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Becoming a researching artist: Situated perspectives on music conservatory learning and teaching

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Abstract

One-to-one instrumental tuition has traditionally constituted the core teaching and learning activity for classical music higher education institutions, and most jazz programmes somehow seem to have taken similar structural approaches. In recent years, with pop, rock and electronica entering many music conservatories, it appears as if ambitions to educate creative, personal artists has pinpointed the need for renewed attention to the suitability of conventional curricular approaches. At Rhythmic Music Conservatory Copenhagen, the work place of the two authors, a decisive curricular shift aiming at meeting such needs, was recently put to work. The main ambition was to place the students' development of their own compositional and performative material at the core of the curriculum, materialised through the weekly KUA critique class. The chapter offers a situated learning perspective on this development.

Lead sheet. Overview

With this chapter we develop and discuss a situated learning analytical perspective on the music conservatory's new curricular structure by examining and discussing, how students and teachers develop skills and competences in and around the KUA classes. Through ethnographic approaches such as participant observation, qualitative interviews and field notes, we unfold through a series of situated learning theoretical analyses, how students' and teachers' changing participation in deeply collective changing practices of artistic diversity and unpredictability constitutes learning.

Our analyses suggest that the KUA class helps provide a transparent learning environment through an explicit focus on a learning curriculum, developing the students' and teachers' agencies as researching artists.

Conclusively, we suggest some broader reflections on such learning analytical potential for other music higher education institutions (music HEI) aiming to educate innovative, creative and artistically independent artists developing new approaches, and new art.

Intro. What is the KUA class?

Seven music academy students meet weekly in their KUA-class, including a heavy rock guitarist, a free jazz vocal performer, a drummer inclined to explore the paths of Milford Graves, an indie songwriter and a bass player with affection for Grieg and grunge.
Every Wednesday morning from nine to twelve they meet with their KUA teacher, sharing the aim of developing their performative and creative practices at or outside the academy. The students exchange artistic ideas and visions, they discuss their intensions for the semester, they present new sketches of songs and compositions, they talk about the methodologies and context of their work, they play for each other or bring recordings from reactions based on the presentations of their fellow students.

Students at Rhythmic Music Conservatory, Copenhagen have for some years now been engaging in critical discussion and reflection on their own and their peers' artistic development projects in so-called 'critique classes', known by its acronym KUA.

Although the students represent very different views on art and aesthetics, the ambition for the KUA class is that they develop individual, artistic skills by sharing impressions and experiences from listening to each other's musical ideas. Similarly, they need to be open to their fellow students' reactions to their own productions and performances. The idea is not to encourage restrictive, normative reactions to the musical ideas presented in class. Rather, the KUA class is an attempt to foster curiosity, new angles, new questions, new arguments – leading to new, interesting works of art – in

a collective setting[1,] and to develop the students' ability to reflect on their own and their peers' artistic intensions, processes, experiments, artistic aspirations, mistakes and products. We often describe this scholarly ambition for the students as being able to listen to your own music from a distance. To be able to travel from the productive field to the receptive field through a post-analysis of your personal artistic statements. To be able to listen to 'yourself' through the ears of the outside world (Jacob's educational field notes).

In other words, the idea behind KUA is for the students to learn about artistic reflection by *doing* it and by experiencing others doing it. [2]

In the following section, we offer some historical background on the KUA class and our current curiosity concerning its learning potential.

First verse. Artistic research entering music higher education curricula

Conventional curricula design within music higher education institutions (music HEI) has for decades placed the one-to-one instrumental tuition model at the core of its teaching (and learning) activities. Until now, this educational approach seems to have worked fine for educating classical musicians, supplemented with ensemble activities ranging from piano duos and trios to string quartets, chamber and symphony orchestras.

With jazz entering the curriculum in music HEI in Europe and the US during the 1970s and 80s, similar curricular logics were initially applied (Brinck 2014, 2017; Hebert, 2011). For some reason, teaching and learning jazz seemed at the time to fit rather smoothly into the conventional classical music education 'mould', adopting somewhat linear ideas of learning certain skills before others, separating the acquisition of instrumental skills from ear training, from theory, from music history, and so on.

1 The paradoxes that we need to address every day include striving for the highest conceivable level of artistic quality within a very diverse field comprising the students' artistic projects. The students' artistic activities – not the academy or the KUA teacher – define the artistic field of attention, and we help the student to strive for the highest artistic standards.

2 The aim is not the theoretical strength of the reflection. Rather, it is the reflection's anchoring to and relevance for the student's specific artistic processes.

When rock, pop, electronica and freer forms of jazz became an increasingly prominent part of the aesthetic palette[3] at some music HEIs (including Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen, Denmark) during the 1990s and 2000s, such historical, didactical arguments were continuously challenged by a series of (now) quite obvious circumstances: 1) The idea of a mutual music theory curriculum for all students seemed not to withstand closer scrutiny. How could we keep claiming that the singer-songwriter, for her artistic development, needed the same 'set' of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills regarding chords and scales as the be-bop saxophonist, the electronic noise artist, or the free jazz pianist? 2) The idea that the one-to-one teaching and learning model (somehow) dependent on the student being taught by a master within the student's instrumental and musical preferences) was the ultimate format for developing instrumental skills and advanced musical interpretation needed similar reconsideration. If the death metal guitarist and the semi-acoustic ambient jazz guitarist were to share a guitar professor, the teaching would have to be on a highly generic level, exhausting the very artistic sensitivity and compassion that it takes to propagate musical knowledge and skill. Or the two guitar students would have to have two different guitar teachers from their respective professional domains.[4]

Finally, 3) with pop, rock and electronica gradually gaining prominence within HEIs, the artistic practice of creating one's own material – a core approach to music-making within these genres (Williams & Williams, 2016) – required some serious attention. And the question arose: how can educational institutions such as music HEIs for popular music offer optimal opportunities for music students within what we might coin 'the creative domains within popular music'? What does such a curricular model look like?

During the 2000s, we at Rhythmic Music Conservatory found this educational challenge increasingly pressing, and finally (in 2012) we decided on an emphatic curricular turn, placing the students' development of their own compositional and performative material at the core of the curriculum and at the same time enabling highly individualised one-to-one instrumental teaching.

3 Please cf. Michelsen (2001) for a thorough discussion of pop, jazz (in Scandinavia coined as 'rhythmic music') taking a societal position 'between high and low' through such institutional dynamics.
4 Such logics seem to beg a new question: how many instrumental teachers would then be needed? One for each student?

Interlude. Authors' biographies of participation

We find it apt at this moment as authors to introduce each of our points of departure for writing this piece. Stating our individual biographies of participation at this point aligns with the ideas behind situated learning theory as presented shortly, claiming inseparability and coherence between the participants' different relational realities and their historical significance.

We have been colleagues at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory (RMC) for more than ten years and have been collaborating on many occasions, excavating and benefitting from our quite different historical, artistic and educational paths through life. This is our first co-written scholarly paper.

Jacob Anderskov

I am a pianist, composer and bandleader trained within the jazz paradigm but nowadays traversing a number of genres from contemporary jazz to composed new music.[5] With my music, I'm always aiming for unforeseeable shapes by changing methodologies and aesthetical settings between my different artistic projects. Similarly, my teaching at the RMC pivots around the un-predictabilities of facilitating the transformational encounters between student, teacher and fellow students.
As an artistic researcher, I have published a number of artistic research projects[6]. In several of those, the mapping of actual as well as potential musical materials has played a central role in developing new directions to my music.

5 This is documented on around thirty albums that Anderskov has published as bandleader.
6 Publications include "Action –Reaction", "Habitable Exomusics" and "Sonic Complexion", all in peer review for publication on https://www.researchcatalogue.net

Lars Brinck

I am a pianist, keyboardist, arranger and scientific researcher. My artistic, educational and scientific interests entwine, pivoting around the spontaneous musical interaction of popular music, jamming and collective improvisation, especially within circular, groove-based genres. I am particularly interested in how and when such skills are developed through relational processes. Additionally, this has led to an interest in discussing conventional assumptions of teaching and learning, illuminating the significance of many different kinds of everyday situations and contexts as places and moments for learning and development.

Second verse. Methodology

Situated learning theory

Situated learning theory (SLT) was originally suggested as an analytic methodology intended to challenge conventional 'distinctions between learning and doing, between social identity and knowledge, between education and occupation, between form and content' (Lave, 1996, p. 143). Lave and Wenger (1991) formulated SLT based on analytical observations on the intimate relational aspects of apprenticeship practices, showing how 'opportunities for learning are (…) given structure by work practices instead of by strongly asymmetrical master-apprentice relations' (p. 91).

Founded on a social practice theoretical understanding of everyday practice as a historical, dialectical construction, SLT emphasises the changing relations between persons and the world, asking: 'what if we took the collective social nature of our existence so seriously that we put it first?' (Lave, 1997, p. 146). Such a social ontological position holds self-evident epistemological implications: knowledge is not only a strongly relational matter, knowledge is also indivisible from and embedded in human practice. From this position, learning is conceptualised as persons' changing participation in changing practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lave, 2011). Lave describes the position like this:

> The construction of practitioners' identities is a collective enterprise and is only partly a matter of an individual's sense of self, biography, and substance. The construction of identity is also a way of speaking of the community's constitution of itself through the activity of its practitioners. (…) Most of all, without participation with others, there may be no basis for lived identity (Lave, 1991, p. 74).

Situated learning theory offers at set of concepts for us to study the 'structuring resources that shape the learning process and context' (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 91). And considering learning to be a part of any social practice involves focusing our analytical attention 'on the structure of social practice rather than privileging the structure of pedagogy as the source of learning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 113)

Lave articulates how we may then discover 'situated opportunities for the improvisational development of new practice' (Lave, 1989 in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 97) and asks further: 'What can we learn from examining contemporary social practice when it is conceived as a complex structure of interrelated processes of production and transformation of communities and participants?' (Lave, 1991, p. 64). Taking a *decentred* approach to the empirical analyses means that '[a]ctivities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation: they are part of a broader system of relations in which they have meaning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Through such an analytical lens it becomes possible to construct a 'robust notion of a "whole person" which does justice to the multiple relations through which persons define themselves in practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 53–54, quotation within quotation in original).

Taking such a decentred, situated learning theoretical perspective on students' and teachers' changing participation in and around the KUA class has the potential to reveal '*the more inclusive* phenomena of collective participation in which we, our identities, products, and knowledgeabilities have their concrete existence' (Lave & Packer, 2008, p. 41, italics in original). This involves shifting from unambiguous notions of an individual learner, the master as a locus of authority and of teaching as the pivot of learning to the idea of changing participation in changing practice.

From this theoretical platform we inquire: how can situated learning theoretical analyses of music HEI students' and teachers' changing participation in the changing practices in and around the KUA class offer a deepened understanding of how learning takes place? And what kinds of new related questions may then surface?

Ethnographic fieldwork

The empirical material for this investigation has been produced through long-term ethnographic fieldwork (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997) and semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with two RMC master students (Zara and Karl[7]) who have participated in KUA classes for a couple of years. Educational field notes and diaries (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994) have been recorded by Jacob during his weekly development of curricular material and class planning. Both authors have been engaged on a curricular management level in developing arguments for the KUA class idea, and discussions from these processes have informed the ethnographic accounts and analytical selections.[8]

As Burke (2008) puts it, we have engaged in a long-term process of 'writing as a method of inquiry' in order to embrace the significance of 'the trying, recognising it as embryonic to the full-fledged attention to the significance of language' (p. 205). We have taken Burke's approach even further in the sense that our *collective* endeavour of writing about, discovering and excavating aspects of interest in the subject at hand has resulted in a long-term written dialogue. This dialogic practice has mainly operated through emailing versions of initial documents, sharing of notes, sharing of preliminary analyses of the student interviews, and so on. Through this collective process we have been able to carefully select three analytical concepts from situated learning theory that we find particularly significant to our findings.

Through ethnographic accounts and interview excerpts (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003; Lave, 2011) unfolding specific, seemingly mundane, everyday situations in and around the KUA class, we hope to provide coherent sensations of the empirical foundation for our analyses. In the following section our analyses and ethnographic accounts 'formlessly entwine', as the late poet and musician Leonard Cohen and his co-writer Sharon Robinson so beautifully put it.[9] Not as linear, causal 'truths' and testable representations of what is going on and how we and the students think and act, but merely as a *presentation* (Polkinghorne, 2003, p. 17) of what we, the authors, as teachers, musicians and researchers, find interesting and significant

7 Students' names anonymised.
8 Anderskov is currently a professor (WSA), and Brinck is currently an ass. professor, PhD and Head of Research and Development.
9 Alexandra Leaving is written by Sharon Robinson and Leonard Cohen. Published 2001 on *Ten New Songs*, Columbia Records.

to the human practices before us, including the perspectives and wordings of some of the students.

Chorus. Analysing changing participation, changing practice

The following section offers a set of ethnographic accounts integrating situated learning theoretical analyses through the lens of the concepts of *transparency, agency* and *learning curriculum.*

Transparency

One of the seminal analytical concepts developed in the scholarly community around a social practice theoretical approach to situated learning theory is the notion of *transparency* as a structuring resource (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 91). The concept enables us to recognise 'the socio-political order of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 91) as a pivotal resource for persons' changing participation – learning – in and around the KUA class.

It is crucial to the idea behind the KUA class that the student's on-going productive processes in and outside the conservatory[10] and the KUA classes' reflective practices are deeply entwined. The KUA class only makes sense if the student is constantly engaged in one or more continuing artistic processes. Hence, the student's artistic work processes are not only the object of critical reflection but the *precondition* for such reflective activity aimed at developing and nourishing the student's personal, independent artistic profile – that of the researching artist.[11]

Looking at the interviewed students' participation in and around the KUA class reveals a number of interesting observations concerning *transparency* as a structuring resource for learning. Zara explains how participating in the KUA class 'opened the horizon towards what is music, and what is [our] approach to music' and how within the group

10 The academy offers an extensive number of work places for students to compose, practice, experiment and produce musical artworks, alone or with others.

11 This curricular idea is supported by Daniel Butt in his discussions on artistic research as music HEI activity, quoting Rogoff to suggest that the academy's critical culture engages in 'singularisation' of art works in order for 'materials, works, associations, narratives, methodologies (…) pursue one another in unconventional modes, invite each other to dance as it were (…)' (Butt, 2017, p. 74).

'there are a lot of different characters and people with different musical backgrounds.' In her class, Zara worked with 'improvisers, songwriters, producers, and so you get a completely different view on your work (…)'. (Zara, pers. comm. [12]). [13]

On a similar note, Karl explains how the dialogue in the class can generate surprising reflections and explicitly mentions how, 'when I listen to other students, there are some comments which I can totally share, but also which I cannot share, because we have different artistic goals or ideals' (Karl, pers. comm.). Karl is himself aware of the fact that conflicts of interest, artistic preference, taste et cetera generate different, often clarifying reflections on one's own work. Karl states how detecting artistic disagreements 'is also interesting, because that is just another way to see one's object [musical work, ed.]. I listen to [a fellow student] and he says "this is great", but I don't think "this is great",' Karl states, before asking himself 'why don't I agree with him or her? Why is it important for me *not* to go this way, but the other way?' (Karl, pers. comm.)

Zara provides a similar example, having often experienced a sensation of 'ah, that's also a perspective [I] can see in my project right now!' and continues this line of thought on how she 'discover[s] new aspects of [her] own artistic personality', while she exchanges views and ideas with people from different backgrounds. Zara sums up how she 'learn[s] that [some specific example, ed.] is not the only right solution. So, you open up, get inspired.' (Zara, pers. comm.).

The interviewed students also express how they benefit from providing reactions to their classmates' works, how processes on response appear in multiple directions, and how the class is 'not only [about] receiving feedback but also giving feedback. Which is also challenging. (…) And every time it's a new task for me to give new comments about (...) a project which I am not related to, which could be totally different from what I am doing.'[14]

12 The reference 'pers.comm.' signifies that the quote originates from the interviews with the students. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and can be accessed by request.

13 All KUA classes are composed with this aim of artistic and instrumental diversity. Outside the classes, we find that the students are given (and taking) many opportunities to meet with artists closer to their artistic preferences.

14 The teacher's task guiding these feedback processes is a matter of many interesting discussions and methodological investigations. Karl experiences how 'it's depending on the KUA teacher, how you can (…) how challenged you (…) because in some KUA lessons [my teacher] says: "Today, only questions" or in the next lesson he says "Only non-judgmental comments"' (Karl, pers. comm.). Søren Kjærgaard, also teaching KUA at RMC, has shared some of his experiences with feedback formats in Kjærgaard (2018) (in Danish).

Critical dialogue based on generous (and for some vulnerable) exchanges of art works and art processes in and around the KUA class seems to provide an array of transparent notions of what the creation of new, personal art (music) entails. The diversity of artistic standpoints, artistic procedural preferences and experiences and artistic products becomes a resource, insofar as the different practices – the KUA class being one of an array of 'meeting spots' – of dialogue and sharing of works maintain their transparency, providing each student with an opportunity to participate from a number of different positions and perspectives of their choice. Acting within specific, carefully considered intentions in a transparent context constitutes *agency,* as we will elaborate on shortly.

Of course, transparency as a resource for learning in such diverse artistic environments represents matters of conflict. Art for art's sake, making money on a number one hit or changing the world through artistic statements? Or a mixture of those (or other) perspectives? Zara conveys how a fellow student bluntly claims how he 'want[s] to be rich with my music', and how, to Zara this 'is a goal [which] I can totally not relate [to]. I'm not sure what I can get from that opinion or that statement. What inspiration can I get there? It is just [a] statement (…) too far away from me.' (Zara, pers. comm.)[15] According to situated learning theory, a 'theory of social practice emphasizes the relational interdependency of agent and world, of activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 50). Persons' thoughts and actions are constantly negotiated through participation in practice(s). From this view, participation 'is always based on situated negotiation and re-negotiation of meaning.' (p. 51)

> I think it is also good to know or to experience a person who wants a totally different thing. Like, 'I want to make money', or 'I want to be a pure artist' – to have those extremes in one room. To me, at least, it would be also great to experience what kind of vibe exist in that field, when those two extremes have to comment on each other. (Karl, pers. comm.)

15 Lave and Wenger (1991) have offered the concept of *telos* to describe the direction of choices. Brinck (2014) suggests the concept of *aboutness* or *what the music is about* as a similar attempt to circumscribe the overall intentions related to human activity on different levels. In Brinck (2014) the analytic concept of *aboutness* is suggested to enable us to recognise and discuss what lies behind, or above, artistic decisions made by different musicians in different contexts. On a similar note, a theory on funk jamming presented in Brinck (2018) entails 'making the music feel good' to describe such overall perspective on funk jamming. Along a similar line of thought, Borgo (2014) suggests the term 'what the music wants' to address such overall guiding perspectives for actions. What is to one artist a clearly stated value or quality, appears to another to be meaningless or at least difficult to grasp. 'What the music wants' is to a great extent an individual matter, although social conventions and historical, cultural conventions are obviously established.

Again, it appears as if a clear statement about wanting to make money from art ignites – or even fortifies – an aspiration *not* to pursue such goals. Transparency regarding the student's many different artistic practices as (also) shared in the KUA class provides access to multiple ways of participation, nurturing the development of a still more detailed perspective on one's own artistic identity. The multiplicity of the lives of an artist, a musician, a composer, (and teacher) becomes transparent through different practices.

Agency

Contradictions, conflicts and paradoxes seem to compel each person to think carefully about their own position and consequently the available action possibilities. Becoming an artist with an ability to make conscious decisions presupposes transparency regarding the many kinds of positions and choices that are available, accessible and affordable.

Developing such a strong ability to make qualified artistic decisions, pursuing ideas and directions to suit your artistic visions or sensibilities seems be crucial to any creative artist. The analytical concept of *agency* in situated learning theory enables us to recognise moments of changing participation in changing practice, where such action possibilities are developed.

Now follows a couple of empirical examples of learning as changing participation as learning from the perspective of *agency.*

Zara expressed how she finds that engaging in the KUA class helps her

> [become] my own teacher, because through this I learn what is important for me and what I need to learn and how I can approach things. And you gain trust in your choices, and I think that is very crucial for being a musician in this world now, outside school. Where we have trust and awareness of your choices – you learn to be your own boss. (Zara, pers. comm.)

From a teacher's perspective, the fact that they are not expected to reproduce either Patti Smith or Charlie Parker provides a space for the students to define their own path. Consequently, the KUA teacher's task entails illuminating to the students how to make that space reach its full potential, and not just remain promising and comfortable. This might mean asking the students about 'the criteria of quality applicable to your music for it to succeed in artistic terms' (Jacob's educational notes).

Zara elucidates how 'I can evaluate it and reflect on it and maybe change it or just leave it like that, because I can say: "No, this is my decision, my artistic decision"'. This point also relates to the former section's analytical concept of *transparency* insofar as the openness of opinions and statements and artworks provides a *mirror* for the student to reflect his/her own views, thus fostering yet more nuanced and robust agency and identity in practice. Zara adds: 'If you invite others into your own work, I feel that I learn much more and much faster than if I am just working in my own room' (Zara, pers. comm.).

The fact that the students share sketches, unfinished products, procedural doubts, frustrations and shortcomings similarly appears to develop the students' agency, their ability to negotiate acting in practice in consciously interdependent manners. Zara discloses how participation in class becomes 'a place for us to share our struggles and see that: "Ah, I'm not the only one, everybody has these problems, it's normal, we can talk and find a way through this." You really build up a relationship.' (Zara, pers. comm.)

The students seem to develop *agency* on a deeper, long-term level in the sense that 'you get to know yourself, your artistic identity.' (Zara, pers. comm.). Detecting and elaborating on differences in taste, argument and perspective seems to gradually clarify the student's own personal artistic aspirations on an aggregated level, providing *agency* to engage robustly in the artistic work processes and the involved ongoing decisions and choices. The students appear to develop an ability to not only look at their own and others' artworks through understandings of the potential interpretational and experiential domains of these works, but to develop *agency* to continuously make artistic decisions based on these reflections.

Learning curriculum

As already mentioned, the KUA students are constantly engaged in their own artistic projects throughout their three, five or seven years of enrolment[16], resulting in a vast production of artistic projects and performances at and outside the academy. This fertile forest of profoundly different artistic projects becomes – consciously or not – the empirical foundation for the reflective practices in the KUA class. And, of course, it also offers reference points for artistic discussions and debates outside the KUA class. In the following section, we look at the significance of the students' and

16 Bachelor programmes in Denmark run for three years, master programmes for five and advanced diploma programmes for seven years.

teachers' artwork constituting such pivotal empirical material, and how we may talk about this as a *learning curriculum.*

Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest a clear distinction between a learning curriculum and a teaching curriculum, insofar as a 'learning curriculum consists of situated opportunities (…) for the improvisational development of new practice' (Lave, 1989 in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 97), and how '[t]he practice of the community creates the potential "curriculum" in the broadest sense' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93, quote in original). In the KUA class (and the formlessly entwined dialogues between students and teachers and among students outside the class), the collective discussions and reflections take the students' artistic productions, sketches and aspirations as their starting point. Taking a learning curricular perspective focuses our attention on the 'everyday practice [as] *viewed from the perspective of the learners'* (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 97, italics in original). Through such an analytical lens, a 'learning curriculum is essentially situated' and 'characteristic of a community', not necessarily as being present in the same (class)room but merely as co-participants in adjacent paths of lived-in practices. It implies 'participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities' (p. 98).

When the student's works are presented in the KUA class, the music initially 'calls on' its own references through the perspective of the student presenting her sketches, ideas or finalised productions. Initially, it is not her teacher or peers who suggest relevant references. The teacher and the other students sense what might arguably be a relevant point of artistic reference or inspiration through their personal artistic intuition by offering an 'open room' for the presenting student to process this input. Points of reference can be aesthetical, methodological or based on informational or research-based similarities in the work or the process. In a comparative perspective, Zara describes how she has experienced different approaches to referencing and how these different points of relations have affected her development of an artistic, creative identity:

> (…) There [are] a lot of teachers, especially when I studied [for] my bachelor at [another music HEI], people or teacher[s] were just telling you that 'You have to play like this, because it is better.' But if you reflect on that, it is just the way the teacher is playing, not what you want to express. Because there is a ton of other musicians in history playing differently. [Our KUA teacher] has a great quality and the skill to lead you in a direction without pushing

> [onto] you his musical ideal, I think. And then, that's where creativity starts. (…) [He] doesn't say: 'go this way or go this way'. He says: 'OK, you have those ten ways to go, and you can choose whatever way you want to go.' (Zara, pers. comm.)

For the KUA teacher, referencing seems to take the student's own artistic production as a starting point, very imminently placing the focus on the student's artistic aspirations and visions. This appears to involve 'access to arenas of mature practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 110), but somehow guided by the student's artistic choices and arguments.

Again, conflicts and doubts constitute a pivotal 'energy' in these processes: Karl elucidates how

> …I go home, reflect on that and listen to the references. And I can just feel if it is right or not. But sometimes I feel that it is totally right. And then after one week, I feel 'No, it is not the right thing', or sometimes I think: 'No, that is not what I am looking for, this reference is not what I am looking for right now,' but after one week it changes to: 'No, it was the right thing.' (Karl, pers. comm.)

The references arising from the artistic sketches presented in the KUA class might be described as an act of 'opening doors to choose from' for the students. And of course, references are (eventually) also introduced by fellow students, either in class or in the band rooms, in the academy canteen or elsewhere. Referencing as a practice closely related to the perceived ideas or directions emerging from the students' budding artworks becomes a distinct and tangible testimony of the relevance of the perspective of a *learning curriculum* on the students' potential development. You might say that the curriculum develops through the ongoing development of the students' artwork *in a formlessly entwined* dialogue with present as well as past, historical artworks. Questions are posed, reactions are offered and reflections are developed from the scope of the students' ongoing work.

This consistent focus on the students' perspective through the lens of their evolving artwork allows for imperfection, failures, mistakes, doubts and sketches. Zara states how 'I wasn't used to share so much about things I hadn't brought to perfection yet' (Zara, pers. comm.). She adds how confidence, the trustful environment, matters:

> [The class] becomes your little family (…). You meet regularly, every week, so through these regular meetings you build trust in the people that you see again and again, and they also open up, so everyone is in the same position. (Zara, pers. comm.)

The professional interest over time appears to be important, insofar as fellow students and the teacher in the words of Karl 'know what you are doing this week and the last week. They follow your development. This is important, because otherwise I think that – especially here [at this academy] – you have so many choices that you can easily get lost.' (Karl, pers. comm.) Zara adds on a similar note how the fact that 'you have this one person, or this group, that you can check base with, is very useful.' (Zara, pers. comm.)

In other words, the students' ongoing artistic work constitutes the main point of departure for the curricular activities in the KUA class. Ideas and products are shared, often in quite (conventionally) vulnerable situations dominated by doubts, confusion, a chaos of options and paths to follow. What seems to make way for this approach is the mere fact that the curriculum clearly is conceived from a learner's perspective. The overall approach seems to be inquiring (paraphrasing Lave & Wenger): What are the situated opportunities here for the improvisational development of new practice? What is needed here for changing participation to be facilitated, for different positions of participation to be possible? And thus, for a steady, yet conflictual and contradictory practice of multiple agencies to evolve?

Outro

Concluding comments

Taking a social ontological stand on human existence – and on learning – might seem to contradict or oppose the educational idea of providing the students with singular, deeply personalised opportunities for developing their individual, artistic, creative identity – clearly a curricular (cl)aim pivotal for any art or music HEI.

We see no opposition here. On the contrary. With this chapter, we argue that situated learning theoretical analyses of the students' and teachers' participation in and around the KUA classes enhance the significance of the dialectics between the student's

individual artistic identity formation and the ongoing changing relations with the other students and their creative work.[17]

Furthermore, we argue that the analytical perspectives of *agency,* of *transparency* and of *learning curriculum* provide us with a coherent argument for such dialectic relations. We show how the intricate, ongoing (and changing) relation between the educational idea of providing each student with a singular, personal perspective on his/her work and the curricular structure of the collective sharing and mirroring of ongoing artworks appears to be productive.[18]

The students' *agency* as artists in society appears to be developed in *transparent* contexts and practices, where what can be learned (and through which practices) surfaces in somewhat recognisable shapes and forms. And *learning curriculum* as an analytical perspective on what is (to be) learned helps us to recognise the significance of a (not only theoretical, philosophical but very tangible, hands-on) student perspective on the everyday activities that education involves.[19]

As we have argued, our analyses have aimed at 'decentering the analysis of [the students as] changing participants' (Lave, draft, p. 23) in and around the KUA classes, acknowledging the impact of other (historically informed) practices than the specific class in question. However, this perspective could have been more thorough. On a larger scale of inquiry, it would be interesting to look more into the students' band practice in the band rooms, their work at their 'bedroom computer stations', their concerts and so on. [20]

17 Just this week, finishing this chapter, we both attended the summer exams at the academy. The exams take place in the form of concerts accompanied by recordings as well as a subsequent reflection and discussion of the artistic choices leading to the artistic statement, the concert. It becomes evident (however undocumented at this point) how the students present interesting, amazing, groundbreaking artworks and that they to a great extent can lay out and share the discussion they have had with themselves and their peers and teachers about the artistic decisions and doubts leading to the final concert.

18 Please cf. Butt (2017 pp. 133 ff.) and Kjærgaard (2018) for further discussions along those lines.

19 Brinck and Tanggaard (2016) present a similar argument for how developing collective discourse of art and art pedagogy involves 'embracing the unpredictable' in order for deep, personal artistic sensations to surface.

20 Please cf. Brinck (forthcoming) reporting from empirical, situated learning theoretical analyses of co-writing rock bands' collective creative processes as learning, inseparable from the evolving art produced in the band rooms.

New questions

We find that the empirical analyses offered here cast light on new ways of thinking about future music HEI's challenges and options in regard to educating innovative, creative and artistically independent artists. We are aware of the fact that the analytical examples presented here stem from the field of creative arts, popular music, jazz, electronica and so on. However, we wonder whether the analytical perspective of *agency* could prove useful in reflecting on classical music students' one-to-one teaching as well, asking: how do we as teachers and institutions provide specific, tangible platforms for students to grow into independent artists and learners in a lifelong perspective? And with the analytic concept of *transparency* we may ask ourselves whether what we want the students to become better at, *is* as apparent, as we usually think. Are the (artistic and/or personal) pathways available to the students during their studies laid out in transparent patterns? Are we aware of what the students learn from being students, regardless of our explicit intentions? And from a different perspective, are we as teachers and institutions being open and transparent in the way we define and communicate our expectations and evaluations?

And finally, the analytical handle *learning curriculum* certainly aids us in thinking about which perspective we adopt on a day-to-day basis to design and argue for our curricular activities. To what extent may each of us reconsider not only the material that we suggest for classes but also the structure of classes, the divisions between younger and older students, the relations between schools and extra-curricular activities in society, and so on?

In conclusion, with this chapter we offer a set of analytical tools for recognising and reflecting on how we can fulfil an ambition to educate students to– in a lifelong perspective – continually be able to develop new approaches to their performances, new interpretations, new audiences and new art forms – regardless of genres, styles or cultural conventions.

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