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Developing Career Paths in Instrumental / Vocal Teaching and the Changing Agenda of Public Music Schools

Introduction

Reflecting on the development of career paths in the field of instrumental or vocal teaching, for me, it's not only thinking about the relation of the academic training on one and the vocational needs on the other side, or thinking f.i. of how to overcome this polarity of studying and professional work by the perspective of life long learning, in a never ending circle of acting, reflecting, and therefore improved acting.

No, first of all, and I beg for your acceptance, I would like to ask: What for the world is the job of an instrumental/vocal teacher at music schools, actually? First of all, I would like to irritate me and you by asking: Are we really aware of all these assumptions of objectives, repertoires and methods, which influence the professional work of instrumental and vocal tutors? Can we then identify different teaching role models? And how do these various types of professional work interact with historical changes in the agendas of public music schools? So, I invite you, to accompany me on a journey through changes and shifts in the self-conceptions of music schools and music school teachers in central Europe (and, of course, I relate primarily to the music school systems I know best, that means: to the German und the Austrian). And, at every point of the analysis, we will then have to ask what the results mean to conservatoires and the academic training in the field of "IVE".

STEP ONE: PRODUCE YOUR *PROFESSIONAL FOLLOWERS!*

As you know, the first conservatoires were founded by the upcoming middle classes /the bourgeoisie, f.i. my home university, the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts, was born as “Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde” (the same organisation, which still runs the famous Vienna “Musikverein”). No question, what inspired these unions of successful civilians, these associations of the elite members of the civil societies of the Nineteenth Century: As a central element of the self-concept of this upcoming, non-aristocrat classes, as a crucial part in their idea of higher education and of that, what we call in German “Bildung” (formation), the classical, paradigmatic or epitome music, the great masterworks of Beethoven, Brahms and Bruckner had to be performed, or let’s say celebrated in concert halls, in the modern temples of the enlightened civil society, in an semi-sacral atmosphere of consecration and adoration. And therefore you need musicians, which are trained perfectly, so that the reproduction or re-creation of these masterworks takes place on the highest possible level (and is not interfered by any technical lacks and human imperfections!).

So, the goal is clear, and in order to realize these objectives, there are, basically, two approaches:

- You can trust in the impact of the master on students, in the influence of the role model for youngsters, you believe in the power of imitation learning, and in the fascinating interaction of formal teaching instructions and non-formal processes of inspiring, copying, just

working together. The musical *master-class* is, then, an example of apprenticeship or situated learning, and of guided participation. The teacher is just the experienced musician!

- Another approach: You are in doubt whether these teaching and learning processes in master-classes are efficient enough, you share the opinion that science-based profession tops everyday practice, and you look at the results of psychological research on successful musicians. And maybe you deal with the so called expertise research in musical psychology; you study f.i. the works of the group around Ericsson, which found out that it takes at least ten years or ten thousands ours of practice to gain expertise in a domain, and expertise arises of a kind of action, which is called deliberate practice. And then you try to derivate – from the examples of successful careers – the basic components of this deliberate practice. Following – as Donald Schoen would say – the paradigm of technical rationality – the teacher then is a well trained professional and teaching means the application of scientific results, in order to reach your objectives with every student in every given situation by using appropriate and evidence-based methods.

Consequences for the idea of conservatoires and music schools and curriculums in terms of teacher training:

It doesn't matter whether you choose approach one or two (master-class or professional teacher training): there is no doubt about the final target; it is the (Re)production of the great repertoire of Western Classical music!

Differences in methods:

In the first approach, there is no need for explicit didactics, only a need for high class musicians, which should have the right touch for young people...

The second approach demands for the integration of science into the curriculum, applied to the field, and intensive teacher's training so that you can be sure, that evidence-based methods work, under which circumstances ever...

I call this: the psychological/scientific turn (from master-class to science- and evidence-based teaching profession).

And the idea(l) of music schools? They are conservatoires en miniature, marking just the steps before the conservatoire, there is, as a matter of principal, no difference in the philosophy and idea of the secondary and tertiary institutions and in used methods.

STEP TWO: PRODUCE PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS – BUT ALSO THEIR AUDIENCE!

In step one, of course, the number of pupils which start at the music schools has to be a little bigger then the number of applicants for the conservatoire as you never know the talent or the willingness to keep on the professional path...

The first picture is the picture of a PYRAMID - it's a bit of Darwin thinking – “survival of the fittest”.

But the more numbers of pupils increase, the more the pyramid becomes ridiculous... Imagine the numbers in Austria We have about 160.000 music school students (in a country of 8 million), 1% is going to music universities (and looking at the number of applicants for our studies – I tell you: that's enough!). And only 2 % take part in regional or national musical competitions. So many who do not survive,

so many do not reach the top of the pyramid, so many who drop out?

This conception makes no longer sense, we need a new one! I therefore propose the picture of an UPSILON with two branches and a shared basis and beginning, and that means: We deeply accept that not everybody wants to or is able to go the professional way!

And we can accept and welcome, then

- Senior starters, who – through beginning to learn an instrument – fulfil a lifelong wish
- Adult students, who integrate making music in their daily life
- Handicapped persons, who will never pass an exam
- Youngsters, adolescents who are looking for coaching just for a limited time.

And no longer we should speak of “drop outs”; students who finish their music school career earlier than at the age of 18 are at the most *Interrupters*... I would always expect and hope that a person who spent some years at the music school had fruitful and successful years and earned benefits which drive him to come back to music school at a later point.

I call this the institutional turn: from “Darwin” selection to the acceptance of amateurs in the sense of the word (amateurs=music lovers!). We have to respect the dignity and own right of the dilettantes (and what means this word if we

don't make an insulting use of it... the Italian diletto means joy!)

Consequences for the idea of conservatoires and music schools and the IVE curriculum: The basic idea becomes a bit different (music school as a kind of compromise... one branch for the young professionals, following their path step by step, the other for the former amateurs, must not go the straight way...). We need an awareness of the former teachers for individual learning processes and tempos and appropriate forms of evaluation; but still we think in terms of learning efficiency – with a particular focus on different *learning conditions*, f.i. beginning age (it makes a difference to teach kids in primary school age or adolescents or young adults or seniors – and it makes the job very special. I ask you: Is there any other educational area where you have teachers for all ages?

But nota bene: At this point, we still do not scrutinize the “service of the masters”, we do not question our destination to the classical masterworks, we do not challenge our commitment to the Gods of the Musical Pantheon (first of all Mozart and Beethoven). .., and using this terms I follow Bruno Nettls brilliant analysis of “Schools of Music” in his book “Heartland Excursions”¹.

And if we accept that not everybody becomes a professional – then we could say: all the others play the less difficult pieces of Beethoven, op. 49 instead of op. 106, they do it for their pleasure and as a basis for better understanding of the more important works – this is one of the main arguments for public music schools: music schools produce a small number of professionals and a huge number

¹ Urbana and Chicago 1995

of people which will – in the future - hopefully enter the music halls to form the audience. So: what matters is great music, composed by very few, played by more, listened to by many.

But, to tell the truth – looking at the realities in German or Austrian music schools: that the whole business has only to do with Bach, Beethoven or Brahms, I have more and more doubts...

- What about all the youngsters playing in bands and searching for advice in terms of rock or pop music, or even jazz?
- What about free improvisation or elementary music making?
- What about the practice of folk music?

And I'm not talking about minority phenomena...

That leads me to

STEP THREE: PRODUCE *MUSICIANS* – AND EVERYBODY IS ABLE TO BE ONE!

When we rewrote the Austrian music school curriculum we felt we had to make a decision: It was not only accepting individual paths and learning tempos or accepting that some people reach lower levels of interpretation of sheet/written music than others, no, it's much and fundamentally more: It

was accepting, welcoming and appreciating all these individual *motives and desires for making music!*

And when we focus on the “drivers”, the motives of the music making individual, on the needs and interests of the “musicking” (to use a term of Christopher Small) human being, then our reference point is no longer the world of music as an art but the musical action itself – as an action of communicating emotion musically, an action of creating and moulding affective states in sound, an action which transforms everyday gestures into musical gestures²?

If we concentrate on the inner life of “music making”³ people it becomes evident that expressing oneself musically not only gives a feeling of self-efficacy, of producing something important, of gaining the respect and love of others (sports would do the same), it also reveals the singularity, the exclusivity of musical expression: there is probably no other way in the human repertoire of expressive actions which is so intensive and direct and so formed, cultivated, yes: beautiful at the same time! And that’s why I do say: Music *making* really matters!

And of course you realize, how strongly this thinking is related to the declaration of the Musical Rights by the International Music Council, to this document of an educational Age of Enlightenment in music pedagogy: the centre of the world are the human rights and not the demands of musical Gods and their holy texts (means: the sacred masterworks in scores...). Let me cite the first three of these rights:

² Helmuth Figdor / Peter Röbbke: Das Musizieren und die Gefühle. Instrumentalpädagogik und Psychoanalyse im Dialog („Music making and the emotions. A dialogue between instrumental education and psycho-analysis“), Mainz (D) 2008, Schott Music

³ It’s a pity that there is no English word for the German “Musizieren” which focusses on the musician!

It is IMC's objective to contribute to securing the following basic rights:

- The right for all children and adults to express themselves musically in all freedom.
- The right for all children and adults to learn musical languages and skills.
- The right for all children and adults to have access to musical involvement through participation, listening, creation, and information.⁴

Consequences for the idea of conservatoires and music schools and the curriculum of IVE:

Conservatoire and music school become substantially different – and not only in terms of organisation or level. The public music school becomes a place which allows people to find out why and how they want “to express themselves musically in all freedom” and then to seek for the acquisition of personally appropriate “musical languages and skills”. Therefore the basic definition of the educational objectives of Austrian music schools went to be paradox, paradox, because the *institutional* target was said to be that everyone finds out his *individual* objectives!⁵

⁴ www.emc-imc.org

⁵ 3.1.1. *Musik als subjektiv bedeutsamer Raum*

Gleich, welche musikalischen Voraussetzungen ein Schüler mitbringt oder welche Ziele er verfolgt, gleich auch, welchen speziellen Lernweg ein Schüler geht: jeder Schüler der Musikschule sollte von Beginn an die Musik als einen Raum erleben, in dem es um Persönliches geht, als ein Medium, mit dem Eigenes mitgeteilt werden kann, als einen subjektiv bedeutsamen Bereich jenseits des Alltäglichen. So entstehen Begeisterung und Faszination, d.h. es wächst jene Freude am Musizieren und Tanzen, die die eigentliche Triebkraft für die langwierigen Bemühungen der Stimmbildung, der Körperschulung und des instrumentaltechnischen Lernens darstellt.

And the idea that the musician/the music-making individual himself is the integrative point of music education leads towards a total musical open-mindedness: Fundamentally, there is no difference between somebody who expresses himself by rapping rhymes or playing heavy metal and somebody who wants to talk in sounds on the basis of a Schubert piece. Please allow me to quote a passage of the new Austrian curriculum for music schools:

The focus of music education at music school lies on making music in a competent and vivid way, and above all on making music together: elementary music making, improvisation, conducting and performing classical works, playing in the styles of rock, pop and jazz or folk music, multimedia performing and so on. Without ignoring the importance of musical works in the development of music in Europe and without forgetting that dealing with music as an art is part of our educational objectives: a broad understanding of what making music is all about goes beyond the performance of musical works.⁶

Consequences for the IVE Curriculum:

Whereas teacher's training in step one and two was seen in the terms of technical rationality (that means: to train teachers to enable them to train their pupils in matters of technical, auditory and expressive skills in the most efficient way), we now shift to another concept of teaching, respectively we extend our idea of teaching: Now, teaching

⁶ *Im Mittelpunkt der Musikschularbeit steht das qualifizierte und lebendige Musizieren... – vor allem jenes in der Gemeinschaft: elementares Musizieren, Improvisation, das Dirigieren oder Spielen von klassischen Werken, Musizieren in den verschiedenen Stilistiken von Rock, Pop und Jazz, ... volksmusikalische Praktiken, multimediale Musizierformen. So wichtig in der europäischen Musikentwicklung auch die musikalischen Kunstwerke sein mögen und so sehr die Auseinandersetzung mit der Kunstmusik auch Teil einer Bildungsaufgabe sein mag: Ein weit gespannter Begriff des ... Musizierens geht nicht allein in der Wiedergabe von Werken auf. www.komu.at*

becomes – as Donald Schön would say - really research-and-reflecting-in- action. And it becomes a process of research because we develop an attitude towards every pupil that he or she is a single case, “a universe of one”. And that means: the young people we deal with are no longer to be subsumed under the abstract category of “pupil”, but are seen as unique human beings with concrete musical needs and desires that we have to find out – as reflective teaching practitioners –, as well as all the meanings that music could have to single persons.

And – as a part of this experimental process called tuition – we have then to offer and provide that range of musical skills and languages which is needed so that musical expression becomes true.

No wonder, that this raises immense expectations to the curriculum of IVE: it’s not only developing this teaching-as-research attitude (on the basis of knowledge about and understanding the complex relations between man and music), it means also generating a lot of artistic abilities – and here I speak of those beyond the principal subject and beyond the interpretation of “sheet music”. That’s why our Vienna curriculum provides as compulsory subjects improvisation work, experience in folk music, pop, rock and jazz practice, elementary music making or African and Latin drumming.

But, to be honest: Providing this wide range of artistic work, problems of identity and, sometimes, too excessive demands arise and emerge, as the day is not long enough to cope with all these musical challenges, and to fulfil the demands of all these different styles and practices in a sufficient way.

But nevertheless: after the scientific/psychological turn (means: don't trust only on the impact of the master), after the institutional turn (means: music schools are also open for true and life-long amateurs), we could now speak of a philosophical and hermeneutical turn (make the individual student to be the centre of your educational reflecting and acting).

Dear colleagues, we are not at the end of our journey... let's have a slight view into the future...

STEP FOUR: HELP PEOPLE TO *PRODUCE THEMSELVES AS MUSICIANS!*

If you imagine the absolutely auto-didactical manner in which Eric Clapton gained his fantastic guitar expertise and if you maybe read Lucy Greens important book "How popular musicians learn", if you see in your mind's eye how folk musicians become masters, then it becomes obvious that we need a broader perspective on teaching and *learning*: We have to realize that there is lot of learning outside schools and without teachers and tuition, we discover the world of informal learning, a world in which the learner determines both the objectives of his learning and its tools and methods. But when we met to a symposium in Vienna March 2009, titled: "Learning to make music – even outside tuition", we found out that even in the "formal" classical area, there is a lot of self-determined, "rough" or "natural" f.i. learning in daily practice, in secretly searching for a second or third teacher, in learning from the mates in the ensembles, in copying records, in making music in a totally different style

and so on. My Berlin colleague, Ulrich Mahlert, summed up a study that was made with Berlin students on the topic of informal/formal learning in the classical area: “Tuition is so much the better, if it is based on the respect for informal learning, ... it is so much the better if it fosters informal learning and follows the idea, that – at the end - formal tuition has only an auxiliary, additional, supportive function for informal learning.”⁷

And also, if you have a look at the “Sistema”, the movement of youth orchestras in Venezuela, you get another perspective of an instrumental learning, which is not totally related to teacher’s instructions. If a Venezuelan youngster starts – without appreciable instrumental tuition before - when he starts with his instrument in the orchestra (five times a week, three ours daily) - we have another situation than the well-known acquisition of skills at school - before the real life demands for these skills! Here, we have learning in a community of practice (like the learning of the native tongue), a learning which consists in taking part in a serious way of making music – from the very first moment on - , a learning which is driven by the willingness of the newcomer to become a full participant in the group (nevertheless: the beginner is despites his peripheral position at the beginning a legitimate member of that group). We are now talking about a learning which is based on imitation of the advanced players, on peer-to-peer-inspiration, on self-instruction (and, of course additional formal tuition). And the spirit of Sistema reaches Europe: In the German area, called “Ruhrgebiet”, until 2012 200.000 children at primary schools will have the possibility to do their first steps on a self-chosen instrument

⁷ Translated by the author; cited after Ulrich Mahlert: Fremdgehen? Informelles Lernen und „klassischer“ Instrumental-/Vokalunterricht; in: Natalia Ardila-Mantilla/Peter Röbbke (ed.): Vom wilden Lernen. Musizieren lernen – auch außerhalb von Schule und Unterricht, Mainz 2009.

and to enjoy making music together. But I'm convinced that this project, called "Jedem Kind ein Instrument / An instrument for every child" can only be successful if the development of instrumental skills will not only depend on traditional one-to-one or even group tuition, but will happen in and emerge from the real-music-making situation in the class!

Whether auto-didactical learning or learning in communities of practice: What does this mean for music schools and the IVE-curriculum? Music schools lose their borders, their walls become permeable, they reach out into life or we could say: less school, more real life! Schools become a meeting point for musicians without separated class rooms and restrictive rules!

And the teacher? He should be full of respect for the learning of his students (and humble in view of the limits of formal teaching); he is less an instructor, more the architect of learning environments; he is less a producer, more a facilitator; he is less a goal-orientated teacher, more a coach and mentor of the student's ways; he thinks less in terms of didactics, more in terms of "wild" learning; he is more an artistic role model than a member of the educational staff.

And the curriculum of IVE? This, again, is paradox: we have to train teachers who are able to go beyond their traditional role, who can, sometimes, forget that they are teachers!

And here we have the last turn, the learner-orientated one, the one which takes us beyond didactics – and my only hope is that you can forgive me for leading you at this very critical point!