structure their practice efficiently: none of them addressed whether it was better to practise in the morning or the afternoon, how long a practice session should be before taking a break, or the use of metacognitive skills. Nor were there any references or encouragements to practice mentally, understood as 'covert or imaginary rehearsal of a skill without muscular movement or sound' (Coffman, 1990, p. 187). What the students did get, however, were multiple methods for practising difficult parts in the pieces they were playing, such as practising a rapid scale movement in small parts or with various rhythmic variations to get it even, or playing so slow that it was possible to play without

making any mistakes. Two of the teachers also made their students use notebooks during lessons to write down things they needed to remember for their individual practice at home.

### 6.4.3 The value of having goals

**Jacob:** *For me it's really important to have goals to work towards. That I'm not just practising without a goal. Goals help me practice. In all these performances coming up [he names competitions and master classes], I want to make a good appearance. (Interview, student P2)*

As addressed in the preceding section, teachers expected students to spend a considerable amount of time on individual practice between instrumental lessons. However, teachers recognised that practice was not always enjoyable in itself, and goals were one of the things teachers assumed would motivate students to practice longer and more efficiently than they would have without upcoming goals. When students and teachers addressed the importance of having goals, it was usually understood as an upcoming performance, in the form of a concert, a competition, a master class or an audition. This was underscored in an instrumental lesson where the student did not yet know when she would perform the piece she was rehearsing:

**Teacher:** Did you sign up for the programme concert?

**Student:** No.

**Teacher:** I'm thinking that today we complete our work with Brahms. You still haven't played with a pianist, right? I feel like the goal is slipping away from us. If it turns out that the school concert is not happening, you sign up for the programme concert.

**Student:** Yes. *(Fieldnote from instrumental lesson, P2)*

The teacher described the goal as 'slipping away', and expressed frustration over not having a concrete performance to prepare for. Several of the teachers perceived upcoming performances as important means to give the tuition a sense of direction, and thus encouraged students to sign up for concerts, enter competitions and participate in master classes. Students interviewed supported teachers' assumption that goals were important, as many of them said they needed upcoming performances to keep up their daily practice. One student stated that 'if I don't have any performances, my motivation just vanishes' (*interview, student P1*), while another felt it unnecessary to practise when the next concert was many months ahead.

Even though performances were considered as important short-term goals, having too many of them, or too many performances where the pressure would be high, such as competitions, could have possible downsides as well. Sharon, one of the teachers, expressed concern about students straining their development, risking 'the good bowing technique, the relaxed shoulder or that the skeleton is in place' (*interview, teacher P2*).

Students also had long-term goals, such as competitions one year ahead, the entrance auditions for higher music education, and of course the ultimate dream of achieving a performance career (see section 6.2). Although students did not themselves describe these goals as important for keeping up the daily practice, there were great differences in amount of practice between those who did aim for a performance career and those who did not. This will be further elaborated in chapter 8.

The value of having goals was furthermore closely related to the value of performance, which I will address in the following section.

#### 6.4.4 The value of performing

Performance is central to being a musician (Godlovitch, 1998), and a natural and central part of the junior conservatoires as well. Concerts were held every junior conservatoire day in programmes 1 and 3, and regularly in programme 2. The regulations in programmes 2 and 3 stated that students had to play at one internal concert per year and normally a concert with their chamber music group as well. There was also an implicit expectation from both students and teachers that the process of learning a new piece would lead to a performance when the piece was ready, as shown in the fieldnote from the main instrument lesson quoted in the previous section.

'A musician is never better than his last concert', one teacher said during the interview, pointing to that an audience can never know what a musician sounds like alone in the practice room (*interview, teacher P1*). The concert has been described by Nielsen (1999) as 'the tip of the iceberg', where all the tedious work before a concert represents that which is under the surface, while it is only the performance itself that is visible to an audience or a jury. Developing performance skills are thus an essential part of becoming a musician and, to Elisabeth, performance was a 'study in professional manner':

**Ellen:** *Do you find that it [annual assessment] contributes to the pupils' development?*

**Elisabeth:** *Well, I think concerts do, but my pupils get concerts every term, because I think playing in a concert is enormously helpful, both for the focus of preparation but also because it puts the actual playing in a different league because you study platform manner. The more you perform, the easier it gets to perform. It's a study in professional manner really on stage. (Interview, teacher P3)*

This teacher considered performances as valuable for 'the focus of preparation', because having a performance to prepare for often motivated students to develop a piece to a higher level. Upcoming performances thus helped increase students' level of preparation. Furthermore, according to several teachers, the actual act of performing offered crucial learning resources for developing performance competence. This is also noted by Nielsen (2006), who argues that '[p]reparing, organizing, executing and finally receiving feedback from the audience contain important learning resources' (p. 11).

To perform might be experienced as a stressful situation, depending on factors such as how vulnerable the person is to stress, how well prepared the person is and on how prestigious the concert is (Papageorgi et al., 2007). All students interviewed performed regularly, but their feelings about performing varied widely. Some of them loved playing concerts and rarely experienced nervousness, while at the other end of the spectrum were those who felt that performance anxiety seriously impaired their performances. There was an assumption, repeated by several teachers and students, that nervousness would go away with doing many performances, as is also commented by Elisabeth in the excerpt quoted above:

**Ellen:** *Have you played many concerts?*

**Hannah:** *I don't play very often, but I've played some concerts from time to time, and it's a really useful experience. I feel that I need concert experience, because I get really nervous, and the more concerts you play the calmer you get, I think. That you get more used to it. (Interview, student P1)*

While Hannah generally avoided solo concerts, another student, who had also heard that it helped to play many concerts, had tried to do so, but found that she was still 'nervous for everything' (*interview, student P2*). Students in the junior conservatoires were not offered any special resources for coping with performance anxiety, apart from the advice of 'play more concerts and the nervousness will disappear'. For those students who struggled with severe performance anxiety, this was a problem, as their anxiety hindered them from

taking part of the important learning resources teachers believed to lie in various performance situations.

#### 6.4.5 The value of participating in competitions

**Ellen:** *What about competitions?*

**Ann:** *I see them as valuable. Then you have a goal to work against, and you learn to prepare a repertoire, so I find that to be only positive. Of course, students need to be prepared that someone else might win, that's important. (Interview, teacher P2)*

Competitions were in general external events.<sup>28</sup> However, even though competitions were not part of the *learning site*, they appeared to be part of the *learning cultures*. For those students who regularly participated in them, competitions gave intensity and direction to the instrumental lessons, as well as influencing the repertoire choice, as competitions often have specific repertoire requirements. In this section I will first discuss teachers' perspective on competitions, before moving on to students' opinions.

Most teachers interviewed were positive about competitions, which were described as 'really good goals to work towards' (*interview, teacher P2*). The lead up to a competition required a more detailed preparation from both students and teachers than preparation for a regular concert. In the extract below, Elisabeth describes the talk she had with a student who wanted to start entering competitions:

**Elisabeth:** *We have to get organised really early so you could make the timings for the competition rounds, and so we choose the right repertoire; it has to be done in good time, because you get a better performance when things have been put on the back-burner after you have performed them once or twice. And we would need to do lots of competitions, just to give you the experience of it and lose the fear of somebody judging you while you play. (Interview, teacher P3)*

The teacher described how she would recommend that her student used concerts to build up experience and confidence, and in this way prepare for the extra pressure the student would encounter in the competition. Another teacher described how, together with students, she started preparing for a competition many months ahead of it. She emphasised competitions as an arena where the student 'should play at his or her best, it's not a place to display your weaknesses' (*interview, teacher P2*). Teachers would not recommend

---

28 Programme 3 had one internal competition

competitions to all of their students, however. Several teachers emphasised that it had to be the student's initiative, and it was not something they would push upon their students. They recommended it to students who held a level high enough to be able to gain a positive experience out of participating, and who were capable of coping with possible negative results as well as positive. Another reason for not recommending it to everyone, was the factor of not 'misusing a jury', mentioned by two of the teachers, meaning that one should not waste a jury's time by participating in competitions way above one's level. One teacher even said he felt embarrassed if his students played in competitions for which they were unprepared, as he thought the jury then would relate his students' achievements to him and think 'are they his students and they're not better than that?' (*interview, teacher P1*). This is an example of the 'reciprocal prestige-lending' that Kingsbury (1988, p. 41) described as characteristic of the relationship between student and main instrument teacher, where the status of the former is influenced by the latter and vice versa (see section 2.3).

Students recognised that competitions were important arenas for making oneself known in the music community and building stability as performers, and that participating could both result in money and lead to opportunities for performances and occasionally also for playing solo with an orchestra. Furthermore, winning competitions often led to extra opportunities inside the programmes as well. Three of the students interviewed from programme 2 had received opportunities for performing as soloist with an orchestra through winning competitions. To win competitions is a way to be consecrated by the field (see section 3.5.1), and musicians often list the prizes they have won in short bios in concert programmes and the like as a way of communicating symbolic capital. Despite these possible beneficial sides, there were several students in the material who had taken an active stance against participating in competitions:

**Christine:** *I'm not fond of them at all. I don't like it. I feel that music is not about being best, it's about communicating things, and people communicate in different ways, and I feel it's wrong, it's like compartmentalizing musicians, like saying that whoever plays fastest is the best. No, I'm no fan of competitions.*  
(Interview, student P1)

This view was supported by two other students who did not want to participate in competitions. Among those who regularly participated in competitions, there were also examples of students who expressed ambivalent feelings, saying 'it's really my teacher who wants me to do them', or 'I try to not have too many of them', and 'I never actually liked competitions' (*interviews, quotes from three*

*students*). It appeared that these students thought competitions were something they *should* do, even though they experienced them as stressful and were not particularly motivated to do them.

There were significant differences between the programmes, regarding whether students considered it natural to participate in competitions. In programme 2, five of the six students interviewed participated regularly in competitions, and had done so for many years. Competitions were not as common in the two other programmes, where only one or two of the students interviewed from each programme participated regularly.

To sum up, there are things to be gained from doing competitions, recognised by both students and teachers, although not all students were motivated to enter competitions, and teachers did not recommend them to all students.

#### 6.4.6 Summary

In this section, I have addressed the activities that were considered especially valuable inside the learning cultures to reach the implicit goal of becoming a musician.

First, I described how teachers assumed that being in an environment with peers of a high level would teach students ‘something about standards’, and motivate them to practice more and develop on their instrument. Most of the students supported this view, and described the environment as stimulating and friendly, while others found it more stressful than beneficial. I will return to this issue in section 9.4.2.

*Practice* stood out as the most crucial activity in order to develop on the instrument, and students were expected to commit a considerable amount of time to practice each week. The students understood practice as individual, concentrated practice, such as exercises, etudes and repertoire, and set it apart from playing in ensembles or doing performances. Students’ lack of practice was one of the things that created tensions in some of the main instrument lessons observed.

*Having goals*, in terms of upcoming performances, were assumed to help students structure their practice. While some were able to maintain their daily practice routine without necessarily having a performance to prepare for, other students needed upcoming performances to be able to practice efficiently. At



times, goals could be further away, like a competition the next year or the entrance auditions for higher music education. Goals had the function of increasing focus and intensity both in the lessons and in the students' practice, according to teachers and students interviewed. The importance of goals is furthermore highlighted by Ericsson et al. (1993) as crucial for the ability to sustain deliberate practice over time.

*Performance* is a central part of being a musician, and as discussed above, a central part of the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires as well. There were students who thrived on concerts, while other students felt uncomfortable and were troubled by anxiety in performance situations, some of them to such a degree that they tried to avoid solo performances. Interestingly, students were not offered any particular resources for accommodating the anxiety, except from the often-heard advice of 'play more concerts and the anxiety will disappear'.

The last point addressed was the value of *participating in competitions*. Students and teachers expressed more ambivalence regarding this activity than the other ones addressed in this section. Teachers regarded competitions as useful experiences, but recommended them only to students who held a level suitable for the particular competition and were thoroughly prepared for the stressful performance situation and able to handle possible defeat. While some students participated regularly in competitions, others did not see the importance of doing them or did not feel that they held a high enough level to take part in them. Even some of those who did participate regularly had equivocal experiences, and would prefer to do fewer competitions than they currently did. That they still chose to do them can be explained by their teachers' expectations, or expectations they felt from other agents in the learning cultures, such as parents, peers or the management.

## 6.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have explored cultural assumptions and values identified as characteristic of the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires. I chose to address assumptions about talent, about success, about teacher–student relationships and about valuable activities, as these all appeared to influence what kind of learning was made possible in junior conservatoires.

*Assumptions about talent* showed a shared understanding of talent among teachers and students as an innate capacity, limited to a few and impossible to teach, what Renzulli (2003) calls an 'absolutist view' (p. 85). This is surprising, as it contradicts much of the research on expertise, elaborated in chapter 2, which emphasises a supportive home environment, engaged teachers, quality and amount of practice and an early start age as more certain predictors of success than innate capacities. Students did understand, however, that they could not rely on their musical talent alone, and that they needed to nurture their talent through practice and hard work. The understanding of talent as innate, combined with the intangibility of the concept, makes talent a potential important form of symbolic capital inside the programmes, and I will discuss this further in section 9.5.1.

*Assumptions about success* were characterised by the dream of becoming a solo performer, which appeared to be a powerful part of the *illusio*, or the interest that the field both presupposes and produces (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Most students dreamt of performance careers, made of a combination of solo performances, orchestra work and chamber music. Two students, both from programme 3, wanted to create a portfolio career that included various positions inside the music industry. Such a future was considered 'undesirable' by students in programmes 1 and 2, however, along with the possible future position of being an instrumental teacher for children.

In discussing *assumptions about teacher-student relationships*, I identified characteristic features as the value of trust, the value of loyalty and furthermore that relations were characterised by an asymmetric power-relation. The importance of trust and loyalty was underscored by examples from relationships where these characteristics were lacking. This was especially evident for those students in programme 1 who had two teachers, where there was little or no collaboration between the two teachers. These students found it difficult to live up to the expectations of both their teachers and had trouble finding time to practise the repertoire required from both their local teacher and their JC teacher. There were also problematic sides with sharing students for the teachers, who did not want to interfere with the work the other teacher was doing, and hence felt less responsible for the student's development. This was also a finding reported by Haddon (2011) in her study of students' and teachers' experiences with two teachers.

*Assumptions about activities* that are valuable for reaching the goal of a performance career were identified as being part of a junior conservatoire, practising,

having goals, performing and participating in competitions. Teachers were conscious that the social environment of the junior conservatoire might motivate and inspire students to practice even harder to strive for the level of their peers. While some students confirmed teachers' assumptions, others experienced the environment as more stressful than motivating, an issue I will return to in section 9.4.2. Practice was understood as individual, concentrated practice, focused on mastering difficulties. This way of defining practice, resembles the definition of deliberate practice as a 'highly structured activity, the explicit goal of which is to improve performance' (Ericsson et al., 1993, p. 368). In the same study, the authors discussed the need for professional musicians to have practiced 10,000 hours to reach an international level. This has been pointed to in other studies as well, as shown in chapter 2 (Manturzewska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985a). Goals were both the long-term goals described in 6.2 and the short-term goals of upcoming performances that both students and teachers experienced as increasing the discipline and amount of students' practice. Performances had a central role inside the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires, as the 'tip of the iceberg' (Nielsen, 1999) where the results of long, individual practice hours are on display. Developing performance competence is thus central to being a musician. The programmes offered no particular resources for helping students overcome performance anxiety. In section 9.5.3, I will discuss whether this absence of support for performance anxiety suggests that the ability to perform under pressure is innate and difficult to improve. Competitions were the fifth valuable activity addressed. Competitions provided both direction and intensity to main instrument lessons for the students who participated in them, and resulted in performance opportunities both inside and outside the programme for those who won. Winning competitions appeared to be one of the important ways of gaining symbolic capital inside the learning cultures as well as in the wider field of musical performance, as was also observed by Perkins (2011).

## 7 Central learning resources and access

Learning resources were defined in section 3.3.2 as tools that facilitate students' learning. As discussed in chapter 6, most students interviewed aspired to performance careers. This chapter will address the learning resources offered to students for developing the competencies needed to succeed in this endeavour through the second sub-question:

- What are the central learning resources made available for students through the learning cultures?

Identifying central competencies, and learning resources for achieving these competencies, has been a bottom-up process. Through analysis of fieldnotes from main instrument lessons, orchestra rehearsals and interview transcripts, I explored the kinds of learning resources that were made available to students through their participation in the learning cultures in the three junior conservatoires. I then placed these resources within three broad categories of competencies that will be addressed in this chapter: *resources for developing technical competence*, *resources for developing autonomy* and *resources for developing ensemble competence*.<sup>29</sup>

---

29 It must be emphasised that while focusing on certain learning resources, other learning resources are left in the background, or even hidden. I have not addressed resources for developing theoretical music competence, sight-reading skills or competence in playing from memory, for instance, themes which were also addressed during interviews and in

## 7.1 Resources for developing technical competence

I feel that we are working on the foundation now. If you're building a house you must first create a foundation. This process is a little tedious, and that's where we are now. And afterwards we'll hang up the nice curtains and the lights. But before that it's concrete and iron – meaning intonation, rhythm and pitch. (Fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2)

In this sub-chapter, I will first address how etudes and exercises worked as resources for developing technical competence and then explore various processes of embodiment, including repetition, playing slowly and being relaxed.

### 7.1.1 Etudes and exercises

Most lessons observed started in the same way, with bowing exercises on open strings, scales, in unison, thirds, sixths and octaves, at different speeds and with different rhythms. These opening exercises were often followed by an etude.<sup>30</sup> On average, 10–15 minutes was spent on exercises and etudes in the lessons observed, while some of the teachers occasionally spent as much as 30–40 minutes. The amount of time spent on them positioned exercises and etudes as a crucial ingredient of learning an instrument. The importance of this was also emphasised in the interviews with both teachers and students:

*Ann: I don't know how fond my students are of my scales, but I like to start with open strings, exercises for the left hand and then scales. I like using etudes as well, but it's a lot to fit into one lesson. But they have to work with etudes and technique, there's no way around it!* (Interview, teacher P2)

Barbara said she would include scales and technical work from the very beginning with children, 'and also I like to give studies, I like to do technical work on studies' (interview, teacher P3). Teachers seemed to share an assumption that scales and etudes were essential in order to become a classical violinist or cellist, and that they held important learning resources for students' musical development. In addition to the traditional exercises and etudes, teachers would also

---

observations. These did not stand out as main themes, however, and were omitted in the end to make room for the three categories addressed here.

30 Cellists played etudes mainly from David Popper's High School of Cello Playing, Opus 73, while the violinists mainly played Rodolphe Kreutzer's Forty-two studies or caprices for the violin, and studies by Otakar Ševčík and Henry Schrädieck.

frequently use self-invented exercises and individualise pre-written exercises that offered students resources for improving particular technical difficulties. However, most students did not use these resources to their full potential. Even though they knew they were expected to practice scales and etudes, and most of them shared their teachers' belief in the value of doing it, a frequent theme in the student interviews was their failure to devote the time to studies expected by the teacher:

**Nicholas:** *[U]sually my problem is I tend to not be so motivated to practise the studies and scales. I go for the pieces. I suppose at some point I'm going to have to come around to do my studies. I can do it if I put my mind to it. (Interview, student P3)*

For many of the students, then, there was a gap between the teacher's expectations and student's preparation of studies. This exemplifies how learning resources hold a potential, but are powerless unless used by an agent (Wertsch, 1998, p. 30).

Exercises and etudes are furthermore valued in the larger field of classical music. The ABRSM exams, for example, include scales and etudes as part of the overall assessment. Scales are also part of the entrance auditions for programme 3. In the entrance auditions for higher music education in Norway, scales and arpeggios are required for violinists and etudes for both violinists and cellists (Norwegian Academy of Music, 2016). The ability to play scales, arpeggios and etudes thus appeared to be established in the larger field of classical music performance as a competence that tell something about a student's overall capacity as a musician.

### 7.1.2 Processes of embodiment

Playing classical cello or violin requires the embodiment of numerous actions. Students need to master various bowing techniques, fingerings, intonation, coordination between the two hands and playing at high speed. These actions must be repeated often enough to make them embodied, so the student can reproduce them in a natural and relaxed manner, while communicating the music to an audience in a performance situation (Ericsson et al., 1993; Sagiv & Hall, 2015). Teachers offered students various resources to help achieve this. I have defined the most prominent resources used in main instrument lessons as *repetition*, *playing slowly*, and *being relaxed*.

## Repetition

The importance of *repetition* was emphasised by all teachers observed, exemplified in the following fieldnote:

The student is in the middle of a piece when he encounters some technical difficulties and stops playing. The teacher asks the student to practise two specific bars 10 times in a row. The student plays the two bars 10 times. Then the teacher says it's enough and asks the student to take the next passage (plays to show him where she wants him to start). The student continues into the piece, and is then stopped again by the teacher, who tells him to practise the next phrase six times in a row. The student plays the phrase six times. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson P2*)

Another teacher said 'the better he plays, the pickier I become. When it's really good we can work for an hour with only four bars' (*fieldnote, quote from teacher in main instrument lesson P2*). Even though repetition of this kind can be a tedious process, students generally did not question or object to the amount of repetition requested by the teacher. Sharon emphasised how important it is that students learn to like these processes. According to her, there was no way around it if they wanted to succeed:

**Sharon:** *Before I used to say that you need to practise a part five times, but that's just a drop in the ocean really. If you are playing a virtuoso piece, it's just an incredibly tedious process, and you need to go through the same phrase thousands and thousands of times, and I see it as my task to inspire them to go into that process. (Interview, teacher P2)*

It was not simply repetition that was emphasised, however, but more precisely *repetition of the desirable movements*. Several of the teachers reminded students during the lessons of bodily learning processes, in which muscle memory means that the body will do what it has trained to do:

[I]f you practise it 100 times absolutely correctly, that is what will happen in the concert because that's what you have practised. We rehearse to succeed, not to fail. (*Fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2*)

Some of the teachers preferred their students to learn a new piece together with them in the lesson, to ensure that they learned the desirable movements from the beginning. It was thus not uncommon that large parts of a lesson were spent working through a piece, bar by bar, writing down fingerings and bowings and giving the student resources for how to practise parts the teacher anticipated would be difficult. Some students also preferred this way of working, but it seemed to depend on their level of playing. The more advanced students

could take most of these decisions themselves, as they had gone through the process of learning a piece guided by their teacher over many years.

### **Playing slowly**

To make the desirable movements correctly, teachers emphasised the resource found in *playing slowly*. When students played a piece too fast too early, they ‘practise stumbling’ as one of the teachers said during an observed lesson. Another teacher also warned his student against practising stumbling: ‘when ever you feel the need to take something over again when you perform, you are playing it too fast’ (*fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2*). A third teacher advised a student that ‘the closer to a performance you get, the slower you should practise’ (*fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P1*). Playing slowly was assumed to be a faster way towards the goal, emphasised in several of the observed lessons.

### **Being relaxed**

Being *relaxed* while playing is the third resource I have categorised under processes of embodiment. Many of the students struggled with tensions or worked to remove unnecessary bodily movements while playing. Two of the students interviewed had experienced serious strain injuries, and this was something teachers wanted to prevent through focusing on being relaxed while playing:

It is in the beginning of the lesson, and the student is playing an F minor scale on the violin. ‘You have a lovely sound now, but what concerns me is the tension in your shoulder’, the teacher comments when the student has completed the scale. The teacher demonstrates the scale to him, while she comments on where in the scale he can benefit from relaxing: ‘Nothing should be fixed on the violin, not your eyes, not your chin, it should all be flexible’. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson P3*)

According to teachers in the observed lessons, being relaxed was a resource not only for preventing injuries, but also for creating a better sound quality and a better overall performance. This is an example of how technique and interpretation are closely interwoven.

The importance of the bodily learning process was also evident in students’ criticisms of previous teachers. While students participating in the study were generally satisfied with their current teacher, a number of them criticised previous teachers for teaching them incorrect technique or not focusing sufficiently on it:



**Evelyn:** *[A]nd then I came here and, yeah, it's been quite a steep learning curve in terms of playing because I've had to make a lot of technical changes, because of the teaching before. I think I'd probably be better now if I had a better teacher early on, but you can't really help that. (Interview, student P3)*

This was echoed in the teacher interviews, where teachers described having students who 'lacked basic competencies' or had to be 'started technically', and commented on how much easier it would have been if a student had come to them earlier. This underlines that playing an instrument is compounded of various competencies embodied through repetitive practise over several years (Sagiv & Hall, 2015). Sagiv and Hall see these processes of embodiment taking place in instrumental lessons as a process of forming a musical habitus. These embodied ways of playing are learned early in life, and might thus be difficult for a teacher to alter later in a student's learning process. This can explain why teachers stressed the importance of playing at such a slow tempo that the student could execute all movements with control, and in this way avoid embodying non-appropriate movements.

### 7.1.3 Summary

In this section, I have explored various resources for developing technical competence, based on observations of main instrument lessons and interviews with both students and teachers. Substantial portions of the main instrument lessons observed were spent on exercises, etudes and technical work on repertoire. Although I emphasised that musicality was valued above technical competence in section 6.1, good technique was still considered necessary in order to be able to express one's musical intentions, as noted by students in section 6.1.3. Work on technique thus takes place with the aim of building a foundation that enables one to communicate musical ideas through one's playing.

Sharon described learning to play as a 'tedious process' (*interview, teacher P2*). This tediousness was related to the numerous repetitions needed in the learning process, the detailed work, the perfectionism and the need to play slowly, described under processes of embodiment. Another word for this kind of process is *deliberate practice* (Ericsson et al., 1993), which is defined as 'not inherently enjoyable' and as demanding both in terms of effort and motivation (see sections 2.2.2 and 6.5). Deliberate practice is limited by a person's effort and motivation, which, for Ericsson and colleagues, provides an explanation for the 'scarcity of exceptional performance' (Ericsson et al., 1993, p. 392). Many

students struggled to meet their teachers' demands of practising exercises and etudes, even though teachers regarded this as a central resource for improving a student's level of playing. The tedious work required of students can thus function as a selection criterion between those who were motivated and had the time and energy to undertake a daily dose of exercises, etudes and deliberate practice, and those who skipped the detailed, repetitive work and 'jumped straight into pieces' (*interview, student P3*).

## 7.2 Resources for developing autonomy

**Elisabeth:** *[W]ith teenagers, I think this is the time that they need to develop a musical maturity and that includes not just playing with your beautiful musical instinct and loving music, but actually an intellectual understanding of what you are doing, so that's what I am attempting to do. Make them not need me anymore; the goal is to bring them to that stage. Make myself redundant. (Interview, teacher P3)*

In this sub-chapter, I will explore various resources offered to students in main instrument lessons to help them develop their autonomy. Developing autonomy here refers to resources aimed at strengthening the student's agency and making them capable of making technical and interpretative choices, independent of input from their teacher. Developing autonomy does not imply, however, that students should become independent of cultural norms guiding interpretative choices within the tradition of classical music. Understanding these cultural norms are rather considered as a *resource* for developing autonomy, which will be elaborated in the first section, below, under the heading '*understanding tradition and style*'. Second, I will explore the resources teachers offered to students with the aim of *developing an artistic interpretation*. Third follows a section on how the development of autonomy is integrated into the learning cultures, and as such is not the sole responsibility of the main instrument tuition.

### 7.2.1 Understanding tradition and style

An important step toward becoming a musician capable of making independent artistic choices is understanding which interpretative choices are thinkable and which are unthinkable within the learning cultures and within the larger field of classical music performance (Hultberg, 2002). Through various strategies, such as verbal instructions and demonstration, teachers offered students resources

for understanding tradition and style. Teachers would share information from interpretative traditions not written into the music, for example, in instructions such as ‘when the phrases go down like that, it’s natural to do a diminuendo’ or ‘the bow is always heavy or heavy-light if it is a stepwise motion’ (*fieldnotes, quotes from main instrument teachers*). These kinds of instructions sometimes regarded style, as ‘when you play romantic music the legato bow is traditionally played like a portato’, or they could be more specifically aimed at interpreting particular composers:

‘Could we dance a little more? I’m not getting the Bach-atmosphere. Bach is friendly, he talks to us freely, and we should not impede him with a massive sound. Still, it shouldn’t be indifferent, just the opposite. Smile inside! (*Fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2*)

Music by various composers should furthermore be played in different ways. ‘You can never play Brahms’ violin concerto like you would play Sarasate’, as one of the teachers said, and you cannot play Brahms as you play Beethoven:

The climaxes in Brahms’ and Beethoven’s music are completely different. With Beethoven they are abrupt and sudden, while in Brahms’ music, they are sustained and slow. (*Fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2*)

Teachers often demonstrated several ways of interpreting a phrase and then left it to the student to choose which one he or she liked the best. Nevertheless, there appeared to be certain rules that a student had to follow in order to be recognised as a competent interpreter. Since much of this information is not written into the actual score, the teacher functioned as a gatekeeper who, through his or her knowledge, offered students resources for understanding the established ways of interpreting classical music. I will go more in depth on teachers’ role as gatekeepers in section 9.4.4.

### 7.2.2 Developing an artistic interpretation

In this section, I will describe resources aimed at developing student’s artistic interpretation of a piece, identified as *metaphors, asking questions* and *allowing for technical mistakes*.

It must be underlined that I have not identified all work on interpretation as contributing to the development of students’ autonomy. Forming an interpretation of a piece can be done through strategies of demonstration, imitation and correction, without evoking much of a student’s autonomy and agency. For

this section, I have thus focused on resources that I found stimulated students' creativity and encouraged them to bring in their own opinions.

## Metaphors

Teachers used metaphors frequently during the lessons observed, although to a varying degree. Some teachers had a lively language, filled with metaphors, while others had a more material language where they mostly relied on concrete instructions. Whereas many of the technical aspects of students' playing could be observed and corrected physically, subtle nuances in sound, timing and dynamics were harder to communicate. Metaphors thus seemed to work as resources to mediate teachers' image of how something should sound to the student or to evoke a sound ideal in the student's mind. Teachers might, for example, use metaphors to give students an idea of the kind of atmosphere they should aim for in a piece. One teacher told her student to play a Bach piece 'airy' and 'friendly', for example, while she used 'depression' and 'a boxing match' to describe a piece by Brahms (*fieldnotes, quotes from main instrument teachers P2*). Furthermore, metaphors were offered as resources for varying the sound on the instrument. Teachers would ask students to produce a sound that was 'coarse', 'round', 'elegant', 'thick', 'massive', 'sparkling' or 'warm'. One teacher asked her student to make a phrase 'even more luscious', and another requested a 'warmer sound'. The kind of sound quality that was criticised in lessons was a 'small', 'pressed' or 'not very advanced sound':

The student is playing Carmen Fantasy, a virtuoso show piece, often performed in competitions. The student knows the piece well, and they are now focusing on the interpretation. Student and teacher are working through it, bar by bar, and the teacher tells the student to play 'without pressing'. The student plays the phrase again. 'Did you hear that? You get more sound when you're not pressing. Great!' - the teacher exclaims. The student continues further in the piece, until the teacher interrupts and asks him if he 'can allow the phrase to grow? So you don't start it to forceful?'. The student plays it once more. 'I picture Carmen as having a kind of veil. So, the sound does not always have to be just as direct as you're doing it now', the teacher comments. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson P2*)

The student was asked to play 'without pressing', to 'allow the phrase to grow' and to produce a sound that could create an expression of Carmen's veil. Without questioning how one produces a sound that resembled the veil of Carmen, the student in the above-described lesson tried to interpret what he thought the teacher had meant. Metaphors were sometimes accompanied by verbal instructions or demonstrations of what it meant to play for instance in a 'less

direct way’, or how exactly one allows a ‘phrase to grow’, but just as often the metaphor was the only instruction given by the teacher.

Teachers furthermore used metaphors to give students resources for forming an engaged interpretation of a piece by giving them an image or a story of what the piece should sound like. It was an ideal, mentioned by several of the interviewees, that a performer should communicate a story to the audience. Teachers occasionally created images of what could be happening in different parts of a piece. A teacher described a part as being ‘really heroic. It’s very broad, like the grand rivers, like Donau’ (*fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P2*). One student, who studied with a teacher who frequently used metaphors in her tuition, came to one of the lessons I observed, enthusiastic about the story she had made up since they last met:

**Teacher:** Have you had any rehearsals with an accompanist since we last met

**Student:** Yes. We rehearsed on Wednesday, and we’ll meet later today, and then Tuesday next week. And we’ve made a story together, because it was so difficult to remember where it should be piano and forte and things like that’.

The student then demonstrates, explaining as she plays: ‘Here he is trying, but then he regrets it and go back again, before he tries again, and then he succeeds. And here it’s the same thing. He tries, fails, tries again, and then it is unproblematic for a little while’.

The teacher supports her and says that it’s good to think in that way, ‘that you’re telling a story to an audience. And the most important thing is not if the story is good or not, or if it is exactly that story the audience hears. The most important thing is that you’re trying to communicate something!’ (*Fieldnote, instrumental lesson, P2*)

For this student, metaphors had become a resource that she drew on when forming an interpretation of a piece on her own.

Although there were many examples in the material where metaphors functioned as resources for students to interpret a piece, it is a question whether metaphors also functioned as resources for developing student autonomy. As with verbal instructions and demonstration, the teacher steered the learning process and decided whether the student managed to create a ‘heroic sound’, or a sound that resembled Carmen’s veil. Whether metaphors facilitated the development of students’ autonomy thus appeared to depend on whether or not the teacher accepted many ways of ‘playing heroic’, and used metaphors to stimulate the student’s imagination. Metaphors are thus identified as having a *potential* to work as resources for developing an individual, artistic interpretation.

## Asking questions

Teachers frequently posed questions to students during the observed lessons. While most questions either were answered by the teacher or did not require a response from the student, there were also examples of questions that offered students resources for developing autonomy. I will concentrate here on two types of questions: *scaffolding questions* (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) and *explorative questions*.

I have identified *scaffolding questions* as those questions intended to activate students' pre-existing knowledge to enable them to manage independently a task that currently could be accomplished only together with the teacher. One teacher, for example, asked a student to go through his checklist before he started to play, and thus reminded the student to activate what he already knew, while another teacher asked the student which strategies she had for sight-reading before she started playing. For Elisabeth, these questions were also a resource for building students' confidence and self-esteem. To ensure that the questions worked this way, she was careful about the kind of questions she asked, and this is an example of the importance of knowing a students' level of development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). Scaffolding question appeared to be suited to build autonomy by making students less dependent on the teacher and more capable of finding solutions themselves. Still, students' problem-solving strategies were modelled after the teacher, and thus dependent on their teacher's opinions as well as understandings of tradition and style (see section 7.2.1).

*Explorative questions*, or questions with no predefined answer, were used only infrequently during the observed lessons. Two teachers, in particular, made active use of this kind of question, and mostly with the more mature and older students. Despite their rarity in the observations, I have chosen to discuss them here because they provided an interesting approach to developing students' autonomy. Elisabeth for instance used questions to invite students to explore their own interpretative ideas:

The student plays the first part of the prepared piece and stops where it is a natural stop in the piece. 'You did very good work this week. You paid attention to the articulation and the character is improving', Elisabeth responds.

**The student:** So I should not stop where ... .?

**Elisabeth:** Do you have any ideas on how you want to do it?

**The student:** Perhaps a bit more mysterious, or is that too cliché?

**Elisabeth:** You want to do anything less cliché?

**The student:** Thoughtfully perhaps?

**Elisabeth:** I like that. And what would you do now? You don't want to stay thoughtful for too long.

The student plays further in the piece, and then asks: 'what do you think?'

**Elisabeth:** If you are convincing, I will be convinced

The student plays it once more. At this point the teacher picks up the instrument to demonstrate a way of phrasing it. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson P3*)

In the lesson, the teacher both invited and required the student to express opinions about interpretation. The teacher was listening to the student's suggestions, asking questions to help him explore his own ideas, and she acted in a way I found to be supportive without being judgemental. In the fieldnote described above, the teacher did not play until the end of the session described. Without having the ideal of the teacher's sound in his ears, the student had to listen to the sound he made, and then assess whether he liked it or not. Sharon also often sent questions back to the students to make them come up with an answer instead of her giving it to them:

**Student:** I've got two questions ...

**Sharon:** You know I won't answer them, but you can still pose them, and then you can answer them yourself.

**Student:** I've noticed that it helps if I take my wrist a little bit out to the side, but I'm wondering if it's too much?

**Sharon:** I understand what you're thinking, and you need to do what feels right for you, and just be careful that it does not become too much. Instead of asking questions, I want you to make a choice, and just tell me what you have done. I really want you to become super strong and independent. (*Fieldnote, main instrument lesson, P2*)

The student in the lesson described above was in her last year before university, and Sharon required more independent thinking from her than from the younger students I observed.

## Allowing for technical mistakes

Allowing for technical mistakes was one strategy applied by teachers to enable the student to focus his or her attention towards the interpretation of the music. The most frequent strategy applied by teachers when students had technical difficulties was to break the difficult section into parts, analyse what made it difficult, try out various technical strategies for solving it, and then put the parts together again. The resource found in allowing for technical mistakes on the other hand shifted the student's focus from the technical problems to the

interpretation of the piece. Although this was not a common resource applied by teachers, I have chosen to include it here as an interesting example of the kind of resources some teachers offered to their students for developing their autonomy. For example, Elisabeth asked one of her students to ‘imagine the sound you want to make, and then the brain will organise it for you’ (*fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P3*). At this stage in the learning process, Elisabeth believed that the student would benefit from putting the imagined sound first, instead of focusing on how to master it technically. In a later lesson with the same student, one passage caused problems for the student. The teacher then advised him to ‘go into the characterisation’:

Now you are struggling too much, and working against it. You should first go into the characterisation and the sound to get the flow. Don’t get me wrong, I appreciate your detailed approach, but right now its smarter to get the bigger picture first. (*Fieldnote, quote from main instrument teacher P3*)

This approach struck me as different from the strategies I had observed in other lessons, and thus I addressed this particular incident in the interview:

**Ellen:** *I don’t remember who it was, a student in the last lesson I observed. He had some technical difficulties and instead of working on it from the technical side you took it from the musical side to make him create a picture in his mind of what he wanted it to sound like, and then the technique ...*

**Elisabeth:** *... yes, and then how to do it. I think that’s the thing I would put first, what our goal is. It’s the expression of the music. What you want to say in terms of character informs how you move on the instrument Because the bow arm is the spirit and character of the music, it’s important how we move that. So if we only think about technique ... (Interview, teacher P3)*

Elisabeth here returned to the idea that the goal of playing is to express something through the music. Technique is a means to achieve this, but if the student was not encouraged to create an image of the sound he or she wished to produce, it would be difficult to know when the goal was attained. Teachers observed would often work from *their* idealised image of how something was supposed to sound when giving students instructions and feedback. This positioned the student in a rather passive role, largely dependent on the teacher to inform him or her when that sound was achieved. When a teacher instead asked the student to create an image, as Elisabeth did above, the student was given agency to define when the imagined sound was realised. This was not a commonly used strategy by teachers, although one teacher acknowledged that chamber music could be really good, because students then forgot their technical problems



and focused more on the music. This focus was, however, not something she encouraged in the main instrument lessons I observed.

### 7.2.3 Being loyal – seeking inspiration

In this section I will address how students develop their autonomy through participating in various learning contexts, both inside the junior conservatoire and at the boundaries of the learning site, and the ways the programmes accommodate this.

The value of loyalty was identified in section 6.3.2 as important for the student–teacher relationships. Students were expected not to take lessons from anyone but their main teacher except on that teacher’s recommendation. However, teachers did encourage students to play for other teachers on master classes and summer courses, something they considered to be an important supplement to the regular main instrument tuition:

**Ann:** *But that they go to summer courses to play for other teachers, that’s something else, I think that’s great.*

**Ellen:** *... so you’re okay with them playing on master classes and interpretations and things like that?*

**Ann:** *Yes, that’s important. That’s great. The students are supposed to develop and become independent and be themselves, and then it’s just positive to have input from several angles. (Interview, teacher P2)*

Several of the teachers echoed Ann’s comment above, emphasising that playing for other teachers was both a source of inspiration and beneficial for students’ independence. However, one teacher was cautious to not recommend master classes and courses to her younger students:

**Barbara:** *[B]ecause you need a steady message about how to do things before you go off cherry picking. You need to get settled in a method that works, and then you can go off and have adventures. (Interview, teacher P3)*

This underlines the importance of a close relationship with one main teacher in the first years for developing a sound foundation that could later be challenged and further developed.

Most students said teachers encouraged them to participate in courses and play for visiting musicians when they had the opportunity. Students who had played in master classes described them as ‘inspiring’, ‘useful’ and ‘motivating’, and several reported it as valuable to have different viewpoints on their playing.

The instructions received in master classes were something most students handled pragmatically:

**Juliet:** *You can think that 'this is something I want to take along', 'this was perhaps not so useful, so I just forget about that for now', and you learn something from all teachers, and then you put it together, and it can end up really well. (Interview, student P2)*

Playing for other teachers confronted students with points of view about important aspects such as technique, interpretation and posture that sometimes differed from those they had learned in their regular lessons. For Juliet, the feedback received at a master class or a course was a source of inspiration to experiment with different ways of playing, an opinion echoed by several other students.

Both students and teachers thus regarded master classes and music courses as valuable supplements to the regular lessons. Their supplementary role can explain why this was not a threat to the loyal relationship between teacher and student. Furthermore, taking part in these courses was in general something student and teacher decided on together, and in several of the lessons observed teachers came with recommendations on which courses to attend or which teachers to seek out for master classes. In this way, teachers could steer students towards teachers and courses they thought would be beneficial.

#### 7.2.4 Summary

In this sub-chapter, I have addressed various resources identified in the material as contributing to develop students' autonomy.

All teachers offered students resources for understanding tradition and style, through demonstration and verbal instructions. Learning the conventions of tradition is an important part of becoming a musician capable of making independent choices, as expressed in the maxim 'learn the conventions before you break them' (as cited in Hultberg, 2002, p. 186). Building an understanding of tradition and style involves learning where the limitations of artistic choice are drawn: limits set both by the composer in the score and by the frames of tradition and style. Thus, strictness in this area can be seen as a way to liberate students later on in their musical career, as argued by Sagiv and Hall (2015). As much of this information is not written into the score, teachers had the role of gatekeepers and mediators between established traditions and the student.

Furthermore, all teachers worked on developing students' artistic interpretation of a piece. Two of the teachers, in particular, worked with interpretation in ways that I have identified as contributing to developing students' autonomy. By asking explorative questions, their students were given agentive space to come up with solutions themselves and explore how they would like to shape a piece.

The last section, on 'being loyal – seeking inspiration', positioned the development of students' autonomy as part of the larger learning culture, and not a task of the instrumental teacher alone. All teachers interviewed encouraged students to seek out inspiration from other teachers on master classes and courses in addition to their regular lessons. Encountering various teachers' ways of teaching can thus be suited to invoke student agency, as it exposes students to various ways of interpreting a piece or solving technical problems. This is in line with Gaunt (2008) who noted that an 'experience with different teachers and learning environments' could foster students' autonomous learning (p. 221).

### **7.3 Resources for developing ensemble competence**

In this sub-chapter, I will explore what kind of learning resources students were offered for developing ensemble competence in the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires. Ensemble playing was a prioritised area in all three programmes, as well as a central future career path for students (see section 6.2). Ensembles here include chamber music and orchestra.

#### **7.3.1 Chamber music**

Programmes 2 and 3 organised chamber music for all their string students, and all students interviewed from these two programmes spoke warmly of the importance of developing chamber music competence. Many students had not played any chamber music before they came to the programme, and thus appreciated the opportunity offered by the junior conservatoires.

Emily found that playing chamber music made her a better musician, and that she learned something every rehearsal by listening to the other students playing. Christian felt that he had developed skills in establishing a group sound, something he considered 'really, really important when playing chamber music' (*interview, student P2*). Jack believed he learnt quite subtle things through

playing chamber music, where important aspects were listening to your co-players and being attentive:

**Jack:** *Maybe I have learned to communicate without words, or to have contact and give signals without it being obvious to an audience. Then there's the skill of playing together without necessarily playing completely in time, and then you need to have that contact with the others. And the skills of ensemble playing, of letting through what is important and not drown the other players. (Interview, student, P2)*

Nicholas also found that he learned small details: for example, listening to 'whether you have the phrasing of a piece, where to speed up, where the climax of the piece is or where the phrases go and those kinds of things' (*interview, student P3*). He found chamber music to be a particular learning context, because the students were involved in the whole process:

**Nicholas:** *In an orchestra, you are just told how to do it by the conductor, whereas in chamber music you can discuss it and analyse who's leading the piece at what point and who has the tune and all those kinds of things. So you're actually involved in discussing it. You're not just told how to do it.*

**Ellen:** *So it's not just the coach instructing you?*

**Nicholas:** *No, it's a conversation, and quite often the coach is a member of the quartet, like the coach is playing the violin in a quartet because there weren't enough people, but that's good in a way as well because then you can treat them like another player, and they're not the coach telling you how to do it. You're really actively involved in deciding how to play the piece, which is great. And when you do the performance and you've worked on it and it goes well and it's really satisfying to have done that, to have done all the work on the performance aspects of the piece yourself, which is great. (Interview, student P3)*

To be actively involved in the whole process of learning a piece, practicing it, preparing it for performance, and then performing it, stood out as important learning resources in chamber music to Nicholas. Students furthermore described chamber music as enjoyable and as an important context for making social relationships and friends. Jacob regarded playing in a quartet as 'four times as fun' compared to playing solo performances (*interview, student P2*). Many of the students highlighted the wonderful repertoire of chamber music, and this, together with the social aspect, made chamber music rewarding and motivating for most of the students interviewed.

Each chamber music group was set up with a coach who, for most students, was someone other than their current main instrument teacher. As discussed in 7.2, receiving input from various teachers can support the development of students' own artistic voice. Chamber music can thus contribute to develop

students' autonomy, both because of students' active involvement in the learning process, where they discuss musical ideas with peers and coach, and because they become familiar with another teacher's style and teaching philosophy.

The main rule was that chamber music groups should be prepared to change every term (programme 3) or every school year (programme 2), but groups that worked well were allowed to continue for subsequent terms. A few of the students interviewed had thus played with the same chamber group for many years, something they regarded as crucial for the valuable learning experiences they had with chamber music:

**Ellen:** *What has it meant for you to be in the quartet for so many years?*

**Student:** *... three of us have been playing together for many years and we're having a lot of fun together, and we manage to have fun on rehearsals at the same time as we're serious enough to make progress. And of course, it's highly enjoyable to play together with three others who are highly dedicated and all four of us are serious musicians, wanting to go far in music. (Interview, student P2)*

Two aspects with this student's experiences with chamber music are worthy of comment here. First, he highlighted the social aspects of knowing the other students in the group and having fun as intimately related to making progress. Second, he valued the opportunity to play together with students who were dedicated and serious, implying that not all groups were compounded of dedicated and serious students. Another student who had been in a quartet for several years echoed the importance of feeling comfortable with the people one was playing with:

**David:** *We talk about the ideas we have about the piece and things are really comfortable. So if anyone has an idea or if someone thinks that someone else's idea isn't great, then everyone's free to say it, and we get through how we want to play pieces quicker than we would have if we didn't know each other as well I guess. So it's really nice to have that, to have friendship with the people you are playing with. (Interview, student P3)*

Students that had been in the same group for subsequent terms could start working on the music immediately without having to spend time getting to know the other people in the group. The social aspect of knowing the people one is playing with and having a sense of security within the group, thus appeared to enable a relaxed learning atmosphere that allowed students to benefit to a high degree from the learning resources found in the social and musical interactions taking place inside the chamber music rehearsals.

The importance of being in a group with people one was comfortable with, and with dedicated musicians, was also attested by the experiences of students who had changed groups every term:

**Juliet:** *I've mostly played in quartets, but I also played in a trio with a difficult composition of instruments that made it hard to find any repertoire, and we ended up playing a transcribed Mozart trio. [ ... ] Some chamber groups established in the programme have continued for several years and participated in competitions, but I have never been in [the same] chamber group for more than one year. (Interview, student P2)*

This student had never had the chance to continue in the same group for more than one year, and at the time of the interview she was not sure whether her group still existed or had broken up. Another aspect raised by this student as well as others, was the frustration of being in a group with students who did not prioritise the rehearsals, as opposed to the experience reported above of being in a group with other 'dedicated' students.

Thus, the value of playing in the same group over a longer period was emphasised both by those students who had had the experience, and by those who had changed groups more often. Furthermore, the groups that had played together for several years had often participated in competitions and performed in external concerts. One of these privileged groups in programme 2, for example, had won several competitions and, consequently, they had many performances coming up at the time of fieldwork. The programme leaders had also invited them to play in external programme concerts, chosen as one of the flagship ensembles of the school. A good functioning chamber music group, created in the programme, thus appeared to offer students additional resources for accumulating musical capital in terms of performance experience as well as recognition in the larger field of classical music performance.

### 7.3.2 Access to chamber music

All string students in programmes 2 and 3 who wanted it had the opportunity to play chamber music. However, as discussed above, the learning resources offered through chamber music appeared to vary according to at least three factors: whether students had been with the same group for a longer period, the level of the other musicians in the group and the other students' dedication towards chamber music.

Teachers reported that it was a puzzle to make groups with a proper composition of instruments as well as age and level of students. One of the teachers administrating the chamber music said they aimed to combine students with similar playing style, work ethos, talent and standard:

**Teacher:** *First thing is that we try to choose children who have either similar playing styles or similar work ethos and the right sort of talent and standard to match. Because if you put somebody who's way below the other people it can actually be very demotivating for them and frustrating for the others because they can't get there ... Of course it doesn't always work because you've only got a finite number and it's tricky. So I suppose we look at playing style, level, commitment and the work that they will do tonally as well. (Interview, teacher)*

The teachers strived to find the best possible solution for the student group as a whole. However, as this teacher underlined, it could not always be done because of the finite number of students. The programmes thus needed to make priorities, and one of these priorities was that groups that had worked well the previous term were allowed to continue for the next term as well. Students were invited to make suggestions about whom they wanted to play with, although their wishes could not always be fulfilled. According to one of the students who had played in the same group for several years, a key to the group working well was that they were all dedicated towards chamber music, and they all had ambitions of a performance career. Being in a group with other advanced students from the outset could thus be one factor that could make a group function well and allow them to continue in subsequent years. There is thus a risk that the more advanced students were prioritised from the outset when chamber music groups were put together, and that, as a consequence, they got access to other kinds of learning resources than other students put in less well functioning chamber groups, as Juliet quoted in the previous section had experienced.

### 7.3.3 Orchestra

**Sharon:** *The orchestras are important, because we find that playing together and being part of a community is closely related to motivation [ ... ] the sum is so much more than each student's individual performance. (Interview, teacher P2)*

Students in programme 1 played in a string chamber orchestra, students in programme 2 in a string chamber orchestra and a symphony orchestra, and students in programme 3 played in a symphony orchestra.<sup>31</sup> As described in

---

<sup>31</sup> One of the interviewed students also played in the programme's chamber string orchestra.

section 4.3.3, I observed rehearsals with the string chamber orchestra in programme 1 and with the symphony orchestras in programmes 2 and 3.

Students expressed themselves very differently regarding orchestra. Some students found orchestra boring and mainly attended rehearsals because they had to. One found it boring because rehearsals involved long periods of waiting while the conductor worked with other instrument groups. Other students complained that the orchestra made little progress due to lack of preparation from students, admitting that they also sometimes came unprepared to the rehearsals themselves:

**Charlotte:** *We meet too seldom, and therefore the level is not as good as it could have been. It's easy to forget to practise the stuff we're doing here, and then a couple of days before the rehearsal, it's like 'oops, I forgot to practise this'. We are not sufficiently prepared for the rehearsals [ ... ] People don't prioritise it.*  
(Interview, student P1)

At the same time, several students, including those who found rehearsals boring at times, emphasised orchestra concerts as peak experiences during their time in the programme. Especially valuable was the opportunity to play advanced pieces together with students of a high level:

**Nicholas:** *I think the symphony orchestra concert I thought was the most enjoyable was, I think it was the last one last year. We performed in this great venue and we played Tchaikovsky 4 I think, and some other stuff. I love Tchaikovsky and it's a great symphony that I knew already but had never played. Performing it with such a high level of playing all around was really great. Sometimes you have these performances and everything goes right and you get a lot from it and you're really inspired afterwards.* (Interview, student P3)

Another student described it as a great experience to be able to 'sit in the middle of a symphony orchestra and be part of the enormous sound all the musicians are making together' (*interview, student, P2*).

The chamber orchestra rehearsals in programme 1 differed from the symphony orchestra rehearsals observed in the two other programmes in that they tended to be more collaborative and less formal than the symphony orchestra rehearsals in programmes 2 and 3. The leader, who also played in the ensemble, often invited students to bring in their opinions, and students occasionally took initiative as well through making suggestions or asking if they could repeat certain parts. The informal atmosphere can be explained by the size of the chamber orchestra, including about 25 students compared to the symphony orchestras of programmes 2 and 3 that included between 60 and 100 students.



In the symphony orchestras in programmes 2 and 3, students among other things had access to learning resources for how to behave in an orchestra. The orchestras strived to be as professional as possible. In programme 2 for instance, the rehearsals started punctually, with the conductor raising one arm as a signal for the orchestra members to be quiet. He then gave short instructions on what they were playing and signalled for the concertmaster to take care of tuning, which she did in the manner of a professional concertmaster. Students from programme 2 had access to written information on how to behave in an orchestra. These instructions included that students should be prepared and know their part before each rehearsal, be there in advance in order to be warmed up and ready to play when the rehearsal began, and that absence was not accepted with the exception of ‘extreme emergencies’ (*documents from programme 2, ‘Ensemble Etiquette’*). In both programmes, an implicit rule appeared to be that the conductor should only have to give an instruction once, exemplified when the conductor stopped the orchestra to repeat an instruction to the basses, followed by an angry ‘how many times do I have to say that?’ (*fieldnote, quote from conductor P3*). Other breaks from the wished-for conduct were observed when some students continued playing after the conductor had signalled stop, and told them ‘it would be a lot more effective if we can all stop when I tell you to’ (*fieldnote, quote from conductor P3*).

Second, participating in the symphony orchestra involved learning the hierarchy of an orchestra. The symphony orchestras<sup>32</sup> in programmes 2 and 3 were organised in much the same way as professional orchestras, led by a conductor. Second in command was the *concertmaster*, the violinist on the front row to the left, who functioned as intermediary between the conductor and the orchestra. In addition to the concertmaster, who also led the first violins, there were one principal for second violinists, one for the viola players and one for the cellists and basses combined. The principals all sat in the front rows of the orchestra, and functioned as intermediaries between the conductor, the concertmaster and the group behind them. In the ‘Ensemble etiquette’ from programme 2, this hierarchical structure was emphasised, stating that members of the orchestra should communicate with their principal in case they had questions, although ‘suggestions from tutti musicians are seldom welcomed’, while communication with the conductor should go through the principal and always be postponed

---

32 The chamber orchestras observed in programmes 1 and 2 had a looser hierarchical structure that enabled all students to communicate directly to the conductor without having to go through their principal.

to the breaks (*documents from programme 2, 'Ensemble Etiquette'*). In case a student had any objections to the instructions given by the conductor, he or she was advised to keep this to him or herself, as 'musicians who hold strong and sturdy opinions on how to interpret various pieces often will get trouble as orchestra musicians'. Participating in the symphony orchestras was thus a means of socialisation into a central professional future arena for the students, and achieving and understanding of rules that most likely would be included in that which goes-without-saying later on.

A third point I want to address, is that students described how different positions in the orchestra gave them access to various learning resources. Positions here refer to whether they had a principal role or not. When students were principals, they reported that they practiced harder and were more prepared for the rehearsals:

**Jack:** *You have a lot more responsibility, because you're leading the group and you need to watch out and not make mistakes, because everyone will notice whether you have prepared or not when you're sitting in the front. And then there's the responsibility, that you are responsible for the group, no matter whether it goes well or not. (Interview, student P2)*

Nicholas appreciated the opportunity to play in different positions in the orchestra, as he felt he learned different things depending on whether he sat in the front or the back of the orchestra:

**Nicholas:** *The front desk has more responsibility, but in the back you have a really hard job because you're sitting by the basses, so you have to make sure that the cello sound remains heard and because you're sitting the furthest away you have to project the most because the sound needs to come from everywhere, and not just from the front. And if it comes from the back it's actually more reinforced in the front and it's easier for the front desks to play with more confidence because they have the sound coming from behind them as well. (Interview, student P3)*

Nicholas found it both useful and 'equally enjoyable to play anywhere in the section', something which was echoed by David, one of the other students from programme 3. Nicholas used to strive to sit in the front, but his perception of this changed after being told by a conductor that he was placed at the back because he was one of the 'stand-out players' in the group and the conductor needed an experienced player in the back (*interview, student P3*). Still, he enjoyed sitting in the front as well, as this offered him resources for developing other skills than he was able to in the back of the orchestra. In the front, he could communicate directly with the other principals, and he appreciated the opportunity to decide on bowings and be the one who got questions from the back section.

Sitting in the back and sitting in the front required different skills, as Nicholas and David emphasised. They thus found it valuable to have experiences with both, especially since, as Nicholas observed, he would probably have to start at the back if he became a professional orchestra player.

### 7.3.4 Access to orchestra positions

As described in the previous section, students described learning different skills depending on where they sat in the orchestra. While some students had experiences with sitting in various places in the orchestra, other students had never had the opportunity to lead their section in the JC orchestra. Professional orchestras usually allocate the leading roles to the highest qualified musicians in the instrument group based on an audition, and the person then in general holds the position as principal as long as he or she stays in the orchestra. Since the junior conservatoires are educational programmes, one could expect that the programmes gave all students equal opportunities for playing in different positions in the orchestra to ensure students' learning outcome. In the observations and interviews, however, it became evident that the same students in general held leading positions in the symphony orchestras for longer periods. Selection of principals appeared to be a combination of handpicking, rotating systems and occasionally auditions. In the following I explore how teachers and students perceived the criteria for selecting principals.

#### 'It's vague'

Many of the interviewed students had been concertmaster or principal in the orchestras during their time in the junior conservatoire. Still, even these students had only vague ideas of how leading positions were allocated:

**Ellen:** *How were you chosen then to be principal for second violin?*

**David:** *I'm not sure to be honest. In symphony I'm not sure how it's done, I guess I just looked at the list and I was there; in symphony orchestra I think you have to apply to be the leader, but for second violin I think you just find your name on the list really. So, I'm not really sure how it's done.*

**Ellen:** *Is it on a rotating basis you think?*

**David:** *I think for the second violin it is, but for the leader of the first I think it's usually the same leader for the whole year. (Interview, student P3)*

David concluded that there might be an audition for being leader of the first violins, but he could not be sure. This can either mean that the concertmaster

had been handpicked, that it had been an audition for invited students only, or that it had been beyond David's 'sense of limits' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164) to apply for it when it was announced, and thus neither he nor his teacher had recognised that there was an audition. Emily had been concertmaster in the orchestra previously, and she thought she was asked then 'because I move quite a bit when I play, and that helps a little I think' (*interview, student P2*). She had never heard of any auditions to be concertmaster. Andrew had occasionally been principal and he had the impression that 'they just shuffle it [orchestra positions] around basically' (*interview, student P3*). However, he had a feeling that the shuffling was not completely random:

**Ellen:** *So everyone gets a chance?*

**Andrew:** *Sort of, but not always, it's sometimes like whoever is the best. For concerts, they're quite clever, they shuffle it around so perfectly that the really good people end up in the main seat for the concert, so it's nice (laughter). I guess it's nicer than just having it really harsh. (Interview, student P3)*

A cellist interviewed from programme 3 was also unsure how they chose the cello principal: 'I think it might be a combination of [leader of the programme] who sometimes comes to watch and some other cello tutors and so on. I'm not entirely sure' (*interview, student P3*). He had noticed, however, that the same person had been in the position for his two years at the programme, occasionally sharing it with one other student.

### **'It's just natural'**

As described above, students had only vague ideas of how principals were selected. There was a tendency in all three programmes for the same students to hold leading positions for an extended period. One might expect students to find this unfair, but on the contrary, most students interviewed found it natural that the same student held a leading position over time:

**Sarah:** *We sort of know that she always is principal, but except for that we just sit wherever we like really.*

**Ellen:** *Do you know why she is principal all the time?*

**Sarah:** *I don't know, it's just like you know that she is the principal. But that is because she has been chosen to be principal so we all know that, and she's also one of the eldest and have been in the programme longer than the rest of us, and that also counts I think, and I think she's one of the more advanced students, so it's very natural really. [Name of other student] will probably be principal now, because [current principal] is leaving the programme and then this other*

*student is the one who have been there for most years. I don't know, it's almost automatic that I'm thinking that 'she is principal now'.* (Interview, student P2)

This student found it natural that the same student had been principal for many years, and that the oldest and most experienced among the cellists would be the right one to take over from her. The younger students interviewed accepted that older students currently held principal roles, perhaps thinking that their time would come. The logic of allocating leading roles in the orchestra thus appeared to be maintained, both by those students placed in leading positions and those who most of the time played at the back desks. This acceptance of a structure that could easily have been perceived as unfair, indicates that students took the rules of the game for granted (Bourdieu, 1977). The feeling of a natural order, is possibly maintained as well by keeping the selection criteria vague to students.

The principals' job is to be the connecting link between the conductor and the concertmaster in front and the rest of the group behind. One of the teachers noted that 'it can actually be a problem if we give students who are not prepared for it such a big challenge. You need to find a match between person and task' (*interview, teacher P2*). Furthermore, the same teacher added:

*If there is a student who is obviously amazing and deserves to be seen, then I don't think it's problematic to give that student the position as concertmaster without any audition. The other students then recognise it and have a natural respect for the excellent job being done.* (Interview, teacher P2)

This teacher considered it as a larger problem if students were offered a principal position without being ready for it, compared to letting the same students hold leading positions for a longer period.

### **'The fairest way'**

In the interviews, teachers reflected on how special opportunities could be distributed to students as fairly as possible, and pointed to positive and negative effects of using handpicking and audition as selection methods. One teacher found auditions to be the fairest way:

**Teacher:** *If you are a student here, I think you should have those chances, everyone should have the opportunity. [...] So, when we're choosing someone, I think it should be based on specific criteria, and that may well be through auditions. Auditions are the fairest way to do it, and if not, it is because there is a rotation system.* (Interview, teacher P2)

If one did not rotate, the teacher found auditions to be the fairest way, because everyone who wanted the position then could prepare, sign up and be assessed by a jury on the same terms as all other applicants, 'and then we get the best student for the best job' (*interview, teacher P2*). This teacher thus perceived auditions as fair *compared to* handpicking. One teacher from programme 1, on the other hand, did not think auditions should be part of the junior conservatoire, and he thus argued that handpicking was a better method: 'They have already auditioned to get in, and in that way competitions should be something they're done with' (*interview, teacher P1*). He argued that instrumental teachers were those who knew best which students would do a good job as principals or as soloists with the orchestra. Teachers could then choose students based on an assessment of their level of playing and who deserved it or had been working particularly hard and would rise to the challenge if presented with it. In this way, handpicking could give those students who would not be selected through an audition process, due to performance anxiety for example, an opportunity to access the learning experience found in being a soloist or in having leading roles in the orchestra. However, handpicking is one of the least open selection mechanisms, as shown by students' responses above. Furthermore, it would give the teacher even more power in the teacher–student relationship, as it would then be the teacher's prerogative to select students for special opportunities.

### 7.3.5 Summary

Developing ensemble competence was a prioritised area in the programmes. This was evident in both the time and resources devoted to it. Most students interviewed considered chamber music as the most valuable learning context, apart from main instrument lessons. What students found especially rewarding about chamber music was the opportunity to be involved in the whole process of learning a piece, and be able to discuss interpretative issues with the other students in the group. It furthermore offered them resources for developing listening skills through being attentive to where to take the lead and where to give room for one's co-players as well as how to create a group sound. However, students reported having various access to learning resources in chamber music. Those who had been allowed to play with other dedicated students for a longer period reported more positive learning outcomes compared to students who had changed groups often, or had been in groups where the composition of instruments were strange or with students who did not prioritise rehearsals.

Regarding orchestra, students had mixed experiences. While some students found it boring because of long waiting time during rehearsals and lack of preparation from orchestra members, many nevertheless reported to have had their peak experiences in the programme through performances with the orchestra. These peak experiences were related to the repertoire and to being part of a large ensemble and the ‘enormous sound’ (*interview, student P3*) of an orchestra. Orchestra rehearsals offered resources for learning professional manners, such as how to behave in an orchestra, the importance of being prepared, on time and quiet while the conductor gave instructions. As addressed by Jarvin and Subotnik (2010), acting professional is a valued competence in higher music education as well as in the music industry, and is thus an important competence to develop for aspiring musicians. The students interviewed for the present study furthermore described that the learning resources to which they had access varied depending on where in the section they were seated. Most students enjoyed being principal, as this gave them the opportunity to decide on bowings and have responsibility for the whole group, and because they could easily communicate with the other principals and the conductor. Still, not everyone had had a chance to be principal, and not everyone wanted to or felt entitled to have a leading position. The programmes allocated principal positions in various ways. Concertmasters were in general handpicked, with auditions held occasionally, while principals were offered through handpicking or based on a rotation system. The issue of how access to orchestra positions were negotiated and perceived inside the learning cultures is an important matter, I would argue. The practice of giving a selected group of students more opportunities with leading than less advanced students is potentially problematic, as it gives a selected group of students more manifold resources for learning and developing skills that potentially will benefit them in the future while hindering a larger number of students from gaining this kind of experience. In addition, it gives the privileged students fewer opportunities for achieving the skills needed to play further back in the orchestra, which Nicholas and David underscored as an important competence for a string player as well. Furthermore, being concertmaster and principal is a position that communicate status inside the learning cultures, with its similarities with professional orchestras: ‘Instead of just writing that I played in the Children’s orchestra, I can write on my CV that I was concertmaster in the Children’s orchestra’, as one of the students said (*interview, student P2*). Having pointed to these issues, there are also possible beneficial sides with keeping the same students in leading positions for longer periods. It enables students to build

competence in leading a group, while tutti members in the group become used to this student's leading style. Furthermore, the principals gain experience with playing together, and becoming familiar with the other principals' style of playing and communicating. If the other players furthermore acknowledge the student holding a leading position as a natural leader, chances are that this will benefit the orchestra as a whole, as one of the teachers argued. However, the varied access to chamber music and orchestra experiences reported by students, points to a risk that the already advanced and experienced students get better and more resources for developing ensemble competence than those who are perceived as less advanced or talented (Davies, 2004).

## 7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have addressed various learning resources offered to students with the aim of developing technical competence, autonomy and ensemble competence.

*Resources for developing technical competence* were prioritised in main instrument lessons observed, and were evident in time spent on exercises, etudes and technical work on repertoire. The instrumental teachers offered students various resources for the embodiment of desirable movements, such as numerous repetitions in such a slow tempo that students were able to do the movements correctly in a relaxed manner. In accordance with Sagiv and Hall (2015), I understand this as resources for acquiring a classical habitus. As elaborated in chapter 3, habitus is understood as an embodied and durable set of dispositions to act. As pointed to in section 3.5.2, Bourdieu regarded the apprenticeship model as especially suited for developing a field-specific habitus, as it involves a close relationship with a master and rich opportunities to observe, get corrections and engage with the master's attitudes, assumptions and values (Prieur & Sestoft, 2006).

*Resources for developing autonomy* were offered to students in various ways. An important aspect of developing autonomy was building an understanding of tradition and style, as 'familiarity with musical practice is a presumption for coping independently with the printed score as a cultural tool in Western tonal music' (Hultberg, 2002, p. 196). Knowing the rules and traditions for interpretation can thus be considered as a prerequisite for knowing what scope of action one has as a musician. Resources identified as particularly aimed at



developing an artistic interpretation included using metaphors, allowing for technical mistakes and asking scaffolding and explorative questions. However, as was addressed in section 7.2.3, developing students' autonomy is not the responsibility of the main instrument teacher alone. Students develop their autonomy through participating in learning contexts both inside and outside the programme, such as on master classes or courses, or in chamber music and orchestra where they are exposed to different views on playing style and interpretation

*Resources for developing ensemble competence* were explored through looking at the learning contexts of chamber music and orchestra specifically. Chamber music was highly valued amongst students as a learning context that offered resources for developing collaborative skills, as well as specific chamber music skills that they anticipated would be useful later in their musical career. What kind of resources a student was offered through chamber music seemed to depend on whether the group of which he or she was part was allowed to continue for multiple terms, and the level and dedication of the students in the group. Orchestra offered students resources for developing an understanding of appropriate behaviour in an orchestra, and it had furthermore offered many of them peak experiences with playing great repertoire in a grand orchestra. Students did, however, report various access to learning resources according to where in the orchestra they usually sat. There was a tendency in the programmes to let certain students have numerous experiences of being concertmaster and principal. A consequence for those who usually held leading positions was that they had fewer opportunities for learning the skills required for sitting further back in the orchestra, while those who usually sat further in the back, did not have access to resources for learning the skills necessary for leading a group.

## 8 Students' engagement

In the preceding two chapters, I have explored dominant cultural assumptions and values as well as central learning resources offered to students through the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires. I will now bring the two together by presenting six student cases through which I explore the third research sub-question:

- In what ways do various students engage with dominant assumptions and values as well as central learning resources in the learning cultures, and which factors can shed light on their engagement?

The concept of engagement is closely linked to motivation, but while motivation is private and often hidden, engagement can be considered as 'the relatively more public, objectively observed effect' (Reeve, 2012, p. 151). However, engagement is not only that which is observable. According to Wenger, engagement is also intertwined with an individual's sense of identification (Wenger, 1998):

Through engagement in practice, we see first-hand the effects we have on the world and discover how the world treats the likes of us. We explore our ability to engage with one another, how we can participate in activities, what we can and cannot do. (Wenger, 1998, p. 192)

This supports the idea that students' ways of engaging in the practices of the learning cultures are highly important for their learning, their sense of belonging and their construction of a learning trajectory. According to Wenger, it is through engagement that we 'develop certain expectations about how to

interact, how people treat each other, and how to work together’, and furthermore how to make use of the resources offered through the community (Wenger, 1998), or, in the context of this study, through the learning cultures. Another premise, introduced by Bourdieu (1990), is that students will both be positioned differently inside a learning culture and seek to position themselves differently according to their previous experiences, competencies, attitudes and ambitions (see section 3.5.2).

When exploring students’ *ways of engaging*, I have sought to understand:

- what kind of learning resources various students were offered and how they engaged with these resources, and
- students’ engagement in the valued activities (see section 6.4) and how they identified with them.

When exploring *factors that can shed light on their engagement*, three factors were identified as particularly significant:

- students’ future ambitions, related to assumptions about success (see section 6.2),
- students’ positioning in the learning cultures, evident in what kind of access they had to privileged positions (see section 7.3.2 and 7.3.4) and valued activities (see section 6.4.), and in how they were described by teachers, and
- students’ self-positioning in the learning cultures, meaning how they sought to position themselves related to their future ambitions and intertwined with their sense of agency.

I have chosen to present six student cases, representing six different ways of engaging with cultural assumptions and values as well as learning resources. I will start each case by addressing the second part of the research question, discussing factors that can shed light on students’ engagement. I will then focus on the first part of the research question by exploring students’ different ways of engaging. Each case ends with a summary of the student’s engagement, where I draw on Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’ of habitus and capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) as well as Wenger’s (1998) concept of learning trajectories.

Of the students presented below, Jacob and Sarah belong to programme 2, Evelyn and Andrew to programme 3 and Benjamin and Christine to programme 1. Three of them play violin and three of them cello. I have chosen to not associate the

persons with their main instrument in the following in order to protect their anonymity.

## 8.1 Jacob – a 'superstar' student

Jacob started playing the instrument when he was four years old, at a local music school. At six, he started with a Suzuki teacher who had what his parents described as a 'good pedagogical plan' (*informal conversation with mother*). The following year, he started playing in the Children's orchestra, which was affiliated with the same institution as the junior conservatoire. He considered it 'really important to be part of a stimulating environment early'. He also described it as important to get 'in good hands early' and to 'see the level and have someone to reach for', referring to his main instrument teacher as well as other students in the programme.<sup>33</sup> He joined the junior conservatoire when he was around 12 years.

Jacob stood out in the material as a privileged student with access to an array of learning resources combined with high ambitions of becoming a solo performer. I have thus labelled him a 'superstar' student, a concept used by Perkins (2011) to describe privileged conservatoire students.

### 8.1.1 Factors affecting engagement

#### Becoming a professional musician

**Ellen:** *What are your dreams for the future?*

**Jacob:** *It is to make a living of doing music, no matter what. Whether it is as a chamber musician, orchestra musician, soloist or all of it. That is my dream.*

Ever since Jacob started playing the instrument, he had dreamt of becoming a musician. He envisaged what I described in section 6.2.1 as the paradigmatic trajectory of the junior conservatoires, namely becoming a soloist combined with playing in chamber ensembles or orchestras. He wanted to do anything that had to do with performance within the frames of classical music, and described playing his instrument as 'extremely fun'. He expressed no alternative career plans besides pursuing a performance career. At the time of the

---

<sup>33</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the students are from interview material.

interview, he wanted to prioritise finding opportunities for solo performances with orchestras. To achieve this, he signed up for auditions where the prize was to perform as soloist with an orchestra and participated in competitions that often as part of the prize offered an opportunity to play with an orchestra. He felt confident that the path he was on, as a student in this junior conservatoire with the teachers he currently had, would provide him with a good basis for becoming a professional musician:

*Many great musicians, for example [name of two Norwegian musicians], come from this programme, and they have achieved great international careers. A jury leader also told me that I'm in good hands and that it's healthy for my development to be here, so I believe that [the programme] offers what I need.*

Former students, representing examples of successful musician trajectories, strengthened Jacob's belief that being in the programme would also give him opportunities to succeed as a soloist in the future.

### **Positioning and self-positioning**

*If one shows that one is dedicated and talented and holds a high level [of playing], [the programme] supports you and prioritises you, and then you are asked to play concerts and different stuff.*

Jacob stood out as a privileged student inside the programme. His privileges included having leading positions in the orchestra, invitations to play on external concerts that occasionally included playing with professional musicians, and being allowed to play in the same chamber music group for many years with other students considered as holding high standards (see section 7.3.2). He furthermore had regular lessons with a renowned musician paid for by the programme in addition to weekly lessons with his main instrument teacher.

His currently privileged position appeared to be a consequence of a number of factors. Jacob was pointed out to me as especially talented already before I started the fieldwork. His teacher described him as one 'who has all that is needed to succeed', while one of the leaders in the programme uttered that 'it would surprise me if we don't see a new star in him' (*informal conversation during fieldwork*).

**Teacher:** *There are many things that work with Jacob. He has this musicality, and an ability to go into the music that's just intuitively there like a great talent. And then he has no performance anxiety whatsoever, he's pretty cool actually, and that's an important dimension when one is doing as difficult things as he is. And he has a good musical memory. He often plays from heart, and still never*

*loses his bearings. [...] And he has a physically good basis for playing, so there's a lot of things that work in Jacob's case. (Interview with Jacob's teacher)*

His teacher was here describing a close-to-perfect fit between Jacob's habitus and what she perceived to be an ideal habitus for a musician. She related this to his intuitive musicality, his technical foundation, his ability to learn music by heart and to his good physique. Another important factor was that, according to Jacob himself, his parents and his teachers, he was not troubled by performance anxiety. Rather, he appeared to enjoy performances, which was supported by the positive response he often got from concert audiences (based on fieldnotes from concerts where I both observed his performances and overheard the feedback he got afterwards). Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, his current privileges were the results of the prizes he had won in competitions over the years. As discussed in section 6.4.5, good results in competitions often result in performance opportunities as well as special opportunities inside the programme. Prize-winners appeared to be consecrated inside the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires, as winning gave a stamp of approval from the larger field of classical music. One of the teachers of programme 2 said they often gave those who had won competitions a reward in form of performance opportunities inside the programme. Ranking highly in competitions seems to have contributed to Jacob's accumulation of symbolic capital that also facilitated access to other contexts, for example invitations to perform in festivals, courses or concert venues.

Jacob identified himself as one who loved playing his instrument, and who wanted to become a musician. To Jacob, becoming a soloist was such an obvious aim that he assumed this was something everyone in a junior conservatoire dreamt of:

*It's an inspiration to know that you're going to play with an orchestra. That is everyone's dream! Even though they might say that they're going to be orchestra musicians or something, of course, everyone is dreaming of playing with an orchestra.<sup>34</sup>*

It was important for him to give an engaging performance of a piece in concerts, and this was something he ranked more highly than having a perfect technique. Another factor he emphasised was that he had no pressure from parents and teachers, and that he simply loved playing his instrument:

*And I feel that many musicians around the world just run technique and are uninspired at stage and that it looks boring. It's possible to see when a musician*

---

34 This comment was also referred to in section 6.2.1

*is on stage whether they like playing, and I think that those who have heard me play know that I really love playing and that it's not being forced upon me.*

To love playing, together with the ability to communicate something to an audience, was something Jacob related to musical talent. He furthermore agreed with the dominant assumptions that talent is an innate gift that cannot be learnt or taught, unlike technique (see section 6.1.3), saying in the interview that ‘technique is something you can learn, but with musicality, you either have it or you don’t’.

### 8.1.2 Ways of engaging

Jacob had a very active schedule during the months of fieldwork, with frequent instrumental lessons, master classes, internal and external concerts, music courses and competitions. Engagement in these activities gave him access to a wide array of learning resources.

First, his active performance schedule was especially notable. Jacob used internal concerts to prepare for more significant performances such as competitions, and he often played the same repertoire in subsequent concerts. By taking all the performance opportunities he could, he managed to gain not only a lot of performing experience, but also a good variety, by performing in various concert halls, for various audiences and with various ensemble partners. He found it important to say yes to all performance invitations he got, ‘because you never know what it might lead to’. His quantity of performance experience is likely to have contributed to his current ability to act ‘pretty cool’ during performances (*interview, teacher*), taking into account that the one thing assumed to remedy performance anxiety was to do many performances (see section 6.4.4).

A second point was the amount of feedback Jacob got from various teachers. He had weekly lessons with two teachers,<sup>35</sup> supplemented by monthly lessons with a third teacher. In addition, he played frequently in master classes as well as on courses for other teachers. As discussed in section 6.3.4, the students who played for more than one teacher often experienced difficulties related to whose advice they should follow. In Jacob’s case on the contrary, playing for more than one teacher appeared to have fostered a sense of autonomy. Jacob felt that he had agency to ‘pick and choose between different options’, and he believed that the way he ended up performing a piece was his choice.

---

<sup>35</sup> He paid extra for additional lessons with a second teacher.

Participating in competitions appeared to be a third significant point in Jacob's ways of engaging. Through competitions, he got experience with performing a repertoire under high pressure as well as with playing in large concert halls. Participating in competitions had also generated a lot of constructive feedback, from both juries and people in the audience. Furthermore, he had developed an understanding that there were narrow margins deciding who won a competition:

*It is also a matter of taste. For example, if one in the jury sees that I have talent but does not like the way I play or really likes someone else, that's fine. There will always be someone who does not like me, while others like my way of playing. It's just a matter of taste. It's very subtle nuances, because the level is very high everywhere.*

He thus said he was always prepared when playing in competitions that someone else might win. Jacob had won several opportunities to perform as a soloist with an orchestra, a learning experience that is rare among junior conservatoire students. Winning competitions had also been a way to build both symbolic as well as economic capital for Jacob, as had his having received several grants. The competitions, courses and auditions he participated in outside the boundaries of the junior conservatoire testify to his high engagement in external contexts.

A last point to address was the support he got from his parents. Both he and his parents addressed the economic issues related to keeping up his current activity level, and Jacob was aware that his parents' support had been crucial for reaching the level of playing he had. 'If it hadn't been for them, I would not be where I am today' he said in the interview. Playing a string instrument is expensive, in terms of the actual instrument including case and bow; and lessons, master classes and summer courses are all costly. Parental support included help with his practice, emotional support, economic support for lessons, courses and instrument, and practical support with getting to all his instrument-related activities. 'His parents know what is required', said Jacob's teacher, who recognised this as highly valuable for Jacob's development. The importance of family support has been noted in several previous studies (Gruber et al., 2008; Sosniak, 1985a).



### 8.1.3 Summary

Jacob was what I have termed a ‘superstar’ student (Perkins, 2011). There appeared to be a common agreement among teachers and leaders that he should be given special opportunities that would best benefit his development. I have identified him as being on an *inbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998, p. 154), investing his identity in becoming a musician. Recalling the values put on performance, goals and competitions (chapter 6), all of this came apparently natural to Jacob. He loved performances, thrived on competitions and constantly had upcoming goals that helped him structure his practice. Furthermore, he was recognised as having a ‘natural musicality’ and an ‘intuition’ that made him interesting to listen to, according to his teacher. In other words, he had *talent capital*, a concept I will return to in chapter 9. Considering all of this, he appeared to be a ‘fish-in-water’, meaning that the logic of the field corresponded with his dispositions, or his habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Furthermore, Jacob was not only recognised as a ‘superstar’ inside the programme, but also in the larger field of music performance. He had achieved this position through winning prizes in competitions, receiving grants and being accepted to play for prestigious teachers in courses, and not least, by being successful in the performance opportunities he had been given. All of this had contributed to a high level of symbolic capital within the learning cultures, and following this, a favourable position in the programme as well as in the larger field of music performance with access to a large array of learning resources both inside the programme and outside.

The range of performances he did during the period of fieldwork, showed a high level of engagement. With Jacob, there were strong forces working towards the same goal of making him succeed as a professional musician. Jacob himself was dedicated to becoming a professional musician, his parents understood what was required from them, his teachers worked towards this goal and through being recognised as a ‘superstar’ student, he had access to the resources necessary to fulfil his ambitions.

## 8.2 Sarah – an anxious student

Sarah started playing her instrument at the age of six, at her parents’ suggestion. Her cousins and siblings all played an instrument, and for Sarah, it felt ‘natural’ to start playing as well. Although she had no objections to start playing, she was

unwilling to practise, something that had 'caused many fights' with her parents over the years. Sarah started her instrumental lessons with one of the teachers from the junior conservatoire, and had played in the Children's orchestra, like Jacob, before she was accepted to the junior conservatoire at age 12.

A dominant theme in her interview was a feeling of being out of place, something she felt stemmed from an early determination not to become a musician. The other theme that penetrated the interview was the anxiety she felt related to performances and to being assessed.

### 8.2.1 Factors affecting engagement

#### **'Keeping the options open'**

At the time of the interview, Sarah was going through a critical phase, centred on whether she should study music in higher education or not. In Sarah's opinion, those students who wanted to become professional musicians had chosen this path many years ago, and she felt like she was running out of time. She was aware that the pre-college years were considered as very important for a musician's development:

*[I]f I wanted to be a musician, I should have chosen it earlier and gone all in, because it's now one can really lay a foundation for one's playing.*

Her parents would like her to study music, while other family members had warned her against it:

*They tell me it's hard to be a musician, you might be lucky and get a job in the orchestra or as a teacher, or maybe you just do freelance work or have a hard student life or something.*

Like her family members, Sarah's instrumental teacher also expressed a negative attitude towards working as a freelance musician, stating that it 'must be very difficult to do that' (*interview, main instrument teacher*). Sarah herself was ambivalent about becoming a freelance musician, and she did not want to teach. Consequently, the possible musical path she could imagine was to get a permanent position in an orchestra, where she knew the competition would be hard. Considering this, she felt that university studies in something other than music would provide her with more opportunities later on compared to music studies. Still, she was reluctant to give up the playing that she had invested so much time and energy in over the years.

## Positioning and self-positioning

Sarah won some competitions a couple of years ago, something that had led to several concert opportunities and a temporary privileged position inside the programme. However, she had become more anxious in performances following the competition, as she felt she had to prove herself more as a prize winner and ‘impress everyone in every concert’. Compared to Jacob, who thrived on the performance opportunities he got after winning competitions, Sarah found them to be more stressful than rewarding. Her performance anxiety, combined with other issues, led to Sarah feeling out of place and not as a ‘real’ musician:

**Sarah:** *That’s why I’m thinking that I perhaps shouldn’t become a [musician], because I feel like I don’t have the right personality to become a musician.*

**Ellen:** *And what kind of personality would you say you need as a musician?*

**Sarah:** *I don’t know, one should get a little nervous, but not as nervous as I get, because that is a little destructive, and I think one should look forward to playing concerts. I think one should look forward to important people coming to your concerts, and not think that ‘now I’m here to impress’, but rather that ‘I’m here to play, because I like it and I cannot live without it’. I don’t think I have the right ... sometimes I feel like I’m not suited to becoming a musician.*

Sarah believed that ‘real’ musicians should love performances and be able to handle their performance anxiety, characteristics that Sarah felt she did not have. Although she had heard the advice of ‘play more concerts, and the anxiety will disappear’ (see section 6.4.4), she had not found that playing many concerts helped at all, and she still got nervous for every performance:

*I’ve been told that the more concerts you play, the less nervous you get. Then I must have plentiful of nervousness – tons – because I get nervous for everything really. Even when playing in retirement homes.*

Since it had not helped playing a lot of concerts, she did not know how to work to reduce her anxiety. Nor did her teacher or the programme offer her any resources for addressing this problem. She thought musicians should have support similar to that of elite athletes, ‘with a person that backs you up, because it’s psychologically challenging to perform and be on stage’.

Sarah found it quite easy to make comparisons between herself and other students since they heard each other play in several contexts during the year, such as orchestra, concerts, master classes and competitions:

**Sarah:** *It’s easy to think ‘those are good, and those are not as good’, and then you want to compare yourself and find out ‘how am I compared to her now?’ And since the programme is so small, it’s very easy to do that. I know who everybody*

*is, and have known them for many years and seen how they have developed, 'oh, now they have become really good' and then, sometimes you think, 'oh, no, what have I done, and where am I?' I'm just being totally honest now, and if you had previously been better than someone, and then suddenly 'wow, he plays so much better than me' and then you feel like 'now I really have to work'. It's like when people say 'you play so good', and then you have to keep up that impression and you just have to run along, and if other people are making great progress, you have to make great progress as well. And one is pushing oneself without really wanting to, to not end up behind or get put on the side. One just wants to be part of the race upwards.*

**Ellen:** ... and keep the distance?

**Sarah:** Yes, to prevent everyone from outrunning you, continuing to be part of the race.

Sarah compared the programme to a constant race in which she considered the other students as competitors who she should outrun or at least keep on a proper distance. Music competitions were a particularly important source for her to compare and assess her own level of playing to others. Even though she had participated in many competitions over the years, she admitted that she 'never really liked competitions'. On one hand, winning competitions had been great for her self-confidence and giving her several performance opportunities both national and abroad. On the other hand, she experienced it as stressful to be a first-prize winner because she did not feel like she had deserved it. In the last competitions she had participated in, she had not made it to the final round, and she had not gotten a prize in competitions she thought she had a fair chance of winning. Since competitions functioned as an important source for knowing her level, failing in them made her wonder what her level really was:

*After this competition I felt like 'what happened now? Where's my level? I didn't know anything after that, and I thought that now I've really hit the bottom. [... ] And then I participated in this local competition, and it was so annoying because I had worked really hard, and normally I'm not satisfied with how I perform, but this time I was really satisfied and a lot of people came to me and said 'I think you're going to win' and 'you played great', but no.*

These experiences with competing might also have strengthened the ambivalence she was currently feeling related to whether being a musician was for her or not.

### 8.2.2 Ways of engaging

Sarah was a hard-working student, in both her instrumental and academic studies. She practised about two hours every day on her instrument, sometimes more and sometimes a little less. Her engagement in the junior conservatoire was mainly directed towards the main instrument lessons and her chamber group, however. With music theory she felt less engaged, something she explained with the earlier mentioned determination not to become a musician:

*Since I thought that I would not become a musician, I was not someone who was curious to find out about all the important musicians, and become familiar with the entire repertoire, and especially with theory, I'm so bad at theory.*

In the programme, students were supposed to have one music theory class every week. Theory lessons were mandatory, but Sarah had nonetheless skipped them for various reasons all the years she had been in the programme. Her lack of interest in theory was something she regretted now, 'because if I want to choose a music performance path I need to be really good in theory as well'.

Sarah furthermore described herself as lacking basic technical competence:

*And my technique ... I have technique of course, one needs technique to be able to play, but playing fast is something I really fear, I fear that my hands will just run away with me because they always have.*

She attributed her current technical difficulties to her former teacher, who she said had taught her a technique she now struggled to discard. Her teacher gave her etudes to practice regularly to improve her technique. But in the observed instrumental lessons, Sarah had not prepared the etudes properly, and was reluctant to play them when her teacher asked her to. In the interview, she confirmed that she mainly focused on playing her pieces when practising. This can either mean that she did not think that the etudes prescribed by her teacher would accommodate her technical problems, or that although she was experiencing technical problems, she was not motivated enough to practise deliberately and overcome the difficulties. Sarah did thus not utilise the resources found in etudes emphasised by her teacher as important.

Turning to orchestra, Sarah described it as often rather 'boring' because of all the waiting. She experienced chamber orchestra differently, although she was not enthusiastic about that either. In the chamber orchestra, 'you cannot trust anyone else to know the part, you need to trust yourself, because we are not so many'. In this smaller orchestra, where she felt more vulnerable than in the symphony orchestra, anxiety again entered the picture, as she was afraid

of spoiling things for others if she did not know her part properly. Thus, she was not particularly motivated to play in either the chamber orchestra or the symphony orchestra.

When Sarah started in the junior conservatoire chamber orchestra, she was placed at the front desk together with the principal. She preferred being in the back, however, and had no ambitions to move further ahead:

**Ellen:** *Have you had any leading positions in the orchestra?*

**Sarah:** *Yes, in the Junior orchestra I was leading the group, but I'm not a person who liked to sit in the front. It sounds silly, I think it's only me, but I become really scared, at least for everything that has to do with music.*

**Ellen:** *Because the spotlight is on you?*

**Sarah:** *Yes, and I'm terrified of ruining it for the others, so then I think it's better to just sit somewhere in the back. My parents say I need to be more self-confident, but with music it's just not possible. (Interview, Sarah)*

Again, anxiety combined with a feeling of being out of place came in the way for Sarah's engagement with learning resources.

Sarah had not been particularly active with seeking out learning resources outside the programme, aside from participating in competitions. Although many students from this programme went to summer courses, she had only attended courses a couple of times.

### 8.2.3 Summary

Right from the outset of learning an instrument, Sarah had been determined that she would not become a musician. This appeared primarily to be a stance against her parents, who demanded that she continued and that she did a certain amount of practice each day. This determination had led to what I have identified as a 'peripheral trajectory' (Wenger, 1998), as she had not been motivated to fully engage in the pursuit of a performance career. Trajectories should not be considered as a 'fixed course or destination' (Wenger, 1998, p. 154), and Sarah was currently unsure of what career she should aim for, as well as what kind of career that was attainable for her.

Compared to Jacob's case, where there was a strong correspondence between his habitus and the values in the learning cultures, Sarah did not feel at home with the dominating values of the learning culture described in chapter 6. Her active stance from an early age of not becoming a musician, can explain both

why she currently expressed ambivalence towards becoming a musician, and why she had not sought out the learning resources that would have prepared her better for a music career, such as being more engaged in learning music theory or working more on her technique. Sarah's case is an example of how it is not only a question of access, but also a question of motivation to engage with the resources available. She struggled with performance anxiety and lack of what she perceived to be important competencies for a musician such as technical and theoretical competence. Furthermore, she was not offered resources to accommodate her anxiety beyond the repeated advice of 'play more concerts'. While performance anxiety is highly common among musicians (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Kemp, 1996), this kind of advice served to make her anxiety into an individual problem for Sarah, as something she had to handle alone. Because of her high degree of performance anxiety, she did not feel she was a 'real' musician since a 'real' musician according to Sarah should love to perform and be able to control his or her performance anxiety.

### **8.3 Evelyn – a versatile student**

Evelyn started playing piano at the age of six and her main instrument when she was eight. Over the years, she had played in several orchestras in her local community, but when she realised that the local top orchestra 'wasn't that great, not everyone wanted to be there', she started thinking of going to a junior conservatoire. She came to the programme when she was 15, something both Evelyn and her teacher described as a little late: 'I think I'd probably be better now if I had a better teacher early on, but you can't really help that'. Despite technical difficulties when she first came to the programme, her teacher found that 'she had a voice' (*interview, main instrument teacher*). To her teacher, 'having a voice' was synonymous with having musical talent. At the time of the interview, Evelyn had just been accepted as a student in higher music education, and was in a process of finding a teacher at the senior department.

A dominant theme in the interview was Evelyn's aim to develop competence as a versatile musician. This influenced both how she positioned herself, compared to other students, and how she engaged with valued activities and available learning resources.

### 8.3.1 Factors affecting engagement

#### **Becoming a versatile musician**

*I think the main thing for me is being a versatile musician, so not just going down one route, that's really important for me, because you get some musicians who say: 'I want to be in a quartet', 'I want to be an orchestra player', 'I want to be a soloist', and it's shutting down a lot of options. So when I'm here I'm just going to try as many things as possible, and then go down some route, and I'm not really sure what that is yet. Hopefully I'll find out.*

Evelyn wanted to become a versatile musician, which contrasted with many of the other students in the study whose career ambitions were restricted to becoming a soloist or an orchestra musician. When asked what she would have to do to get where she wanted she answered:

*I think just taking on as many opportunities as possible. Never saying no to a performing opportunity, just trying everything, and never refusing to play somewhere, no matter where it is, even if it's horrible, just doing it anyway. Just getting out there and doing stuff.*

She was also one of few students in the study who included teaching as part of her future career plan.

#### **Positioning and self-positioning**

Evelyn had arrived quite late to the programme, and so far she had not been offered any special opportunities there. She had not been principal in the orchestra, for instance, and when she auditioned for the flagship string ensemble, she was not admitted. This did not appear to be problematic to her at any point in the interview. Since she had been at the programme for only two years, she found it natural that other, more experienced students got opportunities before she did. She described her own level of playing when she entered the programme as 'not particularly good', which may help to explain why she so readily accepted her current position in the junior conservatoire. Another factor that might have protected her self-confidence was her versatile background and experience that included competencies beyond the ones valued inside the programme. This was for example evident in how she positioned herself as different from most string players:

*Also like, playing popular stuff is really fun, and I think string players, they forget to have fun sometimes. It's always like, it must be very strict, it must be classical, no jazz, no improvisation, and I think string players need to loosen up a bit. A lot. (Laughter)*



Evelyn found it positive and beneficial that classical musicians ‘branched out’ and played jazz, improvised and had a broad range of musical interests in addition to their classical education. Emphasising versatility in this way was not something I found to be a characteristic feature of the learning cultures as a whole (see chapter 6).

She described her own talent as having a good musicality, an individual sound on the instrument, and the ability to hold an audience. She believed that talent was something one was born with, and something other than technical brilliance, which could be worked on. Since she was confident that she had this musicality, she pictured that she would be in a good position for further music studies after having worked more on the technical issues she was currently struggling with.

### 8.3.2 Ways of engaging

Evelyn appeared to be highly engaged in her own musical development, evident in both her initiative in instrumental lessons and her engagement in elective courses in the junior conservatoire. She described the relationship with her main teacher as ‘quite interactive, it’s not kind of teacher–student, it’s more sort of two musicians working together’, a description I found echoed my own interpretations of her lessons. Evelyn was taking initiative in a very natural way by deciding on what she needed to work on in the pieces she played:

*Yeah, I think it’s important to be really engaged, and take as much as you can from the lesson and then put it into your own playing, and taking initiative is very important because teachers like that, and it will improve your playing as well.*

Evelyn displayed what Reeve (2012) has described as ‘agentic engagement’, which can be fostered in students when the teacher adopts an ‘autonomy supportive motivating style’ (p. 165). Evelyn’s teacher offered her this agentic space in the lessons I observed, by inviting Evelyn to bring in her opinions, both on how to solve technical issues as well as on interpretative questions.

Just like Sarah, Evelyn said that her first teacher taught her ‘a lot of really, really bad technique’. When she came to the programme and changed teacher, she thus had to ‘make a lot of technical changes’, something she was still working on during the observed lessons. She built up her practice at home around exercises and etudes, in addition to work on repertoire. Having earned a place in higher music education, she was in a process of building up the daily amount of practice, and currently she aimed for four hours practice per day.

Evelyn said she 'love[s] playing concerts', and 'take[s] pretty much all the performance opportunities' she could get. She did however experience a hint of performance anxiety when doing classical concerts, and she would thus like to play more of them: 'I guess that if you perform a lot then it's a lot easier because you just know that, you're on the stage, it's cool, you can just go and do it'. She also played on master classes when she had an opportunity, and she had participated in a couple of competitions, although she had not won any prizes yet.

Not only was Evelyn aiming for a versatile music career, she was already a versatile student. In the programme, she had electronic studio as an elective and vocal as a second instrument together with chamber choir. Outside the programme, she played in bands that played 'sort of alternative folk, jazz, and lots of different kinds of things' and she wrote her own songs. In the extract below, she described electronic studio as really useful for the competence she wanted to develop:

*I've learned a lot from electronic studio, actually; that's been really really useful for me because I think it's so important to know how to produce your own music, especially if you're doing non-classical, more electronic based stuff, say if you're in a band and you need to produce some music or mix things, then it's really useful to know how to use the equipment. I have been in recording studios before as well, because I do some session work.*

Evelyn found that she had access to resources inside the programme for developing as the versatile musician she wanted to be. Still, even though the programme opened up possibilities for developing a manifold set of competencies through electives, her main instrument lessons were no more versatile than the other lessons I observed. They were restricted to learning what her teacher felt she needed as a *classical* musician, something Evelyn neither criticised nor even commented upon.

### 8.3.3 Summary

Evelyn was already a versatile musician who aimed to create a portfolio career combining various music-related jobs. She played in various bands, she did session work and she wrote music. In the programme, she was given resources for building musical capital as a versatile musician through her elective courses in vocal lessons, choir and electronic studio, something she benefitted from when performing in bands outside the programme. Her engagement in contexts

external to the junior conservatoire in this way inspired her engagement with learning resources available through the programme and vice versa.

Like Jacob, Evelyn was identified as being on an *inbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998), meaning that she was investing her identity in future participation in the field. Still, her goal was different from Jacob's, as she aimed for a career that included performing in various genres combined with teaching while Jacob aimed for a soloist career combined with orchestra playing. Evelyn only related to the paradigmatic trajectory of becoming a solo performer (described in section 6.2.1) when distinguishing herself from other musicians, who she felt closed down possible options within music too early. There can be several explanations for why it was possible for Evelyn to distance herself from what appeared to be the dominant values within the learning cultures. First, it might be that the value of a solo performance career was not as dominant within this particular programme as in the other two. This argument is supported by looking at the ambitions of the other students from the programme who, like Evelyn, envisaged more manifold future careers than did students in the two other programmes. Another explanation may be that Evelyn arrived at the programme at age 15, which is quite late compared to many of the other interviewed students. At that time, she already played in bands and composed music in addition to practising her classical repertoire, and she had musician friends with different values from the ones described as prominent in the junior conservatoire. Her musical habitus had thus been shaped largely outside the realms of the learning cultures of the junior conservatoire, and she still engaged actively in these other music communities alongside her engagement in the junior conservatoire. A final possible explanation is her 'sense of limits' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). She described her technique as 'really bad' when she entered the programme, and she was surprised both by getting in at the programme and by getting in to higher music education. Inside the programme, she had not been accepted in to the flagship ensemble, something that perhaps signalled that she was not one of those who *should* dream of becoming a solo performer. Still, her teacher attributed her with talent capital, and furthermore as one who was sufficiently dedicated and determined to get where she wanted musically.

## 8.4 Andrew – an outsider student

Andrew started playing at the age of four with 'a teacher who was very liberal' and 'just wanted you to have fun mainly'. At the age of ten, he entered the programme and began working with his current teacher. The motivation for applying was that the level of the tuition he was getting earlier 'wasn't that good basically so I wanted better everything'. He explained that the first years with his current teacher had to be spent re-learning technique, similar to Sarah and Evelyn.

Andrew is labelled as an outsider student, as he was one of two students in the material who were certain that he would study something other than music performance in university. His lack of ambition for a performance career appeared to be a significant theme in his trajectory, influencing his rather low engagement with available learning resources and both how he was positioned as well as how he sought to position himself inside the learning cultures.

### 8.4.1 Factors affecting engagement

#### Becoming an amateur musician

Becoming a professional musician did not appear to be something Andrew had ever dreamed of. However, he could imagine studying music history or theory 'without focusing too much on the instrument itself', and combine it with other subjects in university. He could also picture himself doing some private instrumental teaching in the future, and he wanted to continue to play music in the university orchestra or in chamber groups with friends. Becoming a high-level amateur musician appeared to be what motivated him to continue in the programme and develop his skills on the instrument:

**Ellen:** *Even though you don't want to become a [professional] musician, you still find the time here valuable?*

**Andrew:** *Yeah, definitely. Also there's quite a lot of amateur musicians in England and Europe in general. It's not like if you don't become a professional musician it's just the end because then there's nothing else to do. There's quite a lot of really good quality stuff going on [ ... ] But I still need to improve a lot before that obviously. So that's why I want to stay at [the programme] until I'm 18, if not longer. I don't know.*

Andrew had thus chosen a path apart from the trajectories leading towards a career as professional musician that Jacob and Evelyn were aiming for.

### **Positioning and self-positioning**

Andrew had been given a number of opportunities inside the programme. He had great experiences with chamber music, and he had in general stayed with the same group throughout the school year; considered as beneficial by students (see section 7.3.2). He had furthermore had the opportunity to lead his instrument group in the orchestra several times. He found that enjoyable, but did not consider it important to do it often, and he did not have any wishes to play in more concerts than he currently did.

**Ellen:** *Do you have other examples of opportunities you have been given at the programme [in addition to being principal]?*

**Andrew:** *What do you mean, just in general?*

**Ellen:** *Yes. Have you played in any special concerts or...?*

**Andrew:** *I'm not the ideal person to ask because I don't really push for playing in special concerts because I don't really mind that much.*

Later in the interview he distinguished himself from those students who 'can't just await their turn' and kept pushing for sitting higher up in the orchestra or play in a better chamber music group. Andrew did thus not identify with those students who always strived to get better positions. Nor had he considered participating in competitions, something that appeared to be beyond his 'sense of limit' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164):

*I guess if I really really really wanted to do the [internal competition] I could, but it would just be a little bit embarrassing. At the programme? [...] I'm sure there is something, but I don't feel a particular urge to do that. To be honest I prefer to play chamber music to solo in many ways because it's harder, more challenging to get it right. It's with other people, which is more fun.*

This underlines an assumption that competitions are for those who stand a chance of benefitting from them through getting a prize. In Andrew's mind, however, it would only be 'embarrassing' to participate in one. The second interesting point in Andrew's comments above is that he positioned himself more as a chamber musician than a solo musician. To him, being a chamber musician was more challenging than playing solo repertoire. Solo concerts were 'not really worth it' and he considered chamber music as more rewarding, and as something 'not everyone can do' (*interview*). To be able to play chamber music was furthermore something Andrew found characterised talented people, as

opposed to other students who could do a lot of solo performances, but were what he described as 'basically machines'. He identified himself as belonging to the group of talented students, but admitted that he perhaps had been relying too much on his talent and said, 'I could be a lot better on the instrument if I had focused more in practice instead of just relaxing and just relying on that [the talent]'

#### 8.4.2 Ways of engaging

A recurring theme in Andrew's story was his low level of engagement in many of the learning contexts he attended inside the programme. This was evident in the little time he spent on practice compared to the other students interviewed and also in his attitudes towards performance, music theory and orchestra.

When Andrew started the programme, he was allocated a teacher he regarded as 'one of the best' at the programme. However, he had a feeling of not living up to her standards, and felt that she was frustrated over his lack of practice:

*You have to put a lot of practice in, which has been quite frustrating for her I guess. I have benefitted a lot from it, but I think she feels she could have taken one of her students from home and put him or her in my place.*

His teacher also described some tensions related to the discrepancy between her expectations of practice between lessons and the amount of practice Andrew put in. While most students interviewed described a perpetual feeling of not having practised enough, Andrew was not motivated to practise more hours than he currently did. What he tried to achieve, however, was an increased focus and quality in his practice. Like Evelyn and Sarah, Andrew had to spend a considerable amount of time on technical work when he came to his current teacher. A problem, as he described it, was his lack of motivation to do these exercises:

*Theoretically, I should be playing scales for like 15 minutes in the beginning and then go into pieces or studies or whatever, but sometimes I go straight into pieces when I can't be bothered. I also think the problem with scales is that I don't learn them enough. I play them, but I just play them. As long as they sound right, I don't look at the music and then close the book and then play the scale with the correct fingering and slurs or whatever, so that's more about patience really. Because I'm so impatient to go into the pieces because that's what I enjoy most.*

Andrew was thus aware of what was expected of him, and how he was supposed to practise in order to achieve better results, but still, he often skipped this part when practising.

Regarding concerts, he tried to not do too many of them. He enjoyed playing solo concerts in his regular school, but in the programme he preferred chamber music to solo performances. He found solo performances inside the programme to be stressful, 'because there are people watching you, experts, you have to be more careful'. This resembled Sarah's anxiousness about being assessed, while it contrasted the stories of Jacob and Evelyn, who took all the performance opportunities they could get.

He found music theory to be the 'least enjoyable thing', and orchestra 'wasn't [his] favourite'. Even though he had gotten into the flagship ensemble of the programme, he was dreading the amount of rehearsals he now would have to attend. Andrew thus had varying degrees of engagement, and was much more engaged in chamber music and his instrumental lessons than in the other learning contexts offered through the junior conservatoire.

### 8.4.3 Summary

Andrew's lack of musical ambitions made him stand out from the others in the material, and I have thus labelled him an 'outsider student'. His learning trajectory can be described as an *outbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998), which eventually would lead out of the specialised music community. His lack of a long-term motivation to become a professional musician appeared to influence both how he positioned himself related to central values in the learning cultures and his ways of engaging with the learning resources offered. Since Andrew did not adhere to the *illusio* of achieving a performance career, he did not engage in the game being played and, for example, did not strive to live up to his teacher's expectations of practice.

Andrew's position as one who was certain that he would not become a musician and who was not motivated to put in the expected amount of practice, was not found among any of the students from the two other programmes. Although there were students in the other programmes who said they did not always practise sufficiently, they reported feeling bad about it, and indicated that they would like to increase their amount of practice in the future. Andrew, on the other hand, said many of his friends in the programme practised less than he

did, positioning his amount of practice as normal and not something he found to be problematic. The only problematic side of it was that he felt sorry for the tensions it created in the relation with his main instrument teacher.

## 8.5 Benjamin – an academic student

Benjamin started playing the instrument when he was 7 years old at his mother's initiative. At first, he did not want to play a string instrument, but he nevertheless started, had a quick progression compared to others who started at the same time, and began to like it. He got into the programme when he was 13, and before that he had played in various local orchestras. He did not play any other instruments and did not currently engage in other musical activities outside the junior conservatoire except the weekly lessons he had with a local teacher. As described in section 5.1.1, students in programme 1 were expected to continue to play for their local teacher even though they had regular lessons with an instrumental teacher at the junior conservatoire.

I have labelled Benjamin as an academic student because he had both academic and musical ambitions, and strived to keep both options open, very much like Sarah. High academic ambitions characterised several of the students interviewed, and in particular those students who did not yet know whether they wanted to study music or not.

### 8.5.1 Factors affecting engagement

#### 'Becoming as good as I can'

*I plan to apply for higher music education when it's time, and become as good as I can by then, and at the same time have relatively high grades, and see where I end up.*

Benjamin's first priority was to get into higher music education. However, since he was not certain that his level of playing would be sufficient to pass the entrance auditions he also worked hard on his academic subjects. Like Sarah, he was in this way keeping his options for university studies open. Benjamin and Sarah's reasons for keeping the options open were different, however. Whereas Sarah had doubts regarding whether she was *suited* to become a musician, Benjamin felt like he needed a backup-plan in case he did not become *good*



*enough* to get into higher music education. Benjamin dreamt of achieving a job in an orchestra and could imagine being an instrumental teacher in higher music education, but he distanced himself from teaching in the municipal schools of music and arts, considered among the ‘undesirable trajectories’ among some of the students in the two Norwegian programmes (see section 6.2.3). When asked what he thought he would be doing ten years from now he answered that he hoped he would still be doing music:

*If everything goes the way I want them to, I'm still playing my instrument. I don't necessarily have to be educated as a musician, but I hope that I'm still involved with music, and that I'm still allowed to bring joy to others, get something back and see that my playing can affect people, because that is really what I enjoy about playing.*

What was most important to him was thus to continue to affect people with his music, even though it did not necessarily have to be as a professional musician.

### **Positioning and self-positioning**

Benjamin's plan A and plan B described above can be considered as him expressing a ‘sense of limits’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164), something that was even more evident when he described his future musical dreams:

*[T]he dream is to sit in an orchestra and play really well, and it might be strange to say it, but it would be fun to become a soloist, but that is of course only a dream.*

He dared to state the dream of becoming an orchestra musician, but becoming a soloist was something he said with a small laughter and a reservation that this was of course only a dream. A sense of limit was also traceable in his attitudes towards competitions. Like Sarah, he expressed ambivalence about participating in competitions, both because he regarded his chances of winning as small, and because he felt that music should not be about winning and comparing oneself. The joy he experienced when he was able to affect people in the audience in concerts was thus absent when he participated in competitions.

*It has something to do with the fact that you're not playing music to bring joy to others anymore, you're playing to get something back and win, that's why you participate right, to win, and that's not what music is about for me.*

He therefore had a low motivation to do competitions, even though he recognised that competitions included resources for learning through offering valuable performance experiences and feedback from the jury.

### 8.5.2 Ways of engaging

Benjamin was ambitious, but he directed his energy towards both a performance career and an academic career, something that influenced his engagement in the valued activities and with available learning resources in the junior conservatoire. For instance, it caused tension for him regarding practice. Even though he aimed to practice two hours a day, his schoolwork often came in the way:

*Perhaps that's what I regret, choosing the education programme I did. After reading three hours of chemistry you're supposed to go down and practise Bruch, which you've played a thousand times before, and then I often find that it's better to get some sleep.*

Even though he had more time to practise during holidays, he found it hard to keep up a regular practice then as well. He had not participated in any summer courses, although he said he would like to do some in the future. He did not have the impression that many students from the programme travelled to summer courses, and his teacher did not recommend any courses specifically. This was in contrast to programmes 2 and 3, where most students interviewed participated in courses during the summer.

Learning from peers was a recurring theme for Benjamin. Benjamin's teacher frequently arranged the instrumental lessons as group tuition. Even in individual lessons, students would often drop in and listen in when they had time in their schedule. Even though Benjamin regarded the one-to-one lessons as 'the best' and the ones he learned the most from, he also valued these group lessons. Observing the other students play became a resource for him, both to notice alternative ways of playing something and as a resource for comparison. Because of the frequent group meetings, he felt familiar with the other students, and he described a climate where one could use the other students as learning resources also outside the lessons:

*[A fellow student] and I went up to a studio, she played the same piece as I did, and then we played the same part, one first and then the other. She made a glissando that I had not done before, and I had to ask her 'what did you do there? That was really good, I need to copy that.' So, I will claim that it is a fair competition here.*

Benjamin regarded the competition between students as 'sound', meaning that he did not experience any jealousy between students, and that he felt the environment as open enough to ask other students for help, and that other students were willing to offer this help.

### 8.5.3 Summary

Benjamin might be considered to be on an *inbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998), investing his identity in a future performance career, even though his engagement was more peripheral than for instance Evelyn's and Jacob's because he had not yet dedicated himself completely to music. Since he doubted his abilities as a musician, he wanted to keep the trajectory leading towards an academic career open for as long as possible. His work to keep both trajectories open led to tensions for him in terms of intrinsic stress, feelings of guilt and a high workload. Benjamin acknowledged the values of practice, competitions and having goals addressed in section 6.3, but he found it hard to live up to them.

One thing that stood out in Benjamin's interview was his description of peers as important learning resources. Benjamin met regularly with his teacher's students in group tuition, ensemble playing and concerts. These regular encounters seem to have led to relationships with peers characterised by trust and a belief that they had something to learn from each other. Although other students also described close friendship with other students, Benjamin was the only one of the interviewed students who described playing for other students on their own initiative as a way to learn new things and find inspiration.

## 8.6 Christine – a star student

Christine started playing her instrument at the age of six, motivated by older siblings who played instruments. After some years, her teacher encouraged her to apply for the junior conservatoire and she was admitted at the age of 14.

Christine aspired to become a professional musician, and had already earned a place in higher music education at the time of the interview. I have categorised her as a 'star'-student, different from Jacob, whom I characterised as a 'superstar' student. That is not because other students in this programme appeared to be bigger stars than she was, but rather that the programme did not appear to have any 'superstars', meaning students who were acknowledged inside the *whole* programme as rising stars *and* given special privileges by the programme management.

At the time of the interview, she had just been accepted as a student in higher music education, and was already preparing what repertoire she wanted to embark on before the semester started.

## 8.6.1 Factors affecting engagement

### Becoming a professional musician

*This is what I want to spend my life on, that I am spending my life on, and that I have been spending my life on for many years.*

Christine had not always known that she wanted to become a musician, but at the time of fieldwork, she was certain that she wanted to pursue a performance career. The changing point for her occurred when she started having lessons with her teacher in the programme, and started attending senior students' exam recitals and master classes where senior students played. This inspired her, and caused a significant increase in time spent practising: 'I practised several hours after school had ended, stayed until late in the evening, when I had to leave because of the alarm'. Following the increased amount of practice, she experienced that she became a lot better, 'and it was after that I got all these performance gigs'.

Her current goals were 'to play really really well, and hopefully earn a job in an orchestra to have a steady income [ ... ] and then do smaller things like chamber music, perhaps combined with session work'. What she feared was having to take a job as a teacher in the municipal schools of music and arts because she needed the money. Like Benjamin, Christine found a teaching job in the schools of music and arts as belonging to the undesired future careers (see section 6.2.3).

### Positioning and self-positioning

Christine appeared to have a high standing inside the programme, evident, for instance, in her role as principal in the orchestra. In the orchestra, she appeared to have a natural authority as principal, both shown in how the conductor addressed her and how she used her agentive space as principal:

The chamber orchestra is practicing a piece by the composer Elgar. The conductor asks to take from the letter D, because 'there are some strange tones there'. Christine turns to her group and tells them 'it's a C there, don't be afraid of it'. They continue all the way through the piece. Afterwards the conductor asks, looking at Christine, whether they should start on Tchaikovsky or play Elgar once more, and she answers that she thinks they should spend more time on Elgar, and she turns immediately to her group and tells them to 'watch out for the C in the second entrance as well'. (*Fieldnote, chamber orchestra rehearsal P1*)

The agency given to Christine by the conductor, and her natural way of taking it, was something that struck me in the observations as unusual from the other orchestra rehearsals I had observed. She confirmed in the interviews that she enjoyed being in a leading position where she was able to influence the interpretation of the music being played:

*I'm comfortable there. I've played in some orchestras, and usually I'm seated as principal. I've played in ensembles where I have always decided on the voice, and also in the chamber orchestra I've decided how things should be. It feels so good to sit there and play the music as one is feeling that is should be, and it's really frustrating when I'm sitting in the back and completely disagree with the person in front, and maybe feeling that I could have done a better job myself.*

For her, a leading position felt more natural than sitting in the back of the orchestra. As described in section 7.3.4, it could be problematic if a student without such a natural authority had the role as principal in the orchestra. In Christine's case, her authority appeared to feel natural both to her and the other students in the orchestra.

Christine furthermore had a position in her local community as a rising star, referred to in a local newsletter as 'one of our greatest musical talents' (*newspaper article shown to me during fieldwork*). She was thus frequently invited to do performances in churches, weddings or on other local occasions.

### 8.6.2 Ways of engaging

Christine vividly engaged with available learning resources both inside the programme and at its borders. Especially important was her relationship with her main instrument teacher, who appeared to have a high opinion of her. For example, he offered her as many lessons she wanted, and for whatever length, even though he was only paid for 45 minutes every third week. The weeks before she auditioned for higher music education, for instance, she came in for lessons several times a week.<sup>36</sup>

Her engagement was also displayed in the activities and concerts she attended with senior students in the institution. For example, she attended most of the exam recitals with senior students held each spring, she had been part of an

---

<sup>36</sup> It must be underscored that this teacher offered extra lessons to all of his students, as he had time for it and considered it highly meaningful to teach students on the pre-college level, although not all students took him up on his offer and asked for more lessons than the scheduled ones.

ensemble projects with cellists in the senior department, and she attended master classes intended for senior students. Exam recitals and master classes were all public events, but Christine was one of few JC students who attended them. Since she was certain that she wanted to pursue a musical career, she was less concerned with her academic studies and would occasionally drop tuition at her regular school to have instrumental lessons or listen to exam recitals or other activities taking place in the senior department. She did thus not experience the tension described by Benjamin caused by having to balance his time between practice and academic schoolwork.

The exam recitals she had attended became a theme in one of the lessons I observed when her teacher invited her to discuss the students' performances. He seemed genuinely interested to hear her opinions, and Christine appeared confident in her assessments of senior students' playing, and she even brought in criticism of some of them. These informal negotiations of meaning of the exams they both had attended could also be considered as important resources of developing an artistic self, as Christine through them could test her opinions of the performances in a conversation together with a more experienced musician.

In the main instrument lessons, she acted more agentive than most of the observed students, similar to Evelyn's observed behaviour. Christine decided what she needed to work on, and brought in her own opinions and asked questions when there was something she did not understand. She would even openly disagree with her teacher without this creating tension in the relationship, something I did not observe in any of the other instrumental lessons. The role offered to her by her teacher signalled that Christine was *his* 'star student', and a student to whom he would like to give the best possible starting point for becoming a musician.

Christine's engagement in music stretched beyond the borders of the programme. She had been given many performance opportunities in her hometown, both for solo performance with an orchestra, various performances around the city, and performances and recordings with bands belonging to other genres than classical. Her engagement in bands was, however, something she kept from her instrumental teacher, as she felt he would not approve of it:

*I've played in a band, and that was something I didn't dare to tell my teacher. And when I came to the lesson with a pickup on the instrument, it was not so popular ... He didn't exactly say anything negative about it, but I noticed that he thought it could take time away from things I should rather do.*

This is interesting as an example of that which is forbidden inside the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires. Even though the teacher did not ‘exactly say anything negative about it’, his way of reacting made Christine understand that he was not in favour of her musical versatility.

One thing that stood out with Christine, was how she thrived in concerts, and especially concerts for an attentive audience:

*[B]ecause of the tension that arises when you know that those in the audience are actually listening to you. It becomes an interplay between audience and performer, and then things happen in the performance which doesn't usually happen.*

She compared programme concerts to playing on external events for people ‘who really don't care about what you're playing’, where she appreciated the former type. In concerts where she experienced that the audience was listening, she found that she played better than in the rehearsal room. In this way, concerts became a unique learning experience for her, and something she were looking forward to. However, Christine took a strong stance against competitions, which, like Benjamin, she felt were about something else than what music *should* be about:

*I'm not fond of them at all. I don't like it. I feel that music is not about being best, it's about communicating things and people communicate in different ways, and I feel it's wrong, it's like compartmentalizing musicians, like saying that whoever plays fastest is the best. No, I'm no fan of competitions.<sup>37</sup>*

There were other students in the study who did not participate in competitions where this decision appeared to be due to a ‘sense of limit’ – that they did not perceive themselves as good enough to participate in one, or due to performance anxiety. Even though Christine would have a fair chance of succeeding in a competition, and did not suffer from anxiety, she was still not interested in doing them. While it was common for students in programme 2 to participate in competitions, only a few students in programme 1 participated frequently in competitions. It was thus not something that was expected among her peer group in the programme. Another element that can give perspective to her stance, was that her teacher also expressed critical thoughts on competitions.

---

<sup>37</sup> Quotation repeated from section 6.4.5

### 8.6.3 Summary

I have identified Christine as a star student being on an *inbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998), as she was standing on the doorstep of higher music education and had decided to dedicate her full time to music and her instrument. Christine described herself as a dedicated musician and was perceived as one as well by her instrumental teacher. Her way of engaging with learning resources can be described as 'agentic engagement' (Reeve, 2012, p. 151), similar to Evelyn. She was proactive in both her lessons and in the chamber orchestra, bringing in constructive suggestions on how to do things, and by this shaping her own learning process. Christine was uncomfortable with sitting in the back of the orchestra and having to play in ways that she might not agree with. This position can be contrasted with Sarah, who preferred to be in the back of the orchestra somewhere, rather than sit in the front and be responsible for the whole group. Another theme that stood out with Christine was her strong agentic voice when it came to interpretation. She had sturdy opinions about music, evident in the main instrument lessons and orchestra rehearsals where she expressed opinions on how to form a piece, in how she described feeling uncomfortable when she played in ensembles without the opportunity to influence the interpretation, and in her assessment of the exam recitals she had heard.

Like Jacob, Christine was a fish-in-water: there was a correspondence between her habitus, including her values and aspirations, and that which was given value inside the learning cultures. This became especially clear when she described how she loved to perform. She found performances to be unique resources for learning, as she often experienced that new things happened when she played for a receptive audience. Andrew and Sarah, on the contrary, preferred performing in front of non-musicians, as that felt less threatening. While they were concerned about being assessed, Christine focused on what she could potentially learn through performing. She described one of her greatest strengths as not being negatively affected by nerves, and that she therefore was able to perform at the top of her game in concerts.

She rejected competitions, but based on an argument that the core of music is about something else than competing and playing fast with flawless technique. She instead placed emphasis on musicality and being able to express something through one's playing, in line with the assumptions about musicality as being more important than technique discussed in section 6.1.3.



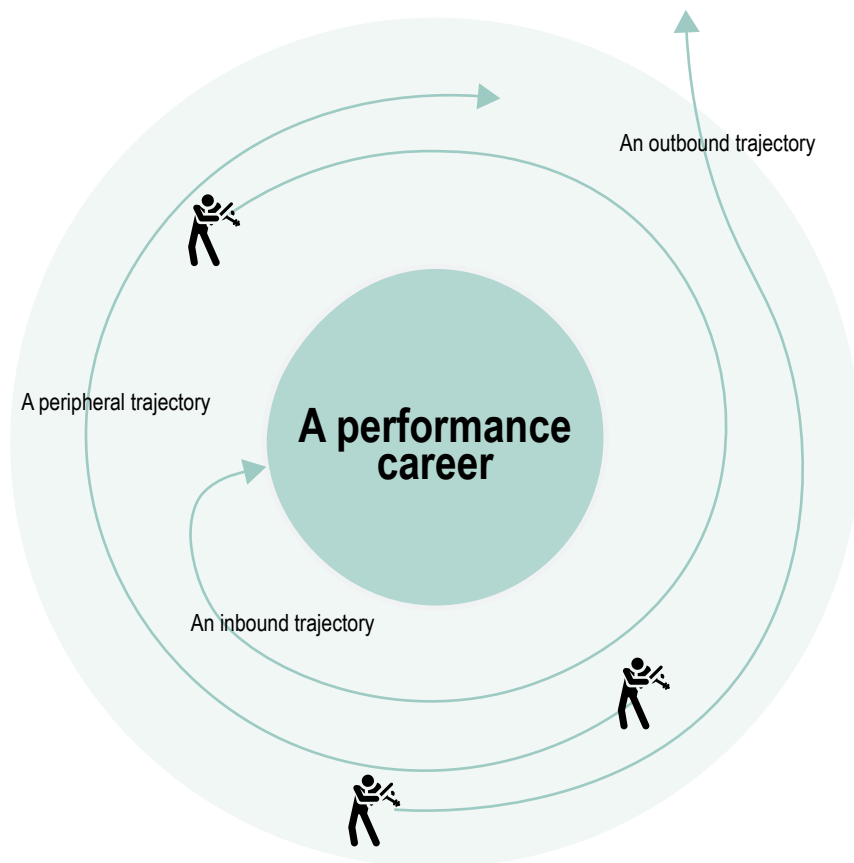
## 8.7 Bringing the six student cases together

I have chosen to present these six student cases as they represented six different ways of engaging with valued activities and important learning resources offered through the learning cultures. Important factors that appeared to influence students' engagement were their musical ambitions, how they were positioned in the learning cultures and how they sought to position themselves.

Using Wenger's concept of trajectories of participation to explore the various student trajectories, I found three different trajectories among the student cases discussed. Jacob, Evelyn and Christine can all be said to be on an *inbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998), leading towards a career as musicians, although they framed being a musician in different ways. Jacob and Christine aimed for a career as solo performers and orchestra musicians. Evelyn pictured a versatile career consisting of performances in various settings and in various genres combined with teaching. Sarah and, to a degree, Benjamin were identified as being on a peripheral trajectory. Sarah because she struggled with anxiety that stood in the way of her engagement with valued learning resources combined with a feeling of not being a 'real musician', and was thus uncertain of whether a music career was the right thing for her to do. Benjamin's trajectory is also partly peripheral because he had not dedicated himself fully to a musician trajectory yet. Andrew was identified as being on an *outbound trajectory*, leading out of the field of specialised music performance. He had taken an active stance that he wanted to keep music as a hobby and get a profession within a different field. The model in Figure 1 is an illustration of the various trajectories.

It must be underlined, however, that these trajectories are pointing in a direction, which made it meaningful for students to currently engage in the ways they did in the practices of the learning cultures. Whether the students I have identified as being on an inbound trajectory actually achieve their current goal of a performance career is dependent on a number of factors, such as how they succeed in auditions, their motivation and how they experience a potential transition to higher music education as well as the transition into professional life, previously characterised as crucial points in musicians' career development (Juuti & Littleton, 2010, 2012).

Through the lens of Bourdieu, a student's positioning within a field will depend on the student's capital and habitus. Those who appeared to be fish-in-water (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), meaning that their habitus corresponded with the values in the learning cultures, were most obviously Jacob and Christine,



**Figure 1:** *Students' learning trajectories*

who both wanted to become professional musicians and who had the access they needed to succeed in their pursuit. What stood out as the decisive factor was that they both enjoyed performing and were not troubled by performance anxiety. The importance of this was strengthened when exploring other students' problematic relationship to performance. One could assume that students in a junior conservatoire would be motivated to engage in all performance activities offered to them and that everyone would strive to get principal positions and experience as solo performers. For example, Perkins (2011) found that students who lacked sufficient opportunities inside the conservatoire, sought them externally instead. This was not the case in general for the junior conservatoire students interviewed, however. Several factors seemed to lead to lower degrees of engagement, the most significant of which I identified

as *performance anxiety*, *sense of limits* and *musical ambitions*. These will be elaborated in the following.

Performance anxiety, interlinked with her anxiety about being assessed and judged, was the greatest obstacle for Sarah's engagement in central learning contexts. Andrew described a milder version of performance anxiety, as he mainly wanted to avoid playing solo concerts inside the programme. In various ways, their relationship to performance caused Sarah and Andrew to not aim for more performance opportunities or principal positions than they currently had, even though this could have given them access to a larger array of learning resources. As described in section 6.4.4, the resources offered to students struggling with performance anxiety is limited to 'play more concerts and it will disappear'. Students who experienced performance anxiety were generally left to their own devices, and the anxiety might therefore lead to students defining themselves out of the field as 'not a real musician' as the case was for Sarah. I will return to the concept of *performance capital* as a symbolic asset included in the broader concept of musical capital in the next chapter.

A second important factor influencing students' engagement appeared to be their sense of limits, evident in how they positioned themselves compared to other students inside the programme. Furthermore, this sense of limits or sense of reality appeared to regulate the goals to which students aspired, and to influence the choices and challenges they experienced as suitable and realistic. This was evident when Andrew said he would only feel 'embarrassed' if he signed up for the competition arranged by the programme. Intimately related to students' sense of limits is a third factor – their musical ambitions – which also appeared to influence their engagement. What kind of career students felt entitled to hope for was in many cases telling of their current position inside the learning cultures, as many of the students expressed future dreams that resembled their existing composition of interests. Jacob, who already had performed several times with an orchestra, for instance, stated that he wanted to become a solo performer, while Benjamin's sense of limits made him add a laugh, followed by the qualifying 'that is of course only a dream', when expressing the same. Benjamin had not yet had any experience with what being a soloist entailed. Evelyn, who was already a versatile student, combining classical music with other genres, session work, singing and composing, pictured building herself a career as a portfolio musician doing many of the same things as she currently was doing. A lack of musical ambitions also appeared to have a major impact on engagement, exemplified in Andrew's case. As he was not motivated by

the long-term goal of becoming a professional musician, he appeared to stand outside the *illusio* working inside the junior conservatoires, saying that if you only practise enough, you will reach the dream of a performance career. In Sarah's case, performance anxiety was part of the reason she doubted whether she should become a musician, as this gave her a sense of limits to what kind of future was attainable for her. The factors of performance anxiety, sense of limits and future ambitions thus appeared to be closely intertwined, and together influencing students' engagement.

In the next chapter I will return to the main questions posed in the study, and discuss what characterises the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires and what kinds of learning and knowledge these cultures facilitate.



## 9 **Learning cultures in junior conservatoires**

In chapters 6–8, I have examined the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires, by looking at cultural assumptions and values, central learning resources and students' engagement. For the present discussion chapter, I return to the main research questions posed for the study:

- What characterises the learning cultures of junior conservatoires and what kind of learning do these cultures facilitate?

In addressing these questions, I will highlight some specific characteristics of the learning culture that I have found across the findings chapters and that appeared to influence the kind of learning that was 'permitted, promoted, inhibited or ruled out' by the learning culture in the three programmes (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 28). This will be viewed through the theoretical lenses of sociocultural theory and Bourdieu's theory, as the two were accounted for in chapter 3.

Up until this point in the thesis, I have used the concept of learning cultures in its plural form. This begs the question of whether a junior conservatoire has one learning culture or several, and further, whether there might be one learning culture across multiple junior conservatoires or whether each has its own. These questions have no definite answer, but I want to consider them using Bourdieu's understanding of fields, which has informed my understanding of learning cultures. As discussed in section 3.5.1, Bourdieu describes fields

as characterised by one or more conflicts where there is something at stake (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Thus, tensions and disagreements need not cause a learning culture to break up into several, as long as these tensions arise because what is at stake is considered to be important enough to disagree about. Alongside conflicts and disagreements, fields are further characterised by a unanimous adherence to the *doxa* and *illusio* of the game, or ‘the fundamental belief in the interest of the game and the value of the stakes which is inherent in that membership’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 11). The *illusio* of the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires was identified in chapter 6 as the dream of achieving a performance career. Since I found this *illusio* to be strong within all three programmes, I have chosen to describe *different aspects of one learning culture* instead of seeing them as different learning cultures. That is not to say that the learning culture in the three programmes were identical. However, I will argue that the *doxa* and *illusio* working in all three programmes were similar enough for it to be described as *one* learning culture, demonstrating similar cultural traits, although with local variations. When there were significant features that only applied to one or two of the junior conservatoires, I will address it explicitly in the following.

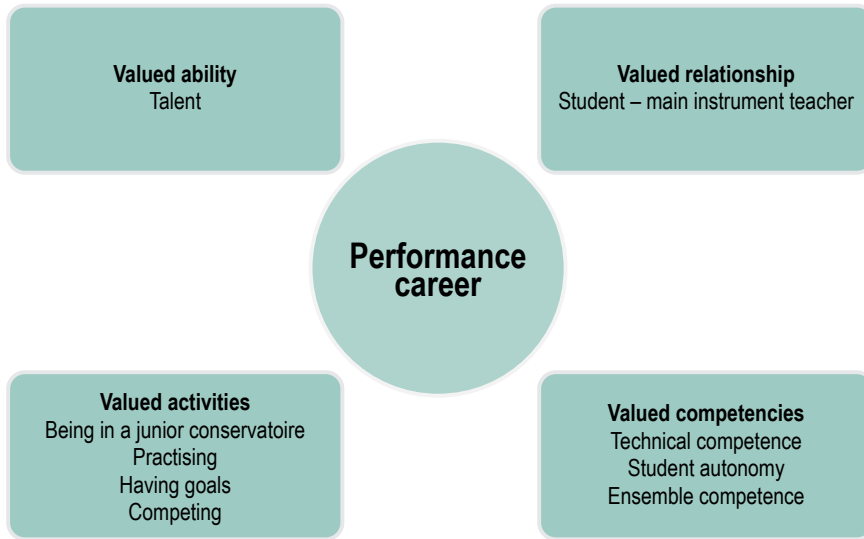
I will discuss four intertwined aspects of the learning culture: *a culture of dedication, a culture of specialisation, a culture of hierarchy and a culture of musical capital*. But first I give a brief summary of the key findings from chapters 6–8 that will be referred to later in this chapter.

## 9.1 Key findings

The findings from chapter 6 and 7 are summarised in the model in figure 2.

The dream of a performance career is put in the middle of the model. Assumptions about success (see section 6.2) were dominated by the dream of a performance career, representing the *illusio*, or that which makes the game worth playing and makes the students believe that the effort they put in is worthwhile.

To be able to achieve a performance career, an important valued ability was to be gifted with musical talent. Students and teachers for the most part understood musical talent as an innate ability (see section 6.2), in line with the *talent account* described by Howe et al. (1998).



**Figure 2:** Key findings chapter 6 and 7

The relationship between student and main instrument teacher was identified as central for students' learning in the junior conservatoire. I found the relationships to be characterised by trust, loyalty and an asymmetric power relation. The importance of these three became particularly evident when students lacked trust in or loyalty to their teacher, or when they questioned the teacher's authority, something that caused tensions in the relationship.

The activities recognised as valuable for achieving a performance career, were being part of a junior conservatoire, practising, having both short-term and long-term goals and participating in performances and competitions. Students and teachers considered practice to be crucial for development, while having goals helped to increase the quantity and quality of practice as reported by students and teachers, and was therefore regarded as important. Furthermore, the long-term goal of passing an audition into higher music education and achieving a performance career were important for keeping up practice habits even when things got rough and motivation decreased, as is also emphasised in writings on deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993). Performances were considered important to develop professional skills and learning to control performance anxiety. Competitions were a more disputed issue among teachers and students; teachers did not recommend them to all students, and not all students wanted to participate in them.



In *chapter 7*, I explored valued competencies within the learning culture. I focused on technical competence, development of students' autonomy and ensemble competence, and then discussed the kinds of learning resources that were offered to students in order to develop these competencies. When discussing resources for developing ensemble competence, access became an issue, as students reported having various access to these resources and thus varying learning outcome.

In *chapter 8*, six student stories were explored, with a focus on students' engagement and factors that appeared to influence their engagement. Students' ways and degrees of engagement seemed to vary according to three interrelated factors: their musical ambitions, their position within the learning culture – including their access to learning resources – and their self-positioning, meaning how they identified with dominating assumptions about success and the valued activities addressed in chapter 6. I identified three learning trajectories among the six students, drawing on Wenger (1998). Most students were identified as being on an *inbound trajectory* aiming at a performance career and investing their identity in becoming a musician. I further identified three of the six students as being on a *peripheral trajectory*, whether due to performance anxiety or uncertainty about their ambitions or qualifications. Finally, I placed the student who did not want to study music in higher education on an *outbound trajectory* – one that eventually would lead out of the learning culture.

Having summarised the key findings from chapter 6–8, I will now discuss the four interrelated aspects I have identified as characteristic of the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires: *a culture of dedication, a culture of specialisation, a culture of hierarchy and a culture of musical capital*.

## 9.2 A culture of dedication

Dedication stood out as an overarching value of the learning culture in the three junior conservatoires, required both explicitly and implicitly through the practices of the junior conservatoires. It was visible in the audition information, which stated that the jury would be looking for potential as well as dedication, and in requirements of attendance and progress (see section 5.2.2). Bourdieu describes dedication as adherence to the *doxa*, or as a 'tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules' (Wacquant, 1989, p. 42). To be dedicated in a junior conservatoire can thus mean to recognise

the values described in chapter 6 as taken-for-granted, without questioning if it could have been in any other way.

JC students were required to spend a significant amount of time practising their instrument each day (see section 6.4.2), and they and their families had to expect to devote weekends to music lessons and rehearsals, as well as spending a considerable amount of money on instrument, travels, lessons and courses. Most important, however, was the assumption that students should be dedicated to the music.

### 9.2.1 Dedication to the music

At the heart of the junior conservatoires stands the music, around which everything revolves, and dedication in junior conservatoires can thus primarily be understood as *dedication to the music*.

The aim of awakening an interest in the beauty of the music being played was evident in interviews with teachers, and strengthened by the observed lessons. Teachers showed their own passion for the music being played in observed main instrument lessons by utterances like ‘this Brahms piece is gorgeous’ or ‘I get so moved by hearing the orchestra playing the Bach double concerto’. As one teacher put it, music should not be about impressing someone, but rather about communicating something meaningful to an audience through the music. This resonates with Nettle’s description of schools of music as being ‘in service of the Masters’ – the masters referred to being the long-dead composers of the great classical canon (Nettl, 1995).

Being dedicated to the music furthermore appeared to be an integrated part of being musically talented. One teacher described the difference between those students who had an inner drive for playing a piece and understood the beauty of it and those who appeared to be extrinsically motivated to play a certain piece by the opportunity it offered for showing off; this teacher considered the first group of students as more musically talented than the latter group. Also when students described their own talent, it was with an emphasis on the significance of music in their lives, which became particularly evident when they described their future dreams: ‘Whatever I do, I hope it will include playing music’ was a common dream repeated by students (see section 6.2). Several students described the music itself as a motivating force for their solo practice as well as their engagement in chamber music and orchestra. Christine and

Benjamin were examples of students who took an active stance against competitions because they found that playing music should be about communicating something meaningful to an audience, rather than about being assessed and awarded for a flawless technique. Although competitions appeared to be a valued activity inside the learning culture, for these students the philosophy behind competitions was at odds with what they regarded as the more important value of communicating something meaningful through the music.

### 9.2.2 Dedication as reciprocal

In section 6.3, I described the teacher–student relationship as characterised by trust, loyalty and an asymmetric power relation. An overarching theme of the relationship was furthermore a reciprocal dedication between student and teacher encouraged by a shared dedication to the music. When teachers understood that students were dedicated to their instrument and the music, and were prepared to put in the effort, the teachers met them enthusiastically and showed them dedication back, in terms of trust, time, engagement, friendliness and support.

The instrumental teachers observed were engaged in their students' lives, and most relationships were not restricted by the boundaries of the scheduled lessons. In several of the lessons, the teacher had been in contact with the student since the last lesson, either by phone or messages or by attending a performance in which the student was playing. Based on what I observed in the informal chat at the beginning and end of lessons observed, teachers seemed to know a lot about their students' lives outside the lessons: their family situation, their academic school subjects, spare time activities and of potential girl- or boyfriends. Two of the teachers even referred to their students as 'my children'. This tells of an intimate relationship that resembled the kind of family relationship described by teachers in Gaunt's study (2008). One of the teachers felt that establishing a confiding relationship with her students was crucial for the student to find and develop their personal artistic voice. This teacher thus devoted a lot of time to building a safe relationship with her students. Furthermore, teachers' dedication was evident when teachers extended instrumental lessons without receiving any extra payment, as the case was for Christine's teacher (see section 8.6). This was not something all teachers were able to offer, due to a tight schedule, but when it was possible, lessons tended

to be extended by up to 15 minutes. Extensions of lessons enabled teachers to complete the work they had started on with a piece before closing the lesson.

However, if teachers did not perceive their students as dedicated, this influenced the teacher's dedication as well: 'when students just do it blindly, and only play to show off, I notice that I lose interest in them as a person' as one of the teachers said in the interview. As described in the previous section, students who teachers found had an inner drive for playing were also perceived as dedicated. Furthermore, how well prepared a student was for a lesson also influenced teachers' perceptions of students' dedication. Expectations about the amount of practice were not something teachers normally made explicit, but they became evident when students failed to live up to them, as described in section 6.4.2. If a student had not prepared a piece properly, the teacher would spend the lesson working on other pieces or exercises rather than repeating what he or she said the last lesson: 'I don't like it when I have to repeat myself', as one teacher said slightly irritated by having to repeat instructions she had already given once. Teachers thus measured students' dedication in various ways, and appeared to invest more in students they perceived to be highly dedicated. I will pursue this issue in section 9.5.2 when addressing dedication as a form of symbolic capital

### 9.3 A culture of specialisation

The lens of learning cultures is suited to exploring both the kind of learning and knowledge that is promoted and valued inside a learning culture and the kind of knowledge that is inhibited or devalued (James & Biesta, 2007). As discussed in section 3.3.1, students develop their competence and construct their learning trajectories by drawing on available resources in their social context. Their opportunities for forming learning trajectories are therefore restricted by the kind of learning resources offered through their social context (Dahlberg, 2013). A central aim of all three junior conservatoires was to provide young people with a specialised music education that would prepare students for the entrance auditions to higher music education.<sup>38</sup> Perkins (2011) described the learning cultures in the UK conservatoire she studied as privileging the development of

---

<sup>38</sup> Although this was not made explicit on the webpages of programme 1, teachers from this programme described in interviews and during main instrument lessons that they aimed to prepare their students for auditions to higher music education.

specialised performers, aimed at preparing students for a performance career. One might expect to find that junior conservatoires offered a broader entrance to music education than a conservatoire, as not all JC students have decided what kind of musicians they might want to become, or indeed whether they want to become musicians at all. What I found, however, was that the junior conservatoires were characterised by a high degree of specialisation. In the following section, I will discuss specialisation by looking at which kinds of knowledge and ways of learning were promoted and valued, and which were devalued or hidden in the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires, in an effort to understand what kind of competencies students had the opportunity to develop.

### 9.3.1 Valued knowledge and ways of learning

In all three programmes students appeared to have manifold learning resources for developing into *classical* musicians, who mastered their instrument technically and were familiar with tradition and style as well as trained in classical performance manners. In chapter 7, I described central competencies as technical competence, students' autonomy and ensemble competence. To this list, I will add performance competence (see section 6.4.4), which is at stake when students perform in concerts, do auditions or enter competitions, and is of central importance for those students who want to pursue a performance career.

Regarding technical competence, most main instrument lessons observed had an emphasis on studies and exercises aimed at improving students' technique in order to enable them to play the technically challenging core repertoire for the instruments. As described in chapter 7, the main instrument lessons were further characterised by repetitious practise and the pursuit of perfection. The attention to minute detail was particularly striking when students had performances coming up, as teachers would then be more meticulous about details than they were when a performance was further away. Students were only to a limited degree given resources for developing as autonomous musicians capable of making independent artistic choices (see section 7.2). Nor was individual, artistic interpretation a criterion on which they were assessed in the annual assessments. According to the stages described by Sosniak (1985b), it is typically not until the transition to higher music education that musicians start 'making music personal and making personal music' (p. 420). Rather, the focus was on establishing an understanding of tradition and style in most lessons observed (see section 7.2.1). This can be considered as a first step towards developing

students' autonomy, as they first need an understanding of the limits of individual interpretation set by tradition (Hultberg, 2002). More than individual interpretation, students in the junior conservatoire were praised for having a natural and unconscious sound or way of playing, which teachers considered as characteristic of musical talent (see section 6.1.1). There were examples, however, of older students being required to take greater agency in the interpretation of a piece (see section 7.2.2). Elisabeth, for instance, quoted in section 7.2.2, said that teenagers needed to develop an intellectual understanding of the music, as a next step from playing by their musical instinct. Students furthermore received resources for developing ensemble competence, which is a central competence both in higher music education and for a professional musician.

Nevertheless, even though chamber music and orchestra took a substantial amount of time in the junior conservatoires, the solo performer had a privileged role. This was evident first through the *illusio*, identified as achieving a performance career centred on solo performances (see section 6.2.1). The value of the solo performer was furthermore apparent in the repertoire played in main instrument lessons that almost exclusively included solo repertoire or sonatas for violin/cello and piano. Furthermore, students were assessed annually (programmes 2 and 3) based on solo performances and thus on their competence as soloists. How well students were able to perform on these performances again relied on their performance competence. Although students had manifold opportunities for *playing* concerts, they did not have access to any resources especially aimed at *developing* this crucial performance competence. I will return to this issue in section 9.5.2 when discussing performance as a form of capital.

### 9.3.2 Excluded knowledge and ways of learning

When certain aspects are valued and emphasised, other aspects wind up in the background, as emphasised by Nerland (2004) in her study of main instrument tuition. In this section I will address the kinds of knowledge and learning that appeared to be inhibited or ruled out by the learning culture in the three junior conservatoires (James & Biesta, 2007, p. 28).

Improvisation or composition were not part of any of the instrumental lessons observed, with the exception of George's practice of inviting students to improvise around the technical exercises he gave them. Neither was music outside the classical repertoire included, again excepting one student who played

a jazz-etude and another student who played a transcription of a jazz tune. Although the material played by these two students had its origins in another tradition, they still learned it the way they learned their other pieces: through reading the music score and receiving instructions from their teacher on interpretation. Furthermore, teachers did not, in general, use recordings or other media during lessons, again with the exception of George who often played YouTube videos of famous performers for his students. By showing them alternative ways of interpreting a piece, he intended to motivate his students, and he would also invite his students to show him videos they had found inspiring. It is possible, of course, that teachers were more likely to experiment with different teaching strategies when they were not being observed. It might also be that improvisation is a more natural part of the tuition when these teachers are teaching younger children, or that repertoire ranging beyond the classical genre is included to a greater extent when students do not have any auditions, exams or competitions coming up that require a certain repertoire. One of the teachers wanted to add after reading the interview transcript that she also included improvisation, composition and aural training as part of her tuition, although this was not something she had emphasised in the lessons observed or in the interview. This is a reminder that what I did observe is only a small sample of teachers' teaching practice, and I might have identified other significant aspects if I had observed tuition with students in a different age range or different level than what I did.

### 9.3.3 Versatile students and a specialised culture

The apparent exclusion of improvisation, composition and other genres could have been explained by students' lack of interest in these themes. What fascinated me during the interviews, however, was students' broad experience and engagement with music outside the junior conservatoire. Evelyn, presented in chapter 8, played in a band, composed her own songs and performed in clubs and other informal settings. Nicholas, another student from the same programme as Evelyn, created music at home on his computer and occasionally engaged in busking,<sup>39</sup> where he and his friends had discovered that they earned more money with popular music than classical. Christine did session work, something she hid from her teacher in the beginning, as she felt he would be critical of her spending time on other kinds of music because it would take the focus away

---

<sup>39</sup> Busking is playing music in a public space for voluntary donations.

from her classical playing. Anna played bass in a band with friends from school. However, none of these activities were addressed in the main instrument lessons observed. Many of the students thus had a broad musical competence including manifold skills that were not considered relevant enough to be included in the main instrument lessons in the junior conservatoires. It is worth noticing that students did not comment on or criticize their teachers for the focus on classical material. For them, their non-classical musical activities appeared to be separate from their main instrument lessons, and they did not find it natural to bring experiences from these activities into the instrumental lessons.

Over the course of years of participation in music education, students had learned the rules of the game: they had developed a natural understanding of what was included in a main instrument lesson and what was not, how lessons were structured and what their role was as students compared to the teacher's role. They had, in Bourdieu's terms, developed a 'sense of reality' embodied in their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). It might thus have felt unnatural to bring their other musical activities into the main instrument lessons, as other kinds of music had not previously been a natural part of this context. It might also have been a conscious solution by students to separate their classical education from other musical activities, because they recognised that their JC teachers were not the best ones to help them with musical activities beside classical performances on their main instrument. Students valued the main instrument lessons as the learning context from which they learned the most, and might therefore have decided that this precious time was better spent on that teacher's specific field of expert competence: classical music.

This also raises questions of students' agency in the three junior conservatoires. Due to the asymmetric power relation between teacher and student (see section 6.3.3), it was the teacher who decided whether he or she wanted to invite the student to participate in choice of repertoire or to bring in opinions on interpretative issues (see section 7.2.2). The students interviewed reported having some influence on choice of repertoire, but in most cases, this was a choice between a set of pieces pre-selected by the teacher. Some also felt they could influence the interpretation (examples of this in section 7.2.2 and 7.2.3), while most of them agreed that the teacher knew best how to solve technical issues. Thus, in general, students had limited agency in their main instrument lessons, although there was a tendency for older students to be given more agency regarding both repertoire and interpretative issues than the younger students I observed (see section 7.2.2). This was evident, for example, in the



cases of Christine and Evelyn who both displayed what Reeve (2012) calls ‘agentive engagement’ (p. 165). These students were in their last year before higher music education, which may explain both why their teachers offered them more agency than other students observed and why they felt entitled to take more agency in the instrumental lessons.

Even though I have identified the learning culture in all three programmes as specialised and centred on the development of competencies needed to succeed as a classical professional musician, there was also some variance in the kinds of learning resources that were available to students in the three programmes. One aspect of this is that programme 1 and 3 included students playing other genres. Students in these two programmes were thus exposed to performances from the jazz department (P1 and P3) and folk music (P1) as a natural part of being at the junior conservatoire. Furthermore, students in programmes 1 and 3 had opportunities to take elective courses that could broaden their musical competence beyond the instrumental competencies developed in main instrument lessons or ensemble playing. Students in programme 1 could take an elective course in improvisation, composition or conducting, while students in programme 3 could choose to play jazz as a second study, and take courses in subjects such as composition or electronic studio. Programme 3 also offered tuition on a second instrument and opportunities to join a choir. All students interviewed from programme 3 had chosen to play a second instrument. In comparison, only one student from programme 1 and 2 combined played a second instrument. Since a second instrument was not offered at these two programmes, he played piano at his local music school. The focus on specialised knowledge on one instrument within one genre was most prominent in programme 2, where all subjects were centred on developing classical performance competence as either solo performers, chamber or orchestra musicians as well as developing theoretical competence relevant for classical music. The learning environment in programme 1 and 3 thus allowed for a broader array of learning resources than what was found in programme 2. This can furthermore help explain why students in programme 3 had more versatile musical ambitions than students in programmes 1 and 2, as accounted for in section 6.2.

#### **9.4 A culture of hierarchy**

An understanding of hierarchy was identified as a qualitatively strong theme in the material. It was evident in assumptions about talent (section 6.1), about

success (section 6.2), about the value of being in a junior conservatoire (section 6.4.1), and in descriptions of access to learning resources in chamber music and orchestra (section 7.3). Furthermore, it was identified as a characteristic feature of the teacher–student relationship (section 6.3). In this sub-chapter I will first address how students were positioned by teachers and how they sought to position themselves. Then I will discuss how the social environment in the junior conservatoires functioned both as a source of motivation and distress for various students, followed by a discussion of the career hierarchy and how the teachers functioned as gatekeepers who both facilitated and controlled access to external arenas.

#### 9.4.1 Being positioned and positioning oneself

According to Bourdieu, as accounted for in section 3.5.1, agents belonging to a field are positioned differently *vis-à-vis* each other, where both the strategies available as well as one's perception of the field is dependent on one's position (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Positioning was addressed in chapter 8, in which the students in the six case studies reported both varying access to learning resources and a varying 'sense of limits' (Bourdieu, 1977), which was intertwined with their future ambitions and expressed through their engagement with learning resources.

Teachers positioned students when they graded talent, meaning when they described certain students as especially talented compared to other students (see section 6.1.2). They were also positioning students when they invited certain ones to function as principals in the orchestra or perform in external concerts, or when they assembled chamber music groups (see section 7.3). One teacher identified competitions and annual assessments as the two main ways of being noticed by teachers and the programme management. By making a good appearance in either of these, students could improve their position inside the junior conservatoire. Students appeared to have a clear perception of the hierarchy as well, evident in statements such as 'they shuffle it around so perfectly that the really good people end up in the main seat for the concert', and 'people who win the [programme competition], obviously they're really good'. As well as having a clear perception of a hierarchy, students were aware of their own positioning inside it, which became evident in their ambitions and their sense of limits (Bourdieu, 1977). Examples of this include when Benjamin described his future plans, and added that becoming a solo performer could be

fun, although that was of course only a dream, when Andrew said it would only be embarrassing if he signed up for the internal competition in the programme and when Charlotte turned down the opportunity to be principal because she found other students to be better suited for the position than her. At the other end of the scale were students like Jacob, identified as a ‘superstar’ student (see section 8.1), who signed up for as many competitions as he could without worrying whether he was good enough to participate in them or not.

The understanding of a hierarchy was also in play when students related to the allocation of principal positions in the orchestra (see section 7.3.4). Although most students did not know how principals were chosen, they did not consider it problematic that the same students held a principal position for a longer period. One of the students displayed her acceptance of the rules of the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) when she said in the interview that she found it ‘very natural’ as the principal were ‘one of the more advanced students’. Among those I interviewed, only one student was disappointed that she had not been given any leading positions in the orchestra during her time in the programme. This may be because many of the students I interviewed had happened to have experiences from being principals, or believed that they would be offered the opportunity in the future. Believing that one would get more opportunities in the future can be seen as part of the *illusio* that could lead students to believe that the trajectory they were on would lead them to more opportunities with time.

A premise borrowed from Bourdieu is that learning cultures, like fields, are inherently competitive, where agents seek to safeguard or maintain their current position (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). While Perkins (2011) found that conservatoire students applied various strategies for improving their position within the field and sought learning opportunities outside the conservatoire if they were not able to access them inside, there were students in the present study who did not wish to improve their position within the field. For some students this was due to anxiety or a ‘sense of limits’, where they did not feel qualified to be among those striving to improve their position. These students did not seek out more performance opportunities than were required, and avoided situations where they were put in the hot seat, such as a principal position in the orchestra. Avoiding such situations meant that they missed out on important learning resources. Other students were not motivated to engage with learning resources because they did not find the stakes of the game important enough to strive for (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), as was

the case for Andrew (see section 8.4) and one other student from programme 3. Bourdieu's premise did apply, however, to those students without anxiety issues who had ambitions of pursuing a professional career, as they all worked to improve their position inside the learning culture. This was done through participating in competitions, 'taking as many performance opportunities as possible', trying to increase their daily amount of practice or be engaged in their chamber music group or in the orchestra.

#### 9.4.2 A stimulating culture or a source for distress?

As discussed in section 6.4.1, teachers assumed that being part of a junior conservatoire would inspire *all* students to work even harder than they would without being part of a high-achieving environment. Teachers thus perceived the hierarchy naturally created by students in different levels as a *resource for learning*. Many of the students supported this assumption, describing the environment of the junior conservatoires as motivating and inspiring. Several students commented that there always would be a certain amount of competition between musicians, and most students described this as a 'fair competition', or found that 'it's not in a nasty way, it's not in a kind of putting-people-down kind of way'. On the other hand, a few students found it more stressful than motivating to be part of the high-achieving environment in the junior conservatoire. Sarah, one of the students presented in chapter 8, compared the social environment in the junior conservatoire to a constant race where she struggled to keep up with the pace of other students in order not to lose her position in the field (see section 8.2.2). Although Sarah's experiences supported the assumption expressed by teachers that the social environment of a junior conservatoire would encourage students to practise more and help them develop more quickly, for Sarah the race had a personal cost as well, resulting in stress and anxiety. Another student said she felt 'lousy compared to other people' in the programme, and had struggled with low motivation and low self-esteem after entering the programme. These students' experiences raise the question of when a social environment ceases to be inspiring and instead becomes a source of distress. As the teachers' idea of a stimulating environment was one in which students were expected to compare themselves to a 'standard', it is no surprise that some students ended up with a feeling of *not living up to* the standards or feeling the pressure of trying to keep up with the standards. Kemp (1996) directs attention to a hothouse effect that might occur in specialist schools where 'undue

acceleration and pressure can generate anxiety' (p. 92), which might explain the distress felt by some of the students. Kingsbury (1988) found that many conservatoire students were troubled by self-doubt due to comparisons with other highly advanced music students:

Clearly, the social environment was rather unpleasant for some of these people; the College of Music was an environment in which their musical 'talent,' which had in their childhood been a mark of their remarkable individuality, suddenly became a mark of similarity with all the other students. In such a context, some students inevitably came to entertain doubts as to whether they 'really' had talent at all. Such feelings, moreover, were manifested in a complex weave of intensely ambiguous friendly-competitive social relationships. (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 5)

These ambiguous relations were also described by students in this study, like Sarah, who described her fellow students as both friends and competitors. The social environment thus worked differently for the various students interviewed: For some students, it represented a positive and fair competition that encouraged them to become better, while it became a troublesome source of stress and anxiety for others. It was remarkable, however, that most teachers were unaware of the possible downsides of being in a high-achieving environment, only emphasising the positive effects the social environment might have on students' motivation and development.

### 9.4.3 A hierarchy of careers

In Bourdieu's thinking, social space consists of positions hierarchically related to each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The trajectories available to JC students are therefore not simply a selection; rather, they are organized in a hierarchy of possible trajectories, in which some, such as a trajectory including teaching or one combining classical performance with performance in other genres, were positioned by most of the interviewed students as undesirable or were not commented on at all. In section 6.2, a clear hierarchy of possible future careers emerged, ranging from the solo performer at the top, followed by playing in a chamber music group and a position in an orchestra. Students were aware to a certain degree that only a tiny percentage of all those who dream about a soloist career, actually would succeed as soloists. It is noteworthy that those who themselves wanted to become solo performers, believed that this was 'everyone's dream' – even those who said otherwise. To claim that one's dream is other than becoming a soloist was thus perceived as somewhat suspicious and untrustworthy. The dominant assumption appeared to be that

*everyone who has a chance* dreams of becoming soloist, and not saying it aloud was taken as a sign that one was not feeling entitled to wish for it because of one's 'sense of limits' (Bourdieu, 1977).

But what is it about a solo performer career that was so tempting for many of the students? I will explore this through discussing processes of *consecration* and the *exclusiveness* related to solo performances.

*Consecration* is the process of celebrating successful agents within a field or learning culture, as described in section 3.5.3. Examples of such celebration are the awarding of prizes or grants or similar honours (Bourdieu, 1993). Within the field of classical music performance, such consecrated figures include famous soloists, who thus often stand as role models for the students in junior conservatoires. Several of the students I interviewed said early experiences with listening to famous musicians at concerts or on recordings had been highly influential for their dream of becoming musicians. When the programmes promoted themselves on their web pages or in other media, they often referred to former students who currently had successful solo careers. On the web pages of programme 2, you could find news about current and former students who had won competitions, received a scholarship or had solo concerts in famous venues. In programme 3, consecration was physically visible in the foyer, where grand wooden plates displayed all prize winners of the institution's soloist competition through the years. The celebration of soloists was thus observable in various ways inside the three programmes, giving the students a clear sense of what success within this particular culture looked like, and thus implicitly communicating what success was not.

Another reason for the high status of soloists in the learning culture might be the *exclusiveness* related to solo performances with an orchestra. There are various selection processes to ensure that only the 'best' are allowed to perform as soloists with an orchestra. Two of the large symphony orchestras in Norway have annual concerts, in which, based on an audition, they select young musicians to perform as soloists with the orchestra. The winners of these competitions not only get the experience of performing with a professional orchestra, they also have their name included in a list of former winners of whom many currently are making great solo careers. In grand international competitions such as the Menuhin competition or the BBC Young Musician, participants often play with an orchestra in the final round of the competition. Furthermore, the first prize in competitions for young musicians is often to perform as a concerto soloist. In this way, performing as a soloist is a distinct

marker that one has been recognised as being among the best musicians in an area, on a particular instrument or in a specific age span. It must be emphasised, however, that such high-profile soloist concertos are not the only way to perform with an orchestra. Some of the students interviewed had performed as soloists with school orchestras or local amateur orchestras, and these had been important learning experiences. However, it is likely that although the opportunity was not won through an audition, it was still the result of them being considered as the best in their area.

Also interesting in terms of students' career hopes was the rejection by many students of teaching as a career or partial career. This is especially interesting because teaching represents an important job market for many music graduates (Arnesen, Waagene, Hovdhaugen, & Støren, 2014; D. Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015). If the students chose to continue on a trajectory towards becoming a musician, teaching would thus most likely be a part of their career at some point. The distinction between teaching music in the municipal schools – seen as being out of the question (see section 6.2.3) – and the more tolerable opportunity to teach in higher music education, corresponds with what Bouij (1998) found when exploring role identities among music education students. Teaching more advanced pupils, or being a 'content-centred teacher' was closer to a performer role-identity and thus a more likely position to occupy for aspiring performers than a role-identity as a 'pupil-centred teacher', teaching children and amateurs (Bouij, 1998, pp. 25–26). Bourdieu's concept of 'reversed economy' (Bourdieu, 1993) can also contribute to understanding the distinction students in the present study made between performance and teaching, where the former is associated with art and self-expression, while the latter appeared to be associated with necessity by some of the students.

#### 9.4.4 The teacher as gatekeeper

[T]he formal teacher–student pairing must be considered as a fundamental element in the production of Western art music. One simply cannot, does not, and will not become a 'classical' musician through only informal learning. (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 167)

The asymmetric relationship between student and main instrument teacher was addressed in section 6.3.3. In returning to this issue here, I will consider how this hierarchical relationship became powerful through teachers' roles as gatekeepers to the wider field of music performance.

Corra and Willer (2002, p. 180) have defined gatekeepers as those who ‘control access to “benefits” valued by others who are their “clients”’. A gatekeeper is not only one who makes entry difficult, however; gatekeepers both guard the gate and open it, and they can thus be understood either as a ‘police’ or as a ‘facilitator’ (Osberg, Doll, & Trueit, 2008).

Teachers acted as facilitating gatekeepers by inviting students to participate in external contexts that the teachers considered beneficial to students’ development. Through a teacher’s position in the field of music performance, he or she had opportunities to invite students to contexts where they could gain important learning experiences, meet teachers and musicians, and broaden their social network, or where they could play with more advanced people, such as students in higher music education or even professional musicians. This is a way to build musical capital, or ‘skills, performance experiences and contacts’ that enhance students’ abilities to succeed as musicians (Coulson, 2010, p. 267). One teacher organised a summer course in which many of her students participated. This was the only summer course some of her students attended, and a main factor in their attendance was that their teacher arranged it and encouraged them to go there. George and Christopher, who both taught in the senior department as well, invited JC students to master classes with senior students when there were visiting guest teachers, and George arranged concerts in which both JC students and senior students played. These are all examples of contexts containing potentially valuable learning resources for students that would have been difficult to access without the teacher. The kinds of contexts to which a teacher can invite his or her students, depends on the teacher’s social and symbolic capital, which together with the teacher’s habitus will regulate his or her positioning inside the field of musical performance (Bourdieu, 1977). A renowned teacher with a wide international network will be able to provide students with access to more capital-giving contexts than a teacher who lacks such a network. Due to the reciprocal sides of the teacher–student relationship, studying with a highly positioned teacher will contribute to raising the student’s position, as noted by both Nielsen (1999) and Kingsbury (1988), since it signals that a student has been considered as especially talented by being allowed to work with particular teachers. Studying with a high-profile teacher can thus itself be a gate-opener to other contexts, as symbolic capital is conveyed from the teacher to the student (Kingsbury, 1988). This was addressed by one of the students in particular, who had attained access to quite prestigious master classes and competitions through his main instrument teacher. He had also



been invited by his teacher to play in external concerts, sometimes together with professional musicians.

At other times, teachers acted as *police gatekeepers, controlling* students' access to performance opportunities. In programme 3, teachers had a formal gatekeeper role, as students were required to ask for their teacher's permission before giving any public performance (see section 5.2.2) This was not explicit in the regulations from the two other programmes, but it still appeared to be part of that which 'goes without saying' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 167). Students prepared for performances together with their main instrument teachers, and the students reported that signing up for performances was something they decided on together with their teacher. The gatekeeper role of teachers in terms of public performance was that of ensuring that a piece had reached a sufficient performance standard. In the instrumental lessons observed, it was the teacher who gave feedback on what needed to be fixed in a piece, how it should be fixed, how many times a phrase should be repeated and when a phrase was good enough to move on in the piece. Finally, it was the teacher who gave the stamp of approval, deciding that the student had achieved a level of playing high enough for a public performance.

Teachers controlled the gate to competitions by recommending them only to certain students and by choosing which competitions to recommend to which students. As described in section 6.4.5, teachers only recommended competitions to those students who they considered held a sufficiently high level for the actual competition and had a good chance of having a beneficial experience from participating. Furthermore, two of the teachers were concerned to not 'misuse a jury' by recommending a competition to students who did not yet hold the level required. One teacher even found it embarrassing if his students participated in a competition for which they were not ready, as he felt that his students' achievements reflected his competence as a teacher. Just as a teacher's status in the field can serve to heighten the status of his or her students, the achievements of a student also reflect back on the teacher, described by Kingsbury (1988, p. 41) as 'reciprocal prestige-lending':

Certainly one of the criteria for evaluating faculty is the number and success of students of the various teachers. The fact that teachers' prestige is augmented by their student's success is mirrored by the fact that students draw status from association with a prestigious teacher, and it is this pattern of reciprocal prestige-lending that grounds my analysis of conservatory social organization in terms of patron-client relationship. (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 41)

This prestige-lending, combined with teachers' desire to provide students with good experiences that could increase their self-efficacy, can explain why teachers were concerned not to allow students to perform in public before they had reached what their teachers regarded as a sufficiently high level. In this way, teachers functioned as gatekeepers, ensuring that the quality of student performance met the demands set by the larger field of music performance. This relates back to the close relationship between many of the teachers and students observed, and can help explain teachers' high level of dedication to teaching and to their students.

A last issue to address related to gatekeeping, is teachers' role as powerful agents in the larger field of music performance, a theme I touched upon in section 6.3.3. Teachers' roles as gatekeepers were not limited to the time the students were in the junior conservatoire. Many of the students noted that the field of classical music performance is a small one, and that it was important to keep good relations with those you meet, and always to be humble. Jacob was aware that he might encounter people he met at courses, competitions and activities later on in powerful positions, such as members of a jury in a competition or an audition. This encouraged him to always be polite and use the right tone with teachers and instructors, as well as his peers in the programme and those he met at courses and master classes. He even regarded being humble as an important part of being talented, acknowledging that this personal characteristic would be important for him in order to succeed as a professional musician. Another student experienced a problematic relationship with his local teacher, but found a change of teacher to be impossible, as this local teacher was a powerful agent in the student's local community through organising important orchestra courses and summer courses. The student thus felt that he 'need[ed] to be on the right side of him', as this teacher would be gatekeeper to contexts the student would later wish to access. Being liked or disliked by a teacher could therefore have consequences for which contexts a student was able to enter in the future.

To summarize this section, hierarchy appeared to be a natural part of the learning culture of junior conservatoires, as an accepted 'way of life' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This is in line with Perkins (2011), who pointed to hierarchies as 'an accepted part of conservatoire life', where 'symbolic violence operates to generate the most performance opportunities for those with "superstar" status' (pp. 195–196). Most teachers considered the hierarchy created amongst students as a positive quality. Still, there were obvious problematic aspects to

the hierarchy as well: for some students it was a source of distress, a majority of the students disregarded important career options such as teaching and for some students it created a sense of limit that hindered them from seeking out potential beneficial learning resources.

## 9.5 A culture of musical capital

Musical capital was defined in section 3.5.4 as the ‘cultural, social and symbolic assets that musicians acquire and turn to [economic] advantage in the music field’ (Coulson, 2010, p. 257), including a ‘collection of skills, performance experiences and contacts’ (p. 264). Given that learning cultures, as fields, position learners differently based on habitus and type and amount of capital (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989), students’ capital is likely to influence both their access to learning resources and their strategies for engaging with them. I will discuss in particular how the capital forms appeared to function as selective mechanisms. In her study of conservatoire students, Christophersen (2009) draws attention to whether it is the student who *chooses* the field or whether the student is *chosen* by the field. For students who ends up leaving the field, the question is whether it is the student who *chooses* to leave the field, or whether the student is driven *from* the field. Through processes in the field of giving certain actions, competencies and abilities precedence over others, students build up a ‘sense of reality’ (Bourdieu, 1977) as part of their habitus that can give them an understanding of whether they belong to the field or not.

In this section I address *talent as capital*, *dedication as capital* and *performance competence as capital*, all valued abilities or attitudes that appeared to be particularly significant both for students’ position in the learning culture, and thus for their access to learning resources and their available strategies.

### 9.5.1 Talent as capital

Talent stood out as a powerful criterion for positioning students inside the junior conservatoires. Teachers described students as being ‘super talented’, ‘really talented’ or as ‘core talents’ (see section 6.1.2). Such labels were one way to designate certain students as having better chances for becoming professional musicians than others. The dominating assumptions about talent, as described in section 6.1, were that it is innate, impossible to teach though

possible to develop, and something that must be nurtured in order to fulfil its potential. Talent was a powerful label because it pointed to an innate trait and thus appeared to be an important asset of a students' symbolic capital, meaning capital that is 'unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 49). According to Bourdieu, one often fails to recognise that the 'ability or talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 48). Thus, to position talent as an innate trait hides that what one perceives as musical talent is, to a large degree, a result of an early exposure to music and the instrument, a supportive family environment, engaged teachers and amount of practice, as emphasised in much research on expertise (see e.g. Bloom, 1985; Ericsson et al., 1993; Platz, Kopiez, Lehmann, & Wolf, 2014).

Furthermore, students and teachers considered musical talent as something else than being technically brilliant, based on the understandings of musicality as the innate talent and technique as that which is learned (see section 6.1.3). Students and teachers both spoke in negative terms about students or musicians who 'just run technique' or, as one of the teachers quoted in section 6.1.3 put it, she'd 'rather have a cup of coffee' than listen to musicians who played with 'extraordinary efficiency' but 'had no voice'. When students defined themselves as 'musical', and even as more musical than others in the programme (see section 6.1.2), they thus demonstrated their recognition of the value hierarchy in which musicality was valued above technique, and they attempted to position themselves in the group of musical students. This distinction has been observed by B. A. Roberts (1990), who found that music students appeared to 'aggressively denounce the "technicians" who attempt lots of notes rather than playing "musically"' (p. 279), or by the students in Nielsen's study (1999), who divided other students into 'trained monkeys' and 'the talented ones' (p. 188). These descriptions from Nielsen's and Roberts's study, were all made by students with regard to other students. In my material, there were students who found that they were not able to express themselves in the ways they wanted because of technical issues (see section 6.1.3). Turning this the other way around would be unthinkable, however: describing oneself as one who could not express him or herself due to a lack of musicality would mean defining oneself as one who did not belong to the field. All students interviewed thus defined themselves as having a natural musicality, and attributed their potential technical issues to a lack of practice, and in particular to a lack of practising etudes and scales.

Students' understanding of their own talent is likely to influence their future ambitions as well as the ways they engage with learning resources. However, when talent was used to position students, it was attributed *to* a student by significant persons in the learning culture. As is pointed out by Kingsbury (1988), attributing talent to someone is part of a power relationship, where it is the one who holds more power in a relationship who has the legitimacy to attribute talent. In Bourdieu's terms, attributing talent to a student is an act of consecration, in which a person who himself is consecrated by the field, recognises and gives prestige to another member (Bourdieu, 1993). Teachers, for example, were much more likely than students themselves to describe students as talented. Andrew said that if I wanted to know who was talented, I should ask his teacher, as she would always tell him. This reminds us that:

An assessment of musicality or talent is not something that is ever proved or disproved. Rather, it is validated with reference to the same social process in which it first arose. An assessment of musical talent is an aesthetic judgment. (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 75)

Since talent was attributed, it could also be taken away, which makes the use of the concept contradictory. On one hand, it was considered as an innate, stable characteristic that an individual either had or lacked. On the other hand, it was a relative concept, and how talented a student was perceived to be depended on whom he or she was being compared to. Since all students in the three junior conservatoires were considered as musically talented, it was only those attributed with 'special talent' that had any privileges. Such privileges could include being prioritised when chamber music groups were compounded, being invited to play on external concerts with more advanced students or professional musicians, or being invited to hold a leading role in the orchestra. Students were perceived as talented compared to their age and their peer group, and being talented at the age of twelve meant something else than being talented at eighteen. Thus, if a student previously considered to be highly talented did not develop as fast as others – as was Sarah's concern in chapter 8 – or if older and younger students were perceived as 'more talented', the status as a 'special talent' might be taken away.

### 9.5.2 Dedication as capital

Students' dedication, or rather how teachers *perceived* students' dedication, appeared to be a valued form of capital in the programme. One teacher defined

dedicated students as those that 'go-all-in', 'show that they want something', participate in competitions and 'practise hard'. Dedication was related both to hard work and to participating in additional learning contexts beyond the mandatory ones, such as concerts, competitions and courses. According to one of the teachers from programme 2, students who displayed dedicated behaviour could get special opportunities, such as playing on external concerts. Dedication as a selection criterion for special opportunities was made explicit only in interviews with teachers in programme 2. Still, students' dedication was required and expected in all three programmes, as discussed in section 9.2.1. Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002, pp. 74–75) describe dedication as 'a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge'. Playing music meant a lot to the students interviewed, and they expressed both enthusiasm and pride when describing their relation to music. Many of them described an inner drive to play their instrument, and considered playing as an important part of their identity.

Sarah, one of the students, did express concerns, however, related to whether she was dedicated *enough* to become a professional musician. She meant 'real musicians' should listen to concerts and recordings, enjoy performances, have an interest in music theory and strive to have more prestigious roles in the programme. These were all areas where she felt she fell short, and she thus doubted whether she was suited to become a professional musician. Similar statements were found in two other student interviews, where students expressed doubt about whether they were dedicated enough to continue a music education they knew would be tough, and where there would be a hard competition for jobs upon graduation. Andrew, on the other hand, openly admitted that he was not dedicated enough to practise as much as was expected of him. He had already chosen not to pursue music in higher education and this was thus not particularly problematic for him, although it caused tensions in the relationship with his main instrument teacher (see section 8.4).

Lacking what they perceived as proper dedication thus appeared to lead students away from the inbound trajectory of a professional career path and onto a peripheral or outbound trajectory (Wenger, 1998) in the learning culture. One factor in this was thus how they perceived their own dedication measured against what they believed to be the norm as was the case for Sarah and the two other students referred to above. The other side of the coin was how *teachers* perceived students' dedication, as there was a tendency for teachers to invest more in students they perceived as highly dedicated and give them

extra performance opportunities (see section 9.2.2). The difference between how dedicated students felt and how dedicated their teachers perceived them to be is important, however, as students might be dedicated without showing it in ways understood by the teachers. For instance, one of the students interviewed defined herself as highly engaged in playing her instrument and she practised more than most of the other students interviewed. Still, because she did not participate in summer courses or competitions and rarely played concerts she was not perceived as particularly dedicated by her teacher; she did not display her dedication in ways recognised as such by her teacher.

Dedication capital was thus found to be a central capital of the learning cultures of the three junior conservatoires. It appeared to position students differently, working as a selective criterion both for the learning culture, which privileged those students perceived as highly dedicated, and for the students themselves, some of whom questioned whether they were sufficiently dedicated to pursue a career as professional musicians.

### 9.5.3 Performance competence as capital

Performance is core to being a musician, and mastering the art of performing is thus central to succeeding as a musician, as is noted by Nielsen (1999) and Godlovitch (1998). Because of the centrality of performance, I have identified *performance competence* as a crucial part of the valued musical capital in the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires.

As described in section 3.5.4, Coulson (2010) argues that being surrounded by music from an early age contributes to building musicians' confidence as performers and builds their self-esteem as musicians. This is supported by Manturzewska (1990), who found in her study of Polish musicians that violinists and pianists who had started playing their instrument later than the age of nine were less likely to become musicians, in part because they were more insecure and anxious in performance situations (see section 2.2.2). Kenny and Osborne (2006) reported that young music students who aimed to become professionals experienced less performance anxiety than students who were unsure of what kind of career they wanted to pursue. These studies all provide an argument of the importance of building security in performance situations, as this influences whether students are motivated to dedicate themselves to

a future as professional musicians or not, and further, how likely they are to succeed.

The students interviewed related variously to performance, in terms of how frequently they performed, the kind of performances they undertook, how they felt about performances and whether they felt successful in performances. Some of them, such as Jacob and Christine (see section 8.1 and 8.6), thrived on performance. These two students performed frequently, and had done so for many years. As described in chapter 8, they were perceived as star-students, aiming for careers as professional musicians. Jacob's performance capital, evident in his stability as a performer, offered him advantages within the learning culture, such as being invited to play on external concerts, being soloist with the orchestra or leading his group in the orchestra. Based on his previous performances, his teachers and the programme management knew they could trust that nerves would not disturb his performance even in high-pressure performance situations. Just as important as performing well under pressure, was the enjoyment these two students found in performances. Although they could feel some tingling or hint of nerves before important performances, this seldom interfered with their playing. Christine even noted that she played better and with more inspiration when she had an audience.

Then there were students, like David, Evelyn and Hannah, who experienced nervousness, and aimed to have more concert experience to remedy their anxiety, in accordance with the advice to 'play more concerts and the nervousness will disappear' (see section 6.4.4). They were thus motivated to build performance capital, recognising that their current level of nervousness would become less of a hindrance if they participated in more performances.

A third group of students had a highly problematic relationship to performance due to music performance anxiety. Both students and teachers assumed that there were resources for building performance capital in the performance situation itself, evident in the repeated advice from section 6.4.4. However, there were students in the material whose problems with performance anxiety were too severe for this advice to be of much help. Five of the sixteen students interviewed would rather not play solo performances, and three of these again described their performance anxiety as severe and impairing their performances. Hannah and Charlotte had both experienced failing in auditions because of performance anxiety and Sarah felt she could never be confident that she had prepared enough before a performance. Charlotte played a maximum of one solo concert per year, while Hannah played no more than two or three.



These two, though struggling with extreme nervousness, still wanted to become professional musicians and hoped that their anxiety would disappear over time. However, they were in a disadvantaged position for achieving their goal as they avoided performance and other situations where they might be judged and assessed. As a result, they missed potentially useful learning resources, as well as resources for building performance capital that could benefit them later, in auditions or competitions when the pressure normally is higher than in a regular concert.

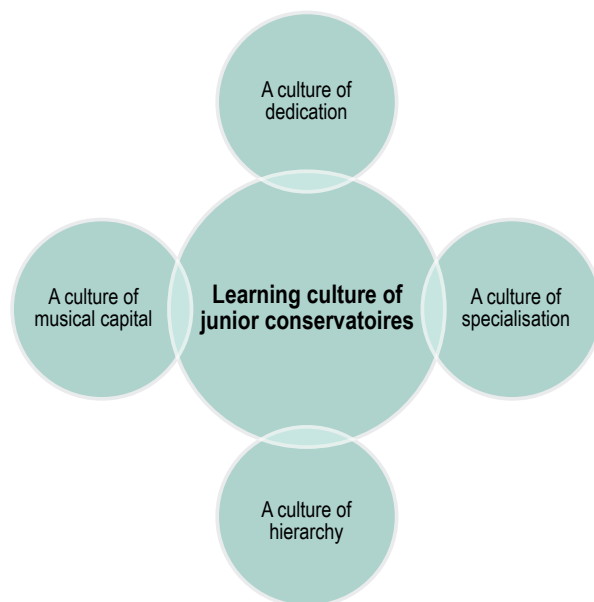
I would argue that the centrality of performance in the learning culture made struggling with performance anxiety into a selective criterion. Students who struggled with anxiety avoided performance situations, and thus did not get access to the resources for removing nervousness assumed to lie in the act of doing many performances. Moreover, when they performed, performance anxiety often impaired their performances. This in turn made it hard for them to prove their actual level on auditions and assessments and there was thus a risk that, because of anxiety, they did not succeed in auditions, concerts or competitions, and therefore would not be chosen by the field and recognised as future musicians. In addition, severe performance anxiety might lead to students choosing to leave the field. Students were aware of the value placed on performance and it troubled the anxious students that they did not perform as often as they felt was expected of them. For some of the students, such as Sarah presented in chapter 8, this had led to a peripheral trajectory. A problematic side of this was that the programmes did not offer any help to students for reducing their performance anxiety other than the advice to play more concerts and one elective course in programme 1 called 'concert production' (konsertproduksjon), where mental preparation was one of several themes. Since students were not offered resources particularly aimed at overcoming performance anxiety, chances are that performance capital is turned into symbolic capital as part of an innate ability that one either has or has not, similar to talent capital.

## **9.6 Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed characteristic aspects of the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires, as well the kinds of knowledge and ways of learning that are facilitated through this culture. I have described the learning culture as a culture of dedication, specialisation, hierarchy and musical capital.

These four features are intertwined, and should be considered as significant influences on what kind of learning and knowledge is promoted inside the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires. The learning facilitated through this culture is directed towards the *illusio* of becoming a professional musician, i.e. achieving a performance career. This *illusio* explains why dedication is required and specialised knowledge is prioritised, and why hierarchy is considered as beneficial for students' development. The learning culture in the three junior conservatoires appeared to position students differently: those students attributed with special talent and as particularly dedicated had greater access to central learning resources combined with a more favourable way of engaging with the resources available. In particular, it was these students' performance competence, combined with a lack of anxiety that contributed to an advantageous position in which their 'sense of limit' did not inhibit their hopes for achievement as musicians.

The four features of the learning culture are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** *The learning culture of the three junior conservatoires*



## 10 **Concluding remarks**

The overall aim of this study was to shed light on music specialist education at the pre-college level, as this has been a previously under-investigated field. Through the conceptual lens of *learning cultures*, this study has investigated dominating assumptions and values, central learning resources, and students' engagement, aiming to understand what kind of learning and knowledge was valued and facilitated in the three junior conservatoires. In this chapter I will address the study's contributions and the potential implications for the field of pre-college music specialist education. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research, based on issues that have arisen in the course of the study.

### 10.1 **Contributions of the study**

As Jørgensen (2009) notes, there has been a lack of studies focusing on educational cultures within the field of higher music education, and this is also missing for the pre-college field. While some studies have addressed the interrelatedness between social context and musical learning in higher music education, this is the first study to my knowledge to explore learning cultures in pre-college music education programmes, relating culture to students' opportunities for learning. In this section I will account for the study's theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions.

### 10.1.1 Theoretical contributions

One main theoretical contribution of the study is to further develop and apply the theory of ‘learning cultures’ to the context of junior conservatoires. In line with the project *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (Hodkinson et al., 2007, 2008; James & Biesta, 2007) and Perkins’ research (2011), the study combines a sociocultural perspective on learning with Bourdieu’s thinking tools of habitus, field and capital. In addition to the perspectives used in these two projects, I included Wenger’s concept of *learning trajectories* (Wenger, 1998) to explore students’ various ways of engaging in the learning culture. The combination of Bourdieu’s theoretical tools and Wenger’s concept of learning trajectories is a novel theoretical contribution that takes individuals’ agency into account while pointing to limitations in individuals’ actions in the social context. There is a potential conflict, however, between Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, often criticised for being deterministic and leaving little room for agency (King, 2000), and the concept of learning trajectories (Wenger, 1998), which emphasises the learner as actively constructing a trajectory by choosing what he or she engages in. While I understand the students as active agents in constructing their trajectories, the study has shown that there were limits to the kind of trajectories students could create, and not all students had equal opportunities for creating a trajectory, as different positions within the learning culture offered unequal access to learning resources.

Furthermore, this study contributes an understanding of how various forms of musical capital served to position students differently inside the junior conservatoire. Especially important were the symbolic forms of capital specific to the learning culture, identified as talent, dedication and performance competence. Inside the junior conservatoires, these worked to position students, with some having more favourable positions for achieving a professional music career.

### 10.1.2 Methodological contributions

Methodologically, the study contributes an approach to exploring learning cultures, combining observation, informal conversations, interviews and document studies to investigate cultural assumptions and values, central learning resources and students’ ways of engaging. The fieldwork, including observation and informal conversations, proved crucial to gaining an understanding

of cultural assumptions and values, as these are often taken for granted and thus seldom made explicit. 'Hanging around' (Bryman, 2012, p. 438) and having informal conversations with the interviewed students and teachers as well as other significant agents such as parents and management proved to be highly important for building an understanding of the learning culture. This research design has brought forward knowledge that I would not been able to access only through interviews. A second methodological contribution is the choice to include three educational programmes in two different countries, as there are few cross-national studies within the field of music education research (Jørgensen, 2009). Although this study was not designed as a comparative study, it has revealed some cultural differences between the programmes in the two countries, and has shown a more multifaceted picture of what specialist music education can entail than it would have if I had only included one programme.

### 10.1.3 Empirical contributions

This study contributes knowledge about the characteristics of the specialised culture of junior conservatoires, and about how this culture facilitates certain kinds of knowledge and competencies. Furthermore, it notes that the values and assumptions characteristic of junior conservatoires in general resemble those of higher music education, as they have been described in previous studies (Kingsbury, 1988; Nielsen 1999; Perkins, 2011). Educational programmes for talented children and young people are a highly topical theme, both in Norway and internationally. In Norway, management and politicians have dominated this debate. One of the main empirical contributions here has thus been to give voice to students and teachers of junior conservatoires, shedding light on their beliefs in the value of a specialist music education.

A strong empirical finding in the thesis as a whole is that students find the education extremely valuable. In particular, being part of the programme has strengthened their motivation for playing their instrument, and this is connected to friendships made in the programme, to their instrumental teacher and to significant musical experiences from playing chamber music and in the orchestra. The education they receive through the programme is also an important factor in the success so many of the JC students have in achieving a place in higher music education. However, the stress reported by some of the students has not been properly addressed in the public debate, and teachers interviewed were only to a small degree aware of the possible negative effects

being part of a high-achieving environment might have on some students. Several scholars have noted the problem of performance anxiety and stress for musicians (Burland & Pitts, 2007; Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003), and this aspect should also be part of the discussion when talent programmes are debated.

The thesis furthermore contributes knowledge about the range of ambitions held by students who attend junior conservatoires, and how well suited junior conservatoire are for various students. Although the junior conservatoires do not *require* students to have a professional music career as their goal, they nevertheless appeared to be especially well suited for students dedicated to pursuing a performance career. Those students who had not yet decided what to do, or had decided to study something else, experienced a certain degree of tension, either in their relationship with teachers or internally, reported as a bad conscience for not being dedicated enough or for not practising enough. The junior conservatoire thus represents a meeting point between a specialised music culture and students who might or might not share the dominant values in the learning culture, and who felt more or less at home within it.

Although I have studied particular cases, limited to string players in three junior conservatoires, there might be similarities between the learning culture presented and learning cultures in other educational contexts. Thus, knowledge produced through this study can be valid also for other kinds of music education as well as other kinds of gifted education.

## 10.2 Implications of the study

This study was designed to *explore* learning cultures of junior conservatoires rather than to *improve* these learning cultures. For this section, however, I would like to address some issues that have arisen through the study that are suited to stimulating a discussion about the kind of education junior conservatoires should offer students on the pre-college level.

### 10.2.1 Broadening conceptions of valued knowledge

As discussed in section 9.3, the learning culture of the three junior conservatoires was found to value specialised knowledge. Although the programmes

differed in regard to the competencies they offered students the opportunity to develop, the main instrument lessons observed in all three programmes were characterised by specialisation aimed towards a performance career. In this section I will address whether junior conservatoires would benefit from valuing a broader set of musical competencies with regards to the versatile future that awaits music graduates.

In section 9.3.2 I discussed the gap between many of the students' broad musical competence and interests on the one hand, and the narrow specialist competence that was valued and prioritised inside the main instrument lessons on the other. When the main instrument lessons overlook students' additional non-classical or non-instrumental musical activities,<sup>40</sup> this is a way of telling them that certain aspect of their musical identity is irrelevant in the context of junior conservatoires. There is a risk that this might lead versatile students to leave the field because they do not feel that their broad musical competence and interests are valued or acknowledged in the learning culture, or because they are not motivated to achieve the valued and privileged careers of a solo performance career or an orchestra position.

The need to focus on specialised competence within one genre and on one instrument can be explained by the junior conservatoires' aim of preparing students for higher music education. As long as the entrance auditions to higher music education require a certain kind of specialised competence (Norwegian Academy of Music, 2016), developing this competence is an obvious focus area for the junior conservatoires. The focus on specialisation can thus be seen as a result of the junior conservatoires' relation to tangential and overlapping fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Still, when considering the manifold career opportunities for musicians today, there might be a need for allowing for a broader specialisation, also on the pre-college level. Several studies, such as D. Bennett (2007, 2009), D. Bennett and Bridgstock (2015), Coulson (2012), Juuti and Littleton (2012) and Perkins (2011) have argued that higher music education does not prepare music graduates sufficiently for the versatile future that awaits them upon graduation. According to these scholars, for a substantial portion of music graduates, working as a musician involves competencies such as teaching, composing, conducting, managing one's own business, making projects and maintaining one's network. Perkins (2011) thus argues in her thesis that there is a need for 'broadening conceptions of specialism' (p. 207) in conservatoires

---

<sup>40</sup> External *classical-musical* activities on a student's main instrument were often addressed, however.



in order to ‘include more multifaceted musical abilities and experiences’ (p. 209). As pre-college programmes, the junior conservatoires do not have the same obligations as higher music education to qualify students for the work life they will encounter upon graduation. Still, junior conservatoires should consider whether, like conservatoires, they should open up to include more ‘multifaceted musical abilities and experiences’ for students already during the pre-college years. This could also contribute to challenge the *illusio* of a career consisting solely of performance in various constellations, and give students a more realistic picture of what being a musician entails. This leads to the next section, where I address the need of challenging the hierarchy of musical trajectories.

### 10.2.2 Challenging the hierarchy of musical trajectories

A central finding of the study, as discussed in section 9.4.3, was that the specialised learning culture of the three junior conservatoires privileged a performance career as the most attractive, while hiding or making other kinds of music-related careers less attractive. As argued in the section above, junior conservatoires could benefit from broadening the conceptions of valued knowledge and, to a greater extent than they do today, preparing students to engage in various performance and non-performance-related work as musicians. I thus agree with Dawn Bennett that there is a need to develop a more ‘non-hierarchical view of the range of occupations available’ (D. Bennett, 2009, p. 312). Bennett notes that music students typically consider success as the attainment of a performance career, and this ‘preclude[s] them from planning a positive engagement with non-performance activities’ during their studies (p. 313). The goal of becoming a soloist, or, failing that, getting a job in an orchestra, is not a realistic goal for most JC students, at least not as their sole source of income. That only a few of the students interviewed include teaching as a likely part of their future career, and some even point to it as something they would definitely not do, is even more problematic, as several studies have shown that most music graduates earn considerable parts of their income from teaching (D. Bennett, 2007, 2009; Coulson, 2012; Smilde, 2009).

Developing a non-hierarchical view of occupations must not be understood as *opposed* to developing the genre-specific specialised expertise on the instrument, however. Nevertheless, it is worth considering whether all the manifold, interesting, stimulating opportunities existing within the music industry could

be presented to students as both thinkable and attractive trajectories – not as fall-back options for those who fail to become solo performers, as some of the students described it. Considering that many of the JC students already have quite diverse musical interests and competencies, this might also inspire a broader range of JC students to aim for a music degree, and could better prepare them for being a musician, building an understanding of the versatile competencies they would need to build a career upon graduation. In this way, students' manifold musical competencies and interests would be valued as important knowledge along with the specialised knowledge already valued as highly important.

### 10.2.3 Making performance competence into a trainable skill

Performance was found to be a significant factor, both for whether students *wanted* to pursue a performance career and for how they were positioned in order to *achieve* a performance career. Struggling with performance anxiety made some of the students interviewed question whether they were really suited to become musicians. Furthermore, because performances are a central part of being a musician, and students were evaluated in general by how they performed in assessments, competitions and concerts, those who either performed rarely due to anxiety or whose performances were hampered by nerves, were in a less favourable position to achieve a performance career. I would thus argue that there is a need for resources devoted to building performance competence already at the pre-college level.

In section 9.5.3, I discussed the consequences performance anxiety had for some of the JC students, and I pointed to a lack of resources in the learning culture for helping students reduce their anxiety. This study, in line with previous research (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Kenny & Osborne, 2006), positions performance anxiety as a common problem among young music students. And we know from other studies that it is a severe problem for many professional musicians as well (Fishbein, Middlestadt, Ottati, Straus, & Ellis, 1988; Kemp, 1996). Papageorgi et al. (2007) even show that adolescence is a particularly difficult period for many young musicians in terms of performance anxiety. There were students in the material who struggled with performance anxiety to such a degree that they tried to avoid performance situations in general and in particular solo performances where they knew they would be assessed. Even though severe anxiety only applied to a few of the students, most students had experienced that

nerves had impaired their performance from time to time. Thus, as Williamon (2004) puts it, the emphasis should be on '*enhancing* performance rather than simply surviving the demands of it' (p. 9, italics in original), furthermore arguing that there are several techniques that can be applied by musicians in order to reduce performance anxiety. Thus, all JC students, not only those who were troubled by performance anxiety, could benefit from developing strategies for how to handle the pressure of a performance situation.

Papageorgi and Welch (2014) argue that there is a need for higher music education institutions to 'challenge the conception that successful musicians do not experience performance anxiety' (p. 181). Considering this, it would be helpful if the advice to 'play more concerts, and the nervousness will disappear', heard from teachers and repeated by their students in the material, was expanded with concrete strategies for tackling the performance situation. This could serve to demystify performance competence, removing it from the realm of innate ability and thus as part of a person's symbolic capital and turning it into a competence that can be developed. It would furthermore contribute to normalise performance anxiety as something all musicians experience from time to time.

### **10.3 Reflections and suggestions for future research**

This study has taken a holistic perspective, trying to capture central characteristics of the learning culture in the three junior conservatoires, and there are topics addressed in the thesis that deserve to be addressed more thoroughly in later studies. Furthermore, there is an overall need for studies that explore music students' learning on the pre-college level from various angles. In what follows, I will draw out potential fruitful paths for future research in the field.

First, there is a need for more longitudinal studies within the field of pre-college music education. Students in this age span are at a critical stage regarding educational choices, and many have great uncertainties regarding whether they want to become musicians or whether they will be good enough to get in to higher music education. This study involved a relatively short period of fieldwork, during which I observed students in various learning contexts and conducted one interview with each student and teacher. Thus, I only had access to students' future plans at one point in time. Although this study was not longitudinal, three to four years have elapsed between data collection and

completion of the thesis. The students, who were between 14 and 18 at the time of the interview, have thus all moved into higher education. I am familiar with most of the students' educational choices through keeping contact with them or their teachers related to the member-check, as well as through other sources such as social media, accidental encounters or because some of them have started at the conservatoire where I am currently working. Some of the students' ultimate choices were not in accordance with the trajectory they said they aimed for in the interview, which raises questions regarding which factors influence students' learning trajectories in the transition years from age 16 to 19, when most decide whether to pursue music as a profession or not. In particular, it would be useful to explore the transition phase from junior conservatoire to higher education, a transition described as crucial by previous researchers (Juuti & Littleton, 2010).

A second issue that intrigued me in the research process, was the centrality of performance in the learning culture, and how intimately related students' relationship to performing seemed to be to their musical ambitions and to their engagement with learning resources. Although only a minority of the students interviewed struggled with such a severe anxiety that it hindered their participation in learning activities that contained important learning resources, the problem is more far-reaching: almost everyone reported that they experienced nerves from time to time when performing. In a future study, it would be useful to look for best practices of specialist programmes where students are equipped with strategies for how to handle performance situations, as well as how such training can help students improve their performances. I would also be curious to investigate to what degree performance anxiety affects whether or not students choose to pursue a professional music career.

Gender has not been a particular focus area in the study, but in relation to students' ambitions there were notable division lines between boys and girls: more boys than girls wanted to become soloists, while the girls to a greater extent envisaged orchestra careers. More girls than boys also expressed concerns about how to combine family life with being a musician, reporting to want a 'stable income' and a 'normal family life'. As the number of students interviewed is not suitable for making generalisations, it remains a question whether these findings are representative for students on the pre-college level or whether it was a coincidence. Whether gender affects ambitions, engagement or access would be an interesting area for later research.

The junior conservatoires in the present study appeared to be characterised by an internal hierarchy, where students had a clear perception of other students' position as well as their own. This became most visible in the students' future dreams and their various ways of engagement in the different learning contexts. Further studies could explore in greater depth how students' 'sense of limits' (Bourdieu, 1977) develop, and how this inhibits or enables their engagement with central learning resources and thus influences their musical development and accumulation of musical capital, and in turn their position for achieving a musical performance career.

Specialist programmes for musicians have much in common with specialist programmes within other fields, such as sports or dance or other disciplines where an early intervention is needed to reach a high level of expertise as adult performers. There might be much to gain from comparing specialist programmes within different fields in order to explore how other fields handle the tension between developing a broad and a specialised competence, what kind of capital is valued, and what kind of learning resources students are given access to in what ways. Comparisons between development of expertise within sports and music are common, and many similarities have been noted in previous studies, by scholars such as Ericsson (1996) and Bloom (1985). However, it would be fruitful to compare specialist programmes within different fields by using the same theoretical framework when doing a future study.

Finally, there is a need for studies that apply various research designs. This study has drawn solely on qualitative methods. Although I regarded this as beneficial for exploring the research questions posed, there are several issues in the field of music specialist programmes where quantitative studies are needed. This study has identified certain values and assumptions as characteristic of the learning culture, and has furthermore shown that students' engagement in the social practices of the learning culture was affected by how they related to these values and assumptions. These findings could provide a basis for investigating whether these factors are significant also for a larger population of students in music specialist programmes. There is also still little knowledge, at least in Norway, of what students in junior conservatoires choose to do afterwards, and whether they qualify for higher music education more often than students with different educational backgrounds do. Larger quantitative studies could provide useful information on these issues.

The pre-college years are highly important in the development of future musicians, as has been pointed out in several previous studies referred to in the

thesis. Providing students in higher music education with the best possible starting point for achieving a versatile music career is thus an important task for music specialist programmes on the pre-college level. Clearly, we need to know more about how such programmes work, and how they can be further improved to ensure that students are both motivated and equipped to face the critical transition into higher music education, and develop a foundation for, as well as a realistic picture of, what being a musician today might entail.



## References

- Aakvaag, G. C. (2008). *Moderne sosiologisk teori*. Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.
- Abbott, A., & Collins, D. (2004). Eliminating the dichotomy between theory and practice in talent identification and development: considering the role of psychology. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 22(5), 395–408.
- ABRSM (2013). Marking Criteria (All instruments). Retrieved from [http://us.abrsm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PDFs/markingCriteriaAll.pdf](http://us.abrsm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/markingCriteriaAll.pdf)
- ABRSM (2014). *Making Music. Teaching, learning and playing in the UK*. Retrieved from [http://us.abrsm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PDFs/makingMusic2014.pdf](http://us.abrsm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/makingMusic2014.pdf)
- AEC (2007). *Final report. Pre-college music education in Europa*. Retrieved from <http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/AEC%20WG%20Report-%20Pre-College%20WG%20Final%20Report%20Pre-college%20music%20education%20in%20Europe%20EN.pdf>
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage.



- Arnesen, C. Å., Waagene, E., Hovdhaugen, E., & Støren, L. A. (2014). *Spill på flere strenger: Kandidatundersøkelse blant personer utdannet i skapende og utøvende musikk*. Oslo: Nordisk institutt for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning. Retrieved from <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/280115/1/NIFUrapport2014-10.pdf>
- Atkinson, P., & Coffey, A. (2004). Analysing documentary realities. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Barratt-Due, S. (2013). Talentene som forsvant. *Aftenposten*. Retrieved from [www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/Talentene-som-forsvant-7245457.html#.UgSm8JKGGrN](http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/Talentene-som-forsvant-7245457.html#.UgSm8JKGGrN)
- Beeching, A. M. (2010). *Beyond talent: Creating a successful career in music*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, D. (2007). Utopia for music performance graduates: Is it achievable, and how should it be defined? *British Journal of Music Education*, 24(02), 179–189. doi:[10.1017/S0265051707007383](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051707007383)
- Bennett, D. (2009). Academy and the real world: Developing realistic notions of career in the performing arts. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 8(3), 309–327.
- Bennett, D. (2012). *Life in the real world: How to make music graduates employable*. Champaign, Ill.: Common Ground Publishing.
- Bennett, D., & Bridgstock, R. (2015). The urgent need for career preview: Student expectations and graduate realities in music and dance. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33(3), 263–277.
- Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E. B., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., & Wright, D. (2009). *Culture, class, distinction*. New York: Routledge.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin.
- Bernstein, B. (1990). *Class, codes and control*, vol. 4: *The structuring of pedagogic discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Billett, S. (2001). Knowing in practice: Re-conceptualising vocational expertise. *Learning and instruction*, 11(6), 431–452.

- Bishop, D., Felstead, A., Fuller, A., Jewson, N., Lee, T., & Unwin, L. (2006). Connecting culture and learning in organisations: A review of current themes. *Learning as Work Research Paper*, 5.
- Bloom, B. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: an introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Pearson A & B.
- Bouij, C. (1998). Swedish Music Teachers in Training and Professional Life. *International Journal of Music Education*, 05-32(1), 24-32.  
doi:[10.1177/025576149803200103](https://doi.org/10.1177/025576149803200103)
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 46-58). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). *Homo Academicus* (P. Collier, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990a). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990b). *The logic of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Oxford: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian meditations*. Oxford: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:[10.1191/1478088706qp0630a](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a)

- Brophy, J. E. (1983). Research on the self-fulfilling prophecy and teacher expectations. *Journal of educational psychology*, 75(5), 631.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as symbolic action: Essays on life, literature, and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burland, K. (2005). *Becoming a musician: a longitudinal study investigating the career transitions of undergraduate music students*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Sheffield Sheffield, UK.
- Burland, K., & Davidson, J. W. (2002). Training the talented. *Music Education Research*, 4(1), 121–140.
- Burland, K., & Pitts, S. (2007). Becoming a Music Student Investigating the skills and attitudes of students beginning a Music degree. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 6(3), 289–308. doi:[10.1177/1474022207080847](https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022207080847)
- Burnard, P., Trulsson, Y. H., & Söderman, J. (2015). *Bourdieu and the Sociology of Music: Music Education and Research*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Burwell, K. (2005). A degree of independence: teachers' approaches to instrumental tuition in a university college. *British Journal of Music Education*, 22(03), 199. doi:[10.1017/s0265051705006601](https://doi.org/10.1017/s0265051705006601)
- Carey, G., Bridgstock, R., Taylor, P., McWilliam, E., & Grant, C. (2013). Characterising one-to-one conservatoire teaching: Some implications of a quantitative analysis. *Music Education Research*, 15(3), 357–368.
- Carey, G., & Grant, C. (2015). Teacher and student perspectives on one-to-one pedagogy: practices and possibilities. *British Journal of Music Education*, 32(01), 5–22. doi:[10.1017/S0265051714000084](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051714000084)
- Christophersen, C. (2009). *Rytmsk musikkundervisning som estetisk praksis: en casestudie*. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/172444>
- Coffman, D. D. (1990). Effects of Mental Practice, Physical Practice, and Knowledge of Results on Piano Performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 38(3), 187–196. doi:[10.2307/3345182](https://doi.org/10.2307/3345182)

- Colangelo, N., & Davis, G. A. (2002). *Handbook on gifted education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Conservatoires UK. (2016). Conservatoires UK. Retrieved from <http://www.conservatoiresuk.ac.uk/>
- Corra, M., & Willer, D. (2002). The Gatekeeper. *Sociological Theory*, 20(2), 180–207. doi:[10.1111/1467-9558.00158](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9558.00158)
- Côté, J. (1999). The influence of the family in the development of talent in sport. *The sport psychologist*, 13(4), 395–417.
- Cottrell, S. (2004). *Professional music-making in London*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Coulson, S. (2010). Getting ‘Capital’ in the music world: musicians’ learning experiences and working lives. *British Journal of Music Education*, 27(3), 255–270. doi:[10.1017/S0265051710000227](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051710000227)
- Coulson, S. (2012). Collaborating in a competitive world: Musicians’ working lives and understandings of entrepreneurship. *Work, Employment & Society*, 26(2), 246–261. doi:[10.1177/0950017011432919](https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017011432919)
- Creech, A., & Hallam, S. (2003). Parent–teacher–pupil interactions in instrumental music tuition: A literature review. *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(01), 29–44.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, I. S. (2007). Family influences on the development of giftedness. *Ciba Foundation Symposium 178 – The Origins and Development of High Ability* (pp. 187–206). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- D’Andrade, R. G. (1995). *The development of cognitive anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahlberg, M. (2013). *Learning across contexts: music performance students’ construction of learning trajectories* (Vol. 2013:6). Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole.
- Daniels, H., Cole, M., & Wertsch, J. V. (2007). *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Davidson, J. W., Howe, M. J. A., Moore, D. G., & Sloboda, J. A. (1996). The role of parental influences in the development of musical performance. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 14(4), 399–412. doi:[10.1111/j.2044-835X.1996.tb00714.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-835X.1996.tb00714.x)
- Davidson, J. W., Moore, D. G., Sloboda, J. A., & Howe, M. J. A. (1998). Characteristics of music teachers and the progress of young instrumentalists. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 46(1), 141–160. doi:[10.2307/3345766](https://doi.org/10.2307/3345766)
- Davies, A. (2004). Preparing professional performers: Music students' perceptions and experiences of the learning process at Birmingham Conservatoire. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(6), 803–821. doi:[10.1080/0951839042000256466](https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839042000256466)
- Davis, M. (1994). Folk music psychology. *The Psychologist*, 7(12), 537.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1–32). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- DiMaggio, P. (1979). On Pierre Bourdieu. *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(6), 1460–1474.
- Ellefsen, L. W. (2014). *Negotiating musicianship: The constitution of student subjectivities in and through discursive practices of musicianship in "Musikklinja"*. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/227601>
- Ericsson, K. A. (1996). *The Road to excellence: The acquisition of expert performance in the arts and sciences, sports, and games*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ericsson, K. A. (2006). *The Cambridge handbook of expertise and expert performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ericsson, K. A., Krampe, R. T., & Tesch-Römer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological Review*, 100(3), 43.
- Fangen, K. (2004). *Deltagende observasjon*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Fehm, L., & Schmidt, K. (2006). Performance anxiety in gifted adolescent musicians. *Journal of anxiety disorders*, 20(1), 98–109.

- Fishbein, M., Middlestadt, S. E., Ottati, V., Straus, S., & Ellis, A. (1988). Medical problems among ICSOM musicians: overview of a national survey. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, 3(1), 1–8.
- Fog, J. (2004). *Med samtalen som udgangspunkt: det kvalitative forskningsinterview*. København: Akademisk Forlag.
- Gagné, F. (2004). Transforming gifts into talents: the DMGT as a developmental theory. *High Ability Studies*, 15(2), 119–147. doi:[10.1080/1359813042000314682](https://doi.org/10.1080/1359813042000314682)
- Gardner, H. (2007). The relationship between early giftedness and later achievement. *Ciba Foundation Symposium 178 – The Origins and Development of High Ability* (pp. 175–186). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Gaunt, H. (2006). *Student and teacher perceptions of one-to-one instrumental and vocal tuition in a conservatoire*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of London, London.
- Gaunt, H. (2008). One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: the perceptions of instrumental and vocal teachers. *Psychology of Music*, 36(2), 215–245. doi:[10.1177/0305735607080827](https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607080827)
- Gaunt, H. (2010). One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: the perceptions of instrumental and vocal students. *Psychology of Music*, 38(2), 178–208. doi:[10.1177/0305735609339467](https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735609339467)
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Godlovitch, S. (1998). *Musical performance: A philosophical study*. London: Routledge.
- Green, L. (2002). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Grenfell, M. (2012). *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Durham, UK: Acumen.
- Gruber, H., Lehtinen, E., Palonen, T., & Degner, S. (2008). Persons in the shadow: Assessing the social context of high abilities. *Psychology Science Quarterly*, 50(2), 237–258. Retrieved from [http://www.psychologie-aktuell.com/fileadmin/download/PsychologyScience/2-2008/10\\_Gruber.pdf](http://www.psychologie-aktuell.com/fileadmin/download/PsychologyScience/2-2008/10_Gruber.pdf)

- Gustavsen, K., & Hjelmbrække, S. (2009). *Kulturskole for alle?* Retrieved from [https://www.telemarksforsking.no/publikasjoner/detalj.asp?r\\_ID=1640&merket=3](https://www.telemarksforsking.no/publikasjoner/detalj.asp?r_ID=1640&merket=3)
- Haddon, E. (2011). Multiple teachers: multiple gains? *British Journal of Music Education*, 28(1), 69–85. doi:[10.1017/S0265051710000422](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051710000422)
- Hallam, S. (1998). The predictors of achievement and dropout in instrumental tuition. *Psychology of Music*, 26(2), 116–132.
- Hallam, S., Creech, A., Papageorgi, I., Gomes, T., Rinta, T., Varvarigou, M., & Lanipekun, J. (2016). Changes in motivation as expertise develops: Relationships with musical aspirations. *Musicae Scientiae*, 20(4), 528–550. doi:[10.1177/1029864916634420](https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864916634420)
- Hambrick, D. Z., Oswald, F. L., Altmann, E. M., Meinz, E. J., Gobet, F., & Campitelli, G. (2014). Deliberate practice: Is that all it takes to become an expert? *Intelligence*, 45, 34–45. doi:[10.1016/j.intell.2013.04.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2013.04.001)
- Hammersley, M. (2005). Ethnography and discourse analysis: Incompatible or complementary? *Polifonia*, 10(10).
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hanken, I. M. (2007). *Studentevaluering av individuell hovedinstrumentundervisning : en case-studie av en høyere musikkutdanningsinstitusjon*. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/172406>
- Hardy, C. (2012). Social space. In M. Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (2nd ed.). Durham: Acumen.
- Heller, K. A., Mönks, F. J., Subotnik, R., & Sternberg, R. J. (2000). *International handbook of giftedness and talent*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Henley, D. (2011). *Music education in England: a review by Darren Henley for the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport*. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175432/DFE-00011-2011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175432/DFE-00011-2011.pdf)
- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G., & James, D. (2007). Understanding learning cultures. *Educational Review*, 59(4), 415–427.

- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G., & James, D. (2008). Understanding learning culturally: Overcoming the dualism between social and individual views of learning. *Vocations and Learning, 1*(1), 27–47.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Howe, M. J. A., Davidson, J., & Sloboda, J. (1998). Innate talents: Reality or Myth? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 21*, 399–442.
- Hultberg, C. (2002). Approaches to music notation: The printed score as a mediator of meaning in Western tonal tradition. *Music Education Research, 4*(2), 185–197. doi:[10.1080/1461380022000011902](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461380022000011902)
- James, D., & Biesta, G. J. J. (2007). *Improving learning cultures in further education*. London: Routledge.
- Jarvin, L., & Subotnik, R. F. (2010). Wisdom from conservatory faculty: Insights on success in classical music performance. *Roeper Review, 32*(2), 78–87. doi:[10.1080/02783191003587868](https://doi.org/10.1080/02783191003587868)
- Jenkins, R. (2002). *Pierre Bourdieu* (Rev. ed.). London: Routledge.
- Johansen, G. (2018): *Musikk talent i grunnskolen. En forskningsbasert evalueringsstudie av Musikk på Majorstuen. Sluttrapport*. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2490071>
- John-Steiner, V., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist, 31* 3/4, 191–206.
- Jordhus-Lier, A. (2018). *Institutionalising versatility, accommodating specialists. A discourse analysis of music teachers' professional identities within the Norwegian municipal school of music and arts*. Doctoral Dissertation. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2480686>
- Juuti, S., & Littleton, K. (2010). Musical identities in transition: Solo-piano students' accounts of entering the academy. *Psychology of Music, 38*(4), 481–497. doi:[10.1177/0305735609351915](https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735609351915)
- Juuti, S., & Littleton, K. (2012). Tracing the transition from study to a contemporary creative working life: The trajectories of professional musicians. *Vocations and Learning, 5*(1), 5–21. doi:[10.1007/s12186-011-9062-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-011-9062-9)



- Jørgensen, H. (2000). Student learning in higher instrumental education: Who is responsible? *British Journal of Music Education*, 17(1), 67–77.
- Jørgensen, H. (2002). Instrumental performance expertise and amount of practice among instrumental students in a conservatoire. *Music Education Research*, 4(1), 105–119. doi:[10.1080/14613800220119804](https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800220119804)
- Jørgensen, H. (2008). Instrumental practice: Quality and quantity. *Finnish Journal of Music Education*, 11, 8–18.
- Jørgensen, H. (2009). *Research into higher music education: An overview from a quality improvement perspective*. Oslo: Novus.
- Kemp, A. E. (1996). *The musical temperament: Psychology and personality of musicians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kennell, R. (2002). Systematic research in studio instruction in music. In C. P. Richardson, R. Colwell, & C. Music Educators National (Eds.), *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning: A project of the music educators national conference* (pp. 243–256). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kenny, D. T., & Osborne, M. S. (2006). Music performance anxiety: New insights from young musicians. *Advances in Cognitive Psychology*, 2(2–3), 103–112.
- King, A. (2000). Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A ‘practical’ critique of the habitus. *Sociological Theory*, 18(3), 417–433. doi:[10.1111/0735-2751.00109](https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00109)
- Kingsbury, H. (1988). *Music, talent, and performance: A conservatory cultural system*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kokotsaki, D., & Davidson, J. W. (2003). Investigating musical performance anxiety among music college singing students: A quantitative analysis. *Music Education Research*, 5(1), 45–59.
- Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions*. Papers. Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass.: Museum of American Archeology.
- Kuh, G. D. (1993). *Cultural perspectives in student affairs work*. Alexandria: University Press of America.

- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Landes, H. A. (2008). *On being a music major: A comparative study of student culture in a conservatory and a university school of music* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Loyola University, Chicago.
- Lapadat, J. C., & Lindsay, A. C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(1), 64–86. doi:[10.1177/107780049900500104](https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049900500104)
- Lave, J. (1993). The practice of learning. In S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.), *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lehmann, A. C., & Kristensen, F. (2014). “Persons in the shadow” brought to light: Parents, teachers, and mentors – how guidance works in the acquisition of musical skills. *Talent Development & Excellence*, 6(1), 57–70.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- MacNamara, Á., & Collins, D. (2009). More than the ‘X’ factor! A longitudinal investigation of the psychological characteristics of developing excellence in musical development. *Music Education Research*, 11(3), 377–392. doi:[10.1080/14613800903144270](https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800903144270)
- MacNamara, Á., Holmes, P., & Collins, D. (2006). The pathway to excellence: The role of psychological characteristics in negotiating the challenges of musical development. *British Journal of Music Education*, 23(03), 285–302.
- Manturzewska, M. (1990). A biographical study of the life-span development of professional musicians. *Psychology of Music*, 18(2), 112–139.
- Marsh, H. W. (2005). Big fish little pond effect on academic self-concept: Cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary generalizability. Retrieved from <https://www.aare.edu.au/data/publications/2005/mar05389.pdf>
- McPherson, G. E. (2009). The role of parents in children’s musical development. *Psychology of Music*, 37(1), 91–110. doi:[10.1177/0305735607086049](https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607086049)

- McPherson, G. E., Davidson, J. W., & Faulkner, R. R. (2012). *Music in our lives: Rethinking musical ability, development, and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1996). *Phenomenology of perception*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Mills, J., & Smith, J. (2003). Teachers' beliefs about effective instrumental teaching in schools and higher education. *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(01), 5-27.
- Mondada, L. (2007). Commentary: transcript variations and the indexicality of transcribing practices. *Discourse Studies*, 9(6), 809-821. doi:[10.1177/1461445607082581](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445607082581)
- Moore, D., Burland, K., & Davidson, J. W. (2003). The social context of musical success: A developmental account. *British Journal of Psychology*, 94, 529-549. doi:[10.1348/000712603322503088](https://doi.org/10.1348/000712603322503088)
- Moore, R. (2012). Capital. In M. Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (2nd ed., pp. 98-113). Durham: Acumen.
- Nerland, M. (2004). *Instrumentalundervisning som kulturell praksis : en diskursorientert studie av hovedinstrumentundervisning i høyere musikk-utdanning*. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole.
- Nerland, M., & Hanken, I. M. (2002). Academies of music as arenas for education: some reflections on the institutional construction of teacher-student relationships. In I. M. Hanken, S. G. Nielsen, & M. Nerland (Eds.), *Research in and for higher music education. Festschrift for Harald Jørgensen* (pp. 167-186). Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music.
- Nettl, B. (1995). *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Nielsen, K. (1999). *Musical apprenticeship: Learning at the Academy of Music as socially situated* (Vol. 24, no 2). Aarhus: Aarhus University, Institute of Psychology
- Nielsen, K. (2006). Apprenticeship at the Academy of Music. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 7(4), 1-16.

- Norges musikkhøgskole, Barratt Due Musikk institutt, & Norsk kulturskoleråd. (2008). *Tid for talent. Talentutvikling i musikk*. Retrieved from [https://www.kulturskoleradet.no/\\_extension/media/3506/orig/attachment/2008\\_Tid\\_for\\_talent\\_NMH\\_BDM\\_NKR.pdf](https://www.kulturskoleradet.no/_extension/media/3506/orig/attachment/2008_Tid_for_talent_NMH_BDM_NKR.pdf).
- Norsk kulturskoleråd (2016). *Rammeplan for kulturskolene. Mangfold og fordykning*. Retrieved from <http://www.kulturskoleradet.no/rammeplanseksjonen/rammeplanen>.
- Norwegian Academy of Music (2016). Audition Requirements – Classical. Retrieved from <http://nmh.no/en/apply/undergraduate-admissions/performance/audition-classical>.
- Osberg, D., Doll Jr, W. E., & Trueit, D. (2008). Gatekeepers of a Complex Field? *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 5(1), iii–ix.
- Papageorgi, I., Haddon, E., Creech, A., Morton, F., De Bezenac, C., Himonides, E., et al (2010). Institutional culture and learning II: Inter-relationships between perceptions of the learning environment and undergraduate musicians' attitudes to performance. *Music Education Research*, 12(4), 427–446.
- Papageorgi, I., Hallam, S., & Welch, G. F. (2007). A conceptual framework for understanding musical performance anxiety. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 28(1), 83–107.
- Papageorgi, I., & Welch, G. (2014). How do musicians develop their learning about performance? In I. Papageorgi & G. Welch (Eds.), *Advanced musical performance: Investigations in higher education learning*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*: Newbury Park: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Perkins, R. L. (2011). The construction of 'learning cultures': an ethnographically-informed case study of a UK conservatoire. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.

- Persson, R. (1994). Control before shape – on mastering the clarinet: A case study on commonsense teaching. *British Journal of Music Education*, 11(3), 223–238. doi:[10.1017/S0265051700002187](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051700002187)
- Persson, R. (1996). Brilliant performers as teachers: a case study of common-sense teaching in a conservatoire setting. *International Journal of Music Education*, 05-28(1), 25–36. doi:[10.1177/025576149602800103](https://doi.org/10.1177/025576149602800103)
- Platz, F., Kopiez, R., Lehmann, A. C., & Wolf, A. (2014). The influence of deliberate practice on musical achievement: a meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5(646). doi:[10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00646](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00646)
- Popkewitz, T. S. (1994). Professionalization in teaching and teacher education: Some notes on its history, ideology, and potential. *Teaching and teacher education*, 10(1), 1–14.
- Presland, C. (2005). Conservatoire student and instrumental professor: The student perspective on a complex relationship. *British Journal of Music Education*, 22(03), 237–248.
- Prieur, A., & Sestoft, C. (2006). *Pierre Bourdieu: En introduktion*. København: Hans Reitzel.
- Reay, D. (1995). 'They employ cleaners to do that': Habitus in the primary classroom. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 16(3), 353–371.
- Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 431–444. doi:[10.1080/0142569042000236934](https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569042000236934)
- Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 149–172). New York: Springer.
- Renzulli, J. S. (2003). The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness. In L. V. Shavinina (Ed.), *The international handbook on innovation*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Rimmer, M. (2010). Listening to the monkey: Class, youth and the formation of a musical habitus. *Ethnography*, 11(2), 255–283. doi:[10.1177/1466138109339115](https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138109339115)

- Rimmer, M. (2012). Beyond Omnivores and Univores: The Promise of a Concept of Musical Habitus. *Cultural Sociology*, 6(3), 299–318. doi:[10.1177/1749975511401278](https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975511401278)
- Roberts, B. A. (1990). *The social construction of “musician” identity in music education students in Canadian Universities*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Stirling, UK.
- Roberts, J. (2006). Limits to Communities of Practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(3), 621–622. doi:[10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00604.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00604.x)
- Sagiv, D., & Hall, C. (2015). Producing a classical habitus: reconsidering instrumental music teaching methods. In P. Burnard, Y. H. Trulsson, & J. Söderman (Eds.), *Bourdieu and the Sociology of Music: Music Education and Research*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness studies*, 3(1), 71–92.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Sestoft, C. (2006). Felt: Begreper og analyser (Field: concepts and analysis). In A. Prieur & C. Sestoft (Eds.), *Pierre Bourdieu: En introduktion*. København: Hans Reitzel.
- Sewell Jr, W. H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1–29.
- Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 4–13. doi:[10.3102/0013189x027002004](https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x027002004)
- Sharp, C. (2015). *Key Data on Music Education Hubs 2014*. London: Arts Council England.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Simonton, D. K. (1999). Talent and its development: An emergenic and epigenetic model. *Psychological Review*, 106(3), 435.

- Slette, A. (2014). *Aural awareness in ensemble rehearsals. A qualitative case study of three undergraduate chamber music ensembles playing western classical music*. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/197184>
- Sloboda, J. A., Davidson, J. W., Howe, M. J., & Moore, D. G. (1996). The role of practice in the development of performing musicians. *British Journal of Psychology*, 87(2), 287–309.
- Sloboda, J. A., & Howe, M. J. (1991). Biographical precursors of musical excellence: An interview study. *Psychology of Music*, 19(1), 3–21.
- Smilde, R. (2009). *Musicians as lifelong learners: Discovery through biography*. Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers.
- Sosniak, L. A. (1985a). Learning to be a concert pianist. In B. S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Sosniak, L. A. (1985b). Phases of learning. In B. S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Sosniak, L. A. (1990). The tortoise, the hare, and the development of talent. In M. J. A. Howe (Ed.) *Encouraging the development of exceptional skills and talents* (149–164) Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Sparebankstiftelsen DNB. Dextra Musica. Retrieved from <https://www.sparebankstiftelsen.no/en/dextra-musica>.
- Stabell, E. M. (2010). *Mesterklassen : læringspotensial og funksjon i musikerutdanningen : en kvalitativ intervjuundersøkelse utført blant klaverstudenter ved Norges musikkhøgskole*. Master thesis. Oslo: Norges musikkhøgskole. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/172478>
- Stabell, E. M. og Jordhus-Lier, A. (2017). Fordypningsprogram i kulturskolen – i spennet mellom bredde og spesialisering. In E. Angelo, R. J. Rønning & A. Rønningen (Eds.), *Forskning og utvikling i kulturskolefeltet. Den doble regnbuen: IRISforsk*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Stige, B., Malterud, K., & Midtgarden, T. (2009). Toward an agenda for evaluation of qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(10), 1504–1516.

- Stollery, P., & McPhee, A. (2002). Some perspectives on musical gift and musical intelligence. *British Journal of Music Education*, 19(01), 89–102. doi:[10.1017/S0265051702000165](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051702000165)
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*: Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Säljö, R. (2001). *Læring i praksis: et sosiokulturelt perspektiv* (S. Moen, Trans.). Oslo: Cappelen akademisk.
- Talent Norge. (2015). *Halvårsrapport og tildelinger. Talent Norge*. Retrieved from <https://talentnorge.no/nyheter/rapport-fra-foerste-halvaar-2015/>
- The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics. (2014). General guidelines for research ethics. Retrieved from <https://www.etikkom.no/globalassets/general-guidelines.pdf>
- Unge Musikere. (2016). Nasjonalt talentutviklingsprogram for unge musikere. Retrieved from <http://www.ungemusikere.no/>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wacquant, L. J. D. (1989). Towards a reflexive sociology: A workshop with Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 26–63.
- Wagner, I. (2015). *Producing Excellence. The Making of Virtuosos*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (2007). Mediation. In H. Daniels, M. Cole, & J. V. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky* (pp. 178–192). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williamon, A. (2004). *Musical excellence: Strategies and techniques to enhance performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17(2), 89–100. doi:[10.1111/j.1469-7610.1976.tb00381.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1976.tb00381.x)



- Wright, R. (2008). Kicking the habitus: Power, culture and pedagogy in the secondary school music curriculum. *Music Education Research*, 10(3), 389–402. doi:[10.1080/14613800802280134](https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800802280134)
- Wright, R. (2015). Injustice and exclusion in music education: Politics in pedagogical practice (or why every learner matters but some matter more than others). In N. Economidou Stavrou & M. Stakelum (Eds.), *European perspectives on music education 4. Every learner counts. Democracy and inclusion*. Innsbruck: Helbling.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research : design and methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Young, V., Burwell, K., & Pickup, D. (2003). Areas of study and teaching strategies instrumental teaching: A case study research project. *Music Education Research*, 5(2), 139–155.

# Appendices

- 1 Information sheet for student participants
- 2 Research participant consent
- 3 Observation guide for main instrument lessons
- 4 Interview guide for students
- 5 Interview guide for teachers
- 6 Thematic map
- 7 Letter of approval from NSD
- 8 Letter of approval from Research Ethics Committee at Programme 3

## Appendix 1: Information sheet for student participants

**Title of project:** Being talented – becoming a musician

**Study approved by School Research Ethics Committee:** \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project concerning how studying at a specialist music school contributes to students' musical development. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The project aims to research the learning possibilities and resources that exist at a specialist school, and to inquire into how students make use of these resources to enhance their own musical skills and musical life.

### What does participation in the project imply?

The research will be carried out at three different specialist schools in Norway and England. At each institution I am inviting 2 teachers and 5–6 students to participate. The study will consist of:

- Observation – I will be present on 4–6 Saturdays during 2013 and 2014 to observe the activities of the programme. I will attend activities such as main instrument lessons, musical awareness classes, ensemble and orchestra rehearsals, master classes and concerts.
- Interview – At the end of the observation period I will conduct an interview with the students on a one-to-one basis where we talk about your experiences as a student at the school, the social environment at the programme, your future plans, and how you understand the concept of 'talent'.

The interview will be held after the activities have finished at one of the Saturdays. Therefore it will not involve you in any extra travel.

### What about anonymity?

The data will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms. Any information that might make a participant easily identifiable will not be included in any written reports or presentations from the project.

I will make a recording of the interview so that your views are accurately represented, but this recording will be deleted after I have done the transcription. Identifying information such as age, teacher or names of friends or parents will be removed from the transcription.

I am the only person who will have access to the raw data material, while my supervisors will have access to the anonymised material.

### Member check

After I have transcribed the interview I will invite you to read it through to assure that there have been no misunderstandings. I will also send each participant a list of the quotes I would like to use in the thesis for approval prior to publication.

### Can I withdraw from the project?

Taking part in this project is voluntary, and the participants are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Participating in the project or not will have no impact on how your studies are organised.

After the study is completed each participant will receive a summary of the findings. The thesis will also be available online. I plan to have it published by the end of 2016.

### Contact details of the researcher:

Name: Ellen M. Stabell

Institution: The Norwegian Academy of Music (nmh.no)

Phone Number: +47 970 22 171

E-mail: Ellen.m.stabell@nmh.no

## Appendix 2: Research participant consent

**Title of project: Being a talent – becoming a musician**

**Study approved by School Research Ethics Committee** \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you and you should have read any accompanying information sheet before you complete this form.*

- If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to participate. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Participant's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ *(full name, please print)*

**agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the project. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research involves.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parental/guardian signature (for minors under 18 years):**

### **Appendix 3: Observation guide for main instrument lessons**

**Date/time:**

**Student(s):**

**Teacher:**

Observation notes

**What pieces/etudes are the student playing?**

- 

**Order of events**

- Introduction
  -
- Warming up
  -
- Pieces
  -
- Concluding the class
  -

**What is the next goal for the student?**

**Is there a theme for the lesson?**

**The teacher's teaching strategies**

**Communication**

*I tried to write down as much as possible of what the teacher and the student(s) said and did during the lesson.*

Type of questions from the teacher

- *Controlling questions*
- *Explorative questions*
- *Rhetorical questions*

Questions and initiatives from the student

Reflective notes (written down afterwards)

**Relationship between student and teacher**

**What learning resources are the student given access to through the lesson?**

**How does the lesson differ from other lessons observed?**

**Were there any special events during this class to follow up on?**

To what degree did I affect the situation?

## Appendix 4: Interview guide for students

### Background

- When did you start playing your instrument?
- How long have you been at the junior conservatoire? Where did you get tuition before you started here?
- Can you already now say something about your musical ambitions?

### Main instrument lessons

- How would you describe a typical lesson with your main instrument teacher?
- What makes a lesson successful for you?
- Which instrument related activities does your teacher encourage you to participate in? (This might for example be master classes, concerts, chamber music groups or summer courses)
- How would you describe the relationship between you and your teacher?
- Does your teacher sometimes work with his or her students as a group? (If yes, the following questions will apply):
  - o Could you tell me a little bit more about how this is organised and what you do? (how many students are present, what activities are there, do you comment on each other's playing, does everyone play?)
  - o How does this kind of group session help your learning?
- Has your teacher taken you to concerts, master classes or competitions outside the programme? If yes, what are your experiences with this?

### The junior conservatoire

- What motivated you to apply for the programme?
- You participate in [list the student's activities]
  - o From all of these activities, which one would you say you learn the most from?
  - o Could you give some examples of what you have learned or achieved through participation in this activity?
  - o Every student plays in at least one large ensemble/orchestra. Can you point to some examples of what you have learned or achieved through this?
- Have you been given any special opportunities at the programme, such as a principal position in the orchestra or playing at concerts outside the programme? (if yes, the following questions will apply)
  - o How were you selected for this?
  - o What would you say you learned from this experience?
- If you were to point out one event as being the most important one during your time at the programme, what would that be?
  - o What made this event important?



- During a normal Saturday, where and when do you typically socialise with the other students at the programme?
- How would you describe the atmosphere between the students at the programme?
- To what degree do you discuss musical issues with your friends inside the programme when you meet?

### **Being talented**

- What would you say characterises a person with musical talent?
- In what ways would you describe your own talent?
- Which skills do you consider necessary in order to become a professional musician?

### **Future plans**

- If you picture yourself 10 years from now – What will you be doing?

If the student would like to work with music, the following questions will apply:

- Can you remember when you decided that you wanted to work in music?
- Were there any special events or particular people connected to your decision? If yes, please explain how these influenced your decision.
- What will be important for you in the next years in order to achieve your goal?
- How would you say that the programme is preparing you for the future you wish for within music?

### **Closing remarks**

- We are now at the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to bring up before we round off?

## Appendix 5: Interview guide for teachers

### Background

- How many students are you teaching at the programme this year?
- How long have you been a teacher at the programme?
- Do you also teach at a senior department, either here or at another conservatoire?

### Teaching young students

- How would you describe a typical lesson with a student at the programme?
  - o What kinds of materials do you use?
  - o What features are similar from student to student?
  - o What features changes from student to student?
- What makes a lesson with a student successful in your opinion?
- How would you describe your relationship with the students I have observed?
- To the teachers who also teach at a senior department: What do you experience as the main differences between teaching young students compared to senior students?
- What instrument related activities do you encourage your students to participate in outside the lessons? (This might for example be master classes, concerts, chamber music groups or summer courses)
- How important do you consider career development to be for the students on the programme?
  - o In what ways do you help the students with developing their career?
- Do you ever work with your students as a group? If yes, the following questions will apply:
  - o How is this organised and what kinds of things do you do in the group?
  - o What can you achieve through group lessons that are different from 1-2-1 lessons?
- Do you ever take your students to concerts, master classes or concerts outside the programme? If yes, the following questions will apply:
  - o Could you describe some of the situations where you have done this?
  - o What can the students achieve through participating in such activities outside the programme?

### The programme

- In your opinion, what can students achieve or learn through participating in the programme?
- What types of professions relating to music would you say that the programme is preparing the students for?

- The students participate in many activities during a normal Saturday at the programme. How important do you find activities such as musical awareness classes, choir, orchestra and chamber music for becoming a qualified musician?
- What kind of challenges, if any, do you face when teaching students at the programme?

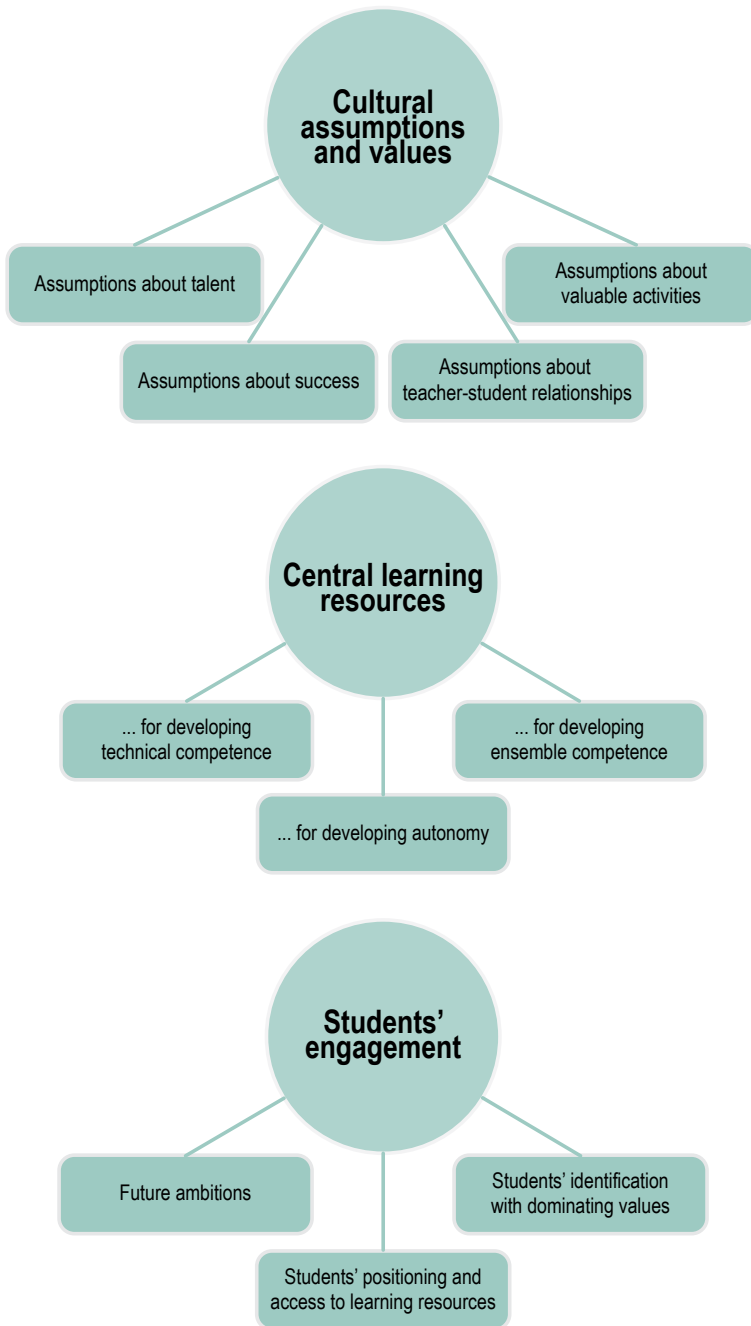
### **Talent**

- We often say that children who play well are talented. What kinds of qualities would you say a talented student should possess?
- Which activities should a student engage in if he or she wants to become a professional musician?
- Which skills do you consider necessary for students to learn in order to become a professional musician?
- How would you say the auditions at the programme work in terms of selecting the best students for the programme?

### **Closing remarks**

- We are now at the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to talk about before we round off?

## Appendix 6: Thematic map



## Appendix 7: Letter of approval from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Forbrukerombud  
K 1507 Norge  
Brevboks  
1471 St. Olavs plass  
0407 Oslo  
Tlf: 022 55 54 96 00  
www.ombud.no  
Orgnr: 980 511 888

Ellen Mikalsen Stabell  
Fagskajon for musikkpedagogikk og musikkterapi  
Norges musikkhøgskole  
Postboks 5190 Majorstua  
0502 OSLO

Virksomhetstype: 0101, 0102, 0103, 0104, 0105, 0106, 0107, 0108, 0109, 0110, 0111, 0112, 0113, 0114, 0115, 0116, 0117, 0118, 0119, 0120, 0121, 0122, 0123, 0124, 0125, 0126, 0127, 0128, 0129, 0130, 0131, 0132, 0133, 0134, 0135, 0136, 0137, 0138, 0139, 0140, 0141, 0142, 0143, 0144, 0145, 0146, 0147, 0148, 0149, 0150, 0151, 0152, 0153, 0154, 0155, 0156, 0157, 0158, 0159, 0160, 0161, 0162, 0163, 0164, 0165, 0166, 0167, 0168, 0169, 0170, 0171, 0172, 0173, 0174, 0175, 0176, 0177, 0178, 0179, 0180, 0181, 0182, 0183, 0184, 0185, 0186, 0187, 0188, 0189, 0190, 0191, 0192, 0193, 0194, 0195, 0196, 0197, 0198, 0199, 0200

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 03.01.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

32372  
Behandlingsmaterie  
Daglig ansvarlig  
Daglig ansvarlig  
Birgitte Tveder - Inning og Merethe  
Norges musikkhøgskole, ved instituttleder Anne Lise  
Ellen Mikalsen Stabell

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er saklig/lovlig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 21. Behandlingen tilfredstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldingsmaterialet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og behandlingsloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger bør notis i godtg.

Det gis en oppmerksomhet på at det skal gis en melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysningene som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gir via et eget skjema <http://www.nsd.no/om/personvern/reklamasjon/skjemaendring>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal ikke skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt de opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pro.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.10.2015, sende en korrespondanse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Stenrud Kvitheim

Sander A. Arntsen

Postboks 5, Arntsen tlf: 55 58 25 83  
Yrke: Prosjektsveiling



## Appendix 8: Letter of approval from Research Ethics Committee at Programme 3

Private & Confidential  
Ellen M. Stabell,  
PhD Research Fellow  
Norwegian Academy of Music



22 November 2013

Dear Ellen

**Re: Research Ethics Application**

Thank you for re-submitting your research proposal titled *Being a talent – becoming a musician. How can participation at a specialist school contribute to the students' development of musical competence*, which has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee.

I am delighted to confirm that the Committee are satisfied with the research proposal submitted, accompanied by your approved DBS check, and that full ethical approval has been granted for your project.

Please note that you should report any untoward events or unforeseen ethical problems arising from the questionnaire to the Research Ethics Committee secretary within a week of the occurrence.

Any feedback which you provide to the participants of the project should be forwarded to the [redacted] School Ethics Committee Secretary for circulation to Committee members.

Should you have any queries relating to this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We wish you every success with this work.

Yours Sincerely

A small, faint signature or stamp located at the end of the letter.

Professional classical musicians, in general, start playing their instrument at an early age, and they have usually put a considerable amount of time into their instrument and other musical activities before they embark on music studies in higher education. The education and musical environment young musicians encounter during their pre-college years are therefore highly important both for their achieved level on the instrument and for whether or not they are motivated to pursue a career in music.

Ellen Stabell's dissertation sheds light on music specialist education on the pre-college level, seeking to discover which kinds of knowledge and ways of learning are valued inside the learning culture of three junior conservatoires in Norway and England. Her focus is on central values, assumptions and learning resources, as well as how students relate to these values and assumptions and utilise the available learning resources. The material is analysed and discussed through the lenses of sociocultural learning theory and Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital.

Based on observations of central activities in the three junior conservatoires, interviews with students and teachers and analysis of documents, Stabell identifies a learning culture characterised by dedication, specialisation and hierarchy, where certain kinds of musical capital are valued. Central to the learning culture is the dream of achieving a performance career and, above all, a position as a solo performer. It is a culture that values musical talent, technical competence and students who perform well under pressure. The dissertation also illustrates how students relate to the cultural values and assumptions in various ways, and by this construct inbound, outbound or peripheral learning trajectories.

Ellen Mikalsen Stabell (1984-) has studied music education and piano at the Norwegian Academy of Music, and has worked as a piano teacher for several years.

