

1. WHO

The road that led me here to this conference in Dublin began with a Polish girl who fell in love with a flute. It continued through a youth full of music, then led me to study in Germany, where I dreamed of a future in an orchestra - nothing less than the Berlin or Munich Philharmonic would do, or at a pinch the Hamburg Philharmonic (my teacher played with the Hamburg Philharmonic but of course I was going to be better than he ☺).

Life and love - and a European exchange program known as Erasmus - finally brought me to Vienna, the *capital of the music world*. There I studied with a member of the Vienna Philharmonic and for the first time experienced a thing for which I didn't yet know the term: the "glass ceiling" as a young female musician. In any case, I had a brief but entertaining existence as a freelance musician in Vienna with a portfolio career: chamber music projects, festivals, youth orchestra productions all over the world, substituting in professional orchestras in Germany and Austria, teaching private students, having trouble deciding whether to specialize in New Music or Early Music or perhaps not to specialize at all . . . but all this was much more about passion than profession – a lot of work with almost no money.

Then I stopped being a student and became a mother. Everything changed - it's a cliché, but it's true! Other values, other priorities took precedence, most importantly the desire for more stability and security in life and in my career; financial aspects also took on a more important role.

And then one day I had an idea: to observe that which I did and had always done from a different standpoint, to raise myself to a different level: to use my being a musician as a research objective.

In 2005 I began my Ph.D. studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna; with this step I became a classic social scientist and conducted a qualitative empirical study on graduates of the Vienna Music University entitled "Traumberuf Musiker?" (Musician: Dream Job?)

In this presentation I'd like to acquaint you with what I consider to be the most important results of the "Traumberuf Musiker?" study; after that I'll slip briefly into my current role as field researcher and tell you a little about my newest research project, "Quo Vadis, Teufelsgeiger?" (Where To, Devil's Fiddler?)

2. WHY

Several things inspired me to do a research project on conservatory graduates. First, there were my personal experiences and curiosity, but there were also other factors: Certain things in the area seemed odd or even contradictory, for instance the fact that the number of graduates was rising while the number of positions in orchestras was falling. A disappearing audience - or worse, a dying one! - was another factor, as well as the fact that the course of study and its content hadn't changed since the 19th century.

But then again, there were also new chances being offered: numerous orchestra academies, new chamber music festivals, new performance possibilities. I won't go into too much detail regarding the new wave of active musical training available at the time, but in combination with this trend there was a new role developing, the role of "community musician". You could see it everywhere: the old, traditional pedestals were beginning to crumble and a understanding and consciousness of oneself as a musician at the beginning of the 21st century was becoming more and more an existential issue. This brought up pressing questions, such as:

- Why are highly trained musicians, graduates of renowned music institutions, finding less and less work possibilities that are satisfying and worthy of their training?
- If nearly all of us want to be soloists, why do none of us actually become soloists?
- Why is it that those musicians who do manage to win one of the rare orchestra positions so often become frustrated in the everyday performance of their jobs?
- What is it that actually motivates us, in spite of all this, to invest so much of our time, devotion, money, childhood, sacrifice, etc. to become a musician?
- And finally, what role does the musical training – and specifically the institutional education – play in all this?

3. WHAT

- What skills, abilities and attitudes does a musician need in the modern job market?

The secondary questions were:

- Can a university music education teach these skills?
- What significance do the teacher and master classes have in this context?

Since a professional career in music was considered to be a process with its roots reaching back to childhood, it was also of paramount importance that the following issues have a place in the study, and serve as a guideline for the interviews:

- What was the initial motive for making music?

4. METHOD

The results of the study are based on qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with 40 graduates of the Vienna Music University from the classes of 1992-2005. Each of the instrumentalists had completed a performance degree; many had also completed the pedagogical program of study as well. (the two areas - performance and education - are strictly segregated in Vienna. They're not even at the same location...) At the time of the interviews, the musicians had been out of school for between one and ten years.

The fields of activity of these musicians are spread throughout the musical job market. They range from careers as international soloist, chamber or orchestra musician and music educator to mixtures of all three. Some have fashioned portfolio careers, marked in some cases by a high degree of expertise in jazz, Early Music, New or electronic music, crossovers . . . the list goes on and on. Some of the former students have also founded their own music schools, lead or direct bands, write books, start labels, initiate concert series and festivals and give workshops and master classes. But they also dress up in costumes and play Mozart and Strauss, as anyone who has ever been a tourist in Vienna knows. Don't laugh - in general excellent musicians sit (or are forced to sit) in those orchestras. Some of the interviewed

musicians audition for [proper] orchestras; some are still considering trying to find a position in an orchestra . . . hopefully as lead . . .

5. CRISIS

One major theme which emerged from the data, common to many of the subjects but very surprising to me, was that of the CRISIS.

- *at the beginning of the course of study* (on average at the age of 15, quick loss of original motivation, indecision, vague ideas of career, arbitrary teachers, strong competition: from a big fish in a small pond to a mere cipher on the international assembly line)

- *during the course of study* (teacher-student relationship; insufficient curriculum or curriculum that was too challenging (or not challenging enough), competition, performance anxiety, stage fright, health problems, taboos, loneliness)

- *at the end of the course of study* (after an average of 9(!) years; the written diploma thesis, the all-important diploma recital, an uncertain future, occasionally a double load (orchestra position and finishing one's studies), alienation from one's teacher, from music, from one's instrument or one's dreams)

- *during transition* ("black hole", a loss of meaning but also a new search for meaning, taking leave of the protection of the ivory tower, being suddenly completely responsible for oneself, self-determination in life and music, becoming reacquainted with the instrument, assessing one's realistic chances and possibilities in the job market)

- *in one's career*

 - As orchestra musician*: dream job or slavery? A very individual answer

 - As freelance musician*: between self-actualization as artist and securing one's existence (juggling widely-varied jobs for which equally varied skills are required - sometimes contrasting and often completely missing or only rudimentarily present)

6. Traditional versus New: THE MUSICIAN'S JOB DESCRIPTION

One of the most astonishing results of the dissertation was the observation of how deep the traditional definition of "musician" was rooted in the subjects' environment, and how opposed to change that definition is - even in the face of obvious or profound transformations in the modern music market. Although reality and their own experience has told them otherwise time and again, many of the interviewees persist in seeing the position of orchestra musician as the "one true calling".

However, this job is only open to a minority of graduating musicians, and it's been that way for a long time; most graduates can only integrate themselves in today's music market as freelancers. However, this fact was ignored in the entire process of the subjects' education - especially at the university, with dire consequences: It drove many young musicians to orchestras with false notions. They believed money, security and status in the form of social prestige would bring them job satisfaction; at the same time they missed the chance to discover and strengthen other potential in themselves, to find - or create - alternative, individual possibilities of making music in the market. In the end, many musicians sat surprised, disillusioned and overtaxed in orchestras and pined for the freedom and self-actualization on the "outside". Meanwhile, the ones "outside" had to defend that very self-actualization with all their might against the verdict of their peers - and more importantly, themselves - that they hadn't "made it".

7. FROM CALLING TO BREAD-AND-BUTTER

At the beginning of the path leading the graduates to music as a career was always clearly music itself, and the playing thereof - not the job. For most of the instrumentalists, this focus was shifted emphatically to practising: artistic vision, personal musical goals and even performing were put off for years. The university study is the time that the musician cloisters him- or herself to concentrate on technique, to struggle for perfection. The competition is by turns cursed and motivating; one's feeling of self-worth for the coming week can depend on the success or failure of a brief evening recital.

. . . An astonishing number of the interviewees realized, from their current vantage point in the "real world", that they had pursued study and career goals for years that didn't match up with their personal strengths or desires; the goals in these cases were set by the "mainstream", by their "master" or simply by default, through a lack of insight into the state of the market.

For the modern, often already working musician, the issues at hand go far beyond quick fingers, perfect changes of register and bulls-eye intonation. These musicians need to transform their dreams into reachable goals, their "calling" into a concrete, bread-and-butter job. In this process, most of them bring their own relationship to music to the fore, striving to unify their music and themselves: this, it would seem, is obviously the central requirement for a fulfilling life as a musician. In the end it's also much more important than the external fact of what form of music-making musicians dedicate themselves to.

8. KEY COMPETENCIES

The everyday life of a working musician requires many new skills and abilities - so-called key competencies - in addition to the traditional expectations. The 40 interviewed graduates agreed in retrospect that these key competencies were not communicated, or communicated too little, during their studies. In the strengthening of these key competencies lies a chance to renew the entire self-conception of the university performance education. In the end, the point is to dynamically build and communicate the knowledge and ability that will allow these musicians to cultivate, and finally to live, their dreams.

- Technical competence
- Artistic competence
- Social competence
- Entrepreneurial competence
- Health knowledge
- Pedagogical know-how

9. But even more important is the following QUESTIONNAIRE:

- What kind of musician do I want to be/What kind of musician am I?
- What music(s) do I wish to play?
- For whom and with whom do I want to play?
- What do I want to give my audience, or today: to communicate to them?
- What is my artistic vision, what are my artistic goals?
- How can I live from that which I most love to do?
- How do I get to perform? How do I find my audience?

10. CONSEQUENCES

- Publication of results: the BOOK “*Traumberuf Musiker? Herausforderungen an ein Leben für die Kunst.*”, just published by Schott (ISBN 978-3-7957-0707-1)
- And: something must be done
- I must do something
- EUREKA – I can do something! I AM DOING SOMETHING:

11. QUO VADIS, TEUFELSGEIGER? (Where To, Devil's Fiddler?)

An FWF research project aimed at furthering the competencies of musicians (The FWF Austrian Science Fund is Austria's central funding organization for basic research)

Quo vadis, Teufelsgeiger? answers the urgent need to develop alternative learning environments in conservatories. In this context, *Quo vadis* is initiating a circular process connecting innovative artistic praxis with reflexive consideration. We're creating a musical competency laboratory and setting up a qualitative research structure with **free improvisation** at its center: a creative practise that can in the best sense of *free play* connect with musicians' original motivation - toward creative experimentation, the commitment to music and enthusiasm for making music.

Parallel with single, small group and ensemble-based improvisation workshops, the musicians receive personal career coaching sessions in which they can reflect on their experiences in a resource-oriented manner and put it into the context of their own process of becoming a musician. At the same time, these directed interviews also serve as important evaluation tools for the qualitative research process. The central question of the project is: To what extent can this process help classical musicians to successfully deal with the many challenges presented by their education and their working life on stage, in the orchestra and in the open market?

Quo vadis, Teufelsgeiger? is one of seven pilot projects to have been approved by the Austrian Science Fund as part of a new grant program for the development and improvement of the Arts (PEEK) - supporting art-based research. For the next two years the project will be implemented in all departments at the University for Music in Vienna, led by an artistic/scientific team of three with Dr. Peter Röbbke. Publications, a concert series and an international final symposium will make the results known to the public.

12.

6 weeks after the project has started it looks very promising. There's a great deal of interest, but there are also obstacles - we can tell already, it's going to be a challenging and exciting project!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!