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Music education and lifelong musical meaning

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VII. MEANINGFUL MUSIC TEACHER EDUCATION

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Music Education and Lifelong Musical Meaning

If "music is not about life but is rather implicated in the formulation of life" (DeNora, 2000, p. 152), then life itself – in its manifold appearances – becomes the starting point for reflections on the meaning of music in and for education. A lifetime perspective on music opens up a broad field of possible research avenues. Such a perspective raises questions, for example, about the meaning of music in different phases of life, and enables us to trace music-related developmental processes and uncover the relevance of sociocultural backgrounds for music activities. Furthermore, the focus on life experience may deepen the self-understanding and self-reflection of actors in music-related professions and thus provides an important starting point for designing and developing didactical tools for teaching music at school and university.

In this chapter we draw on ongoing research projects in Europe which have recognized the potential of a lifespan perspective for music education and are investigating lifespan aspects with different emphases. Common strands from these studies can be identified, such as those that raise questions about the musical development of learners and those that draw on the biographies of music teachers and their implications for teaching.

In the first strand on 'learners' perspectives', it can be seen from the selected research projects how the meaning of music develops over the course of a learner's life. These research studies mainly draw on concepts of musical identities (e. g. Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2017), open up vistas of lifelong learning and also address questions relating to music education. The second strand – on 'teachers' perspectives' – is about the process of becoming and being a music teacher throughout life. The selected research projects referred to in this strand look back to biographic and identity related perspectives which give deeper insights from their specific research context.

In the broad overview presented here, following these two strands allows us to point out and systematize the potential given by each study for a lifespan perspective on music education.

Learners' Perspectives

If we accept that "making music throughout life (is) an important part of the good life" (Mantie, 2022, p. 148) then this raises questions about the developmental processes that enable lifelong participation in music related activities. Music education aims to create and support relations between humans and all kinds of music. This consideration leads to questions about the meaning of music in everyone's lives and how it develops over the life course. This process can be understood as lifelong learning in which music and its meaning can be of great importance in helping individuals to find their place in the world.

This section of the text intends to give an idea of the variety of these meanings by referring to three current research projects. The first considers a research project by Sabine Schneider-Binkl exploring the development of musical identities for learners during adolescence and illustrates the relevance of influences and social surroundings on different types of dedication to music. The second focuses on Alexandra Lamont's research on people's relationships with the physical objects – musical instruments – which sheds light on what music means to people at later life stages. In order to uncover the meaning of different musical practices and habits, the third study referred to in this section focuses on Karen Burland's research on musical participation and its role in the development of musical identity.

Adolescence is understood to be specifically significant for personal development (Ferchhoff, 2011; Oerter & Dreher, 2008). Young people in particular spend a lot of time engaging with music while interacting with their friends (Albert, Hurrelmann, Quenzel, Schneekloth, Leven, Utzmann & Wolfert, 2019; Feierabend, Rathgeb, Kheredman & Glöckler, 2022). Therefore, it becomes clearer that – especially during adolescence-interaction with others is part of the developmental process towards a personal musical identity. In order to develop a deeper understanding of these processes, the theoretical framework established by Hargreaves et al. (2017, pp. 4–5) offers us an understanding of "Musical Identities": "[…] musical identities are performative and social – they represent something that we *do*, rather than something that we *have*, namely the ways in which we jointly engage with music in everyday life". Research examples on so-called "non-musicians" or "hobbyists" by Rickard and Chin (2017) illustrate that different types of relationship with music, such as interest in the reception of music or internal motivations, can play a major role for a persons' relationship with music and therefore in the development of musical identities. Furthermore, it can be seen from research results by O'Neill (2017) how "learning ecologies" and their

connectedness within young peoples' life influence the developmental processes. A current research project on the relevance of music for the development of identities during adolescence being led by Sabine Schneider-Binkl aims to uncover how music can reveal its meaning differently across one person's lifespan development with selected contrasting cases (e.g. "professionals", "hobbyists"). In particular, family and friends play a major role here, and the development of listening habits can be influenced and shaped by the practices of others: one participant in the study gives insights into how childhood listening experiences and the regular playing of classical music records at festive family reunions have shaped his later personal listening preferences and an enjoyment of classical music for festive occasions with family and friends. *"On holidays such as Christmas or Easter, my parents always listened to music by Bach on our old home record player […]. Now, when I cook with my friends, I do the same […]"* (male, 25 years). This example shows that the meaning of music in a person's life can be highly interconnected with shared activities and that these can develop and persist over longer periods of life. Several young adults interviewed within this research suggested that listening to music is accompanied by creating playlists which are shared and co-created with friends, and that this is an important shared leisure time activity over many years. On the other hand, it can be seen from examples of interviews with professional musicians within this research that the development of passion for a musical instrument can also contrast strongly with the musical practices and preferences of parents. *"My father was a dentist and my parents wanted me to study Medicine. I was already admitted to study Medicine at a university"* (male, 39, professional Saxophonist). In such interview examples, the parents' strong wish for the son or daughter to start a particular non-musical career and the conflicts around this seem to strengthen the desire to become a musician and consequently support the understanding of the own musical identity. By reconstructing selected cases in detail, different perspectives and research approaches – such as types of interviews or qualitative data analysis methods – can help us gain a multidimensional view on the meaning of music and the development of musical identities throughout life (Schneider-Binkl, 2022).

Particularly in the popular music sphere this interaction can, for instance, be seen when part of a young person's developing musical identity is influenced strongly by their "idols" (Green, 2002) or their group identity: in identifying as a member of a particular peer group, they will take on similar tastes, activities and interests (Tarrant, North & Hargreaves, 2002). This is not new – witness the idolization of Buxtehude by J.S. Bach, who famously walked some 200 miles to hear the master perform.

Musical identities are also connected to individuals' beliefs and attitudes about being a musician, and can be associated with a strong sense of connection, or calling, to their chosen career. However, the ways in which we identify with music can vary according to other contextual factors, and this can influence the modes and impacts of lifelong musical participation. Studies with amateur, aspiring and established musicians allow us to explore

the extent to which musical identity interacts with psychological and environmental factors to influence the ways in which people choose to engage with music throughout their lives (Creech, Hodges & Hallam, 2021; Lehmberg & Fung, 2010; MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002, 2017; Marsh, 2017).

For many people, musical participation (e. g. attending concerts, making music with others, making music in a home studio) is something which complements their working & personal lives and identities (Burland, 2021). Musical participation can help to complement the positive aspects of working life and offers a chance to 'fill in the self' in order to increase personal satisfaction and counteract more challenging experiences. Therefore, musical activities can offer a source of wellbeing during adulthood and into retirement and, if this is the case, then engagement with music in childhood is important for developing a kind of proto-musical identity; this may lead an individual to consider musical participation as a viable resource as they develop (Burland, 2020; Veloso & Mota, 2021).

But what does this mean for people whose work focuses on music? While research highlights that engaging with music (listening, performing with others) can provide the kinds of rejuvenation and distraction described by Burland's (2021) participants (cf. MacDonald, Kreutz & Mitchell, 2012), aspiring or professional musicians report that they need to find new, non-musical, hobbies & leisure activities that could offer opportunities to 'fill in the self' when experiencing challenges in relation to music (Burland, 2005; Burland & Bennett, 2022). This requires a shift in mindset from adolescence and young adulthood, when music is a primary, all-encompassing focus, and a key feature of identity work. In order to foster the open-minded, adaptable mindset that individuals need to thrive in the workplace as professional musicians. It is vital that students find opportunities to experience a wide range of musical contexts, including different musical genres and styles, different social contexts and engaging with different audiences. They also need to work in situations which challenge them and push them beyond their comfort zones, which enable them to fail (safely) and learn from that opportunity.

We know that our relationship with music can ebb and flow throughout life according to social and work demands. The data gathered to validate a new Musical Identity Measure (MIM; Burland, Bennett & López-Íñiguez, 2022) suggest that four factors – musical calling (a "consuming and meaningful passion" for music, cf. Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, p. 1001), emotional attachment, musical self-efficacy and growth mindset – underpin ongoing engagement in musical activity across the lifespan, regardless of musical domain (e. g. as a performer, DJ, academic, composer) and level of engagement (e. g. as a professional musician or as a hobby). In Burland et al.'s data (2022), self-efficacy and growth mindset are particularly strong in the mid-40s/50s (compared to younger generations); this may reflect general levels of confidence or satisfaction in their work, but may also indicate a moment of reflection and preparation for some kind of work transition that is common at this age (Gembris & Heye, 2014; Manturzewska, 1990). Participants in their 60s and 70s had

significantly higher musical self-efficacy than younger age groups, suggesting that personal perceptions of self-as-musician are particularly important for lifelong engagement in music.

The lifespan and narrative approach can also shed light on what happens to musical identities when they are no longer active (Burland & Bennett, 2022). Having access to a musical instrument is often pivotal in sustaining engagement with music across the lifespan (Lamont, 2011); new research looking at the point where people give up their instruments illustrates the time-line of the attachment to a physical object and provides insight into how identities shift. Through narrative interviews with participants who were donating their instruments to charitable schemes, Lamont and Montero-Diaz (in preparation) uncovered a strong sense of sentimental attachment which was often associated with instrument ownership: *"my viola was made by a friend of mine, so … I feel quite kind of attached to that because I know who made it"* (Kathy, 49). Alongside this came a sense of moral imperative for instruments to serve some useful function, which, if the owner was no longer playing, could only be fulfilled by passing it on to others. Participants spoke of the legacy created by donating their instrument either directly to someone they knew would make use of it or to a scheme that would ensure it was well used. These narratives also reveal something of the 'animate' of their instruments in people's views: *"it just sits and does nothing, and somebody else might be able to make music with it"* (Jenny, 71, referring to her mandolin). Similar to other work on attachment to objects, legacies and passing on to future generations (Curasi, Price & Arnould, 2004; Heersmink, 2018), this line of enquiry shows how musical legacies through donating instruments can allow people to make peace with their own changing musical identities.

In contrast to adjusting to lost identity, ways to sustain identity can also be important. Music education may foster a feeling of belonging and thus support identity-building in times of historic turmoil. That is the case in the schools of the Balearic Islands where two well-defined and geographically delimited initiatives sought to consolidate a new musical paradigm based on the closest and most elementary musical tool: the traditional song in the Catalan language. This methodology for music learning allowed school to positively contribute to the recovery and strengthening of identity traits and became an important tool for social cohesion in a context of pedagogical innovation, which derived from the process of cultural recovery started in Spain in the framework of the end of Franco's dictatorship (Gelabert & Motilla, 2012a).

Teachers' Perspectives

The first part of our chapter focused on the biographical implications of learning music and the related issues of identity formation, so we next turn to consider the importance of life experiences for teaching music. It is possible that the formation of the teacher identity in a music teacher is impacted by their own biography and their identity as a musician (Burnard, 2011; Saunders, 2008; Dalladay, 2014). This section refers to a current research project on student music teachers and their identity formation by Sabine Schneider-Binkl, to biographical research on music teachers by Christopher Dalladay and by Eva-Maria Tralle, and to historical perspectives on teacher biographies by Llorenç Gual-Gelabert.

In the process of becoming a music teacher, there can be tensions between considering oneself as a musician and as a pedagogue (Sieger, 2019). In one of Sabine Schneider-Binkl's current research projects, the developmental processes for students intending to become music teachers in the future are uncovered. Preliminary results show how, on the one hand, individuals try out different identity-related interests and, on the other hand, they need to bring together these possible identities into a coherent whole: *"First, I studied mechanical engineering. But then I realized that this is not what I want to do in my life and I gave up studying. […] Then I was a guitarist in a band for many years and we played many concerts. […] A year ago, I got the opportunity to help out as a Music teacher at a secondary school. I really like it there and I am very happy now to study music education and to become a music teacher"* (student of Music Education for secondary schools, 1st semester). From this example, we learn how the student negotiates various options for his professional career and how the different experiences lead to decisions with the aim of finding the profession that feels personally appropriate. This perspective on the process of becoming a teacher also follows Keupp's findings (2014): his assumption of existing *Patchworkidentitäten* (patchwork-identities) in everyone's lives explains the need for personal effort in creating coherence and meaning in one's life. Furthermore, the theoretical framework on identity formation as a critical task during adolescence by Erikson (1968) and the operationalized model for the process of identity development by Marcia (1980) can frame the understanding about the possible impact of musical practices and experiences for the development of teacher identities in the present, as well as throughout the lifespan. From interviews with adolescent music students, Evans and McPherson (2017) elaborated on how the development of musical identities consists of sequences of exploration and commitment which take on different characteristics according to the quality and number of instances of such periods of exploration and commitment. The students, who participated in Schneider-Binkl's research, highlighted their phases of identity formation, from a period of life where they were passionate about being a musician but, later on, discovered their pedagogic skills. It can be seen from the example given above that, for the interviewed student of Music Education, this process includes periods of life when someone is passionate about

being a musician, but later tries out their pedagogic skills and thereby commits to a new field of interest for their profession.

There can also be a tension between the teachers' identities and self-concepts as pedagogues and their identities as musicians, exacerbated by a focus on learning contexts which do not always center on the development of musical competencies. This, in turn, can influence the development of musicianship for students. Models of the developing identity of both the 'Music Teacher' and the 'Musician-Teacher' have been proposed by Dalladay (2014), which suggest a subtle difference between the two. The former considers the influences of self-image/background and a sense of developing musicality in becoming a classroom music teacher, including the role of initial teacher training and the demands of employing schools. The latter goes further by exploring the complementary and conflicting roles of musician and teacher which can assist and/or impede their respective ambitions. The teacher may well wish to develop musical creativity in their students whilst a school may require levels of compliance that conflict with these aims. It could be argued that many teachers enter the profession wishing to empower their students musically but, possibly as a result of legislative and educational environment factors, tend to only impart knowledge and a few selective skills. This situation, in turn, may well influence the musical biography and identity of the students in their charge. One participant (Dalladay, 2014, p. 242) says that *"there's not a lot of trust in some schools of the pupils… need to give pupils belief that they can do things… give kids more ownership of their music"*. A selection of research participants (trainee and experienced secondary music teachers) were asked the question, *"do you consider yourself as a musician first or a teacher first?"* Responses to this question included (Dalladay, 2014, p. 213):

- musician (active musician in the community)
- both (now beginning to take on more musical activities)
- shifting balance from musician to teacher ("teaching is like a performance")
- teacher ("the longer I teach, the more difficult it is to be a musician")
- both (teacher in the week; musician at weekends)
- musician ("this is part of my identity")

In combination with classroom observations (England), teachers' narratives can help to open up vistas on the development of the 'musician-teacher' identity, formed by the working together of our self-image with our identity both as musicians and as teachers, and how this influences the style and content of learning sessions for students. In one such study, for example (Dalladay, 2014), there has been an exploration of the biography and identity of lower secondary (age 11–14) music teachers in England and the impact and implications of this on the manner of teaching and learning, as well as the content of classroom lessons. It has been posited that the role of music teachers tends to be that

of presenting young people with a sequence of musical activities and experiences which are engaging but do little to develop genuine musicality and musicianship (Wright, 2012): for engaging activities and developing genuine musicianship are not necessarily the same thing. There are many reasons for this situation, including the small amount of time allowed in the curriculum for music, the differences between music teachers' experiences and expectations and those of the young people themselves (York, 2001; Welch, 2012), the subject knowledge, skills and understanding of the teachers, and the balance between developing identities as practicing musicians and professional teachers (Kemp, 1996; Young, 2012). The result has been that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2012) has criticized secondary music education in England for not focusing sufficiently on musical sound as the "language" of musical learning and that far too much provision, generally, has been "inadequate or barely satisfactory" (Ofsted, 2012, p. 4).

The research outlined above (Dalladay, 2014) made significant use of narratives as well as surveys and observations of teaching. This included a comparison between the musical competencies believed to be important by the participants (music teachers and trainees) for the development of musicianship and what was actually covered in class music lessons. As an illustration, for instance, singing was considered to be an important competency (ranking 3rd out of 12) yet, in terms of singing taking place in the classroom, the observed ranking was 7th and, where singing did take place, it most frequently did not include any significant attempts to develop technique, quality, intonation or motivation. An experienced music teacher commented that *"loads of musicians can't sing in tune"* (Dalladay, 2014, p. 166). The same research indicates some contradictions in relation to our example activity of singing. A survey was conducted (n = 64) in which 25 % reported that their first study instrument was the voice and 19 % as second study (44 % total). Yet observations showed there was some reluctance to focus in lessons on any significant vocal improvement and development in pupils; evidence, based on a range of lessons seen by the researcher, indicated that where singing was present, it was not a major feature in most of them. Again, one teacher (Dalladay, 2014, p. 167) included some singing activity in his lesson – *"it is important that the students sing and that singing activities are particularly useful at the beginning and ends of lessons"* – but he went on to suggest that he was *"less fussy about intonation"*. There does seem to be a biographical spiral evident in the classroom with regard to singing (and we are only looking at this as an example of biographical impact): many teachers, strong musicians though they might be themselves, have little confidence in their own vocal expertise (sometimes negatively impacted when they were at school experiencing the same kinds of curricular input from their own teachers) (Bannan, 2002).

The discrepancy between music teachers' beliefs about what should be important in music lessons and their actual teaching practice is also one of the central findings of a recent study on music teachers' biographical experiences with regard to interculturality (Tralle, in print). Based on biographical-narrative interviews with music teachers at secondary schools

in Germany, the study focuses on identifying social norms that teachers meet in the field of interculturality. Furthermore, the study aims to reconstruct to what extent music teachers' processing of these norms is rooted in habitual orientations and is thus closely linked to their biographies. One interviewee, for example, tends to comply with the curricular requirement of teaching 'music of different cultures' by seeing himself more as a learner than as a teacher. This orientation towards exploring new musical genres and styles reconstructed in this case (Tralle, in print) is related to the biographical experience of being limited by growing up in the former German Democratic Republic. For example, access to contemporary music genres from the West was restricted; it did not appear on state radio and television programmes and so, even in his youth, this led the interviewee to develop creative ways to gain access to music he was interested in. The study follows the theoretical premise that biographical narratives enable to reconstruct the implicit knowledge and its relation to explicit knowledge (Nohl, 2017). The results show a tense relationship between these two levels of knowledge and thus raise important suggestions for music teacher training and also for further research in music education. On the one hand, a consideration of tacit knowledge that is deeply rooted in biographical experience can be a stimulus for self-reflection on the part of future music teachers during their studies. On the other hand, exploring the tension between explicit and implicit knowledge enables a critical examination of the proclaimed goals of music in school against the background of its everyday conditions; these include the biographical experiences of music teachers and their implications for pedagogical action in music.

As well as empirical research on music teachers, historical research can also focus on life perspectives and their contextualization. These new trends consider particular people as protagonists of historical processes, understanding that history is not only regulated by macrostructures, but also receives the influences of individuals through their legacy and their contributions. Biographies of individual music educators have been attracted researchers in music education (Frijhoff, 2008). The example of the pedagogue and artist Baltsar Bibiloni gives insights into the meaning of the political and sociocultural background in Catalan-speaking lands and how this influences educational practices (Gelabert & Motilla, 2012b). These educational practices are carried out by teachers who implement Bibiloni's methodology at schools, and end up achieving a transfer to the social environment that conditions – to a greater or lesser extent – their musical identity. This kind of study allows us to examine the biographical experiences of music teachers and their formative power for pedagogical practice in music lessons in school. This translates into contributions focused on interest in the subject, which materialize through life stories or biographies of pedagogues and master musicians.

Conclusion

The aim of our paper was to present current music pedagogical studies that focus on a lifespan perspective. Along with a systematic distinction between learners and teachers, the potential of a lifelong perspective for research in music education with regard to different actors and aspects has been demonstrated. Furthermore, we have considered how learning, biography and identity (of both learners and teachers) impact their lifetime's musical development. We have also demonstrated that this development is at the root of significant, ongoing research projects; highlighting some of the issues which are involved in lifelong musical meaning and learning.

The outlined research activities reveal their potential at the interfaces of psychology, sociology and cultural studies. Identity-related approaches can refer to different theoretical frameworks (e.g. Hargreaves et al., 2017; Keupp, 2014; Marcia, 1980). They help illustrate various dimensions of meaning of music in life, such as developmental processes, sociocultural backgrounds, and individually made decisions about the meaning of music in life. Therefore, analyzing personal constructs of music-related meaning and its evolution can help us to design structures and approaches in music education that "entail developing dispositions and capacities in such a way as to keep the door open to as many possible (music-related) participatory options throughout the lifespan" (Mantie, 2022, p. 227).

These research examples offer important insights into educational practice in all fields of music education and point to the inescapable interconnectedness of education, learning, and lifelong development. We have shown how musical progression and identity is complex and multifaceted, and how all those involved with the education of learners of all ages need to address identity-related questions. We hope that future research in music education will continue to pursue the lifetime perspective and challenge its promising potential.

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