

Appendix J: Participant biographies

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Alice

Alice was a soprano: at the time of interview she had left music college three years previously. All her life she had been committed to music and the performing arts, primarily as a singer but also as a pianist and dancer. Performance had been key to her childhood development, as she believed that it had helped her to overcome her early shyness to become more socially confident. She described music as a 'way of life to her,' and explained that she had 'kind of never really done anything else.'

Alice completed a four-year music degree at university in Canada, where she was born and grew up. After that, she relocated to the UK in order to do a Masters in singing at a conservatoire. She extended her degree to 3 years by undertaking an additional PGDip degree. She enjoyed her university degree immensely, but was encouraged to attend conservatoire in the UK because her head of year believed it would bring her more performance opportunities than those available to her in Canada.

Alice enjoyed her conservatoire degree less. She felt criticised, but unconstructively: she knew that she needed to improve her voice but did not feel technically supported to do so. She also felt as though she was an outsider, firstly, on account of her being more direct than her British peers, and secondly as a result of her unwillingness to ask influential people for favours ('kiss the right asses'). She had hoped that her music college tutors would have helped her to build her career by introducing her to important people, but she did acknowledge having made 'inactive choices' during her degree.

At the time of the interview, Alice was making the majority of her money from teaching singing and piano. This disappointed her; however she appreciated the financial security that teaching brought, and the flexibility of her schedule meant that she could organise performance commitments around her teaching work. In terms of singing, Alice had opera chorus contracts, which were generally young artist schemes taking place over the summer.

Looking towards the future, Alice was hoping to build a career combining what she saw as her three 'niches': French lyric diction coaching, contemporary opera and early music. She planned to do this by meeting people already in these job roles.

Beka

Beka was a clarinettist who undertook a 3-year conservatoire course, graduating six years prior to the time of interview. She began piano lessons at the age of six, after playing around on it at home from an early age. She took clarinet lessons from the age of 7, and by the age of '8 or 9' knew that she wanted to do music 'somehow.'

Although Beka chose to go to music college to focus on playing, she decided in her second or third year that she would prefer to focus on teaching and workshop-leading in her future career. She was concerned about the financial crisis and its impact on her future, and wanted to avoid 'fighting for every penny.' As a result, after graduation she went directly into PGCE study, seeing a teaching qualification as something that would enable her to charge more and apply for a wider range of teaching jobs.

After her PGCE, Beka held a number of teaching positions. She also worked as musical director for a youth theatre production, work that she would like to return to someday. At the time of the interview, Beka had been working as a classroom teacher in an international school in the Far East for two years. She was clearly an engaged and enthusiastic teacher and talked about her enjoyment of helping students to develop independence and creativity. Beka's favourite parts of her degree were the moments that she was allowed to be independent and creative, and it is likely that her job as a teacher allows her to fulfil these values in her career. Outside of school, she still enjoyed playing the clarinet and saxophone in local amateur bands and orchestras.

Beka saw her future as being shaped by geography rather than any specific job role, and at the time of the interview was contemplating moving back to Europe for another teaching job. For Beka, her music education and PGCE served as the key to financial security and freedom of movement.

Chris

Following his postgraduate degree in trombone, Chris moved back to his home state in the USA. Prior to UK study he had completed an undergraduate degree in America. He began playing the trombone whilst at school, and as a teenager had the ambition to be a music teacher. However, winning various solo competitions that made him feel 'like a rock star' helped to cement his identity as a performer, and he therefore went to music college with ambitions to play for a living.

Chris enjoyed his UK conservatoire degree, but although he enjoyed playing a wide variety of music he felt 'pigeon-holed' into becoming 'the jazz poster child.' However, he saw this as a worthy pay-off as he believed it brought him many opportunities to perform. Chris enjoyed the social atmosphere at his college, and found that it was crucial to his musical development as he found a lot of work by networking.

At the time of the interview, Chris was undertaking a variety of musical jobs, including solo work, university teaching and contracted playing with the state symphony orchestra. He was thrilled that the trombone had become his way to make a living, but the orchestral work was the least satisfying of his musical pursuits, and it seemed as though he was motivated to do this to appear responsible to others after graduating. Chris's student debt was large, and he was considering taking a band director's job in addition to his current work portfolio in order to pay off his loans as soon as possible.

Josh

Josh was a bassoonist, who graduated 5 years prior to the time of his interview. After starting on clarinet, he took up the bassoon as a teenager because it was 'about as weird as you could get.' Josh's engagement with music was mainly about exploration: whilst at music college he discovered an enthusiasm for Early Music, and since graduating he was also enjoying playing folk music and participating in musical improvised comedy jams.

Josh began his conservatoire degree as an aspiring orchestral bassoonist, but this aspiration changed when he realised that he would prefer a more creative engagement with music. He enjoyed his degree, but found some of the teachers he had were dismissive of his ideas and diverse enthusiasms, which caused him to feel demotivated at points. He was disappointed with what he felt was a very rigid approach to musical development. He believed his bassoon playing was technically very good by the time he left college, but, by graduation, he was unsure he wanted an orchestral job, and felt ill-equipped to put his musical projects into action.

At the time of the interview, Josh described himself as a 'musician who worked in events,' on account of him working part-time for an events company in order to financially supplement his musical income. His enthusiasm for Early Music, which he found more exciting and creative than more modern classical music, meant that the majority of his gigs were in this relatively small world. As a result, his performing income was sporadic. He was open-minded to teaching work, but preferring to avoid teaching students for exams, which reflected his free-thinking approach to his own music-making. Unlike other participants, he is not resentful of his non-musical work in events, seeing it as an opportunity to find a routine and work with other creative people outside of music.

Josh was open-minded about his future and was unsure whether being a professional bassoon player was crucial for his career satisfaction. Although he clearly loved music, for Josh there was a tension between the musical projects he enjoyed and a need to make money: he was keen to eventually have a family, and acknowledged that this would make money far more important to him.

Leanne

Leanne undertook a four-year degree in trombone, and at the time of the interview was working as an artist manager for a small charitable foundation for young artists. She decided to go to music college in place of undertaking a maths degree at a prestigious university as she had had so much fun as a musician at school.

Throughout her degree, Leanne did not have particularly strong career plans, and assumed she would go into an orchestral job after graduation. However, she suffered from a playing-related injury in her second year and did not recover, but admitted being unmotivated to do so. She talked extensively about her experiences as the only female member of her department, and regretted 'going along with the lads' rather than taking care of herself by going to yoga. She was going to stay at her conservatoire and do a postgraduate degree, but she admitted that this was through lack of something else to do, and was ultimately talked out of this by her parents. During Leanne's conservatoire degree, she took a work placement with a local orchestra. This experience was formative: she enjoyed the responsibility of orchestral management.

After graduating, Leanne took an internship at an artist agency and learned that she could channel her love of organisation into organising others. Since then she has moved into the charity sector. Leanne no longer plays the trombone, but is hoping to increase her engagement with music in the future.

Martha

Martha finished a degree in trombone in 2013, and since then had been working as a freelance musician. She described herself as 'proud to do a mixture of things,' and at the time of the interview was teaching, workshop-leading, playing and writing for a magazine (whilst dog-sitting at the same time!).

Unlike many other participants, Martha reports arriving at conservatoire almost blindly: rather than having a focused engagement with music throughout childhood, she had picked up and put down the trombone multiple times and chose to go to music college because of the fun she had had with National Youth Ensembles. Work placements were key to Martha's development, and she reported going outside of her comfort zone in order to develop her skills. She described her degree as having prepared her well for her career, and she felt able to contact her old tutors for help if she needed to.

Although Martha did not feel especially confident meeting new people, she saw it as a necessary evil for finding and maintaining work. She was aiming for a future playing for musical theatre, and as such had been trying to meet as many people as possible who may help her to achieve this. Despite this aim, she had no particular plans to give up her teaching or writing work, viewing her work as a musician as all of her activities combined. Instead, her main aim for the future was to be able to choose her work as she became more established.

Martha had hobbies outside of music, which she was working hard to keep non-competitive. She could even link these to her career, claiming that being able to talk about non-musical hobbies was key to developing good social connections with fellow musicians.

Natalie

Natalie's path was different in many ways to that of the other participants. Her mother was a singer-songwriter, and as a result she had grown up around music, singing in choirs at school and taking lessons as a teenager. Unlike the rest of the cohort in this study, Natalie did not do an undergraduate degree in any subject and although she had tried to undertake a degree in the sciences she dropped out because she felt it was not what she was 'meant to be doing.' Instead, she continued to sing, taking on small roles with amateur and profit share companies whilst working a variety of different temporary desk jobs. In the end she opted to go to conservatoire, but mainly because other people were telling her to in order to advance her career – she reported feeling confused at the time, saying:

You know when you're kind of starting out, as a musician, and when you're much younger, and someone says to you "you're really good at that, you should have lessons,' and you're like 'well that statement doesn't make sense. Either I'm good at it or I need lessons.' Like if I'm good at it, why would I need lessons? You know like that's the- as a teenager, or whatever, that's your initial, like 'That's slightly insulting, why-'

In the absence of a first degree, Natalie's only option was to do a one-year PGDip degree, which she enjoyed, however she reported that it had left her with 'gaping holes' in her technique. Natalie's experience at music college was based around her having prepared a solo role for an Italian Opera, which gave her an idea of what it would feel like to be a professional singer. Outside of that, she felt largely unprepared for the practicalities of building a career (however had a good working knowledge of business processes from her temporary jobs), and she needed to work more on her voice, meaning that her degree as likely to have mainly provided her with an 'association' over and above an education.

Natalie freelanced for a number of years after graduation, but at the time of the interview she had been a full-time opera chorister for six months. After singing a small solo role at the same company, she auditioned for the opera chorus, craving the continued social connection and security that she had felt as an 'extra.' Although being part of the chorus had changed her outlook on music and her pace of life – she had found more time to sing choral music for fun and was hoping to buy a house – she didn't see this job as 'forever.' She envisaged that her voice would change as she got older (as many voices do) and was looking towards a future singing on the European continent as a soloist.

Oliver

Oliver finished an undergraduate degree in voice in 2013, and at the time of the interview was working primarily in arts administration. Alongside his full-time job at the theatre he was singing in profit-share opera productions, taking further voice lessons and working at a concert hall as a steward and page-turner. Singing in operas was key to Oliver's identity as an opera singer, and his lack of performances meant that he referred to himself as an 'aspiring opera singer' rather than a singer outright.

Oliver began singing lessons at the age of 7, taking part in amateur opera productions as a boy treble from an early age. These early experiences were key, and it was via these performances that Oliver 'got the bug' for opera. However, throughout his conservatoire degree, Oliver was frustrated as he felt somewhat left to his own devices. He had hoped that he would improve his technique whilst studying, however he described teachers who 'didn't know what to do with him' and difficulties in changing teacher when he asked. Instead, his degree felt more like jumping through hoops and passing exams rather than becoming a better singer. Curiously, Oliver talked about his early teacher extensively and with fond memories. It is possible that he remembered the relationship he had with his first teacher and the opportunities that she offered him, and expected that his experience at conservatoire would be similar. He expressed disappointment that his teachers were not equally key to his later educational experiences.

Oliver modelled his future career on a prominent singer he had met when he was a child/teenager, and although he reported knowing that this aspiration could be somewhat unrealistic, he held onto it regardless. Oliver was planning to give up his theatre job, and had just handed in his notice in order that he might have more time to sing in operas. He was looking forward to learning German and hoped to eventually move to Germany as he envisaged that there would be more performance opportunities for him there.

Phoebe

After finishing an undergraduate degree in guitar in 2012, Phoebe was working in an administrative role at a conservatoire. Growing up in Australia, Phoebe's life revolved around music. Her father was a professional guitarist, and music became a form of escapism as Phoebe practised and listened to music for hours to counteract a difficult school life. Phoebe's journey throughout her education was not easy: despite having dual citizenship, she had to work in the UK for two years prior to her degree in order to have Home fee status. Furthermore, she sustained an injury in her second year which caused her to take two years out before completing her degree.

Phoebe's injury became a key turning point for her: after aspiring to be a professional guitarist, she turned her focus to completing her degree and finding a job outside of performance. Back home, she had watched her father struggle with a playing-related injury and had experienced its associated financial difficulties when he could not work. Ultimately Phoebe realised that she did not want to live a life like her parents' and prioritised achieving financial security. She spent the latter part of her degree making connections with arts administrators in the city in which she was studying, and undertaking relevant work placements, which meant that she lined up a job for herself soon after graduation.

Phoebe offered a dual perspective, reflecting upon her own experiences of the conservatoire degree whilst adding observations of her own from her vantage point as a conservatoire administrator. At the time of the interview she described how the classical music world could be quite stifling, with pressures to play the 'right' repertoire and portray a narrow view of success as a musician. She reported needing to become 'obsessed' in order to finish her degree, and had spent time away from guitar playing since graduating. However, once removed from the pressure and obsession, she was busy trying to find ways to enjoy music 'for herself' again, by playing the guitar and going to non-classical live music events.

Zoe

Zoe was a trumpet player who graduated from her degree in 2015. The following year, she participated in a 10-month orchestral graduate scheme, and at the time of the interview she had been freelancing as a trumpeter for around a year. Zoe learnt the trumpet at school from the age of 7 but reported writing to Father Christmas for a trumpet at the age of 5: although her parents were not musicians, Zoe clearly had an early motivation to play music. Zoe described her parents as supportive and encouraging, and although they were concerned about her going to music college, they did not try to dissuade her.

Zoe greatly enjoyed her conservatoire degree, and put a great deal of time and energy into creating a reputation for herself as a soloist, possibly due to an early enthusiasm for Alison Balsom. As a freelancer, she was playing in a variety of settings: as a soloist, orchestral 'extra,' depping on the West End and playing occasional weddings as part of a function band. Although Zoe was playing as a soloist, she had somewhat shed this label from her identity, perhaps due to the fact that it was no longer the sole focus of her career. Outside of playing, Zoe had a busy teaching and coaching schedule, which she credited for its flexibility, financial stability and lack of stress.

Although Zoe clearly loved her job, she described feelings of stress and perfectionism – she even appeared anxious that she had been 'completely useless' at interview. She was hoping that in the future she might find opportunities to play the trumpet for her own enjoyment, and take up non-musical hobbies as a break from work.

Edward

Edward was a tenor, and was interviewed towards the end of his undergraduate degree. He did not have any plans to go onto further study, and although he had places on Musical Theatre postgraduate degrees, he decided against that route because he did not want to 'throw away' his opera training. He had lined up some teaching work for the new school year and was looking forward to 'grafting' his way to a singing career.

Edward was from a family of music teachers and went to public school from the age of 16. He had been singing in operas and musical theatre shows since school, both in school and for national youth companies. His musical motivations stemmed primarily from performance: he described himself as a 'performer who sings' and 'musician comes second.' Edward's principal reason for studying at conservatoire was to improve his vocal technique, and he expressed disappointment that his degree also comprised academic work, which he described as 'pointless.' In some ways, Edward appeared realistic and resilient, he was prepared to do no-musical jobs to support himself, and was prepared that it may take many years for him to find job security as a singer. However, he did not appear to take criticism well, and expressed disbelief that his academic work was marked down.

Edward had high ambitions for himself as a performer, and believed that reports of scarcity of jobs were for the benefit of those already in the profession. However, later in the interview he mentioned that he would ultimately trade a job in music for a 'healthy mind,' if he had to, suggesting that his strong ambitions had their limits.

Freddy

Freddy was a violinist, and had undertaken a four-year conservatoire undergraduate degree concurrently with a three-year university music degree. At the time of the interview, Freddy was in his final weeks of conservatoire study.

Freddy's early musical life was varied and exploratory: his first experiences centred around playing folk music with his dad, learning tunes on the violin by ear. Later he took more formal lessons, playing in the local youth orchestra but also playing the guitar in bands formed with schoolfriends. Choosing to do music at university, in Freddy's words, 'seemed like the obvious choice.' It was not until halfway through his gap year that Freddy made the decision to audition at music college, and was accepted to complete both university and conservatoire degrees simultaneously. His motivation for studying music was a love of music in all its forms, over and above a love of the violin, or even performance.

Although Freddy did not have any particular work lined up for the end of his degree, he was focusing on his strengths as a musician, and planned to find work in teaching, performance (violin, piano and guitar) and composing and producing. He was unafraid of finding work outside of violin in more diverse areas, having taken on small arranging jobs and more pop violin gigs previously. He believed himself to be unusual in this regard, since many of his peers were very focused on orchestral jobs, which Freddy had decided did not appeal to him. This feeling of being different, and having different aspirations, was something of a source of anxiety for him, since he felt generally unsupported into careers outside of orchestral or chamber music.

Freddy planned to experience as many things as possible after leaving college, in order to rule out options, and narrow his focus.

Gary

Gary had just finished a postgraduate degree in flute, and was interviewed a month after his final recital. Before attending conservatoire, he had completed a university music degree, undertaking a year in industry in his third year working for an instrument technician.

Gary's musical journey began relatively late and he began the flute after moving to the UK at the age of 13. He studied with the same teacher throughout his undergraduate degree, choosing his institution for postgraduate study based upon his desire to continue study with his previous teacher. At the time of the interview, he was taking unpaid performance work, but for himself rather than his career: he was motivated by interest rather than 'exposure,' which he found did not pay off. Gary's establishing work portfolio was varied, comprising teaching and playing work alongside non-musical roles in hospitality, as well as a sales job for a flute company. Although playing was important to Gary, it was not central to his work identity, and he derived great enjoyment from his repair work, especially because it enabled him to switch off from work when he returned home. He was realistic about his future as a flautist, and was open to combining a wider variety of jobs to make money.

Gary was arriving at a crossroads after his degree: he had been offered a job training as a flute maker in the US, but he knew that taking this job he would be unable to dedicate his time to practising the flute as he would like. He mentioned having to give up 'the things I would personally want to do to call myself a professional musician,' suggesting he was not yet ready to relinquish his professional musician identity. He had also more recently begun singing opera, and was equally open to waiting for his voice to mature with a view to pursuing a career as an opera singer.

Hilda

Hilda was born and grew up in Germany, but studied in the UK. At the time of her interview she was in her final weeks of a postgraduate degree in viola. She had undertaken her undergraduate degree at the same institution, and although she had gone into her postgraduate degree without a gap year, she had interrupted her undergraduate study previously.

Hilda began playing the violin at the age of 8 because her best friend was taking lessons. She swapped to the viola when she was 13 at her teacher's recommendation, and auditioned at conservatoire at the age of 18, when a family friend suggested it. As such Hilda had not necessarily made any particularly active decisions to study music at any point in her life, however she clearly enjoyed playing the viola and also had a keen interest in music psychology.

Hilda's favourite part of her conservatoire experience was running her own academic research project. She also had fond memories of playing with a string quartet whilst she was a student although they were no longer playing together. It was not particularly obvious from where Hilda's musical motivations stemmed, although she made frequent references to the social benefits of playing music as a group.

When questioned about her plans for the future, Hilda expressed disappointment that her conservatoire Masters degree would not enable her to do a PhD in music psychology. She described her ideal career as being split between research and performance but at the time of the interview she had not put any plans in place to achieve this goal. She was unsure whether teaching was a good use of her qualifications. Her main plan was to live in London and take more lessons on the viola, building her CV in order to 'get a job,' meaning an orchestral position.

Ian

Ian spent three years studying the viola at a conservatoire: two years doing a Postgraduate Diploma and an additional year on an independent study programme, which was non-assessed. He had completed his studies two months prior to his interview. Before conservatoire study, Ian studied music at a university so that he had 'transferrable skills, if for whatever reason performance didn't work out.' He commenced postgraduate study after two gap years.

Ian was already working as a musician during his postgraduate studies, mainly as a strings and piano teacher but also taking on piano accompaniment work and later working for amateur musical theatre companies as a musical director/keyboardist. He readily admitted to being relatively closed-minded about his career options in the past but was more recently committing himself to saying yes to more diverse pursuits, which led to him surprising himself on a number of occasions.

Additionally, he was an aspiring conductor, taking lessons and attending conducting courses over the summer to meet other musicians and develop his skills. This led to him conducting an amateur orchestra that he set up himself for an ambitious year-long project.

Ian's aspirations for the future were mainly to continue what he was already doing: combining many different work strands to make enough money to pay the bills and enjoy his job. He clearly loved music and dedicated most of his free time to it, however he was trying to improve his general fitness and was training for some running events in the future.

Richard

Richard was a viola player, who had finished his postgraduate degree a couple of months prior to his interview. He had studied for his undergraduate degree at the same college, and after taking two years out, returned to do a postgraduate to give himself 'a little bit of a boost like more contacts and some things.'

Richard's early musical life consisted of taking lessons on as many instruments as his parents would allow, including the violin, clarinet and piano. During his A Level years he started to listen to a wider variety of music, which brought with it the realisation that music was 'the most fun thing [he did]' – prompting him to apply to conservatoire. He swapped to the viola from the violin on a teacher's recommendation, for more work opportunities but also to solve technical difficulties. After leaving his undergraduate degree, Richard began teaching strings, but realised that he preferred playing, so gave it up to avoid being 'sucked in,' ultimately returning to conservatoire for a postgraduate degree. Richard was clear that teaching did not define him in the same way that the viola did, admitting that if he was teaching it was because he 'had to.'

Richard was already taking future bookings for his string quartet, a venture that he had set up during his gap years and maintained throughout his postgraduate degree. Richards aspirations changed whilst studying: whereas previously he had aspired to audition for the UK's top orchestras, he later decided that he would prefer to have a fun, easy life, rather than becoming 'practice obsessed.' At the time of the interview, he had ambitions to run a busy function band and was hoping to combine a variety of performance pursuits into his future career.

Sophie

After completing a music degree at a top UK university, Sophie did a postgraduate degree in oboe at a conservatoire, which she finished two weeks before being interviewed. Music was a big part of her life growing up: she began piano lessons at the age of six and violin lessons at the age of seven, finally beginning the oboe aged ten. She was originally drawn to study music at university because she was academically able and hoped to have more orchestral performance opportunities than if she were at conservatoire. A tour with a top university ensemble inspired her to aim for a music career and she auditioned to conservatoires hoping that a degree would improve her oboe technique.

Sophie enjoyed the breadth of her college degree, and had chosen to specialise on the baroque oboe, upon which she was beginning to pick up paid performance work. She found the social scene at her conservatoire a lot different to university, and relished the chance to build strong friendships.

Sophie described herself as 'guided by her faith' more than anything, which at times she found difficult to reconcile with a career in music. She found the prevailing discourse around musicians' careers – which was centred around needing to 'really want it' somewhat at odds with her ultimate aim of 'glorifying God.' She was very aware of what she would need to do in order to find work as a musician: networking for example, but worried that she wasn't the right sort of person as she was in no way 'ostentatious.' Although she aspired to combine performance and teaching work as an oboist in her future, she was equally comfortable with leaving the idea of a music career behind if she needed to.

Theo

Theo had completed a postgraduate degree in clarinet two months prior to his interview. He held an undergraduate degree in linguistics from a top UK university, and took a year out before embarking on his Masters degree.

Aside from music, Theo had 'no other strong ideas of what to do with [his] life,' but he first completed a non-music degree in order that he might be more employable in the future. However, throughout his degree he spent a significant amount of time playing music, and it was this 'itch' to be a musician that prompted him to do a postgraduate degree at conservatoire. Music was clearly central to Theo's identity, and he reported feeling most like himself whilst playing music.

The main benefit of Theo's conservatoire degree was the opportunity to build and become part of a network of musicians: he was already relatively dedicated to his clarinet playing whilst at university. Theo took a lot of opportunities for professional development whilst studying, including doing outreach work which continued to provide him with occasional employment. At the time of the interview he appeared rather dissatisfied with what he was doing, although he was early in his career. He was clarinet and piano teaching for one day per week, which he enjoyed, but he felt as though he was 'waiting around' for other work to come to him. He did hold aspirations to play chamber music and was hoping to branch out into other genres, such as klezmer. He hoped to do more interdisciplinary work, for example collaborations with artists and dancers. However, he appeared unsure of how to do this: he believed that there was 'only so much you can do' to build a career aside from having a well-presented CV.

Yasmin

Yasmin was a bassoonist and had finished an orchestrally-focused Masters degree two months prior to her interview. Before her Masters, she had studied a four-year undergraduate degree at another conservatoire. In the intervening summer between graduation and her interview, Yasmin had moved home and considered giving up the bassoon entirely, but she had recently been offered a place on a year-long orchestral experience scheme, which she had decided to take up. She was therefore living in London and trying to find musical and non-musical work.

Yasmin started playing the bassoon after the local music service suggested she switch from clarinet. She was initially motivated by her first teacher, whom she described as 'just the nicest, bubbliest person.' She spent her sixth form years boarding at a specialist music school, but despite this, she was still considering studying science or medicine at university. However, when the time came to make the application, Yasmin applied to music college because it seemed like 'the easier' option. She did not appear to outwardly regret the decision but she did admit to occasionally asking 'what if.'

Yasmin did not find her conservatoire degrees easy: she suffered badly from performance anxiety, and throughout the interview appeared to be quite harsh on herself. She was disappointed that she had not yet had any professional playing work, and therefore worried about becoming 'one of those failed musicians' or 'a struggling musician.' At the time of interview her aspirations were somewhat fixed: she wanted to be an orchestral musician above all and was unenthusiastic about taking on other work strands. Yasmin also possessed some fixed beliefs about herself: she was a 'stressy person,' bad at self-promotion, and 'not a very good teacher,' amongst other things. These fixed beliefs and aspirations combined allowed Yasmin to justify ruling out certain career strands, and led to her exhibiting some very helpless behaviours. However after the interview, she sent an email to say that the interview was very useful and had helped her 'work things out.'