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**MAKING SENSE OF ‘CLASSICAL’ MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AT
UNIVERSITY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHICALLY-INFORMED CASE STUDY OF A
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

**BY
M. KRIVENSKI**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Department of Music

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how ‘classical’ musical performance (performance of Western art music) is understood in a university context from the perspective of the members of a performance community to which the researcher also belonged. Previous research on musical performance in higher education (HE) has tended to focus on the exploration and/or evaluation of aspects of the educational process of musical performance without necessarily investigating the value systems implicit in these aspects. Using the conceptual lens of ‘communities of practice’, this thesis goes beyond a focus on the educational process and teases out the values and beliefs surrounding musical performance at a UK university. Furthermore, it explores how these values and beliefs are constructed and/or enacted by students and tutors through participation in the practices of a performance community.

A rationale is provided for the adoption of a qualitative, single-case study approach within a social constructionist theoretical framework. The data construction methods used in this study – participant-observation, interviews, focus groups and document analysis – are discussed. The researcher’s role as an ‘insider’ to the community investigated in this study is also considered.

Thematic Analysis of the data brings into focus three different emic understandings of performance: (1) ‘Classical’ musical performance as display of abilities and/or knowledge; (2) ‘Classical’ musical performance as source of insider’s knowledge; and (3) ‘Classical’ musical performance as a shared musical experience. The analysis indicates that these three understandings are unequally distributed, with ‘performance as display’ being dominant, followed by ‘performance as source of insider’s knowledge’. ‘Performance as a shared musical experience’ is the least common understanding among community members.

Understanding the values and beliefs constructed and/or enacted through the community practices identified here sheds new light onto how and what musicians teach and learn at university and how this might be changed for the better.

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1. Introduction

I started teaching piano in a UK university music department in my mid-twenties. As a ‘classical’ (Western art music) pianist who had been musically brought up in an Italian conservatoire from the tender age of 11 years old, I was both puzzled and intrigued by the fact that in the UK musical performance had a place on the curriculum of university music degrees. Before joining the university music department as a ‘visiting tutor’, I had correlated the study of musical performance with the type of professional music training generally offered in a conservatoire-type of institution, such as a music college – in Italy, one certainly could not study performance at university. Consequently, I had viewed university music departments as “places that know” rather than “places that do” (Mellers, 1973, p. 246).

As I later came to realise, musical performance had not traditionally been part of the curriculum of university music degrees in the UK. A series of articles on ‘The study of music at university’ published in *The Musical Times* between February 1973 and February 1974 suggests that musical performance started acquiring a more prominent role in university music curricula only in the late sixties/early seventies. Interestingly, in bringing this series to a conclusion, Howard Mayer Brown underlines the fact that the study of musical performance at university “needs to be encouraged – but as a means to an end, which, simply put, is the understanding of music” (1974, p. 123). Through this remark, the author appears to characterise the study of musical performance at university as qualitatively different from the study of musical performance at music college. This interpretation is supported by the fact that throughout the series of articles musical performance in a conservatoire context is generally presented as an activity pursued with the aim of acquiring “individual virtuosity” (Goehr, 1973, p. 589) rather than musical understanding. Indeed, my training as a ‘classical’ pianist supports this interpretation: in my experience, conservatoire students (and their teachers) tended to be rather preoccupied with the development of advanced instrumental/vocal technical skills. Furthermore, their music-making seemed to be more about fulfilling the musical expectations of some authoritative figures than about developing an understanding of the music performed.

Two decades after the publication of this series of articles, Dave Wright and Janet Ritterman (1994) paint a picture of music colleges and university music departments in the UK at the end of the 20th century as having bridged the gap that traditionally separated them in terms of their approach to the study of music. According to Ritterman (p. 524), this was achieved thanks to the “explicit recognition [in both educational contexts] of the importance of ‘thinking informing the doing’ and ‘doing informing the thinking’” of music students (cf. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [QAA], 2008, para. 2.9). Arguably, a possible implication of such recognition for the study of musical performance in higher education (HE) is that, no matter what educational context, performance students should go beyond a preoccupation with the development of technical skills; moreover, they should engage with their musical material in a thoughtful, critical manner, rather than follow ‘unthinkingly’ whichever interpretative source they might (be led to) believe is the most authoritative.

The above interpretation is certainly influenced by the fact that my own training was strongly shaped not only by a deliberate and intensive focus on the development of advanced technical skills, but also, and quite significantly, by the need to follow authoritative interpretations. This need was driven by the belief – which I was conditioned to adopt during my formative years – that there was a ‘right way’ of performing a piece and that finding it was more a matter of ‘talent’ than thinking. During the early years of my training, the ‘right way’ seemed to be embodied in a particular performing tradition, which was exemplified by exponents of the Russian school of piano playing. When I started my postgraduate studies, the source of authority shifted to the musical score itself – preferably Urtext – from which, according to my teachers, one could decode the composer’s intentions. Although my teachers’ and examiners’ feedback reassured me that I was successful in performing my repertoire the ‘right way’ – generally speaking the feedback I received was very positive – I always had the uncomfortable feeling that the process of finding the ‘right way’ was rather mysterious and ephemeral. Thus, the only way for me to be certain that I was succeeding as a ‘classical’ performer was to have my performances ‘validated’ by an authoritative musician.

Once I completed my formal training and started feeling more settled in my new roles of freelance pianist and piano tutor in a UK university context, I had the opportunity

to rethink the belief that there was a ‘right way’ to perform ‘classical’ music. I engaged with questions such as ‘Is performing the process of carrying out one’s ‘duty’ towards some musical authority?’ and ‘Do performers have any creative agency and, if so, in what way?’ Inspired by the educational context in which I was now active, a research-intensive university music department that encouraged creativity and independent thinking, I started pondering and researching into what it meant to be a ‘classical’ performer and to perform ‘classical’ music. I soon realised that the exploration of these questions was affecting (positively) not only my own performing activities but also my teaching ones: both types of activity became more exploratory in nature and started being informed by my readings of musicological literature from the field of musical performance studies.

As I embarked on this personal quest for musical meaning and creative agency, I also started wondering whether a university music education – as opposed to a conservatoire one such as mine – might be conducive to a broader understanding of musical performance and of the role of the performer. Could the embeddedness of musical performance modules in an undergraduate *university* degree affect the way students and tutors experienced and understood musical performance? The prospectus of the music department where I taught indicated that the study of music on the BMus Music degree was characterised by the exploration of “the interrelationship between music as a creative and practical endeavour, and music as an intellectual study” (Music, 2008). Would this be reflected in the study of musical performance? According to Janet Ritterman (Wright & Ritterman, 1994), what can be read in a prospectus does not mirror “what really goes on” in a programme of studies and does not tell us much about the “implicit value systems” (p. 524) that deeply shape students’ and tutors’ teaching/learning experience in a specific educational context.

This thesis, then, is the result of my desire to tease out the ‘value systems’ implicit in the practices of a university performance community – which I belonged to – with the aim to gain an understanding of how the members of this community made sense of ‘classical’ musical performance and being/becoming a ‘classical’ performer. Furthermore, this thesis is timely in light of the current political, socio-economic and educational climate in which the value of the study of music (and the arts in general) at all educational levels is increasingly under debate. In the UK, music is excluded

from English Baccalaureate¹ and the promotion of STEM² subjects and budget cuts in recent years have led to a decline of music provision in state-schools and local authority areas. The study of a musical instrument is thus being increasingly restricted to children whose families can afford to pay for an instrument and private one-to-one tuition and, crucially, who believe this is a worthwhile investment. As a consequence, fewer children have the opportunity to study music to a standard that will enable them to pursue it at HE level, with potentially serious repercussions for the future of the music industry, for music in academia and music education as a whole. In this context, the relevance and purpose of HE music studies and, more specifically, of musical performance is being questioned (Tregear et al., 2016). As such, this thesis is contributing to the current debate by exploring the value systems in ‘classical’ musical performance as understood and experienced in the context of a UK university music department.

I use the term ‘classical’ throughout the majority of this thesis as this is the label that was most widely recognised and used by the members of the performance community explored in this study when referring to Western art music. Where synonyms arise, this reflects the choice of label within some of the literature or participants’ narratives that I discuss or refer to in this thesis.

Having presented the personal and wider motivations for this project, in the rest of this chapter I contextualise my research and provide an overview of the thesis. In the following section (1.1), I situate the study by outlining relevant extant literature on musical performance in HE and on ‘communities of practice’ in a music-making context. In the second section (1.2), I discuss the overall aim and goal of the study, introduce the conceptual lens of ‘communities of practice’ and outline the broad questions that have guided the research process. The concluding section of this chapter (1.3) provides a description of the structure of this thesis.

¹ A government policy introduced in 2010 according to which secondary schools are evaluated on the basis of the proportion of pupils that achieve good grades in a combination of subjects: English, maths, history or geography, the sciences and a foreign language.

² A number of subjects considered fundamental for future national economic growth by the government, policy makers and (some) universities: science, technology, engineering and maths.

1.1. Situating the study

In this section, I provide an outline of relevant literature on musical performance in HE and on communities of practice in a music-making context. This is not intended to be an “exhaustive summary of prior research” (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 3), but rather a contextualisation of the present study and identification of the research gaps the study aims to bridge.

In attempting to answer its research questions (presented in section 1.2 of this chapter), this thesis covers a broad range of topics related to ‘classical’ musical performance (such as the ‘authority’ of the musical score, the aural/oral tradition in musical performance, peer feedback, the evaluation of musical performance, etc.) and it draws on literature from a broad range of disciplines – including musical performance studies, music education, ethnomusicology, psychology of music and social theory of learning. For this reason, I do not separate the review of relevant literature from the presentation of this study’s findings (in Chapters 3-8 of this thesis). Rather, I intertwine the two by drawing on the literature “on a ‘when-and-as-needed’ basis” (Wolcott, 2009, pp. 65-92) in order to support and enrich the presentation of my findings.

In the following literature outline, I discuss two different research perspectives on musical performance in HE adopted by previous studies: one educational and the other socio-cultural. I also consider the use of the framework of ‘communities of practice’ in research on music-making in formal and informal educational contexts.

Literature on musical performance in higher education institutions

Over the last two decades or so, musical performance as practised and/or experienced in higher education institutions (HEIs) has received increasing attention as a research topic (Rink, Gaunt & Williamon, 2017, p. xxv), primarily in studies within the fields of music education and psychology of music. The majority of these have considered HE musical performance from the perspective of Western art music studies in conservatoires and/or university music departments. Harald Jørgensen suggests this might be due to the fact that “[e]xcept for a few conservatoires that specialise in a specific musical genre (mostly jazz or folk music), Western ‘classical’ music dominates in the majority of higher music education institutions” (2014, p. 4).

Nevertheless, with the increase in the range, focus and content of music degrees on offer in the UK (Hewitt, 2009, p. 329; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [QAA], 2002, para. 2.2.6) and internationally (Bisschop Boele, 2007, para. 3.2.2; Dylan Smith, 2014; Lebler, Burt-Perkins & Carey, 2009; Virkkula, 2016, p. 27), more research attention has been given to musical performance in HE also from the perspective of a wider range of genres, including popular music, jazz and folk music (Creech et al., 2008; Hewitt, 2009; Papageorgi et al., 2010a, 2010b; Partti, Westerlund & Lebler, 2015; Welch et al., 2008).

Possibly because of the central role that the training of music practitioners (such as composers and performers) has traditionally held in conservatoires (cf. Bisschop Boele, 2007; Jørgensen, 2014, p. 3; Perkins, 2013, pp. 196-197; QAA, 2002, para. 2.2.1; 2008, para. 2.8), a considerable number of UK and international studies on HE 'classical' musical performance have been carried out within the conservatoire context (Venn, 2010, p. 4). On the other hand, there has been a growing interest in researching this discipline within a university music department context, particularly in the UK (Burwell, 2005, 2006, 2017; Burwell & Shipton, 2011; Haddon, 2011; Kokotsaki, Davidson & Coimbra, 2001; Krivenski, 2012; Venn, 2010; Young, Burwell & Pickup, 2003). Arguably, this could be a consequence of the growing convergence of the institutional missions of conservatoires and university music departments, which has resulted in musical performance becoming more established as an "integral element" (QAA, 2008, para. 2.9) of university music curricula (cf. Carruthers, 2008; Jørgensen, 2014, p. 3). Indeed, research on the study of music at university in the UK has confirmed the vital role that musical performance plays in students' university experience, specifically in terms of shaping students' self-conception as musicians and their experience of belonging and achievement in relation to their undergraduate music studies (Dibben, 2006; Pitts, 2002).

In spite of the differences in research context, what these studies have in common is that they tend to investigate HE musical performance from an educational perspective (Rink, Gaunt & Williamon, 2017, pp. xxv-xxvi). That is to say, they focus on the identification, exploration and/or evaluation of various aspects of the educational process of musical performance. Examples of this type of research focus are wide ranging and include: the relationship between practising and the development of performance expertise (Jørgensen, 2002; Volioti & Williamon, 2016); the exploration

of one-to-one teaching practices (Burwell, 2005, 2012; Gaunt, 2008; Purser, 2005) and the dynamics of power relations in one-to-one teaching (Gaunt, 2009, 2011); students' learning experiences (Burt & Mills, 2006; Papageorgi et al., 2010a, 2010b); alternative models of performance teaching (Daniel, 2004a; Haddon, 2011); formative and summative assessment of musical performance (Coimbra & Davidson, 2004; Krivenski, 2012; Monks, 2009).

A critique that has been directed towards this type of research is that, in exploring the teaching and learning of 'classical' musical performance in HE, the majority of these studies have focused on "the immediacies and practicalities of practising, rehearsing and performing" (Hunter & Broad, 2017, p. 356, note 3) and have not explicitly inquired into the "underlying premises" (Venn, 2010, p. 4) of the educational process. More specifically, the "musical, educational and social values" (Jørgensen, 2014, p. 5) that inform the educational process of HE musical performance and the possible influence on it of the "social, cultural and institutional contexts" (Triantafyllaki, 2005, p. 384) are not explored, but rather taken for granted. Thus, although this literature clarifies that musical performance studies at HE level should support students' development of performance expertise and/or equip students with lifelong learning skills, it does not make explicit the values and beliefs about performance and being/becoming a performer that students are enculturated into as a result of their studies in HEIs. Furthermore, this literature tends to consider elements of HE performance communities' practice (e.g., the one-to-one instrumental/vocal lesson; the practice session; or the assessment context, etc.) in isolation and/or focus on the experience of a specific type of performance community members (e.g. either the students or the tutors), rather than aim for a more holistic perspective of the performance educational process in HE.

There are, however, a few notable exceptions in the literature on HE 'classical' music studies. Henry Kingsbury's (1988) and Bruno Nettl's (1995) seminal ethnographic works explore Western art music values and beliefs as expressed through "social and cultural processes" (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 10) in higher music institutions in the USA. Kingsbury, for example, focuses on the concept of 'talent' as applied to performance students in a conservatoire context. He conceptualises 'talent' as a socially constructed label whose 'validity' depends on the authority of the individuals who have attributed it. For Kingsbury, 'talent' is the manifestation of a fundamental

“hierarchical inequality”, a social phenomenon that, he suggests, goes beyond the context of Western art music and can be experienced in Western culture at large (1988, p. 82). Nettl, on the other hand, presents the “musical and behavioural principles” that guide the population of a paradigmatic university ‘Music Building’ as deriving from two overarching beliefs: the authority of ‘classical’ composers (such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, humorously depicted as deities) who have been granted a ‘canonical’ status (1995, pp. 11-42); and the superior social hierarchy of performers in relation to the rest of the population in the ‘Music Building’, which Nettl illustrates through the aphorism “Those who can, do; others teach [or write books]” (p. 56, square brackets in the original).

Both studies undoubtedly provide valuable insights into some of the ‘classical’ musical performance practices in North American HEIs with attention to the values and beliefs embedded in them. Nevertheless, Kingsbury’s and Nettl’s works could be considered ethnographies of “Western art music ... as supplier of attitudes and values” (Jørgensen, 2014, p. 4; cf. Kingsbury, 1988, p. 14; Nettl, 1995, p. 3), rather than studies on the practices and value systems of HE ‘classical’ performance communities per se.

Another notable exception in the literature is Rosie Perkins’ case study of the ‘learning cultures’ in a UK conservatoire (2013). Perkins uses the lens of ‘learning cultures’ to “understand the intersections between culture and learning at the level of the conservatoire as an educational site” (p. 198). The author defines ‘learning cultures’ as cultural practices – conceptualised in Bourdieuan terms as the interaction of field, habitus and capital – through which students learn. Her findings point to four main characteristics of the conservatoire’s ‘learning cultures’: (1) the privileged position of “*specialised* performance” (p. 204, italics in the original) and the teaching/learning focus on becoming a specialised and ‘excellent’ performer, as opposed to a well-rounded musician; (2) proactive networking within the institution as a crucial component of students’ learning experience; (3) the hierarchical nature of the institution, illustrated through identity categories of “star” and “second rate” (pp. 205-206), and its contribution to students’ identity construction; (4) the shaping of students’ career expectations and plans or “vocational position taking” (pp. 206-208) and, thus, of students’ sense of self as potential professional practitioner.

There are some clear parallels between Perkins' research and the present study: both share the aim to "understand what *is* or *can* be learnt" (p. 198, italics in the original) through the exploration of participants' practices; and a desire to tease out the values and beliefs embedded in such practices. In Perkins' study, however, the overall aim is the identification and exploration of the dominant practices and values of a HE music institution as a whole and, as such, the research focus of her study is not specifically on a HE performance community and its practices.

Literature on music-making as participation in a community of practice

The framework of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) has been used in a number of studies on music-making in communities outside formal education. Some examples of these include research on: children's participation in communities of musical practice (for a review, see Barrett, 2005); community music as a form of meaningful musical practice and 'authentic' learning (Koopman, 2007); forms of collaborative music-making (such as an adult amateur jazz group, a youth choir and an online Irish traditional music web platform) as participation in specific communities' musical practices (Kenny, 2016).

A commonality among these studies is an emphasis on situated learning as a consequence of participation in the practices of communities which are not necessarily or explicitly educational. Thus, these studies highlight the potential for the development of competence in members of 'communities of practice' through legitimate peripheral participation (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, these studies support an understanding of 'communities of practice' as an effective lens for the analysis of issues in music-making contexts, such as those related to musical participation, negotiation of musical meaning and identity construction within musical communities.

To date, and to my knowledge, the conceptual framework of 'communities of practice' has not been widely used in the exploration of the practices of musical communities in formal education (cf. Kenny, 2016, p. 15). As far as HEIs are concerned, examples of studies that adopt this framework include research on: the learning practices of 'classical' piano students in a conservatoire context, which are conceptualised as a form of apprenticeship (Nielsen, 2006); the development of performance competence in conservatoire students through participation in popular and jazz music workshops

led by expert practitioners (Virkkula, 2016); musical styles as sets of normative practices that define specific communities of musical practices and into which music students can be inducted (Hewitt, 2009).

The above studies highlight how the adoption of the framework of ‘communities of practice’ in HE contexts has allowed researchers to move away from a narrow conception of learning based on cognitive (Nielsen, 2006) and teacher-centred (Virkkula, 2016) models, in favour of an understanding of learning as participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community of musical practitioners. Thus, these studies appear to support the use of the framework of ‘communities of practice’ as implemented in the current study. In other words, as a means to tease out the values and beliefs that inform the practices of a specific HE ‘classical’ musical performance community; and to explore the experience and understanding of musical performance in a HE context from a holistic perspective, that is, one that takes into consideration the whole range of community members (students, tutors and examiners) and of practices (e.g., one-to-one lessons, group classes, practice sessions, rehearsals, informal learning and/or feedback, assessments, etc.).

This study’s contribution to extant literature

Considering the gaps identified in the above literature, this study aims to bridge them by going beyond an investigation of the teaching and learning of HE musical performance and gaining an in-depth understanding of what musical performance and being/becoming a performer means (or comes to mean) to those who engage with it within a community of musical practice. In the current HE climate, the pursuit of “performing excellence as a self-evidently good thing for students” (Tregear et al., 2016, p. 283) has become increasingly debatable. Furthermore, in a university context, the pursuit of performing excellence tends to be considered less appropriate than the development of skills that could help performance students become “independent and reflective practitioner[s]” (Burwell, 2012, p. 217). As such, a study focused on what members of a HE performance community believe and experience to be valuable about musical performance could contribute to the debate with relevant evidence-based knowledge. Moreover, its findings could help further our understanding of musical performance in HE and, consequently, help shape its practices and define its role in current and future university music programmes.

1.2. Overall aim and goal of the study

In light of the gaps identified in the literature outline, the overall aim of this study is to explore the meaning of ‘classical’ musical performance (performance of Western art music) in the context of an undergraduate music degree at a university music department in the UK. This meaning is investigated from an “*emic* perspective” (Stake, 1995, p. 20, italics in the original), that is, through the exploration of how the students and tutors who participated in this study experienced and made sense of musical performance in the context of the performance modules of a BMus degree. In focusing on my participants’ experiences, the goal is to tease out the values and beliefs that they held in relation to musical performance and being/becoming a performer.

This study adopts the conceptual framework of ‘communities of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) as a means of defining the boundaries of the case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008, pp. 546-547) and as a lens through which to explore the participants’ meaning-making process.³ Etienne Wenger (Farnsworth, Kleanthous & Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p. 5) defines a ‘community of practice’ as “a learning partnership related to a domain of practice”, where the term ‘domain’ is used to indicate “the area in which a community claims to have legitimacy to define competence” (p. 5). The individuals that form a community of practice “share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and ... deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). In the context of this framework, practice is understood as “a set of socially defined ways of doing things in a specific domain” and can include approaches and standards that guide the actions of community members, as well as artefacts and styles of thinking and behaving within the community (pp. 38-39).

Participation of members in the practices of their community can vary along a continuum that ranges from peripheral (as it might be in the case of a ‘newcomer’) to full (as in the case of an ‘old-timer’ or expert in the relevant domain) (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 29-37), depending on the degree of competence characterising such

³ This conceptual framework is aligned with the overall theoretical perspective of this study, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

participation (Wenger, 1998, p. 238). Learning and displaying (varying degrees of) competence is understood as “an evolving form of membership” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Thus, participation is a “form of belonging” to the community and a form of ongoing identity construction as community member (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). At the same time, participation shapes how community members interpret what they do (p. 4) and engenders community members’ “experience of meaning” (p. 52). It is important to notice that participation in shared practices does not imply the presence of “harmony or collaboration” (p. 85) among community members; neither does it imply that community members share the same beliefs and/or interpretations of their social world (p. 84).

In view of the above definition of ‘communities of practice’, the boundaries of the present case study are set by two factors: (1) the ‘domain of practice’, that is, ‘classical’ musical performance as an area of study on the undergraduate performance modules of a university music department in the UK; and (2) the individuals who participate in the practices related to this area of study, that is, the members of what I call the ‘formal performance community’: undergraduate students taking the performance modules; the instrumental/vocal tutors supporting the modules through the provision of one-to-one lessons; and the academic tutors designing, coordinating, teaching on the performance modules and assessing performance students. Furthermore, considering the above definition, the use of ‘communities of practice’ as conceptual lens for the exploration of the present case study enables an understanding of participation in the community’s practice as the twofold process of “*negotiation of meaning*” (Wenger, 1998, p. 53, italics in the original) and of identity construction as member of a community of practice (p. 145). That is to say, through the conceptual lens of ‘communities of practice’, the exploration of the practices that students and tutors on the performance modules participate in becomes a key to gaining an understanding of what performance and being/becoming a performer means to said students and tutors.

Taking into consideration the overall aim and goal of this study, three overarching research questions have guided the research process:

1. What is the shared repertoire of domain practices of the formal performance community that members participate in?

2. How is participation in these practices constructing community members' understanding of 'classical' musical performance?
3. How is participation in these practices constructing community members' understanding of being/becoming a 'classical' performer?

1.3. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 (the current chapter) introduces this study by explaining the motivations behind it. It situates the study through an outline of relevant extant literature and identifies the gaps it aims to bridge. Finally, this chapter also presents the study's overall research aim and goal and identifies the questions that have guided the research process.

Chapter 2 details and justifies the theoretical framework of this study and the research orientation and methods adopted. Furthermore, it discusses the research design, including the ethical considerations related to participant recruitment and data handling, as well as data construction and analysis and presentation of the findings. The chapter also provides details of the case study and reflects on some possible limitations of the research design.

Chapters 3-8 present the findings of this study. After considering the participants' views of why undergraduate music students may decide to maintain their membership of the formal performance community beyond their first year of studies (Chapter 3), the thesis moves onto an exploration of the community members' shared repertoire of "doing things" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83) and talking/thinking about them that was part of the community's practice. The focus has been placed on elements of the shared repertoire that participants experienced as most meaningful: engaging with the musical score (Chapter 4); shifting one's approach to (and conception of) music-making from playing/singing to performing during the preparation process and the actual performance act (Chapter 5); listening to performances as experienced by different members of the community: students (Chapter 6), tutors and examiners (Chapter 7); community members' experience of the influence of the wider context of the BMus Music programme on members' participation in the community's practice (Chapter 8).

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by providing a synthesis of the findings in relation to how musical performance and being/becoming a performer was experienced and understood by the participants in this study. This chapter also considers some of the implications of the findings for musical performance at university and how these may affect the current and future role and practice of musical performance in university music programmes.

2. Methodology

Research activities are underpinned by specific “assumptions about the nature of the world, how we can gain knowledge of it and the purpose of enquiry” (Hammersley, 2013, p. 15). Such assumptions inform all aspects of a research project: from the topic and aims of inquiry, to the research paradigm and design, such as the type of data to be ‘collected’ and data ‘collection’/analysis methods. Therefore, it is vital to make one’s theoretical assumptions as a researcher explicit so as to support the “quality” and “credibility” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 18) of one’s study and provide a clear philosophical framework within which the study in question can be interpreted and evaluated. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to clarify the methodological position I have adopted in the current study and discuss the practical steps I have taken in carrying out my research.

In the first section of this chapter (2.1), I consider the ontological and epistemological framework – and correlated research paradigm – of this study and reflect on my role and position as researcher. In the second section (2.2), I provide a detailed description of the research design and of the case study. Furthermore, I consider the appropriateness of the design in relation to the aim of this study and its overall philosophical framework (cf. Denscombe, 2010, pp. 99-137).

2.1. Theoretical perspective

2.1.1. Ontological position: social constructionism

As I have stated in the Introduction (Chapter 1, section 1.2), the intention of this study is to enable a multi-perspective understanding of what performance and being/becoming a performer means to the members of a ‘classical’ performance community in the context of a UK university music department. In order to fulfil this intention, I chose to adopt a research orientation that centres on the exploration of the meaning-making process that participants engage with when interacting with one another and participating in the practices of the community. Both the overall aim of this study and its focus on participants’ interactions and practices are informed by a view of social reality as being socially constructed.

‘Social constructionism’ escapes a specific definition (Burr, 2015, p. 2). Rather, it can be seen as a broad umbrella term that includes some key assumptions: a critical stance towards a ‘taken-for-granted’ view of the world; the belief that our understanding of the world is culturally and historically specific and that individuals’ meaning-making is rooted in social interactions; a conceptualisation of knowledge as deriving from viewing the world from particular perspectives and/or traditions of understanding; and, consequently, a rejection of the positivist idea of ‘objective reality’ (Burr, 2015, pp. 1-12; Gergen, 2015, pp. 1-13). From a constructionist perspective, social reality is “something that is constantly being produced and re-produced; something that exists only as long as people persist in creating it through their everyday actions, words and beliefs” (Denscombe 2010:119).

2.1.2. Epistemological position: interpretivism

A constructionist view of the social world, such as the one adopted in this study, calls for interpretivism, an epistemological position that regards knowledge as the result of individuals actively ‘interpreting’ or ‘making sense’ of their environment and of themselves (Hammersley, 2013, p. 26).

From an interpretivist perspective, reality is considered to have “no inherent properties, no order, no structure” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 119). The “seemingly natural categories” (Burr, 2015, p. 3) through which human beings learn about the world are viewed as being socially produced. What we know about the world is the result of interpretations influenced by “distinctive cultural orientations” (Hammersley, 2013, p. 26) and of viewpoints that reflect “vested interests” (Burr, 2015, p. 9). As such, knowledge and meanings are not something that individuals ‘discover’; rather, these are constructed (Denscombe, 2010, p. 119) and constantly negotiated through social interactions (Gergen, 2015, pp. 4-6).

The implications of interpretivism for scholarly research in general – and for the current study – are that research data should be viewed not so much as ‘collected’, but as ‘constructed’ – an expression which I will use from now onwards when referring to this research phase of the study (Richards, 2014, pp. 35-62). Furthermore, knowledge should be understood as actively co-constructed by both researcher and participants. The interactions between researcher and her participants, as Renée Spencer, Julia Pryce, and Jill Walsh explain, are central to capturing the participants’ “inherently

contextualized experiences” (2014, p. 83). As such, issues of validity of the findings are reconceptualised: from a focus on the elimination of bias in the data analysis and presentation of one’s findings, to a focus on supporting the “trustworthiness of the findings” (p. 83). The latter is implemented through the inclusion and documentation of multiple perspectives on the areas investigated (p. 83), an approach which I have aimed for throughout all stages of this study, including the presentation of the findings in the following chapters of this thesis.

2.1.3. Research paradigm: qualitative approach

My investigative focus has steered me as a researcher towards a qualitative research paradigm (cf. Denscombe, 2010, pp. 132-133). Just as with social constructionism, ‘qualitative research’ is an umbrella term that includes a wide range of research methods. The commonality among these methods is that they facilitate the exploration of social phenomena in ‘naturalistic settings’ and help unpack the meaning that people give to “activities, situations, events, or artefacts” (Leavy, 2014, p. 2). As such, I considered that a qualitative research paradigm would be most suitable to the specific focus of this study – how members of the performance community create meaning and construct specific aspects of the social world they live in – and its correlated constructionist/interpretivist ontological/epistemological position. In the current study, I have used a range of ethnographically-informed methods during the data construction – participant observation, in-depth interview, focus group interview and document analysis (cf. Leavy, 2014, pp. 3-4) – which I discuss in detail in the following section (2.2).

A qualitative approach to social enquiry is generally characterised by a “flexible and data-driven research design” (Hammersley, 2013, p. 12) and involves a preference for verbal/visual data and text. The argument in favour of these types of data – as opposed to number-based data – is that they enable the qualitative researcher to ‘capture’ (some of) the nuances and complexities of the social world, thus facilitating a more in-depth understanding of social phenomena (Denscombe, 2010, p. 133). Researchers who adopt a qualitative paradigm are generally not interested in testing pre-defined hypotheses, but rather they aim to produce rich descriptions and develop explanations (Hammersley, 2013, p. 12), an aim to which I subscribe and which I

have strived to make evident in the presentation and discussion of this study's findings.

2.1.4. My role and position as researcher

Within a qualitative paradigm, the researcher is considered “the primary instrument or medium through which the research is conducted” (Lofland, 2006, p. 3). This is because the researcher is intimately involved in the construction and analysis of her data, with the consequence that these research aspects are inevitably shaped by the researcher's social and personal characteristics (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 55; Hammersley, 2013, p. 13; Leavy, 2014, p. 1). Reflexivity is, therefore, deemed a vital part of the research process (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 85; Hammersley, 2013, p. 13; Leavy, 2014, p. 5) as a way for the researcher to acknowledge her “interests, positions and assumptions” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 188) and allow her reader to evaluate how and to what extent these have influenced the research process.

In the current study, I have used memoing as a way of practising reflexivity throughout both data construction and data analysis stages of the research (cf. Charmaz, 2006, p. 131; O'Reilly, 2012, pp. 104-105; Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 6). Among other things, memoing has helped me become aware of, and reflect on, the ways in which my positions in relation to my participants have potentially shaped my study, “in an awareness of the socially-constructed nature of social research” (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 62).

At the time I started my research project, I had been a member – that is, an ‘insider’ (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Rice, 2008) – of the performance community I focus on in this study for over 10 years, both as a piano tutor and as a solo/ensemble performer. In spite of this, thus far I had felt that my engagement with the community's practices had been rather limited: I was not involved in any group teaching activities or assessments, let alone any decision-making regarding the performance modules' educational aims and objectives (cf. Gaunt, 2011; Venn, 2010). Furthermore, my interactions with other members of the community had been sporadic, with the exception of my own piano students and a few colleagues.

At the beginning of the current study, I took on additional roles within the music department and the performance community: I became a performance tutor and the

co-ordinator of the first- and second-year performance modules. This gave me the opportunity to interact with the vast majority of the performance community's members (students and tutors) in a variety of contexts: group classes, assessments, formal and informal planning meetings, etc. The experiences afforded by my new roles gradually enabled me to participate more fully in the practices of the community. At the same time, quite disconcertingly, I found that thanks to my new roles I had to renegotiate my identity as community member (Wenger, 1998, pp. 149-163) because I could not be identified 'just' as a pianist and instrumental tutor any longer. The process of identity renegotiation became even more complex as I started my data construction stage and community members became aware of my roles as 'researcher' and 'academic'. These roles made me something of an 'outsider' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Rice, 2008) to those members of the community who identified themselves exclusively as 'practitioners' or 'performers'.

It could be argued that the experiences that I have just described positioned me along an insider-outsider continuum in relation to my participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Hockey, 1993; Mercer, 2007). Depending on the contexts in which the interactions with my participants took place, the values and beliefs that particular topics of discussion would elicit and existing power relation dynamics within the community (Mercer, 2007, p. 4), my position on the insider-outsider continuum would shift. For example, when interacting with tutors or students who knew me well as a piano or performance tutor and perceived me as being sympathetic to, and interested in, their views and experiences, there was a shared sense that we all belonged to the same community. This helped me build up a good rapport with these participants and created an atmosphere of trust during the research process (cf. Mercer, 2007, p. 7). Some tutor participants, however, positioned me primarily as a researcher during our interactions and in spite of the fact that contributions to the study were entirely on a voluntary basis,⁴ these participants appeared less comfortable to share their experiences and views with me.

Undoubtedly, the fact that I was a full member of the community facilitated my access to the research setting and to participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 10; Mercer, 2007, p. 7) – as well as enabling me to become a participant observer

⁴ I discuss details related to participant recruitment later on in this chapter (section 2.2.3).

(DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, pp. 1-5) – and provided some “common ground from which to begin the research” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). On the other hand, reflexivity helped me become aware of the fact that belonging to the community I was researching into made it challenging at times for me to “make the familiar strange” (Acker, 2001, p. 5). In other words, on some occasions I found it difficult to create enough distance between myself and the focus of my research in order to make explicit some of the assumptions I took for granted (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 9). I also realised that because of my closeness to the focus of my research, at times I found myself “going native” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 22), which would prevent me from seeing aspects of the community’s practices “as worthy of analysis rather than as taken-for-granted features of social life” (Acker, 2001, p. 5). Such examples of reflexivity will become evident in certain moments of the presentation of the findings.

2.2. Research design

The specific design of this study is ethnographically-informed and, as such, it remained flexible over the course of the study, gradually developing as the research progressed (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 11). The design is intimately connected to the ontological and epistemological positions described in the previous section of this chapter as well as to the specific aim identified in Chapter 1 (section 1.2). I start this section (2.2.1) by discussing the overall research approach adopted – that of a case study – and the ethical considerations in relation to the recruitment of participants. I then describe the case study (2.2.2), that is, I introduce the community of practice I focus on in the present thesis and situate it within the broader context of an undergraduate music degree in a UK university music department. This is followed (2.2.3) by a description of the methods I employed for data construction and for data analysis.⁵ I conclude the chapter (2.2.4) by reflecting on two possible limitations of the overall research design.

⁵ This study includes secondary analysis (Thorne, 2004) of the data from a separate qualitative project carried out in the same research context and which focused on the same case study: ‘Feeding back in musical performance: exploring feedback practice in relation to students’ and tutors’ learning and teaching experience’ (Krivenski, 2012). The project was funded through the PALATINE (Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Innovation Network) Development Award Scheme (HEA, n.d.).

2.2.1. A single-case study

In order to fulfil the research aim of this study (discussed in Chapter 1.2), I decided to adopt a case study approach. This choice was motivated by the fact that this research approach is acknowledged to promote a holistic and in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under investigation and to enable its exploration within ‘natural settings’ (Donmoyer, 2009; Hammersley, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2009; Myers, 2000; Stake, 1995, 2005).

During the very first stage of data construction, I adopted a ‘collective case study’ design (Stake, 1995, p. 4). This included three different HE institutions as case studies – two universities and one conservatoire – which I believed would provide a representative variety of research settings and facilitate the construction of rich data. A few months after gaining access to all three institutions and entering the field as a participant observer (cf. O’Reilly, 2012, pp. 86-115), I realised that in order to explore the phenomenon of meaning-making in HE musical performance communities in a way that did justice to the complexity and idiosyncrasies of the area of inquiry I would need to narrow down my research to a single-case study. Therefore, I chose to focus on the ‘classical’ musical performance community in the context of the institution where I worked. I considered that being an ‘insider’ would facilitate my access to participants as well as provide me with a richness of research opportunities that would support a holistic, in-depth approach to the study.

The choice of focusing my research efforts on a single case was supported by literature on qualitative research, which suggested that a single-case study approach was more conducive to an in-depth and multi-perspective exploration of a specific phenomenon than a larger case study (Hammersley, 2013, pp. 13-14; Myers, 2000, p. 5). As Martyn Hammersley and Roger Gomm put it, “the larger the case, other things being equal, the less depth of investigation is possible” (2009, p. 15, note 2). Margaret Myers also suggests that through a smaller case study approach it is possible to “gain a more personal understanding of the phenomenon and the results can potentially contribute valuable knowledge” (2000, p. 5).

Robert Stake and Bent Flyvbjerg argue that what is most valuable about the type of knowledge that single-case research can provide is its “concrete, context-dependent” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224) quality, which enables an “extension” (Stake, 2009, p. 4) of

the reader's experiences – that is, it enables vicarious experiences. By giving access to these vicarious experiences, Robert Donmoyer elaborates further, single-case study research can “enrich the repertoire of social constructions available to practitioners and others” (2009, p. 8) and, as such, “expand the range of interpretations [of a social phenomenon] available to the research consumer” (p. 19). This expansion of the range of interpretations can result, according to Donmoyer, in the acquisition of a richer, multi-perspective understanding of the researched phenomenon, which is the overall aim of the current study in regard to musical performance in HE.

2.2.2. Description of the case study

In order to contextualise my analysis of the data presented in the following chapters (3-8), in this section I describe the type of university and music department within which the community of practice I focus on in this thesis was active. I also define the boundaries of this community of practice by identifying its domain of practice and setting, which separated it from other performance communities active within the same music department. Lastly, I specify the composition of the community of practice by identifying the types of community members and the various categories of membership.

The music department in this case study belongs to a research-intensive university college which was a member of the ‘1994 Group’ (“The 1994 Group”, n.d.) until the group was dissolved in 2013 (Kennedy, 2013). This institution is one of approximately 80 in the UK offering Music degrees. The department boasts an approach to the study of music which maximises students’ “creative and academic potential” and encourages their “ambition and independent thinking” (“Music Department”, 2012). When talking about the HEI to which the department belongs, participants (particularly students) described it as “less traditional” in terms of curriculum content than other universities in the UK, a place with the reputation of being “creative” and “eccentric”.

At the time when this study was carried out, there were three undergraduate music programmes on offer in this department: BMus (Hons) Music, BMus (Hons) Popular Music and BMus/BSc (Hons) Music Computing. The first two programmes offered the study of musical performance as part of the degree to students enrolled on one of these programme's performance modules. These programmes also provided extra-

curricular (i.e., non-formal (Davidson & Broughton; Wise, James & Rink, 2017)) opportunities for performance that did not require students to be enrolled on a performance module.⁶

In light of the conceptual framework of ‘communities of practice’ I introduced in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), it could be said that in this music department several performance communities co-existed in parallel, whose memberships and practice were determined by two main factors: (1) the genres and styles musicians engaged with (cf. Hewitt, 2009); and (2) the setting – formal or non-formal – within which these communities were active. On the BMus Music programme, the practice of performance communities in both formal and non-formal settings centred on “classical music from all periods” (Music, 2008, p. 2). On the Popular Music programme, the practice of performance communities in both formal and non-formal settings centred on “popular music in its many forms” (p. 9).

Thus, the community of practice I focus on in the current study is defined by (1) the type of music that its members engaged with – ‘classical’ music – and (2) the type of setting that shaped the community’s practice and determined its memberships – the formal setting of the BMus Music programme’s performance modules. More specifically, this community was composed of all the students enrolled on one of the three ‘classical’ performance modules (one for each year of undergraduate studies) as well as of the members of staff who held a teaching and/or assessing role on these modules. It should be noticed that the first-year performance module (Performance and Critical Listening) was compulsory for all first-year students; whereas the second-year module (Classical Performance) and third-year module (Advanced Performance) were elective options.

Henceforth, for practical reasons, I refer to the ‘classical’ performance community active within the formal setting of the performance modules on the BMus Music programme as the formal performance community or the performance community or, more simply, the community. Additionally, when referring to one or more of these performance modules and/or to any individuals active on these modules (performance

⁶ For example, on the BMus Music programme, students could participate in the music-making activities of student ensemble groups, such as the Contemporary Music Ensemble, the Chamber Choir, the Sinfonia Orchestra; and on the BMus Popular Music (PM) programme, students could sign up for open-mic gigs curated by PM students.

students, performance tutors and/or performance examiners) I omit the qualifying words ‘on the BMus Music programme’ unless required for clarity purposes.

Taking into account the above definition of the formal performance community, it is possible to identify four types of community members and three categories of membership or participation,⁷ according to the member’s role as well as “experience and ... display of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 152) within the community. The types of members and categories of membership are as follows: (1) the performance students – the undergraduate students taking the performance modules, characterised by peripheral participation; (2) the performance tutors – academic tutors coordinating the performance modules, teaching performance group classes and assessing performance students, characterised by full participation; (3) the instrumental/vocal tutors – who provided one-to-one lessons, also characterised by full participation; and (4) the academic tutors – permanent members of staff who were occasionally part of the performance examination panels, whose participation was exclusively on the boundary of the community of practice. The rest of this section describes the types of members and the categories of membership/participation in greater detail.

(1) Performance students: while this study was carried out, there would be typically around 30 students enrolled onto the first year performance module, with numbers dropping down to 20-25 on the second year’s Classical Performance and to 15-20 on the third year’s Advanced Classical Performance. Performance students were required to specialise in one instrument throughout their degree and for the duration of their performance studies they would have one-to-one lessons with the same instrumental/vocal tutor they were assigned to in their first year. Each academic year, students were expected to demonstrate their progress through the preparation of three assessed performances.⁸ In terms of the ‘communities of practice’ framework, performance students’ membership of the formal performance community could be defined as being characterised by peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in

⁷ As discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 29-37; Wenger, 1998, p. 238) theorise membership of a ‘community of practice’ as a form of participation in the community’s practices.

⁸ In all three performance modules, the first assessment (10-12 minutes of music) was characterised by a focus on ‘solo’ instrumental/vocal technical elements (e.g., scales, arpeggios, studies); the second assessment (about 15 minutes of music) was on ensemble music; and the last assessment (15-30 minutes of music, depending on the year of study) focused on ‘solo’ performance, but had no specific repertoire requirements and was open to the public.

other words, by “the prospect of becoming full participants in its practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 154) through the development of competence.

(2) Instrumental/vocal tutors: the tutors who delivered the one-to-one lessons were instrumental specialists with a background as professional performers. These specialists were contracted on an hourly basis and were often referred to as ‘visiting tutors’ (VTs) as they were not permanent members of staff. Nevertheless, at the time this study was carried out, the majority of the instrumental/vocal tutors who participated in this study had been teaching in the music department for 10 years or longer. The number of contact hours that instrumental/vocal tutors were allocated per student each year depended on the student’s year of study.⁹ Within the framework of ‘communities of practice’, the instrumental/vocal tutors could be described as ‘expert’ members (Wenger, 1998, p. 154) of the formal performance community.

(3) Performance tutors: the co-ordination of the performance modules and the group teaching (lectures, seminars and coaching sessions) on these modules were carried out by performance tutors. These were academic (and permanent) members of staff with a background as professional performers. Performance tutors would also take on the role of examiners: examination panels were generally composed of two performance tutors. Senior performance tutors would have the task of allocating each performance student to an instrumental/vocal tutor. Within the framework of ‘communities of practice’, the performance tutors could be described as ‘expert’ and ‘full’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 154) members of the formal performance community.

(4) Academic tutors: when workload or timetabling issues made it impossible for two performance tutors to sit on the same examination panel, a tutor who was a permanent member of staff but did not have a professional background as a performer would join one of the performance tutors as co-examiner. Members of the formal performance community referred to this type of examiner as ‘academic tutor’. From the perspective of the ‘communities of practice’ framework, the academic tutors who co-examined performance assessments could be described as operating exclusively on the boundary of the formal performance community (Wenger, 1998, p. 104).

⁹ While this study was carried out, the instrumental tuition allowance was as follows: 12 hours for first-year students; 14 hours for second-year students; 17 hours for third-year students.

2.2.3. Ethical considerations and participant recruitment

Before seeking permission to ‘enter the field’ from the specific institution(s) I had chosen for my study, I applied for ethics approval to the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sheffield, which was granted. As my research design evolved, I submitted the details of the amended project to the same committee and this version of the study was also granted approval.

Senior members of staff in the relevant institution(s) facilitated my initial entry to the research setting(s). I was invited to present my research project to potential participants (tutors and students) by circulating a letter that explained the aim and objectives of the project, the research methods which would be used and asked for volunteers for interviews. The letter also provided my contact details so that people who were interested in the project and had any comments/queries could get in touch with me. In the early stage of the study, I also had the opportunity to talk about the project and introduce myself to some potential participants in person.

The participants who collaborated with me on this project did so on a voluntary basis. I asked for their verbal and written informed consent to their participation in this study. Information on participants’ demographics was collected at the same time as participants gave their written consent.¹⁰ The participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any point if they so wished. I was careful to explain that if they decided to withdraw, there would be no negative consequences. This was a point which I felt was particularly important to highlight in the context of my own institution, where the existing power-relation dynamics between myself and potential participants might have been of concern and prevented students and/or tutors either from participating or from leaving the study if they so desired (cf. Mercer, 2007, p. 4). Furthermore, I assured my participants that I would follow the Data Protection Act (1998) for data storage and that participants’ contributions to the final write up would be anonymised. In this thesis, when quoting or referring to my participants I have used pseudonyms – and in some cases I have also altered some personal details that would have enabled the identification of certain individuals – in order to protect my participants’ anonymity. Additionally, when referring to material originating from the

¹⁰ I provide a breakdown of the information on participants’ demographics in Appendix 1. For an overview of participants’ specialism, see Appendix 3.

HEI in this case study (such as prospectuses and websites), I have removed the name of the institution to further protect my participants' anonymity.

2.2.4. Data construction

The data in this study was constructed using a range of qualitative research methods: participant observations (and corresponding fieldnotes), 'intensive' interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. As Robert Stake suggests, the adoption of a variety of qualitative methods within a study can enable "a process of multiple perceptions" (2005, p. 454) of the phenomenon under investigation and, through systematic comparison of the data – an approach I adopted – it can lead to triangulation (Richards, 2014, p. 26). Within the qualitative paradigm, triangulation is considered relevant as a process that can help clarify the meaning of the data as well as identify different ways in which a phenomenon is being experienced and understood (Stake, 2005, p. 454).

The data construction process drew on the Grounded Theory strategy of 'theoretical sampling' (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 96-113; Urquhart, 2013, pp. 64-68), in which initial analysis of data would guide future data construction in terms of participant samples and research focus. For example, after interviewing several members of the formal performance community (students and tutors) and analysing the data thus constructed, certain resulting categories led me to wonder whether students who had left the community – i.e., had decided not to continue their performance studies in the context of the undergraduate degree and, therefore, were no longer participating in the community's practices – and tutors who were only marginally participating in the community's practices (Wenger, 1998, pp. 165-167) – i.e., academic tutors who occasionally sat on performance examination panels – might make sense of musical performance in a different way from community members with peripheral or full participation. This led me to include different samples of participants in my research and expand the focus of my investigation.

In the following subsections, I discuss each of the research methods employed to construct the data used in this study.

2.2.4.1. Participant observation and fieldnotes

Although fieldnotes resulting from participant observation were an important source of data in the present study, I was very selective in my note-taking (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 101) due to the tension I experienced between my positions as 'insider' (active member of the performance community) and as 'outsider' (researcher).¹¹ Consequently, I took notes about casual interactions or events that took place during my normal workday only when they struck me as being particularly significant to my research.¹² I also took notes about performance events I had planned to observe formally. For informal participant observations, I generally carried around a small notebook where I could jot down a quick description or some keywords that later on would trigger my memory when writing up my notes (p. 101). As for the formal observation sessions, these were audio recorded using a small, unobtrusive digital recorder. However, I also used my research diary to take note of any initial analytical insights triggered by the observation session (p. 104) as well as of as many details as I could – such as the body language used by students and/or tutors, the placement of people and/or objects in the teaching space, etc. – that would complement and contextualise the audio recording.

2.2.4.2. 'Intensive' interviews¹³

The majority of the data used in this study was constructed through in-depth or 'intensive' interviews, in other words, guided conversations that elicit the "participant's interpretation of his or her experience" and allow an "in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). As a research method, qualitative interviews are considered "the main road to multiple realities" (Stake, 1995, p. 64) and, thus, a fruitful method in interpretive inquiry.

Most of the interviews in this study are individual, although on a few occasions, when participants suggested it or found it more convenient, I also carried out interviews with two participants at the same time. All interviews took place at a mutually agreed time and location – usually a quiet room in the music department – and lasted between approximately half an hour and an hour and a half, depending on the

¹¹ For a discussion of my role and position as researcher, see section 2.1.4 of the current chapter.

¹² I took fieldnotes from the beginning of the research process (October 2009) until the end of the data construction stage (June 2013)

¹³ I provide an overview of participation in interviews in Appendix 2.

participants' time availability and the extent to which they were keen to share their experiences of, and viewpoints on, the performance community's practices. Interestingly, some of the longest interviews were with student participants who relished talking about what musical performance meant to them and reflecting on their experience of performance in HE – as they told me, they had never had the opportunity to think much about it before – and, in the words of one participant, found the interview a “mind-opening experience”.

The interview ‘guides’ that I developed when preparing the interviews (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 130-134) evolved over the course of the study. Early interview ‘guides’ were characterised by very general, exploratory questions that elicited descriptions of practices and interactions related to the performance modules that participants found meaningful and/or significant. The breadth of the topics allowed for unanticipated, ‘insider’ narratives – what Robert Stake defines as “*emic issues*” (1995, p. 20, italics in the original) – to emerge around the practice of evaluating performance. This prompted me to develop ‘guides’ for the interviews I carried out in the following stage of the project that were narrower in topic. For example, the majority of the questions focused on the participants’ experience of giving and/or receiving feedback; nevertheless, the nature of these questions was still exploratory.

For the final batch of interviews I developed ‘guides’ which encouraged the participants to explore a variety topics. For example, I encouraged them to share their perception of the performance modules’ ethos or of the relationship between the performance modules and other modules on the degree. I chose these topics specifically with the purpose of constructing data that would help me elaborate and refine some of the analytical categories I had obtained thus far.

All interviews were audio recorded – resulting in almost 32 and a half hours of material – and subsequently transcribed following a ‘verbatim’ approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Although transcribing interviews decontextualises the live social interaction due to the loss of features such as body language, voice intonation, pauses, etc. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 178), in the interview transcripts I attempted to capture some of the verbal nuances through the use of specific symbols. Whenever relevant, I also added descriptions of specific gestures or body language based on the notes taken during each interview.

2.2.4.3. Focus group interviews¹⁴

I chose to use focus group interviews as one of the research methods in the study because it could potentially facilitate the construction of rich data in a relatively short amount of time. More specifically, my aim in adopting this method was to explore and understand the emic issue of feeding back that had emerged from early ‘intensive’ interviews. Thus, the purpose of the focus groups was to capture differences in practices, perceptions, values and beliefs in relation to feedback among members of the performance community who had different kinds of participation in the community (cf. Wenger, 1998, pp. 152-158): students, instrumental/vocal tutors and performance tutors. As Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey suggest, group discussions specifically among individuals who have some characteristics and/or experiences in common can facilitate self-disclosure (Krueger & Casey, 2009, pp. 4-6). As such, I looked for volunteers among each undergraduate year-group of students as well as among instrumental/vocal tutors and performance tutors and conducted a total of 5 focus group interviews.

Contrary to how questions are handled in the context of ‘intensive’ interviews, questions in focus group interviews are “carefully predetermined and sequenced” (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 7). Once I developed the interview ‘guides’ for the different groups, I was careful to follow them consistently so as to facilitate the process of comparison and contrast of the data constructed from each focus group.

Depending on the dynamics within each focus group (more than on the number of participants) and my ability to moderate the group conversation, focus groups lasted approximately between one hour and twenty minutes and two and a half hours. The audio recordings of these interviews resulted in almost 9 and a half hours of material, which was transcribed following the same approach previously described for the ‘intensive’ interview research method.

2.2.4.4. Document analysis

The data constructed through participant observation and interviews was supplemented by the analysis of “extant text” (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 37-38) in the form of departmental documentation available to, and relevant for, members of the

¹⁴ I provide an overview of participation in focus groups in Appendix 2.

performance community whose practices this study explores. As the aim of this study was to explore my participants' experience and understanding of musical performance in HE, rather than gain an institutional perspective of it, my analysis of 'extant text' included only documents that were discussed or referred to by my participants. The specific documents I took into consideration were: the prospectus that provided an introductory description of the music department (Music, 2008) and, more specifically, of the undergraduate music programmes available to potential students – BMus (Hons) Music (to which the performance modules considered in this study were part of), BMus (Hons) Popular Music and BMus/BSc (Hons) Music Computing; the pamphlet describing module options for BMus Music students finishing their first or second year of studies; and the 'Marking criteria for classical performance' used in the context of the undergraduate performance modules (see Appendix 4).

The analysis of 'extant text' allowed me to explore what meaning – if any – the above-mentioned documents held for my participants. Furthermore, it provided data on participants' perceptions of official discourses surrounding music-making and the teaching and learning of 'classical' performance. Lastly, it allowed me to gain an insight into issues related to information access and intradepartmental communication in relation to the formal performance community's practices.

2.2.5. Data analysis and writing up

All the data constructed through the research methods discussed above were analysed through Thematic Analysis (TA), a method that Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke indicate as compatible with a constructionist/interpretivist theoretical framework (2006, p. 78). TA enabled me to identify, analyse and provide a detailed account of "patterns" or "themes" (p. 79) across all the data related to the main aim of this study: gaining an in-depth and multi-perspective understanding of the meaning of performance and of being/becoming a performer in a HE context.

The analytic phases of this study took place in parallel with the data construction. Thus, initial analysis of specific data items informed future data construction through the application of 'theoretical sampling' (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 96-113; Urquhart, 2013, pp. 64-68).¹⁵ I started the analysis process by immersing myself in the data through

¹⁵ I discuss 'theoretical sampling' in section 2.2.4 of the current chapter.

repeated readings of data items (e.g., interview transcripts, fieldnotes, etc.). Throughout the ‘data immersion’, I actively searched for ‘meanings’ and ‘patterns’ while trying to retain a sense of whole data items. Following this phase, I conducted initial coding being careful to keep it grounded in the data, that is, creating codes that defined what I was seeing in the data (cf. Charmaz, 2006, pp. 46-48). Using QSR NVivo software as a tool to assist the analytical process (Bazeley, 2007, pp. 2-3), I gradually synthesised larger segments of the data, creating ‘focused coding’ (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 57-60), that is, coding that was more conceptual and went beyond a mere description of the data. In the following phase of the analysis, I reviewed the conceptual codes (and the corresponding relevant data extracts collated under these codes) and identified the main themes and sub-themes and how they fit together in the “overall story they tell about the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92).

Writing was an integral part of the analytical process and each phase was supported by coding memos in which I would reflect on the process and take note of possible ways in which I could develop my coding (Richards, 2014, pp. 91-93). The final phase of the analysis took place during the writing up of the findings, in which I refined the themes and sub-themes further through a process of dialogue with relevant literature. During this phase I also used data extracts (quotations from interviews, fieldnotes and documents) to illustrate and support my analytical narrative while keeping it grounded in the data. In doing so I strived to find a balance between contextualising the quotations without compromising the anonymity of the participants (pp. 217-222).

2.2.6. Limitations of this design

In spite of the recent popularity of the case study as research method (Hammersley & Gomm, 2009, p. 2), this approach to qualitative inquiry has often been criticised as being limited because findings obtained through this method – particularly from single-case studies – are not easily ‘generalizable’ (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2009, p. 2). In other words, conclusions drawn from case study research may not result in “assertions of *enduring* value that are *context-free*” (Lincoln & Guba, 2009, p. 2, italics in the original) and, therefore, may not be practically applicable to other cases. As far as this case study is concerned, this criticism would imply that the context-dependent nature of the conclusions drawn from the exploration of the

practices of a specific HE performance community would make said conclusions irrelevant to other performance communities – unless the communities themselves and the contexts in which they are active are identified as similar to those in the current study (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 2009).

Robert Donmoyer (2009), however, states that the value of a single-case study is to be found in the rich descriptions and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon it can provide. Single-case study's focus on the 'particular' rather than the 'general' facilitates a vicarious experience of a phenomenon to which the reader may have no access or whose socio-cultural setting is different from that of the reader. As such, Donmoyer posits, single-case study research can enable "experiential knowledge" (p. 12) and expand the repertoire of meaning-making possibilities available to the reader. From this perspective, the findings and conclusions that the design of this study has facilitated may enable the reader to make (better) sense of performance practices (and related meaning-making) the reader is familiar with, even though such practices may be set in a very different socio-cultural context.

Another limitation of the current design is the restricted use of fieldnotes to supplement data constructed through interviews. As discussed earlier in this section, participant observation was one of the research methods adopted in this study. Nevertheless, the majority of the data was constructed through 'intensive' and focus group interviews and, as such, findings are mostly based on self-reports of the participants. It is possible that more extensive use of participant observation could have enriched the current data by providing a more in-depth insight into what community members actually did and how they did it (cf. Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 29-30).

Summary

In this chapter I have considered the theoretical framework – ontological and epistemological positions – and research paradigm and methods used in this study in relation to the overall research aim and goals discussed in Chapter 1. Furthermore, I have discussed my role as qualitative researcher and my position of insider-outsider in relation to the participants in this study. Finally, I acknowledged two possible limitations of the research design.

The following chapter opens up the discussion of this study's findings by exploring participants' narratives surrounding students' choice of maintaining their membership of the formal performance community.

3. Maintaining membership of the formal performance community

In this chapter I explore students' reasons for electing the study of performance in their second and/or third year of undergraduate studies. Thus, this chapter investigates why (some) undergraduate music students decided to maintain their membership of the formal performance community¹⁶ beyond their first year of studies. I also reflect on the relationship between students' continuing membership of this community and participants' understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer.

As detailed in the description of the research context I presented in the previous chapter,¹⁷ the first-year performance module was compulsory for all BMus Music students. In their second and third year of studies, however, students elected all their modules and, as such, they could choose to continue their study of performance by enrolling onto Classical Performance (in year 2) and Advanced Classical Performance (in year 3).

My findings indicate that some students started their BMus Music degree already with the intention of taking the performance pathway in their undergraduate studies. In fact, from the point of view of an academic tutor participant,¹⁸ the majority of BMus Music students manifested their intention of taking the performance pathway even before the beginning of their degree, at the stage of their application to university:

[A]s an admissions tutor I see- I'd say about 80% of- no, actually only 70% say 'I want to perform' ... we understand that people come here to make and study their instrument- you know, to make music and study how to progress and that's what they want to do. (Betsy, academic tutor)

Some student participants supported this tutor's perception that, in many cases, music students' commitment to performance predated their engagement with undergraduate music studies. Furthermore, participants' narratives suggest that, in these cases, students' choice of university was directly linked to their perception of whether the degree on offer in a specific music department would give them the opportunity to

¹⁶ I define the formal performance community in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2).

¹⁷ See Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2).

¹⁸ This academic tutor participated in the formal performance community's practice as a co-examiner.

pursue performance as part of their degree in a ‘serious’ manner, that is, in a way that would support and help them develop their performance practice:

Well I did this degree in order to perform. (Veronica, 2nd year student)

[E]ven though [performance] is one module [per academic year], it's- it kind of- it sort of feels like half your course, [half] of the time. But that's not a bad thing, because that's what- in my eyes that's what you come here for ... that's why I came here. (Molly, 3rd year student)

Nevertheless, my findings also indicate that, before choosing to carry on with the study of performance as part of their degree, some students felt very ambivalent about taking the performance pathway. More specifically, findings suggest that (some of) these students did not feel confident they were ‘good enough’ to continue performance beyond their first year of studies, as illustrated by the following quotation:

Actually, in first year, I wasn't sure. I wondered if I was, if I was even good enough to do it. (Tom, 3rd year student)

Although participants did not explicitly explain what ‘good enough’ meant to them, their overall narratives suggest they were referring to their self-perceived ability to prepare the performance assignments at a good standard according to the marking criteria.

In spite of these students’ initial uncertainty about embarking on a performance pathway, *something* about their experience of the music degree in their first (and in some cases second) year of studies contributed to their decision to stay on the performance pathway:

I knew that everything was compulsory, in first year, and then I knew ‘OK, second year yeah I won't do performance’, and *then* I was like, ‘OK I will do performance in the second year I won't do it in the third year’, OK, *come third year* ‘yeah I'll do it again’. (Josie 3rd year students, emphasis added)

In the following sections, I explore what specifically led these students to elect performance as part of their undergraduate studies. Participants’ narratives indicate that students generally had more than one reason for carrying on with performance and for choosing to maintain their membership of the formal performance community. For analytical purposes, however, I discuss these reasons separately, in five distinct

sections. The first section (3.1) explores students' desire to improve their skills as performers, which, in the second section (3.2), is contrasted to students' focus on developing their instrumental/vocal skills. The third section (3.3) addresses participation in the performance modules as source of enjoyment and personal meaning. The following section (3.4) focuses on students' perception of their own performance abilities, particularly in comparison with their perceived academic skills. The final section (3.5) looks at the perceived relationship between the study of performance and social status in relation to the overall student population in the music department.

3.1. Desire to improve one's performance skills

Findings in this study indicate that at the beginning of their undergraduate studies many students did not think of themselves as performers, in spite of the fact they described themselves as being (relatively) proficient instrumentalists or vocalists. Some student participants' narratives indicate that performing was a rather alien experience to them (cf. Venn, 2010, p. 12). As such, they held a conception of themselves as 'just' instrumentalists or vocalists. In the words of Kay, a third-year student at the time of her interview:

I love playing the piano and I certainly see myself as a pianist and I'm happy to just be sat in a room for 3 hours just playing. But when you put me on a stage I kind of- I find that so much harder ... because I've not done a huge amount of performing before [the degree]. I thought myself as a pianist before [the degree].
(Kay, 3rd year student)

The above quotation illustrates Kay's understanding of 'pianist' (or, more generally, 'instrumentalist/vocalist') and 'performer' as two different types of musical identities – as well as of playing/singing and performing as two different approaches to music-making (cf. Venn, 2010, p. 18). During her first year of undergraduate studies, Kay found herself in a context (the performance module) in which she was expected to present her music-making to an audience (of peers, tutors and/or examiners) on a regular basis throughout the academic year. This exposure to performance situations was a very difficult experience for her, as for many of her peers:

[At school] I played the piano but I didn't, I wasn't a serious performer ... I'd done my recitals I had to do during A levels and that was, probably about it, apart

from erm being the accompanist in shows and things like that, you know, never anything- no solo recitals as such and absolutely petrified of performing erm ... so, I was just very inexperienced as a performer. (Kay, 3rd year student)

Notably, Kay appears to associate the concept of being a performer with playing ‘solo recitals’ – she clearly puts her experiences as ‘the accompanist in shows’ at school in a category that does not contribute to her performance experience. Therefore, she seems to associate performance not only with playing for someone else (as opposed to playing for herself (cf. Killick, 2006)), but also with her music-making being completely ‘exposed’ to an audience (as opposed to being part of an ensemble context in which other musicians provided some ‘cover’). Interestingly, her understanding of being a performer as ‘being a soloist’ was not shared by student participants who played an orchestral instrument or by singers. It is possible that this difference in conception was partly due to the vast amount of solo repertoire available to pianists, which is commonly used to develop piano learners’ skills from beginner to advanced level. It could also be argued, however, that this difference in conception might have been further supported by the assignment requirements for all performance modules: with the exception of the ensemble assignment,¹⁹ pianists (and non-orchestral instrumentalists) were always required to perform solo pieces in their assessed performances, whereas orchestral instrumentalists and singers were allowed to perform with an accompanist.

Findings indicate that for students such as Kay, learning and putting into practice the skills needed to perform to an audience became one of the most challenging, but also most meaningful, aspects of their performance modules:

After just performing in [the recital hall], it’s more– you get more into the performance mode of it and thinking about that ... [instead of] just improving your playing. (Darla, 3rd year student)

Darla’s words echo Kay’s experience, particularly in terms of her understanding of the difference between ‘just improving your playing’ and being in ‘performance mode’. When discussing this topic during her interview, Darla identified the former with improving ‘technical things’ and ‘thinking musically’ and the latter, with going well beyond the development of these skills. Although Darla did not explicitly say

¹⁹ A description of all the assignments on the performance modules is provided in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2, note 8).

why in her experience performing was ‘more’ than just playing, I would argue that this was due to the fact that, when in ‘performance mode’, she had to take into consideration a further factor: her audience.²⁰

Kay’s and Darla’s cases are representative of students whose appreciation of the difference between playing/singing and performing was initially gained through their participation in the first year activities on the performance module and subsequently strengthened in the course of their participation in the second year performance module. A common factor among these students was their desire to develop their performance skills further. This desire became a, if not the most, fundamental reason why they chose to take the performance pathway:

[At the end of my first year] I thought my performance skill wasn’t that good, so I really wanted to improve my skill. (Ili, 3rd year student)

Yeah, [carrying on with performance] was an easy decision because I wanted to try different stuff, and try to improve myself [as a performer]. (Edda, 2nd year student)

Students who did not have a (strong) musical identity as performers at the beginning of their undergraduate studies renegotiated their musical identities as they started developing their skills as members of the formal performance community. In light of the framework of ‘communities of practice’, these students can be understood as community members on an ‘inbound trajectory’, that is, as new members “whose identities are invested in their future participation, even though their present participation may be peripheral” (Wenger, 1998, p. 154):

I thought I was utterly convinced that finished first year I wouldn’t do it any more I wouldn’t carry on... When I started to think ‘what would it be if I didn’t do performance’, and I just felt like, I would be missing out on a huge amount ... I think I’d progressed so much in the first year, that it just seemed so wrong to stop it, so I thought I’d just do it again for another year. (Kay, 3rd year student)

I just felt like I was progressing so I kind of almost I may as well keep going with it in a way ... I wouldn’t have improved and kind of got, erm, what’s the word? Like, the difference between playing and performance. (Darla, 3rd year student)

²⁰ For further discussion of my participants’ understanding of ‘performance mode’ see Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

Significantly, and as evidenced by Kay's and Darla's narratives, students' awareness of their increased competence as community practitioners was strongly correlated to their desire to keep improving their skills as performers. This, in turn, played a major role in their choice to maintain their membership of the formal performance community beyond their first year of undergraduate studies.

3.2. Instrumental/vocal lessons

My analysis indicates that another fundamental reason why (some) students elected to carry on with performance was to retain their access to the one-to-one specialist instrumental/vocal tuition that was part of the performance modules.²¹ As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, many students came to understand their continuing participation in the practices of the formal performance community as an opportunity to develop their *performance* skills. In some cases, however, students chose the performance pathway expressly because it allowed them to maintain their relationship with an expert member of the community (at no extra cost) who could help them improve further specifically their *instrumental* skills. Dom's narrative is representative of how these students felt about choosing the performance pathway:

I have to be honest, just the fact that I wanted to keep going with my instrumental lessons and not have to pay [he laughs] for them erm I mean, I didn't know whether I'd necessarily get a good mark in [the performance module], I didn't know whether I'd necessarily enjoy the module. (Dom, 3rd year student)

In one specific instance, the development of instrumental skills through access to an expert practitioner was experienced as vital because it enabled and supported the development of a new musical identity. This was the case for Scott, a third-year student at the time of the interview. He had joined the undergraduate music degree as a first-study baritone, but had continued his participation in the formal performance community as a countertenor. During his first year of studies, he came to experience his one-to-one vocal lessons as very much linked to the development of his new musical identity – that of countertenor – which his vocal tutor had encouraged and nurtured. Thus, choosing the performance pathway became for him the key to

²¹ The relationship between one-to-one instrumental/vocal lessons and the performance modules is detailed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2, note 9).

constructing his new musical identity through the continuing support of his vocal tutor:

I think it was basically my [vocal] teacher. When I was first interviewed [by the admissions tutor], I sung as a- I suppose you can say, a baritone. And when [the vocal tutor I was assigned to] found out that I dabbled in singing a bit of alto, she pushed me to take up singing the countertenor sort of stuff, and I just got really into it and felt like I was getting a lot from my lessons. By the end of the first year, I just thought I could take this a bit further, sort of got the bug for solo singing. So it was my lessons with Niamh, really, nothing else, that made me want to carry on doing performance. (Scott, 3rd year student)

During his interview, Scott described his recently embraced ‘musical instrument’ as ‘an unusual voice’ that performance tutors and examiners found difficult to evaluate and provide useful feedback on. This is possibly why Scott considered other aspects of the performance module – “the tips that you pick up in your seminars and the experience and everything else” – as just a “bonus” in comparison to his vocal lessons.

Scott’s narrative confirms the centrality of the relationship between student and instrumental/vocal tutor to performance students’ learning experience (Burwell, 2005; Gaunt, 2008, 2009, 2011). Furthermore, when considered from a ‘communities of practice’ perspective, the relationship between Scott and his vocal tutor can be understood as contributing to Scott’s processes of identity construction and meaning-making (Wenger, 1998, pp. 4-5): Scott’s relationship with this expert member of the community gave him access to the ‘tools’ necessary for him to develop competence as member of the formal performance community (cf. Nielsen, 2006) and, thus, enabled him to participate more fully in the community’s practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 100-105).

3.3. Source of enjoyment and meaning

For some students, a further reason for carrying on with performance was their realisation that they derived considerable enjoyment and personal satisfaction from engaging with the practices of the formal performance community. In the case of students who had joined the BMus Music programme already with the intention of studying performance throughout their whole degree, performance had been a source of enjoyment to them for a long time, as illustrated by the following quotation:

Well with regards to music, through school, ‘A’ Level, everything, it was always, I was always just relishing the performance, so it was that for me [also at university]. (Dan, 3rd year student)

Interestingly, Dan’s narrative surrounding his engagement with music through performance during his undergraduate studies was characterised by a sense of ‘guilty pleasure’ because he would often choose to spend time at the instrument to the detriment of other modules’ coursework and/or assignments:

[Performance] was the only thing that I solidly applied myself to throughout the course of the whole year ... Because all the other work, sort of dissertation and essays and things that I don’t particularly enjoy, the piano almost became sort of, the luxury option. Because I fell in love with the piece I was doing as well. So I found it was almost a hindrance to my other courses ... So in the end I ended up doing too much piano and not enough of the other stuff. (Dan, 3rd year student)

For Dan, therefore, there appeared to be a strong hedonic component to his experience of music-making through performance (Lamont, 2012) and, thus, to his decision to take the performance pathway right from the beginning of his undergraduate studies.

As for students who were initially uncertain about taking performance as part of their degree, findings indicate that participation in the formal performance community’s practices led some first-year students to experience musical performance as hedonic and/or eudaimonic. In other words, through participation in various performance practices (such as individual practising, rehearsing and performing), these students experienced (aspects of) performance as pleasurable – that is, provoking strong, positive emotions (Lamont, 2012, pp. 576-577) – and/or as an activity that gave meaning to their lives through a sense of personal achievement, growth and social connectedness (Henderson & Knight, 2012, p. 198). This, in turn, brought about a change in students’ understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer that motivated their choice to continue their engagement with performance beyond their first year of study.

Students’ experience of (some) performance practices as hedonic and/or eudaimonic is evidenced in the narratives of two student participants, third-year Tom and second-year Maddie. In Tom’s case, he did not clarify what exactly he found enjoyable about his own engagement with performing. However, he explicitly correlated the time

spent practising with the enjoyment of performance, as illustrated in the following quotation:

[When] I came originally in first year, I wanted to be a composer. I was doing well in my composition in A-Level and I liked the idea of it. The idea more than the actually doing of it, I think. Erm, but in the first year [of my degree], I'd actually changed and I realised that I enjoyed the idea of performing more and I did it more. I found myself practising ... I had always practised the piano lots to get my Grade 8 before I came to uni, I just did it a lot more. Out of all the areas of music, performance's got to be my favourite. (Tom, 3rd year student)

The correlation between the enjoyment of performance and individual practising suggests that, for Tom, this type of music-making provided more than pleasurable (hedonic) experiences: performance became a source of personal satisfaction and contributed to his sense of self as a musician. His words – “I wanted to be a composer ... but in the first year [of my degree], I'd actually changed” – indicate that his participation in the community's practices had a profound impact on his relationship with music as a practitioner and, thus, on his musical identity.

In the case of second-year student Maddie, the factor that contributed to her experience of performance as a source of enjoyment and personal satisfaction was her participation in a variety of ensemble activities (during the academic year) that were not related to her performance module's assignments. Maddie's narrative foregrounds the opportunities she had during her first year of studies to collaborate in small ensembles and large group performances with peers from more advanced performance modules. Maddie explained that these experiences had been so meaningful to her that they had led her to elect performance in her second year:

I really enjoyed [performance], yeah because I enjoyed like, all the playing I did last year because I did a lot of extra stuff, lots of ... like I did a quartet with a third year violinist and loads of other things ... and I just enjoyed all the performance I was doing. (Maddie, 2nd year student)

Maddie's narrative conveys a sense of self-realisation through her ability to participate in the performance practices of the community beyond what first-year students were expected to do on their performance module. As such, it could be argued that her extensive participation contributed to her sense of social connectedness and, thus, to her sense of belonging to the performance community.

Although enjoyment is generally highlighted as central to sustained music participation (Lamont, 2012; Pitts, 2005), Karen Burland (2005) has presented it in less positive terms in her study on students' experiences of HE performance in relation to their career aspirations (pp. 103-106, 228). Here, the author compares and contrasts how students from two different HE contexts – conservatoire and university – experienced their participation in performance as part of their undergraduate degree. In Burland's study, enjoyment is identified as a 'mild' emotional reaction experienced by those students who did not wish to undertake a career as professional performers. Enjoyment is contrasted with the 'intense' response experienced by the group of students who aspired to become professional performers. This response was characterised by a sense of personal achievement and meaning and, according to Burland, it indicated the extent to which these students' self was invested in becoming a professional performer. The correlation that Burland makes between students' 'mild' or 'strong' experiences of performance and their desire (or lack thereof) to pursue performance as a career, suggests that long-lasting commitment to performance may require individuals to experience performance not only as hedonic (that is, enjoyable), but also as eudaimonic – in other words, as a source of *both* pleasure *and* of personal meaning (cf. Lamont, 2012), an interpretation that the findings discussed in this section support.

3.4. Perception of performance vs. academic abilities

Findings in this study indicate that the decision to carry on with performance was, for some students, (also) related to their self-evaluation of their musical performance abilities in comparison to their academic skills (such as research and essay writing skills). Student participants who expressed the belief that they were not academically 'strong' experienced the performance modules as a way to limit their involvement with modules that explicitly required a theoretical, historical or philosophical approach to music and that were assessed through essay writing:

I'm also not particularly strong at the theoretical side of music. So [module election] was also about, you know, suiting the degree modules to my strengths, and performance supposedly is one of those. (Dan, 3rd year student)

I'm not good at writing and I'm not good at music aesthetics and erm ... I just realised in second year that it not really suit me 'cause I couldn't handle really

complicated things. So probably performance was the best subject I can take.
(Sabina, 3rd year student)

Interestingly, some of the academic tutor participants supported the view that some students chose the performance pathway because of their discomfort with academic work. However, these participants also believed there was a further reason why some students would choose performance; namely, that students were more likely to get a higher mark in a practical module (such as performance or composition) than in an academic one:

[Some students] just feel traumatised by academic work and therefore want to find that [performance] pathway, and I have to say part of the reasons is that erm ... my impression is, we would need to check this out, is that far more high marks are given in performance and composition than in academic work. (Theo, academic tutor)

Dan's, Sabina's and Theo's narratives suggest an understanding of practical music-making (within undergraduate music studies) as being quite separate from an academic approach to music. Interestingly, findings in Celia Duffy's and Joe Harrop's research (2017, pp. 280-281) on the influence of academic studies on performance as creative practice echoes my participants' understanding. The perceived separation between academic studies and practical music-making was a recurrent theme in many of my participants' narratives and I explore it in depth in Chapter 8 (section 8.2).

It is clear that for students who had greater confidence in their performance skills than in their academic ones, performance became (among other things) the means to do well – or at least better – in their overall degree. Based on this way of relating to their degree studies one might, at first, draw the conclusion that these students had specific self-efficacy beliefs and a particular orientation or attitude towards learning – what from a social cognitivist perspective is referred to as an “entity self-belief” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Another interpretation of the findings, however, would suggest that students were not locked into a fixed evaluation of their abilities. In fact, their self-conception appeared to shift depending on the approach to music – the specific musical discipline – they were referring to. Thus, when some of these very same students talked about learning performance, they did so in terms of ‘improving one's skills’.

The discourses used by a third-year student, Ili, clearly exemplify this. When referring to a key aspect of students' academic work – essay writing – she positioned herself within a “fixed entity” discourse, which Carol Dweck and Ellen Leggett associate with performance-orientation learning (p. 256):

I couldn't just stop playing suddenly, 'cause I'm really bad at writing. (Ili, 3rd year student)

Conversely, as evidenced in section 3.1 of the current chapter, when Ili discussed one of her reasons for choosing the performance pathway, she adopted what Dweck and Leggett call a “mastery-orientation position” (p. 257), which is associated with an “incremental belief-system” (p. 263):

[A]t the time, I thought, my performance skill wasn't that good, so I really wanted to improve my skill. (Ili, 3rd year student)

Ili's use of different discourses within her narrative about herself as a music learner could be understood through the lens of Wenger's theory of identity, in which he defines identity as ‘a nexus of multimembership’ (1998, p. 158). In a more or less ‘peripheral’ way, Ili – as all performance students in the department – belonged to both performance and academic communities in the department. Through her use of different discourses in her narrative, Ili appears to exemplify Wenger's theory that individuals' behaviour tends to vary from community to community and, more specifically, that each community affords individuals the opportunity to construct different aspects of themselves and gain different perspectives of the world they engage with (p. 159). Thus, it would appear that, in the case of students such as Ili and Dan, participation in the formal performance community's practices favoured a positive sense of self as musicians, which, in turn, motivated these students to continue their study of performance throughout their degree.

3.5. Social status

The final reason considered here for students to continue performance as part of their degree studies was made explicitly by one student participant only. My analysis of the data, however, suggests that this reason was shared by a larger group of students. Caroline, a vocal student, explained how her interest in achieving a particular social

status – ‘being popular’ – played an important part in her decision to take the performance pathway:

I always thought that the people who, like, perform and do performance are sort of, you know, without wanting to sound really shallow, but I always feel that they’re more popular. I think there’s a social thing about doing performance. Like, you know, the performance people are sort of like, ‘Oh you’re doing performance, wow, wow’, and I think that, but I sort of wanted to buy into that a bit, as well.
(Caroline, 3rd year student)

It is significant that Caroline felt the need to excuse herself when sharing with me the importance that ‘popularity’ had for her and to clarify that she did not want to ‘sound really shallow’. It may be possible to shed some light on this act – Caroline excusing herself – by considering the ‘social thing’ she mentions here above through the framework offered by Henry Kingsbury in his seminal book *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory cultural system* (1988). In his discussion of talent and musical performance, Kingsbury suggests that the recognition of someone as ‘special’ or ‘talented’ – and therefore worthy of being a performer – could be understood in terms of “recruitment of an elite” and “reproduction of a structure of inequality in social power” (p. 79). Considered from this perspective, I would suggest that what Caroline might have felt uncomfortable about – and the reason why she felt the need to excuse herself – was her desire to be set apart from the general music student population and be seen as part of a ‘musical elite’, thus contributing to the reproduction of social inequality among the music population of the department.

Notably, the idea that ‘being a performer’ could be interpreted as ‘being part of a social elite’ was explicitly supported by two academic tutor participants, Theo and Betsy, albeit with contrasting personal views on the matter. When Theo shared his views about performance and students’ choice of modules in their second and third year, he did confirm that a considerable number of students chose performance because of the social status they believed they would acquire by being part of a group of individuals who were considered ‘special’:

[I]f you play something you must be creative and imaginative ... so, it makes [the students] feel special, as though they’re, as it were, being initiated into a tradition of artists. (Theo, academic tutor)

Theo's own personal perspective on the matter, though, was very different. The transcribed version of his words (here above) may not communicate his own position very clearly. Nonetheless, Theo's tone of voice and body language during the interview, as well as his overall narrative, were unambiguous in this respect. Theo did not believe that being part of a 'tradition of artists' – in this specific case, of a community of musical performance practitioners – was sufficient to grant its members a 'higher' social status than other musicians within the larger context of the music department. Rather, he appeared to identify (some of) the members of this community with, as Joseph Kerman puts it, the "stereotype of the 'intellectually disreputable' interpreter" (1985, p. 190). Furthermore, Theo believed that (some of) the performers in the formal performance community had a lot to learn from the musicologists in the department (cf. Taruskin, 1982, p. 348) and, as such, their (apparent) self-perception of being 'special' or having a higher social status within the department was, in his view, very much misguided.²²

In the case of the other academic tutor participant, Betsy, her beliefs about 'being a performer' aligned much more closely with those expressed by Caroline. This is evidenced by the way Betsy used the discourse that identifies 'being a performer' with being part of an 'elite group' when discussing her views on membership of the formal performance community. Betsy believed that membership of this community of practice should be reserved only for a special few, more specifically, for students she described as 'our top performers' and students with 'talent'.

Although both Theo and Betsy held academic positions in the music department, their musical backgrounds were very different: Betsy had trained as a professional singer up to Masters level before embarking on an academic career and still kept up her singing skills with the support of regular one-to-one lessons; whereas Theo described his own practical music skills as a performer as being very modest. Thus, it could be argued that their personal view on the social status of performers in the music department differed because of their own musical experiences and identities. In other words, it is possible that Betsy's training and sense of self as a performer were related to her belief that 'talent' was a vital factor in becoming a performer and, consequently,

²² My participants' views of the relationship between performance and other approaches to music within the context of the BMus Music degree are explored in greater depth in Chapter 8.

led her to share Caroline's view that members of the performance community were 'special'.

Interestingly, Betsy's belief that membership of the formal performance community should be limited to a certain type of student was explicitly supported by one student participant. Rosie, a third-year student who chose not to continue performance in her final year, expressed the view that "it's good that [this degree] does give you the option after first year not to take [performance], because I don't think [performance]'s for everyone." Out of context, her words would appear to support Betsy's position that only 'special' students – that is, students with 'talent' – should be allowed to elect the performance pathway. In fact Rosie's comment was related to the difficulties experienced by some students – including herself – when trying to balance their performance practice and academic work and which led them to give up performance. This is a theme I address in depth in Chapter 8 (section 8.1).

Summary

In conclusion, findings in this study indicate that, through participation in the practices of the formal performance community, students' understanding of what it means to perform and be/become a performer was renegotiated. Furthermore, they indicate that this process of renegotiation of meaning was crucial to their decision to elect the performance module in their second and third year of undergraduate music studies. More specifically, even though some students had initially held an understanding of performance that made them feel uncertain about continuing their performance studies, participation in the community's practices contributed to changes in their understanding of what performance and being/becoming a performer entails. In turn, these changes in students' understanding became key to their decision to take the performance pathway.

My analysis reveals that (some) students came to understand performance as the means to enjoy and/or put into practice their own abilities (discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.4); and/or as a way to acquire and develop new skills (sections 3.1 and 3.2) or a particular social status (section 3.5). Interestingly, these conceptions suggest a self-oriented approach to performance. In other words, they suggest that what students found rewarding about their engagement with performance practices was related to a positive sense of their own achievements, rather than to a perception of the

opportunity for connectedness to other people or for self-transcendence through music-making (cf. Perdomo-Guevara, 2014).

The process of renegotiation of meaning through participation had a direct impact also on students' understanding of what it means to be/become a performer and, as a result, on their own self-conception as musicians. This impact was particularly evident in the cases of first-year students who had not initially thought of themselves as performers, but 'just' as instrumentalists/vocalists. Participation led these students to renegotiate their understanding of themselves as musicians to the extent that they became able to positively identify themselves as performers (or performers in the making). Thus, participation reinforced these students' sense of belonging to the formal performance community and was key to their decision to maintain their membership of the community beyond their first year of undergraduate studies.

4. Engaging with the musical score

The performer's engagement with the musical score is a practice widely accepted as central to Western art music (WAM) performance and commonly considered the starting point to the performance process (Reid, 2002, p. 102). In recent years, this practice has become a rather charged topic in musical performance studies (Cook, 2014; Doğantan-Dack, 2014; Leech-Wilkinson, 2009a) and scholars have argued that discourses about the relationship between score and performer deeply affect not only our understanding of the role of the performer and the function of performance, but also performances themselves.

The way the majority of my participants talked about the musical score appears to support these scholars' argument: the discourses present in my participants' narratives indicate that the beliefs they held and/or developed about how a performer should relate to the musical text were deeply connected to their participation in the performance community's musical practice. These discourses ranged from viewing the score as a prescriptive text which had to be followed to the letter, to treating it as a vehicle for personal expression.

In this chapter, I address my participants' narratives surrounding approaches to the musical score and explore what these narratives reveal about the community's beliefs regarding performance and being/becoming a performer. In the first section (4.1), I focus on participants' views about, and experience of, a literal approach to the score; and in the second section (4.2), I investigate participants' understanding and experience of going 'beyond' the noted score.

4.1. A literal-minded approach to the score

An approach to the musical score that several participants identified was some performers' tendency to read it in a rather literal fashion. This means that the notation and other markings in the score (such as fingering) were handled in a prescriptive way and followed as closely as possible. According to one performance tutor participant, this was a widespread practice, particularly among students. He remarked on the difficulty that tutors experienced in trying to get these students to "think beyond" the notation, particularly if the students' abilities were "below average":

[P]erformers [have] become increasingly fixated on believing that all they need to know is in the dots in front of them ... trying to get them off the notation, for a start, or at least not off the notation but to think beyond it, is one big problem especially for anybody below average ability, as you know as a teacher, they're just completely fixated on what's in front of them. (Sean, performance tutor)

Some of the student participants who engaged in this type of practice viewed their own literal reading of the score as undesirable, a bad habit that should be corrected because it created some technical and/or musical limitations to their music-making:

I always find that a bit hard 'cause you have fingerings written in sometimes and they're quite often not the best way to do it and I always just follow it exactly. (Jamie, 3rd year student)

I think my playing, I think it's half my fault that er, I'm very much concentrating on the notes and not so much the expression side. And I think my playing comes across as a bit mechanical because of that. Erm and that is something I need to, perhaps I'm fighting against it. (Oriana, 3rd year student)

It is interesting that Oriana described her preoccupation with the rendition of 'the notes' as a fault that she was not entirely responsible for. Although she never explained why she believed that her approach to the score was only 'half her fault', I believe that a possible answer could be inferred from what Rosie, another third-year student participant, said regarding how 'classical' performers are expected to relate to the score:

[An] expectation that I found in classical performance is the ability to be – basically to translate what's on the sheet music very close to it, within rhythm for rhythm, note for note, those kind of things. And because of that, it sort of makes you sort of very meticulous and all that kind of stuff. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

Rosie explained that while she was expected to execute the score very accurately, the feedback that she received on her performances made it clear that she was also expected to give an 'expressive' rendition – or as she put it, 'translation' – of the score that wouldn't compromise the accuracy of her reading. She found the combination of expectations very difficult to reconcile – "Okay, well, where does this sort of translation come in from my own side of things?" – and a source of pressure, to the point that it would affect her "mental and physical health".

Rosie had not had much experience with Western art music before the beginning of her degree. It would appear that through her participation in the practices of the formal performance community she had developed the view that a faithful rendition of the notation was not only valued but also expected by (at least some) community members. Her experience appears to echo the results in Jessika Karlsson's and Patrik Juslin's study (2008, p. 321), which indicate that instrumental/vocal lessons tended to focus mainly on the reproduction of musical notation.

If we go back to Oriana's statement – "I think it's half my fault that I'm very much concentrating on the notes" – and consider it in light of the perceived expectation that the score be approached faithfully, it could be argued that Oriana's engagement with practices of the formal performance community led her to develop a specific belief: namely, that respecting the text was a non-negotiable condition of belonging to this performance community. It is possible, therefore, that she viewed the performance community at least partly responsible for her own exaggerated focus on notation and her resulting literal approach to the score.

Oriana's and Rosie's words suggest they experienced some unresolved tension between trying to be expressive in their performances while at the same time complying with the expectation of being faithful to the score. The feedback they received during performances did not appear to provide a solution to how they could reconcile these two aspects. In the end, Rosie concluded that she was the one responsible for finding a solution to this issue and she experienced this aspect of her participation in the practices of the community difficult to cope with. These student participants' experience of the formal performance community's expectations reflect a wide-spread and persisting belief among Western art musicians in the "authority of the score" (Kingsbury, 1988, pp. 87-99) and the resulting expectation that performers should follow the notation without deviation (Cook, 2013, pp. 216-218; Hill, 2012, p. 98; Hill, 2002, p. 131; Leech-Wilkinson, 2009a, chapter 1.1, para. 5).

The reason why the score is seen as authoritative resides, as Nicholas Cook explains, in an understanding of "music as sounded writing" (2013, p. 3). In his book *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*, Cook describes how the conception of music as text is generated by the belief that the composer gives meaning to the musical work by laying down his/her intentions in the score through the use of notation. Musical

meaning is thus identified with “what can be notated” (p. 17). Cook argues that the idea of “music as sounded writing” engenders what he calls the “paradigm of reproduction” (p. 3). This paradigm implies the view that performance is a form of reproduction: reproduction of “the work, or the structures embodied in the work, or the conditions of its early performances, or the intentions of its composer” (pp. 3-4). Consequently, the performer’s role becomes understood as that of a mediator whose task is to “transcribe the work from the domain of the abstract to that of the concrete” (p. 13). This conception of performance and of the role of the performer, Cook writes, strongly conditions performers’ discourse: ideas of duty to the composer’s meaning and faithfulness to the score are generally speaking taken for granted among performers (p. 20). It is not surprising, then, that concepts such as “respect for the text” and “performance as observance” should also be present in the teaching of performance (Ritterman, 2002, p. 83) and in the narratives of performance communities such as the one in this study.

When talking about approaches to the score, one participant – third-year student Josie – argued that in the case of contemporary art music, strict adherence to the score was not only expected but simply inevitable. In Josie’s view, contemporary music composers loaded the score with so much information and were so specific with their performance indications that performers were left with no choice but ‘simply’ reproduce the score as accurately as possible:

[This tutor] he does his, like compositions and- he had some of his- a bit of his music framed and I was like, I remember, I'd always wait for the Sibelius room and I'm just sat there looking at that piece of music, and say, ‘Just so specific!’ like, one note has so much, like information: it would have a dynamic and articulation [marking] and accent and ornament. I was just like, that was a lot of information on the one- and like, you know they've done that for a reason, like, so in the end, like, the performer has to perform in that way. (Josie, 3rd year student)

Peter Hill points out that the composers’ trend of increasing the amount of prescriptive information in their scores has been taking place for a couple of centuries now. And whatever the reason composers have been doing this – “a mistrust of the performer's ability to understand [the composer’s intentions], or an anxiety to control [the performance]” (2002, p. 131) – the end result has been that performers have

become much more literal-minded than they used to be (see also Cook, 2013, pp. 3, 216).

Josie would seem to share this evaluation of the modern performer's attitude to the score. For her, the literal-minded approach of performers had far-reaching implications for the role of the performer. Continuing her discussion on contemporary music scores, she said:

So in the end the performer is not really that important today, that's what I thought, it's quite sad to think that, but I think in today, in the 21st century, the performer is not the most important thing any more. (Josie, 3rd year student)

What is interesting here is that according to Josie, contemporary 'classical' music – and its notated form – forces the performer to be in a subservient position to the composer, something that, in her own personal view, was not the case with composition from earlier periods:

I guess in 21st century music the composer is seen as the top of the pyramid, so like, what they write there goes, whereas I feel like back, go back maybe 200 300 years, the music was, you know, there the performers were at the top of the pyramid. I think that's what's mainly changed in music today. (Josie, 3rd year student).

Josie saw an indirect hierarchy between the performer's creative contribution – and thus the performer's artistic status – and the amount of (in her words) “composer specific” information in the score. The more “under-determined” (Alessandri, 2014, p. 24) the score was, the greater the performer's opportunity for creativity. On the other hand, she believed that engaging with music encoded in prescriptive notation led to music-making to which the performer could not contribute creatively. For Josie this form of music-making is not truly 'performing', but just a pretence on the part of the performer, a 'going through the motions'. This view is illustrated through her description of her own participation in a rehearsal and concert of the department's Contemporary Music Ensemble (CME), which she was asked to help out with at short notice:

[W]hen I jumped into CME everyone was so, like I don't wanna- I wanna say so serious- it's just like, what the music says, goes ... I think that kind of reflects, it reflects in rehearsal. I think in terms of the actual performance, like I said I was

kind of going through the motions ... 'cause there's so much information on one page, you're concentrating so hard, that you know, you go through the motions, you kind of forget, you have an audience (Josie, 3rd year student)

Josie's comment on 'forgetting the audience' suggests that, under 'normal' circumstances, she would experience performance as a communicative or "people-oriented" (Perdomo-Guevara, 2014) practice. This specific context, however, transformed it for her into a 'self-oriented' one.

Interestingly, Josie believed there was an intimate connection between the lack of creative input imposed by highly prescriptive scores and the performers' lack of physical freedom during performances of those scores. This is something that she experienced as a member of the audience. Josie recounted how she was deeply affected by the performers' lack of movement when she attended departmental contemporary music events in which her peers performed:

[The composers] are seen as the most, like, 'Oh yeah, what he says goes,' you have no input, you have to perform it in this way, that's probably why I've such an issue listening, like watching, not listening, I don't mind listening to it, but watching like modern music, 'cause I'm like, the performers are just so stuck, I'm like, [in a quiet, shaky tone of voice] 'Move, move'. (Josie, 3rd year student)

It is possible that the lack of physical freedom Josie was referring to could have been caused by some technical difficulties that restricted the performers' movements while interacting with their instrument. I would suggest, however, that what she found uncomfortable to watch was a lack of expressive movements in the performers, which restricted her ability to connect with the performances as a member of the audience. In this respect, it could be argued that for Josie the performers embodied the creatively restricted approach to the score through their lack of physical movement (cf. Davidson, 2017).²³

Some participants discussed the literal-minded approach to the musical score from a different perspective, that is, in the context of performance evaluations. This is illustrated by a student participant's narrative about the use of musical scores in the setting of performance seminars. Third-year student Lana explained that when students performed in seminars, their peers tended to follow the score of the piece

²³ In Chapter 5 (section 5.2), I consider in greater depth participants' narratives about the 'performing body' in relation to their understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer.

being performed and read it in a very literal manner. Thus, they would base their evaluation of, and comments on, the performance on whether or not the performer executed the notation and other markings in the score accurately. Lana did not appreciate this practice and, therefore, when it was her turn to perform in a seminar she decided not to follow it:

[The performance tutor] likes you to have photocopies [of the score] and to give them to everyone. I just, 'cause [my piece] wasn't ready again 'cause I was the first one in, you know, erm I just decided that I wasn't going to give anyone the photocopies 'cause I didn't want other people to find out ... because everyone spends all their time looking at the music [score], if they have the music [score], and going 'Oh you didn't do this' ... people just look at, you know, 'Are they playing it all legato?', 'Did they end the phrase at the right point?', 'Is it the [correct] dynamics?', 'cause what they expect is there in front of them and then they're just matching what happens in front of them to what they expect to happen. (Lana, 3rd year student)

Lana describes the musical score as a text against which performers are judged and her narrative suggests that this way of using the score was common practice among her peers.²⁴ Interestingly, Lana found that her strategy of withholding copies of the score from the students resulted in her peers giving her feedback that was much more useful to her as a performer:

[I]f they [don't use the score and] don't have those expectations then they, they can just, you know, it's a blank canvas and they can go 'Well for me I thought this.' Erm, yeah. And it doesn't mean that then, they're wrong if they say, 'I don't think there's enough varied dynamics', and you say, 'Well actually there aren't any dynamics in' or 'There aren't so I can't, sorry.' You know. But then it's something for the performer to think, 'Well even if they're not there, maybe I should think of putting my own in.' So I think, you know, in my opinion it's better without music. (Lana, 3rd year student)

Although Lana's strategy was motivated by a desire to make her own lack of preparation go unnoticed, she achieved something much more profound in my view: a shift in the way her performance was experienced by her audience. Instead of listening to her performance as "notation made audible" (Cook, 2013, p. 17), students experienced it as a real-time activity during which the performer created meaning

²⁴ This practice appears to be mirroring that of examination panels in the context of assessed performances, a topic I address in Chapter 7 (section 7.2).

through the sounds produced (Doğantan-Dack, 2014). Thus, they were able to evaluate it in its own right, without referencing it to the musical score. In other words, Lana enabled a shift from listening to music-making as ‘performance of music’, to listening to it as ‘musical performance’ (cf. Goehr, 1996 as quoted in Cook, 2013, p. 136).

4.2. Thinking beyond the score

As we have seen in the previous section, students struggled when engaging with the musical score in a literal-minded fashion. On the one hand, it seemed to enable them to comply with the (perceived) performance community’s expectation that ‘classical’ performers be faithful to the composer’s musical text. On the other hand, this literal-minded approach clearly imposed on them a whole range of restrictions – from the way they physically interacted with their instrument, to their ability to be musically expressive – which resulted in a negative performance experience.

As discussed in the previous section, Lana’s solution to some of the issues created by this approach was to remove the score from the situation, at least as far as her listeners were concerned. Other participants, however, talked of ‘going beyond notation’ as a practice through which the performer could still engage with the score (and, according to some, still embrace a discourse of ‘faithfulness’) without having to renounce a sense of creative agency.

Two questions come to mind when considering the practice of thinking beyond the score: in what way could a performer move past a literal reading of the score? And, how far beyond notation could a performer (or should a performer be allowed to) go? Possible answers to these questions can be inferred from how participants talked about this practice, which I now explore.

First of all, I would like to reconsider the seminar context that Lana described in the quotation from the previous section, but this time from a different perspective: that of the performance tutor who led these seminars. Even though from Lana’s description one might draw the conclusion that Max, the performance tutor in question, did not mind a literal reading of the score when students evaluated their peers’ performances, he very much lamented this approach when talking about peer feedback:

[I]n the seminar situation ... my goal personally is just to make this short review, or this, you know, short discussion [about a student's performance] as much creative as possible, even, if it is controversial, even it is, if it is not right, provocative you know. It's still better than to go through this, you know, clichés, you know, about the dynamic, articulation, you know, and, and [the students] all look at music of course [he mimics holding a book in his hands], yeah, which is good, you know, but not for the sake that they should comment on, you know, how exact the performer was erm playing or singing what was written. (Max, performance tutor)

It would appear that Max intended the use of the score only as a starting point, a way to ground the students' listening of their peers' performances and he very much urged students to go beyond a superficial comparison between the score's indications and their peers' music-making. My observation of some of the performance seminars that Max led confirmed this and provided a clearer insight into his approach. The following extract from my fieldnotes of a second-year seminar illustrates this in some detail:

Shui, a piano student, performs next. She's presenting Schubert's first Musical Moment D 780. Her peers follow her performance on copies of the score Shui distributed before walking onto the stage. Once she has finished playing they all applaud. The comments from her peers that follow are mostly about 'things' they saw in the score but she did not do! For example, a student looks at a specific section of the score while she is talking to Shui and says, 'It goes down from forte to pianissimo so you could be even quieter'. Another student comments, 'I could hear some of the phrases but other ones I couldn't, but I could *see* they were there [in the score]'. Max just looks at the students without saying anything. In between comments there are brief, awkward moments of silence. There's no natural discussion among the students; they just list issues they noticed, one by one, or – more rarely – they comment on what Shui did well (one student says, 'I liked the loud parts'). After another moment of silence, Max turns to the students who have been giving feedback and says, 'What I hear is like, actually, very similar to what erm British examiners normally do. It's like ticking a box, you know? Like dynamics', he mimics ticking off a box with a pen, 'Tempo', he repeats the same gesture. 'But what about the *meaning* of the piece? Did she get it? What is this meaning about, can you tell? Or is it about nothing? Why did he write it?' A student interjects with 'there could have been more contrast', to which Max replies with some questions: 'But did you get any sense of it, any meaning? What is it about for you?' The same student carries on: 'it's not meaningless, but it could have been more expressive'. Max asks her, 'In what way?' ... Eventually

Max turns to Shui and asks her, ‘How would you describe this piece, in very simple words?’ One of the words that Shui uses is ‘Romantic’. Max picks up on it and asks her, ‘What is Romanticism for you? What is romantic for you? Of course when you meet your boyfriend it is romantic and what do you do to be romantic?’ A student jumps in with, ‘You express your emotions’ and another says, ‘Establish a connection’. Max agrees with them and says, ‘But don’t you think being romantic can also mean trying to be more individual than you normally are in real life, more special?’ Turning to Shui, he adds, ‘So you have to do something more special so that it becomes more special’. He then goes on stage, takes Shui’s place at the piano and starts playing various sections to show her how she could use different touches to characterise them. (Fieldnotes, 16 November 2012)

As the above extract shows, the tutor openly criticised – albeit in a humorous way – the students’ reliance on a literal reading of the score when they gave feedback on their peer’s performance. Max’s questions to the students, “What is the meaning of the piece?” and “Did she get it?”, suggest that in his view meaning is not to be found in the performer’s adherence to the details in the score. Instead, he invited both performer and her peers to look for it in the way the performer connects to the music at an expressive level. He did this through the exploration of metaphors – such as that of a romantic relationship – and the kind of musical action metaphors could inspire in order for the performer to achieve a particular expressive effect (cf. Leech-Wilkinson & Prior, 2014). He told the performer that she needed to “do something more special” so that her performance may ‘become more special’. What I find significant is that this tutor’s answer to how far beyond the details of the score the performer could go is given through a musical demonstration, rather than a verbal explanation. The tutor’s practice of passing on his own understanding of how a score should be performed echoes Daniel Leech-Wilkinson’s view that Western art music is:

essentially an oral culture imagining itself to be a written culture. Musicians learn their craft via practical, one-to-one studio teaching (supplemented by workshops, masterclasses and rehearsals) in which beliefs about how scores should be played are passed on orally and by example. (2016, p. 325)

The modelling aspect Leech-Wilkinson is referring to here (the passing on of musical information ‘by example’) could also be conceptualised as the ‘aural’ component of this culture. Performers’ sharing of their own often complex and nuanced understanding and perception of sound and of their musical intentions cannot be

attributed exclusively to the use of verbal communication. As Stephen Cottrell argues, this type of communication takes place to a great extent through the production of musical sound, that is, aurally. Recorded performances, Cottrell adds, can be seen as playing a fundamental role in the creation and transmission of what he calls the aural tradition of Western art music (2004, pp. 50-53).

The discourse of ‘classical’ music as oral/aural tradition appeared in the narrative of a performance tutor participant while discussing performers’ approaches to the musical score. In his view, the reason why performers were becoming increasingly focused on ‘the dots’ in the score was to be found in their decreased knowledge of the aural tradition of Western art music:

[I]t’s a curious paradox of the Western art music tradition, that the longer it goes on, erm certainly in this country and I think in the States and, perhaps in Europe in, Western Europe as well, I don’t know beyond that, then, performers become increasingly fixated, on believing that all they need to know is in the dots in front of them and, because of that, students that we’re getting have decreasing amounts of erm aural knowledge, of listening experience. They just do not know anything about the aural tradition of Western art music, and I think I was the same at the age of eighteen or at least I was, something of the same, but nowhere near as bad as some of the students now. So they’ve- they’ve got access to this huge media network, that we never had, and yet the listening that they do, is- very often does not remotely impinge on what it is they’re trying to play, erm, so, trying to get them off the notation, for a start, or at least not off the notation but to think beyond it, is one big, problem. (Sean, performance tutor)

According to Sean, there is a strong connection between a blinkered focus on notation and the lack of knowledge of the ‘classical’ aural tradition. Furthermore, he believed that the performers’ inability to reflect on their own playing and/or singing in light of their listening to performances belonging to this tradition made it very difficult to teach them to think beyond the musical score. What can be inferred from this argument is that Sean considered the development of critical listening skills in performers a key strategy to enabling performers to move beyond a literal reading of the score.²⁵

²⁵ Some participants, however, believed that the main problem resided in students’ insufficient engagement with the practice of listening, rather than in the quality of their listening skills (see Chapter 6, section 6.3).

An academic tutor participant who was regularly part of performance examination panels supported Sean's view that students needed to engage with WAM aural tradition more analytically. The tutor lamented the fact that students lacked an understanding of style (for example, performed "a Mozart sonata as if it were by Rachmaninov") and played everything "note by note or bar by bar". He believed that in the right context – interpretation classes led by academic tutors such as himself – students could be helped to think beyond the notation through a guided analysis of recorded performances:

I often feel that if only they could have real interpretation classes, even if, you know, if it were only sort of 20 minutes each on an individual piece or how to play a certain section of a piece and whatever, then it would be so much for their advantage. They would learn so much ... You'd say to them, 'Look, play it this way and here's, you know, Pollini on a recording. He plays it that way. Now, what's the difference?' (Callum, academic tutor)

Callum's and Sean's narratives suggest that the engagement with WAM aural tradition not only would allow performers to understand the interpretative opportunities that a specific score could afford, but it would also provide performers with models (i.e., other performances) that illustrate how far beyond the score a performer could (or should) go. The type of practice these tutors supported echoes a particular understanding of performance that Nicholas Cook calls "the perspective of performance style" (2013, p. 135). Cook explains that from this perspective a performance is understood through its "horizontal relationships" with other performances of the same piece or of related pieces. This implies, Cook adds, that musical meaning is seen as being located in the performances themselves, rather than in the score.

Cook contrasts the above "performance style" perspective with a "page-to-stage" one, in which thinking about performance is "structured around ... [a] vertical axis: the composer's score is the starting point for the interpretation, explanation and assessment of a given performance" (p 135). This latter perspective was illustrated by one of the academic tutor participants – Theo, a historical musicologist – as he shared his own views about the current state of undergraduate performance teaching in the

department. Even though he referred to the analysis of recorded performances²⁶ as a teaching tool in the context of performance interpretation, Theo's understanding of performance clearly followed the vertical axis of the "page-to-stage" approach described by Cook; in other words, Theo viewed musical meaning as located in the composer's score:

[W]hen they do performance classes, why don't they invite somebody like Betsy [a historical musicologist] or me or someone- I mean Betsy could talk to the singers, I'd be happy to talk to the people who want to do- to take apart a piano piece for example, play some different recordings and show them exactly how their choices are made, what the historical background is to the style they're playing in, and what choices are left open for them, and how you make an interpretation ... What we want, is to show them erm by particular analysis of performance in relation to a particular piece ... what can analysis and musicology and so on offer in terms of understanding and opportunity for increasing the possibility of experience within this piece ... [W]hat they're doing [in the performance classes] is playing a performing tradition and the work becomes a pretext for displaying their understanding of that emotive approach and not an understanding of the work. (Theo, academic tutor)

In the narrative of this academic tutor participant, the effect of the aural tradition of 'classical' music on the performer's interpretative choices is viewed rather negatively. Theo seems to indicate that without grounding the performer's own understanding of a piece in the analysis of its score and research into its historical background – including, I would assume, historical performance practices – the performer's knowledge of the aural tradition surrounding the piece would lead her to simply reproduce the "emotive approach" of a particular performing style rather than communicate her understanding of the 'actual' meaning of the work. As a result, the performer would be "play[ing] a performing tradition" instead of the composer's work.

The "page-to-stage" approach was also discussed by an instrumental tutor participant who considered it key in evaluating his own students' performances and a vital strategy for clarifying to them the boundaries of their interpretative options:

²⁶ A discussion of the study of performance through the use of recordings is beyond the scope of this thesis. For an in-depth overview of this topic see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's *The changing sound of music: Approaches to studying recorded performances* (2009a) and Nicholas Cook's *Methods for analysing recordings* (2009).

I think it's really important to be objective [when evaluating my students' performances] ... Well I think in terms of the one-to-one situation, just constantly looking at the score and the details in the score, and asking yourself the question 'Okay ... is this a valid interpretation?' You know, 'Does it come from what's on the page?' ... I think, you know, sometimes again, it depends on the individual, but with some students they, they seem to kind of thrive on being a bit radical, a bit rebellious in their interpretations or the way they approach playing. And when that happens I do think you have to start throwing the gauntlet down a bit and really kind of putting goalposts up. Erm, you know, you've got to give them a knowledge of the style of a piece that they're playing and what, you know, okay you want to take it right up to the edge of possibility maybe in some cases, in some pieces of music, but you can't go beyond this point kind of thing. But within that post and the other post wherever it is, erm, you know, there's a big sort of erm pool of possibilities. Erm so, as I say, I mean I might play something faster, slower, louder, quieter, less pedal, more pedal. But if what they're doing has really come from a thought process that, that has identified what the composer is trying to erm project, then that's fine. (Alan, instrumental tutor)

Alan seemed to suggest that (at least some of) his students had no issues thinking beyond the score; in fact unlike Sean's experience, Alan's main concern was how to help his students' performances be securely grounded in the score. Echoing Theo's view, Alan's main criterion of evaluation of the success of a performance was whether the student was able to identify the intentions of the composer – as mediated through the composer's score – and communicate them through her playing. The way he described his own role as instrumental teacher (as someone “throwing the gauntlet down a bit and really kind of putting goalposts up”) with students who liked being ‘radical’ or ‘rebellious’ brings to mind Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's view of the ‘classical’ performance world being policed by authoritative figures, such as teachers and critics: “Small adjustments to norms are sought after by young players seeking to be noticed, but anything obvious is counterproductive: performers who dared to offer a radically different view would be slapped down by performance police” (2012, para. 3.3).

Theoretical analysis as an approach to the musical score was also brought up by some student participants. In their experience, this approach helped them understand ‘how a piece works’ from a structural point of view and supported their interpretative choices. This is illustrated by the narratives of two student participants:

I always break down a piece. I always analyse it. Like, I have to know, break it down, how it works, before I can play it properly ... I love writing on my scores, I make a special copy for analysis and I'm just writing all over it, and going this section is this, or circle that. (Tom, 3rd year student)

What I found really useful was when tutors made me aware of the overall structure of the piece by exposing the whole music sheet in front of me and pointing out the crucial turning points of musical ideas. Personally, I find challenging the idea of balancing a piece of music according to its form rather than its dynamics and expression marks. (Bianca, 3rd year student)

In the case of Tom, it is interesting to notice that he had originally enrolled onto the BMus Music programme with the idea of specialising in composition and it is possible that his practice of analysing the score he was learning as a performer originated from his experience as a composer. As for Bianca, her words indicate that she was introduced to a “page-to-stage” practice by members of the performance community and, therefore, that this approach was common practice among (some) expert members of the community. The way these student participants talked about approaching the score from an analytical point of view to inform their interpretative work recalls the process that John Rink describes as “performer’s analysis” (2002, p. 36) and suggests they had not engaged with this practice before joining the formal performance community.

When the score is understood as repository of the intentions of the composer and, therefore, of musical meaning (as illustrated in the previous quotations), performers tend to (be expected to) ponder the question of whether the musical score they are using represents an “authoritative text” (Lawson & Stowell, 1999, pp. 34-35). In other words, performers (are expected to) consider whether they are basing their interpretation of the music on a “responsible edition”, that is, a musical edition “that most fully represents the editor’s conception of the work as it developed in composition and performance at the hands of the composer” (p. 33).

In this context, musical editions are commonly viewed as having the potential to influence a performer’s interpretation (Jackson, 1996, pp. 6-8; Kingsbury, 1988, pp. 87-94; Lawson & Stowell, 1999, pp. 33-35; Palmer, 1996, p. 434) whether they are

practical, “performing editions”²⁷ that have been heavily edited, or critical, ‘Urtext’ editions, in which the sources of the musical text have been carefully examined and documented and the editor’s markings are kept to a minimum and carefully differentiated from those of the composer. In the case of “performing editions”, the editorial markings and/or suggestions are a potential source of “performance expression” (Palmer, 1996, p. 434) that does not originate directly from the composer and should, according to some, be treated with suspicion (cf. Peres Da Costa, 2012, p. ix). As for ‘Urtext editions’, they may also have their pitfalls when used for performance purposes. Performers may believe, Neal Peres da Costa argues, that “such nice, clean, and apparently authoritative editions definitely embody the composer’s intentions not only in respect of notation, but also of musical execution” (p. xi). Consequently, performers may assume that faithfulness to the composer’s intentions necessitates a literal reading of the musical score.

In the context of this study, musical editions were mentioned only in the narratives of third-year performance students. There could be two possible reasons for this: either this topic was brought to the attention of the students more prominently (or exclusively) in their final year of undergraduate studies; or students became more aware of the discourses surrounding musical editions only once they had reached a more advanced performance and instrumental/vocal level. What is interesting, at any rate, is that the student participants who did mention musical editions talked about them in a way that indicated they did not see how the question of which edition to use would be relevant to their own music-making:

[E]ditions of music, you know, they’re interesting but I just thought, ‘I can’t, I can’t see a way into it,’ do you know what I mean? I just couldn’t see a way in.
(Caroline, 3rd year student)

Some students could not buy into the belief surrounding editions even when it was held by their own instrumental or performance tutor, as the next two quotations illustrate:

[I]n terms of editions I haven't really, other people worry more about it than me, and tell me what edition to get [laugh]. In the end my flute teacher- in the end she

²⁷ Roland Jackson defines ‘performing editions’ as musical texts “put into circulation by renowned singers, pianists (etc.), who passed along their own insights based on tradition and personal experience” (1996: 7).

ends up telling me what edition I should get, I was like 'Ok, cool'. I've never really paid attention, I've just bought the music and that's it, like I remember going to Top Wind, which is like the flute store, they're like you've these- and I'm like, 'Oh that's the prettiest front cover,' seriously, like in the end it doesn't really [matter]. (Josie, 3rd year student)

I know Max (talked) about looking at editions or something, to do with, the actual, sheet music, I didn't find that as interesting [she laughs] erm ... he'd be looking at, erm, like Urtext editions and talking about, the actual kind of, the publishing of music and how, erm, music can be interpreted differently through different editions and things and I just didn't-I don't know if I was just in, not really in a kind of focused mood that day, I just remember not really enjoying that one so much. (Kay, 3rd year student)

The last student, Kay, clarified that what she appreciated the most about certain editions was the quality of the physical product. Nevertheless, she did add that she found it helpful when editions contained a commentary or notes with interpretative suggestions.

As is apparent from the above quotations, certain members of the performance community gave enough importance to the question of musical editions to recommend specific editions to their students; or to illustrate (or attempt to illustrate) the potential effect of different editions on the performance of the same piece. In spite of this clear endorsement of the value of editions, other community members – mostly students, it would seem – did not give much weight to the matter of musical editions. Josie provides a clear example of this:

Becky and Daniel [two fellow students] are always telling me, they're like, 'Ah!' and like I walk into the practice rooms and there's a discussion- there's a discussion about different editors and edition and I'm just like, [with a sarcastic tone of voice] 'Yeah, sure' [laugh]. (Josie, 3rd year student)

The above quotation illustrates how her peers' clear enthusiasm for the subject did not dispel Josie's scepticism on the matter. A particular argument that Josie used to justify this lack of empathy towards the whole issue was: why worry about editions if ultimately performers (even those like her peer Becky, who believe in the importance of this issue) will 'make the music her own' irrespective of what edition she is using?

I probably should care more about the different editions, but erm I don't know, right now I'll make what I make of the music ... [I]n terms of Becky, she's erm a

pianist, but she- I don't know why she cares [about editions] because she just makes it her own any way so [with laughter in her voice] she doesn't even pay attention to the editing marks, so I'm like [laugh], 'Why does she care?', she really does it 'cause she's got such a flair for [performance]. (Josie, 3rd year student)

Josie's quotation seems to provide an example of what Nicholas Cook identifies as "an almost schizophrenic dissociation between the discursive, academic knowledge" that some performers adopt and the actual "tacit, action-based knowledge that they rely on as performers" (2013, p. 23). Becky, the peer Josie was referring to in the above quotations, appeared to be passionate about the issue of different editions when she talked about the topic; and yet, Josie did not find that Becky's intellectual engagement with the topic was reflected in her actual music-making.

Josie's expressions "she just makes it her own" and "I'll make what I make of the music" suggest a relationship with the score in which the performer does not feel an obligation to be faithful to the composer's text or to follow an editor's markings. Rather, the musical score appears to become a vehicle for the performer's expression. The discourse implicit here is one in which the performer takes ownership (at least to some extent) of the musical text, thus assuming a (co-)creative role. This interpretation appears to be supported by Josie's comment on music score editors:

I don't know where this whole like, whether there's one- more editors are better than the others, I was like, 'Oh can't you get some music where there's no editor involved?' 'Cause obviously that's- that's gonna be the, the best one, but erm and then you can put in your own phrase marks in and then me and my flute teacher won't have to have debates [laugh]. (Josie, 3rd year student)

Josie's conception of the performer as (co-)creator and her approach to the musical score are echoed by Michal, another third-year student:

[W]hen you play you're trying to give *something* [to the audience]... sometimes you feel you can do something more with [the composer's music] and for you it's more than maybe a composer would expect ... [O]bviously as a musician you try to reach as many people as you want to, so I would try to find a balance, to still- to make it my own, but not too extravagant because erm ... some people might think, you know, "This is not" ... I think we do need to do something different, but still mainly in a huge percentage relate to what's the, you know, be aware of [performance] conventions and so on. (Michal, 3rd year student)

As we saw with Josie, Michal, too, uses the expression “make it my own” when referring to the composer’s score, a turn of phrase that Nicholas Cook associates with the idea of performance superseding the composer’s score: as he puts it, “in taking possession of the music and making it their own, performers erase the score” (2013, p. 236). I find it significant that these two students – who described themselves as ‘confident’ performers who “love[d] being on stage” – would share a very similar attitude to performing. Both students’ understanding of their role as performers is reminiscent of Stan Godlovitch’s view of performance as ‘story-telling’: Godlovitch sees the performer as a creative agent who participates “in determining the nature of the full work”, while scored works become “vehicles and opportunities” for music-making (1998, pp. 95-96). Nonetheless, Michal saw his own individual creative contribution as bounded, to some extent, by his listeners’ knowledge of performance conventions (Repp, 1997, pp. 420-422), particularly in terms of delivering a performance they could perceive as stylistically sympathetic. In other words, Michal appeared to feel a certain sense of obligation as a performer, not towards dead composers, but towards his live audience (cf. Taruskin, 1995 as quoted in Cook, 2013, p. 399).

Interestingly, another student participant described the approach of ‘making the music one’s own’ – or, as he put it, “play[ing] whatever we want” – as a performing style that did not take into consideration any historical information about the performance practices that existed during a composer’s lifetime. He referred to it as “play[ing] contemporary”. In this student’s narrative, knowledge of historical performance practices was presented as a lens that reveals the limited nature of notation in directing the performer’s music-making and, consequently, the performer’s need to go beyond the musical score:

[O]f course we can always play contemporary and play whatever we want, but there are some- really, unwritten rules in history, you know about using our pedal using our dynamics using our legatos using our staccatos ... you find out that, OK this came from history and this is a serious business, and it’s not just, you know whatever you see in the score ... if you don’t know history you cannot do that if you’re not, well, musicologically, you know, supported you cannot [interpret the score]. (Kadir, 3rd year student)

In Kadir's narrative the practice of thinking beyond the score appears to be underpinned by a 'traditional discourse of duty' generally attributed to the historically informed performance movement (cf. Cook, 2013, pp. 26-29). And yet, Kadir's view of historical musicology classes and of the knowledge that can be acquired through these – which he shared earlier in his interview – makes me wonder whether he was in fact reproducing the views of one (or more) of his university tutors on how a performer should relate to the score, rather than sharing his own beliefs on the matter. In other words, I wonder whether he was, in Bakhtinian terms, "speaking with the voices of others" (Maybin, 2001, p. 68) in order to adopt what he might have considered a socially acceptable way of discussing this particular topic with me, one of his tutors:

I didn't really pay any attention to [historical musicology classes] as if, [history] is going to make me more talented. Even if I've done them I don't remember anything, you know, it was just, an essay project, which you open books you read it ... you spend a lot of time with your research and after you finish it you have to read it throughout your life again and again to remember it, because, I haven't got a very good memory I think, with history [laughing] although with music I do, but not with history. (Kadir, 3rd year student)

Kadir's adoption of the discourse of 'talent' seems to indicate his personal belief that what really matters in musical performance is whether the performer possesses this particular quality (often also referred to as 'musicality') – that (supposedly) cannot be taught because "either you have or you don't" (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 64) – rather than any amount of relevant historical knowledge. Given this student participant's awareness of my identity not only as a researcher, but as one of his tutors on the BMus Music degree, it is possible that, when talking about his views on the matter, Kadir might have preferred to use a discourse that could have been viewed as conforming with the views of (some) of his tutors.

Summary

In conclusion, the participants' narratives surrounding the performer's engagement with the musical score indicate that the community's practice was characterised by three main beliefs: (1) faithfulness to the composer's intentions (and/or to the text that encoded the composer's intentions); (2) thinking beyond the notation and 'making the

music one's own'; (3) and fulfilment of the listeners' expectations about performance conventions.

These beliefs were not necessarily deemed mutually exclusive, although students with little or moderate performance experience were more likely to find them contradictory, rather than complementary, and struggled to reconcile them in their music-making practices. More experienced and confident students were less preoccupied with the composer's intentions and faithfulness to the text, although some demonstrated a clear awareness of the listeners' expectations that musicians conform to performing conventions.

The community's beliefs regarding the engagement with the score reflect two (apparently) opposing conceptions of the performer's role: on the one hand, to faithfully transmit the pre-existing meaning encoded in the musical text; on the other hand, to (co-)create meaning through real-time music-making. Some of the narratives discussed in this chapter suggest that although some community members publicly endorsed the role of performer as mediator, in practice – i.e. when performing – they adopted a creative role. Thus the findings supports the claim (cf. Cook, 2013, pp. 20-23) that while some performers may subscribe to discourses of authority of the composer and of faithfulness to the composer's musical text, their performance activities may be characterised by a more creative approach to the musical score.

5. From the practice room to the stage

As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.1), students on the performance modules found that they had to respond to a very specific expectation on the part of experienced members of the formal performance community (such as tutors and examiners): students were expected to approach their music-making in a way that took into consideration its performative and communicative aspects. This expectation required students to consider how the music encoded in the musical score could “work” (Rink, 2002: 35) as a performance event and, thus, it fostered a shift in their conception of music-making from playing/singing to performing.

Findings in this study suggest that this expectation encouraged an understanding of preparation towards a performing event as a process that went well beyond learning the notes and “getting things right” (Cook, 2014, p. 2):

[I]t takes me a long time to learn music. And not only just to learn the notes, but just to feel like I can go out there and perform and give it, if that makes sense.

(Darla, 2nd year student)

Darla’s use of the verb ‘give’ in this context suggests that learning the musical material for a performance event meant making this material her own²⁸ so that she could offer it (or ‘give it’, as she put it) to her audience through her music-making. As such, she appears to understand the preparation process in terms of creating a sense of ownership of the musical material (cf. Godøy et al., 2012, p. 150) so that she could perform it to (or share it with) her audience.

Darla’s conception of the preparation of musical material as a process in function of performing – rather than in function of ‘playing/singing the right notes’ – is representative of how students came to (or were encouraged to) conceptualise their learning efforts when they joined the formal performance community and started participating in their practices. An implication of this conception of learning is that these students came to experience the performance event as the culmination of the whole preparation process. This is illustrated by a third-year student participant’s discussion of how he approached his performances:

²⁸ The idea of the performer making the musical material her own is also discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2) in relation to thinking beyond the musical score.

[I]f I know when there is a performance, I sort of place it on a map in my mind [chuckling] and ... I sort of build it up- build up the climax to it. I know that *this* has to be done by that time, *this* has to be done by that time, and I need to be confident in the performance, I need to know that I'm well prepared, I've rehearsed enough, everything is settled, the piece is not too fresh, everything is under my fingers ... Once, you know, it comes to, let's say, a week before the performance, I start thinking about it and really focus on that and sort of practise every day. (Michal, 3rd year student)

Michal's (and other participants') understanding of how each step of one's preparation feeds into the performance event echoes the 'holistic views' of the relationship between practising and performing that Karen Wise, Mirjam James and John Rink discuss in their chapter on practising in relation to performance as creative practice (2012, pp. 143-148). Furthermore, Michal's understanding supports these authors' conception of practising as a "deliberate process" (p. 148) which not only culminates in the actual performance, but – most importantly – informs it. In other words, what these conceptions of practising have in common is the belief that the manner in which the preparation process is undertaken shapes the actual performance event.

In the present study, participants' narratives indicate that three specific aspects of the preparation process towards a performance event were particularly meaningful to community members in terms of enabling the shift of focus from 'just' playing/singing to performing. These aspects were: (5.1) playing through work in progress to an audience or, in other words, practising performing; (5.2) becoming aware of the impact of the musician's 'performing body' on the audience's response to one's music-making; and (5.3) developing the ability to switch from a preoccupation with problem-solving to a focus on the moment-by-moment unfolding of the musical narrative that the performer creates. In the following three sections, I present my analysis of the findings related to these aspects of the performance preparation process.

5.1. Practising performing

A specific facet of the preparation process that students realised the importance of – or were encouraged to engage with by expert members of the community – was making time to play through the pieces they were preparing for a specific event, in

most cases a performance assessment. Interestingly, literature on practice strategies, self-regulation and deliberate practice in instrumental/vocal learning tend to identify playing through as an ineffective strategy (Barry, 1992, p. 119; Reid, 2002, p. 109; Sloboda, 2000, p. 400). These studies, however, focus on a type of playing through that takes place during the early stages of the learning process, when students have not yet overcome the instrumental/vocal difficulties (technical and/or musical) that a piece might present to them. In the case of the present study, the playing through practice that participants found valuable refers to a type of activity that is introduced during the last stages of preparation towards a performance. To differentiate it from a more generic understanding of playing through, I refer to it as ‘practising performing’ (cf. Clark, Lisboa & Williamon, 2014, p. 292).

Students would generally engage in this type of practice in front of an audience (or with an audience in mind). The specific settings in which students would practise performing varied. They could be very informal, such as a practice room, in front of one or more peers:

I found a lot of the time, especially leading up to the final recital, I’d call Tilly and I’d say to her ‘could you come to my room?’ And ‘Can I play it through to you, the whole, the whole two pieces?’ And I found that really helpful. (Cemre, 1st year student)

[B]efore, my exam in January I’d like played through my set quite a few times to like my friends, either like individually or like I got a room out and got people to come in. (Aidan, 2nd year student)

Cemre’s and Aidan’s experiences of practising performing in a very informal setting appears to be very similar as they both referred to this activity as an opportunity to go through the whole programme they were preparing.

The contexts for practising performance could also be more formal, such as in the case of performance seminars, where students had the opportunity to play through their work in progress in front of an expert member of the formal performance community (the performance tutor who led the sessions), as well as in front of (relatively) novice members (i.e., their peers):

I found the seminars really useful, especially if I was playing to Max or Sean or whoever was the internal examiner because it was almost like a good way to

dummy play it, like practise the piece you're going to perform to them. (Kay, 3rd year student)

But [it is] actually performing myself in front of [my peers] that helped me to er really bring out 'What am I missing? What am I doing well?' (Mal, 3rd year student)

It is interesting how different Kay's and Mal's narratives are, although they are both discussing their experiences of practising performing in the context of seminars. Kay's stress was on the presence of an expert member of the community – the performance tutor who would be one of her examiners – and as such she appeared to consider this activity as a form of mock assessment and a way to test her ability to cope with a stressful situation. Whereas for Mal, playing through in the context of seminars appeared to be an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of his music-making through his peers' reaction to it and, thus, a means for deepening his understanding of the music from a performance perspective.

Notably, the common factor among the narratives of these four student participants was students' understanding of practising performing as an activity that facilitated the development of a 'sense of performance' or 'performance mode'²⁹ – that is, a sense of playing or singing *to* someone and of engaging with the music as it gradually unfolds through time – in the final stage of their preparation process. This interpretation echoes the findings of Terry Clark, Tania Lisboa and Aaron Williamon (2014, pp. 292-294) on how musicians modify the way they practise in the days leading up to a performance. According to the authors, during the final stages of preparation musicians shift their attention from small-scale musical or technical aspects to the overall effectiveness of their music-making. The shift discussed by Clark et al. appears to correspond to my student participants' understanding of the function of practising performing in the preparation process towards a performance event.

The great majority of my participants found that performance seminars provided a useful context for students' development of a 'sense of performance' in relation to the pieces they were preparing for their assessments. Nevertheless, not all performance students seemed to value these seminars:

²⁹ 'Performance mode' is discussed at some length later on in this chapter (section 5.3).

[T]his is other people's opinions, not mine; some people think that maybe the performance seminars are not very helpful, they don't want to do them all, but I don't know whether that's because they're too nervous and they don't want to do them, or whether it's actually not helpful to them. (Molly, 3rd year student)

[T]he tips that you pick up in your seminars and the experience and everything else' – [I consider them] just as a 'bonus.' (Scott, 3rd year student)

The above narratives indicate that two different aspects of practising performing in seminars might have contributed to some students' negative perception of this activity in this specific context. On the one hand, some students might have experienced the practice of playing through in front of a performance tutor and/or one's peers as an 'opportunity' for this audience to find faults with or weaknesses in their music-making. Thus, practising performing in a seminar context could become a source of considerable anxiety to students if they believed their work in progress was not up to their audience's standards. On the other hand, some students might have found that their own music-making received too little 'specialist' attention in a group class context, particularly in comparison with the type of detailed feedback they would receive in one-to-one instrumental/vocal lessons.³⁰ It could be argued, however, that these two types of negative (or not entirely positive) experiences were underpinned by the same understanding of musical performance: as a music-making activity in which the performer's focus is "on the means of achieving excellence", rather than on "the joys of sharing and reaching out to others that performance may afford" (Perdomo-Guevara, 2014, p. 72).

Participants' narratives suggest that some instrumental/vocal tutors' understanding of practising performing as a vital practice (particularly for inexperienced performers) was underpinned by the same concern with 'the means of achieving excellence' in performance. For example, Alex and Niamh, respectively an instrumental and a vocal tutor, considered practising performing the only activity that could give their students an understanding of what they needed to do to sustain a whole programme without any dips in energy or concentration from beginning to end and in front of an audience (cf. Clarke, 2002, p. 59):

[S]tudents suddenly realise that ... to play solid like on a brass instrument for forty minutes is very stamina sapping and they tend, they tend not to start to run

³⁰ Cf. Chapter 3 (section 3.2).

through the programme till two weeks before the final recital, and that is always a bit of a shock to them because it's a long time to stand up and play ... I always say 'Two months before you should know exactly what you're playing, and be running through it, by that time'. (Alex, instrumental tutor)

[T]he end result is a performance and I think [students] don't often take that into consideration because learning to play a piece in a little room, when you're relaxed and everything is entirely different from standing up in a hall, in a formal manner, in front of people and performing, and that has a lot to do with how you deal with whatever instrument, whatever voice you're doing. (Niamh, vocal tutor)

The above narratives indicate that, in these tutor participants' understanding, practising performing was valuable to students because it would help them gain a realistic perspective of what it would require of them physically, mentally and emotionally to complete the whole performance process effectively.

Notably, some instrumental/vocal tutor participants made practising performing an integral part of the one-to-one lessons they taught, either throughout the academic year or at key moments, such as before assessments:

[M]ost weeks, if not every week, but most weeks, I will get them to perform something. So instead of standing next to them I will go to the other side of the room ... so that they- they start sort of really feeling [they are performing]. And then they will re-evaluate [their music-making]. (Val, instrumental tutor)

[W]hen it comes towards erm exam time, I'll have all my students together and they will play to each other in a kind of mock exam situation, if you like. (Sally, instrumental tutor)

A study by Robert Duke and Amy Simmons (2016, pp. 12-13) on the process of music performance teaching suggests that making play-throughs an integral part of the one-to-one lesson is common practice among expert instrumental teachers. Findings in the current study, however, indicate that some of the expert members of the formal performance community struggled to incorporate this practice into their one-to-one lessons. Participants' narratives suggest that some instrumental/vocal tutors found it rather difficult to switch their attention from specific details of their students' music-making to its overall effectiveness. In the words of an instrumental tutor:

[N]earer the recital then you would listen to the whole thing, but generally I can't help myself, I just- you get to a bit I just need to go back and say it because sometimes you leave it to the end and then you have forgotten what you were going to say. (Julia, instrumental tutor)

In describing the work done together with their instrumental/vocal tutor, some student participants recognised this very same difficulty in their own tutors, as illustrated by Elaine's narrative:

[M]y teacher, she's, like how we- how she conducts my lessons and stuff, I don't have that much time to just play it through and, I just, really just, she always stops, and she is like, 'OK work that over and over and over again.' (Elaine, 2nd year student)

It would appear that Elaine's instrumental tutor found it challenging to disregard any opportunity for her student to polish her playing further. A possible reason why Elaine's tutor, also a participant in the current study, found it difficult to incorporate practising performing in Elaine's lessons could be glimpsed in the way this tutor spoke about her own experience of teaching one-to-one lessons as part of the performance modules (which was echoed by the majority of instrumental/vocal tutors):

[T]ime is so short, the lessons are very few, it's very difficult to work under these circumstances. (Daniela, instrumental tutor).

Daniela's words and Elaine's experience of Daniela's teaching suggest that the tutor's perception of the teaching circumstances led her to feel under pressure and, as a consequence, to prioritise a particular aspect of her student's preparation – precision of execution – over another – her students' ability to perform the whole programme to an audience without stopping.

The narratives of student participants who did not have the opportunity to practise performing during their one-to-one lessons indicate their belief that it would have been beneficial for them to incorporate this activity into their independent practice sessions, as the following quotations exemplify:

I find people tell me that my voice is very like stoppy-starty, I don't think through phrases enough and I wonder if it's 'cause I stop all time ... I get into this practice room, I'm gonna warm up and then I'm going to run through my programme ...

[I'll] mess up, and then, instead of going [on], no one's forcing you to continue so you will stop ... you have to force [yourself] to not stop. (Nicole, 2nd year student)

[W]hen I did my technical exam, which I did pretty well and I'm like happy with my score, but I- I did something wrong and I went, I can't remember, I think I went 'Oh crap!' in the middle of it [she laughs] or something? But it was really helpful because it just, it just reminded me like how I practise as well like, 'cause I'm so used to erm just stopping whenever I do something wrong and then just never playing through. (Elaine, 2nd year student)

These participants' narratives confirm a perceived correlation between practising performing and developing the ability to shift one's attention from musical and/or technical details to the unfolding of the musical narrative while performing. Thus, these narratives indicate an understanding of being a performer as having the ability to disregard potential disruptions to the musical flow (such as 'mistakes') and to create an uninterrupted unfolding of the music across time.

Student participants' narratives about practising performing suggest another reason why this aspect of the preparation process was considered fundamental. These students believed that gaining a sense of the overall performance through this practice would also help them manage and overcome what Aaron Williamon (2004, p. 9) has described as an "obstacle" to musical performance: music performance anxiety (MPA) or stage fright:

I need to give a certain amount of time in my practice just to play the piece over and over again, just like all the way through and then do it again and then play it in front of other people because- and I think that's what gets me really nervous as well, because, like, I hardly ever like, play it, all the way through before I actually perform it. (Elaine, 2nd year student)

For many musicians the idea of performing in front of an audience is daunting, particularly in a solo performance setting (Lehmann, Sloboda & Woody, 2007, pp. 155-158; Papageorgi, Creech & Welch, 2013; Valentine, 2002, pp. 168-169). This was certainly the case for many of the students starting their undergraduate music degree. A student participant even talked of being "petrified" by the prospect of performing during her first year of studies. In the experience of many student participants, however, the regular practice of playing through their work in progress in

front of people gradually helped them find a way to get themselves into a positive state of mind and gain greater confidence as performers. These students' experience of practising performing as part of their preparation process supports Andreas Lehmann et al.'s view that engaging with this type of activity may lessen performance anxiety if it "include[s] the elements of a 'real' performance that differentiate[s] it from a typical practice session, such as the presence of an audience, more formal attire, and playing straight through the music without stopping" (2007, p. 158). The following quotations are representative of the empowering effect that practising performing had for some students, particularly in terms of helping them cope with anxiety and confidence issues related to performing solo:

[I]t does boost your confidence doing performance in those [seminars] I think. Because I remember when we were told in- at the beginning of first year that we would do them, and we'd have to stand in front of- and I've never really stood on a stage ... on [my] own, so I think that's built us up. (Molly, 3rd year student)

[I]n first year I would- that just put me off, but I was literally just like 'notes notes notes' like this, trying to focus on the notes 'cause I was so nervous...I've started to enjoy, sitting down and playing erm the practice of even getting myself into the sort of zone, and actually gonna get into it and not shaking as much and just the physical kind of signs of it. (Kay, 3rd year student)

Molly's words, "that's built us up" and Kay's, "I've started to enjoy ... getting myself into the ... zone", suggest a strong sense of personal accomplishment related to these students' increased ability to engage with solo performance. The central place that the performer's individual abilities had in these (and many other) student participants' narratives suggests a "self-oriented approach" to performance (Perdomo-Guevara, 2014), that is an approach in which musicians' positive experience of performing is correlated to musicians' awareness of their own personal achievements.

The understanding of practising performing as a coping strategy for MPA was strongly supported by most (if not all) instrumental/vocal tutor participants:

[S]ometimes they don't take the opportunities that are thrown to them to get up and perform as much as they should. But I mean [performing is] the only way to kind of get over performance anxiety that, that can affect them so badly of course in exams. (Alan, instrumental tutor)

Interestingly, most instrumental/vocal tutor participants believed that nerves were part and parcel of musicians' performing experience, rather than a state that only some musicians experienced. The following quotation is representative of this belief:

I think it's important to tell youngsters that the nerves are there all the time, and the more important a date you get, and the higher up you get, the worse it gets, it doesn't go away. So you have to learn, at a very early age, or a very early stage of your career, to deal with nerves, and if the students deal well with nerves, then they do themselves justice when they stand up there and perform in front of an examiner or their, their peers or whoever, but if they don't learn to deal well with the nerves, they never erm they're never allowed to make most of their talent.
(Niamh, vocal tutor)

This conception of nerves or MPA (Cook, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) is significant in terms of (some of) the formal performance community members' conception of performance and being/becoming a performer. The belief exemplified by Niamh's words – “nerves are there all the time” and “the higher up you get, the worse it gets” – suggests that fear of being judged negatively by one's audience is understood as an intrinsic part of being a ('classical') performer. In other words, it could be argued that (some) members of the community believed that 'successful' public performing was (at least partly) characterised by the performer's abilities to match her audience's expectations. Thus, performing becomes understood as an event during which the performer has something to *prove* to her audience, rather than to *share* with her audience (cf. Perdomo-Guevara, 2014, p. 72).

5.2. Becoming aware of the 'performing body'

Scholarly attention to the social nature of musical performance (Clarke, 2003; Cook, 2003; Small, 1999) has contributed to an increased focus on the 'performing body' (Caruso, Coorevits, Nijs & Leman, 2016, pp. 405-406; Frith, 1996, p. 217) as a fundamental component of musical meaning. Over the last two decades or so, research on musical communication in live performance has provided increased empirical evidence that visual information – that is, the way musicians present their performing selves and use their body during a musical event – has a fundamental impact on the performers' communication with their audience and the audience's perception of the event itself (cf. Davidson & Broughton, 2015; Schutz, 2008). This

type of visual information may range from how musicians use their body to shape musical expressiveness during their music-making (Davidson, 2005) to musicians' stage presence and physical appearance (Coimbra & Davidson, 2004; Schutz, 2008).

Findings in the current study suggest an alignment between the views of expert members of the formal performance community about the role of the musicians' 'performing body' and the above-mentioned research evidence. Tutor participants' narratives in particular indicate that instrumental/vocal tutors understood the "bodily and visual aspects" (Davidson, 2017, p. 365) provided by musicians during a performance event as key to the audience's reception of the overall event. Findings also indicate that this belief was not held by (many) novice members (i.e., performance students) prior to joining the formal performance community: it appears that students had not given much thought to this aspect of their music-making before the beginning of their HE music studies. These findings support Harald Jørgensen's view that, when preparing a performance event, "many students seem preoccupied solely with the music and forget to prepare their stage behaviour adequately" (2004, p. 95). Instrumental/vocal tutor participants in the current study lamented students' (apparent) disregard for this aspect of their music-making and, echoing Jørgensen, stressed the importance that practising stagecraft skills had on the performers' ability to engage their audience:

[T]he way [students] present themselves, you know, especially, you know, if they come and shamble on and erm 'oh, I'm going to play a little piece [mumbling],' you know, as if they've just dragged themselves out of bed, erm yeah, you can obviously say 'Well, that's not really the way to engage an audience' [laughs]. (Luke, instrumental tutor)

[T]hey forget no matter how good they are at their playing or their singing that if you can't actually look as if you're meant to be up there and stand and deliver, it's hopeless really, so that has to be quite polished and practised as much as the actual technical thing, and I think a lot of erm a lot of people underestimate the ability to just perform. (Niamh, vocal tutor)

Niamh's words in particular suggest the belief that being a performer was not 'just' about embodying and enacting the music (Caruso et al, 2016; Crispin & Ostersjo, 2017: 297-299); rather, it was also about 'look[ing] as if you're meant to be up there [on stage]', in other words, about embodying and enacting the 'performing persona'

(cf. Davidson, 2002). As such, stagecraft skills needed just as much attention as the vocal/instrumental aspects of one's music-making during the preparation process.

Although (some) performance students may have initially ignored the implications of being “thrown into a world of display” (Green, 1997, p. 26) whenever they performed in front of an audience, their participation in the practices of the formal performance community made them aware that “bodily and visual aspects” have a fundamental influence on the performers' communication with the audience (Davidson, 2017, p. 365). Findings indicate that participation in group classes (performance seminars) and assessed/non-assessed performances were particularly significant in developing students' awareness of the visual side of their music-making. This awareness, in turn, contributed to a shift in students' conception of music-making from playing/singing to performing.

This was the case for Michal, a third-year student who had received specialist training as a clarinettist before starting his HE music studies. Michal shared that before joining the formal performance community he had never given much thought to the potential impact of his music-making (both aural and visual sides) on the audience while preparing a performance. Regular participation in performance group classes – a setting for ‘practising performing’³¹ – had “opened his mind” and given him a new perspective on the matter:

[T]hese seminars made me aware that you- in the process of preparation [it] is very important to actually see yourself from the point of view of the audience ... it makes you aware that there are certain aspects you should be paying attention to: for example, ... stage presence, the general things around it, you know, how you enter the stage, how you bow and [laughing] because that's all, you know it's a perf- that actually made me aware of erm ... what performance is, you know?
(Michal, 3rd year student)

When I asked Michal to explain how he understood performance in light of his change of perspective, he replied he now believed that performance went beyond a focus on instrumental aspects of music-making:

[Performance is the] whole act, you know, of entering the stage ... the appearance is quite- is very important, you know, the whole presence.’ (Michal, 3rd year student)

³¹ See section 5.1 of the current chapter.

Interestingly, other student participants' experience of the seminars differed considerably from Michal's in terms of the (perceived) degree of attention that was given to musicians' 'performing body' in this context. From the perspective of these student participants, attention to visual, embodied aspects of performing – such as the enactment of the 'performing persona' – had been very occasional or even non-existent:

In our first and second year I believe we had someone come in and do ... a performance seminar, but it was on bits of performance like walking on, simple things like walking on, presenting your- the title of your piece and things like that. (Oriana, 3rd year student)

Um, I think it's a shame we didn't have more seminars like that, though to be honest, I think you could probably never have enough of that. (Jamie, 3rd year student)

[A]ll the non-musical aspects of performing never really got mentioned as in like, just the formalities of playing and all the things that seem really trivial ... like-kind of posture and things like that. You gotta kind of, look presentable and you see so many people that kind of looked awkward and like subconsciously that can really affect like how you view a performance. (Sander, 3rd year student)

These students' narratives suggest that not all the performance tutors who led seminars may have encouraged a discussion around (or feedback on) visual, embodied aspects of students' work in progress.³² At the same time, their narratives – Jamie's and Sander's in particular – indicate these students' keen awareness of the impact that the enactment of the 'performing persona' has in shaping the audience's perception of a performance event. Thus, it is possible that what contributed to these students' awareness of the role of the 'performing body' was their own participation to these classes as audience members; that is to say, the fact they could observe their peers' music-making. Sander's words – "you see so many people that ...looked awkward" – would seem to support this interpretation.

Interestingly, one student's narrative suggests that, although musicians' performing selves might not have been given (much) *explicit* attention in a seminar setting, peers' and tutors' reactions to students' performances appeared to be affected not only by

³² Notably, only one tutor participant mentioned explicitly that she carried out this type of work in a seminar setting.

how students presented themselves, but also by students' physical appearance. Caroline, a first-year vocal student at the time of her interview, recounted how during these seminars she had started to pay attention to the *tacit* criteria that were being used by both tutor and peers to evaluate students' work in progress. As a result, she came to realise the impact that 'look[ing] good on stage' had on the audience's response to a performance:

[P]eople love [a performance] because, you know, you look good on stage, and that's something you can't really control from, you know, like tall, short, you know... Erm so it's very interesting to see what people have to say just based on what you look like ... It did make me think more about my appearance when I was doing my erm final recital, which was interesting. I did sort of put more effort into the way I looked. Because no matter what you say, no matter how, what's the word erm no matter how impartial you try to be, physically you're gonna be affected by what people look like and I think you can't get away from that.
(Caroline, 1st year student)

Caroline's understanding of the impact that musicians' physical appearance has on audience's reception of a performing event is supported by Lehmann et al.'s discussion on the performer-audience relationship (2007, p. 167). The authors report that research on the reception of live music-making indicates that the audience's perception of performers' 'attractiveness' is a key component of their evaluation of performers' musical abilities. Interestingly, Caroline was the only participant in the current study who made an explicit connection between physical attractiveness and the evaluation of performance; furthermore, she used it to inform her own assessed performances. It is possible that as a vocal student she was more sensitive to the fact that, as Jane Davidson puts it, singers' public performances are "inextricably bound up with their bodies, with no musical instrument to mediate between the music and the audience" (p. 366).

Participants' narratives in the current study indicate that students' experience of a more formal performance setting – the assessed performance – was very different in terms of the attention that the presentation of their performing selves received. Participants explained that this aspect was explicitly taken into account by examiners and that 'presentation' was one of the marking criteria and feedback categories examiners referred to when evaluating students' performances. 'Presentation'

included performance aspects such as stage manner, confidence and attire.³³ Interestingly, literature on the evaluation of musical performance indicates that this type of visual information plays a significant role in assessors' perception of a performance event (Tsay, 2013, p. 14583) even in cases in which assessors are not guided by explicit assessment criteria (see Coimbra & Davidson, 2004).

Some student participants in the current study found that the explicit attention that examiners paid to 'presentation' contributed to a significant shift in their understanding of live music-making and its preparation process. More specifically, examiners' feedback on how performers looked and behaved on stage helped these students realise that their preparation process should be informed by a consideration of both aural and visual aspects of the performer's communication with her audience:

So they had a completely different perspective and I thought 'Oh, I didn't think of that,' like I was so worried on technique that I didn't think about maybe my stage presence, the way I presented myself. And [the examiner's feedback] was really useful. (Caroline, 1st year student)

[T]here are some, certain things that are just 'Oh I didn't know, that I was like that,' like I always make faces when I play, and I have to get used to that, and sometimes I don't realise it's just like, I don't know, a nervous twitch or something. (Elaine, 2nd year student)

Although participants generally viewed examiners' feedback on 'presentation' as helpful to students' growth as performers, when the feedback focused on the performance students' attire it was perceived rather negatively. This is illustrated by two participants who shared their experience of this kind of feedback. In the first case, an instrumental tutor commented on the written feedback that was given to one of her female students:

[A]ctually there was a erm there was a comment about erm on, on a written exam report, some years ago now, there was a comment about a female flute player's dress, what she was wearing. And I kind of, I felt that was a bit unnecessary. (Sally, instrumental tutor)

³³ During their interview, some student participants showed me some of the structured feedback forms (SFFs) they had received after their performance assessments. All SFFs used for performance exams listed and exemplified the feedback categories that examiners used (explicitly).

Interestingly, Sally's view of this type of feedback as "unnecessary" does not reflect research evidence on this topic: what performers wear has been widely recognised to have a significant impact on how the audience "first ... hear them" (Frith, 1996, p. 219) as well as on the audience's perception of their musical abilities (Griffiths, 2010, p. 160; Lehmann, Sloboda & Woody, 2007, p. 167). It is possible that Sally's view originated from an understanding that feedback on attire was too 'personal' to be appropriate in an examination setting.

This interpretation appears to be supported by the narrative of a female student participant who shared her experience of receiving this kind of feedback face-to-face, immediately after her assessed performance. I have included an extensive excerpt of her recounting of the event to do justice to her vivid description of the feedback she received as well as to her own reaction to it:

[A]t the end of the performance, one of the examiners said 'Haley can you come over here a minute,' and I thought 'Oh what do they want to talk to me about?' and I went over... and they said to me...erm '[I]t would have been nice if you could have taken a bigger bow, but we felt the top you are wearing was stopping you from doing that.' ... I suppose it [was] quite loose fabric, so obviously I didn't like, bow down to my feet, but I would never take a big bow anyway, I would just do a curtsy, I'm a lady and that's what I like to do, and, there were still a couple of people in the room, and I felt really humiliated ... it left me feeling really negative about the whole experience. And then I got my feedback form back, and they'd given me some massively high mark for my appearance and presentation, so I thought 'Well, which was it? Did you think that I looked like a tart or did you think that' erm... you know 'I presented myself well,' so it was like contradictory feedback and it was really erm it was really personal feedback, I felt that really they didn't have the right... I thought that really unless I'd come out on stage you know, in a state of undress I felt that it wasn't really appropriate to erm comment on what I was wearing, it's an extremely personal thing to say and I felt really embarrassed. (Haley, 2nd year student)

It is clear from Haley's words that she perceived the examiners' feedback on her attire as a personal criticism, an attack on her identity not only as a musician, but also as a woman – in her narrative she presented herself as "a lady", as opposed to the image of "a tart" which she felt the examiners had introduced into their interactions with her through their feedback. Notably, her judgement of this type of feedback as being 'really inappropriate' was vigorously supported by the students who witnessed

Haley's recollection of the events during the focus group to which they all participated.³⁴ Haley explained further that she did not "like being open to criticism in that way". She also added that this experience caused her to develop negative feelings about performance and contributed to her decision to give up her membership of the formal performance community at the end of her second year.

5.3. Switching to 'performance mode'

When discussing the preparation process towards a performance, some participants reflected on the fact that all the different aspects of the process – from working out one's fingering (for instrumentalists) or what the text of a song means (for singers) to 'practising performing' – needed to be integrated seamlessly for the process to culminate in a convincing performance. The key to a successful culmination of this process was the ability to shift to what some student participants referred to as 'performance mode'. They described 'performance mode' as an approach that enabled the performer to focus her attention on music-making in the moment and on the gradual unfolding of the musical narrative. This was contrasted to 'practice mode', an approach that facilitated problem-seeking and problem-solving (Payne, 2017, p. 5), in which the musical material at hand is deconstructed and reconstructed in a process of exploration and internalisation.

Although these participants believed that the shift to 'performance mode' contributed to effective performing, they also recognised it as problematic due to the fact that much of a musician's practice time was dedicated to working on details and "taking everything apart". As such, they found it challenging to let go of their preoccupation with small-scale musical and technical elements and switch to 'performance mode' as part of their preparation process. This was the case for Darla, a second-year piano student:

The more critical and taking everything apart kind of thing, I think it– I don't know, yeah, I tend not to do that in performances at all because I just feel like once I start thinking about any of those little things it just puts me off completely, I'm not going to play the pieces, like, as I could. But at the same time it's quite hard to, I don't know, either balance the two in practice as well, because if you're even doing too much, like let's say in the weeks coming up to a performance, and

³⁴ This focus group was comprised of second-year students, one male and five female.

I will obviously get quite, like, paranoid about certain things ... so I find that quite hard. (Darla, 2nd year student)

In recounting some of her most recent positive performing experiences, Darla expressed the belief that she did her best when she was immersed in her music-making and, most importantly, managed to let go of the “little things” she spent most of her practice time on, thus shifting her focus on the “bigger picture”. Darla’s description of her positive performing experiences is reminiscent of the state of flow theorised by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Significantly, one of the traits that Csikszentmihalyi identified in individuals’ experience of flow was a weaker sense of the ego “so that the person no longer worried what others thought about him/her, or whether he/she would succeed or fail” (Csikszentmihalyi & Asakawa, 2016, p. 6). This particular trait could explain why performers felt that to be in ‘performance mode’ they needed to relinquish their preoccupation with the details of their music-making, as Darla’s experience exemplified.

A second-year vocal student, Rosie, expressed the belief that the reason why ‘classical’ musicians in particular found it difficult to let go of their preoccupation with details while performing was due to their relationship with the musical score.³⁵ In Rosie’s experience as a member of the formal performance community, performers were encouraged to focus on the correct execution of the details in the musical score in an ‘obsessive’ manner. As a result, performers felt under pressure during their music-making and their mind could not help but keep engaging with the details in question, making it close to impossible for them to be in ‘performance mode’:

[The] expectation that I found in classical performance ... the ability to be – to basically to translate what’s on the sheet music very close to it, within rhythm for rhythm, note for note, those kind of things ... it makes you sort of very meticulous and all that kind of stuff, which is a good thing to have. But those expectations sometimes add so much pressure [when performing] because in your mind, you’re kind of going, ‘Okay, so it goes one, two, three, ba-da da-da,’ and sometimes - and that in itself I think is sometimes an obsessive thing. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

Although several student participants shared their thoughts about being in ‘performance mode’, only one tutor participant discussed it. John, an instrumental

³⁵ For an in-depth discussion of community members’ views about performers’ relationship with the musical score see Chapter 4.

tutor, reflected extensively on what was required to achieve the switch to ‘performance mode’ in the final stages of preparation, as well as during the performance event itself. In his view, it was a matter of encouraging a ‘synthetic’ state of mind in the performer:

[P]erformance is not an analytical activity, it’s a synthetic activity in which you’re putting stuff together. So erm you’re very much in that state of mind. It’s to encourage that state of mind, you know, daring to put all this stuff together and er you know, to let go of some of the detail in order to engage in the act of performance ... [I]f you’re just standing on stage and talking to yourself, ‘Oh, I mustn’t do this, I must do that and I’m worried about this,’ and you’re thinking in terms of that on stage, I mean, it’s not a very sophisticated level of performance in my experience. (John, instrumental tutor)

The image that John conveys with his words – ‘daring’ to engage in the act of performance – suggests a conception of performing in which the musician lets go of her fear of getting anything ‘wrong’ – and thus of her fear of being judged negatively by her audience – and fully commits to the performative and communicative aspects of her music-making. This interpretation is supported by his reflections on external feedback and marking criteria and on performance as a social event:

[A]s regards engaging [in] the act of performance, there has to be an understanding or growing understanding that you can let all [the feedback and marking criteria] go. And if it’s too emotionally laden with that sort of thing, it’s difficult to let go erm you know, the detail of that sort of thing. And if things go wrong in performance, actually, as regards the performance, that’s of no interest in the joy and the flow of just moving on and just creating stuff ... so many things come together [in] that social moment that the energy’s very high: it’s very powerful. (John, instrumental tutor)

John’s narrative suggests that the aspects which are an integral and useful part of the preparation process – an awareness of the audience’s response to one’s work in progress and of their expectations – become an emotional obstacle during the act of performance. His words convey an understanding of performing as a joyful and creative act in which the musician is immersed in the gradual unfolding of the musical narrative (cf. Rink, 2017) and shares it with one’s audience.

Summary

This chapter has discussed how participation in the practices of the formal performance community enabled a shift in students' conception of music-making from playing/singing to performing during their preparation process towards a performance event. More specifically, my analysis suggests that this shift was promoted by moving away from a concern with problem-solving (and a 'practice mind-set') to a state of immersion in, and commitment to, the moment-by-moment unfolding of the music created through one's music-making.

A vital aspect of the emerging conception of performance (and being/becoming a performer) was a growing awareness of the social nature of music-making. This required placing the relationship between performer and audience at the centre of not only the performing event, but also of the final stages of the preparation process. Thus performing becomes understood as an act in which the musician 'gives' a performance to the audience and the audience responds to the performer's enactment of the music and of her 'performing persona'.

My analysis of the findings indicates that the conceptual shift from playing/singing to performing had a positive effect on some students' experience of music-making. Other students, however, had greater difficulties with this shift and struggled to view the relationship between performer and audience in positive terms: they experienced their audience's response in terms of judgment – rather than appreciation – of their music-making. As a result, performing for these students became associated with opening themselves up to criticism, which made it difficult (if not impossible) for them to let go of their concern with 'doing it correctly'. Thus, it would appear that for some members of the formal performance community an understanding of music-making as performing, rather than as playing/singing, did not inevitably lead to an understanding of performing as a positive musical experience.

6. Perceiving a performance (I): students as listeners

As we saw in the previous chapter, a fundamental aspect of the students' journey to becoming a performer involved preparing their performances with an audience in mind. This would entail thinking about, and working on, how to deliver and sustain a whole performance in front of an audience, as well as considering the impact that the sounds they produced and the visual aspect of their performance would have on the audience.

It could be argued that having an audience in mind while preparing a performance involves imagining how listeners might “perceive and react” (Jørgensen, 2004, p. 95) to one's music-making (cf. Kokotsaki, Davidson & Coimbra, 2001, p. 21; Monks, 2009, pp. 35-36). This would entail acquiring an aural (and visual) model of what one's audience might expect to hear (and see). Extant research indicates that aural (and visual) models play a central role in the preparation process of a performance and points to the practice of listening to others' performances (including tutors' modelling during instrumental/vocal and performance classes) as fundamental to the acquisition of such models (Volioti & Williamon, 2016; Woody, 2011, p. 13). At the same time, for a model to be helpful, it would be necessary for the performer to be able to ‘critically’ listen to herself and self-evaluate her music-making against such model in order to determine whether she is progressing and moving in the desired direction (Jørgensen, 2004, p. 96).

The above argument raises some interesting questions regarding the performance community in this study: Who was the audience (real and/or imagined during preparation stages) of performances given by members of this community? What kind of listening expectations did the audience (appear to) have? How did performers get a sense of what these expectations were and how did they react to them? I believe that addressing these questions is relevant to gaining further insight into the community's understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer. Therefore, in this and the next chapter I address them by focusing on the community members' listening practices and their understanding of such practices.

The listening practices that the community engaged with were heavily influenced by the structure and assessment requirements of the performance modules. Students were scheduled to attend instrumental (one-to-one) and/or group classes (seminars) on a weekly basis and were required to prepare three assessed performances each year, two of which were solo. Thus, the main focus in both one-to-one and group classes would be students' exam repertoire:

[W]e do [the performance seminars] on a more or less weekly basis, so the students are coming in to play, either to us or to other people, the specialists that we're bringing in to run those sessions ... it prepares them for the assessment task they're working on. (Sean, performance tutor)

Well, the biggest thing for me I would definitely say is that because they have set exams at set times, you, you, you, I know we've got to gear towards those. (Sally, instrumental tutor)

As part of their coursework, performance students were also required to attend 2-6 performances³⁶ given by their peers (taking place in the music department) and review them. As the next two quotations show, student participants' views of this coursework were mixed, ranging from considering them just an expedient to get students to go to concerts to finding them useful for developing one's listening skills:

[T]he recital reviews? I just thought they were pointless, to be honest, like all the way through- like doing them I just felt I had to do them. I can understand why it's done, because it makes you have to go to recitals, which is really good for performance [students]. (Kale, 3rd year student)

I found it quite- I mean you have to really listen quite critically, especially because the standard erm this year like listening to Dan, I mean, he's a really good performer and he always gets Firsts, so it was very hard to actually criticize him and erm the tutors had said to us they didn't really want lots of positive comments they wanted criticism they wanted us to sort of critique it erm which I think is important and useful to be able to do. (Kay, 3rd year student)

Participants' narratives suggest that because the focus of the listening activities were coursework- or exam-oriented, members of the performance community, whether students or tutors, would mostly engage in analytical and 'critical' styles of listening in the context of the performance modules. This reflects existing research on listening

³⁶ The number of performances students were required to attend depended on their year of study: 6 in first and second year and 2 in third year.

practices, which claims that ‘classical’ musicians tend to adopt these listening styles when engaging with music related to their studies and/or work (Hargreaves, Hargreaves & North, 2012; Reitan, 2013; Woody, 2011). Particularly in the case of expert listeners who engage with musical styles they are knowledgeable about, musicians’ listening practices are likely to be based on “sophisticated analytic criteria” – in contrast with the listening practices of less experienced listeners, which tend to be based on “affective or associative criteria” (Hargreaves, Hargreaves & North, 2012, p. 165).

In a study exploring the way in which professional musicians respond when actively listening to music, Inger Elise Reitan states that the most prominent listening style adopted by her participants was “critical listening” (2013). Reitan explains that this style of listening is characterised by an active evaluation of “the quality of the performer, of the performance, and of the interpretation” (p. 69). Interestingly, the high degree of judgement and valuing that takes place when adopting this style of listening appeared to have a negative effect in terms of the enjoyment of music listening (p. 67): Reitan’s participants reported listening to the music they would normally engage with for professional reasons not for pleasure, but to learn “ways of doing things or new repertoire” (p. 66). Reitan concludes that “critical listening” would appear to be a highly specialised listening style that musicians needed to develop in order to function as professional performers. Robert Woody (2011) echoes this conclusion in relation to university music students. In his study on the listening habits and styles of university music majors, he found that when listening to music related to their studies, students applied an analytical style of listening – although this was not the case for music they listened to outside the scope of their studies. The descriptions my participants gave of the listening practices that members of the performance community engaged with appear to support the above studies. ‘Critical listening’ was the type of listening most participants referred to explicitly, both in relation to students’ self-listening practices and to students’ and tutors’ (and/or examiners’) listening engagement with others’ performances.

Findings indicate that the audience attending performances by members of the community would consist mostly of students and departmental members of staff. At times (such as in the case of students’ assessed end-of-year performances and open concerts given by students or members of staff), friends and family of the

performer(s) might also be part of the audience and, more rarely, members of the general public. In the case of the assessed ‘final recitals’, students would be required to perform in front of an examination panel that included an ‘external’ examiner drawn from professional musicians.

Bearing in mind the role that “the capacities, sensitivities, and interests of a perceiver” (Clarke, 2005, p. 91) play in any perception, including the perception of music, in this and the next chapter I explore the listening practices of the formal performance community from the point of view of different ‘types’ of community members,³⁷ that is, students, instrumental/vocal tutors, performance tutors and academic tutors. To accomplish this, apart from considering my participants’ explicit references to their own and/or the community’s listening activities, I have also taken into account their narratives surrounding feedback practices, which illustrate the community’s listening styles and listening focus in practice.

In the first section of this chapter (6.1), I discuss students’ self-listening practices in real time and in recordings of their own music-making. In the second and third sections, I explore their listening practices in relation to other performers: their peers (6.2) and professional performers (6.3). In the next chapter, I turn to the listening practices adopted by tutors and examiners in relation to students’ performances.

6.1. Students listening to themselves

It is commonly agreed that one of the most important skills a performer needs to develop and refine is the ability to listen to oneself, both during solo/group practice sessions and when performing for an audience. Even in the case of musicians who have regular instrumental/vocal lessons, tutors cannot provide the type of continuous feedback that performers need to prepare their repertoire and bring it up to performance standard. This is because most of the learning takes place during practice sessions and, therefore, away from tutors (Jørgensen, 2000, p. 67): as a tutor participant would constantly remind his students, “your ears are your best teachers”. Roger Chaffin and Anthony Lemieux (2004, p. 27) highlight the positive effect of self-evaluation and self-feedback on performers’ practice efforts and progress (see also Jørgensen, 2004, pp. 95-96). And yet, studies that focus on the learning and

³⁷ I provide a detailed description of the different types of community members in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2).

teaching of HE musical performance suggest that self-evaluation is not much encouraged by instrumental/vocal tutors (Daniel, 2001, p. 221) and that students themselves engage little with the processes of self-evaluation and self-feedback (Gaunt, 2009, p. 17).

The present study's findings indicate that a considerable number of student participants were aware (or were made aware) of the importance of actively engaging in self-listening for evaluative purposes, rather than simply waiting for external feedback. For Martina, a mature second-year student, self-evaluation would always come first in her music-making practice and external feedback would provide her with the means to assess the validity of her own self-evaluation:

I'm not playing the clever, I'm just saying that the feedback just kind of should go into you straightaway and when it comes from outside it is a confirmation, reaffirmation or question mark on your perception. (Martina, 2nd year student)

And in the case of third-year student Dom, self-listening would be especially useful when taking place in an ensemble context, listening to his own performance as part of the whole group's music-making and trying to 'balance it out' accordingly:

I think the most valuable thing for me is playing in a group. And you kind of listen, once you're comfortable with the part you listen to the whole sound and if you're, and if something you're doing doesn't fit in that whole sound that you work out what the problem is and you work out what you need to change and that's- I think for that, that for me is the best way of improving the way I play, by playing in a group and fitting in with other players and adapting and kind of being sympathetic to other players and kind of balance and everything like that. (Dom, 3rd year student)

Not all students, however, seemed to value self-listening to the same extent. When discussing the least useful feedback context, a student participant said 'I [would say] practice sessions'; when I asked him the reason for it, he replied:

[W]ell I don't really get feedback 'cause I'm on my own, I guess it's my own feedback. (Kale, 3rd year student).

What can be inferred from Kale's explanation is that he believed that external feedback would be more useful to his own progress than self-feedback.

It should be noted that even among students who did value self-listening, several pointed out that this activity presented considerable challenges. In some students' experience, listening to themselves did not automatically mean being able to pinpoint specific issues or virtues in their music-making:

[W]hen you're playing sometimes you cannot like hear yourself. Well, you listen to yourself, but you cannot actually say what's wrong. (Edda, 2nd year student)

[I]t's very difficult when you're singing to hear what you sound like. People can say, 'Oh that high note sounded good', but in your head it might not. (Scott, 3rd year student)

Furthermore, some student participants found that the image they constructed in their own minds (through self-listening) of their own music-making could be at odds with the audience's perception – as inferred from the audience's feedback. This could lead students to the realisation that their own perception was 'lying' to them:

I didn't quite understand the feedback, like I, I, I got from the- like ensemble recital? Because I think, yeah, I felt like I was doing the best job, then I was like marked for and it was strange because I got [the examiners'] feedback from yeah of course from the internet? and then I got other feedback from the other peers? They said, 'Really?' That's so strange because they experienced like, I don't know I just, I didn't agree with [the examiners' evaluation] and yeah, I didn't understand? (Nellie, 1st year student)

The above quotation illustrates how distressing it can be for a novice performer to experience a discrepancy between one's own self-evaluation and the audience's evaluation. Nellie's experience echoes the results of Martin Bergee's and Lecia Cecconi-Roberts' study (2002; cf. Daniel, 2004b, p. 91), in which they report that undergraduate performers have difficulties in self-evaluating their music-making in a consistently accurate manner. They also add that "peer evaluation shared with performers may lead to inflated and unrealistic perceptions of performance achievement" (p. 266), which could explain Nellie's confusion regarding the discrepancy between her peers' and her examiners' evaluation of her performance. Bergee and Cecconi-Roberts conclude that "[I]ack of ability to self-evaluate seems persistent and not readily ameliorated" (p. 266). Still, it should be noted that in their study, the facilitation of students' self-listening and self-evaluation activities through tutors' support was restricted to the minimum necessary. In the present study, on the

other hand, most participants indicated that students' critical listening would be actively supported during classes, particularly by their instrumental/vocal tutor, through open-ended questions:

Alan always asks me, 'Can you, can I criticize my playing?' And I think is really best questions that you have to think about and listen to your playing. (Sanoh, 1st year student)

[A]t the lesson, so your teacher would ask you, 'So, how do you feel that you did that?' So she doesn't just go 'Wow that was really good' or 'That was really bad', but she, I mean she wouldn't say that anyway, but erm just makes you go through what you just did, yeah, so that's kind of a very new way of giving feedback, giving feedback for yourself. (Mia, 1st year student)

Clearly, for some student participants such as Mia, this type of guided self-feedback was a practice she had not engaged with before joining the formal performance community. Instrumental/vocal tutor participants confirmed that they would encourage students to develop their self-listening skills to promote active learning and critical listening during both their one-to-one lessons and during practice sessions:

[M]y approach is to erm also ask for their own feedback about themselves, so we're both inputting on that. So it's not just me erm inputting, you know. (John, instrumental tutor)

I find quite useful when you ask the students sometimes to give feedback to their own playing, so as if they're teaching themselves, so then I say 'Well, if you have to be now in my position, what would you criticise?' and then they start thinking what they're doing, because before it's just a little bit automatically. (Daniela, instrumental tutor)

What could be inferred from the above quotations is that by supporting their students' self-listening practice during one-to-one lessons, these tutors were moving away from an exclusively master-apprentice approach – historically predominant in one-to-one instrumental instruction and characterised by knowledge-transmission from tutor to student (cf. Burwell, 2005, p. 200; Parkes, 2010, pp. 101-102). Rather, they were trying to establish a collaborative-type of relationship with their students – in which students were encouraged to think (and listen) for themselves (Burwell, 2005, pp. 207-208).

Another instrumental tutor participant, Alan, believed that there was another vital reason for ‘getting [students] into the habit of listening to what they’re doing’, beyond promoting their independent learning skills. In his view, if students could gain a more objective perspective of their music-making, in particular during exams, they would be able to take some distance from their audience’s perception (as communicated through feedback) of how well they had performed and react more positively to any criticism they might receive from their audience:

[I encourage] them to listen more and more to themselves when they practise. Hopefully, if they’re not too completely freaked out with nerves on the day [of their exam], they will come away with a fairly clear impression of how they perceive their performance. And I think it’s very important to, to keep hold of that. Erm not so that you can throw it back in someone’s face if you don’t like the fact that they criticised you about something, but just so that, you know, you can give some sort of balance, you know, in, in the, the case of, of having, you know, a barrage of criticism on your feedback form from an exam ... [Students] have to remember as well ... that they’re being judged on *that* performance. And that doesn’t, that performance might not reflect their overall progress. Erm and they have to remember that the- most of the time the person listening to them won’t be aware of their progress over a term, term and a half, whatever it is. (Alan, instrumental tutor)

Alan appeared to believe that through self-listening students could come to understand the difference between the ‘product’ they presented on a specific day (e.g. during their exam) and their overall performing abilities and self-conception as performers (cf. Kingsbury, 1988, pp. 64-67). What can be inferred from his words is that being able to differentiate between who one is as a musician and what one does in a specific performance could help a performer understand her audience’s less-than-favourable feedback as an expression of the audience’s perception of the ‘product’ (the performance on a specific day), rather than as a judgement on the performer as musician.

Alan also shared in some detail what specifically he expected his piano students to focus on when listening to themselves (the balance of different parts, speed, rhythmic accuracy). Interestingly, he made a clear connection between developing one’s listening skills and improving one’s technique:

And that's the, that can be- it can affect technique, because when they're not listening to the way they balance things or the speed they're playing at or they're not paying attention to the rhythm or god knows how many other things erm that erm that actually affects both their, their fluency and their perception of where they are technically. Erm and I think, you know, rhythm and listening are as big a part of technique as, as sort of virtuosity or fluency, whatever you want to call it.
(Alan, instrumental tutor)

Only one tutor among my participants did not appear to provide students with active support during one-to-one lessons, even though he expected his students to engage with self-listening and self-evaluation while they were practising on their own:

Participant: I mean the thing is with teaching- with playing, your- your ears are your best teachers. You walk around with these two things on the side of your head and they're your best teachers. You may have a lesson for an hour a week, but for the rest of the time you're playing hours and hours and hours, if you're not being slightly self-critical and listening to your own self-playing for tone quality, you know ... you may suddenly be playing something and find it works. So it's up to you, 'Ah, god, that works: what did I do to make that happen?' So a lot of it you teach yourself ...

Interviewer: Do you give them any specific tips as to how to be more self-critical?

Participant: Not really, no. Just say 'Use your ears', you know. Erm I mean I've never found anybody who's tone deaf. (Luke, instrumental tutor)

Luke appeared to hold the belief that self-listening was an inborn gift that students simply needed to implement, rather than a skill they had to learn how to use. His belief echoes the widespread use of the concept of 'talent' to explain musicians' achievements (cf. Chaffin & Lemieux, 2004).

Several of the student participants who discussed their self-listening practices agreed that, particularly during the actual performance event, it was difficult for a performer to gain an objective view of one's own music-making. These participants would typically comment that they couldn't remember the specific details of what they had done during their performance:

It's all bit of a blur, I can't really remember exactly what I did [laughter]. (Linda, 1st year student)

I really wasn't able to say how [the assessed performance] went after that because of the- yeah, it didn't go as well, but how well did it go, and I was like, yeah, I cannot like mark myself. I wish I had recorded it. (Edda, 2nd year student)

A possible explanation for the difficulty these students experienced in gaining a more or less accurate impression of their performance could be that they had not yet developed their self-listening skills sufficiently. Some participants, however, expressed themselves in quite different terms when discussing their vague perception of their own performances:

I suppose, it's a funny- I don't remember much of my last performance at all. Literally, it's almost like a blackout moment ... I just remember being in the moment for that piece. (Darla, 2nd year student)

I think that's something that I have for a lot of performance really, even in solo performance, if it's going well. I just kind of zone out, and, because it's all muscle based and I've been rehearsing it for, you know a long amount of time, I just kind of let my hands do the work and, and you- and just kind of enjoy the music that's coming out, and then if there's a mistake you kind of have to go 'Wop!' [he laughs] ... it's a bit weird never really being able to remember what's happened when you've performed [he laughs]. (Dom, 3rd year student)

I've always had recording equipment at home, and I just sort of got into a habit of recording, everything that I'd done ... Being able to hear back things after live performance is different. When you're doing it there and then it's- you're caught up in the performance, you might have your adrenaline running slightly erm you're thinking a million things at once. (Scott, 3rd year student)

Expressions such as 'being in the moment', 'zoning out' and 'being caught up in the performance' that the students quoted above used could be interpreted as an indication of 'peak performance state', an experience characterised by a "focus on doing, not on *how* to do what they are doing" (Connolly & Williamon, 2004, p. 237, italics in the original). It could be argued that this type of performance state is correlated with the experience of shifting to 'performance mode' that I discuss in Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

Interestingly, two of the above student participants, Edda and Scott, indicated that a solution to (some) performers' inability to self-listen objectively while performing could be the use of a recording device:

I wish I had recorded [my performance]: it would be so much better now, because now really, I have no idea what happened in it. (Edda, 2nd year student)

Being able to hear back things after live performance is different ... when you're playing [the recording] back you can just concentrate on the sound and you can really assess it that way. (Scott, 3rd year student)

These students believed that recording themselves performing was the only way to regain the objectivity – lost in the performing act – that would allow them to self-evaluate themselves. Scott and another student participant, Sander, explicitly praised the fact that the practice of recording their own performances would make it possible for them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own music-making, thus enabling them to become their own 'judge':

I just used to listen back to everything I'd done, and you could always pinpoint, you know the bits where you went wrong. Sometimes you surprise yourself of how good it sounds, you know, which is always encouraging. Yeah, no one apart from myself really is- got me to do it, I just- I've just been doing it for quite a long time. (Scott, 3rd year student)

I mean that's the best feedback, hearing a recording or a video. You don't need to view you're- you could view your performance as if you're not the person doing it, you kind of judge it as if you're hearing someone else. (Sander, 3rd year student)

A possible interpretation of these students' desire to be able to listen to themselves in a more analytical manner could be that this type of listening gave them a greater sense of agency about their music-making: without having to rely on their audience's appraisals, they could decide what specifically needed addressing in their performance and take action through further practice. Furthermore, it would appear that even after receiving external feedback, recording oneself would allow a performer to maintain one's own sense of agency and evaluate the usefulness of the feedback received – against one's recorded performance – rather than accept it passively or indiscriminately. This is apparent in a student participant's discussion about external feedback she had received from tutors and peers:

The aspects I got more feedback on, and I certainly agree as I started to use a recorder and listen to myself, are being too loud at points and not having enough *dolce pianissimos*. (Bianca, 3rd year student)

According to another student participant, self-recording could also facilitate one's creative approach during practice sessions and the exploration of musical ideas suggested by external listeners such as tutors and/or peers:

[During the seminar] I was chopping things here and there at the end of the day I didn't get nowhere, so that's very simple [feedback I received], erm, it's not simple one, but very kind of, one word, 'continuity'. I went out of the [group] class, and I went like, 'Yeah, I'm gonna record myself, and I'm gonna try and think of this idea of continuity'. (Martina, 2nd year student)

There is a sense in Martina's words that recording oneself during practice sessions could enable a performer to explore musical ideas – be creative – without compromising one's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of one's efforts. It would seem that Martina and the other students who praised self-recording valued this practice because it enabled them to take on different roles and shift from creative musician – while performing or practising – to objective listener – when listening back to a recording of themselves – thus giving them a chance to 'become' their own audience.

When looking more closely at the language that student participants used when discussing self-recording and self-listening practices, it appears that there was a major difference between instrumentalists and singers in terms of what they would focus on when listening back to their own recordings. Instrumentalists seemed to be mostly concerned with the musical aspect of their music-making, such as musical expression and musical breathing:

[I]t's a good tool to see how you're doing overall expressive things, because you probably think that like- I don't know, how you'd think you were expressing like a whole piece would be different probably when you listen back to it on a recording, yeah. (Darla, 2nd year student)

I erm find it very useful, because I could listen back to myself and then I could like give re- feedback to myself. To say, 'Okay, this is nice, this is- I don't like that' ... also from a musical point of view, about when we need to, like, have a pause there, or like take a breath, or make it more fluent. Like, when the rubato works, when it doesn't. Because sometimes it looks like too steady, the piece, or it looks too free. (Edda, 2nd year student)

On the other hand, singers appeared to concentrate more on what went ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, suggesting a greater preoccupation with mistakes and inaccuracies in their own music-making:

I just used to listen back to everything I’d done, and you could always pinpoint, you know the bits where you went wrong. (Scott, 3rd year student)

I have found in my singing lessons that using like a recording thing, to record my lessons and listen back, has really helped just so I can hear what I'm doing right and what it sounds like when I'm doing something right, and what it sounds like, what it feels like, when I'm doing it wrong. And so that sort of helps to separate it out, just from looking back myself. (Caroline, 3rd year student)

The above quotations raise the question of whether the particular focus of students’ listening on errors and imperfections may have been encouraged by what their tutors (and/or examiners) most commonly focused on when listening to (teaching or examining) them. It is conceivable that vocal students’ listening focus may be related to the tendency of vocal tutors to greatly emphasise the teaching of technique (compared to interpretation), as evidenced in Kim Burwell’s study on HE instrumental and vocal teaching approaches (2006, pp. 337, 345) and supported by the findings in the current study (see Chapter 7, section 7.1).

When Scott discussed his recording habits, he indicated he was the only student engaging with a self-recording practice:

[I]n the first year, you know I was always the sad one who’d take the microphone along. But then they’d be sending me emails saying ‘Oh, can you do me a copy of that?’ (Scott, 3rd year student)

His words suggest that to most students (in his year group), the process of recording oneself for self-listening purposes was, at least to start with, unusual. It is possible that his peers had not been previously exposed to this practice, something that would reflect Ryan Daniel’s findings (2001, p. 220) about the frequency with which his participants, undergraduate music students, engaged with audio/video-taping of their own music-making. In the current study, participants’ narratives indicate that self-recording was not a widespread practice among the community members and that only a few tutors occasionally encouraged the students they worked with to record themselves or to watch/listen to recordings of their performances:

[T]here's a lot of learning that can be derived from observing oneself in concert. So I've done a little bit here of recording people, particularly with film ... and then people watch themselves again and see themselves, and that's a very valuable kind of objectivity. Normally, performance is a very subjective state for the performer. It's very interesting to inhabit the sort of objective view of that, that's very interesting. (John, instrumental tutor)

[T]his is one thing that Niamh [her vocal tutor] did say, 'You should record yourself and listen back to yourself ... and give yourself some self-feedback and criticism'. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

It is possible that the majority of the tutors dismissed (or did not consider) the use of recording devices as part of the teaching/learning process because of logistic reasons or time constraints.³⁸ Helena Gaunt (2008, p. 228) argues that the use of recording devices in the context of HE would bring a considerable innovative element into the "long tradition of instrumental/vocal teaching". She believes, however, that some tutors (and, I would add, some students) might be resistant to change and to the challenge of introducing a new teaching/learning strategy. It is also conceivable that the introduction of a recording device would change the traditional power-relation between tutor (the authoritative expert who transmits knowledge) and student (the novice who receives it) and encourage a more collaborative relationship between tutor and student – with greater active participation from the student – which some tutors (and students) might feel uncomfortable with.

Participants' narratives also revealed that students – and, it would seem, mostly vocal students – disliked the experience of listening to themselves, as it were, from the 'outside'. They found it uncomfortable, even though they acknowledged that listening back to recordings of themselves could be beneficial to their progress:

I'm a bit of a wuss when it comes to that and I need to kind of get over hearing over my own voice [laughs]. But I've done it once and it was useful, but the whole time I was kind of cringing and I think for me just because I think 'Oh, I did that wrong, I did that wrong', that I just kind of get so negative, that it doesn't really help me ... I just need to get over the fact that I'm too kind of negative when it comes to hearing myself. (Caroline, 3rd year student)

³⁸ From personal experience as a tutor and a performer, I am aware that using a recording device during lessons/practice sessions requires a suitable space, time to set up the device, more time to listen back to the recording and, during lessons, to comment on it.

Participant: I started recording my recitals and listening back to them and things like that.

Interviewer: How did that work for you?

Participant: ... whenever I would listen to myself back, it sounded like a completely different person. But I could hear where I was slightly out of tune and where erm my diction wasn't good and all those kind of things. And so it helped, it definitely did help erm listening back to my final recitals. But I didn't like the process so I didn't listen to it very much. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

It is clear from the above quotations that these vocal students experienced strong negative feelings when engaging in the sort of listening and evaluation engendered by recording their own singing. Hazel – a vocal student in her final year of study at the time of the interview – was the only participant who appeared to have just overcome her dislike for this practice. This change of heart was due to the fact that listening back to a recording of her mock exam had helped her realise that her singing was better than she had perceived it to be during the actual performance:

I recorded my mock. I hate, like there is nothing more I hate than listening back to what I have just done. But I was like, 'You've just got to suck it up and deal with it.' And I listened to it, and it was actually the most helpful thing I had ever done, and I regret not doing it before. I learnt so much, where I thought 'That's that', in my head when I was singing it, I thought, 'That sounds really bad, what am I playing at?' When I listened to it, I thought, 'Actually that's much better than the phrase you just did.' Which I thought I had down. It was so useful, and I really kick myself that I didn't do it before. (Hazel, 3rd year student)

The above quotation clearly illustrate an important point about singers' self-listening brought up by Dimitra Kokotsaki et al. that "singers cannot hear themselves in the same way as others hear them" (2001, p. 16). It would seem that self-recording allowed the singers in the above quotations to become aware of the gap that existed between their perception of their own voice from the 'inside' (as in the case of regular self-listening) and their perception of their own voice from the 'outside' (through the use of a recording device). If the perception of their own music-making from the 'inside' was more positive than the perception gained through listening to a recording of themselves, it is not surprising that these students would have found it difficult to engage with, and develop, a self-recording practice.

It is possible that instrumentalists who are not used to listening to themselves in a critical way may find self-recording a challenging experience, too, if what they hear in the recording deviates from the image they have constructed of their own abilities as performers, thus undermining their self-confidence. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the explanation that one of my second-year piano students gave for not engaging with a self-evaluation activity a few days before her exam:

Interviewer: Did we do a little bit together, where I actually recorded you?

Participant: Yeah, the last [lesson]. I listened a bit back on it, but I didn't really work on that as such because I just felt like it was too close to the exam. I just felt like it would discourage me, so I listened to a bit of it and I was like, 'No', if this was a few more weeks before, then ... (Darla, 2nd year student)

Even though research (Clark, Lisboa & Williamon, 2014, p. 292) and my own personal experience as a performer indicate that recording oneself is a very effective strategy for maximising one's practice efforts during the final days of preparation, Darla felt that the closeness to the exam made her more vulnerable to feeling discouraged if faced with an objective view of how she performed her exam repertoire. This might indicate that Darla lacked sufficient confidence in her own practice strategies, particularly in her ability to resolve technical or musical issues at short notice. It could be argued that because of the proximity of the performance event, she might have made a conscious decision to engage with a type of self-listening that was more holistic in nature (rather than analytical) and thus facilitated that shift to 'performance mode' that many participants identified as vital to achieving a 'successful' performance.³⁹

6.2. Students listening to their peers

In the previous section I explored students' engagement with listening in relation to their own music-making. As discussed, self-listening (and self-assessment) was a central aspect of students' participation in the practices of the formal performance community. Nevertheless, listening to other performers, particularly to their peers, with the purpose of assessing them, was also a fundamental part of the students' participation in the community's practices.

³⁹ For a discussion of 'performance mode' see Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

Literature on peer assessment in HE has made an explicit connection between self-assessment and peer assessment (Daniel, 2004b; Liu & Carless, 2006). As Ngar-Fun Liu and David Careless (2006, p. 281) state, “[p]eer feedback can enable students to better self-assess themselves as some skills are common to both peer and self-assessment”. The way in which some student participants in the current study talked of the practice of peer assessment lends support to this view. For example, in the experience of a third-year student, Kay, developing the ability to listen to her peers’ work in progress in an analytical way had benefited her self-listening and self-assessment practice:

[L]istening critically to somebody else, and developing the skills to listen critically and analytically was very useful when listening to myself and try and apply the same thing to myself, listening to recordings or listening to myself practise. So yeah, those kind of- yeah the skills to kind of break down and analyse were very useful and that’s something that’s definitely developed over the 3 years I think, so yeah, very useful in that respect. (Kay, 3rd year student)

In the current study, the central position given to the practice of peer assessment was evidenced by the role of peer feedback within the performance modules. These modules were structured so that after the first five weeks of term 1 – in which the module’s activities would be introduced, discussed and set up – students would attend practical group classes (seminars and ensemble coaching sessions) on a weekly basis for the rest of the academic year (excluding the weeks in which performance examinations were taking place). In the context of these group classes, students were expected to present their work in progress to the whole class, as well as comment on their peers’ music-making. Furthermore, as part of their coursework, students were required to attend and review 2-6 solo and/or ensemble performances given by other performance students.

The name of the first-year performance module, ‘Performance and Critical Listening’, is revealing in terms of the style of listening students were asked to adopt from the start and develop in their second- and third-year performance modules: performance students were encouraged to listen to one another’s music-making and comment on it in a ‘critical’ way. Participants’ narratives illustrate that students would be expected to adopt a listening style that would allow them to identify and describe weaknesses in their peers’ music-making. If students’ comments were exclusively praising, the tutor

would prompt them to be more critical and identify ‘what was wrong’ with their peers’ playing or singing:

Participant: [The performance tutor] will make people given an opinion, which is a good thing I think.

Interviewer: How does he do that?

Participant: Just ‘Right you say something now’ [laughs] ... But they’ll have to find something that was wrong or what they would change or what they thought was good. (Oriana, 3rd year student)

[A]ctually there [would be] a bit of pressure from, from Max in the room saying ‘Well what was good about it?’ And, ‘So there was nothing wrong with this playing?’ If, you know, if people, if people said, you know, there’s, oh everyone, if everyone had said ‘Oh it’s good’ kind of, you know, he’d kind of prompt people, say ‘Well [there] must have been something [wrong].’ (Linda, 1st year student)

In the seminars that I attended as an observer, performance tutors aimed to foster students’ discussion of their peers’ performances through both open-ended questions – such as “[I]f you were teaching, what would you suggest to make it better?” – and leading questions – for example, “But don’t you think that being romantic can also mean trying to be more individual ... more special?” Student participants indicated that the tutors who led the seminars would comment on students’ performances only after most (if not all) of the students in the audience had had a chance to express their own views. This suggests that tutors encouraged students to rely on their own listening and evaluative skills and avoided influencing students’ opinions with their own appraisal of a student’s performance:

I think the system is kind of the same [in seminars led by different tutors]: you play, people listen and then, afterwards, the students have their say first. (Michal, 3rd year student)

Interviewer: Would Max [the performance tutor] contribute [with his own feedback in seminars]?

Participant: Yeah erm well, actually not much. He’d make sure people in the audience were contributing, so [he’d] go around everybody. I think he did usually say something at the end as well, to kind of sum up. (Jamie, 3rd year student)

The seminar tutors’ approach seems to reflect a growing interest within the higher music education sector in supporting students’ development of a range of skills –

including critical listening, evaluative and independent learning skills – in the context of ‘classical’ performance studies (Burwell, 2005; Daniel, 2004a, 2004b; Hanken, 2016; Hunter, 1999). Nevertheless, according to authors such as Helena Gaunt (2008, pp. 235, 239) and Ingrid Maria Hanken (2016, p. 366), the focus on the development of students’ evaluative listening skills, as exemplified in the current study, is still more of an exception than the rule in HE performance contexts and group classes tend to be run following a masterclass (tutor-centred) style, with little interaction among students.

Students often found it difficult to comply with the tutors’ request for critical comments. Several student participants expressed their struggle with pointing out to their peers any negative aspects of their performance. This was due to the fact they were afraid of offending them or hurting their feelings:

I found sometimes difficult to give honest feedback to some of my colleagues, as I was at points afraid they would get offended. (Bianca, 3rd year student)

[W]hen you give feedback to people, how often do you, I don’t tell the- you know, obviously you tell the truth but sometimes, you wouldn’t- if you genuinely thought that there was something negative, that they’ve done, I don’t think I would tell them, unless I knew them really really well. (Haley, 2nd year student)

The recurrent theme in these student participants’ narratives is their inability to be entirely honest when giving feedback to their peers, an issue that Ryan Daniel also flagged up when reviewing research on peer assessments practices in HE (2004b, p. 93). What I noticed during my observation of some second- and third-year seminars was that students appeared to be interacting more with the tutor than with the peer on stage when giving feedback:

It's interesting how in the seminars some students are clearly addressing their comments to the tutor, rather than to the peer on stage. It is as if they believe this is an exercise intended to evaluate their critical listening skills, rather than an opportunity to have a dialogue with their fellow students about their performance and perhaps also to offer some helpful comments. (Fieldnotes, 16 November 2012)

Even though my initial observation could be still valid, an additional reason for the lack of a natural dialogue between the audience and the performer may have been the students’ discomfort with giving honest (critical) feedback to their peers.

Students appeared to have a couple of different strategies to avoid criticising their peers: they would either ‘make up’ some positive feedback for the sake of “saying something nice” or suggest alternative technical/musical approaches without spelling out what the issue was with their peer’s current approach:

I did find that sometimes people weren't- perhaps weren't 100% honest with their feedback, just so they could say something nice to people, so I don't know if you're always honest because you don't want to be horrible to anyone, so you might just think of a bit of feedback to say even if it wasn't really that, you know, even if you didn't pick up on anything. (Caroline, 1st year student)

I think that's because we are friends and everything [laughs] and we don't want actually to hurt each other. So I don't think that everyone is, like, 100% honest [laughs]. So-so if something is really bad no-one is going to say, ‘Yeah, it's really bad’, they're going to say, ‘Yeah, you had-, you have to try that and that’, without trying to say your opinion. (Edda, 2nd year student)

From the way students talked about these seminar sessions, it would seem that to them the practice of peer feedback was about more than just developing one’s own critical listening skills and expressing one’s opinion. It was also an important way of negotiating one’s relationship with one’s peers. This interpretation is supported by Liz Lerman’s argument that peer feedback is about sustaining a personal relationship with one’s peers and navigating the need to be mutually supportive while moving “beyond cheerleading” and providing honest and useful comments on one’s peers’ work in progress (Lerman & Borstel, 2003, Kindle Locations 62-64).

Performance tutor participants’ interpretations of the students’ reluctance to provide critical peer feedback varied. Some tutors put it down to the personality of the students (for example, being “shy” or “insecure”). This possibly explains the reason why, instead of facilitating peer dialogue around peer performances and investigating the possible causes of the students’ reluctance, some tutors adopted an insistent – and, in some students’ view, ‘primary school-like’ – approach to eliciting comments from the audience, as some third-year students recounted:

Kale: I understand like the- everyone should have an opinion when someone does a performance but, in the performance seminars it was just like, ‘What do you think, what do you think’, and people were just like reiterating what other people had said-

Sander: people were force- people were forcing ideas.

Martin: yeah, and then it's like, in the seminars sometimes [the performance tutors] just point at you, 'Say something', [Kale: yeah] and sometimes even I haven't anything to say-

Sander: like primary school when you're like, talking, and they say, 'What do you think?'

(3rd year students)

Other tutor participants, however, showed an awareness of the complex nature of the critical peer feedback focus adopted in the performance modules – its relational implications (students being encouraged to take up the role of 'judge' in relation to their peers) and its implicit performance values (e.g., there is a 'right' and 'wrong' way of performing a particular piece) – and expressed the belief that students should be trained on how to give peer feedback in order for this practice to be beneficial (rather than potentially harmful) to the students giving and/or receiving the feedback:

I've done one or two [seminars] and been quite surprised at how much silence there is from the room when you ask for feedback. So I'm not sure how much training people are getting in giving verbal feedback, whether people feel, they don't want to judge because they've been judged, or they don't want to make comments about their colleagues out loud or what, I don't know. (John, instrumental tutor)

I feel that erm the student feedback needs to be cultivated on the whole. Those that have come from perhaps a more specialist music background will be more experienced in how they give other people feedback. Erm because, I think again this is, it is a potentially rather damaging area. (Val, instrumental tutor)

Studies on peer assessment in HE lend support to these tutors' belief: Peggy Nightingale and Nancy Falchikov (Nightingale, 1996; Falchikov, 1995 as quoted in Daniel, 2004b, p. 91) state that the successful implementation of peer assessment depends on the students being carefully introduced to this practice and on clarifying the assessment criteria to be used by the students. In the present study, however, students were not explicitly inducted into this practice. It is possible that the performance tutors who designed and coordinated the teaching/learning activities of the performance modules assumed that students would learn how to critically listen to, and comment on, others' performances by modelling their instrumental/vocal and performance tutors' feedback practices. This interpretation is supported by research evidence (Burwell, 2005; Haddon, 2009; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008, p. 329; Mills &

Smith, 2003) indicating that, in the context of instrumental/vocal and performance teaching, it is common practice for tutors to adopt the teaching methods and strategies they were exposed to as students, rather than develop their teaching practice through formal training.

In spite of the uncomfortable feelings that expressing out loud one's perception of the flaws or weaknesses in a peer's music-making could generate, several student participants talked about their experience of listening to their peers in positive terms. For some of them, this listening practice helped them develop their problem solving skills (cf. Daniel, 2004b, p. 93) in the sense that they would not only identify possible issues in their peers' work in progress, but also suggest possible solutions to these issues:

I thought it was very useful because erm you were listening to a performance from sort of a critical point of view. It gave you things to look out for rather than saying 'Oh, that's nice, well done', you know, erm or 'That was rubbish', but- you were actually listening for ways to, you know, advance that performance further. (Caroline, 1st year student)

If you have a, like a perfect or near perfect performance, then you can find some things to say on how to improve it even more, or how to encourage the person to keep doing what they're doing that is so good ... and it helps you reflect on your own playing as well, which is why I really like being in seminars ... it's just very, very strange when you realise that someone is doing the same mistakes or- as you and maybe you can identify a way to solve them when you couldn't in your own personal playing. (Veronica, 2nd year student)

Caroline's and Veronica's narratives suggest that developing the ability to solve instrumental/vocal or performance issues was an empowering experience for these students. In Veronica's case, this seemed to be so particularly because the different perspective she gained of particular issues, from analysing them in the context of someone else's music-making, would help her find possible answers to problems she herself had been experiencing in her own playing, but had been unable to resolve until then.

Another student participant shared that for her, being in a context in which she was expected to notice (and comment on) another peer's performance issues made her feel more motivated to resolve those very same issues in her own music-making:

Participant: In a semi- seminar situation actually you giving feedback makes you think about your own performance.

Interviewer: Mmm, in what way?

Participant: Erm in that, well if I comment about the dynamics of this person, have I a right to comment about it because perhaps my dynamics aren't as clear as they should be and then, so maybe I will comment but then I have to work extra hard in my performance to say, you know, I've, I've done my dynamics right [chuckles]. Yeah, so no I do that erm I do like that aspect of it because it makes you think of your own performance. (Oriana, 3rd year student)

It would appear that Oriana believed that only a performer who had already solved certain instrumental/vocal or interpretative issues had the authority to comment on such issues in the context of another performer's music-making. Because of this belief, she felt more committed to resolving the issues that she observed in her peers' performances in her own playing. Or seen from a slightly different angle, it could also be argued that Oriana believed she had to strive to improve her music-making in order to 'gain the right' to comment on her peers' performance issues.

The above narrative about peer assessment (i.e., peer listening and peer feedback) highlights once again the relational nature of this practice. Oriana's words illustrate that the influence of the feedback process was not unilateral. In other words, it did not just have an effect on the peer receiving the feedback, but it also affected the student providing feedback: it influenced her actions, her identity construction as a musician and the way she related with her peers. From a constructionist perspective (Davies & Harré, 1990; Gergen, 2015, pp. 129-131; Harré & Moghaddam, 2014), it could be said that the feedback process invited the people involved to take up a particular 'social position'. In terms of an individual giving comments in response to someone else's performance, possible examples of social positioning could be that of a listener who enjoys the performance; or of a musician who recognises her own difficulties in the issues present in the performance in question; or that of an expert who can critique the performance in an authoritative manner. I would suggest that by prompting students to offer critical peer feedback, tutors (implicitly or, in some cases, explicitly) invited students to take up the position of 'the expert'. For instance, the open-ended question used by one of the seminar tutors quoted earlier in this chapter, '[I]f you were teaching, what would you suggest to make it better?', suggests that students in

the audience were asked to take up the social position of ‘the teacher’ and comment on their peers’ work in progress from that standpoint.

The discourse found in Oriana’s narrative – of ‘who has the right’ to comment on the performances of one’s peers – was present in other student participants’ narratives also in the context of writing concert reviews, a coursework requirement on all undergraduate performance modules. For example, Caroline (in her first year at the time of the interview) would at times listen to, and review, concerts given by students who were more advanced as performers than she believed she was⁴⁰. Caroline told me that initially she felt intimidated when she had to review second- or third-year performers and would question her right to be critical about any aspects of these performers’ music-making:

I was glad that it was an assignment because if it had just been sort of me giving feedback of my own accord, I don't know if I could have done it because I almost feel like I don't have a right to comment on other people's performance in, you know, in the fact that they were sort of second and third years doing really good stuff, and then me sort of saying ‘Well actually I thought this was a bit’ erm you know, ‘This could have done with improvement’, I just sort of thought well, ‘Whoa hang on a second’, you know, I did at some points feel like I needed some sort of qualification to say ‘Yeah, you are allowed to do this’. And then I thought, ‘Well I'm, you know, I'm doing a degree, I've got some sort of opinions’, so it wasn't too much of an issue when I got into it. (Caroline, 1st year student)

What is interesting in the above quotation is that when Caroline first tried to justify ‘having the right’ to critically listen to relatively advanced performances and comment on them, she implied that it was her performance tutor – through the act of assigning the concert review coursework – who made it possible for her to take up the social position of ‘knowledgeable’ or ‘expert’ listener and, therefore, invested her with the authority to critique her peers. Still, on further reflection Caroline concluded that the fact she was studying music at a HE level meant that her listening and analytical skills were sufficiently developed to justify her adopting a social position in which she was judging her peers’ music-making.

Even though students such as Oriana and Caroline struggled with the question ‘Do I have the right to judge others’ performances?’, they both found a way to construct a

⁴⁰ This was not necessarily out of choice, but for practical (mostly timetable-related) reasons.

musical identity that gave them that right. This, however, was not the case for all students, particularly when they found themselves in the situation of having to listen to, and express their views on, performances by peers who played a different instrument from their own (cf. Daniel, 2004b), as the following quotation illustrates:

[P]eople were sometimes just saying ‘Oh, good dynamics’, when they really wanted to say ‘Hang on a minute, that- you completely messed that up, but I don't want to say because I'm not an expert on it’... I think it was more useful reviewing singers because I felt like I had more of a right to kind of say- I knew what I was talking about more. (Hazel, 1st year student)

It is apparent that for Hazel (a vocal student), being ‘an expert’ did not mean being a (relatively) knowledgeable and experienced performer, but it meant more specifically being knowledgeable about, and experienced at, playing the same instrument as the one used by her peer on stage. It would seem, therefore, that some students shared the belief that only an ‘instrumental expert’ could successfully engage in critical listening activities. The narratives of two participants, Caroline and Maddie (respectively first- and second-year students), offer a more in-depth view into these students’ understanding of the type of critical listening they believed they should be able to engage with, as well as of the reason why in some cases they were not able to do so:

I found it hard to pick up on stuff erm in Max’s seminar that we did recently erm and he's sort of very ‘Right, now your turn’. And I'm like, oh yeah, I can't think of anything to do with, you know erm some cello- cellists, because I don't really know what- erm technically what's good and what's bad. (Caroline, 1st year student)

I guess I tried to focus just on like- I guess like, musical aspects like phrase shaping and stuff ... erm, like I might say, you know, ‘Add a bit more on like a hairpin’, you know ‘A hairpin here’, or, ‘Don't just end the phrase bluntly’, those kind of things ... For me to give feedback to a brass player, isn't going to be valuable because I don't know anything about playing a brass instrument, you know. I can give maybe a bit of, you know, musical faults or whatever, but actually, if it doesn't sound good I can't say why and it's like ‘How do I know whether it sounds good or not anyway?’ (Maddie, 2nd year student)

Both students appeared to believe that the most valuable type of peer listening, in the context of group classes such as seminars, was one that could identify technical (rather than musical) issues in someone’s performance, which echoes the

‘instrumental expert’ discourse in Hazel’s narrative. The issue, according to these students, was that tutors sometimes put them in the position of having to express their views on a performance by a peer whose instrument they did not play. In these instances, Caroline and Maddie believed that their lack of knowledge about the instrument in question would prevent them from applying their listening skills in a way that could be useful. Significantly, Maddie did not believe that there was much value in focusing her own listening and feedback efforts on more general and musical aspects of her peers’ performances, such as shaping and articulation.

I would argue that these students’ preoccupation with being able to identify (and comment on) technical issues in others’ performances was, to a certain extent, a reflection of their preoccupation with their own technical issues and their struggle to physically master their own instrument. Time and time again student participants (with very few exceptions) showed a deep-seated concern with their own technical abilities when discussing various aspects of their engagement with music-making practices:

[I]t’s hard to when you’re in a practice room, like you say erm you’re kind of learning the music for you at that point and not thinking about giving it to an audience. Um, so I think I do get- maybe you get bogged down in the technical element sometimes. (Jamie, 3rd year students)

I was so worried on technique that I didn’t think about maybe my stage presence, the way I presented myself. (Hazel, 3rd year students)

The above narratives indicate that in some students’ experience, technical issues could restrict their ability to focus on other performance aspects, such as musical communication and stage presence, when preparing their repertoire. In fact, for some students, mastering their instrument from a technical point of view was a major – if not the most important – aspect of their practice:

Participant: The thing I have always struggled with is technicality.

Interviewer: Right, technicality meaning technique or-?

Participant: Technique yeah, being able to, just being able to play what I’m trying to play and you know ... it’s just been more about actually getting, you know, the bloody notes down, and then working from there. (Dan, 3rd year student)

[I]t’s always been technique and it’s still always really technical for me, erm, and I was sort of fighting against that thing of- because in first year, I remember talking

to Theo [her Personal Tutor], and he said, ‘If you don’t think you’re going to get a 2:1, there’s no point in doing performance’, and I was like, ‘What?’, you know, ‘I really want to be good enough to be able to do it next year’. So erm I knew I’d have to work hard at getting the technique right. (Caroline, 3rd year student)

I find it significant that Caroline believed that being ‘good enough’ to get a 2:1 meant sorting out her technique, even though in her description of the conversation with her Personal Tutor, technical ability was not singled out as the most important factor in achieving a good mark in performance. On the other hand, it is possible that Caroline’s belief was validated by (at least some) members of the performance community, such as instrumental/vocal teachers, among whom the primary role of technical abilities in performance was a very common discourse:

[I]f your technique is not there, the music is not there. (Alex, instrumental tutor)

[G]eneral musicianship is really not what I’m here to teach, so I’m really focused in on the technical aspect, or the- you know the finer points [of technique].
(Niamh, vocal tutor)

Students’ preoccupation with technique may have predated their membership of the formal performance community and may be a throwback to earlier instrumental learning experiences: “the dutiful pupil who first learns the notes and then, as a reward, is allowed to ‘put in the music’” (Hill, 2002, p. 132). Nevertheless, the evidence in this study suggests that there were some authoritative voices within the community that supported and encouraged the belief that students’ primary focus should be developing and refining their instrumental/vocal technique. This evidence echoes Susan Hallam’s findings in her study on professional musicians’ approaches to practice (1995, pp. 13-15), in which she found that over half of her participants were technically oriented (see also Burwell, 2006, pp. 337-338).

Given the pressure to focus on technique in their own personal instrumental/vocal practice, it is understandable that some students would generally prefer to critically listen to peers who played their own instrument because they would be able to hear, understand and talk about the technical issues in these peers’ performance. Curiously, when participants discussed their experience of playing in front of an audience composed mostly of ‘non specialists’, the majority of the students said that they

appreciated having an audience who listened to them in a more holistic fashion, without emphasising the technical aspects of their performance:

[W]hen you're in these performance seminars, if you take someone who has never played a trumpet in their life, but is listening to sort of, the tone quality like, 'He could have possibly used a bit more vibrato here' or 'Maybe this phrase should have gone four bars rather than two, or two rather than four' or whatever erm and things like that, the general- things that sometimes you miss out because you're too busy thinking about 'Oh how do I double tongue this' or 'How do I shape this or articulate this' and it's very useful, I found. (Aart, 2nd year student)

For Aart, having peers who critically listened to, and commented on, the musical aspects of his performances gave him a chance to connect to a side of his music-making that he tended to neglect during practice sessions because of the intense focus on technique. Some students also reflected on the fact that, 'in real life', performers would not normally be playing to an audience of specialists; therefore having a seminar audience comprised of students who were not 'experts' or 'specialists' would be more representative of the listening expectation of a 'general' audience:

[G]etting feedback from people who are looking at it just as a piece of music, not looking at your technique, knowing what's going on ... does work really well. 'Cause that's- that's the reality of it, when you play as, as a musician, is you're not just going to be playing to a room full of cellists, you know. (Linda, 1st year student)

I think non-specialist comments are equally as important as people who do play, your instrument, because their opinion is what they- is kind of like if you like the public's expectation, if you like. So it's still important, even if it's maybe suggesting something that's very hard, and that's why you can't, and I know if you, if they think your high notes are too loud and you can't play them any quieter, but they're saying 'We think they should be quieter' then that's probably a valid point. It's just that it's gonna be a very hard valid point. And, whereas a clarinettist would go 'I know that's hard so don't worry about it' [laughs]. (Lana, 3rd year student)

Interestingly, Lana believed that 'specialist' peers might in fact be more 'forgiving' listeners because of their knowledge of the technical difficulties the performer had to face in a particular piece. Therefore, having 'generalist' peers would encourage her to aim for a musically coherent and effective performance, instead of using her technical difficulties as an excuse for disregarding the musical aspects of her music-making.

Although listening critically to other students' performances was explicitly and actively promoted by tutors running group classes, participants' narratives indicate that students also engaged in a subtly different type of peer listening practice: comparative peer listening. The purpose of this listening practice would be to gauge where students stood – in terms of their instrumental/vocal and performance abilities and progress – in relation to their peers, something that students felt they could not gauge from consulting the official performance marking criteria.⁴¹ In other words, students would measure their own progress and abilities against those of their peers to gain an understanding of the average performance standard in the context of the formal performance community and, most importantly, of the gap between it and their own performance standard, as the following quotation illustrates:

Interviewer: You said that you're a bit worried about [the performance level expected in the third year performance module]. So how do you know what kind of level is expected?

Participant: I don't know, I just suppose other performers really. I suppose you end up making comparisons because it's the only way you can kind of do it, if that makes sense. (Darla, 2nd year student)

This style of listening echoes Leon Festinger's theory of social comparison, in which one of the principal hypotheses is that "to the extent that objective physical bases for evaluation are not available ... subjectively accurate assessments of one's ability depend upon how one compares with other persons" (1954, p. 119). In other words, the 'normative standard' (Denton & Chaplin, 2016) of comparing one's abilities to those of others will be used whenever there is no objective and absolute standard⁴² according to which these abilities may be evaluated.

Students would practise comparative peer listening in various contexts. For example, before an assessed performance, to determine their level of preparation in relation to their peers':

[During the ensemble seminar] it was just interesting to see- I think it was good for the group because we looked at all the other groups and said 'Look at what they're doing, they've really pulled together and we're not there and we need to be there' ... More people in our ensemble kind of thought 'Actually, there are

⁴¹ For a copy of the marking criteria for all three levels of undergraduate performance, see Appendix 4

⁴² Because of the loosely descriptive nature of the marking criteria, they do not provide an 'objective and absolute' evaluation standard for musical performance.

people doing really well and we're not'. So it was kind of erm you have to step up.
(Caroline, 1st year student)

In the above case, an unfavourable comparison with other ensemble groups promoted a positive reaction in Caroline's group: the realisation that other ensembles were performing at a higher standard acted as an incentive for the students to put more effort into their preparation so that their group could match that standard. In other instances, however, an unfavourable comparison with other students' performances could have a negative impact on one's musical self-conception. If one's abilities were believed to be much lower than those of the peers considered in the comparison, the student might decide to terminate their membership of the community. This was the case for Edda, a second-year student who decided not to continue with performance in her third year of undergraduate studies after comparatively listening to the final recitals of some third-year peers:

I really like performance and everything, and I-but then, I listen like to the third years, like Bella and Uka, which- they are like, I think they are like so good! It's like, 'OK, I cannot do that' [laughs]. (Edda, 2nd year student)

It would appear that Edda's experiences within the formal performance community led her to believe that the defining characteristic of becoming a performer was being able to achieve a particular performing standard (modelled by her third-year peers), rather than 'simply' growing as a performer and improving one's abilities over time (cf. Denton & Chaplin, 2016), or participating and taking pleasure in the whole process of performing. This evidence appears to support Festinger's hypothesis that people tend to stay in groups "whose abilities are near their own" and move out of groups if their abilities are not closely matched to those of the group and there are no other reasons that make belonging to that group attractive to them (1954, p. 136).

It should be noted that students' social comparison activities were not limited to peer listening. Students would try to gauge their performance standard in relation to their peers also by comparing feedback and/or marks received in examinations:

I did on the odd occasion compare feedback with other singers on my course [module] and in the same year as me. It was a way of seeing how other singers did in their performances. (Sammi, 3rd year student)

[I]t is nice to know where you stand in relation to everyone else for example, if like I've heard that the overall mark for the final recital was quite low, so knowing where you are in relation to everyone else, it kind of, you know, gives you a confidence boost to know you're not there on your own. (Cemre, 1st year student)

It is interesting to notice that in Cemre's case, what appeared to matter the most to her was not the mark she had received, but the knowledge that she and her peers had been awarded a similarly low mark. A possible reason for this, I would argue, is that knowing that the examiners had judged her to be of a similar standard to her peers supported her sense of belonging to the community – as her words, “you're not there on your own”, suggest – and this sense of belonging had greater value to her than the mark itself.

According to my fieldwork observations and to my participants' narratives, comparative peer listening for the purpose of self-evaluation was, generally speaking, not explicitly promoted by tutors. A student participant, however, pointed out one notable exception in the context of a third-year performance seminar. On this occasion, a performance tutor generated the opportunity for a comparative peer listening activity for the 'benefit' of one of the students who had performed in the context of the class, as a way to illustrate his own feedback on her performance. I have included an extensive excerpt from the interview during which the student participant recounted the incident to do justice to her rich description of the event:

Ili, she'd played a Rachmaninov prelude, it was a C sharp minor, the first one and I thought it was very good and obviously she's a very good pianist, erm and, I think there was something-some timing- the way she kind of, leant towards notes and bars in phrase that- Becky [another peer] pulls out and said 'I'm not sure that, that's how you-I'd perhaps do it' and then Max [the tutor] ... he was saying all these things about not playing Russian music right and got very critical and a bit personal erm and of course Ili is quite quiet anyway so she didn't really say much and went and sat down and erm then he said 'Becky you go and play it and show her how to-show her how it's done' or something like that and I just thought that was utterly, utterly disgusting it was a horrible thing to do. Ili just sat there very quiet and a bit pink in the face ... I just don't think it's very good practice to prepare a piece and then have the tutor then put somebody else up and play it who's obviously not prepared, and then say that she's played better kind of thing.

I can see how he was trying to compare and show a different approach, but I just thought the way he did it was just not erm appropriate. (Kay, 3rd year student)

Although Kay, the student recounting this incident, clearly blamed the teacher for publicly embarrassing her peer Ili, it is interesting to notice that she considered her other peer, Becky, at least partially responsible for the situation and reproached her for her eagerness to please their tutor at the expense of another student:

Becky was also a bit too eager to get up there and play I thought erm just sort of swam up there and it's this whole idea of kind of not teacher's pet, but it's like a such a kind of clique, which I think develops in any performance group. (Kay, 3rd year student)

There are several discourses emerging from Kay's poignant account of events. Firstly, the tutor's reaction to Ili's music-making appeared to encourage a conception of performance as an activity that one could do either 'right' or 'wrong', an approach that, according to Roland Persson, may not be conducive to the development of a student's "artistic independence" (1996, p. 33). Secondly, (but intimately connected to the previous discourse), the teaching approach illustrated in the quotation above (providing one specific interpretation model to be followed, instead of facilitating the exploration of various interpretative options) suggests a discourse of compliance with a particular performing tradition (cf. Burwell, 2003, pp. 10-11; Jørgensen, 2000, p. 70; Leech-Wilkinson, 2012, para. 3.3). Thirdly, Kay's reference to the existence of a clique within the performance community implies a discourse of tutor's favouritism; this could potentially create a divide between the students within the clique and those who remained outside of it and thus disrupt the sense of belonging to the community in the 'outsiders' (cf. Pitts, 2003, pp. 286-288).

Significantly, only two students expressed their views about the 'opportunity' for comparative listening that the tutor had created for Ili:

[It] was a, really bad you know, bad show other people didn't seem to have an opinion on the matter, but Chris [another peer] actually said afterwards, much to Becky and Max's surprise, and horror, that he preferred Ili's version and that it was literally, he said purely interpretational ... and he got quite angry about it and I agreed with him. (Kay, 3rd year student)

Although only two students (Chris and Kay) openly rejected the values and beliefs that were expressed on that occasion through the interactions that took place in class after Ili's performance, it is possible that other students among those who attended the seminar did not share them. Ili – who also participated to this study – never volunteered her views about her experience of comparative listening at this seminar and because of the delicate nature of the situation I did not bring up the incident during her interview.

Participants' narratives indicate that for some students, listening to their peers' work in progress was also an opportunity to be inspired by how other people approached different aspects of the performance process. For example, Lana (a third-year student) found it useful to observe her peers' interpretative strategies, particularly if they contributed to the effectiveness of their performances, because it made her aware of interpretative approaches she could apply in the context of her own music-making:

I think [listening to my peers] made a difference to the way I performed because you see how other people perform and how, what other people do with pieces that are maybe erm Handel sonata or something, well there's not very much in it, in terms of dynamics or articulation, but you see their interpretation. And even if you're not doing pieces of that era, you can think 'Maybe I don't have to follow what's written'. (Lana, 3rd year student)

And in the case of Dom and Linda (respectively third- and first-year students), the performance seminars gave them the opportunity to gain a 'rounded view' of performance and reflect more deeply on what makes a performance 'successful':

[Listening to other students' performances] was good. I, I mean I don't know how much it, it helped me as, you know, in my own performance, but definitely helped kind of, give you more of a rounded view I guess of, of performance. (Linda, 1st year student)

I probably found it more useful to watch other people [rather than perform] and kind of, think of, you know, work out erm, and kind of analyse their performance and kind of look at it from that angle when erm yeah kind of an analysis point of view of performance and that kind of helps you to come up with views of what you think makes a successful performance or not. (Dom, 3rd year student)

In summary, although the 'official' learning outcome of the type of peer listening actively encouraged in the performance modules was to help students develop their

critical listening and self-evaluation skills, the findings presented in this section indicate that students also used other types of peer listening as resources to help them understand the community's expectations regarding standards, as well as what the community valued in performance and accepted as 'right' and/or 'effective'. This evidence, therefore, supports studies that argue the potential benefits of peer learning in higher music education contexts (Daniel, 2004b; Hanken, 2016).

6.3. Students listening to professional performers

Listening to 'good' professional performers as sources of aural models and for the purpose of developing one's interpretative skills has been recognised as a long-standing practice, both recommended by teachers and practised by performers at all levels (Curkpatrick, 2012; Hallam, 1995, pp. 14-16; Reid, 2002, p. 107; Reitan, 2013; Volioti & Williamon, 2016). This practice can range from listening to one's own tutor model specific passages, to listening to professional performers in live concerts and/or recordings. It is not surprising, therefore, that participants in the current study – mostly, but not exclusively students – talked about listening to professional performances as a fundamental aspect of the formal performance community's practice. This type of listening practice included both attending live performances and listening to commercial recordings, but the latter appeared to have a more prominent role in students' preparation process.

Student participants indicated that they would use recordings before starting to practice and during the early stages of learning (cf. Volioti & Williamon, 2016, pp. 9-10) to expand their repertoire knowledge and decide whether they wanted to include specific pieces in their exam repertoire. The following quotation is illustrative of most students' approach:

[W]henver I play a piece I'll listen to it, in terms of reading about it I won't do so much, perhaps I should more, but I will always listen to different recordings of it, also- to work out if I like it and want to play it. (Kay, 3rd year student)

This use of recordings points to the students' active involvement in the choice of their repertoire. Nevertheless, most instrumental tutors indicated that they would advise their students – particularly those experiencing considerable technical issues – on the

most suitable pieces for their exams, which suggests a student-tutor collaborative approach to the selection of exam pieces.

The facility with which it is possible nowadays to access professional recordings (e.g., through streaming services, video-sharing websites, online audio libraries, etc.) encouraged some students to rely on recordings to help them familiarise themselves with the pieces:

[H]aving things like YouTube and Spotify ... it's just made, like, access to different recordings, much more, you know, because before you'd have to sort of get a CD, and actually I think that maybe you take that for granted. Because you just think, 'Well I'm just going to tap it into Spotify, iTunes, or whatever, get a recording of it'. Whereas before, you might, you know, to learn something, I would have had to go and sit down, press the notes on the piano and do it like that, or obviously, sight-reading. (Caroline, 3rd year student)

Through the practice of listening to recordings, Caroline was intentionally bypassing the need to sight-read her repertoire in order to learn it and was favouring the use of her aural skills instead, a learning practice more commonly associated with non-classical musicians (Green, 2002). Interestingly, one instrumental tutor mentioned encouraging a similar use of recordings, to support a student's correct learning of the notes in an exam piece:

[R]ecently I got a student erm bachelor third year already, and she all the time, will come and play wrong notes, and I say, 'Look, now, two three weeks before the exam, we cannot have wrong notes- take the recording, listen [laughing] get it into your head'. (Daniela, instrumental tutor)

It is possible that the instrumental tutor's suggestion of using recordings as a very basic note-learning tool might have been made because of time pressure (cf. Volioti & Williamon, 2016, pp. 13, 18) – the proximity to the exam date – and the belief that this way of listening to recordings would speed up the student's learning process.

Another student mentioned using recordings to support his warm-up sessions, this time not only in the initial stages of learning, but throughout the preparation process of his repertoire. Scott recounted how from his second year onwards, he would create a compilation of recordings of all the pieces he was learning, which he would play

back and ‘hum along’ to every time he drove to college, as a way of warming up his voice – and, I would argue, to reinforce his knowledge of the pieces:

I drive in, my warm up is normally in the car. Sort of going through a ritual of getting in my car, normally sticking the CD on of my pieces that I’m gonna sing, you know I always make a CD of what I’m gonna sing and I just listen to it, and erm humming along or something, just gently warming the voice up. (Scott, 3rd year student)

Commercial recordings appeared to play an important role also in terms of stylistic choices and interpretative decisions (cf. Volioti & Williamon, 2016). Michal, a mature third-year student and a much more experienced performer compared to his peers, found that recordings provided ‘a huge guide’ and made him less dependent on his instrumental tutor for advice on stylistic approaches. Other student participants also recognised the importance of recordings in their decision-making process regarding interpretative choices:

You know it’s- obviously your teacher will have a hand in how you interpret some things, but generally speaking I listened to a few different recordings, I’d look at the score myself, come up with a way I wanted to sing it. (Scott, 3rd year student)

Interviewer: How do you make sense of ... conflicting feedback [on interpretation]?

Participant: ... I’ll listen to recordings if that’s possible ... if I have a conflict of erm I’ll try it out and see, see how I think it sounds, if you like. And then, and also compare it to recordings, if I haven’t already done that. (Lana, 3rd year student)

Both quotations suggest that recordings helped these students make an informed decision about interpretative approaches and (in the case of Lana) about which feedback (received during seminar sessions) to incorporate into her music-making (if any). John Sloboda (1986 as quoted in Reid, 2002, p. 107) argues that listening to the performances of masters in an analytical way allows one to acquire performance expertise by identifying, imitating and eventually internalising the expressive techniques of these masters. It could be said, therefore, that through the use of commercial recordings, these students became aware of, and more knowledgeable about, a range of interpretative techniques – and possibly also of accepted performing trends and conventions. This listening practice allowed students to incorporate them

into their own ‘expressive toolbox’, thus giving them the necessary tools to work out for themselves how to interpret their repertoire and making them more independent as performers.

In their article on recordings as learning resources, Georgia Volioti and Aaron Williamon (2016, p. 2) point out that in the Western art music (WAM) tradition, performers’ use of recordings as a way to inspire or influence their own interpretation has received mixed reactions from musicians. In reviewing relevant literature, they refer to findings by Susan Hallam (1995 as cited in Volioti & Williamon, 2016, p. 2), which indicate that some of the professional musicians participating in her study resisted being influenced by other performances (cf. Lisboa, Williamon, Zicari & Eiholzer, 2005, p. 104; Woody, 2011, p. 25), the implication being that these participants avoided using recordings during their preparation process. On the other hand, Volioti and Williamon also refer to a study by Tania Lisboa et al. (2005 as quoted in Volioti & Williamon, 2016, p. 2), which provides evidence that using recordings as a learning resource does not compromise the performers’ approach in terms of their individuality and their ability to achieve new interpretative insights. In the present study, some of the expert members of the community appeared to endorse the use of recordings as a learning resource (cf. Reitan, 2013) and as a way of broadening students’ knowledge of interpretative approaches. For example, during an introductory lecture to the third-year performance module, a performance tutor provided examples of different recordings of the same piece to encourage students to listen in a more analytical manner and to stimulate their sensitivity to different performance approaches:

[The tutor] would play examples, one example of somebody playing a piece and then somebody else playing the same piece and looking at ... different interpretations. (Kay, 3rd year student)

And in fact, in the opinion of a performance tutor, many performance students would have benefited from dedicating much more time to listening to recordings. He believed that insufficient engagement with this listening practice negatively affected students’ knowledge of performing styles and interpretative approaches and, therefore, their ability to ‘form an interpretation’ of the pieces they were learning:

‘[A] thing that astounds me with the students, and I'm sure you've experienced the same thing, is that they don't listen to any music ... You know, I talk to violinists in the department and you find they don't actually know any top soloists. You know, they're learning a piece, and you say, ‘Do you know so and so's recording of that?’ they don't even know the violinist ... [I]f they don't listen to [recordings], they'll never be able to form an interpretation, will they. (Ray, performance tutor)

Ray's observations tie in with the comments that Sean, another performance tutor participant, made regarding students' poor knowledge of WAM aural tradition (“they just do not know anything about the aural tradition of Western art music”) and their inability to go beyond “the dots on the score” (see Chapter 4, section 4.2). Interestingly, the majority of instrumental/vocal tutors who participated to this study did not make any explicit references to the use of commercial recordings in relation to their students' learning process or development as performers, although two participants mentioned encouraging students to “go and listen to other performances and open their mind to other things”.

In the current study, the findings related to the students' engagement with commercial recordings support existing research on performance students' listening habits (Curkpatrick, 2012; Volioti & Williamon, 2016; Woody, 2011). They also expand on existing research by indicating that listening to recordings could contribute not only to students' preparation process and development as musicians, but also to their understanding of performance and of their own role as performers. This was the case for Darla, a second-year student participant. Before starting her BMus Music studies, she believed that being a piano student within the ‘classical’ tradition meant adopting a mediating – rather than creative – role as a performer and that carrying on with performance at university would seriously limit her ability to express her individual voice through performing. Her music studies, however, prompted her to listen to “great interpreters” and helped her reassess the role of creativity in ‘classical’ performance:

I always thought, 'Urgh, classical lessons are going to be more rigid', like I have to play it in a certain way or I'm not going to be able to put myself in as much as I would creatively as like something else where, you know, I got more space improvising ... [but] you obviously listen to some great interpreters and you think, ‘Yeah, that is really, like, creative’ and it- like, yeah, there's a lot in that. (Darla, 2nd year student)

In the course of the interviews and focus groups with my participants, I did not explicitly ask students about their concert attendance habits or whether they had the opportunities to listen to live performances of professional musicians. Some students, however, referred to the impact that listening specifically to one of their performance tutors – described by all participants as a world-renowned performer – had on their understanding of performance and of being/becoming a performer. They would most commonly have the opportunity to listen to him during group classes (such as introductory lectures, seminars and coaching sessions). In this context, he would often take the time to illustrate his own musical ideas or model sections from pieces presented by the students (either on his own instrument or on the piano) to guide their interpretation. A student appeared to believe that the tutor's propensity for modelling was an expression of his identity as musician:

[H]e cannot resist, like he can't tell you how to do it: he has to do it, which I think like I'm all, like that's what music is. (Josie, 3rd year student)

For Josie, this tutor's approach illustrates an understanding of music (that she shared) as something that has to be 'done' rather than 'talked about'. Students who referred to the tutor's demonstrations in class told me that they were particularly struck by the expressiveness and intensity of his playing, as illustrated in the following quotation:

[He would demonstrate things] even on the piano, just making the instrument 'sing' and erm just the emotion that, he put behind his [instrument] when he played ... It was really really interesting. (Scott, 3rd year student)

The specific performing style adopted by this tutor was what had the greatest impact also on students who attended his live performances:

Participant: I learnt, from him a lot.

Interviewer: Can you give me some specific examples?

Participant: He play[s] like crazy [laughing]. That I can see and I can learn from him. (Ili, 3rd year student)

I went to-he did erm, a recital, I think in second year and ... there's just that presence about him like, he's completely like he's completely different on stage then he's in person as well like, first he has all these like remarks, he has you know, it's a bit like up on his high horse sometimes and you're like, 'Right', but when you see him perform you completely respect him, like completely. I just like, I don't know what it is, like he just has this connection with the audience or

something but, I I've actually learned a lot, I've learn a lot from him in terms of, you know not so much- oh no, obviously what he's had to say in the comments he's given me it's like fair enough but, like it's kind of the same as anyone, like everyone's given me comments, I've learned from, but him in specific, in terms of watching him perform (Josie, 3rd year student)

Both Ili and Josie described the experience of listening to their tutor perform in a live concert as a tremendous learning experience. For Josie in particular, the performance quality that she admired the most was her tutor's ability to communicate with his audience: her comparison between his teaching persona ("up on his high horse") and his 'performing persona' ("he's completely different on stage" and "he just has this connection with the audience") certainly indicates that Josie responded more positively to him as a musician than as a tutor. It is possible that she perceived a discrepancy between the values he communicated through the act of performing – music-making as a highly personal form of expression and a way to connect with an audience and share a meaningful experience with them – and those communicated through his teaching – music-making as an activity one can do either 'right' or 'wrong' and that listeners judge, rather than enjoy.

As I have discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.2), students who joined the formal performance community came to understand the visual aspects of performing as fundamental to the overall perception of performers' music-making (Schutz, 2008) and of their 'performing persona'. This is possibly why some of the student participants who referred to concert-going as a valuable learning resource made specific references to professional musicians' stage presence and behaviour. As the previous quotation illustrates, live performances could offer highly effective models of how performers could connect with their audience. Some students found that observing an experienced musician perform live could also help them find the answers to how to deal with stage presence/behaviour, an aspect of their music-making for which (they felt) they had been given little support from the community. In the context of a third-year focus group discussion, during which one of the student participants admitted that he still felt unsure about how to present himself and behave on stage while performing ("I've always found that I've never really known what to do in bars of rest"), a vocal student shared the fact that he would look to professional live performances for answers:

I normally look at professionals, if I go to Wigmore I normally, look- ‘What is he gonna do now?’ (Martin, 3rd year student)

Another student participant’s narrative suggests that listening to professional performers in live concerts could open up performers’ minds and ears to new interpretative approaches to pieces they had been performing for a long time and prompt them to go beyond their long-established views about the interpretative options that a particular piece afforded:

[S]ometimes you play someth- you know erm you might have always played one piece in a certain way and that’s the way you hear it. Then you go to the concert and you hear somebody playing the piece and you’re like ‘Oh, what is it? Why?’ And then ... you think, ‘Maybe that makes sense’, you know. (Michal, 3rd year student)

Arguably, listening to recorded performances could have a similar impact and help performers re-evaluate their own interpretations, even when these are long-standing. It is possible, however, that the additional visual information that is available to the performer when watching (and not just listening to) a professional musician’s live performance might provide a vital contribution to the ‘persuasiveness’ of an interpretative approach that diverges from one’s own.

Summary

As this chapter has illustrated, students engaged with a whole range of listening practices as part of their participation in the formal performance community – from self-listening while practising and/or performing, to listening to (and watching) others’ performances (live and/or recorded), with particular emphasis on their peers’ music-making. In the case of listening practices set or prompted by expert members of the community (instrumental/vocal and performance tutors), the explicit goals were to encourage students’ development of their critical listening skills as well as of their knowledge of repertoire and interpretative approaches, with the overarching aim of helping students become more independent as music learners. The findings suggest that, although some students did achieve (some of) these goals, the lack of explicit guidance from tutors (particularly during peer listening activities) appeared to make it more difficult for other students to reach them. This was especially the case for those students who struggled to reconcile a specific conception of performing put forward

by some expert members of the community – as an activity that should demonstrate instrumental/vocal expertise – with the social position peer listening activities required students to take – that of the ‘expert’ listener – even in the case of peers who performed on an instrument students were not knowledgeable about.

Additionally, findings indicate that engaging with listening practices (peer listening in particular) within a community in which members were required to share (at least to some extent) their perceptions of others’ performances with each other had further significant impact on students’ experience of performing. These practices led students to question what it means to perform and to be/become a performer. They also became a means for students to infer implicit performing values and beliefs adopted by expert members of the community – such as the need to achieve specific technical standards or to follow a particular (‘the right’) performing tradition. Thus, findings point to listening practices as crucial to not only students’ understanding of performance, but also to their construction and/or evaluation of their own identity as performers and their sense of belonging to the formal performance community.

7. Perceiving a performance (II): tutors and examiners as listeners

In this chapter, I continue the exploration of the formal performance community's listening practices, but will shift the focus to those community members recognised as experts, that is, instrumental/vocal tutors, performance tutors and examiners. I investigate these community members' listening practices in relation to the performance students' music-making during one-to-one and/or group classes as well as assessments.

As in the previous chapter, apart from considering participants' explicit references to listening activities, I also take into account their narratives related to feedback that illustrate expert members' listening styles and focus in practice. The aim of this exploration is to gain an understanding of the values and beliefs implicit in these practices and, thus, a deeper insight into the community's meaning-making surrounding performance and being/becoming a performer.

In the first section of this chapter (7.1), I focus on instrumental/vocal and performance tutors' listening practices; in the second section (7.2), I move onto the listening practices of performance examiners.

7.1. Instrumental and performance tutors' listening practices

As we saw in the previous chapter, students' listening practices were affected by the performance modules' structure and requirements. Findings indicate that this was also the case for tutors' listening practices (cf. Haddon, 2012, p. 248). As the modules required students to prepare three performances (two solo and one ensemble) each academic year, tutors would in most cases focus their listening practices on the repertoire that students prepared for these assignments.⁴³

The modules were designed so that performance tutors would listen to (and give feedback on) each student's work in progress in the context of group classes once or

⁴³ In the case of second- or third-year students who were relatively advanced from an instrumental/vocal point of view, one-to-one tutors would occasionally also listen to repertoire for auditions (e.g., for postgraduate programme of studies or orchestral positions).

twice (depending on class size) during terms 1 and 2 and once in term 3. The number of one-to-one lessons allocated to each student allowed instrumental/vocal tutors to listen to (and comment/work on) their students' exam repertoire on a more regular basis.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, all instrumental/vocal tutors who participated in this study believed that the allocated lesson time was hardly sufficient to cover their students' exam material in depth. These findings support other research on HE musical performance (Burwell, 2005; Presland, 2005; Venn, 2010) that suggests a perception of one-to-one instrumental/vocal contact time as limited and, consequently, the perceived need to use lesson time in the most efficient way.

This perceived lack of time appeared to affect a number of one-to-one teaching/learning aspects: from the listening approach tutors had towards their students' music-making – particularly in terms of the type of material they listened to and their listening focus and style – to the tutors' overall behaviour during one-to-one lessons. I now explore these aspects in detail with the aim of teasing out what they reveal about the community's understanding of performance and of being/becoming a performer.

Instrumental/vocal tutors' perception of the amount of one-to-one time available per student was experienced as a source of significant pressure for them during lessons:

[W]anting to get quick results because time is so short, the lessons are very few, it's very difficult to work under [these] circumstances. (Daniela, instrumental tutor)

[T]hat makes you push more I think because, you know, there's so few lessons and so little time, you know. It's not like a music college where you've actually time to coax them along. You realise that before they know it, they'll be at the end of the term and doing their recitals so that there isn't time really. (Niamh, vocal tutor)

The above quotations indicate a link between the sense of pressure experienced by the tutors and the tutors' specific focus during one-to-one lessons on students' achievement of 'results'. Tutor participants used the term 'results' unproblematically, without feeling the need to define what this term might refer to. This suggests they

⁴⁴ The majority of instrumental/vocal tutors split the allocated hours into 40-minute lessons to increase the frequency of the lessons to 18 per year (for first-year students) and to 21 per year (for second-year students). Third-year students would generally have 1-hour lessons and, thus, 17 lessons per year.

assumed that all members of the formal performance community (to which, in their view, I also belonged) held the same understanding of the kind of goals instrumental/vocal tutors worked towards with their students. Given the fact that one-to-one lessons were dedicated to the preparation of exam material, the term ‘results’ would appear to refer to the students’ ability to demonstrate to their audience (i.e., their tutors and, eventually, their examiners) that the exam material had been instrumentally/vocally mastered to the point that it could be delivered confidently and effectively.

The above quotations also suggest a correlation between the tutors’ perception of time (as being restricted by deadlines) and their behaviour during one-to-one lessons. For Daniela and Niamh (the two tutors quoted above), as for other instrumental/vocal tutor participants, listening to and working with their students was experienced as a struggle against difficult circumstances. This strongly affected their approach to their students’ music-making: when reflecting on their own behaviour during one-to-one lessons, these tutors spoke of being ‘very tough’ with their students and of having the ‘urge to keep things moving forwards’ in an attempt to make student achieve ‘results’ more quickly.

Pushing for ‘results’ was an approach that students were also aware of during their instrumental/vocal lessons, as the following quotation illustrates:

I felt like we were rushing sometimes to get, you know, the music done and finished, ready for the recitals, which was- I still feel was a bit of a shame because if we’d had a bit more time, it would have been really- it felt like we could have, you know, got a bit further with it. (Jamie, 3rd year student)

In Jamie’s view, there should have been more to his performance studies than simply achieving a ‘finished product’ to be presented to the examiners. Jamie’s words indicate his wish to engage with the musical material at a deeper level and, possibly, in a more exploratory and creative way. On the other hand, his one-to-one tutor’s approach appeared to be focused primarily on the achievement of the correct reproduction of the musical score, rather than on promoting a deeper engagement with the music in his student. These findings echo Kim Burwell’s study on HE performance (2005) in which she suggests that instrumental/vocal tutors’ focus on readying their students for exams in the most time-efficient way could lead tutors to

sacrifice students' development of a more personal and creative engagement with music.

A clear effect of the perceived time restriction on instrumental/vocal tutors' listening practices in a one-to-one context was their belief they needed to be selective about what kind of material they would listen to during their students' lessons. In most cases, this was reflected in the tutors' decision to focus exclusively on their students' solo repertoire:

Interviewer: Did you work on the ensemble piece with your um, guitar teacher?

Participant: No I didn't, I didn't have time to. Um, it would have been nice to, but I just had too much to do with the [solo] recital programme and stuff like that. (Jamie, 3rd year student)

[B]asically we're under such- we've only got, you know, certain number of hours to spend with each student in the year and actually to get them through their two exams each year erm on such, such few hours erm is quite a task anyway. (Sally, instrumental tutor)

What is interesting about Sally's words in the quotation above is that in referring to only two assignments (the solo ones) she appears to be completely dismissing her students' ensemble assignment as not relevant to the one-to-one context. This tutor's narrative about students' assignments ties in with findings indicating that the majority of this community's instrumental/vocal tutors felt they did not have time to devote to listening to their students' ensemble parts and believed that students would benefit more if they were provided with specialist support on their solo repertoire.⁴⁵ This approach suggests that tutors tended to relegate non-soloist repertoire to secondary importance, in spite of the fact that a considerable number of students identified themselves as being ensemble performers:

I'm really not a fan of performing solo anyway. Certainly as a percussionist I don't feel like that's really what erm what my role is as a musician, it's kind of I feel like a more of a kind of supportive role. (Dom, 3rd year student)

I've come from a very ensemble background erm I play in wind bands ever since I was little [chuckles]. And erm so I- I'm a very confident player in that situation, but put me with a piano, [I] hate it, absolutely hate it. (Oriana, 3rd year student)

⁴⁵ Students would receive 2-3 coaching sessions with a performance tutor in support of their ensemble assignment preparation; the focus of these sessions would be on the whole ensemble group, rather than on individual parts.

The prominence that was given to solo repertoire by one-to-one tutors (and by the module co-ordinators who, in designing the assessments, clearly emphasised solo repertoire) is reminiscent of the key role assigned to solo performance that Henry Kingsbury (1988, pp. 111-142) describes in his study of ‘a conservatory cultural system’. In Kingsbury’s view, the solo recital is a key event because of the importance given to individual ‘talent’ in WAM performance. The solo recital, therefore, becomes a “ritual of individual accountability” (p. 116) in which the performer has to demonstrate that she has the necessary individual musical and technical skills to be recognised as a ‘talented’ performer by her audience. The emphasis given to the development of advanced individual musical and technical skills, rather than to collaborative ones, appears to be typical of conservatoires around the world as far as WAM performance is concerned (Cottrell, 2004, p. 79; Creech et al., 2008; Mather, 2016, pp. 1-3). It could be argued, therefore, that by emphasising solo (over collaborative) performance, the community in this study embraced (at least to some degree) values, practices and an understanding of performance generally found in a conservatoire-type of musical institution.

Another effect of the perceived time restriction on instrumental/vocal tutors’ listening practices was the tutors’ tendency to choose a specific listening focus in terms of their students’ music-making. This would commonly result in one-to-one tutors choosing either a narrow and in-depth focus (generally speaking on technical aspects of their students’ performances) or a wider but more general focus (covering a broader range of performance aspects, from technique to interpretation to stage presence). Some tutors believed that because of their ‘specialist knowledge’ on the instrument they taught, their listening practice should focus on the “finer points” of their students’ technique. These tutors’ preference for a technical focus was confirmed by some of the student participants, as illustrated here:

I think Niamh is very hot on technical ability ... very much so. Every sort of critique is technical and very rarely, if ever so, I think I can count on one hand the number of times I actually ran through an entire piece of music during a lesson.
(Rosie, 3rd year student)

[M]y lessons have been nearly all technique, like [my instrumental tutor] doesn't really say much about musicality I think. (Maddie, 2nd year student)

Other tutors, however, adopted a more holistic listening practice; their main goal was to help their students achieve a rounded preparation of their exam material by the set deadlines, in most cases at the cost of leaving specific technical issues unresolved:

[B]ecause [the students] have set exams at set times ... I know we've got to gear towards those and that very much affects the feedback I give, particularly in the first year. Erm because in- the bottom line is they have to do it, the technical exam, you know, and they- they've got to present something at the end of the first year. And so erm it's very difficult to deconstruct their technique and sort things out. And often I think 'I wish there weren't any exams in, in year 1, for some students.' Because they just need to sort themselves out. (Sally, instrumental tutor)

Sally's narrative suggests that the number of exams (and possibly the amount and difficulty of the examination material) that students were required to prepare each year was counterproductive to the students' learning experience, particularly to those just starting their undergraduate studies. In Sally's view, the assessment system in place prevented tutors from focusing on the real needs of students with underlying 'foundational' issues (such as postural and technical weaknesses), which in turn compromised the tutors' ability to foster their students' growth as instrumentalists/vocalists and performers (cf. Haddon & Potter, 2014, p. 130; Pitts, 2004; 2005, pp. 130-132).

The perceived pressure to prepare students for the assessments by the set deadlines seemed also to encourage instrumental/vocal tutors to adopt (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the tutor) a 'critical' listening style⁴⁶ that specifically concentrated on the imperfections and/or mistakes (of technical and/or musical nature) in their students' music-making. The aim of such listening style was to point out these issues to their students in detail so that students could resolve them and thus present a more polished performance to the examiners:

[N]earer the recital then you would listen to the whole [programme], but generally I can't help myself, I just- you get to a bit, I just need to go back and say it because sometimes you leave it to the end and then you have forgotten what you were going to say. (Julia, instrumental tutor)

⁴⁶ Critical listening is also discussed in the context of students' listening practices (see Chapter 6, sections 6.1 and 6.2).

Oh no, [my instrumental tutor] can't stop herself from stopping me, like if there's a mistake she'll start banging on the piano and then I'm just like 'OK well, we'll probably gonna stop then'. (Haley, 2nd year student)

This listening style had the effect of shifting both tutors' and students' attention away from the bigger picture, that is, providing students with the necessary physical, mental and emotional tools to feel at ease and do their own best in a performance situation in front of an audience (cf. Davis & Pulman, 2001, p. 251). Instead, this listening style appeared to promote a preoccupation in students with avoiding mistakes and with meeting the expected instrumental/vocal standards – a particularly counterproductive state of mind that extant research has linked to negative performance experiences and increased anxiety (Leech-Wilkinson, 2016; Papageorgi, 2007; Perdomo-Guevara, 2014). Rosie, a third-year student who chose to leave the formal performance community in her final year, described the effect that her vocal tutor's listening practice (that in Rosie's view was prompted by the performance modules' examination system) had on her approach to performance:

[I]t actually did have a negative affect on ... my performance as a musician in general ... At the beginning of the second year, I went for an audition and I prepared for it with [my vocal tutor] ... I knew the lady who gave me the audition. It was for one of her friends, but she had known me in first year and we had worked together on some things erm and then she called me for this because she thought I'd be brilliant for it. And she just said, like, she had noticed such a difference in the fact like I wasn't expressive, I wasn't connecting, I was so nervous and obsessing with different aspects of technique and all this kind of stuff. And she just said [my performing] was unrecognisable and it was really harsh criticism for me to take, but I realised that- I began to realise that myself after I began to do other things, I was so focused on the technique and so focused on ... these expectations. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

Rosie added that her decision to take a year out from performance in her final year of undergraduate studies was due to her desire to rediscover a more expressive approach to music-making, something that she felt her vocal tutor's listening practice and feedback approach did not promote.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, performance tutors would have the opportunity to listen to students' work in progress or play-throughs (depending on the individual students' level of preparation on the day) in the context of seminars,

ensemble coaching sessions and end-of-year mocks. These sessions were run by different performance tutors across the academic year, particularly in first- and second-year performance modules. As a result, students were exposed to a variety of listening practices and expectations.

Student participants' narratives indicate that each tutor tended to give more weight to some specific performance aspects over others when listening to (and giving feedback on) students' music-making. Veronica, a second-year piano student, found that being exposed to a variety of performance tutors' listening focuses and expectations (as expressed through the tutors' feedback) had been an enriching experience to her as a performer because it had allowed her to gain different 'expert' (though not necessary 'specialist') perspectives on her own music-making:

[S]o far I've had you, erm Max and Daniela ... But it's funny 'cause you notice that [tutors] choose other things to comment [on]. And I found it always very useful to have different- different professors kind of sitting there and talking about your work, because they all have different things to say, and especially if they're not a pianist, then it's just very interesting to hear from a purely mus- musical point of view [about] what you're doing. (Veronica, 2nd year student)

Veronica's words indicate that she correlated the musically-oriented listening focus of some performance tutors to their lack of specialist instrumental knowledge. As I illustrated in Chapter 6 (section 6.1), student participants made this very same correlation when discussing peer listening practices. In that context, the lack of specialist instrumental knowledge was perceived as a limitation because students believed this made them unable to critically listen to (and comment on) technical aspects of their peers' music-making. According to some participants' narratives, the fact that some performance tutors lacked specialist instrumental knowledge was also perceived as a limitation and their more holistic, musically-oriented listening approach was not always experienced as positively as in Veronica's case:

[The performance tutor] focused more on the musicality, what you're doing, rather than technique, 'cause obviously he can't, like, with all different instruments apart from string [instruments]. (Kale, 3rd year student)

Kale's choice of words, "obviously he can't", highlights his understanding of the tutor's musically-oriented listening approach as a negative factor because of the tutor's inability to focus his listening skills (and offer detailed feedback) on students'

instrumental technique (with the exception of string players). Kale's understanding of this performance tutor's listening approach – which was shared by other student participants – points to this student's implicit preoccupation with his own technical abilities. It also suggests that he held the expectation that performance tutors should be able to offer the same type of specialist support (in terms of listening and feedback practices) as instrumental/vocal tutors.

Kale's expectation might have been promoted by the fact that students could observe a very different listening approach in their performance tutors when these tutors were faced with a student who played their same instrument. On these occasions, the performance tutors' listening tended to shift from a holistic, musically-oriented focus to a much more detailed and technically-oriented one:

[S]omething that always sticks in my mind very clearly is erm a performance seminar with Emma, with Sean [as the performance tutor] and ... everyone went up [to perform] and we did the usual kind of feedback, but then Emma plays and because she's a [wind] player, Sean just completely, kind of, he points out every single problem and ... goes 'This is wrong, this is wrong, you need to change this, stop moving your head, blah blah blah'. (Dom, 3rd year student)

Val [a woodwind player] just kind of, erm, trivialised your instrument- she'd be like, 'How great is it to play a bass trombone,' it's like, you could have gone on stage and just done nothing like just holding a bass trombone, yeah. Then like Lizzy [a woodwind player] goes up and she makes her cry, because [she plays] her instrument. (Sander, 3rd year student)

Many of the student participants who observed the kind of behaviour described in the above quotations expressed the view that the tutors' approach towards these peers was overcritical and harsh. The narrative of one student participant, however, suggests that these students' perception of their tutors' approaches might have been coloured by two significant factors: the students' relationship with their own musical instrument (the extent to which they felt 'in control' of it); and the impact that receiving detailed, critical feedback in a public context had on their musical identities as performers. This is illustrated by Michal's account of a seminar in which he received feedback from a performance tutor with specialist knowledge on his instrument, the clarinet:

[O]ne tutor actually ... started doing kind of like a public lesson, literally he stood next to me and he was telling me quite specific things, like for example ... 'You

could try different fingering' ... And we started sort of experimenting and playing around and ... we sort of focused on one phrase. Actually, a lot of people found it that he was pretty harsh on me and I actually didn't feel it. I actually enjoyed it because I felt that ... he knew what he was doing, what he was talking about. So [laughing] it was quite interesting to see how people perceived it, 'cause I was really- you know, I took advantage of it ... and I was very happy and satisfied [with the experience]. (Michal, 3rd year student)

The description that Michal gave of the whole incident indicates that he experienced the 'experimenting and playing around' with different fingering that the tutor had promoted during the seminar as an exploration of the expressive possibilities of his instrument, rather than as a 'harsh' attack on his own technical abilities. Michal was a mature student and quite an experienced performer in comparison to his peers. The way he talked about the clarinet during the interview suggests he had built up a very confident relationship with his instrument, which had contributed substantially to his own positive musical identity as a performer.⁴⁷ It would seem that Michal's level of comfort with his own instrument and of confidence in his own identity as a performer enabled him to view this seminar experience as an opportunity for further growth. Thus, he did not feel undermined by the tutor's listening (and feedback) approach in the seminar. Nevertheless, the fact that many of Michal's peers viewed the tutor's approach towards him as harsh might have been more a symptom, in some individuals, of internalised beliefs about instrumental/vocal abilities in WAM performance than a sign of discomfort with their instrument or identity as performers (cf. Perdomo-Guevara, 2014).

Interestingly, findings indicate that one performance tutor explicitly supported a 'harsh' listening (and feedback) practice. When discussing his own feedback approach to students' music-making, this tutor stated that he always aimed to be "as critical as possible", irrespective of the instrument students played. The reason for this, he explained, was his belief that "positive feedback" was "in most cases [a] waste of time". In his view, a highly critical approach gave students the opportunity to learn how to cope with a "hostile" environment, which he believed would stimulate their development as performers:

⁴⁷ Michal viewed himself as a soloist and chamber musician. He rejected the identity of orchestral player in spite of his orchestral experience before and during his undergraduate studies because of his dislike for performing in that context.

I try to be as critical as possible because ... I think that we all develop because of certain obstacles and restrictions. So it's good to have obstacles, it's good to be criticized and if we are not criticized we don't have, so many chances to- to help ourselves ... [Where] I came from ... musical performance education was very similar to sports education ... and [a] musician performer was trained in the same strict and very hostile way as a dancer or sports person ...with mostly critical feedback ... [It's a] kind of poison which really stimulates you and I believe it works. (Max, performance tutor)

Other tutor participants appeared to have mixed feelings about this listening – and more in general, educational – approach. On the one hand, they understood it as an effective way of training Western art musicians who wanted to become professional performers because it would ‘weed out’ students who could not cope with the pressure and high standards of the professional WAM world. On the other hand, they questioned its appropriateness in the present educational context, which (according to some) aimed to be “inclusive” – i.e., students were allowed to enrol onto the performance modules irrespective of their (perceived) ability to become professional performers or to cope with the demands of the professional world – and suggested it should be balanced out by more supportive and encouraging listening (and feedback) practices. One performance tutor explicitly stated that in the present educational climate – characterised by a shift towards inclusiveness and widening participation, particularly in the university sector (cf. Brown, 2004, p. 81; Young, Burwell & Pickup, 2003, p. 3) – a performance teaching/learning approach that focused more on participation and collaborative skills was, in his view, more appropriate. And yet, the majority of tutors believed that even in the university sector, they would be able to give their best support to their students only by treating them “as if they really want to be proper performers, professional performers”.

There was a general agreement among tutors, however, that all students would benefit from learning to cope with a ‘tough’ audience and harsh criticism and that instrumental/vocal and performance tutors should teach students how to adopt the “right attitude” towards ‘negative’ feedback. In other words, students should be taught how to not let criticism “depress them”, but turn it into a positive stimulus for further practice and growth. The tutors’ agreement on this point suggests their belief that being exposed to a ‘tough’ audience was a defining property of ‘classical’ performance training and that a major aspect of becoming a performer within this

tradition was to learn how to survive harsh criticism without losing belief in oneself as a performer or in one's abilities to improve.

Tutors' listening (and feedback) practices presented in this section suggest a widespread belief among community members that the central aspect of the study of 'classical' performance should be the development of students' individual instrumental/vocal skills. These practices also indicate that the way in which tutors understood what kind of 'results' their students should achieve in their performance studies was very much linked to this belief: the term 'results' in this context appears to take on the meaning of 'the ability to display one's instrumental/vocal skills through the performance of 'solo' repertoire'. This belief was perceived by some tutors to be at odds with the educational values of wider participation and inclusivity that, in their view, were officially promoted by the university music department within which the performance community operated. Nevertheless, findings suggest that the majority of performance and instrumental/vocal tutors were unable to move away from (or broaden) their conception of performance as expression of individual 'talent' and display of advanced instrumental skills. Thus the belief that the study of performance could also be guided by different values – such as wider participation and the development of collaborative skills – appeared to be a rare exception within this community.

7.2. Examiners' listening practices

In this section I continue the exploration of the listening practices of 'expert' listeners and focus on the 'expert audience members' that students performed for in the context of their assessments: the performance examiners. When looking at the listening (and feedback) practices of performance examiners, findings in this study indicate that these were strongly affected by two particular factors: (1) examination practices – more specifically, the examiners' use of explicit marking criteria and of musical scores to guide and ground their listening and feedback/marking activities – and (2) the examiners' professional backgrounds. Therefore, I consider the examiners' listening practices in light of these two factors, with the aim of understanding what they reveal about – and how they contribute to – the community's conceptions of performance and of being/becoming a performer.

Interestingly, when considering the listening (and feedback) approaches of examiners, some participants believed that these did not differ in any major way from those of other ‘expert’ listeners. In other words, some participants believed that performance examiners had very similar (if not the same) listening expectations as instrumental/vocal or performance tutors. This understanding of the examiners’ listening approaches appeared to be based on the view that the criteria used by any type of ‘expert’ listener when engaging with ‘classical’ musical performance were ‘universal’. As such, these participants believed that students, tutors and examiners shared an implicit understanding of what students should aim for in their performances to meet the examiners’ listening expectations:

[The listening criteria] are pretty universal, yeah, they are also- tend to be erm sort of a consensus about what people, as listeners, need from the performer, they tend to be. (John, instrumental tutor)

Interviewer: So are the [official] marking criteria [used by the examiners] something that you sort of looked at?

Participant: To be honest I didn’t, no, I really should have done. I think- I think you kind of know what you need to do really and your teacher knows as well, yeah. (Jamie, 3rd year student)

It is possible that these participants’ belief in some ‘universal’ listening criteria may be related to what Bruno Repp (1997, pp. 420-421) refers to as the “implicit norms” of WAM performance. He describes them as “norms that are handed down from teacher to pupil and are far from arbitrary” (pp. 420-421) which indicate to the performer how to approach the musical score and deal with performance traditions associated with specific styles. Repp states that in spite of musicians’ general belief that there might be different effective and ‘valid’ ways of playing the same music, these ‘implicit norms’ create in fact a strong constraint in terms of what is deemed acceptable (particularly by ‘expert’ listeners) in a musical performance and, as such, tend to regulate most performers’ approaches to music.

The view that listening criteria were ‘universal’ among ‘expert’ listeners was not, however, shared by all participants. In the experience of an academic tutor participant who had been part of performance examination panels, the way examiners listened to and evaluated musical performances was rather ‘subjective’:

[E]verything is subjective, whether it's an essay assessment or whether it's a performance assessment. It's- the examiner will- their assessment is supported and informed by their area of specialism, their particular interests and how they erm relate to er a performance, because people listen out for different things as well. There are some people who listen for- some examiners I understand who listen more analytically. They listen more for the structure and whether that's brought out or not, whether that structure is understood. Other examiners are listening more for interpretation, shaping, what we call musicality or just call individualism within that statement. So it's inevitable that [evaluating performances] is not objective simply because we are looking for different things and simply also because music, any form of expression, writing as well, getting back to the essays, is a creative enterprise. And you can't be objective about creativity. There is just no way. (Betsy, academic tutor)

Betsy's narrative clearly illustrates that performance examiners sitting on the same panel may have different listening focuses, depending on their own professional (and possibly personal) musical interests and, therefore, they may not necessarily share the same listening criteria. Several studies on expert and/or non-expert music listening (Levinson 1987, Sloboda 2008, Kinney 2009, McPherson & Schubert 2004, Coimbra and Davidson 2004) support this perspective and confirm that performance listening (and evaluation) can potentially be affected by a wide range of musical and extra-musical factors: from the listeners' musical background, interests and knowledge of the material being performed, to the listeners' mood and memories associated with specific pieces as well as the listening circumstances and contexts.

Findings in the current study indicate that two specific practices were implemented during performance assessments with the aim of grounding and guiding the examiners' listening activities, arguably in an attempt to limit unwanted influence of musical and extra-musical factors on the examiners' listening and evaluation activities. These practices were (1) the examiners' use of the musical score during students' performances and (2) the application of marking criteria to the examination process to help examiners focus on and evaluate specific aspects of students' performances. I now explore the (perceived) impact of each practice on the examiners' listening approach, starting with the use of musical scores.

Participants explained that, according to assignment guidelines, students were required to submit a copy of the musical score for each examination piece they

presented so that examiners could refer to it during their performance. Some student participants' narratives indicate a serious concern with the examiners' practice of following the score during assessed performances and point to students' belief that examiners adopted this practice with the aim of evaluating students' performances against the score. In other words, some students felt that the adoption of this practice meant that examiners would focus their listening on (and penalise students for) any discrepancies between the score and students' music-making:

In the exams, the [external] examiner didn't- he looked up like once or something. So they don't really look at [stage presence] anyway. (Hazel, 3rd year student)

Most of the time, you know, [the examiners in the final performance] sort of spent, sort of like, looking at the music [score] ... [I]f you made a mistake, like in the words or erm like you sort of hold on a note too long and, you know, start the phrase a bit late or whatever, Max [one of the examiners in previous exams] doesn't pay any attention to that, but... [the examiners in the final performance] were obviously looking at the music, rather than looking at me as a performer. It was like they were trying to catch me out straight away. Like, 'Right, I'm going to look at this music [score], and as soon as she gets something wrong, I'm going to circle it,' you know? (Caroline, 3rd year student)

The above accounts of students' examination experiences suggest that some examiners tended to disregard most (if not all) visual aspects of students' music-making. Participants such as Hazel and Caroline (both vocal students) found this particularly disconcerting as these examiners' approach to their music-making appeared to go against these students' understanding of the vital role of visual information (such as stage presence, body language and facial expression) in musical communication between performer and listener and in the audience's appreciation of a performance – a role which research has confirmed to be fundamental to listeners' musical experience (McPherson & Schubert, 2004; Schutz, 2008; Tsay, 2013; Waddell & Williamon, 2017). Caroline's words – “they were obviously looking at the music [score], rather than looking at me as a performer” – suggest an understanding of performance (on her part) in which small inaccuracies in the reproduction of details in the score are considered insignificant in relation to whether the performer can bring the notation to life through her actions, both aurally *and* visually. In this respect, her understanding echoes Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's reminder that musical “[s]cores exist, but music ... happens” (2016, p. 330). And thus Caroline's (and Hazel's) words

indicate the expectation that the audience's (and examiners') eyes be on the performers – i.e., the musicians who make music happen – not on the score.

Findings suggest that the examiners' practice of using the score during students' performances appeared to encourage (some) students to adopt a literal reading of the score,⁴⁸ rather than to focus on the creation of a musically effective and convincing performance. This was due to students' fear of being judged negatively if they disregarded any notational details. Thus, students' reaction appears to support Henry Kingsbury's view that performers tend to be "aware of the critical disdain that can be visited on performers who too cavalierly disregard the directives of the composer's text" (1988, p. 94). Furthermore, findings indicate that diverging from an accurate execution of the score – particularly in the context of an assessed performance – could make students feel 'exposed', even when this approach to the score was justified by expressive reasons. Students' discomfort with a non-literal approach to the score is illustrated by a third-year student's narrative about the work she carried out on her ensemble assignment with her performance tutor, in which she was being encouraged to disregard accurate counting in order to focus on more expressive sound production:

I felt very kind of exposed playing- playing the Adés and like things like in the final movement, [the performance tutor] said I don't, 'You don't even need to count.' He just said 'Play the notes,' and that felt very kind of like erm what's the word, vulnerable, instead of going '1-2-3 1-2-' he said 'Just play the notes and then make sure you come together with Scott [the ensemble partner] at certain points.' He said, 'That's the most important thing, how you're touching [the keys].' He wanted me to play like a harp, so how I was actually touching the notes, rather than how long I actually held them on for, 'cause he said 'Nobody's gonna know,' he said. (Kay, 3rd year student)

It is interesting to notice that letting go of an accurate reading and reproduction of (some aspects of) the score in order to be more creative in her music-making made Kay feel "vulnerable". A possible reason for her feelings of vulnerability might be inferred from the words that her coaching tutor used to encourage her to set aside her concerns for accuracy: "Nobody's gonna know." These words appear to suggest that, as long as the audience could not tell whether a performance was based on an accurate reading of the musical text or not, the performer could afford to disregard a literal

⁴⁸ Practices and beliefs related to the performer's approach to the musical score are discussed more extensively in Chapter 4.

approach to the score. This view of musical communication between performer and audience points to an implicit understanding of the audience as judge evaluating against a musical score, rather than as listener/viewer appreciating a live musical event. From this perspective, Kay's feelings of vulnerability and her initial reluctance to let go of accurate counting are understandable: she did not want to give up the safety of accurate reading and give her 'expert' listeners (her examiners) any reason for judging her negatively, particularly in a context in which examiners normally followed the musical score during students' performances.

Significantly, Max, one of the performance tutor participants who regularly sat on performance examination panels, expressed the belief that performance examiners should behave like adjudicators in international competitions. He stated that it would look 'completely silly' if members of a jury used a musical score during competitions, implying that, in his view, this was also true for performance examiners. "[Y]et," he added, "here [the use of the score] is required ... [for] what reason I don't know." Notably, this participant was often a jury member in international competitions and it is possible that his professional experience in that context promoted his belief that HE examiners should adopt the same listening behaviour as competition adjudicators.

This performance tutor's belief was not explicitly shared by the other examiners who participated in this study. Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to observe how his belief (and the way it was expressed through his listening approach) could affect his colleagues' listening practices during exams. My observation took place in the context of one of my third-year piano students' final recital (it should be noted that on this occasion neither examiner was a piano specialist):

At the beginning of the exam, before Hannie started playing (she was already on stage), Max made a comment about not wanting to use the scores: 'You know, these pieces they are standard repertoire' and then he also added, 'They don't use scores at competitions'. I noticed that Ray [the other examiner] was reaching out for the copies of the scores that Hannie had left in front of him, on the examiners' table, but as he heard Max's comments he left the scores on the table, untouched. So during Hannie's performance neither of them followed the scores. (Fieldnotes, 5 July 2011)

What I find significant is that these examiners' listening approach – evidenced by the feedback and mark on my student's performance, which they shared with me straight

after the exam – took into consideration Hannie’s performance as a whole (focusing on aspects such as expressiveness and characterisation of the material performed, musical communication, stage presence, etc.) while ignoring several small errors and inconsistencies between her performance and the written notation which (because of my in-depth knowledge of the scores) I had noticed. I believe that in this instance their ‘holistic’ evaluative approach was promoted by the fact that the examiners’ listening was not grounded in the score. One may conclude that if the examiners had followed the musical scores, they might have focused more on the aforementioned errors and inconsistencies and, consequently, their evaluation of Hannie’s performance might have been harsher.

Interestingly, this conclusion would not be supported by the findings in the study by Joel Wapnick, Patricia Flowers, Marci Alegant and Lily Jasinskas (1993) on piano performance evaluation. The authors of this study suggest, in fact, that the listeners’ use of the musical score does not bring any qualitative difference to performance evaluations. It is possible, however, that the fact that the adjudicators in Wapnick et al.’s study were all pianists who were being asked to judge the performance of a well-known piano piece may have made the use of the score redundant to their evaluative activities. Therefore, it could be argued that in cases in which the examiners are not specialists on the instrument used in the performance, the practice of following the score may discourage the examiners from listening to the performance as a whole and promote greater focus on any details that diverge from the written musical text.

The second practice regularly adopted by performance examiners with the intent of guiding their listening and evaluative activities was the use of marking criteria.⁴⁹ As a performance tutor participant explained to me, he had introduced criteria specific to musical performance to be used in the context of the assessments for all performance modules in 2002 with the aim of bringing greater coherence and balance to the evaluation process (cf. Bergee, 2003).⁵⁰ The performance tutor argued that these criteria were a must in an educational context, particularly as a guide that would help examiners translate what he called the “qualitative experience” of performance listening into a quantitative measurement:

⁴⁹ See Appendix 4 for a copy of these criteria.

⁵⁰ This participant explained that before the introduction of performance-specific criteria to the department, there had been “just some very bland criteria for everything that went on here: performance, composition and written work.” (Sean, performance tutor)

[W]e do have the assessment criteria there in front of us when we are examining ... even though we know the assessment criteria, we know where that mark will be, we still often go back and check the wording and make sure that the performance that we heard is being described ... by what's in that little box and particularly, if there's a borderline, I think they're particularly useful: if we're thinking, 'Is this really a 2.1 or a 2.2?' and then you go to the wording and by the letter of the law it's a 2.2. (Sean, performance tutor)

Interestingly, not all examiners agreed with the use of specific criteria for performance. One examiner in particular (a performance tutor) believed that the nature of performance was “vague” – possibly echoing an understanding of performance as “ephemeral” (Bergee, 2003, p. 138; Taruskin, 1995, pp. 11-12) – and as such he found that the idea of having to match a live performance to one of the criteria's brief descriptions of possible performance levels (ranging from a Fail to a First) was absurd (cf. Haddon & Potter, 2014, p. 130) and not at all helpful to an ‘expert’ listener:

[I]t's not that I want to be vague, but performance is such a matter that it is a vague matter in a way, yeah. So I was never in favour of this erm assessment criteria because I think it's just erm, how to say, it's it's kind of absurd prose in the style of a erm Eugène Ionesco or Kafka. (Max, performance tutor)

Notably, Max (who, as we saw earlier, was often professionally active as a competition adjudicator) also stated that because no explicit criteria were used to guide the listening practices of adjudicators' in the context of competitions, performance examiners should not need to refer to any criteria when listening to students' performances. His statement suggests that he might have shared the belief expressed by some other members of the formal performance community (discussed at the beginning of this section) that all ‘expert’ listeners referred to the same “universal” criteria when engaging with musical performances and, therefore, there was no need for listening criteria to be made explicit and articulated in writing. Interestingly, the findings in Daniela Coimbra's and Jane Davidson's study on vocal performance assessment (2004) suggest that resistance to the use of explicitly specified marking criteria on part of performance examiners in a HE context may also be promoted by the concern that students and teachers may end up following the “performance model” described by the criteria too closely, thus compromising the development of students' individuality (p. 212). I would argue, however, that in spite

of the limitations of explicit performance criteria identified here above, resisting the adoption of such criteria for assessed performances may be more harmful than beneficial to the students' experience of performance and being/becoming a performer, particularly in a context in which performances are marked. The absence of explicit criteria could encourage the mystification of performance values and standards and, thus, foster a lack of transparency in the performance evaluation process. This could potentially prevent performance communities from moving away from what Kelly Parkes refers to as "the secret nature" of performance assessment (2010, pp. 99, 104) and, in turn, it would most likely generate a sense of insecurity in terms of performance goals and aims in both students and tutors.

The above argument appears to be supported by the fact that among student and instrumental/vocal tutor participants many were anxious to find out what criteria (if any) guided the examiners' listening activities during assessed performances, the implication being that these participants would have welcomed the use of clearly spelled-out criteria for examinations:

[T]o what standard are they gonna be judging me? For example, ... are they gonna be comparing me to, say, conservatoire level erm pianists or what do they expect? (Cemre, 1st year student)

I'm quite confused about [performance standards] actually, because [the performance tutors] didn't set up the level they wish you to- to achieve for a year. (Sabina, 3rd year student)

I would like to be more involved in understanding what the [examination] panel want and how they are marking. (Sally, instrumental tutor)

What is quite surprising is that these participants were not aware of the existence of performance-specific criteria for the performance modules' assessments, which explains their anxiety and confusion in relation to the examiners' listening expectations. The participants' ignorance of the existence of official criteria for performance assessments suggests that these criteria were not openly and purposefully discussed within the formal performance community unless members had an active role as examiners. In fact, an instrumental tutor who had been part of performance examination panels believed that even among examiners the official marking criteria were not always given sufficient consideration and sometimes were even altogether

disregarded. Her reason for coming to this conclusion was twofold: in her recent experience as an examiner she had not been asked to refer to the official criteria during the assessment process; furthermore, lately some of her students' assessment marks had been (in her opinion) highly inconsistent:

I haven't in the last few erm assessments been given a [sic] marking criteria. Which is- which is worrying. And erm and having seen some of the sort of really kind of inconsistent marking that's come back with- from my students, particularly from the last sort of batch of, of erm of things where, where in fact one, one student is in dispute with my support, erm it is absolutely clear there was no- because the inconsistency across is plain to see. I mean, you don't have to be an experienced assessor to know that there was [sic], there was [sic] no criteria present. I mean, I can't say, 'cause I wasn't there and if, if there was [sic], then I think the criteria isn't [sic] clear. But I'd be surprised if there was [sic]. And I think that's a very worrying trend. (Val, instrumental tutor)

Val's assumption that there was a strong correlation between the examiners' disregard of listening criteria and inconsistencies in the assessment process suggests the belief that the adoption of official criteria guarantees a more consistent and objective listening and evaluative approach. It could be argued, however, that because 'expert' listeners may not share the same understanding of what is valuable in a performance, examiners sitting on the same panel might give more or less weight to different performance aspects even when referring to the same official criteria. This argument is supported by an academic tutor participant's narrative about her experience of co-examining assessed performances with her colleagues. According to this participant, different 'expert' listeners do not necessarily notice all the same features or characteristics in a performance – or, if they do, they do not react to them the same way – notwithstanding the presence of official performance-specific criteria:

I enjoy very much working with somebody else to- basically either to strengthen something that I believe is going on in the performance or that I've heard to ensure that that is also what that person, a second party, heard and understand that there is a kind of- one can never talk fully I think about objective criteria, but there is a kind of- there is strength in common apprehension of what goes on in a performance and you need to have that through a collaboration with- with the other ... examiner ... And then of course it's also erm important to have a dialectic between the two examiners, erm, as well as obviously complementarity

so I would hear things that the other examiner would not hear. (Betsy, academic tutor)

What Betsy's narrative is suggesting is that the presence of official criteria is not sufficient on its own to guarantee that the examiners reach the same understanding (evaluation) of a particular performance; but rather, it is crucial for them to engage in a dialogue about the personal listening criteria adopted – their personal understanding of what matters in a performance and, thus, of their listening expectations. These findings echo the conclusions on the role of assessment criteria drawn in some studies on performance evaluation (Bergee, 2003, p. 146; Parkes, 2010, p. 104). These studies' conclusions suggest the need for examiners to openly share their listening expectations with the other members of the examination panel even in the presence of official performance-specific criteria to enable greater consistency and reliability in the evaluation process. It could be argued, therefore, that in order to foster a common understanding of what is valued and expected in a performance among members of the same performance community (including students and instrumental/vocal tutors), the presence of official criteria is potentially a good starting point, but it must be complemented by a transparent discussion among community members about what performance and being/becoming a performer means.

I now turn to the last major factor affecting the listening approaches of 'expert' listeners: the examiners' professional background. The previous discussion on examination practices has already introduced some evidence on how 'expert' listeners' professional activities outside the formal performance community could strongly affect their listening approach, to the point that they would (tend to) disregard some of the examination practices established within the community. This was the case of the examiner/performance tutor who was also active as a competition adjudicator outside the community. The effect of the examiners' professional background on their listening approach was, however, even more evident in the context of 'mixed' examination panels, that is, panels composed by one internal and one 'external' examiner (cf. Coimbra & Davidson, 2004).⁵¹

⁵¹ In contrast to the current study, findings in the study by Coimbra and Davidson indicate that there was "some striking similarity" between the 'external' and the internal assessors' judgements which, according to the authors, points to "a shared cultural expectation" due to the fact that the assessors belonged to the same cultural milieu' (p. 211).

The ‘external’ panel member was an examiner drawn from professional musicians who did not belong to the formal performance community but were active as instrumental/vocal tutors in other HE institutions – usually conservatoire type ones. In all three undergraduate performance modules, two⁵² out of the three performance assignments were assessed by a panel composed of ‘internal’ examiners only: the performance tutor who co-ordinated the module plus another tutor from the department (in most cases another performance tutor, although occasionally an academic or instrumental/vocal tutor might co-examine the event instead). In the case of the final recital, however, the module co-ordinator was joined on the panel by an ‘external’ examiner. As a module co-ordinator explained to me, ‘external’ examiners were included on the examination panel in order to reassure students as to the validity of the evaluation of the final recital. The rationale behind this decision was that having an expert musician on the panel who had no previous knowledge of the students would guarantee a more objective evaluation of the students’ performance. It would seem, therefore, that the module co-ordinator (and other community members who agreed with the practice of including ‘external’ examiners) considered previous knowledge of the students’ learning and performance strengths and weaknesses a factor that could encourage a bias in the examiners’ listening approach.

Contrary to the module co-ordinator’s expectations, many participants found that the inclusion of an ‘expert’ listener who did not belong to the formal performance community compromised the objectivity and consistency of performance evaluations. According to these participants, this was due to the fact there was a considerable discrepancy between the listening approach and expectations of ‘internal’ examiners and those of their ‘external’ colleagues, as the following two quotations illustrate:

I have difficult feelings towards the exams, erm especially the final ones where they bring in an external examiner. I struggle with the subjectivity that comes with the examination of performance erm I find that very difficult ... [T]he comments have baffled me a bit, the comments have been mixed on my comment sheet, like this year for example, I’d found those comments [from the external examiner] hard and the other recitals I’ve done the comments [from the internal examiners] have been very useful. (Kay, 3rd year student)

⁵² The short performance and the ensemble assignment.

I don't believe that if you bring in an examiner from ... the outside who's been in the habit of hearing people at the music colleges, of course he's got that in his head, he's got a certain standard in his head and he's gonna bring it in here as well ... and [students] are being assessed the same, they are being assessed the same here as they are outside and it's unfair, very unfair. (Alex, instrumental tutor)

For Kay, a third-year piano student, the difference in listening approaches between the 'internal only' and 'mixed' examination panels – and thus the lack of consistency in the overall evaluation process – was evidenced by the quality of the feedback she had received across all the three assessments. Her description of the feedback from the 'external' examiner (which she found “hard” and unhelpful when compared to that from internal examiners) suggests the image of 'external' expert listeners intent on finding – and pointing out – errors and flaws in a student's performance rather than suggesting constructive ways in which the student could grow as a performer.

As for Alex, an instrumental tutor who had been part of the formal performance community for over 30 years, the different listening expectations of 'external' examiners (in comparison to that of 'internal' ones) were made apparent in the marking of final recitals, which to him appeared to be much stricter and “unfair” in relation to the marking of performance exams assessed by a panel composed exclusively of 'internal' examiners. I find it significant that, in Alex's view, 'external' examiners could not help but compare the performances of students from the community to those of students from their own performance community, in spite of the fact that all examiners (both 'internal' and 'external') were required to follow the same official marking criteria, which had been specifically created for the BMus Music performance modules' assessments. Alex expressed the belief that students from music colleges had an overall higher instrumental/vocal standard in comparison to university students – echoing Kim Burwell's view that the range of instrumental/vocal accomplishment among university students (particularly at the beginning of their undergraduate studies) is wider than that of conservatoire students (2005, p. 201). For this reason, Alex found that the listening expectations of the 'external' examiners put students from the formal performance community at a disadvantage.

Other tutor participants shared Alex's perspective on the inclusion of 'external' examiners. Furthermore, they believed that the degree of criticism with which the

‘external’ examiners listened to the performance community students (expressed through the examiners’ written feedback and marks) was inappropriate in relation to the students’ educational milieu and, more specifically, to the limited access to specialist tuition it offered:

[S]urely the criticism [from ‘external’ examiners] that we’re talking about now would be the kind of criticism you’d get at music college, where they’re getting regular lessons, not here where they’re getting 12 hours of, you know, for heavens sake, you know to criticise them like that severely and not give them the actual tuition is actually not on. (Niamh, vocal tutor)

The above instrumental/vocal tutors’ narratives have some interesting implications. They suggest that, because of the educational context in which they were normally professionally active, ‘external’ examiners listened to the performance community’s students as if they were all training as aspiring professional performers. These narratives also imply that ‘external’ examiners had an understanding of performance and of being/becoming a performer in which the display of highly developed instrumental/vocal skills was paramount (cf. Kingsbury, 1988, pp. 115-116). As such, it would appear that ‘external’ examiners were more likely to see students’ music-making as an opportunity to test their abilities, rather than consider it from a more holistic perspective.

Student participants’ narratives about their performance examiners confirm and describe in more detail the differences in listening (and evaluative) approach between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ examiners. Students had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the listening approaches and expectations of their ‘internal’ examiners in the context of performance seminars and/or mock examinations. And through the feedback/mark they received for their final recitals, students were also able to infer the listening approaches and expectations of their ‘external’ examiners. Thus, they had the opportunity to compare and contrast the listening practices of the two different types of examiner:

You know, [the module co-ordinator] will mark as a whole, but the [external] examiners on the final recital, they, you know, they only made technical comments and that’s it. (Caroline, 3rd year student)

If, say, [the module co-ordinator] is marking you, which I really like, because I think it’s more- that the performance needs to be about a whole, not just about

like, just reproducing [the score] ... automatically ... It needs to like be, like, you need to feel it and stuff. Whereas [external] examiners just don't care about that and just look at technical ability and it's quite hard. (Hazel, 3rd year student)

Caroline's and Hazel's words suggest that within the performance modules, authoritative figures whose roles included both the teaching and the evaluation of performance had a more 'holistic' understanding of performance compared to that of 'external' examiners; that is, an understanding that valued the overall impact of a performance, including whether the performer was able to make a meaningful, personal connection with the ideas that a musical score afforded and to communicate them effectively to her audience. On the other hand, 'external' examiners appeared to hold a narrower view of what mattered in a performance and focus mostly on aspects such as technique and accuracy.

The way in which performance tutors who also acted as 'internal' examiners talked about their listening practices in the context of assessed performances confirmed that 'internal' examiners would favour a 'holistic' evaluation of students' music-making, without giving more weight to some specific aspects of their performance over others:

[W]e might look holistically at a performance and say 'Well, actually that was just musically outstanding erm and technically outstanding, but the presentation was rubbish, but it's still worth a first overall because it was outstanding' and we kind of take the whole thing [into consideration]. (Sean, performance tutor)

Significantly, one academic tutor participant who was often part of performance examination panels had an even broader approach to 'holistic' listening. Possibly because of his awareness of the musical and educational circumstances of the students performing in the assessments, he took into consideration 'the human factor' of performances: the students themselves. Callum, the participant in question, explained that when listening to assessed performances, he would consider students' psycho-emotional state, as well as how experienced they were as performers, and react to their performances accordingly. The following quotation illustrates Callum's 'holistic' approach – I have included an extensive excerpt from his interview to do justice to the richness of his narrative:

I think erm you need to be sensitive to the fact that erm that the students are, in the main, young and and some of them, you know, don't seem to suffer from nerves at all and others obviously do. And so you need to be sensitive to that and,

of course, there's no, you know, you can't exonerate a student who is overcome by nerves, erm but you can take it into account and you can be sensitive about it ... I would say is that with performance erm assessment you can't forget that it's a human thing, all right? And you've got to take account of the human being who's performing. And actually it's very- some of this is very, very cold because there is often no audience and they have to- they're required to stand up and give, give a performance as if there's a full hall, but they've got two erm usually, you know, middle-aged men sitting at a desk, you know, at the back of the hall and that, that's a big ask ... I'm conscious of that because, you know, you can't erm produce a glittering performance to an empty room. (Callum, academic tutor)

The sensitivity that Callum displayed towards the “human being” performing for the examination panel points to an understanding of performance as a form of mutual communication between performer and listener (cf. Creech & Papageorgi, 2014, pp. 99-100; Davidson, 2005; Hallam, Cross & Thaut, 2016, p. 909; McPherson & Schubert, 2004, p. 64). This understanding is drastically opposed to the one implied by the ‘external’ examiners’ listening practices, that is, performance as a display of abilities which the listener is entitled – and even expected – to judge and criticise. Furthermore, findings indicate that on some occasions the ‘external’ examiners’ listening practices were also characterised by what could be defined as a lack of sensitivity towards the performer as ‘human being’, as the following account from a student participant illustrates:

Participant: The erm the piano examiner and the- what was it, Rachel’s exam? I think she started playing a piece too fast, and [the external examiner] said quite loudly, enough for [Rachel] to hear, she says, ‘Too fast, too fast,’ and it really, Rachel was playing, she was like, ‘Did you hear that?’ Like, what do you do? Do you slow down? Do you just go for it?

Interviewer: So, it was clear that the comment came from the [external] examiner.

Participant: Yes, definitely, and Rachel heard, and Marlin [the next student to be examined] was put off, as well. (Tom, 3rd year student)

The examiner’s behaviour described by Tom is reminiscent of the ‘hostile’ training style considered in the previous section of this chapter: a very strict and highly critical approach to training performers which one of the performance tutors believed was most effective for ‘classical’ performers.⁵³ It is possible that the ‘external’ examiner discussed in the above quotation – an instrumental tutor from a UK conservatoire –

⁵³ See section 7.1 of the current chapter.

shared the same values that were expressed by the performance tutor participant, in which case it could be argued that during the examination session described by Tom she was simply engaging in her habitual listening practice. This ‘external’ specialist listener’s behaviour clearly exemplifies the approach of authoritative figures (“the performance police”) towards young performers who diverge from the listening expectations of “musical authorities” that Daniel Leech-Wilkinson laments in his discussion of the ‘classical’ performance world (2012, para. 3.3).

The two understandings of performance evidenced so far by the listening approaches of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ examiners explored in this section have, I believe, several potential implications for both listener and performer. The understanding evidenced by the internal examiners’ ‘holistic’ approach to performances potentially implies: (1) an intention on the part of the listener to consider the performance as a whole, as well as an appreciation of the vulnerability to which the performer potentially opens up herself; (2) a willingness on the part of the performer to genuinely connect to the music performed and to share her music-making with her audience; and (3) a focus on part of both performer and listener on meaningful musical content. On the other hand, the understanding evidenced by the ‘external’ examiners’ listening focus on specific technical/interpretative standards and on accuracy potentially implies: (1) a ‘hostile’ approach on the part of the listener in which reception is guided by specific technical standards and interpretative expectations; (2) a ‘defensive’ stance on the part of the performer in which meeting the listener’s expectations and avoiding mistakes is prioritised; and (3) a focus of both listener and performer on specific performance standards and criteria.

The different approaches to music-making (and to its reception) that these two understandings of performance potentially foster seem to find a parallel in the two ways in which performers relate to their music-making that Elsa Perdomo-Guevara (2014) identifies in her study on the impact of musical environments on music performance anxiety (MPA). These two approaches to music-making are performing “*for an audience*” versus performing “*in front of an audience*” (p. 72, italics in the original), in which the former is characterised by the performer’s desire “for connectedness and self-transcendence” (p. 71) and the latter, by the performer’s concern with “the means to achieve musical excellence” (p. 72). Both Perdomo-Guevara’s research and this study’s findings suggest that a ‘holistic’ conception of

performance enables more positive music-making experiences for the performers and, I would add, a more positive and broader conception of what it means to be/become a performer.

In the current study, participants' narratives indicate that the listening (and evaluative) practices and approaches of examiners had a considerable effect on community members' experience – and understanding – of performance and of being/becoming a performer. Among students (and, to some degree, among instrumental/vocal tutors), there was a widespread understanding of performance that saw 'pleasing one's listener' as the performer's primary goal. This understanding appears to be related to the fact that students' key performance experiences during their undergraduate studies were, for the most part, assessments; that is, events in which their music-making was marked by 'expert' listeners and contributed to the final results of their overall degree. For this reason, meeting the listening expectations of their audience appeared to be very high on students' (and instrumental/vocal tutors') list of goals to achieve when preparing a performance.

This understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer led some students to build up a profile of their 'internal' and 'external' examiners according to the examiners' listening expectations and/or preferences and use it to 'tailor' their performances to specific 'expert' listeners (cf. Haddon & Potter, 2014, p. 131):

[S]ome examiners just don't care about [expression], and just look at technical ability and it's quite hard. You kind of have to tailor your exam to the examiner because you know that if you give a performance that is full of expression, that one person won't like it, and they will give you a 2:2. (Hazel, 3rd year student)

[T]here also comes a time when if you know who's going to be sitting in your exam and they prefer you to play it like that, sometimes you just have to bite the bullet and play it like that because it's going to please them. (Molly, 3rd year student)

It would appear from these students' narratives that their primary concern in an assessed performance was to achieve as high a mark as possible and that they would be prepared to change or put more weight on certain aspects of their performance in order to gain a better mark. This implies that, when performing '*in front of*' an examiner identified as being more interested in technical standards and accuracy of

execution (than in the overall musical effectiveness of a performance and/or the communicative abilities of the performer), students' focus during their music-making (and their preparation process) would lean towards technique and accuracy. It also implies that, if examiners made their interpretative preferences known through feedback (for example, during seminars and/or mock exams), students would (tend to) adopt the musical ideas of their 'expert' listeners, not because they found them convincing, but because they believed it would help them achieve a better result in their assessments. The practice of trying to 'please one's examiners' is illustrated by a student participant's account of how she would react to the feedback received from her performance tutors (i.e., her 'internal' examiners) on her work in progress:

I think with me, like with [the performance tutors], they were the people marking me, so if they want more cantabile it's gonna be more cantabile, like in the end that's how I went by it, 'cause my flute teacher was like, I'd go like with the feedback [received during seminars], 'Oh yeah, this was said,' 'Oh really?' she says, 'Let's give it a try.' She's like, 'Yeah I can see how it works. In terms of the exam go for it, if that's what they want, that's what they want'. (Josie, 3rd year student)

What I find significant about Josie's narrative is that her instrumental tutor supported the implementation of the performance tutors' feedback even if she did not find the resulting musical effect entirely convincing. This approach to the preparation process of assessed performances suggests that both student and tutor saw the achievement of a good mark through 'pleasing one's listeners' as a vital goal of the student's learning efforts and, it would seem, prioritised it over goals related to the student's musical growth, such as developing the student's ability to communicate her own personal understanding of the music performed effectively and with conviction.

The realisation that performers were more likely to achieve better results in assessed contexts by meeting their 'expert' listeners' expectations – even when such expectations went against the performers' musical intentions and desired technical approaches – led some students to question the kind of performer they were being implicitly encouraged to be/become in the context of the formal performance community. This was the case for Caroline towards the end of her first year of undergraduate studies. Caroline felt that she was being encouraged to meet the listening expectations of her performance tutor (who was also her 'internal' examiner).

She believed, however, that complying with his preferences would compromise her musical and technical growth as a performer. As such, she felt torn between, on the one hand, being true to her own learning goals and intentions as a performer and, on the other hand, settling for ‘pleasing her examiner’, but possibly gaining a higher mark in the process. I have included an extensive excerpt from Caroline’s interview to do justice to the rich description of her misgivings regarding her participation in the formal performance community’s practice:

[Y]ou know [a vocal student], he sang and accompanied himself on the piano [during a seminar] and I had real issues with that because, you know, if you're sitting down you're obviously not using your arm body equipment properly. Erm and he sang it well, but he sang without virtually an ounce of classical technique. His voice sounded like he was singing a Handel song in a popular style and I wasn't a fan of that at all. But Max [the performance tutor] absolutely loved it. And Max actually said to me ‘Well, could you do that?’ And I'm like, ‘Well what's the issue here?’ you know, and it did really make me question what is the point of the performance [modules]? Are we going to try and get the best, you know, show off the best technique and general performance or ... do you have to play up to what the examiners want to hear? And I did find that really hard.
(Caroline, 1st year student)

Both Josie’s and Caroline’s narratives clearly illustrate how a concern with doing well in assessed performances – and the perception of the role that the ‘expert’ listeners played in determining how successful an assessed performance was – could have a considerable impact on students’ (and instrumental/vocal tutors’) approaches to performing. Findings indicate that the concern with doing well in assessed performances and, more specifically, with gaining a high mark, was considerably widespread among performance students (and instrumental/vocal tutors). Consequently, it is likely that a performance approach characterised by a preoccupation with ‘pleasing one’s examiner’ may have been equally widespread among members of the community. One student participant, however, stood out in this study for his disregard for marks and for an approach to performing characterised by a very different view of the roles of performer and listener. Third-year student Sander strongly questioned the attitude to performance that his peers revealed by behaving as if “the mark is all that matters” and by turning their assessed recitals into competitions about who got the highest mark. Sander indicated that he used to share

his peers' attitude, but had overcome it in the last year of his degree because of a shift in what he perceived as valuable about being a performer:

[Assessed] recitals very much are [competitive], just 'cause everyone kind of, everyone gossips about who's gonna get the good marks, and who's erm, everyone everyone works out who got what and that's not, that's what matters like, that's not what music is like ... I got to the point in 3rd year where I, I didn't care about the mark any more because it's an art like, it's an Arts degree essentially. I don't I don't, I don't wanna be chasing a number, when I'm- when I'm playing music. (Sander, 3rd year student)

What is particularly significant in the above quotation is Sander's understanding of performance as an art form (not 'just' a university subject) and, consequently, his belief that performance students should go beyond a preoccupation with what mark their music-making may be awarded. In the course of the focus group to which he participated, Sander clarified further his understanding of being a performer and its relevance to giving less importance to marks:

[As a performer] you wanna know how to come across better, how to give a more enjoyable performance to the audience, 'cause that's like, you don't wanna know, I think that yeah, that's what it's about really, you don't wanna, you don't wanna know how I can get five extra marks to get a- to get a 2.1 or something; it's how can I enjoy it and how can the audience enjoy it. (Sander, 3rd year student)

Notably, Sander viewed performance as an artistic endeavour that should be equally enjoyed by both performer and listener. This understanding of performance implies a desire on part of the performer to connect with one's audience – rather than to please them – through the act of music-making. Arguably, it is thanks to this understanding of performance that Sander was able to experience his assessed performances as opportunities to perform “*for* an audience” (Perdomo-Guevara, 2014, p. 72, italics in the original) – rather than as assignments in which he had to display his musical/technical abilities “*in front of*” (p. 72, italics in the original) a panel of examiners with the aim of receiving a good mark.

The findings in this study do not fully explain the reasons behind Sander's shift of his own understanding of performance to a different level in comparison to his own peers (and to some tutors). They suggest, however, that this shift might be connected to

Sander's active and frequent participation in non-assessed performance activities (such as the departmental orchestral concerts and opera projects) – whose collaborative and participatory nature he thoroughly enjoyed – and his own sense of identity as an ensemble and orchestral musician, rather than as a soloist. Most significantly, findings related to this participant indicate that even within a performance community that, through some of its practices (e.g. listening and feeding back), potentially promotes a rather restrictive view of what should be valued in a performance it is possible for its members to develop a much broader understanding of and approach to performance and being/becoming a performer.

Summary

This chapter has explored how 'expert' listeners – instrumental/vocal and performance tutors and examiners – engaged with, and impacted on, performance students' music-making. Findings indicate that 'expert' listening within the formal performance community focused to a great extent on one particular type of musical event: the solo performance assignment. For this reason, factors such as the performance modules' structure, assignment requirements and deadlines and exam procedures had a central role in shaping and directing the 'expert' listeners' practices. Findings also indicate that 'expert' listening practices were associated with two main understandings of performing: (1) a 'narrow' one in which the main stress was on the performer's 'accurate' presentation of the score and her display of individual musical and technical skills; and (2) a broader or 'holistic' understanding, which saw the performer engaged in a personal and meaningful musical communication with her audience and which valued all aspects of her music-making. Significantly, students' reaction to their 'expert' listeners' understandings of performance would be to try and tailor their music-making to the expectations of the specific listeners who marked their assessed performance. Although this might have been an effective tactic in gaining a higher mark, it appeared to have a negative impact on the students' sense of creative agency and on their identity as performers.

A conclusion that could be drawn from the findings in this chapter is that a performance community that makes assessed (solo) performances the primary focus of its activities and interactions runs the risk of prioritising the listening criteria and expectations of the few 'expert' listeners who have the authority to decide whether a

student's performance was successful or not. This could potentially encourage a very narrow view of what performance and being/becoming a performer means. Furthermore, it could promote an unhealthy relationship between the performer and her 'expert' listeners, in which the main preoccupation of the performer is to please – rather than communicate meaningfully with – her listeners, with all the negative implications this could have for the performer's approach to music-making.

8. Performance in the context of the BMus Music degree

So far in this thesis, I have considered the formal performance community and its practices exclusively within the setting that contributed to defining its boundaries:⁵⁴ the ‘classical’ performance modules on the BMus Music programme. As Etienne Wenger (1998) points out, however, no community of practice is a “self-contained entity” (p. 79); rather, it is active and develops within a larger context. Such larger context not only provides the community with specific resources and constraints, but also shapes, to a greater or lesser degree, its practices as community members respond to the contextual conditions within which they operate (p. 79). It could be argued, therefore, that an investigation of the relationship between a community of practice and its larger context can deepen our understanding of its practices and of the beliefs and values enacted and/or constructed through these practices. In this chapter, then, I consider the relationship between the setting of the formal performance community – that is, the ‘classical’ performance modules – and the wider context of the BMus Music programme, within which the community’s practices were embedded.

To date, and to my knowledge, few studies have considered the influence of wider HE contexts (such as music departments, degree programmes and/or institutional cultures) on the study of musical performance in the university sector. Even though this extant literature generally explores musical performance in HE from an educational perspective – with specific attention to teaching/learning approaches (Burwell, 2010; Haddon & Potter, 2014; Papageorgi et al., 2010a; Papageorgi & Welch, 2014; Simones, 2017) and to students’ transition from an educational to a professional context (Burland, 2005) – findings discussed in this literature suggest that the investigation of the relationship between the study of musical performance and the wider HE context can yield valuable insights into understandings of performance and being/becoming a performer in a university context.

In the current study, student participants’ narratives indicated that their participation in the practices of the formal performance community were very much affected by their overall experience of the BMus Music programme. Student participants

⁵⁴ A full definition of the boundaries of this performance community is given in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2)

explained that the performance module available at each level of undergraduate studies represented just one ‘course-unit’ out of the four that music students were required to take each academic year. Therefore, to reach their yearly target of four ‘course-units’, students were required to take the performance module in combination with other modules available on the programme. When discussing these other modules, student participants defined them as being either ‘practical’ or ‘academic’, two categories which appear to be widely used by HE music students when discussing different aspects of their music degree, such as areas of study, skills required, etc. (cf. Burland & Pitts, 2007; Papageorgi et al., 2010a).

Student participants in the current study identified the performance modules as being ‘practical’, together with modules such as Composition and Music in Film. On the other hand, any module that approached the study of music in a ‘non-practical’ manner (for example, in the words of some participants, from a historical, philosophical or theoretical standpoint) and was assessed through essay-writing, was referred to as ‘academic’. To exemplify this category, students participants mentioned modules such as Aesthetics, History of Performance, Soviet Music and Music and the Body.

My participants’ experience of the relationship between the performance modules and the other modules on the BMus Music programme was varied. In analysing the findings related to this relationship, however, I have identified two main themes that were present in my participants’ narratives, which I explore in the following two sections. In the first section (8.1), I focus on my participants’ perception of the relationship between instrumental/vocal learning vs. ‘academic’ learning. And in the second section (8.2), I explore the relationship between the study of performance and ‘academic’ work as perceived by members of both performance and academic communities.

8.1. Perceptions of performance and ‘academic’ learning

The majority of student participants in this study experienced the performance modules as the most significant part of the undergraduate music degree. According to literature on HE music, this appears to be a common experience in contexts where performance is one of several modules available on the programme of studies (cf.

Burwell, 2010, pp. 106-107). Nevertheless, my participants' narratives also indicate that many students valued the wider musical context that the university music degree offered. This was the case for Linda, a first-year student passionate about performance who had chosen to switch to a university music degree after her brief experience of undergraduate music studies in a conservatoire context:

I went to the Royal Scottish erm for a term erm before I came here. And I- I didn't enjoy it at all, I really didn't enjoy the conservatoire experience in that- in that way. I felt erm well, I felt that there wasn't enough of a- a balance between- between other things, because I really, I really love performing and that is what I want to do, but I wanted to have ... a lot more freedom to explore different areas of music and I definitely found that here. And I think the studying, doing performance in the context of the university, I think it kind of does, it does give you a grounding. (Linda, 1st year student)

Interestingly, Linda believed that to grow as a performer she needed to let go of a narrow focus on instrumental/vocal learning in favour of a more holistic musical experience – through the study of a variety of music areas. Other student participants whose main passion was also performance echoed Linda's emphasis on the opportunity to explore different musical areas in the context of their undergraduate degree. In this respect, there seems to have been an alignment between these students' learning aims – and their understanding of the kind of 'musical journey' they needed to undertake in order to become and/or develop as performers – and the departmental ethos, which stressed the importance of a "rounded musical education" (Music, 2008, p. 4). This understanding of music education is echoed in extant literature on HE music studies, which points to the value of promoting the development of 'well-rounded musicians' in the context of university undergraduate programmes (cf. Papageorgi et al., 2010a, pp. 161-162; Pitts, 2003, p. 289).

In the current study, the blend of practical and 'academic' subjects that many participants appreciated – and which characterised their undergraduate studies – was, however, also experienced as the source of some difficulties. More specifically, these difficulties were related to: switching between 'academic' work and practical (specifically performance) work; and finding a balance between these two types of work. I illustrate and discuss these (perceived) difficulties in the rest of this section.

According to some student participants' learning experience, the type of strategies and focus needed for 'academic' work (such as researching and writing essays) was very different from the type needed when engaging with performance work (such as instrumental/vocal practising). As a result, these participants found it challenging to switch from one to the other in the course of their daily university activities:

I found it really difficult to switch out of academia mode and the research mode and the kind of analytical kind of stuff, and then switch to the performance mode and kind of be very attentive to detail and putting enough rehearsal time in and those kind of things. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

[It]'s not even so much organising, but it is kind of partly, yeah, getting to that [performance] mode. That's the thing that I did find quite hard. (Darla, 2nd year student)

Rosie's and Darla's narratives suggest that 'academic' and performance work were experienced as radically different in nature. Interestingly, Rosie did not seem to believe that activities such as 'research' and 'analysis' (and related skills) – which she identified as part and parcel of 'academic' work – were relevant and/or helpful when engaging in instrumental/vocal practice. On the contrary, in her view they needed to be put to one side in order for her to be able to switch to 'performance mode' and engage with her vocal work – which appeared to be conceived as careful reproduction of notational details.

The perceived difference in nature between 'academic' and performance work (and related skills) is generally supported by literature on HE music studies: when discussing the skills that university music students need in order to flourish in HE, researchers and their participants tend to separate subject-specific skills into two groups – performance and/or 'practical' skills and 'academic' skills – as a matter of fact (for example, see Burland & Pitts, 2007; Papageorgi et al., 2010a). Findings in the current study do not provide an explanation as to why 'academic' and practical work – and more specifically instrumental/vocal practice – were experienced as requiring different 'engagement modes'. It is possible, however, that participants had an implicit understanding of performance as an *embodied* form of musical practice (cf. Rink, 2017) – characterised as a complex process in which “bodily sensations, perception, and cognition” (Nijs, 2017, pp. 50-51) require careful and coherent coordination – and of 'academic' work as a purely *intellectual* approach to music.

Interestingly, research on human meaning-making carried out in the last couple of decades (for a review, see Johnson, 2017, pp. 1-36) posits that all forms of meaning-making, even those generally understood as purely cognitive and abstract, are in fact embodied. In the case of the music domain, however, it is conceivable that a musician may be aware of the involvement of her physical and emotional self only (or more acutely) when producing and communicating musical meaning specifically through instrumental/vocal activities, rather than through ‘academic’ ones. This could be related to the fact that a performing musician needs to engage in “moment-by-moment self-monitoring [of one’s physical/emotional behaviour] in accordance with one’s [musical] intentions” (Nijs, 2017, p. 51) to be able to achieve effective communication during music-making. The way some student participants described the role that their body played in conveying musical meaning while performing – such as, for example, ‘you have to embody the emotion, physically’ – would appear to support the argument that (some) students had an understanding of performance meaning-making and communication as embodied activities.⁵⁵

The second difficulty that student participants experienced in relation to the blend of practical and ‘academic’ subjects in their degree was ‘balancing’ their performance activities and their ‘academic’ work. Students reported that they would often struggle to manage their overall workload without sacrificing one aspect of their studies in favour of the other. In my capacity as piano tutor, I regularly witnessed this struggle among my own undergraduate piano students (and those of my colleagues): as I documented in my fieldnotes, it was quite common for students to cancel their one-to-one lesson at short notice because of essay deadlines or attend their lesson apologising they had not had any time to practise between lessons because of their ‘academic’ workload.

Most of the participants who discussed this type of difficulty were concerned specifically about not being able to maintain their regular engagement with instrumental/vocal practice because of ‘academic’ commitments, such as essay deadlines. Hazel, a vocal student in her third year, talked about this in some detail:

[I]t was hard to balance [academic work and performance] though when you had like three essays that had to be in at the end of the week and you still had to learn

⁵⁵ See also Chapter 5 (section 5.2) for a discussion of community members’ understandings of the ‘performing body’.

pieces [for the assessed performance] ... The last couple of weeks [before an essay deadline]... practice took second place ... [But] if you don't practise for a week, because your voice is a muscle, you lose- it just deteriorates. So I also learnt that, you know, if I didn't do a bit of this work every week, then I was going to fail [laughter]. (Hazel, 3rd year student)

Hazel's words indicate that her concern with having sufficient time to practise her instrument was related to the physical aspect of music-making and ensuring that she could maintain her body/instrument in top shape. Her way of managing the uneven distribution of her degree workload (due to clustering of assignment deadlines) also points to the belief that instrumental/vocal practice is not an activity that a music student can interrupt while busy with other coursework and catch up with at a later (less busy) time. Hazel's narrative suggests an understanding of instrumental/vocal activities (aimed at preparing a formal performance event) as requiring regular, constant practice if the musician is to achieve a satisfactory performance standard. Literature on instrumental/vocal practice supports the importance of instrumental/vocal practice distribution through the week in relation to both maintaining physical health (Wynn Parry, 2004, pp. 45, 49) and achieving a 'successful' performance (Burwell & Shipton, 2011, p. 269).

Other student participants echoed Hazel's concerns with finding sufficient time to practise during term time. Some students believed that their instrumental/vocal practice would inevitably be affected negatively by the (perceived) heavy 'academic' workload, as the following quotation illustrates:

Now obviously academic commitments have meant that practice levels have had to come down slightly, just because that's the way it is. (Aart, 2nd year student)

Aart's use of the expression "practice levels" is significant here: it implies that he understood the reduction in practice time (in order to fulfil his 'academic' commitments) not just in terms of practice *quantity*, but of overall practice *quality* – which, interestingly, is quite the opposite to what research on individual practice suggests: namely, that "focusing on practice quality ... will most probably reduce the need for quantity" (Jørgensen, 2004, p. 91). As such, it would appear that Aart's experience of belonging to the formal performance community – and participating in its practices – in the wider context of the BMus Music degree led him to believe that the quality of his performance activities would be inevitably lowered because of the

need to meet ‘academic’ commitments. This belief suggests that Aart did not experience his ‘academic’ work as (directly) contributing to his performance practices. Interestingly, findings in Lilian Simones’ study (2017) on performance teaching/learning expectations in a university context echo Aart’s experience: from the perspective of students who participated to her study, “there was little sense of the interconnectedness of instrumental music/vocal [sic] with other areas of the curriculum, or of the value of these other areas in contributing to higher levels of musicianship or better-prepared performances” (p. 255).

The belief that in trying to balance ‘academic’ and performance work the quality of the latter would be compromised was shared by other student participants. This had far-reaching implications for (some of) the community members’ understanding of performance in the context of a university undergraduate programme:

I don’t feel like [the module] gives enough of an in-depth into [performance]. I think it’s because of the balance between the academic modules and the performance modules. It’s just impossible at a university, especially an undergraduate degree ... I do think it’s more of a– an introduction into professional classical performance, but not quite ... professional classical performance training. (Rosie, 3rd year student)

[I]t’s not really training that you’re getting here, it’s not, like, conservatoire type training and at the same time, it’s not– the performance isn’t really approached in a more academic way than other unis would do it I suppose ... But then you don’t really have that much time to specialise in [performance] and have that more in-depth element. So it always just feels more like a glimpse of it. (Darla, 2nd year student)

It is interesting to notice the comparison between the performance experience at university and what these participants believed the performance experience of conservatoire students to be like. Rosie’s and Darla’s narratives suggest an understanding of performance studies at university as a more superficial version of what they believed performance studies in a conservatoire context to be like. And the (perceived) reason why performance studies at university could not give them the depth of experience and knowledge available to conservatoire students was, in their views, insufficient time to spend on developing their instrumental/vocal and performance skills and knowledge because of the need to balance performance activities and ‘academic’ work. Additionally, Darla’s words – “performance isn’t

really approached in a more academic way” – suggest the perception of a missed opportunity in terms of the performance modules’ content and its approach to instrumental/vocal music-making. Significantly, the view that the undergraduate performance modules were run as a somewhat lesser version of conservatoire-type of instrumental/vocal studies was supported by some academic tutor participants, as the following quotation illustrates:

[A]t the moment [performance]’s running along a kind of heavily disguised but slightly weary conservatoire type erm traditional thing, you know. (Theo, academic tutor)

There appears to be an implicit criticism in Theo’s words here that the formal performance community active within the BMus Music degree had failed to give their own performance practices a distinct ‘university identity’, but had simply fallen back on the traditional approach to performance associated with conservatoire instrumental/vocal training. In Theo’s view, this was due to “the kind of people” employed to run and teach on the performance modules – individuals who had themselves developed as musicians in a conservatoire context – and, consequently, to ‘the kind of expectations’ communicated to performance students because of these tutors’ music-educational background.

Interestingly, Theo’s critique of the ‘traditional’ conservatoire-type of ‘classical’ music training – a training that focuses primarily on the development of individual instrumental/vocal skills to professional standards – is echoed by Dawn Bennett (2007, 2009) in her investigations on the effectiveness of performance-based HE studies in equipping music students with the necessary skills and knowledge to build sustainable music careers. Bennett’s conclusion is that this type of “[p]erformance-based education and training in classical music does not provide graduates with the requisite skills to achieve a sustainable career” (2007, p. 187). As such, she advocates that HEIs should go beyond the traditional understanding of the practising musician as performer and promote a broader definition of what it means to be/become a successful practising musician through “[t]he development of positive attitudes towards non-performance study” (2009, p. 325).

The limitations of too narrow a conception of what it means to be/become a practising musician – and more specifically a performer – are illustrated by the findings in the

present study, particularly in relation to the widespread practice among performance community members of comparing aspects of their own community to those of performance communities in a conservatoire context. The effects of this comparison were particularly striking in the case of performance students. Findings indicate that, as students progressed through their degree, some of them constructed their identity as performers in relation to their conservatoire counterparts. They constructed an image of themselves as ‘inferior’ to conservatoire students in terms of their instrumental/vocal and performance standards because they could not dedicate the same amount of time to the study of their instrument and received far less specialist support (i.e. one-to-one lessons). Furthermore, they believed that the ‘academic’ work they engaged with would not compensate for these lower standards, all of which would affect their professional opportunities negatively.

This was the case for Lana, a third-year student participant. She appeared to be generally happy with the overall marks for performance she had received throughout her undergraduate studies. In spite of this, Lana’s sense of self as a musician was affected by her belief that she was not – and would never be – ‘at the same standard’ as conservatoire students. This, in turn, led her to conclude that taking performance modules for three years had been a ‘waste of time’:

[A]s I come to the end of [my degree] I start to wonder what’s the point ... ‘cause of the job market the way it is, I kind of wonder whether that was a bit of time wasted when there are people at conservatoires who can’t get jobs performing, what chance do I stand when I’ve been, you know, I’m not at the same standard as them and I shouldn’t expect to be at the same standard as them, for the amount of practice and masterclasses and everything that they’ve had on top of what I haven’t. (Lana, 3rd year student)

Lana’s narrative reveals her belief that the study of performance in a HE context is only worth the time and the effort if it helps students reach instrumental/vocal standards that will give them the opportunity to enter the professional music world as performers. Thus, Lana appears to have a narrow view of what it might mean to build up a sustainable career as a musician. This suggests that, in spite of the music department’s aim to give its students a “rounded musical education” (Music, 2008, p. 4), Lana’s overall experience of the BMus Music degree had not helped her to view the blend and breadth of skills and knowledge she had acquired and/or developed in

the course of her degree as a valuable outcome of her undergraduate studies, one that was most likely to serve her well in the professional music world (cf. Bennett, 2007, 2009). Participants' narratives suggest that the construction of a negative self-identity as a performer, as exemplified by Lana's case, may have been supported by instrumental/vocal tutors through comments (made in front of their students) on the amount of one-to-one tuition, the availability of time to practice and students' instrumental/vocal standards in a university context in relation to a conservatoire one.

8.2. Perceptions of the relationship between performance and the 'academic' work

The findings in this study indicate that participants' views of the relationship between 'practical' and 'academic' modules in the context of the BMus Music degree tended to be affected by a widespread belief among performance community members: that being a practising musician, such as a performer, was fundamental to one's understanding of music and, consequently, to one's experience of university music studies. Rosie – a third-year student who had a strong musical identity as a performer before she started her undergraduate studies – subscribed to this belief:

I kind of picked [the BMus] music [degree] because of those practical as well as those academic things. I don't– yeah, I never really saw myself doing an academic degree ... it would probably make you think about music differently as well if you're not a practising, you know, erm musician, not a practising performer.
(Rosie, 3rd year student)

Rosie's words confirm the significance that performance had for her in the context of her undergraduate degree and suggest a conception of the 'academic' approach to music as complementary, rather than essential, to the experience of engaging in practical music-making and to the musical understanding gained through it. It is possible that Rosie's conception of 'academic' music studies might have been related to a particular type of musicological approach, one associated with what John Rink calls "traditional musicological studies" (2003, p. 303). Rink defines them as being characterised by "*detached* accounts of 'the music' and the performing practices related to it" (p. 303, italics mine). Arguably, it could have been the 'detached' approach of this type of 'academic' music studies – underpinned by a conception of the 'music work' as independent from the performance process – that Rosie found

unappealing when considering the option of a purely ‘academic’ degree. Her negative reaction to undertaking this type of degree also suggests the centrality – in her view – of an “embodied experience of music-making” (Parmer, 2014, p. 69) to higher music studies.

Several participants’ narratives indicate that their practical experience (as performers) of specific music significantly shaped the way they related to that very same music in an ‘academic’ context, as the following quotation illustrates:

I think it’s really good to play music that you can end up talking about. I think it’s good that we did the Prokofiev Cantata. Like obviously at the time I didn’t really realise the importance, but then doing the Soviet Music module, I think it kind of brings it- you’re more attached to what you’re writing about because you’ve performed it. You kind of- you have an insider’s view rather than just- even if you’d listened to it lots of times it’s still not the same as if you’ve played it.
(Lana, 3rd year student)

What is particularly significant about Lana’s narrative is her understanding of how performing music has the potential to give musicians a unique perspective of it – an “insider’s view”, as Lana put it – which cannot be substituted by any listening experience and, therefore, which affects ‘academic’ activities such as talking and/or writing about music. Recent literature on musical performance supports an understanding of the performer as someone with an “insider status” because of the experiential nature of performance (Froelich, 2002 as quoted in Burwell, 2010, p. 107) and because of performers’ (potential) ability to figure out how to “make music work” (Leech-Wilkinson, 2009b, p. 791) as performance. It could be argued that the whole process of performing, from the initial learning stages to the performance event, enables musicians to build up an ‘insider’s’ understanding of music. Indeed, John Rink proposes that when the musical material is thoroughly internalised by the performer, the relationship between the two is such that “‘the music’ one makes in performance not only emerges from but may constitute what one is as a performer” (2017, p. 345). In other words, the musician comes to identify oneself with the music performed: performer and music become one, or at least this is the experience reported by many musicians. From this perspective, it is easy to understand why Daniel Leech-Wilkinson (2009b) and Dillon Parmer (2014) argue that the traditional relationship between musicology and performance – one in which the former is

viewed as providing contextual/theoretical knowledge and musical understanding *essential* to enabling a meaningful instance of the latter – should be reversed and that we should start to consider performing as the basis for understanding music.

Interestingly, an academic tutor participant who identified himself as a musicologist and a ‘professional listener’ echoed the above understanding of performing as providing an ‘insider’s view’ into music:

[M]ost musicologists began life by being performers. Their parents sent them to piano lessons or whatever, so most musicologists do know something about music from the inside and even though they perform in private for the delight of their friends and the annoyance of their enemies. (Theo, academic tutor)

In spite of his acknowledgment of the ‘insider’s knowledge’ that performance enables, Theo lamented the implication drawn by some musicians: that if performance enables an ‘insider’s view’ into music – and, consequently, a scholarly approach to music generates an ‘outsider’s view’ – scholarly work is of secondary importance:

[I]t’s as though people who work on the background and on the analysis of music and on where it comes from and the kind of stylistic aspects of it are treated as though, you know, they are really sort of second- they’re sort of handmaidens to the real business of music. (Theo, academic tutor)

Findings indicate that some members of the performance community did view ‘academic’ work as secondary to performance. In the case of performance students, the narratives of some participants indicate that students tended to be sensitive to – and in some cases critical of – the outsider’s musicological perspectives expressed by some of their non-performing peers and/or tutors in the context of the ‘academic’ modules they took as part of their degree:

[I]n a class as well where the discussion comes up, and people start talking around, and you hear the way they are talking about certain things, that you can tell they just, you know, it’s not a musical context it’s not supported by the sort of performing experience, but it’s purely books ... I can tell, you know, who’s a performer and who’s not. It’s maybe how people react to certain things, to music you know. You hear a musical example and ... there’s something about performers, they kind of grasp it, you feel it. (Michal, 3rd year student)

[I]f anything were to come up ... the performance people would be like, ‘Well, from my experience’ [she laughs] and then ‘Dah dah dah dah,’ whereas obviously

like, erm the others they're like, 'Yes it should be like this' ... I find with like, the non-performance people, they see everything as black and white almost ... but we [performers] obviously we had different views of what's being said, purely because of, like, performance experience or whatever. That came up a lot in Music and the Body, like us lot who like who are performing currently at the minute, we had certain views on things, whereas, like, the other people wouldn't have the same view. (Josie, 3rd year student)

The above narratives underline the participants' strong sense of belonging to the formal performance community and illustrate how the meaning-making process that resulted from their participation in that community's practices (cf. Wenger, 1998, pp. 52-55) affected their experience of (some of) the 'academic' work they engaged with. Michal and Josie emphasise the vital role of a practical experience of music-making (through instrumental/vocal performance) in gaining a 'musical' – rather than just theoretical – understanding of what is being listened to and/or discussed in an 'academic' context. Both participants believed that musicians who performed (as opposed to musicians who did not perform) could have a more nuanced and flexible understanding of issues surrounding music because of their practical engagement with it. Furthermore, they believed that there was a limitation in musical knowledge resulting from 'academic' research that was not supported or accompanied by the practical experience of music-making: Michal uses words such as 'grasping', which alludes, once again, to the embodied nature of performers' understanding of music.

The discrepancy that these students experienced between their own understanding of music as performers and the scholarly understanding of music they came across within the context of their 'academic' modules is echoed by Dillon Parmer in his analysis of the "uneasy relationship" (as he qualifies it (cf. Leech-Wilkinson, 2009b, p. 791)) between music scholarship and performance: "more often than not, the [music] students confront a disparity between what scholars have to say about music in general and the particulars of what happens in actual artistic situations, that inveterate gap between research and practice" (2014, p. 83).

The inseparable link between, on the one hand, our identity and membership of specific communities and, on the other hand, the way we interpret the world around us – illustrated in the previous performance students' quotations – is theorised by

Etienne Wenger (1998) as directly related to our participation in our communities' enterprises. As he eloquently explains:

Being [a performer or anyone else] gives us a certain focus. It moves us to understand certain conditions and consider certain possibilities. As an identity, this translates into a perspective. It does not mean that all members of a community look at the world in the same way. Nonetheless, an identity in this sense manifests as a tendency to come up with certain interpretations, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices, to value certain experiences – all by virtue of participating in certain enterprises (pp. 152-153).

From this perspective, it could be argued that, although Michal and Josie took several 'academic' modules as part of their degree, their experience of 'academic' music practices in this context did not make them feel that they belonged to the local academic community⁵⁶ and were participating in a joint enterprise (i.e., the understanding of music through 'academic' activities). As such, the way Michal and Josie 'looked at the [music] world' appeared to remain grounded in the meaning-making process that originated from their participation in performance community practices.

Findings in the present study indicate that participants who experienced performance as fundamental to their understanding of music also tended to have a specific view of the relationship between 'academic' (or, as some participants referred to it, musicological) work and performance: they perceived the two as being 'detached' or 'separate'. In other words, these participants did not believe that the 'academic' work they engaged with in the context of their modules and the musicological knowledge they acquired through this work had direct relevance for their performance practices. Michal's position is representative of this standpoint, as illustrated here:

Interviewer: When you think of musicology and performance, how do you see the relationship between the two?

Participant: Slightly detached erm. For me as a performer, music should be played and felt, rather than be spoken about too much, you know ... it's about the experience rather than- I'm not saying [it] in a negative way because that's pretty amazing how deep people can dig [chuckling] you know, and how far they can go in sort of analytical sort of ways. But for me, you know, [music]'s an art and you

⁵⁶ In addition to belonging to a community of performers – see Wenger's concept of identity as multimembership (1998, pp. 158-161).

should be feeling it and you should be erm [the] performer gives something to the audience, audience receives that, takes it here [he indicates his heart] and that's it.
(Michal, 3rd year student)

It is interesting that, having reached the end of his BMus Music studies (Michal had just completed his third year at the time of his interview), Michal conceived the “intellectual study” of music (Music, 2008, p. 4) as being somewhat at odds with music as a performative and expressive art form. He believed that music needed to be actively experienced through performance to be truly comprehended (by both musicians and listeners). His words suggest that the performative and expressive aspects of this experience were more worthwhile (to him) than any scholarly approach to music. In his seminal work on musicology, Joseph Kerman appears to validate the performers’ perspective illustrated by Michal’s narrative:

Musicians who work within the ‘living’ tradition do not need to write – or talk – about music; they are the doers, not the talkers, and so one has to say they have every right to view musicology, theory, or any other kind of intellection about music with a certain detachment ... A musical tradition does not maintain its ‘life’ or continuity by means of books and book-learning. It is transmitted ... not so much by words as body language, and not so much by precept as by example ... It is not that there is any lack of thought about performance on the part of musicians in the central tradition, then. There is a great deal, but it is not thought of a kind that is readily articulated into words (1985, pp. 195-196).

Participants’ narratives in this study strongly support Kerman’s point about the fundamental role that body language – and, I would add, modelling – has in the way performers communicate their understanding of music and of how ‘it works’ (cf. Leech-Wilkinson, 2016, p. 325). The following two quotations are representative of the beliefs that the majority of instrumental/vocal and performance tutor participants and student participants held in this regard:

[R]ather than having a lecture talking about performance right at the beginning of the academic year, [students] should experience performance, have their instruments in their hands, stand in front of their peers and experience the space around them, even if it means playing just a few notes. (Val, instrumental tutor; Fieldnotes, 2 July 2009)

I've learned from ... watching [our performance tutor] perform and like he can never- he can never not like even in seminars ... he cannot resist like he can't tell

you how to do it, he has to do it, which I think like I'm all like that's what music is.
(Josie, 3rd year student)

It is interesting to notice that both tutor and student participants in the quotations here above held a view of *talking* (and, presumably, *writing*) about performance as an activity that was out of step with the very nature of music: music (as they understood it) is something one has to *do*. Significantly, findings also indicate that both participants shared Michal's view of scholarly (or musicological) work and performance as 'detached' from performance.

According to some academic tutor participants, this view of the relationship between performance and 'academic' studies was quite widespread among performance students and – what is particularly noteworthy – they believed it was evidenced in students' music-making. More specifically, these academic tutor participants argued that the ineffective 'interpretations' some students gave in the course of their assessed and/or non-assessed performances were due to the lack of integration between these two approaches to the study of music in their own music-making:

I've often erm listened to so many of these students and I've thought, 'Why don't they actually have- have they actually had any interpretation classes, quite apart from the technical instruction they have from their teachers?' ... [S]o many of them lack an understanding of style. (Callum, academic tutor)

[I]t's a disappointment to me that not many performance students do erm our undergraduate History of Performance [module] because they have very little stylistic awareness ... I think it's a shame that, they don't do more analysis of the music ... they don't have an open mind to the potential for patterns of intensity within it and how to bring about the best kind of integration of the material ... [I]nterpretation is taken to be expression, not formal knowledge, formal understanding, direction finding in the music ... [The study of performance]'s driven by technique ... [and] it's blocking off from them the understanding of how to develop as a rounded musician with an understanding of styles and different kinds of repertory. (Theo, academic tutor)

In Callum's and Theo's opinions, students' performances would have gained in musical depth had students incorporated particular aspects of musicological knowledge – such as regarding the stylistic characteristics associated with particular repertoire and the formal properties that can be 'found' in notated music – into their performing practices. It is interesting to notice that both participants seem to imply

that the only way for musicians to achieve an effective performance is specifically through a musicological approach to music, which suggests the assumption – exposed by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson – that only musicologists are “uniquely qualified to tell performers how music should go” (2009b, p. 791). In these academic tutor participants’ narratives there is no sense that being part of the “living tradition” Kerman speaks about (1985, pp. 195-196) could give musicians the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to create effective musical performances.⁵⁷

In their evaluation of the music practices of the formal performance community, both academic participants believed that musicological knowledge was being disregarded in favour of a focus on the development of instrumental/vocal technique. Findings do indicate that there was a considerable stress on technical abilities in the context of instrumental/vocal one-to-one teaching practices and of final performance assessments. Therefore, it could be inferred that, in these contexts, less emphasis may have been placed on other areas of musical knowledge of potential relevance to the performing process. Nevertheless, findings also suggest that analytical engagement with the musical score – at least from a performer’s perspective (cf. Rink, 2002) – and discussions around what may or may not have been stylistically appropriate for certain repertoire were part of some community members’ performance practice, as illustrated by the following quotations:

[My instrumental tutor] made me aware of a general idea of understanding the piece: how it works as a whole, how the phrases connect. So after [I] work with her I can take a new piece and understand it better, you know. (Michal, 3rd year student)

Knowing a style, knowing about a composer, knowing about the composer’s life, like- and theory, theory, you know, I always break down a piece. I always analyse it. Like, I have to know, break it down, how it works, before I can play it properly. (Tom, 3rd year student)

The academic tutor participants who lamented the lack of integration between performance and ‘academic’ work believed that this state of affairs was also due to a misconception regarding the function of ‘academic’ work (and knowledge) in relation

⁵⁷ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has, however, pointed out that although a ‘living tradition’ can enable musicians to create an effective performance, its norms and conventions could be highly restrictive to performers who would like to approach standard repertoire in a radically different way (2012, para. 3.3; 2016, p. 328).

to performance practice, which, in their view, created serious issues in the context of the BMus Music degree:

I think there's a- actually a serious problem in this department of a- a lack of integration really between performance, which is seen to be something expressive, and how that expression is antithetical to academic work. That's an interpretation I hear students repeating from other staff. And that's entirely false. We all know that actually. We know that because the most successful musicians out there are the ones who do their homework and the ones who have the tools to do their homework. (Betsy, academic tutor)

[T]here's a misunderstanding about the function of theory and academic work in that sense in that, the only point really of academic work whatever kind it is, is to increase the possibilities of experience and students don't get that: they think it's just about information...[T]here are endemic problems with ... the performance [modules] in this department. (Theo, academic tutor)

In Betsy's and Theo's view, what the majority of performance students failed to understand – and missed out on – was that 'academic' work could actually support the expressive side of their music-making. And, as Theo explained during his interview, 'academic' knowledge could help students become aware of a wider range of expressive opportunities in the musical score. Although these academic participants' appear to present 'academic' knowledge as an empowering tool for the performer, it could be argued that their understanding of academic knowledge was actually related to the belief that "scholars have the upper hand in matters of knowledge and judgement, and that performers who do not seek out and eagerly assimilate the findings of scholarship in their interpretations run the risk of shallow, meaningless music-making" (Rink, 2003, p. 307).

Notably, all academic tutor participants agreed on the reason for performance students' (mis)understanding of the relationship between 'academic' work and performance. In their view, their (mis)understanding was due to the fact that some members of staff who belonged to the formal performance community had considerable disregard for 'academic' work. Theo discussed in some detail the (perceived) role of tutors in perpetuating this perspective:

[What] I would say, and this is very important, is that you need teachers on the performance [modules] who believe in that connection and operate it themselves. And erm if you don't, in compensation for ignorance, if I can put it in this very

horrible way, they rhapsodise endlessly about inspiration. Then they are exacerbating the problem. (Theo, academic tutor)

What is significant about Theo's narrative is his perception of how values and understandings regarding a joint enterprise (in this case performing) were communicated through the shared practice that individuals (i.e., community members) engaged with when pursuing this enterprise (cf. Wenger, 1998, p. 45). As such, Theo's evaluation of the situation suggests that if instrumental/vocal and performance tutors do not (or are not perceived to) integrate 'academic' and practical work – in other words, if this integration is not a component of the community's shared practice – students will be less likely to view these two types of work as related to one another in any meaningful way.

The above perception of the reasons behind the lack of integration between 'academic' work and performance was supported by the narratives of some members of the performance community. Many of the tutors teaching on the performance modules did not seem to give much (or any) weight to 'academic' work in relation to the practices of the formal performance community, an attitude that echoes the findings of other studies on HE performance (Gaunt, 2008, p. 236; 2009, p. 22; 2011, pp. 176-177; Simones, 2017, pp. 255, 258). Some tutor participants appeared to ignore the 'academic' side of music studies – there was a noticeable paucity of references to scholarly work/knowledge when tutor participants talked about their teaching/assessment practices or about their students' learning journeys during their interviews. Other tutor participants, however, were openly opposed to 'academic influences' in the context of the performance modules and the community's practice – a reaction which I occasionally encountered in the course of my interactions with colleagues. The following excerpts from fieldnotes I took after two planning meetings with a performance colleague illustrate this:

Val talked about giving 1st year students a 'holistic' experience of performance: she suggested that, rather than having a lecture talking about performance right at the beginning of the academic year, they should experience performance ... She added that a lecture about performance makes it all too abstract. (Fieldnotes, 2 July 2009)

Val said 'it's important to speak to students in their language' which is NOT (she stressed!) the 'academic language' they normally need to deal with: 'academic

language leads them to inaction' ... An expression such as 'critical listening' doesn't mean anything to the students: instead she calls it 'active listening' and ties it with not only evaluating others, but also with self-evaluation. (Fieldnotes, 24 July 2009)

Val's reason for her rejection of an 'academic' approach in the context of performance group classes was that, in her experience, this type of approach prevented students from engaging with practical music-making actively. Her emphasis on steering clear of too much talking about performance – and, more specifically, talking about it in an 'academic language' – and on enabling students' active experience of performance during group classes is reminiscent of Kerman's distinction between the "doers" (performers "who work within the 'living' tradition") and the "talkers" (musicologists) (1985, pp. 195-196) that I referred to earlier in this section.

Another area of the performance modules and community practice in which performance tutors appeared keen to minimise (or eliminate, if possible) the influence of an 'academic' approach to music was that of assessed performances. In this specific context, performance tutors expressed their rejection of 'academic' influences on performance practice through their choice of co-examiner:

After the meeting, Max told me that [the Head of Department] wanted to try and have academic members of staff co-examining performance exams on a regular basis (in the final performances, too), but Max didn't agree with this: he was adamant about only having performers as co-examiners. (Fieldnotes, 14 January 2011)

I agree with Max about this in terms of examining, you know, that he's got this hard line that you need performers to examine performance and that preferably they should be related to the instrument. Erm and if you're going to give meaningful feedback, other than just general feedback, I agree with that. (Ray, performance tutor)

The tutors' reason for rejecting the contribution of an 'academic' perspective to their performance practice – in this specific case, on assessment practices – appears to be related, once again, to an understanding of academics as lacking an 'insider's view' of music. It could be argued that these tutors' choice of co-examiner reified the academics' "status of outsider ... through barriers to participation" (Wenger, 1998, p.

104) in the performance community's practice. As Ray, the performance tutor participant quoted here above, explained to me, academics might very well be able to spot issues in students' performances and describe them in general terms, particularly considering the fact that several academic colleagues were acknowledged to be 'professional listeners'. Nevertheless, he concurred with the widespread belief among performance community members that only musicians active as performers – and, ideally, specialists on the instrument used in the assessed performance in question – would be able to understand the specific causes behind students' performance issues, particularly whether or not these issues were related to technical difficulties. Thus, it was Ray's (and other community members') belief that academics who did not perform would not be able to give students 'meaningful feedback'. In other words, academic tutors would not be able to describe the performance issues like a performer would, rather than – as Dillon Parmer laments (2014, pp. 73-74) – like a music historian or a music critic – and offer practical solutions on how to improve. Ray's (and other community members') belief regarding what kind of musician was "qualified" (as a participant put it) to assess performance highlights the fundamental value that performance community members placed on instrumental/vocal specialist knowledge: a type of knowledge that was the direct result of members' enquiry into how music works through a practical engagement with it.

Although, as we have seen so far, my interpretation of the findings appears to support the academic tutor participants' understanding of the reason for students' unwillingness (or inability) to integrate an 'academic' approach to music into their performance practices – i.e., that (some) expert members of the performance community did not model and/or support such integration – I would like to suggest two more viable interpretations.

Firstly, it is possible that, in coming to the conclusion that 'academic' or scholarly knowledge was not directly relevant to them as performers, some students might have been reacting to the 'devaluation' of the epistemological and ontological status of music *as* performance implicit in (some) academic tutors' tendency to "configure the flow of [musical] knowledge in one direction only, from higher knowledge (read disciplinary or research-based understanding) to its implementation in actual practice" (Parmer, 2014, p. 77). The academic tutor participants' view that only students who took 'academic' modules (such as History of Performance) and "did their homework"

could be really successful performers suggests that these tutors subscribed to an understanding of musical knowledge as flowing from scholarly work to practical music-making. This could have alienated those students who valued the “insider’s view” into music that their engagement with performance afforded them.

A further viable interpretation of the reason behind students’ “misunderstanding about the function of academic work” could be that, as John Rink underlines, the application of scholarly research directly to performance “is anything but straightforward” and, furthermore, it requires “appropriate mediation” (2003, p. 307). Etienne Wenger’s theory of ‘communities of practice’ (1998) can provide an insight into why this might be the case. Seen through Wenger’s theoretical framework, meaning-making can be understood as arising specifically from community members’ engagement with their own shared practice. Although both performers and musicologists have music at the centre of their own community’s enterprise, the practices through which they engage with music are not (necessarily) the same and, as such, they (may) produce very different perspectives on music. Therefore, the reconciliation of differences in perspectives and the creation of “new connections across communities of practice” (p. 109) – which are necessary for a functional integration of ‘academic’ knowledge into performance practices – can only be achieved through “processes of translations, coordination, and alignments between perspectives” (p. 109). The point that Wenger stresses is that these processes do not happen by themselves; they need to be facilitated by individuals with multimemberships, which in the context of this discussion means that these individuals need to be legitimate participants in both academic and performance communities. Furthermore, for these processes to lead to meaningful connections, these individuals must be recognised (by other members) as sufficiently authoritative to influence and develop the practice of their own communities.

Even though, as we have seen earlier, (some) instrumental/vocal and performance tutors did not appear to facilitate or support the integration of ‘academic’ approaches and/or perspectives with the performance community’s practice, findings indicate that (at least) one academic tutor participant actively encouraged her students to pursue this integration in the context of History of Performance, one of the modules she coordinated and taught. This academic tutor participant explained that during classes she would get her students to try out aspects of the historical performance practices

covered in lectures so that students could have a first-hand experience of how this type of scholarly knowledge could affect their playing/singing:

I have ... taught the students erm History of Performance with a notion that it's a performance practice course and in fact I renamed it this year Performance Practice, to encourage them to bring in- well to synthesise their study, academic study, with their creative practice as musicians. And that they could approach the- the questions of whether this is a good score, what they have responsibility to do as musicians approaching a certain period of music, what their latitude is as interpreters. All those questions are something I want them to be aware of so that they don't feel like they just need to be like machines and reproduce notes. (Betsy, academic tutor)

It is interesting to notice that in her narrative about the integration of 'academic' knowledge and practice, Betsy introduced the discourse of 'performer's responsibility' to justify such integration (cf. Leech-Wilkinson, 2016): it is the duty of the performer to embrace 'academic' or scholarly knowledge and practices – e.g., to be informed about matters such as the performance style and conventions in vogue during composers' lifetime – and to become aware of what the performer's 'latitude is as interpreter'. Her words clearly imply that there is only so much creative agency that a performer can have in her approach to the musical score. Nevertheless, Betsy appears to understand the integration of a scholarly approach as empowering – rather than restrictive – for the performer, as she believed that the application of scholarly knowledge and practices was the means of freeing students from a literal approach to the score.⁵⁸

My analysis indicates that performance students' responses to Betsy's attempts at getting students to integrate the 'academic' approaches to music explored in her module with their own performance practices were mixed. Some students' narratives suggest that in their experience the focus of the module was mostly on the 'transmission' of the scholarly information and the critical listening of recordings, rather than on the practical application of scholarly knowledge. Interestingly, a student participant explained that because of the title of the module he had expected the tutor to be active as a performer. He had also hoped that the tutor would make use of students' instrumental/vocal skills to demonstrate the practical relevance of the

⁵⁸ For an in-depth discussion of performance community members' approaches to the music score, see Chapter 4.

knowledge presented during her lecturing and was very disappointed when his expectations were not met:

I was really really disappointed because I read the description of the course, and the title itself, The History of Performance, I felt ‘Amazing! That’s what I do, I want to find out a little bit more about it,’ and I think erm the person who teaches that, they should be at least a performer, you know ... [the tutor] didn’t even know what instrument you play and [laughing] ... she could relate, ‘OK, so there’s a clarinet player, there’s a cellist,’ you know, whatever, and that could be really nicely done in the way that everybody would be sort of brought up and they would be able to contribute in a way erm that the whole picture is fulfilled, yeah. So I felt a little bit, it was sort of standard ‘OK let’s go to this point, that point, that point,’ that’s it. (Michal, 3rd year student)

Other students who took the same module did not appear to share Michal’s negative view of the tutor’s teaching approach or of her musical identity. Some participants’ narratives indicate that they managed to identify the scholarly knowledge that was relevant to them as performers and find ways to apply it to their own performance practice:

I did include Baroque ornamentation [in my final recital pieces] ... and I obviously did extensive research [on it]. (Hazel, 3rd year student)

I did Betsy’s module last year, erm History of Performance. Obviously for the earlier stuff that I was doing, I knew much more. My performance was much more informed ... I did sort of commit to erm to doing quite a lot of early music for a while ... I was thinking: because I’m learning all about this, use this info now, you know, with the songs you’re learning, to make them as best as- as good as they can be. (Caroline, 3rd year student)

What I find particularly significant here is that Caroline’s narrative suggests she unreservedly accepted the belief that applying the type of scholarly knowledge the module introduced her to would help her improve her performances and make them “as good as they can be”. And although Hazel did not articulate this belief as explicitly as Caroline, it could be argued that her actions – researching into Baroque ornamentation with the aim of incorporating her knowledge of this performance practice in her assessed final performance – were supported by the same belief. As such, both students appeared to share the implicit belief that being an ‘informed performer’ is equal to being a ‘better performer’.

A conclusion that could be drawn from the above findings is that these two performance students had internalised (some) of the beliefs and values shared by the local community of musicologists. Although findings do not provide a clear answer as to why this was not the case for performance students such as Michal, I would like to offer a hypothesis based on Etienne Wenger's conception of multimembership and its relevance to individuals' ability to bridge the practices of two separate communities – what Wenger calls “brokering” (1998, pp. 108-110). It is possible that Hazel and Caroline, both vocal students, related more positively to the tutor's belief in the value of the integration between scholarly knowledge and practice because the tutor herself had trained as a ‘classical’ singer and still identified herself as one. It is conceivable that, although (some) instrumentalists considered their tutor ‘just an academic’ because she was not currently active as a performer, Betsy's extensive training as a ‘classical’ singer might have enabled vocal students like Hazel and Caroline to recognise her as an ‘honorary member’ of the formal performance community which, in turn, would have helped them embrace Betsy's understanding of the relationship between performance and ‘academic’ knowledge and practice.

Summary

As illustrated in this chapter, the contextualisation of the formal performance community's practices within the BMus Music degree reveals a considerable discrepancy between the values and beliefs embraced by the performance community and those shared by (some members of) the local academic community. There appears to be a fundamental difference in how members of each community understand what it means to engage in performance and be/become a performer. From the performance community's perspective, an embodied engagement with music-making gives musicians a unique insight into how music works, an ‘insider's knowledge’. From the academic community's standpoint, the engagement with a scholarly approach to music can give performers different tools to help them engage with the musical score effectively as well as create ‘informed’ performances.

When considered separately, each community's understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer appears to have some serious limitations. On the one hand, an understanding of embodied music-making as the only meaningful way to engage with music can lead some performance community members to

overemphasise the importance of some instrumental/vocal aspects of performance, such as technique, and to construct a narrow understanding of their own musical identity, which could compromise their ability to create a sustainable musical career for themselves. On the other hand, an understanding of scholarly knowledge as indispensable to the 'success' of a practical engagement with music-making could rob performers of their sense of artistic agency and of their fundamental role in the creation of musical meaning.

It would seem, therefore, that enabling an interrelationship between the practices (and knowledge) of both communities – through careful mediation carried out by individuals who are 'legitimate participants' in both communities – could enrich each community's understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer. I also believe, however, that for this integration to be truly successful, the local academic community would need to acknowledge, as Richard Taruskin suggested very perceptively over three decades ago, that there is much to be learnt about music from performers (1982, p. 348). As such, the local academic community would benefit greatly from embracing an 'academic' approach to music that places the performer and the performance process at the centre of its enquiries.

9. Conclusion

I start this chapter with a brief overview of the main aim and goal of this study and of the ways in which I carried out my research (section 9.1). I then provide a synthesis of the main findings, discuss some of their possible implications for ‘classical’ musical performance at university and highlight this thesis’ s original contribution to knowledge (section 9.2). After discussing the impact of my dual role as a researcher and as an ‘insider’ on both research process and the community I investigated (section 9.3), I conclude this chapter by reflecting on possible limitations of this study and offering some suggestions for further research (section 9.4).

9.1. An overview of the study

In this thesis, I set out to explore how ‘classical’ musical performance is made sense of in the context of a UK university music department. More specifically, the aim of this thesis has been to gain a multi-perspective understanding of what ‘classical’ musical performance and being/becoming a ‘classical’ performer means to members of a community of practice who engage with this type of music-making in a university context.

Previous studies on the topic have tended to focus on the identification, exploration and/or evaluation of various aspects of the educational process of musical performance in HE without necessarily investigating the value systems implicit in these aspects. As such, the values and beliefs about musical performance and being/becoming a performer that students are enculturated into as a result of their HE music studies have either been taken for granted or have remained implicit. Furthermore, previous studies on the topic have tended to consider elements of HE performance communities’ practice (e.g., the one-to-one instrumental/vocal lesson; the practice session; or the assessment context, etc.) in isolation and/or focus on the experience of a specific type of performance community members (e.g. either the students or the tutors), rather than aim for a more holistic perspective of musical performance in HE. Thus, the current study has aimed to bridge these gaps by going beyond an investigation of the teaching and learning of HE musical performance and gaining an in-depth understanding of what musical performance and being/becoming

a performer means (or comes to mean) to those who engage with it within a community of musical practice.

In pursuing this research aim, I chose to focus on a community of practice to which I also belonged. This community was composed of students and tutors who participated in the 'classical' musical performance modules of a UK undergraduate music programme. My choice to investigate 'my own' performance community was determined by the consideration that being an 'insider' to the group being studied would facilitate my access to participants, give me some common ground with them as well as provide me with a richness of research opportunities that could support a holistic, in-depth approach to the study.

The exploration was carried out through the conceptual lens of Etienne Wenger's theory of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The use of this conceptual lens enabled me to investigate how members of the formal performance community constructed and enacted their social world and their own musical identities through participation in the community's practices. Thus, it made it possible for me to analyse the community members' shared repertoire of doing, talking and thinking that was part of their domain of practice and identify the values and beliefs that shaped members' experience and understanding of performance and being/becoming a performer.

In order to fulfil the research aim of this study, I used a qualitative, single-case study approach so as to promote a holistic and in-depth exploration of the community of practice under investigation within its 'natural' setting. To construct the data,⁵⁹ I adopted a range of ethnographically-informed research methods: participant-observation, intensive interviews, focus group interviews and the analysis of official documents discussed by participants. My reason for choosing these methods was to facilitate an emic, multi-perspective understanding of the phenomenon investigated.

The research design and methods used are aligned with the social constructionist theoretical perspective adopted in this study. This perspective views individuals' meaning-making as rooted in social interactions and as historically and culturally

⁵⁹ I explain the reason for adopting the expression 'data construction' in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.2).

specific. As such, it conceptualises knowledge as the result of individuals actively ‘interpreting’ or ‘making sense’ of their environment and of themselves.

The resulting data were analysed through Thematic Analysis (TA). TA enabled me to identify, analyse and provide a detailed account of the main themes related to the formal performance community’s shared repertoire of practices. These themes have provided the structure of the main body of this thesis (Chapters 3-8). Further analysis across these themes has brought into focus the community members’ understanding of performance and of being/becoming a performer in a university context. In the following section I provide a synthesis of these findings and discuss some of their possible implications for ‘classical’ musical performance at university. Additionally, I highlight the ways in which these findings provide an original contribution to our understanding of ‘classical’ musical performance in a university context.

9.2. The findings

This study’s findings indicate that members of the formal performance community constructed particular understandings of performance and being/becoming a performer through practices that can be categorised as follows:

(1) practices related to the preparation process towards a performance – from engaging with the musical score (Chapter 4); to listening to one’s own or others’ music-making (Chapter 6) and giving/receiving feedback on work in progress (Chapters 6 and 7); to playing through in front of an audience or ‘practising performing’ (Chapter 5);

(2) practices related to the performance act itself – being in ‘performance mode’ (Chapter 3); enacting the ‘performing persona’ and embodying the music (Chapter 5); listening to/recording oneself (Chapter 6); evaluating performances, aiming to meet the listeners’ expectations (Chapter 7); and

(3) practices related to the relationship between the formal performance community’s activities and the BMus Music degree as a whole, within which these activities were embedded – engaging in a balancing act between academic work and performance; switching learning modes; comparing university and conservatoire practices and resources (Chapter 8).

Analysis across the main themes has brought into focus three different emic understandings of performance and being/becoming a performer: (1) ‘Classical’ musical performance as display of abilities and/or knowledge; (2) ‘Classical’ musical performance as source of insider’s knowledge; and (3) ‘Classical’ musical performance as a shared musical experience. Although my analysis indicates that these three understandings coexisted in the formal performance community, they were unequally distributed, with ‘performance as display’ being dominant, followed by ‘performance as source of insider’s knowledge’. ‘Performance as shared musical experience’ was the least common understanding among community members.⁶⁰

The main aspects of these understandings can be synthesised as follows:

(1) ‘Classical’ musical performance as display of abilities and/or knowledge

Performing is understood as a display of individual abilities and/or musical knowledge that need to meet the audience’s expectations. These expectations tend to vary, depending on who is part of the audience. Members of the audience who are instrumental/vocal specialists tend to expect the performer to fulfil specific technical standards, to embody the music and enact her ‘performing persona’. On the other hand, members of the audience who are ‘expert listeners’ rather than specialists, such as academic tutors, tend to expect the performer to communicate her knowledge of stylistic and harmonic/structural aspects of the music. These understandings of the performing act draw on discourses of ‘duty’ (to the composer or the written text, to a performing tradition, to scholarly knowledge) and of ‘talent’, particularly in terms of the need to display or prove one’s ‘talent’.

Community members who share this understanding of performance tend to view the performer as a musician whose primary function is to prove herself to, or please, her audience. As a result, the preparation process towards a performance tends to be informed by the desire to meet the audience’s expectations, often to the detriment of the performer’s sense of creative agency and of personal exploration of musical meaning and its communication. Because of the focus on meeting the audience’s

⁶⁰ It should also be noted that a shift from one understanding (or aspects thereof) to another could be engendered by participation in different performance practices (e.g., sharing work in progress vs. performing in an assessed context).

expectations, the performer tends to view and/or experience the performing act as opening herself up to criticism and, thus, as a source of considerable anxiety.

(2) ‘Classical’ musical performance as source of insider’s knowledge

Performance is understood as a process through which the musician gains an insider’s knowledge of music. This knowledge is based on the practical and embodied experience of music-making and is contrasted to a ‘book-based’ or scholarly form of music knowledge. The role of the audience is not made explicit. This understanding of performance draws on discourses of music-making as embodied activity and of the creative agency of the performer.

Community members who share this understanding of performance tend to view the performer as a musician who can comprehend the mechanisms behind music as performance, as well as make music work as the meaningful unfolding of sound in time. As such, the performing act becomes an opportunity for the performer to make music, as opposed to reproduce and/or interpret a musical text.

(3) ‘Classical’ musical performance as a shared musical experience

Performing is understood as a musical experience shared between the performer and her audience. Implicit in this understanding are the ideas that performance is a generous act and that the audience is open and receptive to what a performer has to offer. This understanding draws on discourses of artistic agency and of the social nature of music.

Community members who share this understanding of performance tend to view the performer as a musician who makes the music ‘her own’ so that she can ‘give’ it to her audience. Thus, the preparation process tends to be exploratory and creative in nature and the focus tends to be on finding one’s own way to make the music ‘work as a performance’, rather than on finding the ‘right way’ of doing it. As such, the performing act can become a meaningful experience, and even a source of joy, for both performer and audience.

Implications of the findings

An extensive discussion of the implications of these findings for the place of ‘classical’ musical performance at university is beyond the scope of this section. I

would like, however, to bring attention to three possible implications in relation to current debates on musical performance in HE:

(1) In the current HE climate, the pursuit of advanced instrumental/vocal skills and of “performing excellence as a self-evidently good thing for students” (Tregear et al., 2016, p. 283) is being increasingly questioned, particularly in the context of university undergraduate music programmes. Nevertheless, there still appears to be a widespread belief among instrumental/vocal specialists that the only way in which students can progress as performers in the context of their university undergraduate studies is by engaging with technically demanding solo repertoire. Placing this type of repertoire at the centre of teaching/learning and assessment practices may, however, have more negative than positive consequences. It may promote a very reductive understanding of what performance means and encourage excessive preoccupation with technical ability and accuracy, to the detriment of the achievement of a meaningful engagement with music. It may also lead students to believe that collaborative and inclusive forms of music-making are not as valuable as solo performing, whether educationally or professionally. Furthermore, it may discourage students who do not see themselves as soloists, or do not believe they are ‘good enough’ to be soloists, from participating in performance practices in the context of their undergraduate studies. Thus, it would perpetuate an understanding of ‘classical’ performance as a musical activity accessible only to a minority of ‘talented’ students, rather than as a meaningful way to engage with music open to all music students (cf. Perkins, 2013, pp. 209-210).

(2) The development of reflective and independent learning skills has been recognised as fundamental for the musical growth of performance students in the context of their undergraduate music studies (Burwell, 2005; Gaunt, 2011). I would add that it is also fundamental to their growth as competent music practitioners. It would seem, however, that the widespread belief that there is a ‘right way’ of performing ‘classical’ music – reinforced by the performance examiners’ practice of assessing against the musical score – coupled with students’ concern for marks in performance assessments, stands in the way of this development. Rather than participating in the practices of musical performance with a spirit of curiosity for how music works as performance; and with an attitude of inquiry into performance as process; it would seem that students are more inclined to simply follow the musical directions of community members who sit on examination panels, with the aim to present a musical product

that will please them. I would suggest that in order for students to start taking ownership of their music-making, and thus grow as independent, reflective and competent practitioners, the taken-for-granted beliefs and values that inform these practices need to be explicitly addressed and, possibly, rethought.

(3) In the last few decades, undergraduate music programmes in the UK have been rethought with a view to bring musical performance and ‘academic’ approaches to music on equal footing (Duffy & Harrop, 2017; Wright & Ritterman, 1994). Members of performance and academic communities within university music departments, however, may experience the relationship between the two in very different terms due to the fact that the two communities might not share the same values and beliefs in relation to musical performance. On the one hand, the embodied experience of music at the centre of musical performance practices and the consequent understanding of musical performance as a source of insider’s knowledge into music may encourage members of a performance community to view ‘academic’ or scholarly knowledge⁶¹ of music as secondary. On the other hand, an engagement with music that prioritises the written text which is still at the centre of some ‘academic’ practices and the consequent understanding of performance as the practical application of ‘academic’ or scholarly knowledge⁶² may encourage members of the academic community to view performance as subordinate to scholarly practices. It would seem, therefore, that in order for musical performance and ‘academic’ practices to be experienced as equal partners in a collaborative relationship, the performance and academic communities active within music departments would need to bring their understandings of music into alignment.

Original contribution to knowledge

This study’s exploration of ‘classical’ musical performance through the conceptual lens of ‘communities of practice’ has made an original contribution to the understanding of ‘classical’ musical performance in a university setting in the following ways:

⁶¹ The type of scholarly knowledge I refer to here is understood as knowledge derived from “traditional musicological studies” (Rink, 2003, p. 303), which are characterised by an understanding of music as text. For an in-depth discussion of the findings related to this type of scholarly knowledge, see Chapter 8 (section 8.2).

⁶² See previous note.

(1) By going beyond a focus on the educational process of musical performance at university, this study has identified values and beliefs enacted and/or constructed through participation in specific musical performance practices, thus, bridging the gaps identified in the literature outline (see Chapter 1, sections 1.1 and 1.2).

(2) As a result of the identification of community members' values and beliefs in relation to 'classical' musical performance, the study has provided some possible understandings of what performance and being/becoming a performer means (or comes to mean) to students and tutors who engage with 'classical' musical performance as part of a university undergraduate programme.

(3) Additionally, this study has provided an insight into some of the values and beliefs, and into the practices that enact/construct them, that contribute to a perception of separation between the practical approach to 'classical' music through performance and the 'academic' approach to 'classical' music through scholarly knowledge in the context of university undergraduate music studies.

9.3. Reflexivity

Having adopted a reflexive approach throughout the research process, I would like to acknowledge the impact of my dual role as a researcher and as a member of the community at the centre of my investigation on both this study and the performance community in question. The impact has been threefold:

(1) My dual role made me particularly receptive to my participants' concerns with community practices related to the formal assessment of students' musical performances. As such, after carrying out the initial interviews (2009),⁶³ I started eliciting information from my participants (through interview and focus group questions) about areas I had not prioritised at the beginning of the research process, such as the perceived lack of clear marking criteria for musical performance and the apparent subjectivity of the evaluation process; the perceived tension between doing well as a student (or achieving high marks) and growing as a musician; and participants' tendency to compare the practices and resources of the community with those of performance communities active in a conservatoire setting.

⁶³ See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of participation in interviews and focus groups.

(2) In discussing ‘classical’ musical performance in the context of the BMus Music degree, my participants did not only share their views and experiences of community practices, but also of community members, including many of the tutors with whom I worked while I carried out my research. At times, participants’ narratives surrounding some of these tutors’ practices were negative and could have damaged my opinion of, and relationship with, these colleagues. Memoing played a fundamental role in preventing this from happening as it helped me take distance from my participants’ negative narratives in relation to my daily activities and interactions as a member of the performance community.

(3) Thanks to the reflexive approach I adopted throughout the research process, I implemented some changes in the way I engaged (as an ‘insider’) with certain practices of the formal performance community in response to some of the study’s findings. More specifically, as a performance and piano tutor, I started encouraging a dialogue with my students around assessment criteria with the aim to demystify and clarify the evaluation process of musical performance. Additionally, I encouraged my students to become more aware, and critical of, discourses surrounding the practices of musical performance with the aim to shift students’ focus from ‘performance as display of instrumental/vocal abilities’ to ‘performance as communication of musical meaning’.

9.4. Possible limitations of this study and suggestions for further research

The findings in this study are the result of the adoption of specific research approaches, methods and foci, to the exclusion of others. Inevitably, these findings are, in some ways, also limited by the choices made during the research process. Thus, I conclude this chapter by acknowledging some of the possible limitations of this study. In doing so, I also take the opportunity to suggest possible ways in which research on the topic of this thesis could be furthered.

The adoption of a qualitative, single-case study research approach means that the findings in this thesis are time and context dependent. In other words, they are the result of an investigative effort carried out during a particular period in time and in a specific socio-cultural context. As such, a possible limitation of this study is the

extent to which its findings can be generalised and transferred to other contexts and moments in time. Nevertheless, one of the main advantages to the adoption of this type of research approach resides in the fact that the specificity and in-depth quality of the findings afforded by it enables the reader's vicarious experience of the social phenomenon investigated. It is precisely this opportunity for a vicarious experience that gives the reader the opportunity to enrich one's own repertoire of understandings and interpretations of a particular social phenomenon. This is the case even when the reader's personal experience of the phenomenon in question is characterised by a very different socio-cultural framework to that of the single-case study.⁶⁴

Having said this, the adoption of a larger-scale study, such as a 'collective case study' in which two or more performance communities active in different undergraduate programmes are explored, would certainly add to this study's findings by providing the opportunity to compare and contrast the practices of different performance communities. Of particular interest would be the inclusion of communities of practice that engage with types of music other than 'classical' as it may promote a deeper understanding of musical performance as HE practice across different genres and styles.

In carrying out the data construction of this study, I used participant observation only to a limited extent. As a result, the findings in this thesis are mostly based on participants' self-report through intensive and focus group interviews. Furthermore, most participants (with only two exceptions) took part in one single interview, at a particular point in time, thus resulting in a snapshot view of their perspectives and experiences. Thus, research on musical performance communities in a university context could be furthered through an ethnographic study. A more extensive use of participant-observation may facilitate the construction of richer data and enable a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon investigated. Additionally, the adoption of a longitudinal design may provide a valuable insight into whether and, if so, how community members' values and beliefs change over time.

During the data construction phase of the research process, my investigative focus was limited to members' participation in the practices of the formal performance

⁶⁴ This understanding of the qualitative, single-case study approach is supported by relevant literature, as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.1).

community. In carrying out the analysis of the data, however, I became aware of the potential impact that two factors I had not previously taken into account had on my participants' experiences and understandings of musical performance. These factors were: (1) my participants' educational and/or professional background; and (2) their participation in the practices of other musical performance communities within the same music department, such as non-formal ensemble groups. Findings on their impact are limited in this study, as I did not actively elicit this kind of information from my participants. Nevertheless, they suggest that our knowledge on emic understandings of musical performance could be enriched by further research on the impact that educational/professional backgrounds and participation in multiple performance communities may have on shaping members' values and beliefs about musical performance and being/becoming a performer.

In conclusion, research on musical performance in HE from the perspective of 'communities of practice' shows that the values and beliefs constructed and/or enacted through community practices have far-reaching implications for those both inside and outside these communities. If we are to design, and participate in, effective and transformative HE music programmes that enable students to engage with music in a meaningful way and to build up sustainable careers for themselves, we need to understand the nature of these values and beliefs, the ways in which they are maintained and, in some cases, how they might be changed for the better.

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Appendices

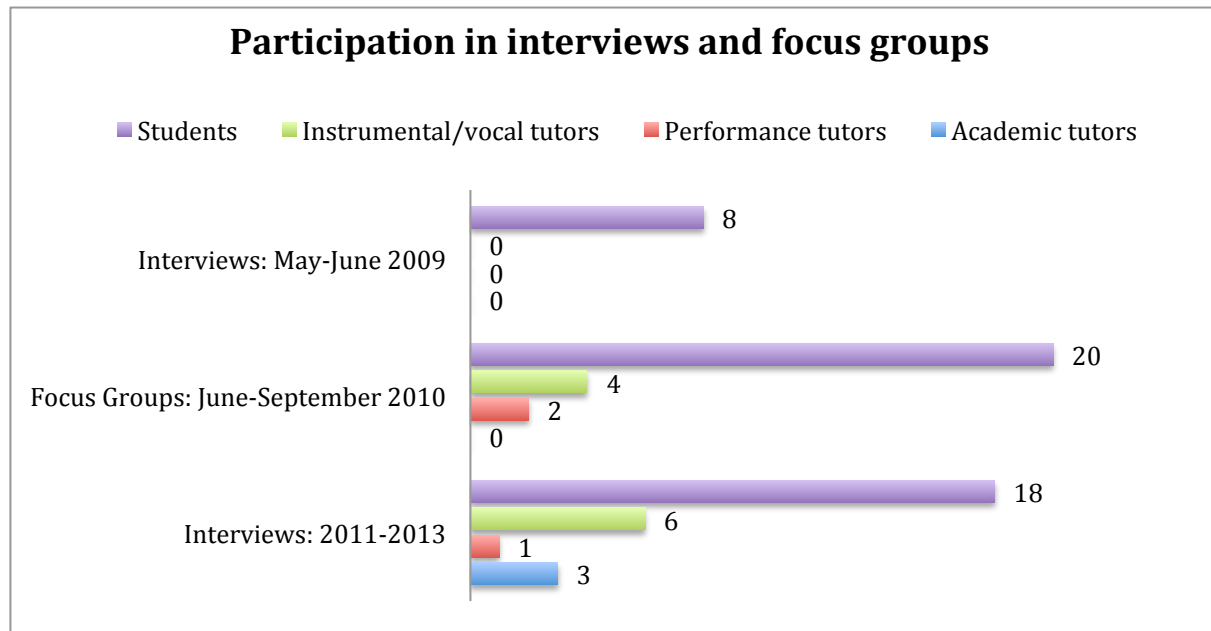
1. Breakdown of participants' information

| Date | Research method | Pseudonym | Participant type | Years in the Music Department | Specialism | Gender | Age range | Nationality |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|-------------|
| 20-May-09 | Interview | Kadir | student | 3 | piano | M | 18-24 | EU |
| 11-Jun-09 | Interview | Dom | student | 3 | percussion | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 12-Jun-09 | Interview | Scott | student | 3 | voice | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 16-Jun-09 | Interview | Michal | student | 3 | woodwind | M | 25-29 | EU |
| 16-Jun-09 | Interview | Kay | student | 3 | piano | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 17-Jun-09 | Interview | Sabina | student | 3 | piano | F | 18-24 | Overseas |
| 18-Jun-09 | Interview | Josie | student | 3 | woodwind | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 18-Jun-09 | Interview | Ili | student | 3 | piano | F | 18-24 | Overseas |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Tilly | student | 1 | woodwind | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Mia | student | 1 | voice | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Sanoh | student | 1 | piano | F | 18-24 | Overseas |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Cemre | student | 1 | piano | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Nellie | student | 1 | voice | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Hanne | student | 1 | voice | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Regina | student | 1 | woodwind | F | 18-24 | Overseas |
| 04-Jun-10 | Focus group | Claire | student | 1 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 18-Jun-10 | Focus group | Elaine | student | 2 | strings | F | 18-24 | UK |

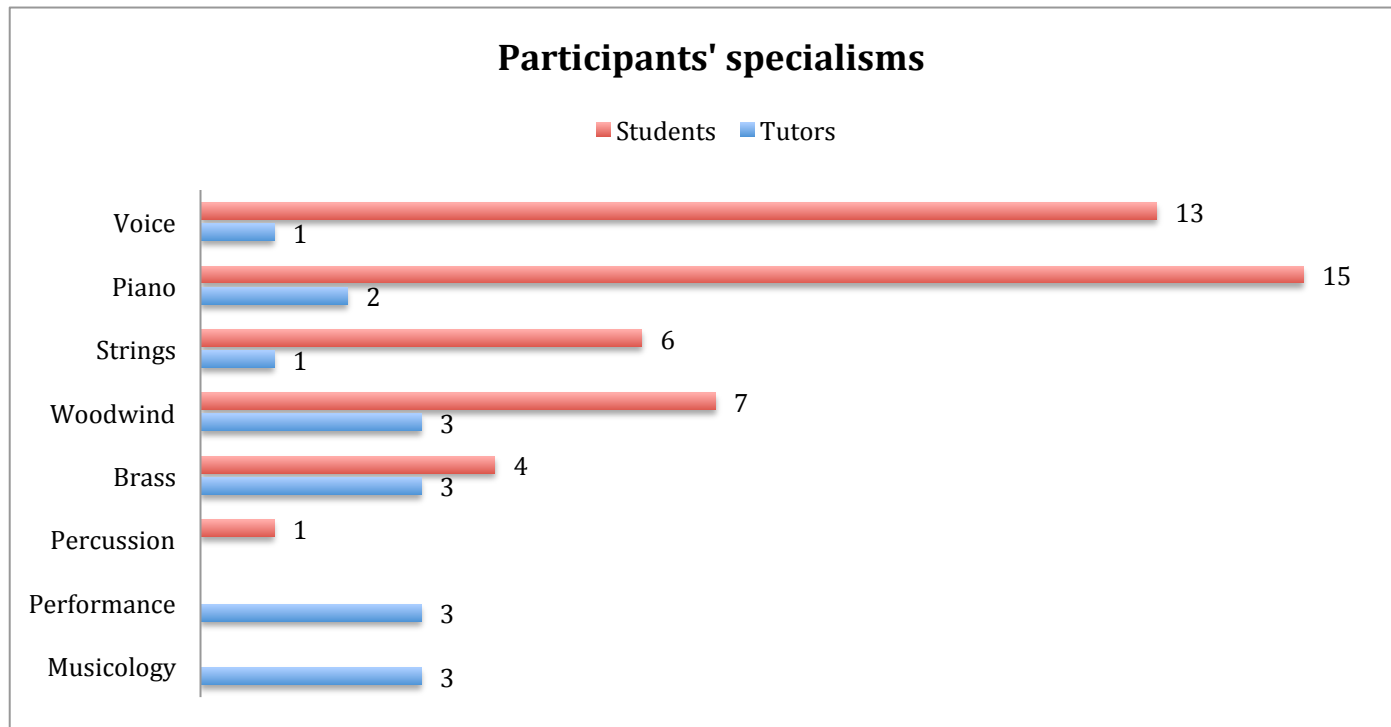
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|-----------|-------------|---------|--------------------|----|-------------|---|-------|----------|
| 18-Jun-10 | Focus group | Nicole | student | 2 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 18-Jun-10 | Focus group | Martina | student | 2 | woodwind | F | 30-35 | Overseas |
| 18-Jun-10 | Focus group | Hannie | student | 2 | piano | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 18-Jun-10 | Focus group | Aidan | student | 2 | piano | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 18-Jun-10 | Focus group | Haley | student | 2 | strings | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 05-Jul-10 | Focus group | Julia | instrumental tutor | 12 | brass | F | 45-49 | UK |
| 05-Jul-10 | Focus group | Niamh | vocal tutor | 8 | voice | F | 60-64 | UK |
| 05-Jul-10 | Focus group | Daniela | instrumental tutor | 13 | strings | F | 45-49 | EU |
| 05-Jul-10 | Focus group | Alex | instrumental tutor | 30 | brass | M | 60-64 | UK |
| 23-Jul-10 | Focus group | Sander | student | 3 | brass | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 23-Jul-10 | Focus group | Martin | student | 3 | voice | M | 25-29 | EU |
| 23-Jul-10 | Focus group | Kale | student | 3 | brass | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 23-Jul-10 | Focus group | Sammi | student | 3 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 23-Jul-10 | Focus group | Tara | student | 3 | strings | F | 25-29 | UK |
| 23-Jul-10 | Focus group | Bianca | student | 3 | piano | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 06-Sep-10 | Focus group | Max | performance tutor | 11 | performance | M | 60-64 | UK |
| 06-Sep-10 | Focus group | Sean | performance tutor | 8 | performance | M | 45-49 | UK |
| 14-Jan-11 | Interview | Luke | instrumental tutor | 35 | brass | F | 60-64 | UK |
| 18-Jan-11 | Interview | Rick | instrumental tutor | 5 | piano | F | 45-49 | UK |
| 10-Feb-11 | Interview | Sally | instrumental tutor | 11 | woodwind | M | 40-44 | UK |
| 10-Feb-11 | Interview | Alan | instrumental tutor | 12 | piano | F | 45-49 | UK |
| 23-Feb-11 | Interview | Callum | academic tutor | 20 | musicology | F | 55-59 | Overseas |
| 25-Feb-11 | Interview | Val | instrumental tutor | 8 | woodwind | M | 50-54 | UK |
| 14-Mar-11 | Interview | John | instrumental tutor | 9 | woodwind | F | 55-59 | UK |
| 21-Mar-11 | Interview | Oriana | student | 3 | woodwind | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 23-May-11 | Interview | Lana | student | 3 | woodwind | F | 18-24 | UK |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------------|----|-------------|---|-------|----------|
| 08-Jun-11 | Interview | Jamie | student | 3 | strings | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 08-Jun-11 | Interview | Aart | student | 2 | brass | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 09-Jun-11 | Interview | Molly | student | 3 | brass | F | 18-24 | Overseas |
| 15-Jun-11 | Interview | Linda | student | 1 | strings | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 15-Jun-11 | Interview | Caroline | student | 1 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 15-Jun-11 | Interview | Hazel | student | 1 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 23-Jun-11 | Interview | Maddie | student | 2 | strings | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 05-Jul-11 | Interview | Veronica | student | 2 | piano | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 28-Jul-11 | Interview | Ray | performance tutor | 15 | performance | F | 50-54 | UK |
| 12-Jul-12 | Interview | Betsy | academic tutor | 5 | musicology | M | 50-54 | UK |
| 05-Jun-13 | Interview | Dan | student | 3 | piano | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 05-Jun-13 | Interview | Edda | student | 2 | piano | F | 18-24 | EU |
| 05-Jun-13 | Interview | Tom | student | 3 | piano | M | 18-24 | UK |
| 05-Jun-13 | Interview | Caroline | student | 3 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 05-Jun-13 | Interview | Hazel | student | 3 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 07-Jun-13 | Interview | Mal | student | 3 | piano | M | 18-24 | Overseas |
| 07-Jun-13 | Interview | Darla | student | 2 | piano | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 07-Jun-13 | Interview | Rosie | student | 3 | voice | F | 18-24 | UK |
| 27-Jun-13 | Interview | Theo | academic tutor | 34 | musicology | F | 60-64 | UK |

2. Overview of participation in interviews and focus groups



3. Overview of participants' specialism



4. Marking criteria for classical performance (2008-2013)

In defining a convincing performance the examiners will pay particular attention to the following key elements:

A performance which is technically assured

A performance which is informed by an appropriate sense of style

A performance which demonstrates an understanding of the work as a whole

A performer who displays some measure of individuality in their approach to the music

Not all of these will be given equal weight at all times; scales and arpeggios will clearly demand more of element 1, whereas studies may demand not only technical assurance but also more of elements 2-4. Core repertoire will make variable demands on all of these elements.

| Grade % | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| First (80+) | An excellent performance in all respects, particularly with regard to musical interpretation. Technical exercises are largely flawless | An exceptional performance in all respects. | An exceptional performance, worthy of professional presentation in all respects. |
| First (70-79) | The conviction and technical mastery is secure, and a convincing musical interpretation consistently holds the attention of the audience. Specific technical virtues, such as dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation, timbral diversity and control, rhythmic accuracy and intelligent | The conviction and technical mastery of the performer, though respectful towards the general style of the piece, holds the attention of the listener to both its local and large-scale properties. Specific technical virtues, such as | An exceptional performance, largely worthy of professional presentation, albeit with minor flaws of detail. Conviction, technical mastery and stylistic understanding are all excellent. Specific |

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| | <p>phrasing, are evident and deployed to good effect. The performer appears relaxed and confident. Technical exercises are near faultless, as is sight-reading.</p> | <p>dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation, timbral diversity and control, rhythmic accuracy and intelligent phrasing, are all so well executed as to be subsumed into the experience of the music. The music is performed in a relaxed and confident manner. Technical exercise are near faultless, as is sight-reading.</p> | <p>technical virtues, such as dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation, timbral diversity and control, rhythmic accuracy and intelligent phrasing, are essentially flawless. Presentation is relaxed, confident and secure.</p> |
|--|---|---|--|

2:1 (60-69)

The performer demonstrates some sympathy with the stylistic demands of the piece, although this may not necessarily be profound. A good level of technical security with respect to dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation, timbral diversity and control, rhythmic accuracy and appropriate phrasing is evident throughout most of the performance. The music is performed in a relaxed and confident manner. Technical exercises are generally secure throughout, although with occasional noticeable errors. Sight reading displays an ability quickly to come to terms with the piece, and with few errors.

There is a good understanding of the relationship between piece and style. A good level of technical security with respect to dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation, timbral diversity and control, rhythmic accuracy and appropriate phrasing is evident throughout most of the performance. The music is performed in a relaxed and confident manner. Technical exercises are polished albeit with small slips. Sight reading displays an ability quickly to come to terms with the piece, and with few errors.

There is a clear and demonstrable understanding of the relationship between piece and style. There is a high level of technical security with respect to dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation, timbral diversity and control, rhythmic accuracy and appropriate phrasing. The music is performed in a relaxed and confident manner. Technical exercises are polished and executed at good speeds. Sight reading displays an ability quickly to come to terms with the piece, and with few errors.

| | | | |
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| <p>2:2 (50-59)</p> | <p>Technical security with respect to the following is sometimes flawed: dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation and timbre, rhythmic accuracy and appropriate phrasing. There is some evidence of stylistic sympathy, but it lacks consistency. The presentation is secure without being elegant. Technical exercises have been practised, but lack fluency. Sight reading shows errors, although the basic shape remains always recognisable.</p> | <p>Technical security with respect to the following is sometimes flawed: dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation and timbre, rhythmic accuracy and appropriate phrasing. The performer's sympathy with the musical style may be occasionally evident, but is often absent, and not presented with conviction. The presentation may lack confidence/elegance. Technical exercises have been practised, but are let down by lack of fluency and may be under speed. Sight reading shows some errors, although the basic shape remains always recognisable.</p> | <p>Technical security with respect to the following is occasionally but obviously flawed: dexterity, flexible dynamics, secure intonation and timbre, rhythmic accuracy and appropriate phrasing. The understanding of the relationship between piece and style is less than obvious, and not communicated adequately to the audience. The presentation may lack confidence/elegance. Technical exercises have been practised, but are let down by lack of fluency, noticeable errors, or lack of speed. Sight reading shows significant errors, although the basic shape remains recognisable.</p> |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <p>3rd (40-49)</p> | <p>Although the voice or instrument may be poorly controlled, there are occasional secure and musically interesting passages. Musical cohesion is often lacking, but again occasionally present. Technical exercises have notable errors, but appear to have been practiced, if somewhat inadequately. Sight reading is generally poor, but</p> | <p>The handling of the voice or instrument may show some degree of control though not consistently so, and perhaps at the expense of musical cohesion. Technical exercises are notably error-strewn, suggesting lack of competence and practice. Sight reading is poor, with numerous and significant errors.</p> | <p>The handling of the voice or instrument is often inconsistent. Musical cohesion is frequently lacking, and there is little by way of interpretive insight. There may be significant technical defects indicating lack of competence and practice. Sight reading is poor, with numerous and significant errors.</p> |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|

recognisable.

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <p>Pass (35-39)</p> | <p>There is frequently insufficient control of the voice or instrument. Although there may be some evidence of musical or stylistic understanding, technical deficiencies undermine this. Technical exercises may be unknown or seriously flawed in their execution. Sight reading is weak throughout, with major errors and no evidence of musical structure or shape.</p> | <p>There is so little control of the voice or instrument as to seriously disable musical interpretation. Technical exercises appear largely unknown, or are flawed in their execution. Sight reading is weak throughout, with major errors and no evidence of musical structure or shape.</p> | <p>Adequate control of voice or instrument is generally lacking. This consistently undermines any real sense of musical interpretation. Technical exercises are often flawed in their execution, demonstrating an inadequate grasp of instrumental or vocal technique. Sight reading is weak throughout, with major errors and no evidence of musical structure or shape.</p> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <p>Fail (below 35)</p> | <p>There is no sense of shape or structure to any significant part of the performance. Works chosen for performance may be unnecessarily lacking in challenge or sophistication. Technical exercises are clearly beyond the candidate's ability. Sight reading bears little relationship to the printed score.</p> | <p>Technical ineptitude largely undermines the performance, to the extent that musical interpretation is difficult or impossible to discern. Technical exercises are clearly beyond the candidate's ability. Sight reading bears little relationship to the printed score.</p> | <p>Technical ineptitude clearly undermines some parts of the performance; musical interpretation or stylistic sympathy thus become impossible to discern. Many technical aspects of chosen works appear beyond the candidate's ability. Sight reading bears little relationship to the printed score.</p> |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|

5. Recommendations to the Music Department

In light of this study's findings – summarised in Chapter 9 (section 9.2) – I would like to recommend some changes to the overall teaching/learning and assessment approaches adopted on the performance modules that are part of the undergraduate music degree. These are high-level changes and are intended to be translated into strategies with specific, practical objectives in consultation with the members of staff involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the performance modules. The changes I am recommending are as follows:

- **Changing the narratives surrounding classical performance practices by foregrounding two conceptions: ‘*music as performance*’ (as opposed to ‘*music as text*’) and ‘*performer as creative agent*’ (as opposed to ‘*performer as mediator of the composer’s work or intentions*’).**

Instead of perpetuating the performer's sense of duty towards the composer's musical intentions, the musical text and/or a particular performing tradition, teaching/learning and assessment practices should encourage performers to take (at least some) responsibility for the creation of a performance that is persuasive and engaging. Questions such as ‘Is this working as a performance?’ and ‘In what way is this musical material meaningful to you as a performer?’ should be at the core of teaching/learning and assessment practices.

- **Reframing the goals and priorities of performance students, tutors and examiners so that their practices may promote a deeper engagement with, and understanding of, musical performance as a performative and expressive art form;**

Rather than encouraging an approach to performance that focuses on the development of instrumental/vocal technique for its own sake and as separate from the process of sharing musical meaning with one's audience, teaching/learning and assessment practices should

prioritise the performers' development of their own musical understanding and expressive intentions (in relation to a musical text). This process should guide the performers' exploration, development and consolidation of the physical means that may be most effective when communicating their musical understanding and intentions through performance.

• Promoting teaching/learning and assessment practices that enable and validate approaches to music-making informed by a spirit of curiosity, exploration and risk-taking; that question taken-for-granted conventions; and that give performers the opportunity to develop and express their own artistic voices;

In working towards a performance, performers should be encouraged to explore a broad range of interpretative approaches that a musical text may afford, rather than simply follow approaches considered 'correct', 'appropriate' and/or 'authoritative'. Building a clear understanding of current performing conventions (including what it means to approach the musical text in ways that are considered stylistically 'appropriate' and/or 'correct') is a first step in preparing a performance. Performers, however, should not be afraid to explore interpretative approaches that challenge and go beyond the boundaries created by performing conventions. This process of exploration is more likely to enable performers to find/develop their own artistic voice and create persuasive performances than one characterised by unquestioning respect for performing conventions and traditions and by conformism.

- **Promoting teaching/learning and assessment practices that do not separate a practical approach to music from an intellectual one, but rather recognise critical and creative thinking as a fundamental aspect of performers' work towards creating persuasive performances.**

In order to change an understanding of intellectual (or 'academic') approaches to music as fundamentally different from practical approaches to music, performers' endeavours should be strengthened by scholarly work that recognises and investigates performers' modes of engagement with music as a viable and valuable source of knowledge about how music 'works'. Whether within the performance modules themselves or in the context of other modules on the undergraduate music programme, performers' efforts should be supported with scholarship that is informed by an understanding of 'music as performance' and 'performer as creative agent' – as opposed to scholarship that prioritises the written musical text and conceptualises the performer's work as practical application of scholarly knowledge – thus engendering a truly collaborative relationship between practical and academic approaches to music.