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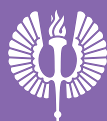

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

# THE MUSIC PRODUCER AS CREATIVE AGENT

## Studio Production, Technology and Cultural Space in the Work of Three Finnish Producers

Tuomas Auvinen

TURUN YLIOPISTON JULKAISUJA – ANNALES UNIVERSITATIS TURKUENSIS
SARJA - SER. B OSA - TOM. 467 | HUMANIORA | TURKU 2018

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## University of Turku

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The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

ISBN 978-951-29-7518-1 (PRINT)
ISBN 978-951-29-7519-8 (PDF)
ISSN 0082-6987 (Print)
ISSN 2343-3191 (Online)
Painotalo Painola, Piispanristi 2018

# Abstract

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
Faculty of Humanities
School of History, Culture and Arts Studies
Musicology
TUOMAS AUVINEN: The Music Producer as Creative Agent: Studio Production, Technology and Cultural Space in the Work of Three Finnish Producers
Doctoral dissertation, 211 p, 4 pages of attachments
Juno doctoral programme
December 2018

In this dissertation, I have studied the creative agency of the record/music producer. The aim of the dissertation is to study what kinds of creative and social agents record producers are. *Agency* here means an individual or collective capacity to move within structures. Therefore, I approach my main question through examining how the creative agency of the producer is formed with respect to structures specific to record production; music technologies, studio spaces and sociocultural structures like the music industry and genre-related values.

To achieve this, I have conducted ethnographically oriented multi-method case studies on three music production projects. I have mainly relied on field obervations, interviews and the music my participants produced. The novelty here lies in the fact that this study combines ethnographic case studies of pop, rock and classical in the same study.

My main finding is that the music producer's agency in the studio production process is constructed through an interplay between technological practices, social settings and studio spaces. Technological practices and studios influence the social aspects, the creative core, of music production. Furthermore, technologies together with genre expectations influence the producer's role differently in different production settings. This is best visible in the idea of the pop producer as 'tracker', another novelty finding.

I hope to have provided perspectives on how agenies can be formed at the grass roots level also outside the realm of music production. Furthermore, I have provided a model into studuying agencies in all kinds of technologically induced cultural processes.

Keywords: music production, record production, music producer, record producer, agency, music technology, recording studio

# Tiivistelmä

TURUN YLIOPISTO
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Musiikkitiede
TUOMAS AUVINEN: The Music Producer as Creative Agent: Studio Production, Technology and Cultural Space in the Work of Three Finnish Producers
Väitöskirja, 211 s, 4 liitesivua
Juno tohtoriohjelma
Joulukuu 2018

Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa olen tutkinut musiikkituottajan luovaa tekijyyttä. Tutkimuksen päätavoitteena on selvittää millaisia luovia ja sosiaalisia tekijöitä musiikkituottajat ovat. *Tekijyys* tässä tutkimuksessa tarkoittaa rakenteiden sisällä olevia toimintamahdollisuuksia. Tästä johtuen lähestyn tutkimuskysymystäni tarkastelemalla sitä, miten tuottajan luova tekijyys muodostuu suhteessa musiikin tuotantoprosessin rakenteisiin; musiikkiteknologiaan, studiotilaan sekä sosiokulttuurisiin rakenteisiin, kuten musiikkiteollisuuteen ja genresidonaisiin arvoihin.

Tutkimuksessani olen tehnyt kolme musiikin tuotantoprojekteihin kohdistuvaa etnografisesti suunnattua monimenetelmäistä tapaustutkimusta. Aineistoni koostuu pääosin kenttähavainnoista, haastatteluista sekä tutkimuksiin osallistuneiden tekijöiden tuottamasta musiikista. Uutta tässä tutkimuksessa on pop-tuotannon, klassisen musiikin tuotannon ja rocktuotannon etnografinen tutkimus samassa työssä.

Tärkein uusi tutkimustulos on havainto siitä, että tuottajan tekijyys studiotuotannossa rakentuu teknologisten käytäntöjen, sosiaalisten asetelmien ja studiotilojen välisen vuorovaikutuksen kautta. Teknologiset käytännöt ja studiotilat vaikuttavat sosiaalisiin näkökulmiin, jotka on luovan toiminnan ytimessä. Lisäksi havaitsin, että teknologiset käytännöt yhdistettynä genreihin liittyviin oletuksiin vaikuttavat tuottajan rooliin eri tavoilla erilaisissa tuotantoasetelmissa. Tämä näkyy parhaiten träkker-tuottajan ideassa, joka on toinen tässä tutkimuksessa tekemäni uusi löytö. Toivon, että tämä tutkimus tarjoaa laajempia näkökulmia siihen, miten ruohonjuuritason tekijyys voi muodostua myös musiikkituotannon ulkopuolella. Lisäksi tutkimukseni tarjoaa mallin, jonka avulla tekijyyttä voi tutkia kaikissa sellaisissa kulttuurisissa prosesseissa, joissa teknologia ja teknologiset käytännöt ovat olennaisia.

Avainsanat: musiikin tuotanto, äänitetuotanto, musiikin tuottaja, äänitetuottaja, äänitysstudio

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# Acknowledgements

Even if my name is on the cover of this dissertation, there are lots of people without whom I could not have been able to complete this work. I feel especially privileged to have had an amazing, resourceful and active supervision team.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my first supervisor, professor John Richardson. Your extensive feedback and advice have been of utmost importance in this work. Your endless support and encouragement have kept my eye on the goal especially during difficult times and in moments of self-doubt and psychological uncertainty you have said exactly what I needed to, not necessarily wanted to, hear to be able to continue my work.

Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to my second supervisor, professor Johannes Brusila. Your calm feedback and almost Socratic question-based supervision style have had a great impact on the development of my epistemological thinking and research skills during the process of this work.

I would like to express my gratitude to my third supervisor Dr. Susanna Välimäki. Without your critical, concrete and helpful feedback especially on the use of concepts as analytical tools and your encouraging support I could not have been able to complete this dissertation.

I would like to thank all the people in the national doctoral program of music research. Especially I want to express my gratitude to Kaarina Kilpiö, Heikki Uimonen, Meri Kytö, Anne Sivuoja-Kauppala, Tarja Keskustalo-Rautiainen and Helmi Järviluoma for the helpful comments and educational advice you have provided.

I would like to thank my dear colleagues at the department of musicology at the University of Turku: Yrjö Heinonen, Marjaana Virtanen, Anna-Elena Pääkkölä, Juha Torvinen, Sini Mononen, Tiina Käpylä, Inka Rantakallio, Sanna Qvick, Jelena Gligorijevic, Kaapo Huttunen, Atte Häkkinen, Markus Mantere and Kari Kallioniemi for your encouragement, collegial support, stimulating conversations and helpful comments. I would like to thank all the people at the Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology, especially Antti-Ville Kärjä, Meri Kytö, Kim Ramstedt and Saijaleena Rantanen for your collegial support.

I would like to thank, Shara Rambarran, Nyssim Leffort, Alan Williams, Joe Bennett, Serge Lacasse, Phil Harding, Andrew Bourbon, Alex Stevenson, Paul Novotny, Toby Seay, Paul Thompson, Katia Isakoff, Brendan Anthony, Jo Lord, Lachlan Goold, Anne Danielsen and Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen who I've met through

the Association for the Study of the Art of Record Production for their collegial support.

I would like to thank my pre-examiners Mark Katz and Simon Zagorski-Thomas for their helpful comments in the final stages of this work. I would also like to thank professor Helena Ruotsala for acting in the evaluation committee.

I would like to express my gratitude to professor Mark Katz for acting as an opponent in my public defense.

I would like to thank the The Finnish Cultural Foundation, Otto A. Malm Foundation and the Finnish Educational Fund for funding this research project.

I would like to thank Johannes Koskenniemi for encouragement.

I would like to thank my father Ville Auvinen and my mother Jaana Auvinen for planting into me the seeds of curiosity and thirst for knowledge already as a child. This has had a major impact on my career path.

I would like to thank my wife Mari-Kaisa Auvinen. Without your mental and financial support, I would not have been able to complete this work.

I would like to thank my children Ester and Olivia for support and meaning.

In Helsinki, December 4th, 2018
Tuomas Auvinen

# Foreword

I have been in contact with music as both a listener and a musician since I first started to play the violin at the age of five. Like most people today, the majority of music I have heard during my lifetime has been encountered in a recorded format, either vinyl, CD, MP3's, films, commercials or directly from a streaming service, as is increasingly the case these days. Recorded music has again always been produced by someone; music does not become recorded to a medium by itself. Given my own formal classical training, which does not usually include any aspects of music recording technology, I did not encounter recording studios or music production until my teens when I started to shift more towards making popular music. I could describe my first experiences in a studio as a musician as eye-opening in many different ways. Most importantly, I realized how much the decisions and judgments involved in the process of making records affect the music that is the final product, thus having an effect on its listeners, all of us.

In my early 20's, I started to work as part-time record critic alongside my studies in musicology. At the same time, I produced a few records. This is probably the point at which I fully realized how much our understanding and appreciation of the final musical product of a record depends on who *produced* the record and, in cases of independently produced records, how much it can affect the final product if *nobody* produced it. This insight widened my perspectives on record production and made me comprehend how rich and multifaceted the process is, how much more goes on in the process than mere recording of sound sources. All this got me into the study of the art of record production. While I do not intend to belittle the role of anyone else involved in record production, I became especially interested in the role and the agency of the producer as a key agent in the process. Throughout my academic career I have studied the role of the producer; first in my bachelor's thesis, then in my master's thesis and now in this doctoral dissertation. This ongoing fascination has hopefully allowed me to dig deeper in seeking answers to the questions that inform this study. I will now move towards laying out the background of this study.

# 1 Introduction and Object of Study

> "The question often arises: "What exactly does a record producer do""? (Zak 2001: 172).

This question posed by the musicologist Albin Zak is one I often still encounter when people around me learn about my research interests. I am still asked this question despite the fact that record (or music) producers are becoming increasingly more well-known and have acquired celebrity status especially within the past 20-30 years. The interest in producers has also resulted in a growing number of manuals on how to become a producer (e.g. Hepwort-Sawyer & Golding 2011; Mellor 1997) and popular accounts of famous producers and their work (e.g. Swedien 2009; Visconti 2008). This study, however, is not a book on how to produce music. Instead, I aim to critically analyze and increase knowledge about the role and creative agency of the record (or music) producer. By creative agency I refer to an agent's ability to "make and effect decisions" (McIntyre 2008) during the record production process that result in new sonic material. Moreover, in this study I discuss agency with reference to several overlapping structural frames of reference. My intention is to analyze and discuss how different structures contribute in the formation of the producer's agency. These structures include physical structures of the record (or music) production studio, cultural structures like genre conventions and traditions, social structures like relations to other agents involved in the process and structures that incorporate physical, social and cultural aspects, like music technologies and technological practices. I will do this by conducting three ethnographic case studies on record production projects. The first of these is a home studio based pop production project, the second a concert-hall based classical production project and the third is a rock production project based in a commercial studio. By conducting these case studies and comparing them to one another, my aim is to produce new knowledge about the role and agency of the producer, the studio as a cultural space and the record production process.

Record production has become the conclusive and most widely accepted term for the creative activity of making musical records. I understand the concept "record" as stemming from a time when physical, tangible musical records were more or less seen as records of a real live performance situation. The term and its definitiveness, however, could be called into question for the reason that most records have no longer been records of actual live situations for a very long time but entities constructed from

bits and pieces of recorded music or, in many contemporary cases, entirely synthetically "coded" or "programmed" musical structures, which contain very little or no actually recorded sound from an external sound source. Furthermore, music is increasingly sold not in the form of traditional physical records but as sound files, or it is streamed and listened to directly online without listeners ever even purchasing and downloading a sound file to their own computer or mobile device. Thus, some have suggested that the correct current term should be changed to "music production". This term is broader and includes production independent of production methods. While this suggestion is valid, the term "record production" has already achieved such an established position in the scholarly field as well as in the field of professional practice. Furthermore, musical pieces not involving actual audio recording can be understood as *records* of a specific time and in a looser sense. This is clear from, for example, how production approaches become dated and change. For this reason, I use the terms "music production" and "record production" as synonymous with the creative activity of making music onto a medium for the purpose of disseminating it and having audiences listen to it in a non-live situation.

In this study, I hold on to the conception that music is not a "thing" but a practice, an act (more about the concept of *musicking* in Small 1998). In the context of record production, one could also talk about *technological musicking* (Greene 2005: 6). Therefore, my main focus is on the actions and interactions of individuals making music, not on the final product of record production. I do, however, undertake some music analysis when it reveals aspects of the actions and interactions of producers. I will now proceed to stating my research questions.

## 1.1 Research Questions and Aims

As I provisionally discussed in the previous section, my aim in this study is to explore and examine the agency of the producer in the process of making a musical record, which I here call the record production process. Here, I am interested in the agency of the producer because the producer is the central figure of record production. The producer is the link between the artist, the record company and, to some degree, the audience (cf. Hennion 1989). Despite the importance of producers in record production, they do not (or extremely seldom) work alone. The agency of the producer, again, is affected and formed in connection with different kinds of physical, social and cultural structures necessarily present in the record production process. Therefore, my aim is to examine the technological practices of the record producer and the music production studio as a cultural space, as both music technology and the production studio are instrumental structures in the record production process. As such, they facilitate and construct the agencies of the individuals involved in the production process of a musical record. Furthermore, the music production studio as a technological environment is important because it is the space and place where the producer acts as the intermediary and central figure of record production drawing

together the different components involved in the process; the musical aspirations of the artist, the financial aims of the record company and, when understood broadly, the future audiences who will listen to the music.

By examining the producer's agency, I will shed light on the culture of the record production process and on the agencies also of other individuals involved in the process. For the purposes and aims of this study I ask the following main research question:

*What kinds of creative and social agents are record producers and what perspectives can my case studies on and comparison of different recording practices provide concerning the agency of the producer in these particular cases and more generally?*

As I've discussed above, the agency of a record (or music) producer is more or less dependent on various structures that are necessary in the music production process. Music technology as understood very broadly is perhaps the most central structure that influences the formation of the agencies of the producer and other participants. After all, without electronic music technologies record production would not exist in the first place. Music technology is the necessary tool and structure through which musical ideas are manifested in record production (cf. Théberge 2001). Therefore, my first sub-question is: *How do producers use music technologies in the record production process and in what ways do these music technologies and technological practices influence and contribute to the formation of the producer's agency?* As noted already, the central nature of music technology in the process of record production requires me to ask this question if I wish to produce knowledge about the creative agency of the record producer. This question also includes investigating the producer's responsibilities and activities during record production, as a significant share of the creative actions involved in record production are conducted through music technologies.

Another key structure in record production is the recording or production studio. This is the primary site of record production, the space and the place where most actions aiming at producing a musical record take place. The studio can take different forms and sizes depending on the individual project. It is nevertheless simultaneously a physical and a cultural space. Therefore, my second sub-question is: *how do music production studios as physical and cultural spaces contribute to and affect the formation of the producer's agency?* This question is necessary because the characteristics of the studio influence the ways in which music is produced. The studio thus facilitates the agency of agents involved in the music production process and is also affected by agents producing music. As a physical structure, the studio imposes structures on, for example, vision and hearing, and the way it is set up influences the actions of individuals (cf. Bates 2012). The studio is also a cultural space (cf. Horning 2013) which carries ideas and values about how music should be made.

Record production is inherently a communal process (cf. Hennion 1987).

Therefore, social structures are a third key element in the formation of the producer's agency. Consequently, my third sub-question is: *how do social interactions with other creative parties in the record production process influence the formation of the producer's agency?* Social structures here refer both to explicit and implicit, both immediate and underlying social dimensions which influence the activities of the individuals participating in the production process and consequently the producer's agency. These include, for example, genre conventions, values embraced by individuals working with different musical styles and ideas about the ontology of music which affect the aims of a record production project. When writing of the "construction" or "formation" of agency, I refer both to activities intentionally conducted by the producer her/himself and to processes taking place independently of the producer's intentional actions.

Here, I am primarily interested in the *process* of production and the agencies of various parties during the production process of a musical record instead of the *end product* of the production process. Therefore, an ethnographic approach is the only possible way of doing this research. Without going into the studio and observing the actions and interactions of the producer I would not have been able to answer my questions. With this I am not saying that examining the end product could not reveal aspects of the production process or that a study based on interviews could not produce valuable knowledge about the producer's agency. Indeed, in this study, I do combine analysis of musical recordings, i.e. the end products of the production process, with ethnographic study of the studio process. However, basing this study only on interviews or the analysis of musical recordings would have resulted in a one-sided view of my research questions. Without going into the studio and taking an ethnographic approach (cf. Greene & Porcello 2005), the questions would have had to be phenomenological (cf. Martin 2014) or related to aspects of cultural reception with a lesser emphasis on the perspectives of music producers (cf. Moisala & Seye 2013: 34).

To be able to answer the research questions I have presented, I have chosen to do three case studies, each on a different producer in different production settings. In these studies, I examine the work of producers in music/record production processes from the start until the end of individual projects. Each of these case studies provides an opportunity to explore the research questions from different perspectives. The first case study provides a window on the agency of a young pop music producer in a home studio setting. This offers insights into the most recently developed and contemporary production practices that are based primarily on uses of the digital audio workstation (DAW). In this setting the producer's agency can be regarded as being formed through the relatively easy availability of digital production technologies, the possibility to work wherever and whenever one wishes, the strong merging of the different activities and roles necessary in the process of music production and the possibilities and hindrances related to working from a home studio, which here is regarded as a social and a cultural space. My second case study on the creative agency of the classical producer can be understood as providing a perspective on how social structures like

cultural conventions and traditions affect the formation of the producer's agency. This includes, for example, consideration of how the idea of music as the work written in the score and the aim of replicating that in sonic form sets bounds to the producer's agency, influences the producer's technological practices and how a concert hall as the recording space influences the producer's possibilities to realize her/his ideas regarding the production. My third case study on a rock producer working with a band in a more traditional commercial studio represents what could perhaps be called a more traditional mode of record (or music) production. This case study emphasizes the perspective of how social relations between the producer and members of the band influence the producer's agency. Furthermore, it offers insights into how a traditional studio structure as a technological, physical and cultural environment facilitates the producer's agency and how the producer might alter this structure to further enhance her/his agency.

To summarize; all my case studies deal with the producer's creative agency and how music technologies and studio spaces as structures contribute in its formation. Nevertheless, for the reason that the case studies are very different, they offer different perspectives on the same subject. This is desirable as my aim is to provide a multifaceted and diverse perspective on the creative agency of the producer and how it is formed. Next, I will proceed to define and discuss the main concepts through which I seek answers to my research questions. These are the concepts of creative agency, technology and cultural space.

## 1.2 Key Concepts

In this study, I have chosen to take a conceptual approach instead of working from the starting point of large overarching theories, which could be either proven or disputed by the analysis of my research material. My approach is in this respect in line here with cultural theorist and literary theorist Mieke Bal's (2009: 14) idea of the humanities finding its heuristic and methodological basis in operative concepts rather than (hard) methods. Concepts in this study work as sort of "miniature theories" (Bal 2009: 19), which help in the analysis of objects. This approach is easily reconcilable with the material-oriented ethnographic nature of my study. My primary aim in this study is to examine the practical work of the music producer by analyzing ethnographically her/his actions and interactions with respect to music technology and to other creative parties during the music production process in the cultural space of the recording studio. I see an ethnographic fieldwork approach as the only convincing way to accommodate this aim as it is the best way to ascertain how music is produced in practice. Methods related to, for example, close listening are another way of studying music production and I apply these methods to the extent that they support my primary aims. In this way I aim to produce more knowledge about music production and about the creative agency of the producer. Concepts are of great help in this process. The main concepts orientate and define my object of study, my research setting and my

research questions as well as set the analytic/interpretative framework for my ethnography. This conceptual perspective is also well aligned with most of the earlier scholarly work on the role and agency of the producer, which is not very theory-laden in nature but is more oriented towards the practical and through the practical; most earlier studies on the art of record production tend to arrive at the conceptual through practical music analysis, ethnographic field methods or through the analysis of historical events. However, a subtler conceptual fine-tuning or refinement can be of value in itself. It is perhaps a humbler way to undertake research.

Even if Bal's background is in visual arts and literary theory and in the study of artworks in traditional terms, I contend that her approach, which she calls cultural analysis, can be applied in an ethnographic study as well. This argument is based on the rather Geertzian (cf. Geertz 1975) perception that field observations, photos, videos and recordings produced in the field – the studios and working spaces of record production personnel during record production – can be analyzed as cultural texts. The notion of a cultural text in the present study is thus not limited to the music that is or has been produced by the individuals, whose work I'm studying, but extends to, for example, interviews, field observations, studio spaces and music technology.

The successful application of a conceptual approach in a study requires the clear definition of the concepts in question. However, it also requires the idea that concepts are malleable and changing, *travelling* concepts. They can be adopted into my analysis without having to accept definitions carved in stone. In the following sections I will define the main concepts I use and put them into a context of earlier studies in the field of the study of the art of record production. I will first discuss what is perhaps the most important concept in my study, that of *creative agency*. Thereafter, I will discuss the concepts of *music technology* and *cultural space* that refer to all those physical and socio-cultural structures which form the contextual prerequisites and restrictions involved in studio practice and thus have a role in the formation of the creative agency of a music producer.

### 1.2.1 Creative Agency

Creative agency, which is the main concept related to my research questions and a key issue in my title, is a combination of two separate concepts: that of *creativity* and that of *agency*. Producers as central agents of record production are the most interesting characters as their agency spans many different levels. Producers are the agents in which the commercial, technological and creative elements come together (Howlett 2012). Therefore, the producer’s agency could be analyzed, for example, at the level of the music industry; what the producer’s place is in the vast network of the music business. For me as a cultural scholar, however, the central issues in the formation of agency are the aesthetic norms, cultural practices and social negotiations, even sociopsychological aspects, related to the creative process of record production. This process happens mostly in the recording studio. This is where the structures of the

music industry are manifested at a concrete level. Analyzing these aspects of the producer's agency is what I grapple with and scholars of the music industry do not. Even if creative agency is frequently used in the cultural study of music as a concept in its own right without differentiating between its two separate parts, here I will first provide some insights into them both separately and then combine the two to provide a solid conceptual foundation for the present study on the creative agency of the producer.

Despite the many academic fields in which agency has been theorized, for the purposes of this study I have chosen to draw primarily on earlier writers, who have theorized agency in the context of record (or music) production and to some extent, music-making in general. In my mind, this approach creates a stronger connection to the field of the study on the art of record production, which is a rather new but rapidly growing academic field. Drawing merely on general theoretical approaches to agency would not establish this connection to the same extent. Also, approaches to agency in studies on record (or music) production hold the view that agency is *collective* or at least the agencies of individuals are mutually dependent on one another. In my view, there is sufficient evidence to support the premise that any study on record production must consider the entire process as a collective procedure. Moreover, the premise of collective agency refutes the Romantic view of creativity as an attribute of the individual genius. This is a key component in my understanding of creative agency.

The musicologist Timothy D. Taylor (2001: 35), whose work has mainly focused on music and culture, defines agency as "an individual actor's or collective capacity to move within a structure, even alter it to some extent". This definition works as a good starting point for me in this study. Even more simply and specifically, agency (in the creative process) could be defined in the terms of the music producer and scholar Robert W. Taylor (2017) as the "ability to make choices". In the context of creativity, Taylor (ibid.) leans on the Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1997: 28) notion, that "Creativity occurs when a person, using the symbols of a given domain such as music [--] has a new idea or sees a new pattern, and when this novelty is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion in to the relevant domain". Along similar lines, agency can be defined, in terms of the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984: 9; see also Taylor 2017), as referring "…not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place". This definition is useful since in addition to defining what agency is, it states what agency is *not* and thus brings clarity to the definition; agency refers to what an actor is *capable* of doing, not merely to what s/he *wants* to do. I contend, however, that agency always assumes structure; without structures, be it physical or socio-cultural (I would include economic in this category), agency cannot exist. In my study, this means that agency related to the actor of the music producer cannot occur without the physical structures of the production studio, music technology, which are of primary concern in this study, and the socio-cultural structures of the music industry, which I will deal with to the extent that the premises of this study require.

As Taylor (2001: 35) builds his comprehension of agency in the face of (music) technology, his definition works particularly well for my purposes here, as the process of record production is inherently technological and record production as a process evolves in collaboration with technological development (I will focus more on technology as a concept and a structure in section 1.3.2.). Basing his ideas on the work of the cultural anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner (1996: 2) Taylor (2001: 34) argues: “Practice theory provides a way of avoiding the traps of theorizing the subject and agency in the face of technology without falling back into the polarized positions of voluntarism on the one hand and some kind of structural determinism on the other.”

Theorizing agency in the study of a technology-heavy process like record (music) production without having to consider either voluntarism or determinism as a premise, provides a way to approach the creative agency of the producer from a material-oriented perspective by focusing on my field materials (notes, videos, photos) and interviews. This provides an opportunity to thoroughly examine the extent to which technology affects agency on the one hand and the extent to which agents use technology at their own discretion and even alter it on the other.

How does creativity then play together with agency? This study is based on the premise that producers, like musicians and composers, are creative agents. The sociologist Jason Toynbee (2000: 35) formulates this idea by stating: “I want to suggest that people who make popular music are *creators* [original italics], that is agents who make musical differences in the form of texts, performances and sounds.”

Toynbee (ibid.) adds that this idea includes “all stages of music-making from ‘writing’ through ‘performance’ to ‘production’”. Furthermore, as I will show in the course of this study, Toynbee’s stages of music making are not always separable from one another but intertwine and entangle in ways which make it hard to tell when one form of creativity ends and another begins. This is true especially in popular music. Furthermore, the premise that record production is a collaborative process in which creativity is shared is central to my study. In the specific context of the study of record production, the media and communications scholar Philip McIntyre (2008) has suggested a way of conceptualizing the agency of an individual and her/his creative decisions within the social structures of the studio environment. He (ibid.), like Taylor (2001), has built his conception of creativity on the Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) systems model (see also Zagorski-Thomas (2014: 16). He sees creativity as a result of a dynamic system composed of three elements: “a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation.” (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 6).

Creativity, then, would occur when a person brings novelty to the domain, which is the existing field of works. For McIntyre (2008) this model provides an escape from the mythical idea of creativity that he calls "romantic" or "inspirationist". This comprehension, according to him (ibid.), places the individual artist at the center of focus and enforces “a belief in the idea that we are dealing with quasi-neurotic artists who see their own creative activity as fundamentally self-expressive and, importantly

for this paper, supposedly free from any discernible constraint." Furthermore, he (ibid.) fears that "These ideas are perpetuated in many of the myths that surround the recording studio. The Dionysian tales of artists working under the inspiration of whatever muse is popular at the time are legendary." Toynbee (2003: 102), in addition to acknowledging that "little attention has been paid to it [creativity], especially among cultural studies", shows equal concern towards the ever-prevailing romantic discourse of creativity, according to which "Romantic discourse asserts that music comes from within and is a direct product of the psyche of the creator" (Toynbee 2003: 103). He (2003: 104) goes on to explain how "such an understanding of creativity has become hugely influential, and not just in the realm of art music. Both jazz and rock fans have adopted the heroic mode and, along with it, a tendency to lionize artist-creators."

The music sociologist Simon Frith (1996: 60) similarly acknowledges that the romantic belief of creativity, of the talented musician as genius, has a dominant position in the music industry. He (ibid.) even argues that "producers have a *more* romantic ideology of creativity (and creative success) than musicians". I would, however, argue that, given how producers act out the creative process they engage in, a possible romantic idea of *talent* as an intrinsic quality of the genius artist is only an inadequate articulation, a sort of a shortcut in explaining a complex social process, which producers are not used to discussing in analytical terms. Nevertheless, I would hesitate to infer that individual capabilities, inclinations or what Frith (ibid.) calls individual *talent* have no role in the creative process; individual abilities and skills do exist even if there is nothing innate or genetic about them (Ericsson & Pool 2016). I do, however, hold the premise that it is only one of the many components involved in the creative process.

I concur with Toynbee to the extent that music fans might still hang on to the Romantic ideal, which is outdated from the standpoint of academic research, according to which agency in reality is typically shared and collective in nature. Toynbee (2003: 111) explains how stardom is marketed to fans and audiences: "The industry strives to reduce uncertainty of demand by marketing a few big stars. And in popular music it has been convenient to graft stardom onto the authorship cult of small group or performer-writer that has predominated in the rock era." Toynbee (2003: 104) however expands this premise to musicians by stating that "It is clear too that the musicians themselves understand their work in romantic terms – as the outpouring of the tortured solitary soul". While this might be true historically and might today be the image a musician or an artist must present to her/his fans to make it easier to sell music, I disagree on the notion that the true conception of creativity among musicians (or producers) still dominantly hangs on to the romantic ideal, as creative agents work in the studio with one another in a collective setting as a premise. I will elaborate and attempt to show proof for this argument in the forthcoming chapters of this study by bringing out the role of the producer and her/his cooperation with the performing musicians.

Even if I don't quite share the degree of eagerness McIntyre and Toynbee have in

their crusade against the idea of the romantic ideal of the creative artist, as I find most scholars at least in the field of (ethno)musicology and cultural musicology have abandoned such ideas long ago, I do find it constructive to consider creativity in the music production context as a result of multifaceted processes in a system of socio-culturally and historically formed value systems and cultural spaces rather than as plain individual efforts. Also, the total abandonment of the value of individual effort and authorship in the creative process can also result in the discarding of agency altogether. Consequently, the lack of agency might lead to hard structural determinism. Furthermore, I am inclined towards the idea that "Creativity will always retain a certain mystery because, by definition, it generates things that have not yet been seen or experienced." (Ericsson & Pool 2016: 205).

According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997: 6) systems model, "creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation". This model provides a perspective onto a more multifaceted understanding of creativity. Building on the systems model, McIntyre (2008) discusses creativity in the context of music production:

> For record producers the knowledge systems, skills and techniques they need to be aware of in order to make an impact in the studio include, but are not limited to, a knowledge of rhythm, melody, harmony, song structure, arrangement and instrumentation, some form of an understanding of psychoacoustics in order to effect changes in the emotional characteristics of a performance, knowledge of what constitutes a good performance and, increasingly, techniques for getting the most out of the technological apparatus in the studio.

This set of knowledge or know-how is formed through getting to know the "domain" or "field of works", i.e. listening to and getting acquainted with as much music as possible. McIntyre (2008) elaborates: "For a record producer this field of works, or its comparative term the domain, includes the body of songs they use as a template to make judgements in the studio."

Defining creativity through the systems model undoubtedly provides tools to escape the Romantic conception of creativity and to place creativity in the context of a collective effort. However, defining creativity as contributing to or bringing novelty to the domain forms a challenge of defining the domain. If the domain in music consists of existing musical works, the perceived nature of the creative agency of a particular agent will be affected by how we comprehend the ontology of a musical work especially when comparing and contrasting classical and popular music in the context of record production. If a musical work is considered, along the lines of traditional Western classical thought, to be the abstract idea presented in a musical score and a record only a sonic realization or storing of this work, creativity would only occur in the pre-recording activity of composing. If, however, a work includes the abstract

parameters of the composition and the recording, i.e., a work of music is understood as a process and a sonic phenomenon, creativity could be viewed far more broadly.

For the purpose of tackling this dilemma, I find Toynbee's (2000) approaches helpful when conceptualizing the relationship between agency and creativity. His definitions provide clarity to the discussion despite the fact that in this study I do not discuss agency first and foremost in terms of social class, ethnicity, race and gender as Toynbee (2000: 36–42) does, but rather in terms of cultural conventions related to music production, technology and the studio space. In connection to his idea of musicians as *creators,* Toynbee (2000: 35) suggests that: “Crucially, though, the musical creator is restricted in how much difference s/he can make at any given moment.”

I do not accept all of the ideological premises of Toynbee’s readings, such as, for instance, the idea that it is only due to capitalist ideology that the social nature of the creative process is suppressed or that the cult of the romantic genius is the only factor justifying the copyright income for the successful artists (Toynbee 2003: 111). One might even argue that sometimes the social nature of creativity is even celebrated in the popular discourse on extremely successful artists (see Swedien 2009). I do, nevertheless, agree with this idea of creativity in the context of (popular) music. For Toynbee (ibid.) the amount of difference an agent can make at a given moment is restricted, which means that the “unit of creativity is a small one” (ibid.). For him, this is a key assumption in a larger discussion and enables "a wide range of musicians to be treated under the rubric creator" (Toynbee 2000: 35). This premise works well in my study for three reasons. Firstly, my study rests on the premise that producers, whose agency I'm studying, enter a music (or record) production process with the intention of exercising creativity. Secondly, the definition enables me to include producers, whose agency and the quality of it, is the central question in my study. Thirdly, Toynbee’s definitions of creative agency include several aspects of music-making and do not necessarily require a predetermined ontological solution to what a musical work is in order make it possible to decide whether or not creativity has occurred, but leaves the ontological question open for discussion; Toynbee (2000: 35) states that this key assumption makes it possible to discuss "all stages of music-making from 'writing' through 'performance' to 'production'". This is not to say that these different stages of making music could not overlap; quite the opposite. The degree to which they can be handled as separate activities to begin with is an important indication of the kind of culture that an individual music (or record) production project harbors. Despite my reservations about discarding the individual agency centered model, in this study I hold on to the premise that “creativity in music needs to be reconceived as a cultural process rather than a heroic act”. New music is created by social actors in networks and through collaborative processes (Toynbee 2003: 110). This connects with the actor-network theory (see Latour 2005) to some extent.

In this understanding, the concept of cultural space, where collaboration happens, is important. In the context of record production, creative agency is facilitated by

technology and the recording (or production) studio. The studio can be seen as the site where creative agency takes place during record (or music) production. The studio as a physical and cultural space, its design, location, interior, its characteristics, benefits and shortcomings in addition to the cultural habits and practices that the individual subscribes to and ascribes to the studio affect and construct the agencies of the individual agents who work within the creative collective of the record production team; I will return to the concept of the cultural space specifically in section 1.3.3.

Lastly, I must reaffirm that agency in this study is seen as being dependent on structures. As McIntyre (2008), drawing on Csikszentmihalyi (1997: 6), puts it: “This is to say that a record producer’s agency, the ability to make and effect decisions, is dependent on the structures, principally the domain and field, they encounter and surround themselves with.” Here, I must note that my aim is not to engage in a far-reaching theoretical conversation about how the domain and the field as structures limit or enable the agency of the producer. Rather, I use the systems model of creativity to establish a premise; that creativity, in the sense of people bringing novelty to the domain validated by a field of experts, has occurred in each of the case studies I have conducted. The structures, music technology, recording (production) studio and sociocultural structures, whose influence on agency I study here, can be understood as specific elements bound within Csikszentmihalyi’s field and domain. However, as I have written, the main purpose of the systems model of creativity here is to establish the premise that creativity has occurred in the case studies and that agency here is creative in nature. The emphasis of the current study is on agency, not creativity itself. Furthermore, the systems model provides a connection to the research field most relevant to this study, as it has been used in the study of the art of record production in the past.

Agency, as said, is dependent on physical and socio-cultural structures as the entirety of being depends on them in one way or another. Structures again include both physical structures like, for instance, buildings and pieces of technology as well as social, cultural, ideological, intersubjective and historical structures, which may include, for example, the organization of the music industry, studio production conventions, inherent ideals in a cultural setting (for instance, a genre) and inherent logics built into software or hardware. In the following sections I will discuss the concept of technology and technology as a specific structure, on which agency in the context of music production depends. Thereafter, I will deal with the concept of cultural space, which is another structure that affects agency.

### 1.2.2 Music Technology

When one hears the word 'music technology', one often starts to think about gadgets which need electricity to be functional and which capture, reproduce, modify, edit or shape sounds. Gadgets like these would include guitar amplifiers and floor pedals, microphones and audio cords, mixing consoles and loudspeakers, synthesizers,

computers and software, studio spaces with hundreds of blinking lights, headphones and drum machines. Indeed, pieces of technology and especially the critical study of how they are used by people (in cultural musicology) is an unavoidable aspect in the study of music production; record (or music) production, when it is understood as the making of musical records, would be unthinkable without music technology. Therefore, all studies on music production touch upon technology at least to some degree either explicitly or implicitly. Yet the most basic academic definition of music technology extends beyond the mere pieces of hardware or software and connects it to human action and thinking. According to Frith (1996: 226): "In its most basic definition, the technology of music simply refers to the ways in which sounds are produced and reproduced." Frith (ibid.) even comprehends music history in different stages according to the ways in which music has been stored and retrieved. This understanding could also include ways in which music has been performed and mediated. Although Frith's "technology of music" can be understood differently than "music technology", I understand the former as bearing the same meaning as the latter when the latter is understood in the broadest possible sense.

For the purposes of scholarly studies on the culture of music production and the agency of the producer, music technology must be understood in a wide sense as a structure which plays a vital role in the construction of agency and has an effect on culture, that is the values, ideas, actions and interactions of human agents involved in music production. According to the musicologist Paul Théberge (1997: 193): "Recording technology must be understood as a complete "system" of production involving the organization of musical, social and technological means."

The studio ethnographers Paul Greene and Thomas Porcello (2005: 269) share this view by stating that scholarly accounts on processes of music engineering must understand technology "not just as a tool but as a critical means of social practice". This wide conception of technology opens up perspectives or vistas on how technology has influenced music making. It also ties this study to the wider field of the cultural study of music technology. In his study on music technology and how it has changed music and musical practice, the musicologist Mark Katz (2010: 3) has proposed a concept called the "phonograph effect". He states (ibid.): "Simply put, a phonograph effect is any change in musical behavior–whether listening, performing or composing–that has arisen in response to sound-recording technology. A phonograph effect is, in other words, any observable manifestation of recording's influence."

Even if Katz does not specifically mention it, the activity of 'producing music', which in itself can be seen as including all of those mentioned, could be added to the list. While the use of this specific concept begs the presence of a larger historical context, as otherwise the *change* in musical practices is hard to grasp, some conclusions about the ways technology has changed musical practices can be drawn from individual present-day case studies when they are properly contrasted with the findings presented in earlier research on music production.

Discussions on music technology and its relationship to agency inevitably bring into play the debate of technological determinism on the one hand and voluntarism on the other. The majority of contemporary music technology scholars try to avoid arguing for technological determinism, or so-called "hard" determinism, which refers to the idea that "tools, machines, and other artefacts of human invention have unavoidable, irresistible consequences for users and for society in general" (Katz 2010: 4; see also Théberge 2001: 15; Frith 1996: 234; Middleton 1990: 67). Katz (ibid.) continues: "Though I say that recording [technology] influences musical activity, I am not espousing technological determinism, particularly what some scholars refer to as hard determinism."

This is my initial understanding of technological determinism as well. To avoid the trap between structural voluntarism and determinism, I draw on Timothy D. Taylor's (2001: 36) conceptions of technology as a "special kind of structure". Taylor (2001: 35) sees that defining technology simply as a structure is problematic for the reason that technology is always changing, "whereas the term *structure* seems to imply something that is comparatively static". While I fail to see the ways in which structures in general are static as opposed to the non-static structures of technology, Taylor's (2001: 38) way of approaching technology as a structure that "both acts on its users and is continually acted on by them" is helpful. Furthermore, according to Taylor (2001: 35–36) "it is no accident that some have interpreted "technology" to refer both to tools and machines, as well as techniques and kinds of knowledge". He continues:

> Technology is a peculiar kind of structure that is made up of both schemas and resources, in which the schemas are those rules that are largely unspoken by technology users, thereby allowing for some degree of determinism, while technology as a resource refers to what we do with it – that is, what is voluntaristic. (Taylor 2001: 37.)

This conception of technology in connection with agency is useful to my study as it provides a way to move beyond the "falsely binarized" poles of voluntarism and determinism and to examine how technology "both makes and is made by people" (Taylor 2001: 35). It provides a way to examine the creative agency of a music producer in relation to the technological structures that the process of record production entails from a "clean slate", so to speak.

In a way, when it comes to the creative agency of the music producer, the relationship between technology and agency can be understood as mutually dependent. According to Greene and Porcello (2005: 5):

> Every technology brings with it a particular logic, a *structure* [my emphasis] that, among other things, is a means of bringing order to the world (Winner 1999: 32). This logic reflects its particular social history; as Lysloff and Gay point out (2003: 15–16), the logic of a particular technology depends upon the

logics of the related technologies and preceding technologies that prefigure it (e.g., the electronic keyboard is prefigured by the piano, which in turn is prefigured by the harpsichord) and also the shifting social and economic contexts.

The logic of new technologies can thus be a result of the logic of a preceding technology. However, in my view, a technology that predicates the logic of another might have been predicated by a previously unknown technology invented by a human agent.

Based on ideas presented in this section, I argue that technology, when understood very broadly as the complete assemblage of the different pieces of technology used in record production including the studio as a whole and the values and ideas related to those technologies, would constitute the primary structure, within which the creative agencies of the producer and other agents involved in record production are constructed. When and if technologies change, it affects the agencies of the people involved. Agents, however, may also change structures at least to some extent, as I have stated in section 1.3.1., or an agent can use technology to strengthen her/his agency and use technology to influence another structure in record production. The concept of music technology thus forms an important part of my perspective, from which I will discuss the formation of the producer's agency in my case studies. The concept of music technology thus works as an operative concept in my ethnographic analysis and the interpretation of my research materials. In the following section I will discuss the concept of cultural space, which in the context of music production is interconnected with technology, at least to some extent.

### 1.2.3 Cultural Space

Space and place and their connection to music and music production have been a subject of debate for the past few decades at least in cultural musicology (Hawkins 2004: 16). Space is both physically and culturally constructed and affects and conditions "the meanings and values we conventionally attach" to music (Brusila, Johnson & Richardson 2016: 5). The concept of cultural space holds in itself a premise that space is not only a purely material objective reality consisting of matter. A specific space also contains conceptualizations of values and ideas formed by human agents, their social interactions and historical continuations. Thus, specific spaces are also socially constructed cultural environments. Space, like technology, can also be seen as a structure much like technology, which "acts on its users and is continually acted on by them" (Taylor 2001: 38). A specific space designed for a specific purpose, like for example the studio in the context of this study, also holds values and ideas which affect the agencies of individuals within the space and can thus never be inherently "neutral" facilities. One comes to a studio space with a specific activity in mind. This activity again is governed at least to some extent by social norms and conventions. On the

other hand, agents can effect changes on a space through social processes. Indeed, in my opinion the strength of the agency of an individual can be discussed in terms of to what degree an agent can affect the space in (or on) which s/he acts.

Perhaps the most dominant and profound theories of cultural space have been outlined by the sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991). Although Lefebvre (ibid.) uses the term “social space”, I contend here that any space where social interactions take place could be seen as cultural space, since culture in my view can be constructed only through social interactions between separate agents. An individual living in solitude couldn’t form a culture in the way that we understand it. For Lefebvre (1991: 26) “(social) space is a (social) product”. He continues to explain how space is “both a result and a container, both produced and productive – on the one hand a representation of space (geometric homogeneity) and on the other a representational space (the phallic)” (Lefebvre 1991: 288).

For Lefebvre (ibid.) spaces seem to be constantly changing processes, which are produced as both abstract and concrete places (Lefebvre 1991: 288; see also Kumpulainen 2012: 6). I understand this as implying that social processes give and assign meanings to a space, thus making the space cultural. Mere material constructions without social interactions taking place in connection to them wouldn’t entail meaning and thus could not be seen as cultural spaces. On the other hand, social organizations and agency in connection with them may have an effect on the way a space is materially constructed. This social constructivist approach is demonstrated in, for example, the sociologist Thomas F. Gieryn’s (2002: 46) idea that “research space mirrors the social organizational units of science”. This idea can be considered in the context of record (or music) production and the studio space as well. Also, when talking about studio spaces, we mostly refer to buildings. Gieryn (2002: 35) further states:

> Buildings stabilize social life. They give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns… And yet, buildings stabilize imperfectly. Some fall into ruin, others are destroyed naturally or by human hand, and most are unendingly renovated into something they were not originally.

In connection with this I would side with the ethnomusicologist Eliot Bates’ (2012) idea, according to which:

> when recording artists enter studios they enter into spaces that seem by their very nature to constrain social and musical practices and practitioners (the coercive nature of studios); yet, those same studios were the result of a design process which arguably mirrors the social organization of studio work, and perhaps, the broader music industry in which these studios reside.

Thus, the case can be made that studio spaces, like music technology, both act on and are acted upon by human agents (Taylor 2001: 38).

The recording (or music production) studio or other recording space, which is the cultural space I'm dealing with in this study, has established itself as a cultural space only in the past one hundred years. According to Bates (2012):

> Studios must be understood simultaneously as acoustic environments, as meeting places, as container technologies, as a system of constraints on vision, sound and mobility, and as typologies that facilitate particular interactions between humans and nonhuman objects while structuring and maintaining power relations.

This passage lays a foundation and establishes a starting point for how studios can be understood as cultural spaces, that is spaces that have an effect on the formation of agency in the record (or music) production process. One of my perspectives in my analysis of the producer's agency is the studio space and how that space both contributes to the formation of agency and is shaped due to the actions of agents. As music production studios are specific spaces designed for specific purposes and they are fundamentally cultural in the way that the activity of music production incorporates specific cultural contents, the concept of cultural space works as an operative concept in my ethnographic analysis and interpretation of the formation of the music producer's creative agency, which is at the core of my research problem.

In the next section I will discuss the ethnographically oriented methodological foundation of the present study. The concepts of creative agency, music technology and cultural space I have defined and discussed here will provide an analytical and interpretative framework for my methodology. These concepts will be especially useful to my analytical and interpretative work.

## 1.3 Methods and Materials

From a theoretical and methodological perspective, this study is rooted in the traditions of cultural musicology and ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicology here, however, serves mainly as what, for example, Mantere has labelled a "hermeneutic ideal" (2006: 43) rather than a paradigm steering every aspect of the research process. From a practical methodological perspective, the approach I have taken in this study tilts more towards being multi- or mixed-methods in its nature (I will return to this point in section 1.3.2.). An ethnographic approach is suitable in this study for the reason that my aim is to produce new knowledge about how the producer's agency is constructed in the practical concrete setting of record production in the studio. This is not to say that there wouldn't be other ways to study the producer's agency. For example, one could study the producer's agency from an industrial perspective by analyzing the place of the producer in the network of agents in the music business. Also, one could study the

producer's agency by conducting close listening of music and making interpretations on how the producer's actions affect the cultural content of the music s/he produces. However, I focus on how music is produced and I am primarily interested in how the producer's agency is constructed during the process of music production. This is commonly the focus in ethnomusicology and for this reason an ethnographic approach is the most viable approach. Also, looking at the situation from the producer's perspective makes this study lean towards ethnography as it is understood in the ethnomusicological tradition (Moisala & Seye 2013: 34). Scholars in the ethnomusicological tradition like Jeff Todd Titon (2008: 29) focus on the people making or experiencing music by conducting interviews and fieldwork either as observers, participant-observers (e.g. Slater 2016: 170–172) or, perhaps increasingly, active agents who take part in the process of making music or, for example, by learning to play an instrument of the tradition they study (e.g. Rice 1995).

Traditionally, ethnomusicology has focused on non-Western music. Scholars in this tradition, however, increasingly conduct studies in the Western cultural field and in their own cultural spheres. What makes this study ethnographic is not the selection of research subject but rather the premise that all music, also classical music, is embedded in culture (see Mantere & Moisala 2013: 201–203). My methodological choices follow from this premise. They are essentially ethnographic and my main research material consists of both traditional ethnographic material (interviews and field observations) and the music (both sonic and written scores) that my case study subjects produce and work on. As Mantere (2006: 43) has noted, ethnomusicological peer-reviewed publications such as *Ethnomusicology* and *World of Music* have predominantly published articles on non-Western music, popular music, music technology and music audiences and have seldom featured articles on classical music. This study on the other hand features case studies from both classical and popular music, which distinguishes it from traditional ethnomusicology. Furthermore, today ethnographic methods are commonly used in the cultural study of all musical styles and traditions when the focus is on the actions and interactions of people making music. Therefore, this study could best be described as an ethnographic study in the field of cultural musicology.

In qualitative research on individual cases like the present study, the question of generalizability through inductive reasoning is always relevant. Here, I do not claim that all the results or interpretations would be true for all music producers and music production projects. However, I contend that my choice of doing ethnographic fieldwork on individual case studies serves my aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the producer's creative agency in the music production process through interpretation (cf. Titon 2008: 27). This choice is in line with the current epistemological understanding of ethnomusicology (Titon 2008: 36). Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that a deeper study of particular producers when compared and contrasted with earlier research will reveal some aspects of the producer's agency in general or at least will provides new insights and perspectives for further research.

Also, it is unlikely that any producer is an outlier to the extent that s/he wouldn't share any values, production practices or ideas about music with producers at large (cf. Auvinen 2016). This line of thinking is consistent with the rebuttal of the idea of the genius individual; even if a producer was portrayed in this way or if s/he tried to present her/himself as an independent creative genius, s/he would still be influenced by the production culture of music.

In the following subsection 1.3.1., I will discuss the selection process of research subjects (or collaborators). Here, I will also discuss some of the delimiting of my research by stating what I focus on and what has been paid less attention to. In subsection 1.3.2., I will discuss my fieldwork methods after which I will discuss the interviews in subsection 1.3.3. In subsection 1.3.4. I will discuss my musical research material and in subsection 1.3.5. I will collectively discuss the analysis of my research materials. In subsection 1.3.6. I will examine my own position as a researcher in this study. I will end this section with thoughts on research ethics in subsection 1.3.7.

### 1.3.1 Choice of Research Subjects

An important premise of this study is to investigate the creative agency of the producer and how it is constructed through social and technological (including the studio) processes. I wanted from the outset to conduct qualitative research on three case studies of different musical styles, traditions and settings. This has been achieved by studying the work of the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen in a home studio based pop production setting, the producer Seppo Siirala in a classical production and the producer Jonas Olsson in a rock production conducted in a commercial studio. I will introduce the research subjects (or collaborators) in more detail in their respective analysis chapters. Three case studies have provided me the necessary variety of different producers and production settings to be able to achieve a wide enough comparative perspective to make some conclusions that would extend beyond these individual case studies. On the other hand, three is a small enough number of case studies to provide me the possibility for deeper cultural analysis arising from my research questions and to still complete this study in an appropriate time frame.

Conducting an ethnographic study on the work of music producers turned out to be more challenging than I initially thought. The greatest challenge was finding producers that would be willing to participate in my study. Therefore, availability has strongly characterized the selection of my case producers and projects. Many producers who I contacted with a request to participate didn't reply to begin with (FD 2.10.2016). Others declined my request without giving any particular reasons (FD 11.4.2014). The reason for this might lie in the nature of the creative process and the fragility of the social interactions taking place in the aforementioned process. According to the musicologist Joe Bennett (2011):

> The other challenge is that songwriting is not easy to document in practice. The first difficulty is finding songwriters who will agree to be observed, followed by the need to construct an observational environment that minimizes the risk of damaging the process due to the observer-expectancy effect.

As songwriting is an important part of the contemporary music production process and producers take part in it, Bennett's observation might exemplify the reason that many producers who I approached were reluctant to take part in my study. Furthermore, some stages of production might be more sensitive than others. For instance, in my first case study on the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen, I wasn't able to be present to observe the very initial stages of the collaboration between the producer and the singer, where the seeds of the song production process were sown. Therefore, I have had to rely on interviews and musical material, which had been created at the time.

Of the three producers whose work I studied, the classical producer Seppo Siirala was a complete stranger to me at the point of initial contact. As for the pop producer Vepsäläinen, I knew him from before this research as I had worked with him as a musician. I also knew the rock producer Olsson from before this study as he had been a research subject in my master's thesis in 2012. The musicians, singers, engineers, composers and conductors were all new acquaintances to me at the time of initial contact. Other participants in this study were actively selected by me to an even lesser degree than the producers, as they happened to be the people that the producers were working with in the projects that I studied and that I was allowed to observe.

The fact that I knew some of my research subjects beforehand is at the same time a limitation and an advantage. The limitation comes from the fact that my previous encounters with the subjects might have affected my analysis and interpretations of the interview contents; my personal experiences related to the research subjects affect my *pre-understandings*, which might have had ramifications for the explanation and new understanding of my hermeneutic circle (cf. Rice 2008: 58). On the other hand, the fact that I knew a producer personally from before might have allowed me access to observe the creative process to begin with (cf. Bennett 2011).

Another challenge has been the spontaneous nature of production work. From this perspective, the ethnographic study of a record production process could be described in the words of Slater (2015: 67) as "chasing a moving target". This refers to a production process which takes place at different locations or at different times. Naturally, I was not able to be constantly present when examining a song's production process, which took place at different times and different places during the course of almost a year and during which the creative parties involved sometimes got together at very short notice. This reflected on me as a researcher; for example, one time I got a message from a producer telling me that he is having a session with the singer "now" (FD 15.2.3016).

Regarding the choice of research subjects, someone might ask why I have only

chosen to study the work of male producers. This is not so much a question of choice but rather a question of availability; the female producers I contacted unfortunately did not want to participate in this study. Any reasons I might give for this would be purely speculative and I am not going to make any guesses in this context. It is my hope that my research will be extended in future studies to include also women and other social groups that are not represented here.

### 1.3.2 The Ethnography of the Studio: Field, Observations, Notes, Field Diary, Field Recordings, Photos and Videos

Ethnomusicology has come a long way since field work aimed primarily at transcribing non-Western music into Western notation with the aim of preserving vanishing Western musical cultures (Rice 2008: 43). At least since the time of the ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood (1971), the role of the researcher as a participant-observer has become more or less paradigmatic (Mantere 2006: 43). Titon (2008: 25) has taken this perspective even further by emphasizing the *lived experience* of the researcher in addition to that of the research subjects. This emphasis results arguably at least to some extent from his moderate criticism towards the influential anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (1973) tendency to see cultures as collections of texts. Even while I accept Titon's criticism of the tendency to "textualize everything" (Titon 2008: 28), I have definitely been influenced by Geertz (1973) and his notion of "thick description", at least in the way I describe my observations in the field. Secondly, Geertz's (1972) research and analysis on the Balinese cockfight resembles ethnographic study on studio work despite the seeming superficial differences; both can be understood as relatively closed cultural systems with their own value systems, hierarchies, rules and social structures. Furthermore, it is easy to identify with Geertz's (1988) idea that ethnography demands rhetorical skill and that an ethnographer is more an author than a reporter (cf. Titon 2008: 34). Reaching an equal level of linguistic competence, however, will take me more time as I am still in the beginning of my academic career.

A substantial amount of research material in this study is comprised of field observations documented in field notes, field diaries, audio recordings, photos and videos. In ethnographic research the question of what constitutes a field often arises (Rice 2008: 42). As my focus here is the creative agency of the producer during the production process of a musical record, the field is defined by where and when the producer engages in creative activities aiming at producing a record. In other words, the field is where the producer interacts with other agents involved in the process, music technology and the spaces where music is produced. This connects with, for example, the ethnomusicologist Helmi Järviluoma's (2013: 112) notion that "ethnography lives where people and cultures meet". Spatially, the production process of a musical record is often defined by the physical space of the recording space or the studio. Here, locating all the spaces where people come together to produce music throughout time was nevertheless challenging, to say the least (see section 1.4.1.), as it

was not possible to be with my research collaborators and/or informants at all times. Temporally the field was defined by the duration of a production process which usually starts with an initial contact between the agents involved in the process and ends with the release of the produced musical piece or song. In this study, however, I observed and studied the agency specifically of the producer. Therefore, I limited my field to the stages of production where the producer has an essential role and left out deeper examinations of phases such as mastering (and to a certain degree mixing), in which the producer has not been directly involved. Moreover, due to the technological nature of record production, the field extended to the digital domain. The relatively short nature of the production process of a single recording and thus the comparatively short time spent "in the field" on my part perhaps somewhat shifts my study away from the ethnomusicological research tradition, in which the researcher often spends long times in the field and with the research subjects (cf. Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009: 160; Rice 1995) and towards the younger tradition of cultural musicology. Alternatively, this research can methodologically be understood as part of the body of contemporary ethnomusicology; today fieldwork is often done in shorter consecutive occasions and seldom lasts for lengthy periods of time (Barz & Cooley 2008: 14–15; Moisala & Seye 2013: 32; Bayley 2010: 206–224). Furthermore, contemporary fieldwork can be done entirely virtually (ibid.).

As I have noted previously, shorter times spent in the field observing the production process and combining this with interviews and music analysis shifts this study away from traditional ethnomusicology and towards contemporary ethnomusicology (ibid.), cultural musicology (to the extent that in our time the two even differ in the first place) or perhaps a more mixed or multi-method approach. However, in this specific study the shorter times spent in the field, and still being able to understand the study as ethnographic, is to some degree justified by two reasons. Firstly, I did have prior experience of music production both as a producer and a musician working in home studios, as well as in commercial studios and concert halls before I began to conduct this study. Therefore, I did have some ideas of, for example, how the music production process works and who the agents involved are. This is a clear difference to traditional ethnomusicological research settings, where the researcher comes in as a complete outsider and has to spend months to figure out even the basics of what the people s/he is studying do. Secondly, my case studies all happened in a Finnish setting. Therefore, I didn't have, for example, to learn a new language or get acquainted with a completely new set of concepts and ideas to acquire even a rudimentary understanding of what is going on or to be able to observe or interview the participants involved in the study (e.g. Rice 1995; Bates 2010; 2016). According to my understanding, in traditional ethnomusicology (based on immersion in an unfamiliar culture), these activities require a significant amount of time spent in the field. For the reasons stated above, I do not think that this study required full immersion to gain a proper understanding of record production as a process and the construction of the producer's agency.

For the duration of this research, I have kept a field diary (Appendix 1) which I have referred to in the European form “(FD date.month.year)” in my analysis chapters three, four and five. For example, if I was observing a studios session on March 8, 2016, and I referred to my observations on that day, I have written the reference (FD 8.3.2016) inside the text. I have focused on writing down everything that I have interpreted as important from the perspective of my research questions aiming at understanding how the producer’s creative agency is constructed. This means that I have written entries every time I have been in contact with my research subjects in a way that is meaningful from the perspective of my research questions. This also includes some random situations when I have been in contact with the participants without prior planning, when and if the situation included any kind of discussion about the research project. Thus, I have in a way expanded the "field" into spaces outside of, for instance, the production studio or outside of clear situations, where music is being produced in a pre-arranged "session". Creativity can, after all, take place outside of such circumscribed instances. New ideas can flourish and come in odd places at sudden times. Also, I have documented in my field diary all instances where I have reached out to possible informants or research subjects. For example, when a producer whose work I wanted to study didn’t respond at all or refused to take part in my research, I documented the situation in my field diary. This serves the purpose of demonstrating the field work process more comprehensively.

In situations where it was possible, for example when describing a phone call with a possible informant, I have written directly into my field diary on a laptop. However, when observing production work in the studio, I kept a notepad and a pen with me at all times. This is an obvious (albeit traditional) choice of note-taking tool as tapping on a laptop would be more of a distraction for all involved. In my notepad, I jotted down observations that I interpreted as important from the perspective of my research questions and my study’s conceptual foundation. After each session, I transcribed my notes as soon as possible into my field diary. This can also be understood as a part of the hermeneutic process; as an analytical and interpretative part of my ethnography. Analyzing as distinguishing between the essential and unessential from the viewpoint of my questions happened all the time while observing the music production process (Heinonen 2013: 88). The interpretative process can also be understood as having taken place in a double hermeneutic form (Martin 2014: 55) during fieldwork, as I have had to distinguish between what the people participating in my research have viewed as important.

Ethnomusicologist Gregory F. Barz (2008: 207) has argued for the inclusion of field notes as they are in ethnography. This, according to him (ibid.), would be a good way of “allowing our readers to experience our individual processes of knowing, those paths we took to understanding, interpretation, or analysis.” I agree with Barz’s argument. However, I have not included field diary entries as such inside the text of my analysis chapters. Instead, I have referred to my field diary, which does include descriptions of my own feelings and experiences in addition to descriptions of what I

have seen and heard (if the two are separable to begin with), and stored it with other materials. I have done this mainly for reasons that have to do with the flow and readability of my text rather than any epistemological or philosophical purpose.

### 1.3.3 Interviews

In the course of this study, I conducted several so-called “thematic interviews” because in them I concentrated on certain premeditated themes (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 47) related to music production. Also, all the interviewees had experiences of similar processes (music/record production) as a premise (ibid.). Based on the “focused interview” (Merton, Fiske & Kendall 1956), the themed interview differs from it in the way that it doesn’t require all the interviewees to go through the same experiment-induced experiences but holds on to the idea that all the experiences, thoughts, beliefs and emotions can be addressed through this method (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 48). The thematic interview is a semi-structured method insofar as the themes of the interviews are the same for everyone. However, it lacks strict question forms and question orders typical of structured interviews (ibid.). Despite having a pre-written question list, some interviews escalated more towards a form of free interview or even conversation, as my informants often provided unpredictably interesting and illuminating perspectives which required further interrogation spontaneously and which would not have come up through strictly structural interviews. As a result, I did notice afterwards that some of my follow-up questions might have unintentionally led the participants in a certain direction despite the fact that I actively avoided leading and suggestive questions. This happened rarely and, in my analysis, I omitted responses that might have resulted from leading questions or conversations. Some questions arose from my observations of production work in the studio and were thus not predetermined. I wrote these questions into my field notes and used them in later interviews sometimes right after a production session, during a break or at a later time. This strengthened the idea of data triangulation or a mixed-method approach.

During the course of this study, I conducted altogether 19 interviews. The lengths of the interviews ranged from more than 90 minutes (e.g. Siirala 2015), when discussing, for example, the background of a producer, to just a few minutes (e.g. Olsson 2017b), when I wanted to know, for example, the producer’s view on a certain production technique I had just observed in the studio. I conducted all interviews (Blind Channel 2016; Olsson 2016a-b; Olsson 2017a; Mäemets 2016; Elts 2016; Tüür 2016; Siirala 2015, 2016a-c; Vepsäläinen 2015a-c; 2016b-c; Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016a-b) orally and recorded them with either an Olympus digital voice recorder (model VN-3100PC) or an iPhone 4, with the exception of one e-mail-based interview (Vepsäläinen 2016a).

As the people participating in my research were Finnish and/or spoke Finnish at a very high level, I conducted the interviews in the Finnish language. Therefore, I also transcribed the interviews fully in the original Finnish language. In the transcription

phase I aimed at preserving the tone and to an extent the non-verbal communication they conveyed. I did note, for example, pauses and laughs in cases where I interpreted them as relevant from the perspective of what the interviewees meant. All interview quotes that I have used in my analysis I have carefully translated into English. In the translation process, I have aimed at preserving the original meanings of the quotes as accurately as possible. Therefore, the translated quotes I have used in my analysis are not necessarily literal translations.

### 1.3.4 Musical Material

In addition to field observations and interviews, I have analyzed musical material in both sonic and written form in order to glean another perspective in understanding the creative agency of the producer. My initial goal was to analyze the relationship between different versions of the music under production in an attempt to find out how the producer affected the music during the production process. The musicologist Amanda Bayley (2010: 206–224) has approached the study of music-making in a similar manner, although in a performance rehearsal setting, not in the context of record production. I succeeded in this in various degrees in each of the case studies.

In the first case study on pop producer Mikke Vepsäläinen and his work with the singer Ida Paul, I had use of various versions of the song 'Kunhan muut tiedä' that were under production. In this way, I was able to compare the different versions to one another and to the final released version and analyze how the song developed during the production process in the hands of the producer (and the singer). This also offered me perspectives on what to ask Vepsäläinen in later interviews. In my second case study with the classical producer Seppo Siirala, the musical material was different for reasons related to the classical musical tradition. The first recorded version of Tüür's Symphony No. 8 only emerged after Siirala's editing process of the recorded material was complete. However, I did obtain a copy of Siirala's own version of the score, onto which he had made markings and notes. In this way I was able to get another perspective on how a producer of classical music approaches the music during the production process. In my third case study, the only musical material I obtained were the released recordings of the songs 'Can't Stop Us' and 'Alone Against All'. Despite my requests, I never obtained the pre-production version from the band Blind Channel. I did, however, obtain different mix-versions of the songs from the producer Olsson. The analysis of these different versions turned out not to be very relevant from the perspective of my research questions on the producer's agency.

### 1.3.5 Analysis of Research Materials

The different kinds of research materials or data have offered the opportunity to examine the research subjects from many different perspectives. This comes close to the idea of data triangulation (e.g. Bennett 2011) in the hard sciences, although the

term itself it is not very widely used in the humanities. In this study this means that I have compared the different forms of data, interviews, field observations, photos, videos and music to one another. Different kinds of data validate one another. For example, when an informant/participant has expressed something in an interview, I might have cross-referenced this finding in light of other data, for example, with a field observation written in my field diary. On the other hand, if different forms of data suggest contradictory views, it can also provide new perspectives on the issues at hand. Also, different kinds of materials have influenced the production of one another during the entire ethnographic process. For example, my more extensive background interviews oriented the ways in which I conducted field observations, i.e. what I paid attention to in the field and field observations again reoriented the questions I asked in future interviews.

In my analysis process, the main concepts I have discussed and defined in section 1.3. have been of instrumental value both in description and analysis as well as in interpretation and evaluation. The cultural musicologist John Richardson (2012: 12) writes:

> Criticism as a method can be parsed into a number of interrelated activities, including description (or elucidation), analysis, interpretation and evaluation. Research in the 1990s in cultural studies placed a strong emphasis on interpretation and hermeneutical methods. Concurrent with the turn of the third millennium, researchers have taken a noticeable turn towards matters of experience and performance, as indicated by terms such as the performative turn, the phenomenological turn, and the affective turn.

Richardson continues to discuss how shifting epistemological paradigms move the focus on the different stages of the analytical process at different times with the emphasis currently being on phenomenology (ibid.). Here, I would nevertheless emphasize the term “interrelated”. No stage of the analytical process can be independent from another despite the paradigm. Operative concepts, however, are key in bringing the stages of the analytical process together.

Firstly, the concepts of creative agency, technology and cultural space have oriented the collection (or production) of data, for example, in how I have formulated my research questions. Secondly, they have oriented the process of field work in, for example, what kinds of things I notice or choose to take note of in the studio situation (Palmu 2007: 144; Heinonen 2013: 88) and what kinds of things I pay attention to in the close listening of my musical material and/or close reading of the musical score. Close reading, here, refers to a “combination of detailed analysis with discussions of cultural meaning” (Richardson 2016: 111). It implies interpretation, what it means, instead of mere technical analysis of structures (Richardson 2016: 116).

The entire analytical process can be understood as having happened in all stages of fieldwork (Palmu 2007: 144, see also Heinonen 2013: 88). I started to analyze and

interpret interviews already in the transcribing phase by highlighting parts that I understood as meaningful from the perspective of my research questions. Then, of course, another layer of interpretation happened in the translation from Finnish to English as I have had to interpret what my interviewees actually meant. In a way, it is hard to distinguish between the collection (or production), analysis, interpretation and evaluation of my research material. In an ethnographic study like the present one, the notion of "collecting" research material is problematic in the first place, with the exception of musical pieces. As the researcher in contemporary ethnomusicology is an active participant through lived experiences (Titon 2008: 25), my research material has been more or less "produced" by me as far as interviews and field diaries are concerned; had I as a researcher not conducted interviews and written down notes about my observations, the material would not exist. This leads to the notion that, at least according to my understanding, the phases of the analytical process, description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation are more or less intermingled in the hermeneutic process (Richardson 2012: 12; Palmu 2007: 144; Heinonen 2013: 88). For example, when making observations in the research field of the studio, what I make note of and describe in the first place can be understood as an interpretative act; it is my interpretation of what is important to make note of and develop further from the perspective of the research question.

### 1.3.6 Position of the Researcher

In an ethnographic study, and in all studies where human subjects are concerned, the position of the researcher is of some importance. This question is at the core of the emic/etic dichotomy which discusses the researcher's position as an insider or an outsider.

In the beginning of this study I thought of myself as somewhat of an insider. The reason for this is that I did produce some records in the late 2000's. Furthermore, I do take part in studio work and record production projects as a musician, composer or arranger continuously albeit somewhat seldom, as my core work is in research. However, when I went into the field and started to conduct interviews with producers, I noticed rather quickly how the culture of music production manifests itself very differently through the eyes of people who work full time in music production versus myself with only a limited amount of experience. This became particularly noticeable in my second case study, in which I studied the work of the classical producer Seppo Siirala (see chapter 4). Having had no experience in classical production, I felt like a total outsider, even if I went through extensive classical training in the viola in my childhood. Furthermore, when studying the work of the young pop producer Mikke Vepsäläinen, I came across terms and concepts I had never heard of, such as, for example, the role of the 'tracker' (Auvinen 2016; 2017) (see section 3.3.). I therefore see my position in terms of the ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice (2008: 57): "I am neither insider nor outsider; I speak as myself, a self formed, reconfigured, and

changed by my encounters with and understandings of [record production], and indeed all kinds of other musical works and performances." Based on this, I have not thought of myself as too much of an insider to be able to analyze the work of the producer critically and from a far enough distance. However, had I been a complete outsider, it could have been extremely hard to get in touch with producers in the first place (see subsection 1.4.1.). In my understanding, the illusion of the objective and completely neutral observer-researcher in ethnographic research has been abandoned long ago (cf. Slater 2016; Mantere 2006: 43). Therefore, I do not see it as necessary to ramble on much longer about how my presence might have affected the participants; it definitely had an effect but it is hard to know how much, since it is impossible to observe where one is not present. In my field diary, however, I have discussed the effects of my presence in the studio situation, in cases where I have noticed something. Also, in some instances the participants commented on the effects of my presence and I have made note of these comments in my field diary as well.

### 1.3.7 Ethical Considerations

In a study like the present one, where the names and identities of research subjects are revealed, the question of research ethics becomes especially important. However, in this study I do not cover any topics or areas that are especially sensitive from the participants' perspective, for example stigmatizing diseases or crime history. All the informants in my study gave their consent and agreed to participate with their own names and identities. As for the identities of people who refused to take part in my research and/or I didn't contact but whose name came up in interviews etc., I have naturally concealed details when discussing them in this study. For example, as I have also documented the search for research subjects in my field diary, I have naturally left out the names and assumed genders of the people that I contacted but who did not want to participate or who did not reply at all. For the same reason, I have intentionally left out any third-party names mentioned by my informants (cf. Korvenpää 2005: 26).

Before the first interview with each participant I explained the purpose of my study. I explained to them how my research would progress and that all materials would be used in a manner that at the least does not harm them in any way. I explained to my collaborators that they would have the right to discontinue their participation at any point during the study. Also, I clarified how and where the results of this study would be published and where any material I gathered during my study would be stored. I believe here lies also a mutual interest; should any of my research harm my participants in any way, it would effectively end my academic career. When taking photos or videos in the field, I always asked for permission from the people involved. When doing field work with larger organizations like the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta (chapter 4), it was naturally impossible to ask each individual separately for permission to observe. Instead, this permission was collectively granted through the producer and the intendant of the orchestra. The two had informed the orchestra of my being present

beforehand and nobody had objected to it. I have offered all the people that I have interviewed and observed the opportunity to, upon request, get acquainted with any material that I have gathered of them before publishing (see Auvinen 2016; 2017; Heinonen 2013: 87). This has naturally not affected my text in any way.

I have stored all research material on two external hard drives: Seagate Backup Plus hard drive and a Lacie hard drive. This includes photos and videos, interviews, field diaries and interview transcriptions. I keep the field notes written on paper in a physical binder. I have not stored the research material in any virtual cloud-based backup drives where they could leak. At the request of some of my participants, research materials such as full interviews, photos, videos and unpublished versions of music are not publicly available but can, when necessary, be obtained from the author on individual request. I have then cleared permissions with the participants individually.

## 1.4 Outline of Study

So far, I have discussed the background of this study. I have dealt with how I became interested in this topic and I have briefly stated the purpose and objectives of this study. I have also stated my research questions and aims. Next, in chapter 2, I will go through and discuss the earlier body of research on record production, the record (or music) producer, on music technology and on the music (or record) production studio. I will also make initial statements about what I am bringing into the field of the study of the art of record production and into the study of the producer's agency.

After this I will proceed into my analysis chapters on the three case studies I conducted in the course of this research. In chapter 3, I will analyze and discuss the role and agency of a young pop producer Mikke Vepsäläinen who, in the course of this case study, worked in a home studio setting with the singer Ida Paul on a song called 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä'. In chapter 4, I will analyze and discuss the role and agency of the classical producer Seppo Siirala, who worked with the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta on recording and producing the composer Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8. In chapter 5, I will analyze and discuss the work of the producer Jonas Olsson in his work with the rock band Blind Channel when they produced the songs 'Alone Against All' and 'Can't Stop Us'. In chapter 6, I will provide concluding thoughts on all of the cases studied collectively, discuss what my case studies reveal about the producer's role and agency in general, evaluate the validity and reliability of my research and provide perspectives on future research.

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# 2 Earlier Research on the Producer's Agency

To study the producer's agency requires working within an interdisciplinary field which includes various aspects of record (or music) production and work in the production studio. Despite the fact that scholarly study that touches upon issues relevant to record production arguably dates back to the first part of the 20th century (cf. Benjamin 1936), the study of the art of record production as a research field of its own is rather new. The first comprehensive handbook on the scholarly study of record production (Frith & Zagorski-Thomas 2012) was only published in the year 2012. The subtitle of this book, "An Introductory Reader for a New Academic Field", reveals the novelty of this academic field. The field has featured close cooperation between scholars doing academic study and practicing professionals. This is especially true of producers and engineers, who have written texts that meet the rigorous standards of academia but are to some extent based on the personal experiences of the writer (see Burgess 2013). However, debate about whether the academic field should be called *record production* or *music production* remains intense. For many, record production refers to an activity which results in a tangible physical *record* that can be held in your hand, put on a turntable or inserted into a CD player. As record production is increasingly shifting towards producing digital end products in non-physical formats, many today prefer the term *music production* (see Moorefield 2000: xiii). I use these terms interchangeably; in my opinion both have become established enough as terms referring to the set of activities which take place in a recording studio of one type or another and which aim at producing a sonic end product that, when stored on a medium, can be retrieved and listened to by other people. The same logic applies to the terms *record producer* and *music producer,* which I use interchangeably. The term *music producer* (see Auvinen 2017; 2016) might describe the essence of the producer's role better in the contemporary setting; the term *record producer,* however, is established to such a degree that it serves the same purpose. As the producer has been viewed as the central figure of music production, much of the earlier literature on record production touches on the producer's role directly or indirectly. The way I comprehend it, the study of the record producer's agency can roughly be categorized into four different main categories.

Firstly, there exists research of a positivistic nature. This includes, for example,

studies by students in practical music production educational programs or by music production educators. Doug Bielmeier's and Wellington Gordon's (2017) study on teaching music proficiency on audio recording education programs is a good example. William Moylan's (2007) work on studio practices provides insights into approaching studio work as a professional practitioner although it has a cultural element to it. Brendan Anthony (2017) has done similar practice-based research on mixing. From a scholarly perspective this body of scholarly inquiry offers perspectives on how the producers-to-be approach the creative process and highlights the strong bond between research and creation in the field of music production. In this study, however, this will not be is not my contribution. I am more interested in taking an ethnographic outsider's perspective (to the degree that this is possible) on the producer's agency.

Historical accounts form another category. These approaches are usually not specifically aimed at the analysis of the producer's agency but discussions of the producer are a side product of more general research on the history of record production including technological perspectives on and accounts of the development of the studio. For example, Susan Schmidt Horning (2013) has written a deep analysis on music technology and studio recording. Furthermore, Virgil Moorefield's (2005) research on the evolution of the producer's creative role from the time the producer became an artistic agent in the 1950's emphasizes technological change and its impact on the producer's role and agency. Toivo Burlin's (2008) historical analysis of the production of Swedish classical music includes the producer almost as a side note.

The same is true with larger studies on the music industry. Studies using, for example, Keith Negus's (1996) sociologically-leaning analysis on production culture provides insights into sociocultural aspects of the music industry that affect the producer's agency on a very general level as a part of music industry personnel. Similar historical (or sociological) studies include Jari Muikku's (2001) study on the production of Finnish popular music records between 1945 and 1990. What is noteworthy here is the absence of explicit discussions on the producer. The explanation for this might lie in the formation of the role of the producer in Finland, which has been discussed by Korvenpää (2005). I will return to this point later.

Many studies concentrating specifically on the producer's role and agency are based exclusively on interviews. Adam Martin's (2014) interpretative phenomenological analysis based on original interviews provides a detailed analysis of how producers experience their own work. Scholarly work on more well-known producers (e.g. Burgess 2012, Zak 2001) or general accounts of the different roles of the producer (e.g. Frith 2012, Blake 2012) are more or less based on media interviews or analysis of media discourses on the producer's role. These provide important perspectives on how producers view their own work. However, they face the challenge of having to evaluate how much producers want to give a certain impression of themselves and assessing how much of what producers say is realized in the real-life studio situation.

Earlier studio ethnographies dealing with the role of the producer come closest to

the present study in methodological terms. More traditional ethnographic studies in which the researcher stays more as an outsider include, to give just two examples, Antoine Hennion's work (1983; 1987) which emphasizes the collective nature of the production process and Jari Muikku's (1988) surprisingly early study on record production in Finland. It seems, however, that many studio ethnographies with researchers that have more etic positions concentrate on non-Western circumstances. For example, Paul Greene's and Thomas Porcello's anthology *Wired for Sound* (2005) provides a collection of studio ethnographies concentrating almost exclusively on non-Western studio settings. The same is true of, for example, Louise Meintjes's (2003) study on Afropop in a South African studio. Here, again, the focus is not specifically on the producer's agency. So-called participant observations can also be included in the category of ethnographic study. The line between autoethnography and participant observation nevertheless remains vague and might lie only in the hermeneutic ideal (cf. Mantere 2006: 43) of a scholar. More recent studies include Lachlan Goold's (2018) recent PhD dissertation on experiences of how DIY recording spaces sound and, for example, Mark Slater's (2015) study on the shattered and scattered nature of the creative studio process. Again, these do not concentrate specifically on the producer's agency.

In what follows I will concisely go through what earlier research has said about the role and agency of the producer. I have broken this chapter down along the lines of my research questions. First, I will discuss some earlier general perspectives on the producer's role and agency. Then, I will discuss sociocultural approaches to the work of the producer, examining earlier accounts of the relationship between the producer and music technology and the producer's agency and the studio. I will end this chapter by discussing some earlier producer research conducted in the Finnish context.

## 2.1 General Perspectives on the Producer's Agency

In the collective mind of the public the role of the producer is unclear, "enigmatic" (Zak 2001: 172) to put it modestly. This could best be summed up in a quote by the musicologist Albin Zak (ibid.): "The question often arises: 'What exactly does a record producer do?'" The notion that "Conceptions of the producer's role vary greatly among producers themselves and from one era to another, and the scope of the role is limited only by the number of tasks on a given project" (ibid.) does not make defining the producer's role any easier. Some historical changes in the producer's role can nevertheless be detected. These changes have previously been attributed to the progress of music technology, the evolution of the production studio and to the emergence of new genres, which often go hand in hand with technological advancements.

Zak (ibid.) discusses how from the point of view of the record company the producer is the person whose task it is to deliver a project on time and on budget. Even if there have been producers who "do little more than pay the bills and keep the project on schedule, leaving creative tasks to writers, arrangers, musicians and engineers", Zak

(2001: 172) goes on to state that most rock producers are involved in some kind of an aesthetic role in a production project. This role might overlap with songwriting, arranging, performing and/or engineering "either in actual participation or in lending critical judgment or advice (Zak 2001: 172). He argues that “While no two producers have quite the same combination of skills, each must have the ability to draw together diverse elements and to manage the dynamics of collaborative creativity among the members of the recording team.” (Zak 2001: 173.) This works as a good generalization on the essence of the producer’s role. Even if Zak is mostly concerned with rock producers, his views can be expanded into other forms of popular music at least to some extent, as his definition of rock is rather wide.

### 2.1.1 The Producer’s Tasks in Record Production

Generally speaking, making a musical record consists of five stages. These are songwriting (or composing), arranging, performing, engineering and producing. (Zak 2001: 164.) These are what Zak (ibid.) calls the "nominal categories of contributors" that are usually written onto an album's cover. The boundaries of these categories are nevertheless, as Zak (ibid.) puts it, "fluid and tasks often merge or overlap". Simon Zagorski-Thomas (2007: 191) and Allan Moore (2012) provide a similar list of the stages of most production projects but omit “producing” from the list. This might reflect the notion that “Producers may act as arrangers, performers, songwriters, or engineers” (Zak 2001: 164). Especially in the contemporary setting, producing can easily be understood as influencing all the essential categories of contribution to various degrees depending on genre and individual project. Especially with more contemporary styles like the various subgenres of EDM or electronic music, all the aforementioned nominal categories can typically be done in the same digital space concurrently. Furthermore, as music is increasingly published on the Internet and listened to on streaming services such as Spotify or bought as sound files from online stores such as iTunes, the specific individuals and their designated roles other than the artist whose name is on the virtual cover remain for the most part unknown to the general public. The degree to which the tasks and roles of different creative agents working in a collaborative creative process (Zak 2001: 163) as a "creative collective" (Hennion 1983: 160) intertwine, overlap and merge during a production process, is a good indicator of the values, practices and traditions prevailing in the production of music in different genres, styles or historical eras.

### 2.1.2 The Producer as Artist

The general conception in earlier research is that the role of the producer changed from being a record company cleric to a creative agent in the 1950’s or 1960’s (e.g. Muikku 1988: 34; Moorefield 2005). Similarly, Phil Spector has been regarded as the first producer who was known for specific chart hits in this capacity (ibid.; Muikku 1988:

34). George Martin has been seen as another early producer with creative agency. However, the music he produced was known as the music of The Beatles, not as the music of George Martin (Muikku 1988: 34).

It is naturally impossible to say whether or not Spector in fact was the “first” artist producer. Earlier research, however, recognizes Phil Spector as the first producer widely known for his own distinct sound and thus as a producer with an artistic role. Other producers from the 1960’s who have been dealt with as having artistic agencies were, for example, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys and the “Fifth Beatle” George Martin. As a founding member of the band, Wilson had a background as an artist (Moorefield 2005: 16). Martin again reportedly influenced song structures and arrangements (Moorefield 2005: 27), which both constitute artistry even in very traditional terms. The sequence of successful multi-platinum selling artist producers goes on up until our day. In some genres the fame of the producer has even surpassed the fame of the artist. While there is nothing inherently wrong with studying the work of commercially successful producers, this conception of a chain or a sequence of producers mirrors a rather canonical perspective on the historical narrative of producers. Also, top producers might be regarded as exceptional, not typical. Therefore, studies that research the work of less famous producers, like this one, might bring new perspectives to the research field and produce knowledge of typical producers. This is one of my contributions to the research field.

### 2.1.3 Types of Producers

The role of the producer can also be understood as varying depending on the type of the producer and individual project. Partly based on his own experiences in the industry, Burgess (2013) distinguishes between different kinds of producer types. Without using the actual word, he (2013: 7) makes a clear distinction between producers with creative roles and those who have more or less administrative roles, such as "executive producer, associate producer and additional production credits". He (ibid.) argues that the term "producer" is a "catchall term", which describes "a range of skills, responsibilities, and functions" (cf. Zak 2011: 173). These are subject to change depending on genre and subgenre, and the producer's relationship with the artist varies (Burgess 2013: 7). He exemplifies:

> For instance, a suitable producer for bands such as Metallica, Disturbed, or Slipknot is, in general, unlikely to be a good fit for pop artists like Katy Perry, Justin Bieber, or Britney Spears. Variances in approach are even more pronounced if we consider styles outside of popular music, such as traditional musics, classical, and jazz. (ibid.)

Even if Burgess' account lacks deeper theoretical discussion on genre distinctions and the categorization of music in general, his views seem valid as he approaches the

differences in the roles of producers through the examination of the functionality of a producer. This approach in part exceeds boundaries of genre and style. According to Burgess (2013: 7): "…the breadth of each genre means that genre alone is not the determinative factor; outwardly similar artists may require different functional classes of producer."

In his typology, Burgess' (2013: 9–19) identifies six different kinds of producers depending on their "functional interaction with the featured artist, the material, and the studio environment" (Burgess 2013: 8). The categories are rather broad and provide only rough generalizations for the reason that "No two producers or production teams have identical skill sets or ways of working, but commonalities do exist", as Burgess (ibid.) himself puts it.

The first category in Burgess' typology is that of *artist* (Burgess 2013: 9), which according to Burgess is the simplest and includes "artists who produce themselves". Moreover, he (2013: 9) notes that this is a "growing class of producers" resulting from the "democratizing effect of digital recording technology". This view resonates well with, for instance, Warner's (2003: 20) notion that "Much of the music that may finally be recorded and mixed in costly studios will have been created initially using digital systems in a less expensive environment – the now ubiquitous 'home studio', which has become virtually a prerequisite for any aspiring pop musician." Although the democratizing effect of inexpensive music production technology has been a subject of fiery debate especially in terms of industry gatekeeping and publishing, the argument that technology is available to more people, thus making it possible for more artists to produce themselves, must be held to be valid in the current circumstances. Additionally, for instance Paul Théberge (1997) discussed the consumerism of producers already two decades ago even before Internet-based distribution, laptop DAW's and streaming became norms in music production. The musicologist Andrew Blake (2010) has again provided more contemporary discussions on the ramifications for culture of the overall digitalization of music. For the typology of the artist-producer, Burgess (2013: 9) gives early examples like Les Paul to more recent artists like Gotye.

Burgess (2013: 9) designates the second category in his list of functional typologies *auteur*. In Burgess' (ibid.) thinking a producer who falls into this category is "audibly the primary creative force in the production". The auteur-producer could be compared to a film director, whose style is consistent in the majority of her/his work. Similarly, an auteur-producer would have a certain "sound" of her/his own. The importance of one's "sound", as I have mentioned before, is of course a wider discourse, and is connected in part to the development of studio technologies in the post-Tin Pan Alley era in the 1950's and 60's (Théberge 1997: 191–192).

Burgess (2013: 14) labels his third category *facilitative,* describing someone who is "often credited as a co-producer" and usually starts out as an engineer, a programmer, a musician or a co-writer. The role of the producer in this category is supportive, as the artist is the primary creative force in the record production process.

A significant number of producers see themselves as *collaborative* (Burgess 2013: 14) producers, who share the creative load but do not "attempt to control every detail of a recording; they bring an "extra band-member mentality to their productions" (Burgess 2013: 15). Burgess (ibid.) mentions George Martin as a producer in this category.

In Burgess's (2013: 15) typology, an *enablative* role is largely formed through activities not directly related to studio work. Instead, the role of an enablative producer would include "finding talent and material and creating conditions in which a successful recording could take place" (Burgess 2013: 15). Furthermore, Burgess (ibid.) discusses the similarities of the agency of this type of a producer with what we currently identify as an A&R person. Therefore, this producer type remains more or less historical as a clear producer type.

Another producer type close to the present-day A&R person in Burgess's (2013: 17) typology is the *consultative* producer. The consultative producer "performs the role of a mentor in a production, garnering loyalty from appropriate artists even though he or she may spend little time in the studio" (ibid.). This type of producer, with Rick Rubin as an example, has the function of bringing "fresh ears" to the studio and having a "big picture", but they are generally present in the studio more than an A&R person (ibid.).

As I have stated above and as Burgess also grants, his producer typology is a general and rough evaluation of the different kinds of producers that may be present in the vast number of existing production projects and settings. What must be noted as well is the fact that for the most part Burgess' producer types haven't become extinct over time. Types of producers that existed in the 1950's still exist and thus the change in the producer's role has been "more additive than evolutionary" (Moorefield 2005: xiv). Furthermore, even if a certain historical type of *producer* doesn't exist in present-day record production, the activities and responsibilities of the producer type haven't vanished but have rather been distributed among different agents, like, for example, A&R people. Optionally, producers with responsibilities that are no longer associated with the agency of the producer work under a formally different job title.

### 2.1.4 The Producer as the Leader of the Creative Collective

Earlier research has emphasized that in record production, like film production, the production of a pop song is also highly collective in nature and is a "direct result of the work of a number of different people" (Warner 2003: 34). The producer has been seen as the central figure of the collective in the production process. Consequently, the producer's role has often been compared to that of a film director as the film director is the "person who oversees the range of work required to produce a film and also makes the important artistic decisions" (ibid.). The idea that the music (or record) production process is fundamentally a collective process is almost paradigmatically shared by scholars of music production. In his influential article on the success of the pop song,

the sociologist Antoine Hennion (1983: 160) discusses the collective nature of the music production process. He (ibid.) states: "The *creative collective,* a team of professionals, who simultaneously take over all aspects of a popular song's production, has replaced the individual creator who composed songs which others would then play, disseminate, defend and criticize." According to Hennion (ibid.). the team disseminates among themselves the various roles "which the single creator once conjoined". The final product is a result of a "continuous exchange of views between the various members of the team; and is a fusion between musical objects and the needs of the public" (ibid.). Although not explicitly, Hennion's views reflect the change in record production in the twentieth century, which is understood to include all aspects of music making from composition to recording, or at least to regard the different phases of the entire process as affecting one another. Hennion's view of the collective having replaced the individual creator could, however, be seen as somewhat controversial as it raises the question of whether or not the compositional process has ever truly been individual in nature (see chapter 1.3.1.).

Zak (2001: 163) also describes the production of popular music as "intrinsically a collective process". He (ibid.) further emphasizes the idea that social relationships between the members of the creative team contribute to the end product of a recording (or production) process. Reasons for the very collective nature of music (or record) production, I would argue, lie in the fact the multifaceted process requires so many different kinds of skills not easily acquired or maintained by a single individual. The digital revolution, however, has further contributed to the nature of the creative collective. Ready-made and easy-to-use inexpensive technologies might have made the production process less collective. I will discuss this later in more detail.

## 2.1.5 The Producer as Mediator

Some scholars have dealt with the producer as a "mediator" and "intermediary". The mediating capacity of the producer can be understood either in terms of being in between the music industry and the audience or in between the various creative agents involved in the creative collective (cf. Hennion 1983) and production technologies. Naturally, these two perspectives intertwine to some extent, as the producer brings into the studio "the ear of the audience" (Hennion 1983: 161). Furthermore, in a later publication Hennion (1989) discusses the producer as an intermediary between production and consumption. The music sociologist Keith Negus (1996: 66) shares this view by stating that the "recording industry personnel act as intermediaries, constantly *mediating* the movement between artists, audiences and corporations". Negus's (ibid.) views are based on the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) views on cultural intermediaries. For me, the real value of Bourdieu's ideas, as far as the producer's role and agency is concerned, lies in the notion that the jobs and careers of cultural intermediaries "have not yet acquired the rigidity of the older bureaucratic professions" (Bourdieu 1986: 151). This is not to say that being a producer isn't a real job or a

profession. However, the work of a producer might remain less rigid than older bureaucratic professions due to the prevailing culture of the music industry (as well as of most creative industries). Muikku (2001: 35) supports this notion by discussing how intermediaries in the music industry obscure the formal divides of working life, which include boundaries between work and leisure, production and consumption, personal taste and professional judgement and the differences between artists, industry workers and audiences (ibid.). This group of professionals includes producers as well and is highlighted by the fact that label-based employment has become a rarity as present-day producers are essentially freelancers (Blake 2012: 195; 2009: 38; cf. Negus 1996: 63). All this might have an effect on the mediating capacity of the producer, as their loyalty might lie first and foremost with themselves or their own firms rather than with their record companies that are essentially customers.

The producer and record production scholar, Mike Howlett (2012), argues that the concept of "nexus" would describe the producer's role better than the often-used term "mediator". The reason for this is that for Howlett (2012) the term "mediator" “describes a technical process of transfer between media, such as from a performance to a recording as mediated by the microphones, the mixer and the recording medium.” The term "mediation" would thus better describe the role of the engineer, who deals with the relationship between the production technology and human agents. Howlett (2012), however, states that "the essential role [of the producer] is creative and involves choices". Therefore, the term "mediation" does not cover the myriad of the producer's key functions, which constitute "an act of creative interaction with all the factors affecting the resulting production" (Howlett 2012). The term "nexus" would thus better describe an active human agent, who is a bond or a link between "the creative inspiration of the artist, the technology of the recording studio, and the commercial aspirations of the record company" (ibid.). The idea of the producer as “nexus” arguably works at least equally well if not better than the terms “mediator” and “intermediary” when describing the role of the producer especially in the contemporary setting.

## 2.2 Sociocultural Aspects of the Producer’s Agency

Due to the fact that record production is inherently a social process, social and cultural aspects of the production have an effect on the producer’s agency. In addition to the immediate social interactions taking place in a specific production project, built-in sociocultural structures like ideas about the ontology of music, authorship and genre expectations influence the agency of the producer.

### 2.2.1 The Producer and the Music Industry

In addition to studio work, the producer has been seen as having a larger role in the music industry. As said, one of the most prominent ideas of the producer’s role in

earlier research, and perhaps in the public mind alike, is Hennion's (1983: 161) idea of the producer as someone who brings the "ear of the audience" into the studio. The idea here is that it is the producer's task to evaluate what future audiences would like to hear and, consequently, buy. This perspective highlights the role of the producer as an organizing force of the music industry that coordinates the creativity of the artist, production technology and the commercial aims of the record company (Howlett 2012).

Despite the fact that business indeed plays a role in the formation of the producer's agency, much of earlier research on the changed producer's role and agency has, nevertheless, concentrated on technological aspects. However important the development of music technology has been to the evolution of the producer's role (I will deal with this aspect later), the changes in the music industry and its financial models can also be understood as having contributed to the agency of the producer and to what kind of roles producers want to assume. The renowned record producer and record production scholar Richard James Burgess (2008) argues that as album budgets have shrunk and the producers' fees along with them, producers have had to come up with another source of income. Increasingly taking part in the compositional process and getting a percentage of the compositional credits provides another stream of income and thus contemporary producers have increasingly taken part in songwriting in their capacity as producers. This makes sense when considering the way in which songwriting royalties are governed and distributed in music (cf. Lessig 2004: 55–58). What has remained untouched by earlier research is a synthesis of economic and technological catalysts behind the change of the producer's agency. The question of what extent producers have started composing due to possibilities afforded by new technologies as opposed to the financial necessities created by shrinking producer fees remains unanswered. Much, however, depends on genre as a value structure.

### 2.2.2 The Producer and Genre

The role of the producer varies depending on the genre or style of music. This is true especially today as myriad different musical genres have emerged in the recent decades. Some genres, like for example hip hop and various subgenres of electronic music, have been considered producer-driven in nature (Moorefield 2005: 111). Dance music especially has been seen primarily as the "producers' rather than performers' media" in earlier research (Thornton 1995 :74). By contrast, other genres like rock or Western classical concert music feature the producer more or less in the background. When it comes to the producer's role and its differences between genres, the greater distinction could be viewed as the traditional differences in values between pop on the one hand and rock on the other. The key difference is the degree to which music is created in the studio and how much emphasis is put on traditional musicianship. (Warner 2003: 4.) Furthermore, the degree to which a style or tradition emphasizes recordings as opposed to performances can be seen as having a direct impact on the

role of the key person of record production, the producer. Without disputing earlier findings on the producer's role and genre differences, in the context of rock versus pop, the difference might only be due to the underlying authenticity/artificiality discourses (ibid.) and does not necessarily have much to do with what creative agents involved in a recording project actually do in the studio. A rock act might have to *appear* to embrace the values attached to rock music and avoid seeming "overproduced". In reality a rock album can be produced in a very pop-like fashion, with electronic instruments and digital technologies, as long as the image of the act remains as emphasizing traditional musicianship over technology.

Frith (2012: 207–221) has discussed the place of the producer in the discourse of rock as separate from other genres like pop and from styles in the larger category of African-American music. Interestingly in the light of the aims of the present study, he (Frith 2012: 207–208) compares the place of the producer in the public discourse of rock music to that of the producer in classical music, suggesting that the anonymity and invisibility of the producer in rock stems from the prevailing discourse of "authenticity". Frith (ibid.) compares his ideas to those of Symes's (2004) in his discussion of the idea that even if the history of rock as a discursive construction of the late 1960's was a record-based form (contrary to classical music), the ideal musical experience is live performance. Therefore, rock records in the public discourse are always discussed against the backdrop of 'authentic' live performance (Frith 2012: 208) as opposed to pop music, where the live performance would simulate the recorded performance (Frith 2012: 221). The underlying causes stem from rock ideology, in which commercialization and standardization are more or less values to be avoided, both of which are firmly associated with the role of the producer (Frith 2012: 201). As a result, the producer, a key person in the record production process, has remained more or less in the background in the discourse especially on rock criticism. This doesn't mean that a rock producer couldn't be as involved in the creative process as in the production of pop records. The absence of the producer of rock records, depending on the individual case, might only be manifested as a discourse, which does not necessarily very accurately reflect the reality of the processes taking place in the studio during production. Frith (2012: 221) sums up this perspective coherently:

> In this respect rock record producers are seen as both more significant for rock as an art form than producers in jazz, folk or classical music, but less important for rock as a cultural project than producers in pop or dance music. The producer was both obdurately present in the music and readily ignored in the way that music was discussed.

Regardless of the fact that the producer's role varies sometimes even to a great extent depending on genre, I would assert that the producer is equally important in every genre, albeit in a different manner. The presence or absence of the producer, I would say, is a part of the public image of a genre generated through discourses related

to the genre, which again are constructed through the value structures associated with the genre.

## 2.2.3 The Producer in Classical Music

Most previous literature on record production concentrates on the production of popular music. Consequently, the role of the classical record producer has not been studied to nearly the same extent. This is one of the reasons I have chosen a classical production project and a classical producer as one of my case studies.

According to the musicologist and music theorist Arved Ashby (2010: 227): "Two things that differentiate a recording of classical music from one of popular music are their conceptions of the composition (or song) being documented, and their attitudes toward recording as it might relate to writing music." This notion of Ashby's sheds some light on the fact that studies on the production of classical musical records in the past have tended to lean towards philosophical considerations and have often concentrated on the ramifications cast upon the ontology of the musical "work" by recording technology and much less on the role of technological processes in the aesthetic changes of the music. The reason behind this might also lie in Ashby's (2010: 22) notion that: "recording has had less an aesthetic influence on classical-musical practices than an ontological effect. In other words, it has helped shape and define the sort of thing that music is." Popular music in the 21st century again is unthinkable without electronic technology (Théberge 2001: 3). This is arguably not true of most classical music, although some conventions and stylistic features in classical musical performance practices, like for example the violin vibrato, can be seen as results of recording technologies (see Katz 2010: 94–108).

In previous literature, the process of the production of classical records has been considered a creative process only to limited degree, if at all. As a result, creativity, when considered as bringing novelty to the domain, which is the collection of existing works, has not been considered a part of this process. This could be seen as a direct result of the traditional ontological considerations in classical music: the music is commonly regarded as being the score, the ideal represented by the abstract parameters of Western notation and therefore creativity occurs mainly in the compositional process[1]. Agents in the classical musical realm have considered recorded classical music "a photolike documentation of an object or event (not a process, performance, or communication) and as a point (not a span) in time" (Ashby 2010: 227). Therefore, as, for example, the music scholar Peter Johnson (2010: 37) has noted, recording in the realm of classical music aims at using technology "to conceal its presence, to create a naturalistic simulation of live performance." Obviously, Ashby and Johnson alike refer

[1] This conception prevails especially when a work is understood as the score and creativity is understood in Csikszentmihalyian (1997) terms as making a contribution to the domain of existing works. (cf. McIntyre 2008)

to traditional concert music stemming from the core of the Western canon (and perhaps more accurately from the Romantic ideals of the 18th and 19th centuries) having to be aware of 20th century stylistic categories like, for instance, musique concrète, experimental avant garde and perhaps some subcategories of minimalism, which are all styles predicated on the use of audio recording technologies. Despite these exceptions, the relationship between classical music and recording technologies has not been subject to the same scholarly interrogation as popular music and its associated recording technologies.

In addition to the effects of recording technologies on the ontology of the musical work and the small amount of studies concentrating on the aesthetic effects of recording technology on classical musical performance practices, there exists a body of scholarly writing about "the ways in which the phonograph has transformed the conditions of listening to [classical] music" (Symes 2004: 60). He (ibid.) continues admitting that:

> the nature of recorded sound and its underlying discourses have not been subjected to the same degree of analysis. The neglect is particularly pronounced in the area of classical music, which has been insulated from those developments in cultural studies that have shed light on the way recording has transformed the nature of popular music.

Symes (2004: 60) goes on to argue that the reason behind this neglect lies in the cultural ethos embedded in the analysis of classical music. This ethos according to Symes (ibid.) has avoided "contextual questions relating to music and the technology in its reproduction". The ethos might be a result of the classical musicians' rejection of recording technologies due to their fear of the undermining of performed music. The general public, however, as Symes (ibid.) states, did embrace the phonograph. This dichotomy of classical musicians on one hand rejecting and the listeners of classical music on the other embracing recording and reproduction technologies of music might be the fundamental reason for the fact that scholarly work on classical music and recording technologies has concentrated on the listening experience, not the production process.

The limited amount of research concentrated on the production of classical musical records and the agents involved in the production processes of classical records has noted that the practices of sound recording and engineering have evolved around two opposite discourses. The first emphasizes realism and asserts that recordings should mimic the sound of a real concert hall as accurately as possible. When one listens to her/his record at home, one should be taken into the "best seat of the house". The second emphasizes idealism and suggests that recorded music should be a medium in its own right and act as an alternative aural landscape to the situation of a live concert. (Symes 2004: 86–87.) The epitomizing example of the latter discourse, discussed extensively by the musicologist Markus Mantere (2006: 87–88), is its most prominent

advocate Glenn Gould's decision to retreat from live performances altogether and concentrate on producing polished performances in the recorded format instead (see also Philip 2004: 60). For Gould recording technology was a liberator from the constraints of a live performance, from aesthetic-historical contexts and the canons and traditions associated with them (Mantere 2006: 177). Furthermore, recording technology gave Gould the opportunity to construct a perfect interpretation of a musical piece (Mantere 2006: 95–96). Gould's striving for perfection was naturally not a unique aim in itself, but rather an ultimate example of a general shift from "the age-old quest for fidelity [to the live performance] into a modern quest for perfection" (Horning 2013: 172). Nevertheless, the number of deeper detailed scholarly accounts on the production process of classical records and the role of the producer and/or other production personnel is somewhat limited.

Some scholarly writings, like Simon Frith's chapter of *Performing Rites* (1996: 226–337), refer to memoirs of classical record producers and recording artists as they address larger issues that touch upon recording technology and music. Studies like these, however, remain more or less anecdotal and philosophical accounts of what producers aim for, how they see their roles and what they endeavor to achieve in their production work in terms of the sonic end product. These questions, again, touch upon the question of the ontology of the work and the performance, like, for instance, in the case of Glenn Gould (Frith 1996: 227), and leave out detailed first-hand analysis of the producer's actions and interactions during the production of a record.

Blake (2012) in his book chapter on Suvi Raj Grubb's production work comes closer to an analysis of the producer's role in the production of classical records. Blake (Blake 2012: 195) describes how the producer mediates the "relationship between the score, the performing artists and the processes and technologies of recording". Concrete activities including in this mediation include, for example, making sure that the recording does not contain poor intonation (Blake 2012: 201; 2009: 39) or clear mistakes, as in the musicians playing something not written in the score, and making sound-related requests to the engineer (Blake 2009: 39). Despite the argument that recording technologies have affected the aesthetics of classical music to some extent (cf. Katz 2010), earlier research has emphasized that the process of classical record making has been dominated by the ideal of the attempt to recreate the best seat of the concert hall into the home of the listener. According to Symes (2004: 62):

> Classical records, by and large, attempt to create a concert hall into a domestic environment and aim to make the best seat of the house *the best seat of the house* [original emphasis] – a telling string of words in this connection, encapsulating the keystone discourse governing classical recording, that only a few have had the temerity to challenge.

This underlying principle can be understood as a sociocultural structure, a value that governs the actions and interactions of the agents involved in the production

process, including the producer. However, classical recording can be understood as having developed a new ideal. Due to the possibilities afforded by music production technologies, the aim of classical recording in earlier research has been understood as aiming at something better than the best seat of a venue during a live concert. In her historical account of the change of studio and recording culture, Susan Schmidt Horning (2013) has concluded that the production of classical music records drifted away from the attempt to recreate the original live-experience towards a more accurate representation of the score. She (Horning 2013: 171) writes:

> Renowned conductor Leopold Stokowski, who recognized the audio engineer's vital role in the sound of his 1930's broadcasts, attributed equally transformative powers to recording engineers: "The first step is to make recorded music exactly like the original," he declared. "The next is to surpass the original."

Horning (2013: 171–172) further expands on this view explaining how faithfulness to the original score had "long since given way to splicing, editing, re-editing and multiple micing" in the production of classical musical records. She argues that this change led professionals in the classical music industry to re-evaluate the amount of credit that should be given to the performing artist with respect to the credit given to the "combined efforts of the recording director, recording engineers and tape editor." (ibid.) According to Horning (2013: 171) this change took place in classical music in the 1960's in a similar manner to how it took place in the realm of popular music and it naturally resulted in a change in the agency of production personnel. By 1960, the recording engineer was considered "the sound-man artist" who was "fast approaching the importance of the orchestra director in attaining artistic results". Similarly, the musicologist Robert Philip (2004: 218) discusses how producers in classical music would either edit the performance to exceed the competence of a band or to utilize recording techniques to take the overall sound of a recording far beyond what is possible at the recording venue (Philip 2004: 50). This conclusion is surely accurate when examining the situation from within the recording industry and within the creative collective of the record production process. Audiences, nevertheless, I would argue, realize the importance of the role of recording personnel to a much lesser degree in classical than in popular music, where engineers and producers are frequently visible in the mainstream media and are lifted to the status of an artist in the general discourse.

In his historical account of the classical recording practices in Sweden between 1925 and 1983, the musicologist Toivo Burlin (2008) discusses the producer as a specific job title. According to him (Burlin 2008: 249) the job title of "producer" didn't even exist in the classical music recording industry in Sweden in the 1940's. Rather, the person who today would be called the producer was called the "recording director" (Swe. *Inspelningsledare*) "who would correspond to both the producer and the technician, like the music technicians of the radio some moons later" (Burlin 2008: 249, translated from the original Swedish by the author). This notion of Burlin's (ibid.)

also reveals some regional differences.

A quote from Ashby (2010: 227) summarizes the difference between the production of classical and popular music: "Alan Parsons remarks on the convergence of the studio engineer's job with that of the popular musician: 'They are both expected to have the skills of one another, and there are not many musicians around who don't know every last detail about recording techniques'." Even if this remark in my opinion exaggerates the reality of the situation to some extent, it does demonstrate the differences between the classical and the popular. With no intentions of underestimating the knowledge and knowhow of classical musicians, I would contend that most classical musicians do not have sufficient technological knowhow, nor are they by and large interested in recording technology to the extent that they would be able to produce records without the help of a producer and/or an engineer. Furthermore, Ashby (2010: 226) discusses how classical and popular record makers have different conceptions of composition and how their "attitudes toward recording as it might relate to writing music" differ (ibid.). In popular music, the composition process has at least from the 1950's onwards been more or less intertwined with the studio process to the point where the studio has been used as a compositional tool (see e.g. Moorefield 2005), whereas in classical concert music the compositional process and the recording process have been regarded as two separate processes to the extent that a recording of a piece is understood as "just a picture of the score taken by somebody" (Ashby 2010: 226). Obvious exceptions include the aforementioned musique concrète and other contemporary classical music styles like, for instance, Philip Glass's work. As I have shown in this section, much of the previous research on the producer's role has had a technological component to it.

## 2.3 The Producer's Agency and Technology

As the record production process is inherently a technological process, much of earlier research on the producer's role and agency focus on music technology and how its development has influenced the producer. Warner (2003: 33) has neatly summarized the connection between the producer and music technology: "A fundamental aspect of the relationship between technology and pop music is embodied in the record producer, who oversees the production process in the recording studio." One could, however, argue that the relationship between pop music and technology is embodied in the listener. Here, I nevertheless focus on the production process of musical records and in this process Warner's statement is at the least very close to the truth.

### 2.3.1 Technological Change and the Producer's Agency

Earlier historical approaches emphasize that the role of the producer mirrors the general ideological changes of the record production process. Moorefield (2005: xiii–xiv) argues that due to the practical and ideological shift from craft to art, from creating

an "illusion of reality" to producing a "reality of illusion", which took place in record production in the 1950’s and 1960’s, the producer became an *auteur* instead of a technician. In practice, this means that prior to the 1950's the aim of record production was to record and capture a musical performance and reproduce the live-event whereas after the shift record production became an art form in its own right (e.g. Fikentscher 2003: 293).

The question of whether or not the change was driven exclusively by technological change (Zak 2001: 173; Moorefield 2000: xiii) or if the change of studio technology was in fact a result of this ideological change remains a topic of the technological determinism versus voluntarism debate, which I am not going to address in the present study. It can nevertheless be stated, in the words of the musicologist Yrjö Heinonen (2015: 34), that these processes were *interdependent*. This process resulted in the promotion of producers, and to some extent recording engineers, from technicians to artists (e.g. Moorefield 2005: xiv). Furthermore, it cannot be a coincidence that this shift happened at a time when magnetic tape, a medium that enabled editing to a far greater extent than earlier recording media, started to become the standard recording medium and multi-tracking the standard method of production. Philip (2004: 50) argues that tape recording instigated the “era of the record producer” spearheaded by the classical producer Walter Legge. Théberge (1997: 217) argues: “The multitrack tape recorder was not simply a new device for the recording or layering of sound, or even for the composition of music; it was part of a larger “social technology” and, as such, played a role in the entire reorganization of production in popular music.” The key feature of the magnetic tape was its “increased flexibility in editing” (Kealy 1974: 44). This gave more power to studio engineers and producers and while lowering production costs, led to, as said, producers and engineers experimenting with the new technology to create new sounds (Théberge 2001: 9). In earlier research, the emergence of electronic technologies in general is understood as a key innovation not only in the empowerment of the producer (and engineer) but as a key in the development of making record production an artform. After all, early acoustic sound recording offered only limited opportunities for sound manipulation or even recording (Horning 2013: 30).

As said, the consensus among earlier research seems to be that figures like Phil Spector and George Martin were the earliest producers with artistic roles. Théberge (1997: 192) argues that Spector was the first producer who was recognized for his own unique sound. This sound came to be known as the “Spector Sound” or the “wall of sound” (ibid.). He further states that this change is connected to an emergence of the “idea of a distinct and recognizable "sound” because the expression gives semantic weight to a change that was much more fundamental in nature.” (ibid.) In a similar manner, Horning (2013: 138) dates “the Sound” assuming greater importance “in terms of quality as well as individuality” to the 1950’s and attributes it to the development of new recording technologies such as the magnetic tape, which improved the fidelity of recording and enabled greater manipulation of sound after recording.

Moorefield (2005: 9–10) discusses Spector as the first artist producer in a similar manner. He sees that the change in the producer's role was driven by the developing music production technologies and, perhaps more importantly, the new approaches which the emerging independent record companies took to the recording medium (cf. Théberge 1997: 192; see also Horning 2013). The importance of having one's own "sound" also highlights a specific difference between popular music and classical music which can also be understood as the fundamental difference between a musical tradition predating the emergence of recording technologies and a musical tradition emerging from the development of recording technologies; in classical music the faithful interpretation of the written score, which predated record production by centuries, is of utmost importance, whereas in popular music timbre (sound) and rhythm are the most important musical elements and the recording of a song has the same function as the score in Western classical music (Moorefield 2005: xiv). For me, Moorefield's conception is fundamentally too deterministic (although I think it is possible that his articulation of the issue only appears deterministic for reasons related to the clarity of his writing style). I would rather approach it through the concept of affordance. The emergence of electronic technologies afforded music makers new kinds of sounds which especially producers in popular music took advantage of (Horning 2013: 54). The digital revolution with synthesizers and vast sound banks can be understood as having finalized the opportunities to produce music based on sound as "Any Sound you can Imagine" (Théberge 1997) became possible.

### 2.3.2 The Producer and the Digital Revolution

The importance of sound and the producer's involvement in its creation after the digital revolution is further discussed by Moorefield (2005: 73) in his discussion of how the producer Trent Reznor spends a great deal of time sampling and creating sounds. This must be understood as a consequence of an opportunity afforded by the digital revolution. When synthesizers and samplers became central in the production process, the sheer volume of available sounds expanded vastly. This again led to more time spent on searching for, experimenting with and creating sounds instead of composing in traditional terms. This in my view has accelerated the shift from traditional Western compositional activities to sound-based musical activities in the creative process.

The digital revolution is sometimes thought to have instigated a change away from the collectiveness of music production towards a more individual production mode. The digital revolution, namely the technologies of MIDI and the digital audio workstation (DAW), have contributed to the emergence of the home studio, which according to the popular music and music technology scholar Timothy Warner, has become "virtually a prerequisite for any aspiring pop musician" (Warner 2003: 20). This change, I would argue, has made anyone who makes music a kind of a producer, as it has contributed to the "breakdown of the amateur/professional status in the production process" (ibid.).

The ethnomusicologist Alan Williams (2012) has argued that, due to the graphic display, technological secrets of production methods have revealed themselves. Therefore, musicians have been empowered and they might notice the irrelevance of producers and engineers. When musicians gain access to the means of production and learn how to use them, the music production process potentially becomes less collective and more an individual effort of the musician or artist. Williams's argument makes sense. After all, the arrange screen in a digital music production setting is a direct metaphor for a visual musical score, and the tradition of presenting music in a visual format with a horizontal timeline dates back hundreds of years. Williams's finding is interesting for the reason that it brings up an opposite perspective on how music technology can alter the producer's role. If electrification and multi-tracking augmented the producer's creative powers due to the possibilities they offered, visual screens now have the capacity to diminish the producer's agency by empowering others. This change however, I would argue, has not slowed down the rate at which producers become famous for their collective work with artists and musicians. Perhaps this change can be understood as having steered attention away from the technical knowledge of *how* sound can be recorded, edited, mixed and mastered, traditionally attributed to the producer and the engineer, and drawn more attention to the importance of *what* to do with that knowledge, i.e. aesthetic judgment. Consequently, a competent contemporary producer or engineer who musicians want to work with collectively would work on the musical content to an even greater degree than before the digital revolution. Furthermore, the scholar Chris Gibson (2005: 205) has argued that, despite the sweeping changes in studio technology and the fact that theoretically everyone has access to the means of production, "high-level mastering and post-production facilities" have survived and, I would argue, become even more important.

## 2.4 The Producer's Agency and the Studio

In addition to music technologies, the development of the physical and cultural space of the production studio as the epicenter and stage of music (record) production is relevant from the perspective of the producer's agency. Sometime it is hard to discern studios from music technology as the studio is more than just a space. It is intrinsically a technological environment. Some research on issues concerning studio space and music production has nevertheless been done and they have always had either explicit or implicit connections to the producer's agency.

### 2.4.1 Historical Narrative

Horning (2013) has provided perhaps the most comprehensive historical account of the evolution of the recording studio. The important perspective on the producer's agency here is the way studio development mirrored job titles and new jobs. For example, according to Horning (2013: 16) in the early days of sound recording the agent

responsible for recording was a "recordist". This mirrors the aim of record production at the time, which was to record the sounds that musicians produced. Especially in the era of acoustic recording, the expertise of a recordist in terms of the studio space lay in the skill of situating the musician at the right distance from the recording horn. According to Horning (2013: 29–30), the nature of recording studios in the early days

> ranged from the elaborately equipped Edison Recording Laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey, with more than a hundred different recording horns of various sizes and shapes, to Gennett's Indiana operation, a single-story shed nestled among factory buildings and railroad tracks, equipped with comparatively rudimentary recording technology and expertise.

The electrification of the studio was a key development when it comes to the evolution of musical styles (Horning 2013: 54) and therefore the producer's agency. Despite the fact that this first revolution in recording came from outside the commercial record business (ibid.), when it comes to studio personnel, the electrification of the studio transformed the recordist's job "from a craft-based endeavor reliant on empirical knowledge to an engineering skill, although it did not do away with the need for tacit knowledge and artistic sensibility" (Horning 2013: 55). In a way, it professionalized the recording process and elevated the "recordist" to "recording engineer" eventually resulting in the establishment of the "Audio Engineering Society" (Horning 2013: 76).

This process can be understood as the first step of the elevation of studio personnel from pure reproducers of a live performance towards something more. Further innovations, like the malleable magnetic tape, advanced this development. However, to understand the nature of contemporary record (or music) production, one must understand the emergence of multi-tracking and the rise of the independent studio.

Even if she doesn't discuss the producer explicitly, Horning's findings are important when discussing the producer's agency and the studio space in two different ways. Firstly, her account of studio history shows how difficult it is to distinguish between the recording (or production) studio and music technology. They are interdependent and changes in one easily affect changes in the other. Secondly, her account exemplifies the ways in which changes in studio technology and the studio environment affect job titles and how studio work is conceptualized. The elevation of the recordist to recording engineer may work as a point of reference when discussing similar changes connected to, for instance, the home studio and digital technologies.

### 2.4.2 The Independent Studio

The shift to independent studios becoming the norm of the music production culture is key in understanding the agency of the contemporary producer. Horning (2013: 208–209) has argued that the changes that multi-tracking brought in record production in

the 1960's "instigated sweeping changes in studio design". It opened up a new realm of possibilities in the chase for sound, and the importance of the artistic decision-making of engineers and producers increased (Horning 2013: 204). The traces of this change can be seen in research that discusses how producers themselves see technology as secondary to creative musical ideas (Martin 2014: 232), as producers and engineers have assumed artistic agencies. It is difficult to know, however, whether it was the change in the producer's agency that changed studio design or the other way around. Technological change can nevertheless be seen as a common catalyst; the possibilities afforded by multi-tracking resulted in more time spent in the studio. This posed new requirements for the studio as a space. According to Horning (2013: 208), artists begun to want surroundings more "conducive to creativity" as people started to spend "weeks and months in the studio rather than hours or days". More time spent in the studio meant that the studio had to be a place where people had the right "vibe" and the surroundings the right "feel" (Horning 2013: 209). Consequently, interior design made studios more like living rooms and less like production facilities and artists started to build their own home studios or locating to exotic "resort" studios to record. (ibid.). As a result of this change, the independent studio has remained the default venue of record (or music) production. What we see here is an essential change in the studio as a cultural space. What started out as a tinkerer's workshop evolved into an industrial production facility and ultimately into a home-like environment. What seems to be missing from this body of research is deeper analysis on the relationship between changes in the studio as a cultural space and the way in which it is interconnected to the agency of producers, how they spend their time in the studio and how longer times spent in the studio affect the social relationship between the producer and other creative parties. This is one gap that I aim to fill with the present study.

### 2.4.3 The Home Studio

Based on earlier research, the rise of the independent studio and its underlying values (leisure, working off-the-clock) can be understood as having laid a path to the emergence of the home studio. Despite the home studio in one form or another becoming perhaps the most common contemporary studio model there exists fairly little research on the topic. Exceptions do exist (e.g. Kaloterakis 2013).

Contrary to a general public understanding, the home studio is not a very recent invention nor is it exclusively connected to the digital revolution. As Horning (2013: 209) has argued, producers and artists started building project studios in their homes already in the 1970's. Up until the digital revolution, however, it was possible only for prominent individuals who could afford a "wide range of quality equipment to rival that of the commercial studios" (Théberge 1997: 232) as studio equipment was rather expensive and spaces with good acoustics were not cheap either. The emergence of MIDI sequencing, which offered the possibility to pre-produce music at home without the loss of audio fidelity, changed the nature of the home studio and resulted in the

integration of the home studio and the professional studio. (Théberge 1997: 232.) The emergence of the DAW finalized the home studio's possibility to produce music that may rival the quality of commercial studios. In addition to the fact that home studios provide the opportunity to avoid paying rent to the studio owner, its development can also be seen as a phase in the continuum of the development of the independent studio. Again, there is a shortage of research on the interesting question of how home studios as cultural spaces are connected to the producer's agency. By becoming, to some extent, a requirement for all pop musicians (Warner 2003: 20), the home studio in a way completes this development by, instead of making the studio a living room, literally bringing the studio into the living room. However, the home does not always offer the best conditions for music production even if it features the latest production technologies and the best comfort; the home as a space entails values that do not necessarily go hand in hand with the idea of working (see Auvinen 2016; 2017). Moreover, since a home is not usually designed as a recording studio, acoustic shortcomings of the physical space might affect audio recording and mixing in undesirable ways. This is naturally a greater problem in some genres than in others. The evolution of the home studio, despite the connecting values opposed to those that are associated with work, is however in line with the general fusion of work and leisure associated with the music industry (Muikku 2001: 35).

### 2.4.4 The Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)

The latest shift in the development of music technology is that of the digital revolution. In the past 15–20 years, the digital revolution that started in the 1980's has perhaps affected the consumption of music rather than production, even though it has had an effect on where production and consumption intertwine (I will discuss this in chapters 3 and 5).

The digital revolution has nevertheless been profound. Taylor (2001: 3) argues that "The advent of digital technology in the early 1980's marks the beginning of what may be the most fundamental change in the history of Western music since the invention of music notation in the ninth century". This rather bold argument is most convincing when viewed from the perspective of music production. Inexpensive, portable and immaterial production technologies, such as laptops and software, have revolutionized music production. As digital audio production became the norm in the industry (Théberge 1997: 60), the digital audio workstation (DAW) with its graphic display is today the epicenter of the production process (see also Blake 2010: 55). In a way the studio can now be moved into the digital space entirely, especially in genres like, for example, EDM that do not require recording acoustic sound sources. Despite the growing number of studies on the DAW (e.g. Marrington 2011; Kaloterakis 2013; Blake 2010) questions related to the digital production space and the producer's agency remain untouched. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that despite the contemporary

possibility to produce music purely in the digital space, a physical studio space in one form or another has remained vital to the production process of musical records.

### 2.4.5 The Studio as an Instrument

The studio as a musical instrument is another way of conceptualizing the studio as a cultural space and the producer’s agency. A good example of a producer using the studio in a new way and thus contributing to the producer's agency is Brian Eno, who in earlier research has been considered one of the pioneers in the use of "the studio as a full-fledged musical instrument" (Moorefield 2005: 53). What is remarkable about this notion is the fact that Eno developed his production practices in the 1970's, well before the full bloom of the digital revolution. Furthermore, Eno was among the first to consistently use the studio as a compositional tool, as a space where composition happens (Moorefield 2005: 53–54). Earlier research has also viewed George Martin and his pioneering studio work on The Beatles’ *Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Moorefield 2005: 43) in a similar manner. In the production of many contemporary pop styles, this is more or less a premise or an axiom perhaps even to the extent that the “instrumentness” of the studio and the aspects it might bring up in relation to the studio as a cultural space and the producer’s agency has not been studied to a great extent. I would nevertheless argue that conceptualizing the studio space as an instrument strengthens the producer’s creative agency, given that the producer is the key actor in the studio.

### 2.4.6 Studio Culture and the Producer

As I have discussed before, culturally the studio has shifted from being a “cold” and “institutional” production facility to a homelike space before eventually literally moving to the home (Horning 2013: 208–209). The shift has been a result of technological changes connected to creative desires, economic opportunities, and all these different stages are embedded with different cultural values. Despite changes in studio design, some general conceptions of the studio as a cultural space remain.

Eliot Bates (2012) has discussed what studios do to the social settings and interactions taking place in the music production process. Bates (ibid.) to some extent criticizes earlier remarks which have understood studios as “laboratories” (Hennion 1989: 406–407), “assembly lines and workshops” (Kealy 1982) and “isolated non-places” (Théberge 2004). He (Bates 2012) argues that rather than every studio producing the same product (given that the creative agents are the same), studios are unique and leave their mark on the product. Furthermore, studios shape social interactions, cultivate new practices and might become places where artists specifically want to go to produce their music and they might become sites of pilgrimage (ibid.). These views suggest that studios are not merely production facilities, like for example factories, but have deep cultural meanings embedded into them.

While I find Bates's (2012) arguments valid to a great extent, one might ask whether or not musicians actually want to go to a certain studio for the studio's sake or if they want to go to the studio because a specific producer works in it. This is an especially crucial question when discussing studios other than those with cult reputations like, for example, Abbey Road or Motown. Furthermore, when producers have become consumers of technology, as Théberge (1997: 200) suggests, the question can be raised: how do studios differ from one another if everyone ends up buying the same computers, gadgets, software synthesizers, sample packages and production technologies that are marketed to them? Then, the cultural nature of each studio would be formed predominantly through the interactions of the people working in it (and perhaps on it) rather than the studio itself. I would argue that the recording/editing software ProTools and Logic Pro are good examples of a sort of a standardization process, as they have become a somewhat standard platform for any studio. Hence, the biggest cultural differences between studios in the contemporary setting stem from differences between acoustic spaces like concert halls and churches, professional production studios built for that purpose and home studios that are studios only in their secondary purpose.

## 2.5 The Producer in the Finnish Context

Despite the increasingly international nature of record (or music) production and the point that developmental trends in record production are somewhat similar regardless of country (at least in the Western context), it is appropriate to discuss some of the essential earlier research on the producer in the Finnish context as my research subjects are Finnish and work predominantly in Finland. As I have said before, the amount of scholarly literature on the producer's agency is comparatively small overall. Therefore, the amount of research in small Finland is even smaller. Furthermore, Finnish research specifically on studio production has often been a part of larger accounts of the music industry.

### 2.5.1 General Study on the Finnish Music Industry

The scholar and author Pekka Oesch (1998) has written about the structure, the employment and the economy of the Finnish music industry touching upon music production as well. The ethnomusicologist Pekka Gronow has conducted extensive research on the history of record production both from a general perspective (e.g. 1970; 1996) and in the Finnish context (1967; 1995; 1981). His research is typically historically oriented and deals with large structural questions through the analysis of quantitative data. He has nevertheless also employed ethnomusicological approaches (e.g. Gronow 1996). The musicologist Paavo Korvenpää (2005) has dealt with the use

of studio technology in the production of the Finnish iskelmä[2] tradition between 1960 and 1980. Although historical in its approach, his analysis between technology and agency shares some commonalities with my research.

Muikku (2001) has also discussed Finnish popular musical records from a historical perspective. He entertains the very plausible idea of the Finnish music industry developing rather late compared, for example, to its American and British counterparts. According to Muikku (2001: 317) the Finnish recording industry was "completely dependent" on foreign companies, and record production in Finland can be understood as having started only after the Second World War, which ended in 1945. The fact that record production in Finland began at such a late time has naturally some ramifications for the formation of the roles and agencies of Finnish producers and other actors involved in the production process. Despite the late bloom of the Finnish music industry, Muikku's (1988) ethnographic study on record production in Finland offers insights into the role and agency of the producer in Finland.

### 2.5.2 The Producer in the Finnish Context

Muikku (2001: 308) has argued that the concept of the "producer" only emerged in Finland "during the multi-tracking era in the 1970's", which is significantly later than in the American or the British context. Prior to this, agents called "arrangers" or "conductors" took care of hiring suitable musicians and making the proper arrangements both musically and practically (ibid.). Only the new producer generation of the 1970's started to think in terms of isolated tracks and in terms of sounds rather than notated arrangements. Consequently, the philosophical shift from the "reality of illusion" to the "illusion of reality", which had taken place at least in the United States and Britain in the 1950's and 1960's (cf. Moorefield 2005; Heinonen 2015), took place in Finland through the new producer generation in the 1970's.

The fact that record production in Finland developed rather late compared to its international counterparts could be attributed to the fact that industrialization in Finland happened relatively late in general. Furthermore, the Second World War can be understood as having slowed down the progress of activities related to culture and the arts in general. However, this relatively late shift in producer culture can nevertheless be understood in terms of genre conventions. A significant portion of produced records in Finland especially before the 1970's fell under the "iskelmä" genre. Active producers, who took part in shaping the musical content, emerged from the rock-genre, which didn't fully take off in Finland prior to the 1970's (Muikku 2001: 310). This notion is highlighted by the fact that Korvenmaa (2005), who specifically deals with the production process and technologies used in the production records in the iskelmä-genre in Finland during the 1960's through the 1980's, doesn't

[2] Iskelmä is a style of popular music typical in the Finnish context. An international counterpart would be the German schlager.

discuss the producer's role in the production process. As late as the 1970's, the conductor/arranger acted as the producer and the role of the producer in its contemporary meaning emerged in iskelmä productions as late as the 1980's (Korvenmaa 2005: 23–24). This is the case despite the general conception that an important aspect of the relationship between technology and popular music in the studio is embodied in the producer (Warner 2003: 33). Korvenmaa (2005: 180) nevertheless discusses recording engineers who were also musicians and who clearly had an aesthetic input and a creative role with respect to the sonic result of record production. According to Korvenmaa (ibid.)

> Laasanen [a Finnish musician and recording engineer] is a good example of how the role of the recording engineer expanded through the increasing use of technology. In the 1980's, the recording engineer became also a programmer who used drum machines, sequencers and mixing consoles equipped with automatic mixing capacities. [translated from the original Finnish by the author.]

Here Korvenmaa explicitly mentions activities which are commonly associated with the role of the producer especially in contemporary record (or music) production. In other words, a producer can be seen as having been part of the production process even if the agent that acted as one was not called a producer. This opens up a perspective on record (or music) production in general; a certain set of activities always exists in the production process of musical records. These activities, however, are distributed amongst the creative agents involved differently at different times. Furthermore, these agents go by various names at separate times and in separate genres.

Despite the late bloom of the Finnish producer, Muikku (1988: 140) offers an early and deep insight into the role and agency of the producer in Finland. He even distinguishes between the authoritarian rock producer, whose responsibilities were limited to studio work and mixing, and an iskelmä producer, whose activities started with selecting songs for the artist, continued with acting as a dictator in the studio and ended only when the marketing of a record was stopped. Here we see, again, a distinction between producers of different genres, which could to some extent be brought back to Burgess's (2013) producer typologies. Nevertheless, the early timing of Muikku's research indicates that producers in Finland have existed for decades. Furthermore, their roles and agencies resemble their international counterparts, at least when it comes to rock production. Contemporary research here will nevertheless update understanding of the producer's agency in the Finnish context and bring it into the 21st century. Hopefully it will also find a connection with current international counterparts.

## 2.6 In Conclusion: Why does this Study Matter?

Earlier study on the role and agency of the record producer provides a solid base and a rich context for any subsequent research, including this study. In this chapter, I have discussed previous research on the record (or music) producer's role and agency, music technology and the studio. I have included what I see as relevant from the perspective of my present research questions and aims. My contribution to this body of research aims at considering some aspects that seem to be missing from the research field. How technological practices construct the creative agency of the producer has not been studied by ethnographic means before. Earlier studies of this question rely mainly on interviews (e.g. Martin 2014). When they deal with technological practice, they do not concentrate on the producer's agency specifically (e.g. Slater 2015), or if they focus on the producer, they don't concentrate specifically on technological practices (Muikku 1988). Furthermore, how the studio as a cultural space influences the formation of the producer's agency has not previously been studied with deeper ethnographic methods. Research on this topic is limited to how the producer uses the studio (e.g. Moorefield 2005; Hennion 1989; Théberge 2004; Kealy 1982) and not how the studio might influence the producer. Furthermore, since Hennion (1983;1989), earlier ethnographic studies have not concentrated specifically on the producer's agency. I would nevertheless argue that my research questions require an ethnographic perspective. My research is here to fill these gaps in the field of producer research. More modest novelties provided by this research include the fact that I compare and contrast the agency formations of three very different producers, one of them being a producer of classical music. To my knowledge, the creative agency of a classical producer has never been studied from an ethnographic perspective before.

Even if record production as a process and the producer as an agent in that process are fairly recent phenomena from a grand historical perspective, compared to, for example, narratives of Western music in general, certain kinds of producer canons have already been established. What troubles me most about the earlier research on the role of the producer is that the vast majority of it seems to be rather unquestioning of what I call canonical successions. What I mean by this is that many of the accounts written on the work of specific producers have tended to concentrate on famous and successful producers as "extraordinary figures" (Moorefield 2005: xiii). This kind of research might resonate more widely with a wider audience from a cultural perspective. For me, however, one of the duties of scholarly research is to question the established canons which exist in the collective minds of the public and which have more or less been created, or at least unintentionally supported, by mainstream media and its narratives.

It is natural that writings on well-established star-producers are more interesting to the general public than writings on producers at the grassroots level, who are at the beginning of their careers or who lack a public reputation for other reasons. Furthermore, it is understandable that research material on famous names is more readily accessible; published interviews and released musical material are all open for

analysis and interpretation. This viewpoint is stressed when considering how hard it is to gain access to creative processes as an observer (Bennett 2011). I do, however, not intend to suggest that studies on the work of famous producers would somehow be drifting towards elitism or propping up an elitist feel in the whole field. Quite the contrary; the public discourses revolving around producers of high status offer a rich web of meaning especially in the realm of cultural studies. However, star producers are unusually agentic and therefore do not provide an example of a typical producer. Studying the work of producers who are not famous might shed new light on the producer's role and agency due to the lack of a meaning-creating public image. Furthermore, studying the work of a young producer "in the making" produces knowledge on roles and agencies of producers before the heroic narrative of the artist-producer genius comes into play. This perspective might also produce new knowledge on the present and the future of music production instead of its past.

In a broader sense, this study provides a model for the study of agency also in other instances where technological practices influence and are influenced by social interactions between music makers. One could study, for example, how musicians use technologies in live settings, how changing live sound technologies affects the agencies of musicians and engineers in concerts and in preparatory processes like sound checks and how genre-specific conventions and values influence the way in which musicians deploy music technologies. Furthermore, this study can provide insights into the study of how agency is constructed in technological processes in general, not only in instances where people make music. This is important in a society where electronic, and especially digital, technologies are increasingly becoming an integral part not only of most daily activities but potentially of being itself. If, previously, using technology was a decision that had to be justified, not to interact with technologies in today's world increasingly requires a conscious decision.

There is also a more general reason for the need to complicate and problematize agency through studying it very concretely at the level of the individual agent. In terms of agency, when defined as the ability to move within structures or alter them (Taylor 2001: 35), the more or less artificial and theoretical determinist-voluntarist dichotomy reduces individuals either to involuntary slaves of existing structures and prevailing circumstances or supreme masters of their own fate. In the political realm, the division often differentiates between those on the progressive left and those on the neoliberal right. Behind the tendency to oversimplify agency are ideological goals which do not stand the test of detailed scholarly scrutiny. Furthermore, I would argue that larger-scale statistical research, which can reduce people to more of less artificial identity categories, cannot consider enough variables to account for the uniqueness of each individual person and situation, and sometimes strengthens the ideological premises of agency rather than complicating it. A study like the present one, however, drills into agency on an individual level and is able to account for important situation-related details that contribute to agency. This also provides a way to analyze how identity matters to individuals, whether as a unifying or a divisive factor.

I will now proceed to the analyses of my three case studies. I will first discuss the agency of the home studio-based pop producer through analyzing the work of a young producer, Mikke Vepsäläinen. Then, I will discuss the role and agency of the classical producer through my case study on the producer Seppo Siirala and his work with the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta. After this, I will discuss the work of the producer Jonas Olsson in a rock/band setting.

# 3 Case 1 - The Production of Contemporary Pop in the Home Studio: Producer Mikke Vepsäläinen and singer Ida Paul

The home studio is a space where music has been produced since the 1950's, and it evolved in connection with the conceptual change from producing the "illusion of reality" to the "reality of illusion". However, only after the digital revolution has the home studio become "virtually a prerequisite for any aspiring pop musician" (Warner 2003: 20). Furthermore, I would argue that the emergence of the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) as the default tool in music production has had an effect on how music is produced and how producers and other music creators relate to their own role (cf. Théberge 1997: 60; Marrington 2011; Williams 2011; Walther-Hansen 2017; Moorefield 2005: 73; Richardson 2005: 9). In this chapter, which constitutes the first case study of this research, I will discuss the role and agency of a home studio-based pop music producer. I will do this by analyzing a case study on a production project in which the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen produced a song called 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Paul 2016) with the singer Ida Paul. In my analysis, I will discuss how social structures like the music industry, cultural structures like values connected to the home as a studio, physical structures like, for instance, the acoustic limitations of the home studio, and sociocultural structures like, for example, music technologies and their uses work in the formation of the producer's agency.

First, in section 3.1., I will introduce the producer Vepsäläinen and the singer Paul who took part in this case study. Furthermore, I will introduce the song they produced, deliver some analysis on how the song evolved during the production process and discuss what the evolution of the song tells about the role and agency of the producer. Then in section 3.2., I will discuss Vepsäläinen's and Paul's work in the home studio. I will provide insights into how Vepsäläinen's role and agency as a producer were formed in relation to the home studio environment, how the home studio facilitated interaction and how the hindrances related to the home studio as space contributed to the formation of agency. After this in section 3.3., I will proceed to analyze Vepsäläinen's and Paul's creative work in relation to technological practices and to some extent in relation to record company personnel. This will lead to section 3.4., in

which I will discuss the producer's role and agency as a 'tracker' (Auvinen 2017). I will conclude this chapter in section 3.5. by making remarks on what this case study has revealed about the role and agency of the contemporary pop producer. I will also make suggestions for some further research on producers in similar settings.

## 3.1 Producer Mikke Vepsäläinen's work with Singer Ida Paul on the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Eng. 'As Long as Others Don't Know')

In this section I will introduce the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen and the singer Ida Paul, who took part in this case study. Furthermore, I will introduce the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Eng. 'As Long as Others Don't Know'), which they worked on during this case study. In addition to mere introductions, I will discuss the place and status of these agents in the greater structure of the music industry. I will also discuss the development of the song that Vepsäläinen and Paul produced during the course of this case study.

### 3.1.1 Background on Vepsäläinen and Paul

The producer in this case study, Mikke Vepsäläinen (born 1992), is a pop music producer who lives in Helsinki, Finland. During the time of my fieldwork he was working primarily from his home studio in Kamppi, in downtown Helsinki, Finland. He relocated to another non-home studio space after this case study was over (see section 3.2.). Vepsäläinen has a background as a professionally schooled touring drummer. According to his own accounts, he became interested in music production when he observed the work of a producer while working on an album of one of his own former acts. Subsequently, he switched his career path from being a musician to producing music. After graduating from the Helsinki Pop/Jazz conservatory he also started to study law at the University of Helsinki. (Vepsäläinen 2015b.)

As a producer, Vepsäläinen could be described as aspiring. He is not yet an established name within the trade, which he does realize himself. According to Vepsäläinen, the scarcity of production projects and the small amount of money available for music production (cf. Burgess 2008) makes it hard for younger producers to get assignments. Projects are more easily given to producers of higher status. He states: "As I have entered the game only very recently, it is very hard to prove to people, mostly record company people who decide on things, money - - that I would be entitled to get the same projects even with good production work" (Vepsäläinen 2015b).

According to Vepsäläinen, not having an established name in the industry puts him in a kind of a vicious circle. Record companies hesitate to give him production projects because they have not given them to him in the past and because he has yet to produce

any major productions (Vepsäläinen 2015b).

Despite admitting the fact that he is not yet a well-known name in the music production trade, Vepsäläinen identifies himself first and foremost as a music producer and he works within the constraints of the music industry. Between my first interview with Vepsäläinen in March 2015 and my second in September 2015, he signed a publishing contract with Warner Music Finland (Vepsäläinen 2015b). This means that it is easier for him to arrange for songs and production to be assigned to artists who are represented by Warner Music. This doesn't necessarily mean that it would be easier for him to be recognized as a producer, though, as the songs on which he might have worked as a producer might be "re-produced" or "post-produced" by an "established" producer before publishing.

Ida Paul, whose collaboration with Vepsäläinen I observed in this case study, is a 21-year-old singer/songwriter. Before her first solo single "Laukauksia pimeään" (Eng. "Shots in the Dark") (Paul 2016a), she already gained some publicity as she acted as a featured singer and songwriter for the 2015 hit 'Madafakin darra' by the pop/hip-hop group Roope Salminen ja Koirat (2015). Vepsäläinen and Paul first met at a songwriting camp (cf. Hiltunen 2016) organized by Warner Music. They had been in contact a couple of years earlier; Paul had uploaded a video of her singing online and when Vepsäläinen saw it he contacted her online. At first, this initial contact did not result in further collaboration. However, their cooperation started when they ended up working for the same publishing company. (Vepsäläinen 2015c.)

Even though Vepsäläinen and Paul originally met at a Warner Music song-writing camp, the basis for their collaboration is not label-driven employment. According to Vepsäläinen (2015c):

> How this started is that Ida and I both like to make music together and an A&R person at our publisher told us that we should make music together, [he said] "that's good material". Ida has also played our songs for the record company representatives and they've told us that our songs are good and that we should finish them.

Despite their publishing contracts, in practice Vepsäläinen and Paul work as independent entrepreneurs or freelancers who sell their songs to the record label. (Vepsäläinen 2015c.)

### 3.1.2 The Song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Eng. As Long as Others Don't Know') and its Development

Upon request Vepsäläinen sent me four versions of the song (Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016a–d) 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Paul 2016b). The lyrics tell about a stagnated relationship between the narrator and someone else and the way in which the couple try to keep up appearances. The first version (Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016a) is a short one-

minute-long songwriting demo in which Vepsäläinen and Paul tried out the melodies for the verse and chorus. It explores a basic rhythm and some chords. This version (Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016a) worked as a sort of a starting point and does not even reveal the whole structure of the song, as the purpose was to try out compositional ideas and jot down the "main elements" of the song, which were harmony, the top-line (melody) and the lyrics. Vepsäläinen and Paul decided to think about "production ideas" afterwards, even though it was possible that some ideas in the very first session demo would end up in the final version. Vepsäläinen and Paul composed this initial "session demo" in Vepsäläinen's living room in early August 2015. Before starting the creative process, the two discussed topics on which they wanted to write a song. Once they had decided on a topic it was "easy for them to start to compose a song". (Vepsäläinen 2016a.) As the production process of the song I am analysing here continued, an A&R person at Warner Music listened to a fairly advanced demo version of the song. The song got a "green light" from the label, which meant that Vepsäläinen and Paul could move on to produce the final version of the song. (Vepsäläinen 2016a.)

The second demo (Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016b) version follows the main lines of the very first session demo. This version features a second verse, a second chorus and a bridge before the final chorus. The structure of the song could be represented as follows (bar count in brackets):

| **Table 1: Comparison of the Structures of the different versions of 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä'** | |
|---|---|
| **2nd and 3rd demo version (key Bb minor)** | **Final version (key C minor)** |
| Intro (4) | Intro (2) |
| Verse (16) | Verse (16) |
| Chorus (8) | Chorus (8) |
| Post-chorus (5) | Post-chorus (5) |
| Verse (16) | Verse (12) |
| Chorus (8) | Chorus (8) |
| Post-chorus (8) | Post-chorus (8) |

| Bridge (9) | Bridge (8) |
|---|---|
| Chorus (8) | Chorus (8) |
| Post-chorus (8) | Chorus (8) |
| | Post-chorus / outro (10) |

The second demo features changes in the second half of the verse along with a greater instrumental change. Minor changes to the beginning include high-pitched electric guitar strums. The chorus is almost identical in the first two versions. The only difference is that the grand piano introduced in the verse continues in the chorus. Therefore, the chorus in the second version has much more mass than the chorus of the first version.

When asked about the origins of the new ideas introduced in the second version, Vepsäläinen referred to another version he had produced between the original session demo and the second version he had sent me. In between the two versions Vepsäläinen had produced a “larger production demo” of the song. He had discarded this version but he kept some of the ideas in the new version. According to Vepsäläinen this version had lots of production ideas, like a 4-on-the- floor rhythm pattern and the guitar strums, which he and Paul wanted to try out. In the end, they decided that the ideas were not good. According to Vepsäläinen this was nevertheless an important phase because they could “zone out ideas that were not suitable for Ida’s voice and artistic persona”. (Vepsäläinen 2016a.)

The third demo (Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016c) version is basically an enhanced or “better sounding” version of the second one. A bass drum was added so that “one could get a better grip on the song”. Also, Vepsäläinen and Paul wanted to “remind themselves” about the fact that they didn’t want the song to be a “traditional slow song”. (Vepsäläinen 2015b.)

The fourth (Paul & Vepsäläinen 2016d) and last demo version structurally follows the lines of the preceding version. The melody and harmony remain mostly the same. Several instrumental changes have been made and lots of small sound effects and details have been added. The piano, which dominated the arrangement in the second and the third versions, has been removed and replaced by softer synthesized pad-sounds. This change was made because Vepsäläinen and Paul wanted a production that sounded more “urban” (cf. Burgess 2008). This version, which didn’t have the piano, also “felt” better suited to Paul’s developing artist persona. According to Vepsäläinen (2016a), the A&R person at the record company also agreed with this view. The greatest single change in the fourth version compared to the preceding ones is the key. The key has been raised from Bb minor to C minor. This is the result of trying out

different keys to "find the suitable one for Ida" (Vepsäläinen 2016a). According to Vepsäläinen (2016a):

> Often a key that is a little bit too high gives the vocals the best tone. Many singers have one or more hotspots in their voice and by changing the key we try to find these hotspots. The studio affords the possibility to work on these things so that the result sounds good.

Examining the development of the song and contrasting this development with views expressed in the interviews reveal that Vepsäläinen's main duty in traditional terms is to come up with the arrangement, which he often calls "production ideas", whereas the melody and the lyrics come from the artist/singer. These roles are nevertheless subject to constant change and renegotiation during a project. The arrangement as a term is of course strictly a technical one that is used when copyright percentages of a song are divided. This might be connected to the producer's aim of getting his share of royalties and copyright fees (see Burgess 2008), as discussions of copyright laws to include producers and engineers have just begun (see Middleton 2016). Vepsäläinen's involvement in the arranging process moulds his agency into what he calls a "tracker" (Vepsäläinen 2015a), possibly with the combination "producer/tracker" or a "programmer" (Vepsäläinen 2015b; FD 18.2.2016). According to Vepsäläinen, the tracker is responsible for the programming and/or playing of the backing tracks, whereas the "top-liner" is responsible for coming up with the melody. The "lyricist" (Paul) again is responsible for the lyrics, though Vepsäläinen assumes some responsibility for the lyrics and for the top-line as well. These three agencies form the songwriting/ production team, in which agencies constantly intertwine and overlap, even if both have their own main area of responsibility (Vepsäläinen 2015a). In the production of "Kunhan muut ei tiedä" Paul was mainly responsible for the lyrics and the melody, whereas Vepsäläinen was in charge of all the rest. The writing and the production of the song was nevertheless a collaborative effort throughout the process (Vepsäläinen 2016a). The melody and the lyrics were constantly changed during the process and both had ideas for alterations. Vepsäläinen nevertheless had more say in the lyrics and melody than Paul on the arrangement, or what Vepsäläinen would call "production" (Vepsäläinen 2015b) (FD 15.2. 2017; FD 18.2.2017; FR 1). A setting of this nature calls for a re-evaluation of the traditional divide between the melody, arrangement and the lyrics. According to Vepsäläinen (2015a) an "even split", in which the copyright fees are divided evenly between the members of the creative collective, is a standard since the tracker's role is much greater than what the standard 16,67% (Teosto 2013) maximum copyright share for an arrangement would suggest. I will further expand and elaborate on the idea of 'tracker' in section 3.4.

## 3.2 Working in the Home Studio

In this section I will examine and analyze Mikke Vepsäläinen's production work and his collaboration with Ida Paul in his home studio. I will describe the characteristics of the studio based on my field observations and examine how Vepsäläinen relates to his home studio. Furthermore, I will discuss cultural aspects related to the home studio and examine some of its shortcomings in production work which eventually led Vepsäläinen to move the studio out of his home. My aim in doing this is to discuss how the home studio contributes to the collaboration between Paul and Vepsäläinen and how the characteristics of the home studio play a role in the construction of Vepsäläinen's agency as a pop music producer.

### 3.2.1 7th Floor Studio and its Amenities

During the project Vepsäläinen mostly worked in his home flat, which he had turned into a music production studio. Vepsäläinen called the studio the "7th Floor Studio" because of its location on the 7th floor of an apartment building in the neighborhood of Kamppi in Helsinki, Finland. Despite its small size, Vepsäläinen's home studio features plenty of comforts one would expect from a place where people need to enjoy spending time. Vepsäläinen's flat included a room which functioned both as a living room and a bedroom; a kitchen, which is somewhat of an open space due to the lack of a door between the kitchen and the living room, a wardrobe that doubled as a recording booth, a bathroom, a sauna and a balcony (Photo 8–9). Vepsäläinen's DAW (digital audio workspace), which functioned as the studio control room, was situated in a corner in the living room against a wall that separated the walk-in closet from the living room (Photo 8–11). The other end of the living room, which was separated from the DAW/control room by a bookshelf, featured a comfortable couch. The bed was situated at the other side of the room and was separated by a small wall of dimmed glass. The walk-in closet, which was separated from the rest of the apartment by a simple door, had been turned into a small recording room. The wardrobe featured dark-colored foam rubber on the walls and ceiling (Photo 12–13). This effectively removed any echoes or standing wave frequencies. Furthermore, he had tucked a towel between the upper edge of the door and the doorframe to decrease bleeding (Photo 14) between the control room and the vocal booth. (FD 1.10.2015.)

### 3.2.2 Pre-production Coffee and Conversations

In the studio drinking coffee was an important ritual before any other activity took place. Vepsäläinen's ability to offer a variety of different kinds of coffees emphasizes the comfortable experience one has at his studio. (FD 1.10.2015). Before starting a session, Vepsäläinen and Paul drank coffee and conversed about the coffee and music business. Surprisingly little of the discussion evolved around the song they were about

to produce. They talked especially about a gig by the group Roope Salminen ja Koirat in which Paul had been a featuring artist. This was due to her appearance on the chorus of one of their released songs, 'Madafakin Darra'. They also discussed the chart success of the song and the reaction this song had had on the live audience. They then moved on to talking about other artists, especially the Finnish rap-artist Cheek, who was the first Finnish artist to sell out the Olympic Stadium. They talked about how the whole event was well marketed. Other topics include copyright issues and the fact that there is no real management culture in the Finnish music business, comparing it to the management culture in Sweden, which was in their opinion far ahead of that in Finland. (FD 1.10.2015.)

On the surface, this seemed like a bit of a waste of precious production time. This initially appeared to me as disinterest in the actual content of the music they were making. (FD 1.10.2015.) However, drinking coffee and conversing can be seen as a way to relax and ease pressure before starting to work. Considering the enthusiasm and hype the two demonstrate at times during recording (FD 15.2.216), it would nevertheless seem more appropriate to consider these conversations as important social prepping especially as the two were at the beginning of their careers. As a social situation, it can also be somewhat of a bonding experience, something that strengthens the relationship between the people starting to work together. Talking about the industry in which they work might give both a sense of mutual respect; they consider each other peers and professionals in their common field. Furthermore, as Paul especially was in the beginning of her career, the aspect of social prepping becomes even more important. This emphasizes the importance of the social and collaborative nature of music production; people working together must enjoy spending time with each other at least to some extent. Earlier research on studio production supports the idea that drinking coffee is perhaps more of a universal custom connected with spending time at the production studio (Bates 2012). My observations also link up with Horning's (2013: 208–209) ideas about the development of the studio space to accommodate an environment where people feel good, which turns it into being "more conducive to creativity". I see these pre-production conversations and coffee times as strengthening the agency of both Vepsäläinen and Paul; sharing information and perspectives on the music can be seen as strengthening one's "capacity to move within a structure" (Taylor 2001: 35), that is, one's agency, with the structure in this case being the music industry. As a private space, a home studio may offer a freer and more relaxed environment for conversations like these; as a space is not shared with other producers, the people engaging in conversation can speak freely without having to be concerned with what others think about their conversations.

### 3.2.3 Collaboration in the Home Studio

After drinking coffee, they started to record vocals for 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Eng. 'As Long as Others Don't Know'). As I've discussed in section 3.1., they had already

recorded a demo version of the song and at the time I observed their work, they were working on and recording on and recorded vocals. Vepsäläinen paid a lot of attention to the feelings and emotions conveyed by the vocals. He was very mindful of the small paralinguistic elements in the vocals such as creaks, sighs and minute timing changes in the vowels of the vocal text. (FD 1.10.2015.) This demonstrates an understanding of the importance of the voice carrying much more information than the "semantic value of the actual words it utters" (Lacasse 2000: 10; see also Frith 1996: 192) or at least that a "paralinguistic dimension is often as important as direct verbal meanings" (Middleton 2000: 29). The driving force behind the decisions on which takes were deleted and which were kept seemed to be considerations of what possible audiences would like. Vepsäläinen also gave interpretive instructions to Paul between takes and instructed her to aim for certain kinds of sounds "which people dig" (FD 1.10.2015). This resonates with Hennion's idea of the producer as the "ear of the audience" in the studio (Hennion 1983: 161). In this situation, the taste of the audience can be understood as a cultural and aesthetic structure which steers decision making in the studio during production, thus building the agency of the producer and the artist. However, as it is really hard to predict what audiences want, I would interpret this as an imaginary structure; it might only come into existence once the song is released and the audience either likes or doesn't like it. Regardless, Vepsäläinen's active role in giving feedback to the singer makes him a coach and a collaborative agent behind the vocal performance that ultimately is strongly tied to Paul's artistic agency and persona. Giving feedback as a key element of the producer's role resonates largely with all of the cases in this study (see e.g. sections 4.3.3.; 5.4.4.). As a practice widely found as a part of the producer's role in very different musical styles, it could be understood as a key function of the producer regardless of genre or perhaps even of time. Thus, the degree to which the producer is or is not able to give feedback and the degree to which the producer's feedback molds the actions of other agents can to a great extent be understood as key elements in the construction of the producer's agency.

A possible reason for the dominance and sheer amount of Vepsäläinen's comments and instructions to Paul during vocal recordings became evident to me during a later vocal session. The two agents recorded take upon take of the same spots. They spent lots of time on one single bar and recorded it with different sounds to get lots of options for the editing process. Later on, they sat down in the living room and built the vocal track from dozens of different takes syllable by syllable. Vepsäläinen was in charge but listened to Paul's comments and took them into account. Furthermore, Vepsäläinen edited the final tracks on his own but he would send them to Paul for approval. If Paul didn't like something, Vepsäläinen would redo it. (FD 15.2.2016.)

To a degree, Vepsäläinen's comments and instructions served the purpose of getting different kinds of vocal takes with different kinds of sounds to be used as raw material later on in the production process. Sitting behind the DAW and having visuals (see Williams 2012) of the project as a whole put Vepsäläinen in a better position for keeping track of what they had already recorded and what they still needed. This would

have been more challenging for Paul as she concentrated on her vocal performances in the isolation of the walk-in closet/singing booth.

### 3.2.4 Shortcomings of the Home Studio

As far as considerations related to temporal and environmental aspects, Vepsäläinen's home studio seemed to offer the optimal elements for creativity and for customer satisfaction even if the lack of a larger room for recording live drums limited the kind of music that could be produced in the studio. The atmosphere was relaxed, Vepsäläinen and Paul could spend as much or as little time in the studio as they wished, they could sit wherever they wanted, drink coffee at will and didn't have to take turns with or give space to other studio users. The studio being in the home, however, wasn't without drawbacks, which I will discuss next. For the reasons stated above, Vepsäläinen's eagerness to move out of the home studio and start working in another studio space seemed peculiar at first. However, some aspects related to home life did not sit well with the idea of working. According to Vepsäläinen (2015b):

> My work efficiency suffers when I work at home as there are so many other things that I should take care of as well. Also, I don't get the feeling of going to work when I work at home, which is harmful in the long run also for privacy reasons. Furthermore, I don't get the feeling of going home from work as my work is in the same [space].

These aspects presented by Vepsäläinen point towards some cultural aspects of the home. These connect to ideas of leisure, relaxation and free-time, which contradict with the idea of working. Not getting the "feel" of "going to work" also seems to be of some hindrance to Vepsäläinen. Also, not having the feeling of coming home from work might be counterproductive as one never has a designated time and space for relaxation; constantly being in between work and leisure might in the long run be stressful, even if not uncommon in the music industry (cf. Muikku 2001: 35; Bourdieu 1986: 151). He (ibid.) continues:

> General disturbances are also a problem as there are other people around. My work would require a quiet space. My work would also require a space that has good acoustics at least to some extent, or that would be symmetrical even to some extent, or that would have at least some elements that working in a studio room would require. This space has no such elements.

During a vocal recording session, the acoustic limits of Vepsäläinen's home studio became evident. Due to the sound bleed between the living room/control room and the recording booth Vepsäläinen could not use his studio monitors during takes, which

resulted in Ida Paul and Vepsäläinen both having to wear headphones all the time (Video Clip 19). Vepsäläinen even gave me a headphone jack with a wire extension for me to plug my headphones in so that I could listen to his and Paul's conversations between takes in the digital space of the DAW. (FD 1.10.2015; FD 15.2.2016; FD 18.2.2016; Video Clip 19.) The acoustic limitations of Vepsäläinen's home studio could also be the reason that Vepsäläinen didn't do the final mixing himself. This could, however, also be due to simple role specialization; Vepsäläinen as a producer works with the artist to create the song and the arrangement and someone more specialized takes care of the mixing. The acoustic qualities of the home studio can nevertheless be understood as physical structures which shape the producer's agency by either strengthening or weakening it. For example, the lack of symmetry in the production space might make it hard to get a truthful sound image when listening, thus making it hard to do the final mixing of a song.

As a young producer, Vepsäläinen has always produced music on digital platforms. In Vepsäläinen's home studio most work happened in the digital space of the DAW. This is obviously a stylistic choice as well. The overall sound of Vepsäläinen's productions are essentially electronic and the producer himself defines his style as "urban pop" (Vepsäläinen 2015a; See Burgess 2008). Vepsäläinen's choice to work in a predominantly digital environment makes him reliant on digital plug-ins. On the other hand, his "choice" could be seen as a result of the lack of larger recording spaces; without the possibility to record a real drum set due to the lack of proper recording spaces, the overall sound of the produced music ends up being electronic, as the rhythmic elements have to be constructed using samples and/or synthesizers. Furthermore, Vepsäläinen (2015a) discusses some social hindrances related to the home studio:

> A great plus would also be the social element, which has never really been emphasized in Finland yet, but which is on the rise all the time. Studio complexes with many songwriters and producers and engineers are being formed as we speak. This development enables a collective atmosphere and hence a collective working style.

Here, Vepsäläinen expresses a desire for a stronger professional atmosphere and professional support. Working in the home studio isolates him from a larger creative community. While it is desirable that the studio isolates the people working on music "to give musical creatives the conditions required to experiment and create music" (Watson 2015: 188; see also Théberge 2004), isolation from a supportive creative community can in fact be a hindrance in the overall process. In the summer of 2016, Vepsäläinen relocated his studio to the neighborhood of Töölö in Helsinki. His new studio was in the immediate vicinity of Warner Music Finland's offices and other creative spaces. This space was a "real" studio with straight angles and surfaces designed for acoustic purposes. (FD 28.8.2016.) Vepsäläinen seemed to regard this as a

positive change.

In this section I have discussed the formation of producer's agency in a home studio setting by analyzing the producer Vepsäläinen's work in a home studio setting. In the following I will discuss technology and agency in the home studio after which I will move onto discussing how Vepsäläinen's agency is formed through the idea of "tracking", which makes the producer essentially a tracker/producer.

## 3.3 Technology and Creativity in the Home Studio

As I have discussed in chapter 2, driven by the developing music technology, the agency of a record/music producer has been in constant change after the 1950's. In addition to the producer's agency changing historically and between different individuals, this agency might also differ between different projects. In this section, I will discuss the ways in which technology as a structure and technological practices construct the agency of the pop producer Mikke Vepsäläinen.

### 3.3.1 The Necessary Equipment and Technological Disinterest

The increasing use of the Internet and the emergence of the laptop DAW have ramifications for the studio as a space. According to Vepsäläinen (2015a), his computer is the only piece of equipment that is absolutely necessary for him to produce music (see Blake 2010: 55). He says:

> The computer. Because that is the only piece of equipment with which I can create productions without having anything else. It's not very sensible but it's possible. I have lots of projects that I tweak just sitting on a train with a laptop on the table and headphones on my ears. (Vepsäläinen 2015a.)

Despite this notion, Vepsäläinen's seeming disinterest towards his production technologies echoes Martin's (2014: 232) findings. When asked, Vepsäläinen briefly mentions the names of his main recording and editing software and the hardware he uses without going into any kind of details on specific models or technical information (Vepsäläinen 2015a). This highlights the producer as a creative agent working in the realm of aesthetic decision-making instead of being a technician whose job it is to realize the ideas of someone else. This also strengthens Martin's (ibid.) idea that for producers, technology is secondary to the creative ideas in the studio and weakens the preconception of producers as technology enthusiasts. Especially as my third case study with the producer Jonas Olsson provides similar views (see section 5.3.6.), this could also be seen as a typical trait of the contemporary generation of producers, who started their careers with home studios and digital technologies. According to Gibson (2005: 198), as more emphasis is put on "post production tweaking instead of spending time to find the perfect spot for/experience with different mics & acoustic spaces", the

producers' relationship towards the technology, especially the hardware, might become different. This could be regarded as a typical feature of the tracker/ producer, whose emphasis is on "tweaking" as a post-production activity (Vepsäläinen 2016b) rather than on the recording process. The more the recorded audio, in this case Paul's vocals, is processed, the less the individual qualities of a microphone matter. Thus, Vepsäläinen does not necessarily have to find "the right microphone" to record Paul's vocals. The development could also be seen as a result of a standardization of digital technologies. Different music production software packages might not differ enough from one another to result in producers strongly preferring one to another, thus resulting in a seeming lack of interest in technology. This state of affairs might nevertheless be limited to the Western cultural realm where the equipment available generally exceeds a certain level of quality. More interest towards technology might be demonstrated in places and situations where good quality equipment is scarce (Crowdy 2007: 148–149).

### 3.3.2 Reference Material and New Technologies

The latest technological trend in music is the shift from buying physical CD's or storing sound on hard drives to listening to music on streaming services. Even if it is obvious that the main implications of this development are for the consumer market, there are some ways in which this alters music production. Furthermore, this echoes the notion that with the ever-developing music production technologies, producers have become consumers as well (Théberge 1997). Online streaming services come into play when it's a question of the practice of *listening to reference material* (see also section 5.3.7.). This practice connects with McIntyre's (2008) ideas of the record producer getting to know the field of works or the "domain", which includes all prior products accepted by the field (of experts). According to McIntyre (2008) the domain includes: "the body of songs they use as a template to make judgments in the studio. The more a producer understands the domain the stronger their knowledge will be and the greater their ability to produce work in a studio situation." Traditionally the reference material, the available domain, from which a producer could draw ideas, was limited to his/her record collection. During the production of the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' Vepsäläinen (and Paul) listened to reference material as well but with the difference that they had access to an increasingly vast, if not nearly unlimited amount of Western popular music through Spotify. As we waited for Paul to arrive at the studio, Vepsäläinen listened to the demo version of the song under production. At the same time, he listened to other songs on Spotify for ideas. He selected songs with approximately the same tempo and the same style as the one they were going to work on. Furthermore, Vepsäläinen and Paul listened to material from Spotify as they were sitting on the couch taking a break from recording and trying to come up with ideas for a post-chorus melody line (FD 1.10.2015). The situation was very much like a jam session but it happened without instruments in the traditional sense. Vepsäläinen and

Paul only used their voices and Spotify to work on the melody for the post-chorus. (Field Recording 2.) Consequently Spotify, a software consumer technology, became a production technology. The line between production and consumption becomes blurred as producers become consumers, but also vice versa, as producers make use of a *consumption technology* in their production process. Furthermore, a new kind of music consumption practice by music producers might contribute to a less personal, more commoditized relationship to music in general.

### 3.3.3 Collaboration with A&R

A third important agent in the production of the song was the A&R person who represented the record company. When Vepsäläinen and Paul were recording final vocals for the song they mentioned the feedback they received from A&R. According to Vepsäläinen (Vepsäläinen & Paul 2016a) "he told us to fill in the gaps that were in the demo". Paul continues Vepsäläinen's (ibid.) thought:

> In practice, how it works is that s/he tells us feelings, I think, very often, for example "there's a lot of stuff here" and "there's very little stuff here". But they tell their own opinion. If they comment on a single line I might still keep it if I feel that it's better for me as an artist. Nobody puts words in my mouth.

In this way the A&R person enters the studio and assumes a sort of a proxy-agency in the production process without necessarily being physically present. Despite the notion that the A&R person refrained from being directly involved in the creative process, in a situation where the producer and the singer themselves have entered the industry fairly recently and have yet to achieve fame and authority, the A&R person as the representative of the record label may assume a fairly strong agency in the process. In his analysis of power and agency in the studio setting, McIntyre (2008) discusses how stardom and fame increases the power and strengthens the agency of an agent. This mirrors back to my study in a reversed way since I have deliberately chosen, as I have stated before, to study people who have not yet acquired fame and stardom; studying producers and artists who have not (yet) become household names gives a different perspective on music production and the producer's agency compared to research on successful figures. As a young producer, Vepsäläinen worked from his home studio. This is a case in point; he had perhaps not yet acquired enough work for it to be sensible for him to rent a studio away from home. Next, I will discuss some of the shortcomings of the home studio which affected Vepsäläinen's agency as a producer.

## 3.4 The Producer as 'Tracker'

As I have discussed before in this chapter, as a producer Vepsäläinen identifies himself

first and foremost as a *tracker* or *tracker/producer*. In this section, I'm going to expand on the idea of the producer as tracker by analyzing the traits that make Vepsäläinen a 'tracker'. The role of the tracker has not been studied to a great extent before. Scholarly publications dealing with the tracker include my own articles (Auvinen 2017; 2016) and an article by the musicologist Riikka Hiltunen (2016). Implicitly, Bennett (2011) also discusses the role of a tracker-like producer without using the exact term. Perhaps the reason for the scarcity of publications on the role of the tracker lies in Hiltunen's (2016: 6) remark, according to which "The terms tracker and topliner are frequently used in the trade [music production] but their meanings are partially unstable". In the following, I hope to bring clarity to this rather nascent terminology.

### 3.4.1 The Tasks of a 'Tracker'

As said, in many projects, Vepsäläinen describes himself as a tracker/producer. This includes the production of the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' with the singer Ida Paul, which I observed and analyzed in this case study. As I briefly mentioned in section 3.1, the tracker is the agent whose responsibility it is to create the tracks and come up with the arrangement excluding the melody. The tracker might also be the producer and a producer might be a tracker. A producer might also be an engineer, but this does not have to be the case. According to Vepsäläinen (2015b):

> If I sign up for a songwriting camp they might ask me, "so are you coming as a tracker"? But they also might ask me, "So are you coming as a producer/tracker"? So, they use the term producer/tracker, which practically is the same as a songwriter-producer. But I would say that it is not a "full producer", because there are several songwriting situations where we're only asked to finish the song in the traditional sense.

The connection that Vepsäläinen makes between the role of the tracker and songwriting camps relates to Hiltunen's (2016) research on songwriting camps in Finland. In a later e-mail, he explained the idea of the tracker a little further. Here Vepsäläinen extends the responsibility of the tracker to cover some of the melody as well when roles become mixed during production (Vepsäläinen 2016d). He (ibid.) comments:

> Let's think about a situation where the production team is comprised of a tracker/producer (who cannot play any instruments) and a guitarist. The tracker/producer might have an idea of a song she/he would like to write. He can ask the guitarist to 'play some kind of keystroke pattern in a meter divisible by three'. Then the guitarist plays according to these instructions but the producer might guide it in a certain direction: 'That's good.' 'Try something else.' "What if you played that chord for a longer period of time". This also

happens sometimes when melodies are written.

This obscuring of roles and responsibilities raises serious questions about songwriting credits and brings up important questions about creative agency and the artistic role of the producer. Who is the composer in a situation like this? Vepsäläinen (2016d) continues:

> Is it the person who has operated the instrument (who comes up with ideas according to her/his skills based on what the tracker/producer says), or the tracker/producer (who has a concept in mind, but who doesn't have the skills to realize it)? I face this phenomenon very often, because I'm not a singer.

Vepsäläinen says he can still take rather great responsibility for the melody by giving guidelines such as 'how about a screeching high melody line here, which comes down halfway through the second bar. How about the first note on the fourth.' (ibid.) If a tracker/producer guides the formation of, for instance, the melody as much as Vepsäläinen describes here, they take a fairly large responsibility for composing as well. My observations in the studio support this view of the tracker's role. Even if most of Vepsäläinen's comments deal with how the vocals sound, he also takes part in coming up with lines in the melody (FD 30.9.2015).

### 3.4.2 Tracker and "Full Producer"

During a later interview, Vepsäläinen differentiates between being a tracker and being a *full producer* by referring to the agent's relationship to production technologies. According to Vepsäläinen the tracker is the guy 'who is tapping at the computer' whereas a producer, who is not a tracker, doesn't necessarily have to touch the production technology (Vepsäläinen: 2016b). Furthermore, Vepsäläinen says that a project might have a tracker and a separate producer. He elaborates (2016b): "You can have a tracker who is programming and behind her/him there could be a producer, who says what to do. So, the role of the producer extends beyond the role of the tracker."

The views I have presented above would suggest that there is a difference between a tracker and a "full producer". The difference, however, remains somewhat vague. According to Vepsäläinen (2015b):

> Well, if I'd have to tell the difference between the tracker and the [full] producer. It is a little challenging in Finland and especially in these "small games", as the concept of the producer is very wide. The producer is [often] also the engineer etc. A 'tracker' is more of a technical term. It describes the person who engineers the production, i.e. the backing tracks. So, the tracker is the one who programs the different instrument tracks.

Thus, according to Vepsäläinen (ibid.) the tracker refers to an agent with specifically articulated duties concerning the sonic result. He (ibid.) continues: “The tracker might play and record the tracks and the producer has more of a general picture of the song as a whole. The producer has the last word in what sounds will be used and might influence the song after the tracker has worked on it.” Then, the difference between the producer and the tracker, if they are not one and the same agent, lies, at least in part, in the level of authority with respect to the music under production. In her study on collective songwriting, Hiltunen (2016) discusses the roles of tracker and topliner. She (Hiltunen 2016: 6) shares my view of the vagueness existing between a tracker and a producer. She (ibid.) writes:

> The terms tracker and producer are used in part synonymously even if there are differences between the working roles. The roles often cross. The tracker might have a role in the creation of the harmony and s/he can also be involved in the making of the lyrics and the melody. On the other hand, topliners can have ideas about the production. The obscuring of roles and especially the narrow difference between producing and composing are tightly bound to the increasingly important role of technology in the process of music making [translation from the original Finnish by the author].

Hiltunen’s (2016) view and my observations would suggest that the role of the tracker as a category of the producer’s agency seems to be strongly connected to composing, or perhaps more appropriately in the context of pop, songwriting. In his article on collaborative songwriting, Bennett (2011) provides a typology of songwriting models. Among these models, the role of the producer differs ranging from someone completely excluded from the songwriting process to an active participant in it. He labels one of his models ‘top-line’ writing (see also Hiltunen 2016), in which “[a] completed backing track is supplied by a ‘producer’ to a top-line writer who will supply melody and lyric. The backing track acts as harmonic/tempo template but more crucially as inspiration for genre-apposite creative decisions, such as singability of a line.” (Bennett 2011). In my view, this passage from Bennett’s article implicitly refers to the role of the tracker/producer without explicitly mentioning the term *tracker*. However, Bennett’s model, albeit valid, in light of my findings simplifies, perhaps intentionally, the reality of the production process to some extent. As I have shown in this case study, even if Vepsäläinen as a tracker/producer was mainly in charge of the “completed backing track” (Bennett 2011), his responsibilities extended beyond the backing track into composing the melody and even working on the lyrics. In this way the roles get mixed more than Bennett’s model would suggest. This view of the role and agency of the tracker is also supported by Hiltunen’s (2016: 6) findings. Even if the role has, as Bennett’s findings suggest, surely existed before it has been labelled, perhaps the term ‘tracker’ could be more widely used when describing a specific type of producer.

### 3.4.3 The ‘Tracker’ and Technological Agency

The unification of the roles of the engineer and the producer in one person, the tracker/producer, could be seen as a phase in the continuum driven by technology, which Horning (2004: 714–715) describes. It should, however, be also noted that from the 1960’s onwards, engineers in music production do not necessarily have anything to do with actual engineering. Horning (2013: 143) writes: “By the 1960s, recordists had become “recording engineers”, yet ironically, many of those who entered this profession often knew less about electronics and the basic technical foundations of recording than their self-taught predecessors.”

Similarly, the “programming” which Vepsäläinen (2016b) adds to the list of the activities of the tracker, has very little to do with traditional programming activities i.e. writing actual code. When it comes to engineering and programming as the tracker/producer’s activities, I would argue that they must be understood more or less as metaphors that have emerged from the increasing use of electronic and digital technology in musical activities. Alternatively, they can be understood as loose references to earlier practices; much like early recording technologies required engineering skills, early digital music technologies required programming skills. As the use of electronic music technology (engineering) and digital platforms (programming) has increased and traditional musicianship (playing instruments in the traditional sense) has declined, new names for activities have been established and they have been borrowed from fields that have traditionally had very little or nothing to do with music but where the tools adopted by music production personnel have been used. As a consequence, for example the producer can be called a “programmer” even if s/he in reality does not write code. These new metaphors again can be understood as having an effect on the cultural content of the roles and agencies of the producer. I would argue that the term ‘tracker’ as a producer’s role and designator of the producer’s agency is a development in the continuum of technological change and role delineation in music production. Furthermore, I would also contend that the terms tracker and programmer as attributes of the producer’s role are culturally loaded and construct the producer’s agency in the minds of others. Much like an individual who is labelled an “engineer” is expected to know about electronic technology, a “programmer” is thought to possess knowledge about computers and digital technologies, tools which the contemporary tracker/producer uses in her/his production work. This kind of specialized knowledge can be understood as being outside of the realm of common knowledge; it’s something reserved for insiders. In this way, technological terminology that describes an activity used in connection with producer’s agency validates, gives authority to and forms clarity around the otherwise vague role of the producer.

Williams (2012) offers another perspective on the relationship between the tracker/producer and technology and the way technology-centered knowledge is

distributed among individuals. His notion of the alterations of agencies as a result of graphic displays offers a view on the idea of tracker-agency. According to Williams (2012) (see also section 5.4.3. in this study):

> The presence of the graphic display in the recording environment significantly alters the collaborative process, wresting secretly held knowledge from the control of engineer and producer, thus extending the role of the musician beyond the performance stage, while simultaneously exposing vulnerable human weaknesses in a harsh, unblinking light.

However, when observing the work of Vepsäläinen and Paul, the latter showed no interest in the graphic displays or the technology involved in the production process (FD 1.10.2015; 15.2.2016; 18.2.2016). Thus, instead of multiple separate agents being empowered by DAW technology and visual displays, as Williams (2012) suggests, the empowering in Vepsäläinen's case takes the form of multiple agencies coming together in one person, the tracker/producer, as the role of the tracker/producer encompasses elements from engineering, programming, composition, arranging and even musicianship. The technological change described by Williams can perhaps be understood as an enabling factor in Vepsäläinen's shift from being a touring drummer to becoming a producer (Vepsäläinen 2015b). This, again, could be seen as a result of the accessibility (Williams 2012) afforded by digital technologies; one does not have to get deeply immersed in the engineering of technologies and thus is freer to engage in other activities. This shift in the agency of the producer could with good reason be viewed as a phonograph effect (Katz 2004: 2). The combination of agencies in the role of the tracker/producer takes to a natural conclusion Horning's (2004: 714–715) idea of producers and musicians becoming more involved with technology and engineers again having more creative input as a result of technological development.

### 3.4.4 The Limits of the 'Tracker's' Agency

Based on what I have discussed before, I would argue that without digital technology and visual displays, which offer the producer the possibilities to firstly *see* all the tracks of a song or musical piece and secondly nearly *unlimited editing* and creation of tracks without recording audio, the term *tracker* as a metaphor of the producer's role and a characteristic of the producer's agency, the ability to make and effect decisions, would not have emerged. Despite engineering becoming a central activity of the tracker/producer and being carried out in the home studio, my data would support the view expressed by Gibson (2005: 205); namely, the survival of a part of separate engineering services that he calls "high-level mastering and post-production facilities". After Vepsäläinen and Paul were done with the song and they had approval from the record company A&R, they sent the song elsewhere for mixing, in which Vepsäläinen took very little part, and mastering, in which he took no part (Vepsäläinen 2016c). This

notion further strengthens the tracker/producer's importance in the songwriting process (cf. also Hiltunen 2016) and lessens her/his importance in mixing and mastering. In Vepsäläinen's case, however, this might simply have been a result of the acoustic limitations of this home studio (see section 3.2.4.).

Gibson's (2005: 198) perspectives, which I have already discussed in section 3.3.1., offer an even broader context for the analysis of the role of the tracker/producer. When emphasis is put on post-production tweaking (ibid.) instead of finding the perfect microphone or the perfect spot for it in a unique production situation, the producer's relationship towards technology changes. As I have noted, this is true especially with respect to hardware and seems to be embodied in the agency of the tracker/producer. "Tweaking" here would refer to editing and enhancing the recorded or programmed tracks (Vepsäläinen 2016b). However, the degree to which these are indeed "post-production" activities can and should be debated. In this case study, activities, like editing, traditionally related to post-production overlapped with the recording sessions, became a part of the overall creative process and thus mixed with activities related to arranging and composing.

## 3.5 Conclusion: Trackerism and the New Default of the Pop Producer's Agency

In this case study I knew the producer beforehand. I had even worked with him as a musician, which raises the question of how much our common history might have influenced, for example, how he responded to my interview questions. On the other hand, without a common history and a consequent lack of trust, I might not have been able to study his work in the first place (cf. Bennett 2011). Our common history might have diminished the degree to which my presence affected the work of Vepsäläinen as there really was no phase of getting to know one another in the course of this study. Also, as is often the case with professional producers, I think Vepsäläinen might have refused to take part in this study, had he felt that my presence affected his work too greatly. The fact that the single most important finding here was the idea of the producer as 'tracker' raises challenges for the generalizability of the results presented here. This is in part for the reason that the role of the 'tracker' has not been extensively studied before. However, the explicit mention of this type of producer role by Hiltunen (2016) and its implicit mention by Bennett (2011) strengthen the understanding that even if this case study cannot tell everything about the tracker/producer, this role does exist as a part of the creative practices of popular music production.

In this chapter, I have discussed how musical, technological, social, spatial (physical) and organizational (industrial) structures construct the role and creative agency of a producer. I have done this by conducting a case study on the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen's work with Ida Paul on the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Paul 2016). During the time of this case study, the former worked from his home studio.

Thus, in this chapter, I have also provided perspectives on home studio-based production work.

Through ethnographic means and by examining the evolution of a song during production I have attempted to reveal aspects of the musical activities of a young producer who identities as a tracker/producer. I have showed how the agency of the tracker/producer is formed through a combination of composing, arranging, programming, vocal coaching and engineering. The idea of being a tracker clarifies the agency of the producer's role, which is present in the top-line songwriting model introduced by earlier research (Bennett 2011; Hiltunen 2016). Therefore, this study has sharpened ideas about the role and agency of a producer in this model. In light of my findings, the noun "tracker" and the verb "tracking" appear to be concepts that are commonly used in the context of contemporary pop production. Despite the wide use of the terms they have not yet been strongly conceptualized nor have they been used in writings about music production in meanings that are similar to the ones I've used here. This is highlighted due to the observation that even if Vepsäläinen uses the term in a self-evident manner, he struggles to clearly define its meaning or describe its distinction from other producer agencies. In light of my findings, the use of the term tracker as a facet of the role of the producer is limited to contemporary "urban pop" (Burgess 2008). Furthermore, it is possible that the term "tracker" is only a new piece of terminology applied to a role which already exists. This role is the producer of urban pop. Furthermore, I have examined how the tracker/producer works in the home studio, how the home studio as a cultural space contributes to the formation of the agency of the producer in question and how the tracker/producer's agency is defined by the possibilities afforded by digital music production platforms. By studying the work of a young producer in the digital age I have provided a peek into the present and future of music production. This case study, however, is definitely not an all-encompassing account of all producers in similar situations. I therefore call for further comparative research on the role and agency of the tracker/producer and her/his relationship to other creative agents, studio spaces and digital technologies.

My research materials show that the aspiring home studio-based music producer Mikke Vepsäläinen identifies himself first and foremost as a *tracker/producer*. This means that his main duty is to come up with the 'tracks' for a song, which translates into the *arrangement* of a song in traditional songwriting terms. In spite of the arrangement being his main responsibility, the traditional technical copyright-related term 'arranger' would not be sufficient to describe Vepsäläinen's work as he influences the music he works on in so many ways. He works together with the songwriter/top-liner from the very early stages of the compositional process, selects sounds, works as a recording engineer, an editing engineer, and collaborates with the singer to make the vocal tracks better while contributing to improving the 'top-line' (melody), the lyrics and, through giving feedback, the vocal performance throughout the production process. When a tracker/producer is working, the processes of songwriting and music production constantly intertwine and cannot be separated from one another. This, to my

understanding, is possible through digital music production technologies such as the DAW.

I argue that the idea of ‘tracker’ as a facet of the broader role of the producer stems from the development of digital music production technologies such as the DAW. Software-based workstations and the vast instrument libraries available today enable the producer to program, record, create and edit all of the tracks included in a project. Furthermore, the fact that project studios and home studios as private spaces have the opportunity to fully compete with commercial studios gives the single tracker/producer even greater and more holistic control over the entire project and all its tracks during the production process. Without the contemporary technology available for music production, the agency of the tracker could not exist in the way in which Vepsäläinen describes it. In addition to the *tracks* of a project, the tracker also acts as a social agent by working with singers and musicians and with the A&R people of the record company to make their tracks better. Therefore, the agency of the *tracker* is a combination of artistic decision-making, aesthetic judgment, collaboration with other creative parties and using digital production technology.

The term ‘producer’ may point to a variety of different agencies. Moreover, the term *programmer* as an attribute of the producer’s agency comes up in interviews and conversations much more often than the more traditional term *musician.* The constant renegotiations, overlaps, blurred lines, and switches between the different agencies might reflect a flexible production culture, in which anyone can do anything depending on the situation. Different kinds of production settings nevertheless call for different kinds of producers and conceptual attributes connected to them. The term ‘tracker’ as an attribute of the producer’s agency and a concept describing the producer’s self-identification requires further comparative study on other producer subjects. Here, though, I have attempted to outline some principles for future discussion.

# 4 Case 2 - The Production of Classical Music: Seppo Siirala and the Production of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8

As I have stated before, the production process of classical musical records is an understudied area. The topic especially lacks deeper ethnographic accounts which would touch upon the actions and interactions, agencies and structural organizations of the production of classical records. This might stem from the general notion put well by Ashby (2010: 22): "recording has had less an aesthetic influence on classical-musical practices than an ontological effect. In other words, it has helped shape and define the sort of thing that music is."

The idea that record production has not had an aesthetic influence on classical music again might stem from the premise that the agents involved in the process have not affected the aesthetics of the music, thus making it less important as a field of study. It follows from this that the agency of the classical record producer, unlike her/his popular music counterparts, remains to a great extent uncharted territory. My aim in this chapter is to assess and examine the agency of the classical music producer Seppo Siirala with respect to the spatial, temporal, social, cultural and technological structures surrounding the production of a classical record. First, I will provide background information on the agents involved in this case study. Then I will go on to analyze the process step by step. I have divided my analysis into sections based on the temporal phases of the production process; pre-production, recording and post-production. This is because in classical record production the different temporal phases, unlike in many cases of popular music, are rather clearly temporally distinguishable from one another. By doing this I am endeavoring to produce new information on the agency of the classical producer.

## 4.1 Introduction: the Producer Seppo Siirala and Other Agents

In this section, I will introduce the various agents involved in the case study I have conducted. In subsection 4.1.1. I will discuss the background of the producer Seppo Siirala. In subsection 4.1.2. I will introduce other key agents involved in the production

process I have studied. In the same subsection, I will also say something about the musical composition Symphony No. 8, which is the work that was recorded and produced in the process that I have studied. Providing background information is important because an agent's background, which s/he cannot change, plays a part in the social structures within which the agent operates. In addition to discussing the musical backgrounds of these agents, I will situate them in the larger structural context of the music industry. This is important for the reason that agency is dependent on social structures (see chapter 1.3.3.) and, as studio spaces and the technologies used in the record production process are structures that can be altered "to some extent" (Taylor 2001: 35) by the agencies of music production personnel, the larger industrial organizational structures are more or less static from an individual agent's perspective; when the structures of music industry change, it is extremely rarely the result of an individual actor.

## 4.1.1 The Producer Seppo Siirala

Seppo Martti Siirala was born in 1952 to a musical family. His mother was a cellist and had formed "Trio Siukonen" with her siblings. His older brother became a professional pianist and after, he himself became a classical guitarist. He first played the violin and the viola. He even played the double bass for a short period of time before getting enthusiastic about the classical guitar. He eventually worked as a professional musician and a classical guitar teacher for twenty years before he "switched tracks, so to speak, and became a record producer" in the year 1991 (Siirala 2015).

The reasons Siirala switched to producing were many. According to him, it is really hard to support oneself financially by playing the guitar. He had three children to provide for at the time and one of the reasons was financial. He (Siirala 2015) elaborates: "The [19]90's depression came and I noticed that I had to do something for our livelihood to begin with. I also had a professional crisis: I wasn't fully satisfied with what I was capable of doing as a guitar player."

These circumstances described by Siirala could be seen as structures that exist and evolve as independent from the agency of an individual and on which agency is nevertheless dependent (McIntyre 2008). He had recorded quite a bit as a guitarist and he had also made radio recordings. Thus, he had some experience "from the other side of the microphone as well" and he liked it. This kind of working suited him well. According to Siirala (2015):

> Somehow it suits my temperament that I can make music carefully, deliberately and take my time and record many takes. Gradually I learned to work in that environment and I also learned, as usually there was no producer present, and I had to make all decisions myself.

His desire to be able to make careful decisions and take many takes resonates with views expressed by Glenn Gould. For Gould recording technology provided the means to "analyze and specify" a musical work (Mantere 2006: 97). Furthermore, for Gould it was completely irrelevant whether or not a recorded performance was compiled from one or several takes (Mantere 2006: 96). He continues (Siirala 2015):

> I felt that it was very laborious to have to go back and forth to listen to the takes to be able to evaluate and the editing…it's very chaotic at times especially with Yleisradio [the Finnish public broadcasting company]. They had good engineers but we were still operating with analog tapes and there was a lot of messing around in the editing phase and through this I sort of got interested in this area.

Siirala first thought about putting up his own record company. He established a firm and started by publishing his own recordings. At the same time, he nevertheless noticed that he wasn't completely up to it on his own. He elaborates (Siirala 2015):

> I noticed… that I would need a little bit of capital and that these great idealistic plans would require better equipment and we were in the middle of the transition to the digital era, or actually the transition had already happened and I had no idea how to operate in that [environment].

Siirala noticed a job advertisement in a newspaper, in which Ondine, a Finnish record label concentrating on classical recordings, was looking for a producer. He explains: "By chance I noticed a job listing in a newspaper, in which the record company Ondine was looking for a producer. I applied for the job and got it. My own career as a record company owner ended there and it became a dormant company until I ended it completely." (Siirala 2015).

From 1991 Siirala worked for Ondine as a full-time record producer on a monthly salary, until he was laid off in 2010. He elaborates:

> Ever since, I have worked as a freelancer and as a kind of a contractor for Ondine and I've also done projects elsewhere [for other customers]. And this has been going on up until today. Right now, the situation is such that the amount of work has been decreasing quite a bit and I've also reached the age of retirement and I'm going to start drawing retirement money from the beginning of next year [2016]. This doesn't mean that I would quit working. I'm still going to continue working as long as work is offered. (Siirala 2015.)

The fact that Siirala was laid off in 2010 creates an important connection to earlier research on classical record producers. According to Andrew Blake (2012: 195) producers have tended to be employed by the classical music departments of major

labels. Blake (ibid.) further elaborates that this has promoted the producer's aesthetic agency over his/her commercial one, as the "permanent employee doesn't usually have the contractual driver of sales points". Freelance producers in the production of classical records have only recently become routine professional figures because of "capitalism's tendency to outsource risk" (2012: 195.) In Siirala's case, a more likely reason is the rapid decline of the sales of classical records, which in a market as small as Finland’s have been fairly small to begin with. According to Siirala, the record company Ondine still had six full-time employees in the year 2010. Today the company has one CEO, whose salary is divided between two companies, Ondine and Naxos.

According to Siirala, there are different ways of becoming a record producer in the realm of classical music. He nevertheless thinks that a producer in this area has to have personal experience of playing, singing or conducting (Siirala 2015). I will expand on this notion in section 4.3.3.

As a producer, Siirala is not in the position of deciding *what* is recorded. The record company makes these decisions. He might nevertheless offer his opinions on matters like these, but mainly he says he is a "content producer". (Siirala 2015.) Other agents involved in the production process of Erkki-Sven Tüür’s 8$^{th}$ symphony included the composer Tüür himself, the conductor Olari Elts, the recording engineer Enno Mäemets and naturally the musicians who are part of the Tapiola Sinfonietta.

### 4.1.2 Other Agents and the Work

The composer Erkki-Sven Tüür has a somewhat unusual background for a classical composer. Tüür started his musical career in Soviet Estonia in the second half of the 1970’s as front man and leader of a progressive rock-band (Tüür 2016). Between1980 and 1984 he studied percussion and the flute at the Tallinn Georg Ots Music High School and composition with Jaan Rääts at the Tallinn Conservatoire. Furthermore, Tüür has studied electronic music in Karslruhe, Germany. Since 1992, he has worked as a freelance composer. (Tüür 2016.)

The sound engineer Enno Mäemets, born on March 1$^{st}$ 1959, decided to become a recording engineer when he was in the seventh grade simply because he “was interested in the field” of sound recording. He became interested in sound as an acoustic phenomenon after meeting some scientists who had had the opportunity to travel abroad and bring him scholarly articles on the subject. Mäemets nevertheless wasn’t able to get into any educational institution to study sound recording because his parents were not members of the communist party, and sound recording, which was a tool for propaganda, was a protected field of study at the time in communist USSR. Despite setbacks, Mäemets ended up becoming a recording engineer and the Tallinn department head of the record company Melodiya after studying electronics at university level. Even if Mäemets’s real interest was sound recording, he always had music as a hobby on the side. (Mäemets 2016.)

The conductor Olari Elts started his musical career at the age of five by playing the piano. He studied in the music-oriented middle-school system. According to Elts (2016), "each soviet republic had one and it was one of the few good things in the USSR". In this music-oriented middle-school he studied the flute and the piano between the ages of 7 and 18, after which he studied conducting at the music academy. Starting from the year 2000, Elts has worked as a conductor "all over the place". (Elts 2016.)

The orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta is the so-called city orchestra of Espoo. According to their website, they are a high-quality chamber orchestra. They feature both national and international conductors and soloists as guest performers. For the past 25 years, the orchestra has maintained a "core repertoire of the Viennese classics". The ensemble is nevertheless eager to perform contemporary works and children's music. They also like to participate in multi-genre productions. The orchestra makes tours in Finland and abroad. The orchestra's home base is Tapiola Hall at the Espoo Cultural Center, which is also where most of its more than 60 records have been recorded. (Tapiola Sinfonietta 2016.)

As mentioned above, the work which was being recorded in this case study is Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8. The original titular duration of the work was 28 minutes and it featured two flutes, two cornets, two clarinets, two bassoons, one percussionist and strings. It was commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and was first performed on April 30th in the City Halls of Glasgow, UK. The first performance was conducted by Olari Elts.

In the following subsection, I will analyze and examine the producer Seppo Siirala's role and agency in the preparatory process which preceded the recording sessions of Erkki-Sven Tüür's 8th symphony performed by Tapiola Sinfonietta and conducted by Olari Elts.

## 4.2 The Producer and the Preparatory Process

The producer and agents involved in the record production process need to prepare for the recording of a work. In this section, I will discuss the ways in which Seppo Siirala prepared for a recording session of a piece of classical music in general and how he prepared for the recordings of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony no. 8. I will call this phase pre-production and it entails all the activities that have to do with the production process prior to the recording sessions. In this way, I will demonstrate ways in which the producer constructs her/his agency by means of getting to know the social, musical and organizational structures involved in the process and also in a way framing structures by becoming familiar with the other agents involved in the process. Additionally, I will discuss how the construction of the cultural space in which the recordings took place shaped and limited the agency of the producer in the production process.

## 4.2.1 The Importance of Preparation

Siirala sees the preparation process in a recording project as crucially important. His career as a full-time producer had a very intense start. On his first day at work as a full-time record producer he had to go to a recording session without proper preparation. He didn't have time to get acquainted with the work. He explains (Siirala 2015): "I learned very quickly that it is important to carefully study the works which are to be produced in advance. Fortunately, it [my first production] was fairly simple tonal music…some vocal record and the result was fairly good."

In addition to the lack of preparation time and having to go directly to the recording session, they also had a problem with the recording space. The team was recording in the Hyvinkää Hall and there was a severe problem with background noise. They had to switch halls and by chance the nearby Järvenpää Hall was available. According to Siirala "all the elements of a catastrophe were present" (Siirala 2016c). These views expressed by Siirala would suggest that proper preparation would diminish the chance of surprising elements, and potentially complicating, elements.

For Siirala, a project typically starts with contact from a record company. His work starts by someone presenting an artist or a group and a work or collection of works that is to be recorded. At this stage, he starts to get acquainted with the work(s) and think about a recording space. Siirala (2015) states:

> We always record in acoustic spaces and we need to decide what music suits what space…Is it possibly going to be a church? And if yes, is it a large church or a small church. Is it a concert hall? What kind of a concert hall? And practical issues like availability and distance and budget and other things of course affect this.

After this, all the practical issues like schedules and hall reservations need to be made. Siirala usually tries to find three consecutive recording dates for a single record. Sometimes it can require four days and sometimes the sessions are divided into two different two-day sessions. The budget of the projects is also something Siirala has to "constantly keep in mind". (Siirala 2015.)

In the case of Tapiola Sinfonietta and Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8, Siirala was given a schedule from the orchestra, which included more than just the recording times and the rehearsal times for the recording, as the week also featured a concert and preparations for the concert (Appendix 2). The works which are to be recorded, the spaces where the recordings take place, the artists involved in the project and the schedules could be understood as the structural confines within which the producer's agency may be formulated. Getting to know these confines seems to form the essence of the producer's preparation process or pre-production process.

## 4.2.2 Knowing the Work

Prior to recording, the producer must *know* the work that will be recorded "as thoroughly as possible" (Siirala 2015). According to Siirala (2015): “Here then starts a study period for me. I get acquainted with the work or works that will be recorded by reading the score and if there are some previous recordings or sonic material of the work available I listen to them as much as possible.”

In practice, this means reading the score. This perhaps implies the idea of the work being the score, i.e. the abstract parameters of pitch and rhythm and a set of instructions on dynamics and tempo written by the composer (e.g. Klein 2015). In his preparation for the recordings of Tüür’s Symphony No. 8, Siirala made notes on his version of the score. A good example of this is a note he made on measures 219–221 (Tüür 2010), in which he re-wrote the rhythmic patterns above the staff to better comprehend the complicated rhythms the composer had written. Other pre-production notes include markings that help him to follow the score while listening to the recording. An example of this would be a marking in measure 29 (Tüür 2010), in which he has marked an entry of the trumpets and the cornets after these instruments have had a rather long pause. Some notes included possible demanding parts, passages with new instruments coming in or spots with clear tempo changes (Video clip 2) (Tüür 2010a: measures 377–386). Better perception and understanding of a challenging part again served the purpose of being able to detect how well the musicians played the passage in question and allowed him to give better feedback to the musicians. All this reflects Siirala's notion of lacking a background as a conductor. He continues (2015):

> I'm kind of slow as a person, I'm not so fast I could react… comprehend a score that fast. I don't have a background like that, I'm not a conductor after all. I need to take time for it [making sense of the score]. People are different of course. Some people do it faster than I do.

In this case listening to previous recordings of the work to be recorded was possible only to a limited extent. Tüür's Symphony No. 8 had not been released as a recording before. As I mentioned in the previous section, the work was premiered in England in 2010. This premier live performance was recorded. After listening to the recording, Tüür shortened the work by taking out two long passages from the "second part" of the work, after which it was thus "much more compact" than the original version. Siirala noticed this as he listened to an unpublished "documentary" recording of the premiere live performance. (Siirala 2016a.) By calling the recording of the live performance a "document" he reveals an ideological difference between the recording of a live performance and a produced recording. As I will discuss in the following sections, they are different kinds of products and serve different purposes. As long as we understand agency as being dependent on structure (e.g. McIntyre 2008; see also chapter 1.3.2.), the producer’s activities related to getting to know the work can be

understood as a way of getting familiar with a musical structure and attempting to comprehend the ways in which the producer must build her/his agency. The producer's agency again could be seen as partially being formulated against this musical structure, as the musical structure of the score is the very thing that the producer aims to make a recording of. Furthermore, the producer's comprehension or the general understanding of the work concept in classical music can also be seen as structures which in this case contribute to the formulation of the producer's agency.

Tüür's Symphony No. 8 (Tüür 2010a) is composed as one continuous piece of music without separate parts. Siirala himself nevertheless divided the work into three parts according to the "structure of the composition" and according to "different elements that are being handled" (Siirala 2016a). This is also discussed by Tüür himself in a program note on his website (Tüür 2010b). Siirala also read through the program note. According to Siirala (2016a):

> As a small guideline, I went onto Erkki-Sven Tüür's homepage. He's written a program note on this and it is very useful in the way that it helps me to perceive this entity and the starting points in the construction of this composition.

Siirala (2016a) also suggested that I should read it as well:

> If you are interested, you should read the program note written by the composer especially now that you are about to hear it. It [the work] takes shape in a whole other way. It is not very long and it helps you to follow the work as well.

Reading a program note written by the composer himself and holding that as an important part of understanding the work reveals that the intentions of the composer are important for Siirala. The program note becomes something that guides the recording and production process despite the fact that in the note Tüür encourages the listener to "trust one's intuition", "create one's very own unique story while listening to this music" and states that "the best approach I can recommend is prejudice-free listening" (Tüür 2010b). The program note thus functions as a sort of a composer's presence in the preparatory process even though, as I will show later, the composer was present in the recording sessions as well. Symes has discussed the importance and meaning of program or sleeve notes in the context of recorded classical music. He argues that sleeve notes "act as mediating texts that provide a particular reading of the music" (Symes 2004: 151). Symes naturally discusses texts that are written on the sleeves of finished recordings and thus function as mediating texts between the "listener and the loudspeaker" (ibid.)[3].

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[3] The musicologist and composer, Lawrence Kramer, understands these kinds of "textual inclusions" in terms of "hermeneutic windows" (Kramer 1990: 9–10). He writes: "1. Textual inclusions. This type includes texts set to music, titles, epigrams,

In the case of Tüür's 8th symphony and the producer Siirala, a program note (Tüür 2010b) comes into play already in the recording and production process of the work and, albeit rather formalistic in nature, provides some sort of a web of meaning already in the early stages of the record production process.

Studying the score very carefully and reading program notes written by the composer himself strengthens some fundamental values that lie in the cultural and historical structures of classical music. The composer’s intentions are important and they play a part in the construction of the producer’s agency. Considering the composer’s intentions, however, could be seen as a perspective, through which the producer himself forms structures around his agency. Perhaps having total “freedom” as a producer isn’t desirable.

### 4.2.3 Getting to Know Other Agents

In the pre-production process of a recording project, Siirala aims at getting to know how the artists approach the work at hand. This happens on two levels. Firstly, he talks and has conversations with, for example, the conductor and, if there is one, the soloist. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, he listens to performances and/or rehearsals of the work by the artists involved in the recording project, which allows him to get a sonic picture of what the music would ultimately sound like. He (Siirala 2015) elaborates:

> If the artists have a concert or some other happening where they perform these works, I go to listen to them to get a picture of how they approach this work. I also try to form a personal relationship with them, because it helps the beginning of the process if you've somehow gotten acquainted with them and discussed the matter with them to some extent and found out what they are aiming for.

In this way Siirala (2015) attempts to tackle the project from different perspectives. Furthermore, he has to make sure that he has a recording engineer, since he does not do the actual hands-on recording himself. He (Siirala 2015) elaborates:

> I always need a professional recording engineer as a partner to work with. I have to brief him about the project, of course. The recording engineer doesn't

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*programs* [my italics], notes on the score, and sometimes even expression markings. In dealing with these materials, it is critical to remember – especially with texts of vocal pieces – that they do not establish (authorize, fix) a meaning that the music somehow reiterates, but only invite the interpreter to find meaning in the interplay of expressive acts. The same caution applies to the other two types. (ibid.)”

> necessarily have to get acquainted with the repertoire in the same way as I do, but s/he has to have a clue about what kind of an overall sound we are aiming at and what the [important] points in the repertoire are and what kind of stuff we are going to be working with. I need to be able to describe that.

Sometimes Siirala and the engineer have the opportunity to go and listen to a last rehearsal and do a sound check. This is true especially with orchestras. In his view, this is important especially when the work that is to be recorded is new material and has not been recorded before (Siirala 2015). As noted above, this was the case with the recording of Tüür's Symphony No. 8 as well.

The fact that Tüür shortened the piece after hearing the live recording of the first performance raises an important issue related to the relationship between composition and record production. As I have discussed in chapter 2.3., in classical music the process of composing is usually seen as inherently separate from the studio production process, unlike in contemporary popular music, where activities related to composition and studio production constantly intertwine (e.g. Auvinen 2017). Making compositional changes to a work due to having listened to a recording of the work in question, would nevertheless suggest that record production does have an effect on compositions to some extent in classical music as well. Tüür (2016a) elaborates on how he gets inspiration from recording sessions:

> It is good for a composer to get to listen to one's own orchestral texture many times consecutively. This always gives new ideas and thoughts and a completely different [view]. It is also important from the perspective of future works to sit here [at the recording sessions] and listen. It always generates some inspiring ideas as to what I could do, what I could develop from a texture and it's inspiring for me from that perspective too.

According to Tüür (2016a), the recording session is the situation in which a score is dealt with in the deepest way. The same depth and interrogation of a score does not happen in an orchestra rehearsal for instance before the concert. He (Tüür 2016a) adds: "It is a good opportunity to reflect on things, what you have done as a composer and what you want to do in the future. Many new ideas are born in the sonic reality." These views suggest that despite the fact that the agencies of the producer and the composer are clearly separate in classical music, the production process of a record and the producer as an agent who works with the score could be seen as having an indirect effect on the composition and the work of the composer, when and if the composer gets new compositional ideas as a result of the rigorous work the producer does with the score in a recording situation. In this way the producer's agency could be understood as bleeding into the compositional process as well. Certainly, there are differences between composers in classical music. Tüür's background in progressive rock might have an effect on his own idea of what the "work" is. Tüür (2016a) states: "The work is

the score but the sonic entity is always a part of it. Without the sonic entity kind of like [sentence incomplete]… The sounding reality is what matters for me.”

In the case of Tüür's Symphony No.8 (Tüür 2010), Siirala went to listen to Tapiola Sinfonietta's rehearsals on days leading to the recording day. The orchestra had a rigorous recording and rehearsal schedule to follow (Appendix 2). This schedule, which contained information on when the orchestra was going to work on the symphony, also helped Siirala plan his preparations for the recording project as the orchestra's weekly schedule included working on other music as well. Tapiola Sinfonietta practiced Tüür's Symphony No. 8 for the first time on March 8th 2016 at 11:50 in the morning. I was allowed to sit in on the rehearsal as well and observe Siirala's work. At the same time this gave me the opportunity observe how the orchestra prepared for their concert and for the recording sessions. As we entered the area within Espoo Cultural Center, which was restricted to Tapiola Sinfonietta's personnel, Siirala had the opportunity to talk a little with some individuals involved in the recording project. As we walked along the rather lengthy corridor which leads from the lobby of Espoo Cultural Center to the backstage area of Tapiola Hall, the home venue of Tapiola Sinfonietta, we met lots of people. Siirala had informed the people at Tapiola Sinfonietta about the presence of a researcher beforehand and he introduced me to everyone we met. As we met with the conductor, Olari Elts, the two quickly spoke about some common professional acquaintances and another project they were both involved in (FD 8.3.2016). Talking about other common projects led to discussions about the current project. Siirala and Elts discussed how the rather sizable percussion section, which included a drum set, was going to be situated on the stage. Siirala asked Elts about his vision. Elts responded by saying he didn’t really have an opinion and asked Siirala about his opinion. Siirala said he needed to listen to the rehearsals and think about it. (FD March the 8th 2016.) This conversation reveals that the conductor had confidence in Siirala's judgment and ability to make decisions that affect the aesthetic content of the upcoming record. In other words, the conductor gave the producer creative power in the process even if the producer first asked for his input.

As we continued to walk down the hallway, we met with the orchestra’s percussionist. Siirala and the percussionist had a brief conversation about the fact that Tüür’s Symphony No.8 includes a drum set. The percussionist told him that he had recently performed in a classical piece with a drum set. (FD March the 8th 2016.) This conversation didn't contain very detailed decisions or questions from either party. It could be seen as the producer’s way of making sure that the percussionist knows what he is doing as the work includes an exceptionally large percussion section and the percussion plays an important part in the composition. Furthermore, according to Siirala, the "peculiarity of peculiarities is that it features a drum set" (Siirala 2016a).

At first, short conversations like this might seem like a waste of time. They do not contain very large quantities of information regarding the actual project the individuals are involved in. On the other hand, such conversations might have an extremely important social function. First of all, they can work as signifiers of presence. The

people having conversations acknowledge the active presence of one another. Moreover, having a conversation about the project, even a short one, strengthens the idea that the record production process is a *collective* effort. Even if some of the conversations do not touch upon the project at hand, it can be a way of acknowledging one another as peers and professionals in a common field (Auvinen 2016: 17). Also, it strengthens the common web of intersubjective meaning that the two share and thus it may work as social glue, a form of building trust and bonding. In addition to meeting with Elts and the percussionist, Siirala introduced me to the intendants of the orchestra. As I have said before, he had informed them about my presence beforehand and their attitude towards me was rather positive. They granted me full access to the premises where the orchestra practiced and performed. This turned out to be a great asset for my fieldwork. From this moment on every time I wanted to enter the premises, the security personnel opened the door to me even if I wasn't accompanied by Siirala or a member of the orchestra. (FD, March the 8th 2016.) After walking down the hallway and talking to people, Siirala sat down in the middle of Tapiola Hall, which is the home venue of Tapiola Sinfonietta. He listened to the orchestra rehearse and read the score. As he listened, he made notes and markings on his version of the score, especially in parts that would cause possible difficulties in the recording process. (Video Clip 3.)

Despite the hierarchies that are in place in an orchestra setting, the atmosphere was relaxed. During the very first time the orchestra rehearsed Tüür's Symphony No.8, the conductor Elts gave the percussionist feedback by saying he plays too loud. The percussionist protested a little by referring to the sheet music where the written dynamic indication is mezzo forte but complied nonetheless. Furthermore, they exchanged amused looks with Siirala, who laughed a little and raised his finger to his lips to hush in a joke-like manner. (FD March the 8th 2016.) This interaction between Siirala and the percussionist is interesting. The percussionist in a way sought approval for his idea of how a part should be played from Siirala, the producer, even if it is self-evident that the conductor is the one who makes the final calls in an orchestra rehearsal. Siirala gained a role and agency in the rehearsal despite the fact that the nature of an orchestra rehearsal should not depend on whether it aims at a live performance or a recording session. According to the conductor Elts (2016):

> In theory they shouldn't differ from one another at all. But often these days, you probably know that the concert is often recorded as well and then is put onto record, so on and so forth. But then this kind of a studio recording… of course it would be nice to always have the opportunity to work in the way that…let's say that…often in England, for example, that if we have a recording session with a London orchestra and then…we have the music…and then people practice at home and then we press the recording button. There is not much time for rehearsals. This is the case with orchestrated film music for example. We record straight away.

Elts (2016) went on to explain that Tüür's 8th symphony is a work which could not be recorded in this manner due to the fact that it is technically challenging. Thus, it needed to be properly rehearsed for the concert alone. He (ibid.) continues:

> I constructed the concert program in such a way that we would have a little more time for the [Erkki-Sven Tüür's 8th] symphony than normally. Other works [in the concert program] are a little easier. And we have had a bit more time to rehearse the symphony and have worked more on it.

Elts further elaborated that things should be done this way every time there is a concert coming up. He also highlighted the importance of having more time for different sections of the orchestra to rehearse separately, especially in a work like Tüür's Symphony No. 8, which is "very difficult for the brass section". (Elts 2016.)

As Siirala listened to the rehearsal he also made notes on, for example, the trumpet player playing at the wrong time (FD March the 8th 2016). When the orchestra finished playing the work through the first time, the conductor Elts had a short chat with the musicians. He gave instructions and the musicians made notes on their sheet music. They started to play again from the letter Q (Tüür 2010a, measure 314), which starts with a fade-in. Siirala made a note of this (Tüür 2010a, measure 314). This can be understood as the producer’s way of preparing for the spots in the work which might be problematic in the upcoming recording situation.

At 11:44 AM the recording engineer Enno Mäemets entered the Tapiola Hall. He sat next to us and commented on the lighting of the hall. He asked Siirala about where the percussions would be situated onstage for the recording. Siirala explained the situation and its challenges to Mäemets. The problem was that there was more equipment onstage than was needed for the recording of Tüür's Symphony No. 8 because some of that extra equipment was needed for other works in the upcoming concert. The microphone set-up would have to be adjusted to the situation. Furthermore, Siirala and Mäemest discuss micing solutions for the trumpet (FD March the 8th, 2016).

At this point Elts let everyone except for the woodwinds take a 10-minute break. Siirala whispered to me that the second cornet makes some kind of an undesirable high-pitched sound while formally playing the correct notes. He used the Finnish word "kiksailla". For want of a precise translation, the term means the sound that results from bad tongue technique when playing a brass instrument. According to Siirala, this would be a problem in the recording process. Siirala and Mäemets also spoke about when they would put the microphones up onto the stage. They decided that it had to be done on the night of Thursday 10th of March, since the hall was going to be used in the morning. (FD March the 8th 2016.)

After the 10-minute break, the conductor Elts sent everyone else home except for the strings. Elts and the concertmaster spoke about issues related to performance style and interpretation. She asked Elts if they should play a part "in the style of

Shostakovich". Elts responded by saying "no" and telling them to play the part "lightly, in a jazz style" instead. Elts and the concertmaster talked a lot during the remainder of the rehearsal. The concertmaster also spent some time giving performance instructions to other players. (FD March the 8th 2016.) This discussion resembled to some extent the practice of listening to reference material when producing popular music (see chapters 3.2. and 5.3; see also Auvinen 2016: 26), even if the musicians do not actually listen to anything else during the discussion at the rehearsal. This nevertheless points to the idea that everyone who was present had some sort of an understanding of what jazz sounds like or what are the typical characteristics of a performance of Shostakovich's music. Therefore, it refers to an assumption that everyone has undergone a similar education, which makes it possible for everyone to have similar ideas of what certain styles or composers sound like. I continued to listen to the rehearsal with Siirala until the rehearsal ended at 1:57 PM. After the rehearsal, Siirala and Elts discussed the seating arrangements for the recording session. They also discussed the position of the percussionist onstage. (FD March the 8th 2016). Even if the rehearsal discussions between the conductor and the musicians might seem irrelevant from the perspective of the producer’s agency, Siirala sat and listened carefully to the discussions in the rehearsal. This provided him with valuable information about how the conductor and the musicians approach the work. He’d be able to utilize this information in the recording process.

The rehearsals continued the following day, March 9th, 2016. Siirala started his day with some coffee at the cafeteria at Espoo Cultural Center. I joined him for coffee at 11:30 AM and we discussed the cultural industry and the cutbacks city orchestras are facing. After coffee, we proceeded to the Tapiola Hall. We sat in the very middle of the auditorium. Elts and the orchestra were actually not rehearsing Tüür's Symphony No. 8 as they should have been according to the printed rehearsal schedule, but were working on other music that they were going to perform on the following Friday. Elts apologized for the inconvenience and told us that they were going to work on Tüür after the lunch break. This didn't seem to bother Siirala at all. Instead he responded: "We'll just enjoy it then". (FD March the 9th 2016.) This demonstrates the importance of the producer being flexible in the process. It also shows that even if the producer is responsible for the overall success of the recording project, including schedules, the artists have the freedom to make changes at least in the preparation phase, and the producer is the one that has to adjust.

After lunch, the orchestra started working on Tüür's symphony again. Siirala once again read the score and made notes while listening. Every once in a while, he whispered and made comments to me. For example, when the orchestra played through measure 47, Siirala whispered to himself: "The rhythms are not together at all". He made another note on measure number 35, which featured some bad intonation. At times Siirala hummed to himself as he tried to get a better sense of what was happening musically. (FD March the 9th 2016.) This perhaps reflects Siirala's lack of background as a conductor (Siirala 2015).

## 4.2.4 Practical and Social Structures Limiting the Producer's Agency

As I have stated before, in this study I build on the premise that agency is dependent on structure (e.g. McIntyre 2008). Structures again come in different forms and types. Therefore, it is appropriate to devote a section on how the social structures of the orchestra and the practical circumstances related to the physical characteristics of the recording venue, which are structures that the producer cannot change, contribute to the producer's agency in record production.

On a rehearsal break Siirala went onstage to talk to the conductor Elts. They agreed that the best position for the percussion and the drums was not against the wall. In general, the percussion should be further away from other instruments. The two didn't discuss the reason, but it might have to do with the acoustics of the space and the fact that, given the role of the percussion in the work, it might be better that the percussion bleeds as little as possible into the close-up microphones intended for other instrument groups. Also, close proximity to a wall might cause unwanted reflections.

As far as the seating arrangements were concerned, the greatest challenge seemed to be the concert on Friday, in which the orchestra performed other pieces in addition to Tüür's Symphony No. 8, which featured other instruments that are not a part of Tüür's Symphony No. 8, such as a grand piano. The production team wanted to record the concert to get more material for the record. The extra instruments caused spatial and acoustic problems; they would resonate while the orchestra was playing and they would take up room, which limited the possibilities of rearranging the musicians' seats on the stage. The musicians should nevertheless be seated the same way in the concert as they would sit on the following Saturday, which was the recording day. Otherwise using the material recorded at the live concert would be challenging, if not impossible. (FD 9.3.2016.) This is an example which demonstrates how concert schedules and plans not directly related to the production of a record can limit the producer's agency.

The rehearsal ended at 2PM. After this Siirala went to talk to the house technician backstage. They looked at a screen which displayed the stage in its entirety and discussed the possible changing of seating arrangements during the concert. The technician told Siirala that he would prefer not to move anything around, but that he could move around anything else except for the grand piano. The harp to be used in the first half of the concert didn't feature in Tüür's Symphony No. 8, and would be removed anyway. Also, he'd be able to move all the extra percussions, which would be the source of most of the undesirable resonance noise. (Field Recording 3.) This discussion demonstrates how the producer has to strike a balance between artistic means, in this case making the recording circumstances sonically as good as possible, and practical issues related to the limitations that the recording space and the practices that the orchestra as an institution constitute.

After discussing with the house stage technician, Siirala spoke to the conductor Elts and asked him if it was possible to move the double basses from behind the first

violins to the other side next to the percussion and drum set. Shortly afterwards Siirala and Elts went back onto the stage. They continued to discuss the same issue with the concertmaster and solo cellist. The concertmaster brought up concerns about how well the musicians could hear one another if they changed the seating arrangements. She said that in the present seating arrangement, in which the first and the second violins are opposite each other, "they find each other best musically". She told Siirala and Elts how the orchestra had voted on the seating arrangement in the past and the current arrangement had "won by a landslide". Changing it would make the musicians' work much more difficult. At this point Siirala, Elts, the concert master and the solo cellist collectively agreed that substantial changes to the seating arrangement could not be made. (FD 10.3.2016.) This again demonstrates how the concert hall as a cultural space limits the agency of the producer. The producer cannot do everything s/he wants to make the best possible record due to the musicians' reciprocal mutual habits, which have been constructed in connection with the physical and sonic realities that their concert hall provides. These post-rehearsal conversations demonstrate how Siirala has to consider many opinions and positions from many different people involved in a record production project, ranging from house technicians to musicians. Sometimes these views contradict what the producer thinks would be the way to achieve the best sonic result. S/he nevertheless has to live with that and make the best out of a compromise, which is the result of many opinions, feelings and approaches. The producer's creative agency, which involves aesthetic decision-making, like the seating arrangement, which again would affect the sonic result of the end product, is thus constrained by conventions and habits of the musicians in the orchestra. Also, the immediate circumstances, such as the requirements of upcoming concerts and the stage setup administered by venue staff, contribute to the producer's ability to make and effect decisions (McIntyre 2008). Another way to understand this, however, is that it might be desirable from the producer's perspective to consider the expertise and experience of other creative parties involved. Here, for example, if the producer had had his way, the musicians might not have been able to play as well as possible, resulting in a final product of inferior quality. Listening to the musicians might be necessary preparation, during which the producer learns how the best possible outcome can be achieved with the specific collaborators involved. If nobody negotiated with the producer or offered alternative views to those of the producer's and the producer automatically got his way, the musical result might end up worse than intended.

### 4.2.5 The Producer and Knowing as Much as Possible

In conclusion, I might state that Siirala's preparations in a recording project aim at *knowing* as much as possible about all the different aspects of the upcoming project. He must know the people involved in the project. He must know how the musicians and other creative parties involved in the project approach the music. He must know the spatial, temporal and financial circumstances of a project and he must know the

music, i.e. the score and possible earlier recordings of the work, as well as possible.

Siirala's activities in the preparation process of a recording project reveal two important aspects. Firstly, the producer's responsibilities cover many areas and elements of a recording project. According to Siirala (2015):

> Well, the state of things is that all responsibility is loaded onto the producer. It is like that. If something goes wrong, the fault usually lies with the producer. Whatever it is, except for when a musician plays badly. Sometimes that happens too. But I am responsible for the musical part in the making of a record, that it gets finished and it is as good as it can be and that there aren't technical mishaps or mistakes and that the musical content is as good as possible.

He (2016c) continues:

> Afterwards, when the critics for example listen to the recording very seldom can they, are they able to, even realize that the producer has some kind of a role in this… Except in the case that it sounds bad. Then it is usually the fault of bad production… Usually this is the case, but very seldom have I read [a critique, which states] that [a record is] well produced.

Johnson (2010: 44) has also noted the tendency to blame "production" for anything they understand as faults in the end product. He (ibid.) states: "In a commercially released recording a minor blemish already signifies a failure of the system – defective production". This, at least to me, signifies an interesting difference between records of popular music and classical. Negative critique of popular music often attributes failures to the pursuits of the artist whose name is on the cover, not so much to the producers.

Another important aspect is related to the importance of the score. The notion that the producer must know the score as well as possible before the recording process begins reveals that the idea of the score as a template for the musical work still prevails in classical music. This observation would support the notion that the aim of record production in classical music is to retrieve the work from the score in its sonic form. As Eve Klein (2015) has put it: "The drive to realise a work "faithfully" has dictated the cultural construction of classical music over the last two hundred years and informs all aspects of performance pedagogy." Nevertheless, the producer's activities make it clear that heavy mediation is involved, however transparent the process of sonic retrieval of a score might be (e.g. Blake 2012: 195).

## 4.3 Recording Sessions: Power and Technology in the Studio

All preparation and what I have labeled pre-production in this study aim at making sure that the recording sessions are as successful as possible. The recording sessions again are an inherently technological process. This section will examine how the producer's agency is manifested and constructed in the recording sessions. Furthermore, I will analyze and interrogate the ways in which the use of technology during the recording sessions construct the agency of the producer and the ways in which the existing static working spaces and environments and the technological environment constructed by the agents mirror the social organization and thus the agencies of the participants of the recording sessions. By doing this I attempt to address my sub-questions, which deal with how the producer's agency is constructed through the use of technology and how the studio as a cultural space plays a part in the construction of the producer's agency. By answering these sub-questions, I aim to clarify the main question regarding the creative agency of the producer.

### 4.3.1. Choice of Recording Space and its Ramifications

As I've stated before, the recordings of Erkki-Sven Tüür's 8th symphony took place at the Tapiola Hall, which is the "home" of the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta. In general, classical recordings often take place in the home hall of an orchestra and one of the reasons for this is financial. According to Siirala (2015):

> Well, orchestras usually have a home hall, where the recordings naturally take place, because the rent of a large hall is usually rather high, and if they pay rent anyway, why would they go somewhere else and pay extra rent… Record companies don't want to pay for the production costs these days. This restricts [the choice of the recording space] to some extent.

Financial constraints thus play an important part in decisions, which ultimately affect the aesthetic and artistic outcome of a musical record. While this is an obvious structural issue, which affects agency, there are also other external factors that influence the choice of the recording space. Siirala (2015) continues:

> Churches are another option. They are not necessarily that cheap, but they are acoustically very different. The problem with churches is often external noise… Traffic noises or other surprising noises like the sound of the gravedigger's Bobcat or the leaf blower or the lawnmower.

The restrictions that affect the producer's agency concerning churches as recording spaces could perhaps be viewed as structures which are built into the original social

purpose of the church space. People are buried on church grounds for historical and religious reasons. Furthermore, churches are often situated in areas where people have easy access to them and many churches were built at a time before recording technologies even existed. Therefore, soundproofing was not a consideration at the time of building. The most important matter in choosing the recording space is nevertheless aesthetic. Siirala (2015) continues:

> The primary criterion is that we try to find a space which is suitable for the music, which would support the music. Roughly it can be said that older music needs a resonant space around it so it blends well, and modern music with lots of details has to be done in a drier space so everything gets differentiated.

This was the case with Tüür's Symphony No. 8 as well. In addition to the hall being the home venue of the orchestra, the Tapiola Hall is acoustically rather dry with very little reverb (FD 8.3.2016) and would thus be suitable for a modern piece of music with plenty of details, which ideally would require a dry space for recording. Let us consider, for example, measures 25–26 (Tüür 2010), in which the clarinets, the cornets and the percussions (marimba) play an overlapping rhythm in a medium fast-tempo. Listening to the passage in the final edit of the recorded work (Tüür 2016) makes it even more evident that recording a passage like this with layered rhythms on instruments with very different attacks in a space with a substantial amount of reverb would make it impossible for the listener to hear the rhythmic details of the piece. Another example can be found in measures 219–221 (Tüür 2010a), in which Siirala has made his own notes above the staff to make sense of the rhythmic pattern. Listening to the passage (Tüür 2016: measures 219–221) makes it clear that this sort of a rhythmic pattern performed and recorded in a space with lots of reverb would make it seem as if the musicians are just playing in bad timing and not as if the composer composed it in this way. The dry acoustics of Tapiola Hall nevertheless make it possible for the listener to make sense of the complicated rhythms, which are a part of the composition. For the reasons I have specified above, the choice of recording space is a combination of aesthetic judgement on the producer’s part, financial limitations necessity of a recording project and the practical conditions related to the fact that the recording space is the home venue of the orchestra. The choice of venue reflects on the producer’s agency; on the one hand, there is the aesthetic judgement that the producer exercises when choosing a venue for a recording project. On the other hand, the financial constraints and the practicality of recording in the home venue of the orchestra seem to dominate any real choice of recording venue, at least in this case study. The necessity of recording at the home venue of the orchestra imposes structural conditions which affect the agency of the producer, as I will discuss later.

### 4.3.2 The Constructed Technological Environments

The facility, Tapiola Hall inside the Espoo Cultural Center, didn't feature a built-in control room, as it is not designed first and foremost for recording purposes, but for live performances. Therefore, a control room had to be separately constructed for the recording sessions. This is a common feature in spaces where recordings of classical music take place. Siirala (2015) explains:

> We do all our recordings in acoustic spaces, and if they were built more than ten years ago, they don't have control rooms, or it's in the wrong place or it's a control room which is not suitable for our purposes. They are meant for controlling lights or making documentary recordings. Thus, we have to use a dressing room or some other space, in which our recording equipment, which fortunately is very small these days, can fit.

This was the case with the recording of Tüür's Symphony No. 8 in Tapiola Hall as well. The control room was built into an instrument storage room (Photo 1), which was situated along one of the backstage hallways near to the back entrance of the hall. The computer and its screen, along with headphones and individual volume controls for everyone (including myself), a talkback microphone and microphone amplifiers were set up in this instrument storage room, which now doubled as a control room. There were no studio monitors and all listening happened through headphones, which is different compared to a traditional control room. Cables went from the control room to the 23 individual microphones set onstage through an analog audio distributor. The control room in this case is a good example of a technological structure constructed by the agents, namely the engineer and the producer involved in record production. It exemplifies an agent's capacity "to alter it [structure] to some extent" (Taylor 2001: 35). The technological structure is built with the purpose of recording in mind, so in a way the premediated social structure of a recording session steers the construction of a control room. The possibilities that the production team had when constructing the control room again were limited by the physical space that the Tapiola Hall and its backstage area offered. Therefore, the production team didn't have visual contact with the recording space, and thus with the musicians and the conductor, in the way that traditional conventional studios have (see e.g. Bates 2012). A small talkback speaker was set up onstage behind and a little to the left of the conductor's podium (Photo 3). This allowed the producer Siirala and other members of the recording team to communicate with the conductor and the musicians. The lack of visuals between the control room and the recording space nevertheless created a situation where the musicians and the conductor would hear a *faceless voice* giving feedback about their performance.

The composer and film music scholar, Michel Chion (1999: 18), calls a voice like this an *acousmatic* voice or an *acousmêtre*; a voice that is heard "without its cause

being seen". A voice like this could sound like the voice of God, an all-seeing, or in this case all-hearing force, which one cannot see, but which sees you (the musician and the conductor).[4] Interestingly, Chion (1999: 19) makes a similar connection to religions, especially Judaism and Islam, in which the "Master, God or Spirit" is transformed into an acousmatic voice. Chion (1999: 21) also distinguishes between a *complete acousmêtre* and an already visualized acoustmêtre which "is more familiar and reassuring". In this case Siirala would fall into the latter category as he was visibly present and in personal contact with some of the agents involved in the process before the recordings started. Thus, Siirala's voice could be understood as being elevated into an all-seeing (or in this case, hearing), all-knowing voice of omnipotence in the recording sessions (Chion 1999: 24). Here, this works as an example of how the technological constructions of the technological studio space in a way mirrors the social organization and hierarchy of the recording sessions in record production in the same way that "research space mirrors the social organizational units of science" (Durkheim & Mauss 2002: 46; quoted in Bates 2012). From a musician's perspective, the producer is not physically present in the performance space but gains a sort of a proxy presence through technology and gives feedback to the musicians on their performance as a faceless all-hearing force through a small black box (the speaker) situated next to the conductor. This puts the producer in a very powerful position especially combined with the technology constructed to enable the producer to control all communication between the control room and the recording space (I will discuss this point more extensively later). Due to the inability to observe how the musicians acted during recordings, it is hard to say how much the all-perceiving voice of the producer in fact affected the overall situation in the concert hall/recording space. I would nevertheless argue that it strengthened the producer's agency with respect to the conductor and the musicians due to the lack of immediate visual contact that exists, for example, in a traditional studio setting through windows between the recording spaces and the control room. This might have also been the reason for the fact that Siirala gave all of his critical feedback in a soft and his positive feedback in a reassuring voice. The lack of the reassuring element (Chion 1999: 21) requires other forms of reassurance. Also, the fact that Siirala socialized with the musicians and the conductor prior to the recording sessions can be understood as important from this perspective; it is easier to take feedback from someone you have seen.

Multiple micing and multi-track recording, which naturally is a common feature of contemporary recording regardless of genre or style, was adapted to the production processes led by Siirala at a relatively late stage. He (Siirala 2015) explains:

> We recorded directly into stereo for a pretty long time before we moved into recording multi-track in the early 2000's. That is an important point, that it is

[4] For obvious reasons, I was not able (allowed) to observe the playing of the orchestra in the recording space during recording; an extra person inside the recording space could cause unwanted noise and potentially affect good takes.

> also a financial question, because mixing and all this takes time and time is money. Also, the equipment and the software were still expensive at that point. And nowadays all recordings are multi-track recordings.

The manner in which Siirala and his colleagues switched to multi-tracking was fairly arbitrary. He (ibid.) continues:

> The change was in fact quite dramatic. I can give you one example including names… We were recording Lindberg's music and Esa-Pekka Salonen was conducting. Esa-Pekka had of course gotten used to multi-tracking in the big world, where they had switched to multi-tracking earlier, and where they have more resources and he had gotten used to not being that accurate with the balance [of the orchestra] because they would have more options at the mixing stage.

Siirala and his team were recording at the Helsinki Cultural Center with people from the Finnish national broadcasting company (YLE). They were recording direct stereo with two tracks. He (ibid.) continues: "Esa-Pekka [Salonen] came to listen and was kind of surprised that he would have to have everything in balance as we recorded it. So, he was like "couldn't we like…couldn't we multi-track this. With Sony, we have like really good equipment.""

The workers of YLE quickly got up and Siirala and his crew switched to multi-tracking during the recordings. He viewed the transition as a positive thing as stereo recording was very stressful. He (ibid.) elaborates:

> Sometimes I do projects with YLE and sometimes with another recording engineer and I've sometimes worked abroad and that sort of stuff. But it was very stressful. When we recorded everything directly into stereo, everything had to be in good balance immediately. The knowledge of the fact that we couldn't change it afterwards was the thing. Multi-tracking certainly made everything easier.

According to Siirala (ibid.), doing a sound check is easier with multi-tracking, as you have a greater control over the sound in the control room. Multi-tracking especially helps in the post-production process so you don't get "the kinds of gray hair caused by notions like 'that part should have been multi-tracked'" (Siirala 2015). As mentioned before, Siirala switched to multitrack recording at a fairly late stage. On the general switch to multi-tracking in classical music, Horning (2013: 171–172) writes: "At the height of the era of "high fidelity"… faithfulness to the original performance had long since given way to splicing, editing, re-recording, and multiple micing…"

The reason for the late switch to multi-tracking might have to do with the small size of the recording scene in a small country like Finland and the resulting limited

budgets. As Siirala's (2015) views would suggest, the conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen had gotten used to more advanced recording techniques in the "big world" with large companies like Sony. Recording in stereo and the switch to multi-track could again be seen as a play between the structural financial constraints, aesthetic aims and agencies of the various individuals involved in the record production process. Referring to Siirala's views, multi-tracking gives more control over the aesthetic outcome of a record to the producer and/or the engineer. Therefore, it is interesting that, at least according to Siirala (2015), he switched to multi-tracking because a conductor suggested it. The switch could nevertheless also be understood as a form of natural progress which both parties involved acknowledge similarly. This would suggest that, at least to some extent, the producer and the conductor have very similar ideas of what constitutes a good end result.

### 4.3.3 Recording Takes and Giving Feedback

The recording team sitting in the control room during the actual recording sessions consisted of the producer Seppo Siirala, a substitute for the main engineer Enno Mäemets and the composer Erkki-Sven Tüür. Before recording of the takes started, Siirala wanted to do a final sound check and asked the orchestra to play "the part with lots of marimba and low frequencies" (FD 12.3.2016). As the final sound check sounded "healthy", everyone was ready to start recording. The conductor still came to the control room to briefly go over the recording plan. This wish to speak face-to-face indicates at least to some degree that the lack of visual contact is a hindrance to some extent. Siirala, the composer Tüür and the conductor Elts decided to start playing and recording from the beginning until measure number 58 after which they would start doing retakes of shorter passages (FD 12.3.2016).

The team began recording. The engineer always stated out loud the number of the take and Siirala would say "action" or "cut", commands which resemble ones given by a film director (see e.g. Warner 2003: 34). When the recording was rolling, Siirala constantly made notes on his version of the score much as he did during the rehearsals. Only this time he wrote down the numbers of takes and how they were. For instance, a number and a plus-sign after it meant the number of the take and that it was a good take. As an example, onto measure 65 Siirala wrote 16+ (Tüür 2010, measure 65), which means that take number 16 is good. However, a number and two small vertical lines, which look like quotation marks, indicates the number of a take and that the rhythms are not together. An example of this would be the marking 15" in measure number 62 (Tüür 2010, measure 62), which means that the musicians, who were supposed to play together, didn't play together in measure number 62. The composer Tüür also read the score during the recordings but did not take any notes.

At measure 58, Siirala cut the recording as planned and gave feedback to the musicians. Siirala's feedback included statements such as "measure 47 is inaccurate" and "the string section has problems at measures 48 and 49". After this the production

team in the control room started to record take upon take and Siirala gave feedback between them. (FD 12.3.2016.)

According to Siirala (2015), the producer must be able to give credible feedback during a recording session. Therefore, the producer must have a background as a professional musician, singer or conductor (ibid.). This is because otherwise the producer would not be able to give "enlightened feedback" to the artists (Siirala 2015). He (ibid.) elaborates:

> This [giving feedback] is the essential issue in the producer's work. In the recording situation, you have to be able to give credible feedback to the artists so that a [relationship of] trust is established and that you really have an opinion upon which the artists can base their own decisions.

This again reinforces enforces a relationship of trust between the producer and the musicians, which enables the musicians to believe that the producer really has an opinion on which the musician can lean when making their own decisions. Siirala (ibid.) also discussed the lack of a “producer-culture” in Finland, stating that there are only three full-time professional classical music producers in the country (cf. Muikku 2001: 308). He elaborated that all of them have backgrounds as professional classical musicians. Different countries, however, have different systems. Siirala (2015) explains: “In Germany, there’s this Tonmeister education, but that also includes mandatory instrumental studies. A classical producer must thus have a background as a musician.” His view of musicianship as an essential element of the producer's background has some resonance with earlier writings on classical producers. However, from a historical point of view, emphasizing the importance of musicianship as the background of a producer is peculiar and might reflect a change that took place in the 1960’s. Blake (2009: 39) argues that this was not the case before the 1960’s. According to him (ibid.): “Producers such as Walter Legge at EMI and John Culshaw at Decca had no formal degree-level musical training”. Blake (ibid.) discusses how Culshaw even disapproved of the change that happened from the 1960’s onwards as trained musicians and university-educated Tonmeisters started to produce records. He (idib.) continues: “Legge and Culshaw had been ‘trained’ not in performance of composition but in music appreciation, of an already existing repertoire.” One could argue, however, that at least the contemporary training of a classical musician does indeed include training in the appreciation of the canonic repertoire. Other important elements mentioned in earlier research are, for instance, being an assistant to an older producer and being in administrative positions with musical groups (Blake 2012: 198–199; 2009: 39).

In the case of the production of Erkki-Sven Tüür’s Symphony No. 8, Siirala was already an experienced producer, which naturally would elevate his status and strengthen his authority in the process with respect to other creative parties involved. However, the fact that he was able to start working as a professional full-time producer

for a record company without an extensive track record would suggest that in classical music the producer-status comes with the job description. Furthermore, credibility as a producer also stems from a background as a professional musician in classical music and not from a track record of financially successful records. Siirala's credibility (or track record) also stemmed from his background as a professional classical musician, not from successful recordings produced in the past, unlike popular music, as he had very little producing experience before starting as a full-time staff-producer at a record company. The idea that the producer's agency is more or less formed through the pre-determined job description reflects the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the production process in classical music when compared to that of popular music. Furthermore, the importance of having a background as a professional musician, which in classical music more or less means that one must have studied music in a recognized educational institution, strengthens the bureaucratic and perhaps the "stiff" institutional nature of record production in classical music and the realm of professional classical music in general. Another way to understand the background of the classical producer is in terms of music literacy. The key to becoming a classical producer might lie in being able to read western notation, even if this skill does not necessarily have to match that of an experienced conductor (Siirala 2015). This skill is acquired through classical education often in recognized educational institutions. In popular music, however, the producer is not necessarily required to be able to read Western notation as popular music is often created during the studio process and by working directly with sound (Warner 2003: 18–19; Théberge 1997: 192).

Siirala's body language revealed a great deal about his opinion of the performance he heard. He shook his head at tough spots which didn't sound good, and in which the musicians made mistakes or played inaccurately (FD 12.3.2016). This was at least to an extent made possible by the lack of visuals between the control room and the recording space; the recording team could more freely express their feelings about the process as long as the musicians couldn't see or hear them. This again was entirely controlled by Siirala. Sometimes his feedback was very descriptive and figurative in nature. For instance, when the orchestra was playing take number two after their lunch break on the main recording day, he stated that "the phrase" in this take "didn't speak to me". At other times, again his feedback was extremely accurate. He could ask the musicians to "concentrate on the last three 8th-notes in measure number 21" or to "stay together at measures 200 and 300" (FD 12.3.2016), which has a pattern, where the bassoonists, the clarinetists, the percussionist and the cornet players have a common rhythm (Tüür 2010, measure 21). After an hour and a half, the orchestra took a lunch break. Siirala explained how according to labor union regulations, orchestra musicians are not allowed to play in a recording session for more than 90 minutes nonstop without a break (FD 12.3.2016).

### 4.3.4 Controlling Communication during a Recording Session: Power and the Red Button

From a social perspective, the producer's most important piece of technology during the recording process was the red button, which looks almost like an emergency button or a nuclear launch button (Photo 2). The sole purpose of this button was to enable or disable communication between the control room, where the producer Siirala, the recording engineer Mäemets and the composer Tüür sat, and the recording space, where the musicians played and the conductor conducted. Significantly, the producer Seppo Siirala was the only person using the button during the recording process. This granted him total control over social interactions between the recording team and the musicians. Consequently, the producer became the most powerful social agent in the creative process as he had the ability to mediate communication between the control room and the recording space during recording. Siirala also made extensive use of this control.

Siirala became a sort of intermediary or gatekeeper of the communication which took place during the recording sessions. The significance of controlling communications between the recording team in the control room and the musicians in the recording space became evident especially when the recording team in the control room had discussions between takes. Usually Siirala gave feedback to the orchestra directly after the take and the orchestra would play again from the designated measure. At other times Siirala, Mäemets and Tüür would negotiate after a take. Siirala would wait for Tüür's opinion, not pressing the button and thus omitting communication, and then articulate the feedback to the orchestra in a slightly different way while pressing the button and thus enabling communication (FD 12.5.2016). A good example of this occurred during the recording session. The orchestra had just finished a take and recording had been turned off. Members of the production team in the control room were discussing the quality of the take. Tüür commented on the peculiarity of the fact that at times the performance of the orchestra was extremely good and other times the quality was very bad. Tüür added that this is something that should not be expressed to the musicians in this way (FD 11.3.2016). Consequently, Siirala kept his finger off the red button and thus eliminated the possibility that the orchestra could hear this comment. The red button is a great demonstration of how a very simple and small piece of technology can have a major social function in the creative process of a larger collective. This demonstrated the importance of social interactions and the significance of tact therein within a creative collective. While mediating communication might not explicitly entail creative agency, as in making contributions to the domain (McIntyre 2008) or making musical differences (Toynbee 2000: 35), it must be understood as an important part of the *collective creative agency,* namely, here the making of musical differences in the form of performance (ibid.).

## 4.3.5 Communication and Time Management during the Recording Sessions

Siirala's social agency in the process of classical record production differs from that of Vepsäläinen's in a home studio pop production (see chapter 3.2.) and Olsson's in a commercial studio rock production (see chapter 5.4.) in one crucial way. The discussions before and during breaks, in between and after recording sessions that Siirala had with the musicians, the conductor, the composer and the musicians were by nature very short and usually tightly concentrated on the matter at hand, i.e. the ongoing recording/production activity, with minor exceptions (FD 8. –12.3.2016). Discussions very rarely concentrated on anything else, like for example the music industry at large, whereas Vepsäläinen and Olsson conversed frequently and engaged in telling stories about the music business and specific individuals in it with the musicians they were working with, especially before sessions, during breaks and even in between individual takes (see chapters 3.2. and 5.3.). This example demonstrated how the producer in classical music must focus on the job at hand due to the rigidity of a large organization with large numbers of people involved and the necessity of effective time management in a process restricted by, for example, musicians' union breaks and overall tight schedules.

One reason for the tight schedules was the relatively high level of technical challenge that Tüür's Symphony No. 8 offered the musicians in contrast to the time allocated for the recording sessions (Siirala 2016c). This had an effect on the mood in the control room, which was at times hasty and a little stressful. This was evident in the way Siirala frowned and shook his head in frustration if a take didn't go well. (FD 12.3.2016.) This of course was not visible to the musicians, which brings forth an important characteristic of the producer as agent. The fact that the schedule is tight emphasizes the producer's ability to plan ahead and be on top of things all the time. Furthermore, it makes it ever more important that the producer has the ability to stay calm and give feedback to the musicians without making them feel uncomfortable or transmitting a feeling of hastiness or rush. Every time Siirala gave feedback through the talkback microphone, he spoke in a very soft and overly calm voice, even if he recently had had a rather tense conversation with other members of the production team in the control room. (FD 12.3.2016.) This illuminates how important the character of the producer is from the social perspective of the record production process. The producer has to make people feel that everything is going well and according to plan even if he himself feels that things could be going better and more fluently. Furthermore, he must stay calm and make other agents involved in the process feel that there is enough time, even if time is running out. The *social* aspect of the producer's agency thus becomes a part of the *creative agency* of the producer, as his social skills, his character and his feedback-giving capabilities have a direct influence on the creative activities taking place.

It is worth mentioning that communication between Siirala and the engineer

Mäemets, who formed the core of the production/recording team, was fairly infrequent (FD 12.3.2016). The two did not need to say much in order to collaborate. According to Siirala (2015), this is due to a long-standing professional relationship between them. He (ibid.) elaborates:

> Most of the recordings I have made with Enno Mäemets, whom I have worked with for more than 20 years. He has his own company and we have formed a kind of mutual language. We know from very little [communication] what the other one wants and what the other can offer and it speeds the process up and makes our work easier.

This draws attention to the importance of the relationship of the producer and the recording engineer in the production process of classical music. This can also result from a high degree of tacit knowledge about the record production process that the producer and engineer have. This can be compared to the implicit knowledge of the producer and studio personnel in the production of popular music (cf. Horning 2013: 55). The small amount of communication between Siirala and Mäemets can further be compared to the vast amount of communication and negotiation that Siirala had with other parties involved in the process. This might reflect either the fact that the producer did not know other agents as well as he knew the engineer, or the idea that the probability of a conflict between the producer and the other agents excluding the engineer was much higher than of a potential conflict between the producer and the engineer due to a common history of professional collaboration. Siirala frequently communicated with the conductor, the composer, the musicians and staff at the Tapiola Hall before and during recording sessions and during breaks (FD 8.-12.3.2016). Interestingly, the situation didn't change even though Mäemets used a substitute recording engineer on the main recording day. According to my understanding, this reflects a clear delineation of roles and activities in the production of classical musical records.

What is noteworthy about Siirala's agency and status as a classical record producer is the fact that at least in part his authority and status as a producer comes with the job description itself and not through a track record or a certain kind of chart success. This differs from the situation in popular music, where track record (or the lack of one) very strongly determines the status of a producer (Olsson 2017a; Vepsäläinen 2015a) (see section 5.4.). As I have mentioned in section 4.1., Siirala first became a staff producer at Ondine by applying for a job listing he had found in a newspaper. Before starting as a full-time producer, his prior experience as a producer was limited to producing his own recordings (Siirala 2015). This kind of a track record would never be enough in the popular music context in order for a producer to have a high status as an authority. As I have discussed earlier in section 4.3.3., Siirala nevertheless stresses the importance of his background as a professional musician in his work as a producer. He (Siirala 2015) explains:

> It is actually a requirement that the producer in this musical realm has personal experience of making music, in particular playing, singing or conducting an orchestra. One has to have a feel for it, otherwise it's hard to give enlightened feedback to artists. Because that is the essential thing in the work of the producer.

The fact that there is very little or no overlap and flexibility between the agencies of different actors in the production process might also have to do with the fact that the producer's agency and status, or what could be called his "producerness", are in a way inscribed in the official position of the producer. In other words, being a producer is a role. Siirala's responsibilities as a producer are fairly strictly pre-determined to include detecting wrong notes and bad timing, commenting on the sound and intonation, giving feedback to the musicians, editing, making sure that the project stays on schedule and communicating between various parties involved in the project. These can be seen as very common tasks attributed to the producer of classical music (Blake 2009: 41). However, Siirala as a producer does not strongly take part in, for example, the selection of microphones, and influences their placement merely in an indirect manner in the form of giving feedback on how the orchestra sounds in the sound check. This could, however, stem from the long-standing work relationship with the engineer Mäemets and the fact that they know the working habits of one another. Furthermore, Siirala as the producer does not take part in composition or arrangement, conducting or playing an instrument. Even if he has various responsibilities, Siirala's role as a producer in classical music is more clearly defined than the producer's in popular music. In the following section I will discuss the editing process and the degree to which it is at the core of production

## 4.4 Post-production: The Art of Editing

Here, I will discuss the producer Seppo Siirala's post-recording activities, namely the editing process. In doing this, I will attempt to demonstrate how the creative agency of the producer, that is the agency that has to do with exercising aesthetic judgement and making "musical differences in the form of texts, performances and sound" (Toynbee 2000:35), is perhaps strongest in the editing process. In this respect, I attempt to expand on the question of what kind of a creative agent the producer is and the sub-questions of how the use of music technology constructs the agency of the producer and what underlying values contributing to the producer's agency connected to the production process are revealed by the examination of the producer's use of technology.

## 4.4.1 Edit Room

Siirala's editing work happened in a studio which goes by the name *Edit Room,* which was built into Enno Mäemets' garage. Siirala frequently referred to this studio as "our studio". The studio, which doesn't feature a recording room, has been built for post-production purposes like editing and mixing. An interesting detail of the studio design was described to me by the engineer Mäemets, who discussed the importance of colors in the studio. The color of the monitors, for instance, was burgundy (Ph 4 23.3.2016) for the reason that people perceive that color as warm-sounding. Other color choices included, for example, a "warm" yellow stripe (Ph 5 23.3.2016) on the back wall of the studio as opposed to a "cold" yellow. (Mäemets 2016.) This demonstrates the fact that sound qualities are not perceived as detached from other surroundings. Furthermore, it shows how cultural conventions affect the way in which people perceive sounds. Burgundy as a color might be culturally connected to classical music. This might be a result of the use of the color burgundy in the royal European courts, within which Western classical music developed historically (cf. Grout & Palisca 1981). Similarly, a heavy metal studio might have black as its dominant interior color, as black is often associated with heavy metal music.

In his editing work, Siirala worked with a pair of speakers, a computer with two separate screens, a mouse, a computer keyboard and Siirala's version of the score, which included his own notes made during the preparation and recording processes. As we sat down at the workstation, Siirala laid down some ground rules. He told me that I was allowed to watch and record him work, but I was to remain silent for the most part and not constantly ask him questions, since "the editing schedule is rather tight". (FD 12.5.2016.) Siirala nevertheless agreed to answer some questions as I recorded (FR 12.5.2016) and videotaped (Video clip 7) the process. This request indicates that the editing process is a delicate process, which cannot take up too much time and which requires hard concentration. The editing process is at the same time extremely *auditive* and highly *visual.* On the screen on the left side Siirala had on display a window which featured all the takes that the team recorded during the recording process. On the screen on the right side he had a kind of a zoom-in window, in which he could edit and fit two different takes together. On the screen on the right, he could zoom into the millisecond-level to see the waveforms of the takes very accurately. (FD 12.5.2016.) (Video clip 7.)

## 4.4.2 Distribution of Editing Responsibilities

As I have suggested before, one of Siirala's key activities in the production process of a classical recording is editing, which is an activity of the post-production phase of a project that takes place after the recording session(s). When distinguish between the different activities and tasks an individual agent had, editing could be seen as the single most important element of the producer's creative agency, especially as it is a solitary

activity, meaning that the producer does the editing for the most part alone. The art of editing is an activity where aesthetic decision-making is combined with digital technology. Therefore, I would call it a *techno-creative activity.*

Depending on the project and the customer, the editing responsibilities might be shared with different agents as well. According to the engineer Enno Mäemets (2016): "It depends on the situation. The productions which we do ourselves, which Edit Room [Mäemets' and Siirala's company] does, then we, I edit them, yes. Ondine's productions, usually Seppo [Siirala] does the editing."

Sometimes the editing might be done by a third party and Siirala and Mäemets only do some quality checking. Mäemets (ibid.) continues:

> RSO [the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra], depends on the situation, I've usually edited, depending on the schedule, or then YLE [Finnish National Radio] edits them, but in that case, we need to finish them. Which means that we go through every single edit-spot. We have better resolutions in editing. I see [the waveform] better, the sound is more visual, we see the special spots better on a bigger screen.

Tapiola Sinfonietta's recording of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 was financed by the record company Ondine and Siirala alone was responsible for editing.

### 4.4.3 The Score and (Re)constructing the Performance

Siirala has conducted his editing work on a digital platform from the beginning of his career as a producer. The key idea of the editing process is to construct the performance from the takes which were recorded in the recording sessions. According to Siirala (2015):

> My job is to put everything together from the [recorded] material. I mean, there might be ten times more material compared to the duration of the work. And often there is. And that's just… of course I've made some preliminary notes on the score. So, I do have a picture of it.

In the case of the recording of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No.8 the production team recorded altogether 88 takes during the main recording day on March 12th 2016. They recorded 55 takes in the morning before and 33 takes after lunch. Siirala constantly made notes and markings (e.g. Tüür 2010: measure 2) on his copy of the score and the recording engineer kept count of the takes by saying out loud the number of the upcoming take before hitting the recording button. (FD 12.3.2016.) In addition to the takes recorded on the main recording day, Siirala was able to use some material from the dress rehearsal and the concert, which both were recorded from beginning to end.

Because of the fact that many things happened at the same time (FD 12.3.2016) in the recording sessions and the fact that they were relatively short in duration, Siirala admitted that he could not notice everything during recording and had to recap and listen to the recorded material again during the editing process. Siirala (2015) states: “But there's lots of stuff I don't notice during the recording session. It cannot be avoided. I need to carefully check at least all the takes I've marked with a plus sign and compare them to the ones I've marked as second or third best.”

In the process of editing, Siirala did carefully listen to each and every one of the takes again (Video Clips 7–14). If a take did not sound right, he even went on to listen to individual tracks by soloing them on a digital mixer screen (Video clip 13), even if his intention was not to edit the tracks individually, nor would he have had the opportunity to do so for the reason that every individual microphone recorded the entire orchestra anyway. On one occasion Siirala, for example, soloed the tracks which had the microphones closest to the marimba for the reason that he wasn’t able to hear the details “in this noise” (Video clip 13). This would suggest that multi-track recording instead of simple stereo recording in classical music seems to serve the purposes of quality control in addition to the purposes of mixing and balancing the orchestra (see chapter 4.3.2.). This highlights the detailed and careful interrogation of the quality of the recorded material on the producer’s part.

### 4.4.4 Creative Editing and Technical Editing

Siirala said that he enjoyed the editing process despite its laborious nature. He (Siirala 2015) elaborated: “It is also a very creative phase. I have the opportunity to combine different takes according to my own vision. And at the same time [I have to] make sure that the takes really fit together and that there are no sudden tempo changes or things of that sort.” Regarding the editing process as a creative activity suggests that Siirala himself assigns creative agency to the producer as an agent. Furthermore, emphasizing his own vision would suggest that Siirala understands that the producer’s creative agency is rather strong. However, as he discusses the editing process Siirala distinguishes between the *creative* and the *technical*. In his words:

> …and then there's the technical editing, so the seams [between two edits, where one take end and another begins] become unnoticeable. It is a quite laborious process. It takes easily some 40 hours to edit a record depending on material. And I do it alone. It's a very lonely activity. It suits my temperament and I like it. (Siirala 2015)

For Siirala, creativity in the editing process means working with recorded material and *choosing* takes based on his own vision. This is a good example of how creativity can be understood; it means making aesthetic judgments (cf. Blake 2009: 39) on the recorded material and acting on them. *Technical* editing on the other hand is something

one just has to do to make the compilation of takes sound like a coherent entity, which the final edit (Tüür 2016) of Tüür's Symphony No.8 did sound like. Even Siirala himself wasn't able to tell where a take ended and the next began after the editing process was over and the edited entity was ready (Siirala 2016c). The balance between the technical and the creative sides in the editing process affects our understanding of the producer's creative agency. If creativity is defined as "making musical differences in the form of… performances" (Toynbee 2000: 35), then all activities related to the editing process fall into the domain of creative agency. If, however, we strongly define creativity as having to do with aesthetic judgment, the *technical* side of editing as something that just has to be done in order for the performed work to sound coherent, we must ask the question: to what extent does pure technical editing involve aesthetic judgment?

The difference between the technical and the creative to some extent remained vague. While I was watching Siirala edit in the post-production studio (Video clip 7), he seemed to spend a significant amount of time finding the takes with the right notes and accurate rhythms. To me, this too seemed a very technical process by nature and didn't have much to do with what generally are thought of as artistic or creative qualities like interpretation or the feel of a performance. However, activities in editing like, for example, aligning waveforms, which seems like a very technical activity, can also be seen as including an aesthetic element, as it is included in the construction of the performance. Siirala (2016c) offers an angle on this notion:

> First of all, what is interpretation? That needs to be resolved first. I think that everything is interpretation. If there's a wrong note, it is a bad interpretation from the perspective of the recording. You can't separate the right notes and how accurately the musicians are playing together from the interpretation of the work. They are always related…everything is connected to everything. I always aim at everything being correct, the way it is written in the music [in the score].

This statement reveals a rather broad understanding of creativity. It also strengthens the understanding that in orchestral classical music, the starting point is the score, not the sonic entity (cf. Blake 2012). All of his activities as producer, editing included, aimed at everything being "correct". The degree of correctness of a recording again is contrasted against the score. But what about the multitude of parameters which are not written in the score and/or cannot be written by means of Western notation? Observing the editing process offered a good example of a situation like this. As Siirala was editing together takes on measures 43 and 44 (Tüür 2010, measures 43–44), he came across a problem with an issue related to the reverb. While the string section in measure 43 in take number 8 was accurate and the intonation was good, editing it together with take number 6 would cut the natural reverb of the stings short and produce an edit spot, which sounds unnatural (Video clip 9). This issue, according to

Siirala, was the result of a mistake in the recording sessions. Siirala (Video clip 9) explains: “That’s why I usually aim at asking [the musicians] to start a few measures before, so we wouldn’t have this situation, but then they [the musicians] always beg for us to start right there [in the precise bar]. I’ve fallen into this usual trap.” This raises the question of which elements in the editing process should be regarded in terms of aesthetic judgement or creativity and which fall more into the category of technical details, which just have to be taken care of. While the edit spot I have discussed above clearly sounds like two separate takes and not a coherent performance (Video clip 9), it is up to the producer’s aesthetic judgement to seek another take and decide whether to go with a combination of takes, which would have a more natural reverb and thus the more coherent feel of a continuous performance but perhaps weaker intonation or rhythmic accuracy. From this perspective, every decision fundamentally has to do with aesthetic preference and thus every aspect of the editing process can be regarded as a part of the producer’s creative agency.

Siirala also discusses how musicians contradict themselves when distinguishing between technically correct performances and great artistic visions. According to him (2016c), musicians and artists usually begin a project with a grand vision in mind and say it’s much more important than individual wrong notes or inaccuracies in the recorded performance. When musicians get to hear the recordings their attitude nevertheless tends to change. Siirala (2016c) elaborates:

> When they [the musicians] face reality and I send this edit to them to listen, the first things they pay attention to are these inaccuracies and possible wrong notes. So, I would say that the musicians themselves are to blame the most for the fact that we aim at being absolutely faithful to the notation. I too think it is important, but if I didn't actualize it, I know I would immediately get feedback.

This finding is convergent with Philip’s (2004: 45–46) findings. He discusses how “musicians themselves sometimes press for editing that the producer does not think necessary” (Philip 2004: 45). This, according to Philip (ibid.), is due to the “modern expectation of accuracy in every detail” which “puts great pressure on musicians and record producers not to let a single blemish be heard on the finished recording”. This pressure seemed to influence the editing process in this case study as well, even if within classical music there does exist a school of thought, a “minimalist approach on editing” (ibid.), that emphasizes direct cuts, according to which the recording should represent what the musicians really played live with the greatest possible accuracy as opposed to what the musicians should have played according to the score.

During the editing process Siirala faced some dire challenges. Concerning, for instance, the very beginning of the symphony with the unison 8th-note rhythm (Tüür 2010, measure 1–2), he stated that: “This is challenging because…perhaps you remember this begins with these kinds of hits, which are supposed to come at the same time and there isn't in fact a single take in which the beginning of the piece would be

coherently right and I just need to heavily edit it." (FR 12.5.2016). In practice Siirala needed to edit it note for note at the level of milliseconds. This emphasizes the nature of a classical record as a constructed performance. Here lies a connection with what Blake (2009: 42) has written about the classical producer Suvi Raj Grubb. According to him (ibid.): "He [Grubb] would doubtless have employed to the full the current digital editing software that allows music to be cut and pasted with microtonal and micro-temporal accuracy way beyond the dreams of Grubb's tape-splicing world." In his more historical account, Blake forecasts what I have observed in this case study. The classical producer does indeed make extensive use of the possibilities afforded by digital sound editing software. However, technically speaking, Siirala only edits the micro-temporal. In Siirala's editing, aspects of the microtonal are relevant only to the extent that he could find, for example, notes with better intonation in the recorded material and was able to edit them when using temporal editing. He would not manipulate individual notes tonally.

### 4.4.5 Ethics, Technology and Authenticity

The idea of making the entire record from a single take recorded from beginning to end was not even discussed at any point during the production process. This idea as a viable option or an ideal of some kind did not come up in any of the interviews either. This reveals that the creative agents involved in the production embrace a set of values which has refuted the idea of an ideal, in which the recording of a classical musical piece is a recorded documentation of the performance (see e.g. Burlin 2008). For the creative agents involved in the recording of Tüür's Symphony No. 8, the final record is a compilation of different takes as a premise. The fact that the record is not an authentic performance to begin with raises questions about the possible use of other technologies to enhance the end result. According to Siirala (2016c):

> Well, this starts to be a kind of an ethical question. There was a story in Hesari [Helsingin Sanomat, the most widely distributed newspaper in Finland] today about using Photoshop to fix photos. They seem to have the principle, at least according to the news story, that no elements should be deleted or added, that they can adjust the colors or the tone but they should not make changes to the picture.

Drawing this analogy, Siirala reveals a similar approach to the musical performance as something which shouldn't be changed but enhanced. He (Siirala 2016c) continues:

> We can use equalizers, but if we start to mess with pitch, we are operating in a grey area… I have to confess that I have committed such a sin in the past, but

> in these cases, it has been the only option to remedy the situation and the other option would have been not to release it [the record].

This analogy to photography, however, raises more questions than it provides answers. The way in which Siirala constructs the performance from multiple takes would be more like taking several photographs and combining them together into one entity rather than taking one photo and enhancing its colors. Siirala's unwillingness to use technologies such as Melodyne to correct pitch is also explained by the setup of the recording process. As the musicians are recorded in an acoustic space all at the same time, all sound sources bleed to every microphone and as a result, every microphone basically records everything. This is emphasized in the sonic material captured by the overhead microphones situated behind the conductor (Photo 3). None of the sound sources are recorded in isolation. According to Siirala (2016c):

> After all, these are one hundred percent recordings, which means that everything bleeds everywhere… Melodyne or some other system, which allows you to change pitch, it affects the entire file and not just the individual microphone. Even if you did it to one track only, it bleeds to the extent that affects the whole.

Siirala's views on the ethical considerations of post-production reveal two alternative underlying fundamental value structures, which to a great extent guide the production process of a classical record and therefore the activities of the producer. One value may be that the idea that the musical work, which should not be changed, is the same as the score, which has been written by the composer. The performers need to play compositional elements such as pitch and rhythm correctly and they are elements which should not be treated by technological resources even if it means that the performance needs to be constructed from multiple takes. On the other hand, for instance sound which cannot be written down by means of western notation, is subject to adjustments and enhancements in post-production, as it is not necessarily considered an integral part of the musical work but an element which is manifested only through the performance, not in the score. Therefore, elements that are not manifested in the score can be treated and enhanced. In other words, the musicians should be able to get the abstract elements, which in this thinking constitute the "work", right. The production team can then enhance the sound, which is not considered a part of the work. This line of thinking is supported by Siirala's detailed attention to the score during the entire production process from preparation to editing; the final sonic result must reflect what is pre-written by the composer as closely as possible. Another understanding of this issue might be that the work is not necessarily the same thing as the score but, due to conventions generated in the course of hundreds of years before recording technologies even emerged (cf. Frith 1996: 226–227; Grout & Palisca: 1981), it is a frame of reference for decisions made in the recording process; anything,

for example sound adjustments, can be made at the discretion of the production team as long as it happens within the confines of the score. The same observation about Siirala's attention to the score and the fact that the score was present in all stages of production can support this line of thinking as well.

As the recording is compiled from multiple takes, considerations about the authenticity of a performance come into question. Siirala (2016c) again does not see a problem in that. He (ibid.) states:

> A concert and a recording are two different things. They have different goals. Different means [to reach the goals]. I don't see an ethical problem in the fact that we compile it from pieces. If you think about filmmaking, or writing – – You don't do it in one sitting. Anything. Fine arts.

Siirala's (ibid.) reference to filmmaking is often used in writings on the music producer (e.g. Warner 2003: 34). He (2016c) continues:

> With temporal art forms music and theatre, we need to consider these things, but I don't see a problem with this because we do it honestly and we admit it, that we conduct the recording like this and this way we can reveal qualities from the work which would not come forth in a live performance.

His choice of words also reveals the distinction between a concert and a record even when talking about a recording of a concert. The word he uses for a recorded live concert is in Finnish *taltioida* (Siirala 2016a), which refers to an event being sonically *captured* or *documented* as it is. However, the Finnish word he uses for a produced record again is *levytys* (Siirala 2015), which is a record that is the result of a record production process and is recorded in separate recording sessions with a multiple-take approach and, as a premise, it is a performance constructed through editing. The two different Finnish words "*taltiointi*" and "*levytys*" both translate into English as *record.* The word recording, however, could more accurately describe the meaning of the word *taltiointi,* which means the recording of a live event as it is. Thus, Siirala reveals his understanding of a recorded classical work as an ideal, a medium in its own right and an alternative aural landscape to that of a live concert (Symes 2004: 86–87). These underlying values revealed by the editing process constitute what could be understood as a social structure, which contributes to the agency of the producer.

In connection to his views on recorded and live music, Siirala reveals his attitude towards live music. He states (Siirala 2016c):

> I like to go to a concert… I enjoy it… I don't actually listen to records that much. I'd rather listen to…I'd rather go to a concert than to a record store for practical reasons alone. Because listening to records demands a certain amount of peace and time. It is easier to go to another space, a concert hall to listen. A

> performance naturally always provides a new experience. Of course, I listen to records, too, for professional reasons alone, to get acquainted with repertoire and I listen to other versions of something that is to be recorded, but…I need both.

Even if preferring live concerts to records might only be Siirala's personal preference, it might also reveal a valuable point about the values embedded in the production of classical music. Even though at this point it is more than clear that making classical musical records entails heavy artificial construction of the performance, the underlying values behind the entire system lean towards appreciating the live event as the "real deal" or the authentic norm, of which the recording is a reconstruction.

Siirala's thoughts about a record and a live performance being two different things and having different aims resonate with earlier research, which touches upon historical accounts from the first half of the 20th century. Symes (2004: 67) discusses how the magazine *The Gramophone* featured "ongoing debates" about "whether records were superior to live performances". In conclusion, the technical editor of the magazine stated, that "live and recorded performances provided different kinds of acoustic realities" (Symes 2004: 67). Johnson (2010: 38–39) agrees with this view and asks the question "why the recording should be required to conform in every detail to a live performance" in the first place. From this perspective, Siirala's views can perhaps be interpreted after all as "neutral" with respect to the appreciation of live concerts versus recordings. They serve different purposes and are even sonically different, as can be understood with reference to Johnson's (2010: 39) argument, according to which in reality there does not exist a single authorized listening position where the 'correct' sound can be heard. He elaborates (ibid.)

> There may be a single location in the auditorium that offers an optimum listening position, but this is likely to be above the auditorium, in a position accessible only to microphones. In practice, mixed inputs are routinely used to provide maximum control over sound quality and balance.

Interestingly, this view challenges the "best seat of the house" approach in the production of classical records. If this principle guides the production process, the sonic result might in fact be the best seat situated where seats cannot be situated; an imaginary best seat at an imaginary performance.

Similar discussions about the distinction between live performances and the extent to which recordings should sound like the performances that never took place are also central in rock music. Auslander (2008: 76) discusses this point: "Only a few records foreground the artifice of their studio construction; most are made to sound like performances that could have taken place, even if the really did not (and could not)." In his footnotes, Auslander (ibid.) even contrasts this notion with examples from classical

music. This would indicate, at least to an extent, that rock music and classical music, despite their different canonical histories, value systems and cultural backgrounds, seem to share similar ideas when it comes to the relationship between the record and the live performance of the same work, piece or song.

### 4.4.6 Editing and the Producer’s Agency

The case of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 and Tapiola Sinfonietta with producer Seppo Siirala has shown how important editing is in the record production process. In practice, if Erkki-Sven Tüür composed the work which was manifested in the printed score, the producer Siirala "composed" Tapiola sinfonietta's *performance* of this work from the multiple takes that the production team captured during the recording sessions. Thus, the editing process became Siirala’s key creative activity, that is an activity which involves aesthetic judgment and taste. Without a rather heavy editing process, there wouldn't even have been a complete recorded performance of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 by the Tapiola Sinfonietta orchestra. This is a result of the fact that the production team didn't even try to record a complete performance of the piece from the beginning to the end, but chose to record the entire performance bit by bit in multiple takes. This striving for a perfect performance through editing connects with, for example, Horning’s (2013: 172) idea that during the era of “high fidelity” the aim of reproducing the original live performance gave way to “splicing, editing, re-recording, and multiple micing”. The very instrumental and rather dominant position that the producer possesses presupposes that the record producer's role in classical music is far more creative and artistic than has been thought before. The interviews, which Siirala gave and the sessions I was allowed to observe, gave no hint whatsoever that this would in any way be an unusual or new practice in the production of classical records, rather quite the contrary. Talks with Siirala, the conductor Elts and the engineer Mäemets and the actions they took gave me the impression that this is standard procedure in the trade; as a premise, one of the producer's duties is to compile the final recording from multiple takes. This astonished me because I was able to find very few scholarly writings indicating that the editing process and compilation of the final performance as a key function of the producer’s agency would be such a dominant activity in the process of classical record making.

The producer’s heavy editing responsibility would suggest that the key component of their creative agency is the construction of the performance through editing. This again is facilitated by a larger set of values, aims and attitudes about the work, the relationship between the score and the performance and about the differences between a live situation and a record. This would suggest that the production of classical music features very similar underlying ideas about recording as popular music; recorded sonic material is more or less raw material for the construction of a performance (e.g. Auvinen 2016: 18), and ideas of recordings as authentic documents of live performances do not exist. This value is in a way embodied in the agency of the

producer as a creative agent, who constructs a recorded performance. This connection between rock and classical seems to exclude contemporary, often EDM-based, pop music, in which the production technologies and the studio are more transparently present in the sonic end result and in which agents involved in production are less concerned with issues of liveness and the authenticity of its recorded representations. Issues related to the relationship between the recording and the live performance can be understood as historically and culturally derived ideological structures which contribute to the formation of the producer's agency. Ideological structures related to the authenticity of the record with respect to the live performance would as a result have a similar effect on the producer's agency in rock and classical, whereas in pop music different ideas related to this issue would potentially shape the producer's agency in a different direction.

Based on what I've discussed above, I would dare to contest the term "editing". For me, the term refers to making changes, cutting and enhancing an existing performance. In this case study, the word editing, however, refers to a total construction of a performance from recorded clips of sonic material, resulting in "a copy of a performance of which there is no original" (Blake 2009: 42). The recorded takes are more or less raw material for the ultimate compilation, which is the constructed performance. Should we call a final edit an "edit" or should we call it a "construction", a "compilation", a "montage", a "mosaic", an "assortment" or a "collection" of separate performances? Or, perhaps we should indeed call it a "composition", in a broader, perhaps truer, sense of the word, as a result of playing with signs; metaphorically speaking a "screen upon which images flash by in a delirious succession" (McClary 2000: 145).

## 4.5 Conclusion: The Producer in between the Score, the Performance and Technology

In this case study, I did not know the producer nor the other agents involved in the production process beforehand. However, I do not think that my presence had any significant effect on the actions and interactions of the participants. As I understand it, it is fairly easy to blend into a bigger organization like the orchestra that was involved in this process, especially as the venue where recordings took place had all kinds of people coming and going at all times to begin with. The generalizability of the results of this case study is challenging and not least for the reason that the number of classical producers is very small to begin with. More research on the agency of the classical producer is clearly needed. However, due to the institutionalized nature of, and the strong historical and cultural conventions that prevail in, classical music, it is fairly safe to suggest that many of the results I have presented here would apply to other classical music production projects as well. Also, the fact that I have held on to a multi-method approach strengthens my arguments and findings; it is unlikely that

something I have found in different kinds of research materials would ultimately be untrue. In the interviews I conducted during this case study I sometimes noticed afterwards that during some conversations I might have said something that led the interviewees too much in a certain direction. In these rare cases, I have omitted these responses from my analysis.

Studying the role of the producer in a classical production reveals the prevailing ideology of the ontology of music, which penetrates the realm of classical music: the score is the music in its purest form and a recording should aim to realize this ideal as accurately as possible. This premise can be understood as an ideological structure, which confines the agency of the producer. Moreover, my findings here support earlier ideas presented by, for example, Johnson (2010: 37) about the relationship between the work, technology and performance. According to him (ibid.): "Behind their [the producers'] work is the unspoken acknowledgement that the illusion of live-ness can be maintained by sophisticated technological applications." In the final edit, technology should not be recognizable by the listener and the final sonic product should be an illusion of a real-time live performance. Recording technology can nevertheless be seen as having an effect on the musical works (compositions) in a more indirect way, as the process may influence the composer's compositions after s/he hears a recording of the work. The composer might also be influenced by the recording process if s/he is involved in it. In this way, the producer's agency can be seen as bleeding into the compositional process as well.

Based on my analysis in this chapter, the producer has an instrumental role and a fairly well-defined set of activities in making the best possible recorded version of the music written in the score. Making the best version of the music (the score) means mediating between the score, technology and the musicians. The fact that the composer was also present in the recording sessions and that the producer Siirala mediated with the composer in addition to the musicians, technology (engineer) and the score, is perhaps a minor exception to the usual. According to Blake (2009: 39) this is often not the case in the production of classical records. The reason, however, might be that most recording sessions feature the music of dead composers. In this case, however, the composer was alive.

The producer's link to the technology used in the recording sessions is embodied in the engineer, who sets up microphones onstage, constructs the (possibly) previously non-existent control room, sets up talkback features, which enable communications between the production team and the musicians and thus facilitates the producer's social agency in the recording process. The most important activities constructing the producer's agency during the recording process consist of giving feedback to the musicians, getting to know the score and the financial, spatial (schedule etc.) and social structures that form the premises of the production process. Making sure that a project stays on schedule and communicating and negotiating between the production team and the musicians are also key activities which form the core of the producer's agency in a classical music production.

In the case study on Seppo Siirala's production of Tapiola Sinfonietta's recording of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 conducted by Olari Elts, traditional music analysis often used in studies of classical music would in my experience have had very little to offer in examining the role and agency of the producer in the project. However, a close reading of the producer's version of the score, which featured markings and notes made by the producer during pre-production, rehearsals and recordings, opened an extremely important window onto how the producer thinks about the music and relates to the musical structures, the score, from the perspective of record production. This was of instrumental importance because of the central role that the score plays in classical music production; it shed important light on the producer's mediating capacity between the score, technology and the artists involved. Therefore, studying the producer's version of the score illuminates their role in the project and how their agency is constructed in relation to the work.

The producer's creative agency, that is the making and effecting of aesthetic judgement, was most clearly manifested in the editing process, during which he worked alone and most strongly exercised aesthetic decision-making, as he constructed the performance from the 88 individual takes that were recorded in the recording sessions. The role that Siirala took in making aesthetic decisions was stronger than what earlier research has concluded. Blake (2009: 39), for example, argues that the producer (in classical music) "sometimes" makes aesthetic decisions. Siirala, at least in this case study, was involved in aesthetic decision-making throughout the process and especially in the editing process. Siirala nevertheless didn't emphasize his own artistic role in the process, which either results from Siirala's personal humility or reflects traditional and somewhat canonical notions of artistic and creative agency as vested predominantly in the artists (musicians, conductors, composers), not the production personnel. Even if Siirala didn't see himself so much as a creative agent or an artist in the process and he saw the interpretation of the record as the vision and interpretation of the artists (conductor, musicians), his individual role in the process was at least as, if not even more, dominant than any other individual artist's in the process, except perhaps Tüür's, if composing is seen as a part of it. From another perspective, it could be said that the completed recording of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 is Siirala's best interpretation of the bits of Tapiola Sinfonietta and Olari Elts's performance(s) of the piece, which again is their interpretation of the best version of the passages which they recorded.

In light of my materials, there seemed to be very little overlap or flexibility between different creative roles in the production of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8. Any kind of overlap between the roles of the artists (the conductor and the musicians) and the studio production personnel (producer, engineer) in the context of classical music is unthinkable, although the producer ensuring that everyone plays the right notes or that their rhythms are accurate could be seen as stepping into an area which traditionally would belong to the conductor. This finding contradicts some of the observations of earlier scholars of classical record production. In his study on classical

production, Burlin (2008: 249), with reference to Huber (2005), discusses how the roles of different agents in the record production process are flexible. Burlin (2008: 249) takes a historical view on the division of labor and elaborates:

> The producer and the engineer can take over each other's tasks and have help from other assisting engineers and arrangers. But in principle, these job roles are valid, regardless of genre, in the digitalized music industry of 2008 in the same way they were in 1955. (translated from Swedish by the author).

The latter part of Burlin's observation strengthens the idea that the contemporary roles of record production personnel were formed in the 1950's along with the technological innovations and the general reformation of the recording industry. I would nevertheless argue that in the production of classical music records the roles of different agents are far less flexible than in popular music.

Siirala's importance as producer in negotiating between technology and the artists became evident in the process, as in classical music artists are generally not interested or they do not have the competence to deal with recording technology. Siirala's (2015) note supports this view:

> Most artists don't care, if I say it bluntly, the musicians, they don't necessarily even have the competence to think about the process that far along. For them the playing is so much more important, I mean the artistic execution. And somehow it is self-evident for them that the result is good. There are exceptions of course.

This view of Siirala's is strengthened by the post-rehearsal situation. After one of the rehearsals with Tapiola Sinfonietta, Siirala sat down with a musician in the cafeteria at Espoo Cultural Center. Siirala told me afterwards that this person spoke to him about a possible future recording project, in which s/he would like Siirala to be the producer. Siirala nevertheless told me that this musician didn't really have a realistic picture of what a recording project entails. These notions by Siirala find support from the observations I made during the recording sessions of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8. Any time Siirala had conversations with musicians about the recordings of the piece, the musicians did not offer any real insights on the use of recording or production technologies like, for instance, the 23 microphones that were set up on the stage. Moreover, it seemed as though it was very hard for the musicians to consider any aspects related to the recording process. They were, however, more concerned about their seating arrangements and how they would "find each other musically" (FD 9.3.2016) (see chapter 4.2.), as I have discussed before. This is not a trivial concern, though, from the perspective of the production process of Tüür's Symphony No.8. Complex interlocking rhythmic patterns are difficult to execute if a musician cannot hear other musicians properly. Here, the musicians had enough agency to ensure that

they had the circumstances to offer their own best. Thus, the musicians' agency can be understood as strengthening the overall process, in which everyone had their own very specific place. By ensuring they had the best possible circumstances to perform their best, their agency would reflect positively on the producer as well. The musicians' main concern, nevertheless, was the quality of their playing and their performance regardless of whether they were performing in front of an audience or if they were playing just for recording purposes. This might stem from the fact that in the educational programs of classical music, musicians are not educated in recording technologies and thus their training is mostly aimed at live situations. Formal classical musical education can be regarded as an important structure in the construction of the agency of various agents; the education provides people with a set of skills and value systems, which are then transferred into their activities in the record production process. Siirala (2016b) nevertheless does point out that musicians play differently in a live situation compared to a recording situation. He (Siirala 2016b) elaborates:

> Usually we can't get lots of usable material to a record from the [live] concert due to reasons related to the playing of the musicians. The touch, the way [in which the musicians play] is so different. The musicians immerse themselves in the task so that there are inevitably more inaccuracies. When we do it without an audience and in small passages at a time, we put the things accurately into place. Of course, we try not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, i.e. keep the intensity, and usually we succeed in this.

This observation connects with Katz's (2004) views on how technology and the emergence of recording technologies had an effect on how violin players started to use more vibrato to cover up the inaccuracies in their playing. In the case of Tapiola Sinfonietta and Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8, the musicians played more freely and consequently less accurately in the live situation with an audience present than in a recording situation without an audience. On the other hand, it could hold true that the reason for the musicians playing more accurately on the recording day than in the concert could stem from awareness of the fact that what they played on the recording day would stay forever as opposed to what they played in the concert. Siirala (2016b) lists other reasons for the fact that much of the recorded live performance cannot be used in the final recording:

> The audience of course makes some noise as well. There are people who cough and all other sorts of shuffling, which limits the amount of material that could be used. There are other problems too. We can't empty the stage of extra percussion and other stuff that's on it in the middle of the concert. All these affect the sonic characteristics and therefore in practice we need to rely on the [recordings on] Saturday.

For the reasons mentioned above, Siirala (2016b) stated that the concert was more of a

> …rehearsal, sound check for them [the musicians] and perhaps we can, I hope we'll have enough time to make some concrete changes if needed, not only in the positioning of the mics but also, especially with the percussions something unexpected may come up – – the marimba is rather dominant now. It is marked like that in the score but it's very dominant, so how much then... what is the impression when you listen to it in the control room. It's never one to one with what it sounds like in the audience.

The notion that the musicians don't care about the process of record production, which includes the technological process, strengthens the producer's role as the agent in between the score, the performance and technology; as Andrew Blake (2012: 195) puts it, the producer in classical music is the one who mediates "the relationship between the score, the performing artists and the processes and technologies of recording". If the musicians and artists like the conductor are not especially interested in the recording process, and the recording engineer, who strongly represents the essential technological know-how in the process, is not experienced as a musician, the process needs someone to mediate between the two, the artists and the recording technology.

The producer's agency is constructed from several elements of musical know-how. Firstly, it is constructed through having a background as a musician, which enables him/her to understand the score and to give feedback to the musicians (Siirala 2015). Secondly, the understanding of music production technologies enables the producer to work with the recording engineer during recording and to construct the performance from the myriad of takes through editing. Thirdly, social skills and an understanding of how the music industry works as a whole enable the producer to mediate between the various different agents involved in the process.

Finally, I would like to argue that the activity called "editing" as the core activity of the producer's creative agency isn't accurately described by the term itself. Editing, for me, means making changes to an existing entity. Editing in the light of this case study, however, means more or less constructing an entire performance from bits and pieces which did not even exist as a coherent entity before the editing process was over. Given these findings I would argue that the classical producer is a much stronger creative agent in the production process of a record than prior views would lead us to understand. Additionally, I would suggest an alternative term for the activity that today is called "editing". I understand this essentially as "performance composition".

# 5 Case 3 – The Production of Band Music: Jonas Olsson and the Band Blind Channel

In this case study, I analyze a project which for most people might represent a stereotypical production project of a musical record: the producer works with a band in what could be understood as a conventional studio to achieve an end product which is the released musical record. This, for many, also represents a setting in which producers start their career as they might get to produce the demos of their friends' band. In this chapter I will discuss ways in which the producer's agency is constructed when s/he works in a band setting. I will do this by examining a production project of two songs in which the producer Jonas Olsson worked with the band Blind Channel. The role of this case lies somewhere between the two very different cases I have already discussed and provides yet another perspective on the creative and social agency of the producer and how it is formed in relation to the social, technological and physical structures it depends upon and which exist in the music production process.

First, I will briefly introduce producer Jonas Olsson, the band Blind Channel and the songs they worked on producing during the course of this case study. Then I will go on to discuss Olsson's studio as a creative space and the ramifications it has for agency. After this, I will discuss the music production process and studio technology, especially how digital technology has afforded the producer the opportunity to alter the traditional temporal structures of the production process and how these have both practical and social implications, if such a distinction can be made in the first place. Thereafter, I will discuss the social dynamics between the band and the producer and how they contribute to the construction of creative agency.

## 5.1 Jonas Olsson, Blind Channel and the songs 'Alone Against All' and 'Can't Hold Us'

In this section, I will introduce the research subjects involved in this case study. Furthermore, I will explain their backgrounds and their places in the music industry with the aim of situating them in the greater social structure within which they operate. After all, agency depends on structure (McIntyre 2008). Finally, I will discuss their musical backgrounds and the circumstances behind their co-operation, which can also be seen as historical and social structures, which might influence their agencies.

## 5.1.1 Producer Jonas Olsson

Producer Roy Jonas Olsson, who goes by the name of Jonas Olsson, was born June 10th 1981 in Sweden. Because of his parents' divorce, he moved to Kokkola, Finland with his mother when he was a child. He started his musical career at the age of thirteen, playing electric guitar in a few bands which he formed with his friends. At 15 or 16 Olsson became interested in recording. He recalls:

> There was some kind of a recording device at a band-practice room. They were Hard Drive recorders at the time and I started to record band practices and we made demos all the time and I was interested in the world of recording. (Olsson 2017a.)

At the time the Internet had just emerged. Olsson spent much of his time at the school library printing large amounts of recording literature that was available online. Furthermore, he visited recording-related bulletin boards and read anything he could find. After high school, he studied musicology at Åbo Akademi for two years but was "not very successful in it" as he simultaneously worked at a studio he knew doing internships and recording demo-bands. Olsson further studied music technology at the Conservatory of Turku graduating from a vocational study program in 2005. The day after graduation Olsson started his own company and has worked as a full-time engineer and music producer ever since. (Olsson 2017a.)

## 5.1.2 The Band Blind Channel and their Collaboration with Olsson

According to their website, Blind Channel is a "fresh, energetic, violent pop-band" from Oulu, Finland. The band's line-up consists of drummer Tommi, bass player Olli, guitarist Joonas, guitarist/vocalist Joel and the vocalist/rapper Niko. The band was formed in the year 2013. The group has performed at major Finnish music festivals such as Provinssirock and Ilosaarirock and international festivals such as Wacken Open Air. Blind Channel works with a Finnish label Ranka Kustannus, owned by Riku Pääkkönen, who was the founder of Spinefarm Records, which again has featured bigger Finnish metal bands such as Nightwish and Sonata Arctica. (Blind Channel 2017.)

The collaboration between the band Blind Channel and the producer Jonas Olsson resulted to some extent from a sort of a social "gamble" (Blind Channel 2016) stemming from the band's eagerness to get a record contract, on the one hand, and their specific decisiveness to work with Jonas Olsson, on the other. According to the band's singer/rapper Niko Moilanen (Blind Channel 2016) the band contacted both the record label Ranka Kustannus and the producer Jonas Olsson at the same time. Niko (Blind Channel 2016) states:

> We had decided to make a record. We had had some [contact] with both of them and many things were up in the air “maybe this, maybe that” and then we cheated. We sent a message to the boss of our current record label Ranka kustannus. We asked him “Hi Riku, would you make a record deal with us? We have a top producer Jonas Olsson, who’s going to make the record”. He wasn’t our producer yet at the time. Then we sent a message to Jonas Olsson, in which we said “Hi Jonas. Would you producer our record? We have this Riku Pääkkönen who will pay for everything”. Then we just waited.

With these pretexts, both agreed and started to collaborate with Blind Channel. The band had already been in the studio for two days before signing the record contract. Moilanen (Blind Channel 2016) continues: “Then we just waited for the boss of the record label Riku. He was supposed to come to the studio with a record contract. We just waited and hoped that he’d come. He then came on the third day.” A band setting more or less begs the question why a band needs a producer, especially as the band produced fairly advanced demos before the sessions with Olsson started. This is directly connected to the question: what does the activity called “producing” or the part of the music called “production” mean to the musicians and the producer? The band’s guitarist/singer Joel Hokka states that he “makes the demos as good as possible” even if he doesn’t “polish the production… but leaves some holes in it for the producer to fill” (Blind Channel 2016). Hokka (ibid.) continues: “But usually when I’ve finished a demo I expect it to be at least five times better after Jonas [Olsson] has dealt with it. In a way…it just has to become… it must sound more pro and better in every way possible. This is what I expect [from the producer].”

The desire to sound professional in this case can be viewed as a value judgement. This value can be understood as a cultural structure that is opposite to, for example, values associated with DIY (do it yourself). This value structure orients the agency of the band members into seeking help from a producer whose work they hold in high regard. This essentially affects the agency of the producer; he gets work due to the band’s desire to sound more professional. The vagueness of the articulation of this desire, however, suggests that the members of the band don’t necessarily know what would make their music sound “more pro” and/or how they can fulfill this end. The band’s other guitarist Joonas Porko adds (Blind Channel 2016): “I think the starting point is always that we make our demo as good as possible and we can be satisfied with it at that point already. Then Jonas adds his miracles to it.” The ambiguous idea of “adding miracles” further resonates with general thoughts about the work of the producer; it is often hard to pinpoint what the producer actually does (Zak 2001: 172). For the members of the band the term “production”, which becomes better through the work of the producer, entails elements such as song structure and arrangement. The guitarist Hokka adds: “Sound has a big role in today’s music. All sounds become better through Jonas. Simultaneously all decisions like, for example, chords in the background pad and others.” (Blind Channel 2016). The idea that sound is of utmost

importance resonates with ideas generally associated with popular music as opposed to classical music (cf. Théberge 1997). This can be understood as referring to the importance of understanding sound enhancing techniques such as panning, compression and equalization; skills that the producer has and the musicians lack. Furthermore, the producer assumes a significant role in the recording of the vocals, which are recorded "more accurately" and "more time is spent on them" (ibid.). Hokka (ibid.) continues: "Jonas' ears are more accurate and his ideas for vocal parts are better. These kinds of things. That is production." The singer/rapper Niko Moilanen provides an additional perspective on the activity of production:

> If you think about production in the way that you have a song, which is recorded with a guitar and then you add background [tracks] like synthesized drums and pads to it with FL Studio or some other software and people say that this is the production. But then you can produce that too if you improve the drum sounds and make it groove.

Furthermore, Moilanen extends the activity of producing to lyrics but struggles to give an exhaustive description of what producing means. He continues (ibid.): "The lyrics of the song might be ready, but it can be produced as well by going "look at that, you make a double rhyme to it" or something. Everything can be produced but is it production, what is it? It's strange. It's a form of polishing."

These views presented by members of the band Blind Channel reveal a perspective on what "producing" might mean in the studio vernacular among musicians of the younger generation. The term "producing" increasingly refers to arranging and making the "background tracks". Additionally, it refers to working on sounds which constitute the tracks. This observation is especially interesting for the reason that Blind Channel falls into the category of rock as opposed to mainstream pop, where the agent called "producer" is heavily involved in songwriting and arranging[5].

Members of the band Blind Channel recognize the importance of the producer's role from the perspective of success. They even go as far as giving the producer credit for the rise in the amounts of Spotify stream counts, as the sale of physical records does not properly measure success in the music business today (Blind Channel 2016). According to the members of the band, their streams on Spotify started to soar immediately after they signed a recording contract and started working with Olsson. This view reveals what could be perceived as a rather simplistic causal understanding of how success is generated and can be explained by a general human desire for such explanations (Ericsson & Pool 2016: 109; Kahneman 74–75); a good producer equals success even if there might be multiple variants affecting the stream counts. Therefore, their understanding of the causality of success is content-driven as the producer was

[5] To arrive at this conclusion, one merely needs to take a quick glance at the credits on the album covers of mainstream pop acts.

not a major part of Blind Channel's public image; the producer helps the band achieve content of higher quality and stream counts rise. The guitarist Hokka, however, also offers an additional view (Blind Channel 2016):

> Our cover, which was released earlier and was the second song we did with Jonas [Olsson], started to stream this year. It was funny. We got 30 000 streams in January. Now it has 650 000 streams. This happened in less than a year. The speed is pretty scary. Other songs have streamed 200 000, the 3 or 4 singles I mean. I think that Jonas is one reason for the fact that they started to stream better.

These views suggest that the motive for getting a good producer is not merely about the quality of the production for the sake of quality itself. It also entails values related to quantitative measurements of success. The singer/rapper Moilanen concurs with Hokka's views by bringing in a marketing perspective (Blind Channel 2016):

> It probably has to do with fact that Riku [the record label owner], or the record company has been able to get our songs on Spotify playlists. But would they have made it to the Spotify lists if we had worked alone without a producer? It's hard to know.

This additional view suggests that the members of Blind Channel do have some understanding of the complexity of the music business. Activities related to marketing also influence the success of a song, and the overall success of a pop song is a multifaceted complicated process (cf. 1983). Hokka nevertheless holds the view that "the quality of our songs became better after Jonas [Olsson] had produced them. It has probably affected lots of things. It all starts with the song" (Blind Channel 2016). For them, everything nevertheless starts with good music, a good song. Good quality again is achieved by working with a good producer.

As noted previously, in this case study I've studied the agency of the producer when s/he works in a band setting. Production work in a band setting differs from working with a solo artist. As a versatile producer, Olsson distinguishes between working on a pop-act and working with a band. According to Olsson, the starting point in the creative process is different between the two. He states:

> In my thinking pop-music or pop is not a genre but it is a sort of an approach to making music. And I face this problem a lot because I work with [produce] both pop artists and bands and a lot of times a band seeks to work with me because they want to do pop or they want to sound more pop. Then we come to the problem that they want to make pop, and they aim at a certain end result but they do not want to take a certain starting point. (Olsson 2016a)

Of interest here is the fact that Olsson does not distinguish between different genres necessarily in stylistic terms, as in how the end product sounds to the listener or how the music itself is structurally laid out, but rather in terms of how the production process is organized and what starting points are involved. He (2016b) continues:

> Making good pop, one of its starting points is that there are no expectations [of the end result]. It should start from scratch. Today we might do reggae, another day we might end up with a piano song and the third day we might do a classic rock song. And we can boldly borrow from all styles, put them together. And usually a characteristic of a good pop performance is that it has some sort of a crossover potential so that it in a way mixes two or does a musical style in a way that it has not been done before. For example, we might have a reggae-like soundscape but we might play a Chuck Berry style riff. This creates an intersection between two styles.

According to Olsson's philosophy, good pop music lies in the intersection between different styles. The situation is different, however, when Olsson works with bands. The style of a band is more or less defined already before initial contact with Olsson, which restricts the agency of a producer. This creates an important premise in his work with the band Blind Channel. Olsson states (ibid.):

> This does not happen often with bands because they have thought things through very precisely that "there needs to be these kinds of drums and we want them to sound like this" and "we want the electric guitars…" so it sort of locks so many things that it cannot be pop anymore. Then it can end up being rock music with pop influences or some other influences. This is my philosophy.

In other words, a band, like Blind Channel in this case, comes to Olsson in pursuit of making their own existing music sound better, not to make new music altogether. Olsson’s elaborations show how he thinks about the creative process in a philosophical way. This observation is contrary to some earlier observations about how practitioners in record production speak about their work in non-conceptual ways (cf. Draper 2013).

### 5.1.3 The Songs ‘Can’t Hold Us’ and ‘Alone Against All’

During the studio sessions which were the subject of this case study, Olsson and Blind Channel produced two songs. One was Blind Channel’s original song ‘Alone Against All’ and the other was a cover of Macklemore’s ‘Can’t Hold Us’.

*Can’t Hold Us* was released on Spotify by Ranka Kustannus on March 3rd, 2017. The song is a cover of Macklemore and Ryan Lewis’ song of the same name from the album *The Heist* (Macklemore & Ryan Lewis 2012), which was released on October

9th, 2012 by Macklemore LLC. The song was first released as a promotional single on August 16th, 2011, in three different formats. The song is in the time signature of 4/4 and could be described as follows. On the left is a representation of the structure of the original version for comparison. On the right is Blind Channel's cover version. The parts are designated with capital letters or words and after the part inside the brackets I have written the bar count of each part.

**Table 2: A structural comparison of the original version and Blind Channel's cover version of the song 'Can't Hold Us'**

| **Original version:** | **Blind Channel-version:** |
|---|---|
| Intro (4+8) | Intro mod. (4+8) |
| A (8+8) | A (8+8) |
| A2 (8+8) | A2 (8+8) |
| Pre-Chorus (4+4) | Pre-Chorus (8) |
| B (8+8) | B (8+8) |
| A (8+8) | A (8+8) |
| Pre-chorus (4+4) | Pre-Chorus (4+5) |
| B (8+8) | B (8) |
| C1 (8+8) | C1 (8) |
| C2 (8+8) | C2 mod. down (8) |
| B (8+8) | B2 mod. down (8) |
| | B (8) |
| | Outro: (8) |

As can be seen from the table above, the song 'Can't Hold Us' to a great extent follows a fairly standard pop format with even numbers of bars in each part. Most parts are divided into either two parts of eight or two parts of four bars, where the latter part features a change in arrangement and/or a difference in feel in the vocals. The most frequent chord progression in the song could be represented as Im – VII – Vm – VI in the Aeolian mode. Exceptions include the intros, parts C1 and C2 and some latter halves of A, where the instrumental arrangement drifts into different kinds of riffs

played mostly in unisons instead of chord stacks.

Parts A (verse), B (chorus) and the pre-chorus give a sense of progression as they are the parts which contain lyrics either rapped or sung. Parts C1 and C2 are mainly instrumental parts which might contain single punch lines of sung lyrics.

As I have illustrated above, Blind Channel follows the structural form of the song fairly faithfully. They have cut the C-parts in half and swapped some parts around. For example, what in the original version is the second half of C1 is essentially the Outro in the cover version. Also, C1 and C2 in the cover constitute what is essentially C2 in the original version. Naturally, the instrumentation of the cover song differs drastically from the instrumentation of the original version, which is dominated by a piano, an array of different kinds of acoustic-sounding percussive instruments, some trance-lead-like synth sounds, possibly synthesized horn sounds, a very plunge-sounding bass and female vocal choirs. The cover version, on the other hand, features the instrumentation of the band Blind Channel, which has a drum set, two electric guitars, which are heavily distorted most of the time, an electric bass, rap vocals and clean vocals. The cover version also features extensive synthesized additions, the result of a sophisticated production process featuring also agents outside of the main collective of Olsson and Blind Channel as Olsson used an assistant (Olsson 2017b).

What is notable in the cover version is that, excluding the first four bars of the intro, it is in the key of D Aeolian which is a full step lower than the E Aeolian key of the original version. Moreover, in the cover version parts C2 and B2 drop even further down to the key of C Aeolian. This key drop in addition to the very metal-like instrumentation makes the cover essentially sound like a song by the band Blind Channel in the category of contemporary metal/rock with elements of rap/hip hop, whereas the original song is more of a pure rap/hip hop song. Drop tuning, a common characteristic of contemporary heavy metal, makes the overall sound darker and essentially ties the music into the stylistic traditions of metal. At the same time the original song is recognizable and some of the feel of the original song remains in the cover as well. According to Olsson (2017a):

> Thinking about the content…when you make a cover, you'd have to justify it somehow, why you did it. If you make an identical, for example, a piano-arrangement of, for example, Adele's [song] 'Someone Like You', like "why did you do it, why?". But his band version is obvious, this is like emo/core some rap/EDM hybrid version of an urban rap-song, so the justification is itself, in the form, why it is done. It is so different and it remakes the song in an interesting way. In a way, it reinvents the composition with this transformation.

This was exactly the case with Blind Channel's version of *Can't Hold Us* (Macklemore & Ryan Lewis 2012). Blind Channel also made some minor changes in the lyrics of the song to suit their own narrative better. For example, when Macklemore and Ryan Lewis say "but that's what you get when Wu-Tang raised you" in the second

verse, Blind Channel says “but that’s what you get when Macklemore raised you” insinuating that they grew up listening to Macklemore, as Macklemore perhaps grew up listening to the band Wu-Tang Clan[6].

The song ‘Alone Against All’ (Blind Channel 2017b) was released on April 7th, 2017, as a digital release on Spotify. The structure of the song can be represented as follows:

| **Table 3: The structure of the song ‘Alone Against All’** |
| --- |
| Intro (8+8) |
| A (8) |
| Pre-chorus (8) |
| B (8+8) |
| Post-chorus (4) |
| A (8) |
| Pre-chorus (8) |
| B (9+8) |
| B2 (12) |
| A (8) |
| Pre-chorus (8) |
| B3 (8) |
| B2 (12) |
| Post-chorus (4) |

Like the cover song ‘Can’t Hold Us’, ‘Alone Against All’ is also in the key of D Aeolian with the lowest string of guitars and bass tuned to drop C. Drop-tuning being a common feature in metal music, this creates a heavy metal feel to the arrangement. In addition to the basic instruments featured in the band’s live set-up (two guitars, bass, drum set), the arrangement includes some synthesizer pad-sounds which take a more or less ambient role and bring breadth to the overall soundscape. The live line-up of the band does not include a keyboard player, which means that the synthesizer sounds come from a playback device in the live setting. Some sounds bring the aforementioned EDM-feel (Olsson 2017a) to the arrangement. For example, the second half of the intro features a rather dominant and aggressive saw-like lead sound, which

[6] An American rap-group.

sounds almost like an aggressive DJ-scratch. This sound takes production away from what could be thought of as traditional "authentic" rock aesthetic (see e.g. Warner 2003: 4).

The vocals feature very little rap, contrary to the cover version of 'Can't Hold Us'. Both vocalists, Niko Moilanen and Joel Hokka, sing with clean vocals most of the time. Some parts, for example the line "I am what I am" in the second pre-chorus, include aggressive growls or shout-like sounds which highlight the feeling that the words attempt to convey. Furthermore, some words, for example "angels" and "demos" in the first verse, are emphasized by added distortion and harmonizer effects to the vocal sound.

The differences between the production of these two different songs from the producer's point of view remain unclear. Olsson (2017a) states: "Both were made with the same piety. Joel [Hokka] told me, of their own original song, that this song is important to him. But he didn't say that the other one would have been any less important. This is the only way we touched upon the issue. The songs are different." This might reflect the view Olsson expressed about the difference between working with a pop artist or a band. With a band, the sound and style of the end product is more fixed already at the beginning of the project. Therefore, the producer's work remains similar regardless of the song under production as long as the band stays the same (Olsson 2016a). This would suggest that Olsson's work with Blind Channel is concentrated on enhancing and bringing forth a specific sound which makes the band what it is. This is contrary to, for example, how Vepsäläinen worked with Ida Paul (see chapter 3).

The songs, namely the demos that Blind Channel sent him (Blind Channel 2016), constituted the musical structures which affected the formation of the producer's creative agency in the production process. Olsson's agency was also limited by Blind Channel's already established sound; he could not alter it too much without dispensing with what is essential about the band. Furthermore, the cover version of 'Can't Hold Us' as a musical structure fundamentally restricted the agency of everyone. These kinds of restrictions of the producer's creative agency, however, are not necessarily negative but can even be understood as desirable. Olsson (2017a) even restricts his own agency voluntarily as he tries to avoid "constantly marinating the project with his own ideas" (I will return to this later in section 5.4.1.). Olsson (2017a) originally even became interested in working with Blind Channel for the reason that he was "fascinated by the rap EDM mix". Overall creativity here can be viewed as flourishing within relatively strict confines (cf. Hennessey & Amabile 1988: 12). This can further be understood as a set of boundaries or a stylistic structure within which Olsson chose to work. The creative collective in this instance can also be understood as a frame within which the creative agency of the producer and that of the musicians were built. My close reading of this collaborative work would suggest that rather than taking part in the compositional process or having a heavy influence on arrangements or lyrics, Olsson's work here focused more on ensuring the quality of the recorded performances

in the studio and enhancing the sound by implementing a multitude of small sound details, which I have discussed above. These details might, however, have significant meaning (cf. Lacasse 2000: 10). This can also be understood essentially as a genre convention. In rock music, the producer typically is less involved in the processes of composition or arranging than in pop or the myriad genres falling into the broad category of EDM, but nevertheless more than in classical or jazz (Frith 2012: 221). However, Olsson's work with Blind Channel suggests that the lesser presence of the producer in rock music compared to pop or dance is real and not just a result of how the producer's role in music is discussed, as Firth (ibid.) seems to suggest.

## 5.2 The Studio as a Creative Space

The studio is the central creative site of music production, as I have discussed before in chapters 2, 3 and 4. In this section, I will discuss the recording or production studio as a physical and cultural space and demonstrate how the characteristics of the studio space facilitate the creative agency of the producer and that of other agents involved in the music production process. Characteristics include both studio design and, for example, physical location. This discussion includes two different perspectives, which can be understood as two sides of the same coin. As I have discussed before, on the one hand agency is dependent on structures (McIntyre 2008), which in this case means the structure of the studio space with its enabling and limiting traits. On the other hand, agency has an influence on structure (Taylor 2001: 34). The recording studio could be understood simultaneously as something that "both makes and is made by people" (Taylor 2001: 35).

### 5.2.1 InkFish studio

Olsson's studio InkFish is situated in Helsinki in a neighborhood called Vallila. The building where the studio is situated is a sort of a concentration of creative spaces that includes at least one other studio. I found this out as I first tried to enter the wrong studio before finding the right door to InkFish studio. (FD 27.11.2016.) As I have stated before, Olsson used to have his studio in Kokkola, Ostrobothnia. He moved it to Helsinki in 2015. The fact that InkFish is located in Helsinki is an important issue for Olsson. He explains:

> [After moving to Helsinki] I think that my projects have been a little different. I have been able to do things that require more presence. For example, I've signed a couple of artist projects here, my own artists to my own company, who I produce and for whom I write songs. It's a lot easier to work with them… and it wouldn't have even been very credible to sign Helsinki-based artists to some Kokkola-based tradename. (Olsson 2017a)

Some projects were also very difficult to manage from Kokkola. He (2017a) continues:

> I led Robin's [a Finnish platinum-selling artist] band as a kind of a musical director for three years. I held rehearsals for the band and other stuff. For the first year I did that I was still based in Kokkola but it was really difficult – – it's [important] to be able to provide presence.

These views reveal several important issues about the agency of the producer. The music business in Finland seems to be Helsinki-centered, at least to some extent. For a producer to be able to do certain kinds of projects s/he needs to be physically close to Helsinki. Providing physical presence to artists strengthens the producer's agency. The second issue Olsson mentions, which is more interesting to me, is the credibility of a producer. It is interesting that the producer is seen as more credible when based in Helsinki. This further emphasizes the Helsinki-centeredness of the Finnish music business. Overall credibility again can be understood as a major strengthening factor in the agency of a producer. Of note is also how the physical location of a studio, and at the same time the location where the producer is based, as a concrete structure also becomes a value structure and therefore to some degree a cultural structure; the physical location, a physical structure, affects *credibility*, a value structure, of a producer and strengthens or weakens the producer's agency. Gibson (2005: 194) has argued that:

> Large cities usually provide both the socio-economic context (clubs, recording studios, inner-city bohemian neighborhoods) and, perhaps, the inspiration for musical creativity, though this may be less from urban cultural diversity or unique landscapes, and more from everyday links with audiences, other musicians and composers.

This seems to be the case with Olsson and his wish to move his studio to Helsinki as well. A large city as an environment provides better and broader social and economic structures for music production than a smaller one. Also, larger cities afford more business opportunities for a producer. Thus, it enhances and especially expands the range of possibilities supporting the creative agency of the producer.

### 5.2.2 Physical Structures of the Studio and the Creative Process

On my arrival, Olsson showed me around. He took me to the control room and recording spaces. The control room featured a small singing/recording booth immediately adjacent to it, separated by a soundproof wall. The singing/recording booth had a window to the control room so the producer and the artist would have visual contact with one another. (Video clip 15.) (FD 27.11.2016.) The fact that the smaller recording booth was in very close proximity or even attached to the control

room could be regarded as a mundane technical studio feature with no deeper meaning behind it. I would, however, suggest that close proximity and direct visual contact between the smaller recording space and the control room formed an important physical structural base for the production process. Vocals, for instance, were recorded in this space. Vocal recordings again were of the utmost importance in the process as a whole. Olsson (2017a) explains: “In my opinion the vocals are the most important here, what the listener pays attention to… There’s more that needs to be played around with here [the vocals] compared to other elements.”

As I have discussed in sections 5.3.3. and 5.4.3., the feel that musicians have when they record their parts is important and contributes to the sonic result they produce. The fact that the producer is close to them and sees them when they record can be understood as establishing a feeling of connectedness and unity. Also, the possibility for the musicians to see the producer when recording their parts and receiving feedback from the producer can be an important factor in the collaborative process, as it could be seen as strengthening the overall feel of working together as a group and not as separate agents. This is a way in which the physical structure of the studio can be seen as influencing the social structure of the creative process and thus the creative agency of the producer in a positive way. Also, the choice to have a small recording space attached to the control room can be seen as a way in which the producer as an agent has the ability to influence physical structures (Taylor 2001: 35) to better meet his needs.

Another perspective can be derived from the fact that a recording space is a part of the control room and not a separate entity at a distance. In addition to enhancing communication through close proximity, this physical build of the studio environment emphasized the idea of the studio as a musical (meta-)instrument (Moorefield 2005: 53–54), or an environment where compositional and arrangement-related processes take place. This became evident especially when someone had spontaneous ideas which they immediately wanted to experiment with. For example, when working on the Macklemore cover song ‘Can’t Hold Us’, Olsson had the idea of a rising choir-sound from the Backstreet Boys song ‘Everybody (Backstreet’s Back)’ (Backstreet Boys 1997: bar 28) (FD 19.12.2016), which starts on the first beat of bar 28 and leads the song from the pre-chorus to the hook and the chorus. They listened to the song as a reference (Auvinen 2016: 25–26; Auvinen 2017) (see sections 3.3.2. and 5.3.) and Hokka immediately went into the recording booth to sing the parts on repeat (Video Clip 15). Olsson assembled the choir later by editing the parts into the song (Blind Channel 2017a: bar 36). The fact that the recording booth is attached to the control room makes it much easier to work together spontaneously, thus contributing to the creative agency of the producer and others. This observation reveals an important perspective on the agency of the producer. Firstly, it strengthens the position of the control room and the digital audio workstation (DAW) as the epicenter of the creative process. The closeness of a recording space becomes important when determining its potential in the creative process; a space attached directly to the control room seems to

make it easier for the creative collective to use the space spontaneously and, as a part of the studio, as a compositional (or in this case arrangement) tool (Moorefield 2005: 53–54). Creativity flourishes as closeness creates a better symbiosis between the producer and the artists. This improves the workflow and strengthens both the producer's and the artist's agency with respect to one another.

The studio featured a larger recording room next to the common area (Photo 7). Despite having a window (Photo 7), this space lacked visual contact with the control room (FD 27.11.2016) and when entering this recording space, one had to leave the control room and walk through the common area to the recording space. All communication between this recording space and the control room was purely sonic and happened through a talkback microphone and speakers (Video Clip 16). A space like this is needed to record live-sounding drums (FD 27.11.2016). However, a space this far from the control room would make the kind of spontaneous creativity I have described above much more difficult than a space attached to the control room. When recording drums, the drummer of Blind Channel and the producer Olsson recorded them according to predetermined arrangements which had been coded before the recording sessions started (see section 5.3.1.). While this can simply be viewed as a production technique or a production model chosen by Olsson and Blind Channel regardless of their studio circumstances, a recording space that is further away from the control room could be understood as a physical structure which enforces a work method like this, instead of a method that embraces a more spontaneous creative process that I have described above in connection with the smaller recording space attached to the control room.

### 5.2.3. Extra-musical Amenities in the Studio

InkFish studio featured a rather sizable living room with couches and a full kitchen. This self-evident feature of commercial studios today stems from the development which originates from the 1960's as client comfort received greater attention (Horning 2013: 208). Horning (2013: 209) elaborates: "As the recording studio business became increasingly competitive, artist comfort and hip interior design became selling points along with state-of-the-art technology." Even if Olsson's studio design doesn't go anywhere near the lengths of including "hot tubs and sleeping accommodation" or Persian rugs (ibid.), it has enough amenities to provide sufficient comfort for production sessions which tend to become lengthy and laborious (Blind Channel 2016). Upon entering the studio, I encountered members of Blind Channel and their manager sitting around and joking in a couch arrangement in the common area/living room. (FD 27.11.2016) This area was where band members would eat and spend time when they were not needed in the recording spaces or in the control room. The same rather large space also featured a kitchen where Olsson and the band members ate and drank coffee on their lunch and coffee breaks. Apart from a shelf with magazines (Video Clip 17) the common area/living room/kitchen did not feature many

recreational possibilities despite the fact that in earlier research and writings on the contemporary recording studio, recreational amenities have been regarded as an important feature (e.g. Horning 2013: 209). This could nevertheless stem from the fact that InkFish studio is located in Helsinki and at a reasonably close proximity to the city center. The possibilities afforded by the urban location might be enough as opposed to secluded studios far away from urban physical and social structures (see ibid.).

At times, Olsson and members of Blind Channel also moved the creative process into this space when they didn't need studio equipment. For example, before starting to record vocals on November 29th, 2016, Olsson, Hokka and Moilanen went to the kitchen to check the lyrics of the Macklemore cover song 'Can't Hold Us'. Olsson checked them through and he and Moilanen discussed some of the changes the band had made before starting to record the vocals. (FD 29.11.2016; Video Clip 17.) Even if the meaning and purpose of situations like these could at first glance be viewed as trivial, there might be more to them than this. Getting out of the gadget-filled control room where the producer and the musicians have spent a long period of time without a break might be an attempt to get a fresh view in a more relaxed atmosphere and a more open space when making decisions on content like the lyrics, which does not require the technology of the control room. These observations resonate with Horning's (2013: 209) ideas of different surroundings being "more conductive to creativity" even if to a much lesser extent than what she ultimately describes. Furthermore, it takes some pressure off the producer if band members are not constantly present in the control room. In other words, the producer gets more space for her/his own thought processes when s/he can work alone or with just some of the band members in the control room. The rest of the group needs a place to spend time in and the recreational/common area serves this purpose well.

### 5.2.4 Achievements on Display as a Demonstration of Authority

What struck me as a very distinctive characteristic of Olsson's studio's interior were the numerous gold, platinum and multi-platinum albums which hung on display on several walls inside the studio space (FD 27.11.2016; Photo 4; Photo 5, Photo 6). Hanging gold and platinum albums on the walls of the studio might seem like a mundane trait of any typical commercial studio. However, there seems to be a clear reason for the fact that Olsson has not taken the certified gold and platinum records home but has hung them on the wall of his studio, which is his workplace. They could be understood as trophies[7], resembling those that athletes put on display, with the caveat that in sports the trophies are more likely to be found in the home of the athlete. At first glance this kind of interior, however stereotypically ordinary it is in the music business, might come across as showing off. It nevertheless serves a crucial purpose from the perspective of the producer's status. Having a producer's achievements on

[7] Listen to the rapper/producer Dr. Dre's song 'Forgot About Dre'.

display in the very space where creativity happens elevates the producer's status in the eyes of his/her customers, like, for instance, the band Blind Channel. Olsson's prior success as a top producer again was one of the primary reasons that Blind Channel asked Olsson to be their producer in the first place (Blind Channel 2016; see section 5.1.2.). The emphasis here is on the term "top producer". To be a top producer in popular music, one must have sold a large number of records. Displaying the proof of record sales achieving records on the walls of the studio space strengthens the producer's status as a top producer. Before having a track record in the form of sales success, Olsson had problems with acting as a creative agent, as in making and affecting aesthetic decisions in production sessions. He (Olsson 2017a) elaborates on the early days of his production career:

> I expressed my opinions many times but people just shrugged their shoulders and continued the old way and didn't want to see the problem. Or then they saw the problem but it was an ego-issue to them, in a way that a 19-year-old can't know and we know better, we've played these songs.

This view suggests that the lack of earlier success affects the producer's agency in a negative way because he is given less creative power by artists. Prior success again strengthens the producer's agency and builds up the authority and power of the producer. In a way, success reproduces success in a positive vicious circle. McIntyre (2008) has discussed the influence of the producer's experience and success on his/her authority:

> A producer like Phil Ramone, for example, who has produced and worked with Paul McCartney, Frank Sinatra, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Gloria Estafan, Barbra Streisand and many, many others needs no real introduction in a studio setting. It can be argued his abilities are written all over his *curriculum vitae*, in the awards he has garnered and the multiple successes he has had.

Similarly, hanging gold and platinum albums on the wall could be seen as displaying one's *curriculum vitae* for the customer to see. It can be understood in business terms as *proof of concept*, which in this case is the producer her/himself. Thus, the choices made in the interior design, which is a part of the physical structure of the studio, can be understood as a building block in the agency of the producer. The studio interior as a part of the physical structure of the creative process, however, is a structure that the producer has control over. This could be understood through Taylor's (2001: 35) definition of agency and especially the latter part of it; an individual capacity to "alter" a structure "to some extent". In this way, the producer's capacity to design the interior of the studio and thus affect the physical structures becomes a self-strengthening cycle. The ability to display her/his achievements on the studio walls is a sign of strong agency as it shows an ability to alter physical structures. These physical

structures, which manifest the producer's achievements and success, again become a form of social structure as they strengthen the producer's value and power in the eyes of other creative parties who are present in the studio and thus make the producer's agency stronger in contrast to others.

## 5.3 The Studio Process, Creativity and Studio Technology

As I've discussed previously in this study, technology is at the core of the creative process of music production. Rather than just a collection of gadgets, music technology must be understood as something much more profound and pervasive. In the words of Théberge (1997: 193), in this study "Recording technology must be understood as a complete 'system' of production involving the organization of musical, social and technological means". This section is devoted to the exploration and analysis of Jonas Olsson's technological practices in his studio work with the band Blind Channel. Moreover, I will analyze how his technological practice affects his creative agency and the agency of others. Here, technology is understood as the central structure upon which agency depends (Taylor 2001: 35). I will discuss how technological practices affect the structure of the process of record production, agency dissemination, the motivation of musicians and what views on sound quality arise from digital sound manipulation practices. Finally, I will discuss the producer's relationship towards technology and how this case study provides an example of how the Internet as a new technology can expand the creative process.

### 5.3.1 Blurring the Lines between Pre- and Post-Production and the Recording Sessions

As I have discussed in previous chapters, traditionally a record production project could be divided into three consecutive phases: pre-production, recording, and post-production. Pre-production traditionally takes place prior to the recording sessions. Depending on the perspective, pre-production might include basically all the activities which have to take place before a producer and a group or an artist are ready to record, including writing the songs. Usually the pre-production process includes a group or artist sending some versions of their songs to the producer, who gives them feedback and may, for example, suggest changes to the song structure or the arrangement. The recording session traditionally takes place after pre-production and includes recording the sonic material of the music which the musicians have rehearsed. Post-production, which takes place after the recording process, traditionally entails the manipulation (or enhancement) of the recorded material into the final form in which the producer and the musicians want to release it, and includes activities like editing, mixing and mastering. Like most models in general, dividing the phases of the record production process temporally is, of course, a rough generalization and the activities included in each phase might vary depending on genre, the individual producer and individual

artist (or group). However, in the early stages of record production, it was convenient and usually most cost-effective to keep the phases of the record production project separate, mostly because recording time was limited and hard to get (Horning 2013: 208). Studio time was scarce and it was most efficient to spend time over a separate pre-production phase, after which musicians would know what and how to play in the studio during recording. This changed with the emergence of independent studios in response to musicians' desire to spend more time in the studio in sessions without predetermined end times (Horning 2013: 209).

While the merging of pre-production and recording started even before the digital revolution, the merging of recording and post-production activities like editing could be seen as becoming possible through digital technology. Before digital recording mediums, which enable, for instance, infinite undo-commands, non-destructive overlap recording and non-destructive editing, it would not have been realistic to do extensive editing or mixing during the recording process due to practical reasons related to the analog tape medium. It made more sense instead to record everything in a predetermined fashion, and then edit, mix and master, especially as the different studios were built for these separate purposes: a recording studio would be different from an editing, mixing and mastering studio. This holds true to some extent even today (e.g. Auvinen 2016: 24; Auvinen 2017; Gibson 2005: 205). However, the digital revolution has firstly made it possible for the producer to streamline the record production process; secondly, it made it easier to disseminate agency between different agents involved in the process and include agents who were not originally involved; and thirdly, it made the blurring of the different phases a desirable phenomenon.

When examining Olsson's work with Blind Channel, the possibilities afforded by digital technology and how they affect the production process were clearly visible. In practice, the recording sessions, which took place in InkFish studio, were intrinsically something between pre-production, sound recording and post-production. The recording of the drums was a prime example of this. The way in which the drums were produced was a mix between recording the drummer playing acoustic drums and programming electronic drum sounds, which is another example of the possibilities afforded by digital production technology. I use the term "produced" here for the very reason that the sonic result was a combination of recording and programming, and the resulting drum tracks were a mixture of electronic and acoustic drums. Hence, the word recording would not describe the process accurately enough.

Before the drum recordings started, Olsson's assistant had "coded" or "programmed" the snare and bass drum hits into the ProTools sessions of the songs. The drummer played his parts on top of these pre-programmed drums. Olsson (2016a) explains:

> We had a reference song from an American band called Asking Alexandria and their song 'Reckless and Relentless', or something… In my opinion that

> particular drum sound cannot be achieved only by playing [and recording] acoustic drums but it’s sort of half programmed and half played.

Before recording the real drum set on the recording day, Olsson still worked on the pre-programmed electronic drum tracks a little bit because some arrangements needed to be fixed immediately before the recordings started (FD 28.11.2016). Olsson (2016b) states:

> I just changed them a little on the go because we arranged the drums a bit before we started to record and we changed some rhythms. Then I listened to how Tommi [the drummer of Blind Channel] played it and I changed the [coded software] drums that we had pre- programmed to match his hits. I didn't need to tap the tracks altogether. I was able to just make the small changes, as we had already done the preparatory work.

What is important to note here is the essence of pre-production. In this case pre-production entailed programming electronic drum tracks based on demo versions of the songs, not rigorous rehearsals where the musicians would practice together and then transfer the well-practiced parts onto recorded tracks. Moreover, the pre-production programming extended to the recording phase, as Olsson changed the electronic drum tracks to match what the drummer played. In this way the pre-production phase extends into the recording phase and is controlled by the producer.
After recording the real drums on top of the programmed ones, Olsson muted all other microphones from the mix except for the overhead mics, the so-called room mics and the hi-hat mic. (Olsson 2016b.) He (ibid.) explains:

> They give us the ringing of the cymbals. It's a lot harder to program the [ringing sounds of] cymbals and the hi-hat […] or at least it is very laborious and difficult… How should I put it? The power and effectiveness and the certain *hit power* of the drums’ rhythmicality is due to how the actual drums, not the cymbals, are in time and how their volume level is.

By programming the drums, the bass drum and the snare, Olsson was able to make them “perfect” and remove any unwanted inaccuracies between the timing and volume of each separate hit. The cymbal sounds again were the result of recording the acoustic drum set. This gave the production team the possibility to add a certain kind of “life” associated with the aforementioned “ringing” to the overall sound (Olsson 2016b). What is noteworthy here is how Olsson matched the programmed or coded drum tracks with the drums played by the drummer but then muted the “real” drums, excluding the cymbals. As a result, the arrangement of the bass drum and the snare would resemble what the real drummer played but the sounds would be completely electronic. Why is this then necessary to begin with? This could be understood as stemming from values

related to rock as a genre. The emphasis on performance in rock music (Warner 2003: 4) leads to an ideal of authenticity, where a rock song should sound the same live as on record, or at least there should be a "feel" of liveness (see Auslander 2008) in the sonic result. This can be understood as a value structure, which steers the agency of the producer when producing a rock song even if it wasn't necessary from a technical point of view; the programmed drums must match the ones that the drummer plays live even if the "real" drums are not very strongly audible in the final sonic result. The underlying values at stake here seem to emphasize the importance of a live "feel" while simultaneously stressing the necessity of a powerful and polished result. This can be interpreted as stemming from the combination of heavier rock and rap or EDM (Olsson 2017a; see section 5.1.3.).

### 5.3.2 Blurring the Lines of Production Phases and Disseminating Agency

During the recording process Olsson always edited the tracks after a single instrument had been recorded, which traditionally is something that belongs to post-production as a temporally separate stage that occurs after the recordings are done. He did this for the drum tracks before proceeding to record other instruments. Furthermore, once they had recorded the bass guitar tracks for Blind Channel's original song 'Alone Against All', Olsson asked the bass player to take a break as he had enough material. He would then listen to the takes, edit everything into place and fix inaccuracies before moving on (FD 29.11.2016). This, however common in contemporary digital production, is an example of how digital technology and working on a DAW (digital audio workstation) make it possible for the producer to mix the traditionally separate temporal phases of record production. Olsson (2016b) explains the reason for this working practice:

> I build the production as I would build a house. There needs to be the drum base on which we can record everything else. First of all, we need to know what fits into the sonic picture, what kind of sounds, and secondly, that it sounds how it is supposed to all the time. This is the aesthetic side.

In addition to aesthetic issues, practical considerations guide working practices as well. He (ibid.) continues:

> Then a practical issue is that I have so many active projects at the same time. If I forget this song… if there was a good vibe in a certain take and not in another take, or that we played seven takes in one part and then the bass player noticed that he was out of tune a little bit and then he tuned and then played another seven takes with a bass which is in tune, I cannot remember these kinds of things.

Furthermore, he prefers not to write lots of physical notes on a piece of paper in the way Vepsäläinen (see chapter 3.2.) does. He (Olsson 2016b) elaborates: "Making notes take a lot of time as well. How I live is that all the sessions… when I leave them and close them at the end of the day, they are in a state in which there is nothing to be edited and there is nothing that is incomplete or anything that would require [more work]."

Olsson (2016b) tries to uphold the principle according to which he always leaves a session "complete" and all the take selections are final before calling it a day. This would make it possible for someone else to see all the tracks of a project by just taking a glance and continue his work. This kind of allocation of creative agency to a third party was precisely the case at a later stage in the project, when Olsson had another overlapping session at another location and his assistant Kane Heinonen acted as the engineer/producer (FD 30.11.2017) at a recording session. In a way, Olsson's practice of always editing everything he has recorded into place before closing a project makes it possible for him to scale his business; Olsson can work on other projects elsewhere while his assistant can continue his work. This naturally means that he has to trust the person stepping into his shoes. This is a prime example of how digital technology can make it easier for the producer to control the temporal structure of the recording process and thus enable the distribution of creative agency between different agents. Digital technology then can be understood as something that strengthens the agency of the producer as s/he has more power to control the temporal and, in a way, the spatial structure of the production process; not having to be personally present at all times makes the process faster and somewhat more efficient.

During the guitar recordings, Olsson used a similar editing technique. The difference was that he recorded several takes of a guitar part or passage and selected the best take on the spot, edited and polished it right before moving to the next part or passage. The guitar player didn't even leave his chair to take a break. (FD 29.11.2016). This observation provides us with two views on contemporary music production and the agency of the producer. Editing, which traditionally belongs to the post-production phase done in the recording stage, gives the producer the opportunity to allocate agency more effectively, both temporally between different sessions and between different agents. Editing all the recorded sonic material to the point where it is finished provides the opportunity to continue later at a different time without having to remember the stage at which the project was left. This again is possible only through digital editing (Warner 2003: 21), as editing using an analog medium like, for example, magnetic tape would take too much time to be done during the recording sessions. Secondly, the producer has the opportunity to delegate agency to others more easily. Another individual is capable of taking over in the middle of the recording stage and continuing from the point at which the previous agent left things. This is a prime example of how studios and the technologies they feature "cultivate new practices and shape social interactions" (Bates 2012).

### 5.3.3 Musicians' Feelings and the Phases of Production

Another reason for the fact that Olsson edited right after he had recorded all the takes of a single instrument in a song, and sometimes also right after a single take between two takes (FD 29.11.2016), is related to the feelings that the musicians have during the production process and the overall atmosphere or the "vibes" that the musicians experience. If he decided to first record everything and then do a longer period of editing, it might have a negative impact on how the musicians feel and on how they are doing with the project. Olsson (2017a) explains: "It's nicer for the band to get some finished results. It's very uninspiring to record some takes into some tube or into a kind of a black hole and often the artist's perception of how well s/he has played is very different from the truth."

He (ibid.) underlines the fact that emotions play a crucial role in the production process. One of the producer's tasks therefore is to provide a working method which takes this into account. Olsson (2017a) continues:

> If the artist has a shitty feeling when s/he is playing or singing, it doesn't mean that the take is necessarily shitty. But if s/he has a shitty feeling about it like "fuck, I played like shit" and I go "yeah, it's good, let's proceed". Then s/he does another take with a shitty feeling and in the end s/he has a shitty feeling about the whole recording day and when s/he returns the next day, the shitty feeling from the day before remains and it is added to the vocal performance.

By editing on the spot and thus producing finished results along the way, Olsson is able to soften or eliminate the impact of a "shitty feeling" on the musician's performance. He (Olsson 2017a) explains: "If we continuously produce finished sonic images and it sounds good, like "hey this sounds good, it's going to be good and it rocks and already sounds this good", it raises the feelings and the vibes up and it inspires people to achieve better performances."

This view finds support in educational literature. Dividing up large goal-oriented tasks into smaller concrete steps has an encouraging and motivating effect (Ericsson & Pool 2016: 177). If he was working with robots, Olsson (2017a) adds, feelings wouldn't affect the process in any way. But the fact remains, according to Olsson (2017a), that musicians are often very emotional and feelings play a vital role in how they perform during a production process. This observation highlights the role of the producer as a facilitator (Burgess 2013: 14) and an agent, whose responsibility it is to make the musicians feel good while working. The importance of having a good feeling or "good vibes" during a production project is so crucial that Olsson has constructed his working methods and techniques to facilitate this role. This demonstrates a way in which the producer as an active agent can use technology to alter the structure of the record production process to facilitate a better working environment for the musicians. The producer thus enhances the creative agency of everyone involved in the process by

promoting a better feeling for the agents involved through altering the temporal structures of the production process with the aid of digital technology.

### 5.3.4 Digital Technology and Quality Control

The bass recordings, which followed a similar mix of recording and editing, featured an interesting aspect from a technological perspective. The bass was plugged directly into a pre-amp and from there to the computer's sound card (FD 28.11.2016). Olsson (2016b) didn't want to use a real bass amplifier, because he didn't think it would necessarily make a great difference. He (Olsson 2016b) elaborates:

> Sometimes I use an amplifier, sometimes I don't, but I don't feel like the [sonic] result would be a lot different. If there's a bass player who clearly has her/his own sound and that sound is the result of the amplifier, then yes of course. But otherwise, and especially in music like this, where the bass… This isn't Motown, where the bass could be heard and it plays melody-like themes. Here its role is more or less to double the guitars from an octave below and to bring a rhythmic function, that klang.

Olsson used a software-based plug-in amplifier called SansAmp to tweak the sound of the bass. He also had a compressor on. Olsson used so-called "nazi-listening" when editing. What this means is that Olsson emphasized the "upstairs" of the sound, meaning its higher frequencies, to be able to listen to the attacks of the sound. (Olsson 2016b.) At this point, he wasn't sure whether or not he would eventually remove all plug-ins and send the bass tracks to the mixing engineer in their raw mode (2016b).

As Olsson edited the bass track, it first seemed like he treated the bass track in the same way he had treated the drum tracks, adding a MIDI-bass track on top of the recorded bass audio (FD 28.11.2016). This, however, wasn't the case after all. Olsson programmed a MIDI-bass track only to check that the real bass was in tune. He (Olsson 2016b) elaborates:

> This is pretty much an idiot-proof way of checking the tuning of the bass. When we record bass before recording other instruments, we don't have any kind of chord [harmony] or anything else there. We have the demo tracks but we don't have anything that would stay [in the end product].

The need for this kind of quality control arises partially from the way the bass player handled the instrument in this specific case, and from how the instrument reacted to his playing in terms of its sonic characteristics. Olsson (ibid.) continues: "When we only have the drums and the bass and the bass sound is a little distorted and aggressive and he plays pretty hard and lots of low frequencies and it has lots of attack and also there are lots of harmonic series, it is really difficult to hear whether or not it

is in tune."

Without this kind of quality control, Olsson could not have known if the bass really was in tune until they started with other instruments. This would have slowed the process down. For this reason, Olsson programmed an identical MIDI-bass track, which did not remain in the end result. He (ibid.) further explains the process:

> After they are identical, I cut all the upstairs information [high frequencies] and I listen to the so-called fundamental tone, which is the tone without any harmonic series. Then I can compare. The intonation is never perfect, because it's a string that vibrates, and there's an envelope, a fall, which means that it's a little sharp [in the moment] when it's played [aggressively] and afterwards it settles to the right pitch. But whether or not it's at an acceptable level compared to the reference [MIDI-bass], I can check it really quickly.

So, in the bass-recording process, the MIDI-bass is thus used only for the purposes of quality control and not as something which adds to the sound of the end product. This working method emphasizes the producer's role as quality controller of the musician's performance. Also, it demonstrates how the producer utilizes structures provided by digital technology to control the quality of the performance. Here too, digital technology is only an aid for Olsson in his listening experience. What I mean by this is that even if it were possible for Olsson to make a quality check just by looking at the screen and checking that the frequency of every note is correct by using an auto-tune plug-in or a frequency analyzer, he chooses to listen to the whole bass track and compare it sonically to a MIDI-bass track. This emphasizes the importance of the listening experience in the aesthetic evaluation of the sonic end result. Also, it underlines the importance of sound in popular music. The strong harmonic series that Olsson mentions contributes to the overall sound of the bass. If he had simply tuned it digitally, some of these harmonics would have been lost as the tuner would have forced the sound into certain mathematically correct frequencies. Hence the sonic result could have drifted away from the desired outcome.

### 5.3.5 Recording the Vocals: Quality of Recorded Sound and Digital Sound Manipulation Technology

Olsson allocated a great deal of time and energy in the recording process to recording vocals. To me it seemed like he concentrated more on the recording of the vocals compared to, for example, the guitars, drums or bass. (FD 29.11.2016.) The preparations for the vocal recordings were also more thorough compared to other instruments. As an example, Olsson spent some time doing vocal warm-ups with the singer/rapper Niko Moilanen with the aid of an acoustic guitar (Video clip 18). According to Olsson (2017a), the reason for concentrating so much on the vocals is the fact that it is the "most important element, which the listener pays the greatest attention

to". Furthermore, the vocals feature so many parameters, which must fall into place for the vocal performance to work. He (ibid.) elaborates:

> There are many things which need to work. There's pronunciation and timing and the lyrics and then a certain level of energy and non-phlegmaticness, and also a certain kind of power or hitting power in the pronunciation and phrasing. They all have to work in a good take. Perhaps there're more elements to play around with compared to other instruments.

As I have shown earlier in this study (see chapter 3.2.), this demonstrates how important it is for a producer to understand the importance of the human voice carrying much more information than the "semantic value of the actual words it utters" (Lacasse 2000: 10; see also Frith 1996: 192). The fact that the vocal tracks in the songs recorded by Blind Channel are clearly heavily digitally processed raises a question related to the need to record "flawless" vocal performances. One might ask whether or not the possible perceived flaws are corrected through digital post-production anyway. According to Olsson (2017a) the situation is the exact opposite. He (ibid.) explains:

> Post-production greatly affects the sound of the vocals, all the compression and distortion and all this. They in fact emphasize things, if there's for example a glissando from one note to another or a certain kind of onset or a falsetto shriek or something. The distortion and the compression actually bring the details to the foreground.

If, again, the vocal performance is "laconic and sounds uninteresting", the digital treatment of the vocals brings that up as well (ibid.). Olsson (ibid.) draws an analogy from the world of photography:

> It's like if there's saturation in a photograph so that all the lines and borders become stronger… It's interesting, elevating the contours with a compressor or with distortion, especially in the case of vocals. It's connected to the fact that if the contours are in good time and they are credible and sung with a good feel, they stand being brought to the front.

He (ibid.) further elaborated on the notion and belief that errors and flaws in recorded vocal performances could be fixed with digital treatment of the audio track: "By no means do I think that digital treatment would erase them. I experience it in the exact opposite way".

This idea of the digital treatment of recorded performances saving bad takes connects to the role of the producer in the post-production phase. As the producer's role is to "make a record as good as possible" and ensure the quality of the recorded music (Olsson 2017a), digital technology and the creative opportunities and power it

has given the producer have not after all diminished the importance of keeping the quality of the raw recorded sonic material as high as possible. On the contrary, the myriad ways that digital technology enables the producer to treat the recorded sonic material after recording might have made it more important to maintain the "high quality" of the recorded material. This may, however, change our understanding of the notion of "high quality". Different things become important in the aesthetic evaluation of a performance. For example, pitch can easily be corrected by means of digital sound processing technology and perfect pitch was not of high importance in, for example, some of the vocal recordings that Olsson and Blind Channel worked on (FD 19.12.2016). However, details in the *feel* of a recorded vocal performance seem to be more difficult to salvage. This is because the digital treatment of sound, like compression and distortion, bring up many of the details and qualities of recorded sound instead of diminishing them. Therefore, flaws in the recorded performance would also become louder due to digital treatment. This issue might, however, be more relevant in some genres than in others.

This finding would suggest that digital technologies have strengthened the importance of the producer's role in ensuring the quality of a musical record throughout the production process and not just in the post-production phase. To some extent this finding contradicts Gibson's (2005: 198) views, according to which the application of digital technologies in music production has resulted in more emphasis placed on "post production tweaking instead of spending time to find the perfect spot for/experience with different mics & acoustic spaces". It also contradicts the popular belief that the quality of the raw material is of secondary importance when everything can be fixed with digital technology anyway. Olsson's (2017a) views and my own observations during the recording session (FD 29.11.2016) would suggest that applying digital treatment to the sonic material in post-production would actually make the quality of the raw material *more* important, not less. However, with digital post-production possibilities, different kinds of elements, like for example the *feel* of the sound constituted by paralinguistic elements (see e.g. Lacasse 2000) in the quality of the recorded sound, become important instead of, for instance, pitch (as understood by conventional Western standards) as it can be easily corrected by means of digital technologies. As I have noted, this might nevertheless also be a genre-related issue; it might be truer in some musical styles than in others.

### 5.3.6 The Producer and Technological Disinterest

Despite the vast number of technological gadgets in his studio and the fact that his production work in its current form would be virtually impossible without them, Olsson showed very little interest in pieces of technology as such. He (Olsson 2017a) elaborates: "Earlier I was more interested in studio technology but it's kind of faded away. Now I'm interested in the philosophical aspects and more lately I've started to become interested in things related to group dynamics."

For Olsson, studio technology is only a way to accomplish his creative ideas, a means to ends and not ends in themselves. He (Olsson 2017a) compares studio and music production culture to that of a biker gang:

> For me studio technology is a tool to accomplish something and there's a certain kind of culture… maybe like a biker gang, that you have the certain tools that are most expensive, the top tools, and people read about those that Americans use and the new gadgets flood the market all the time. There's a certain kind of culture and a cult around the gadgets.

Olsson's (2017a) view on technological culture reflects ideas presented by Paul Théberge (1997) on producers as consumers of technology. Olsson (2017a) doesn't want to be a part of the culture he mentions. He (2017a) continues:

> [For me] it's not [a thing]. Engineering work is actually very conservative when you get to the professional level. People still use mics from the 1950's and it still seems like the best equipment was invented in the 1960's and 1970's. And in a way, I've kind of hit the bottom. If I had to go deeper, I'd have to be interested in electronics and building gadgets or something. As a tool I feel like I've learned as much as I need to in order to realize my artistic visions with it [technology].

Thus, for Olsson technology is always subordinate to his creative ideas or, in collaborative situations, the creative ideas of others. His views support the idea of the producer as a creative agent and a facilitator of creative ideas instead of an engineer or a mere technician. Aesthetic decision-making and creative ideas lie at the core of the producer's agency whereas technology in and of itself is only a tool in the realization of creative musical ideas and in the process of making aesthetic judgments and decisions based on them. Olsson's attitudes towards technology reflect ideas presented by Adam Martin (2014). According to him (Martin 2014: 232): "producers feel that technology is and always should be secondary to the creative ideas of the studio, producers do not feel that they need particularly expensive equipment in order to do their job and that producers favor simple studio setups in order to be functional." Furthermore, Martin (ibid.) discusses how the interest (or disinterest) towards technology differentiates professional producers from amateurs. He (Martin 2014: 233) elaborates: "The amateur students I have encountered over the years seem much more concerned with the technical issues than the social whilst the concerns of professional producers, as evident through many of the following accounts, seem entirely the opposite to this."

As I have shown, these views seem accurate in Olsson's case as well. His disinterest in studio technology in itself is also in harmony with his understanding of time as an important tool when he produces music. Olsson (2017a) elaborates:

"Philosophically speaking, time is an important tool in [music] production. It is often said that it is hard to reach a final result in one sitting and know what it is about." In his view (ibid.) taking time gives a certain kind of perspective

> …which comes from doing a workday and bouncing a working version of it and listening to it in another state of mind or at home or at another time. This gives valuable information about the "magic", in a way the magic is important, even if it's unmixed or something, you hear the magic, whether or not it's there, from a raw vocal track. You can hear if you can "bake" it from that.

All this would suggest that ideas on aesthetic judgment, for which *time* is very important, are far more significant in the construction of the producer's agency than any gadget, as technology remains subordinate to the creative ideas of the producer.

### 5.3.7 "All the Music in the World": New Technologies and Reference Material in the Studio Session

The practice of listening to reference material was an integral and essential part of the creative process in the studio with Olsson and Blind Channel (FD 28.11.2016; FD 29.11.2016). Listening to reference material connects to what McIntyre (2008) has written about creativity and how it relates to the field of works, or the "domain" (see chapter 3.2. and Auvinen 2016: 25–26). This practice was the key element in getting inspiration and finding solutions to creative problems they were facing during the recording sessions, whether it was a certain sound they wanted to achieve in a certain part of a song or a rhythmic idea for some other part. Technology and namely the Internet, which Olsson regards as one of his most important tools in his production work, plays an important role in this practice. Olsson (2017a) elaborates: "The Internet is an important tool. We get to listen to all the music in the world as reference when we want. In the earlier days, we had to cycle to the library. Then they're like "yeah, we don't have that record here, come back in two weeks. We should be getting it by then"."

The practice of listening to reference material could be seen as something that has been fundamentally changed by new technologies, as I have discussed in chapter 3.2. The recording session, during which premeditated musical solutions only need to be recorded and realized becomes also a session during which the producer and the artists search for inspiration and ideas for their music. Composing, arranging and coming up with ideas during a studio session is of course not a new practice in itself. It emerged already in the 1960's in the work of producers like Brian Wilson, who worked with the Beach Boys, and Phil Spector, and in 1970's producers like Brian Eno, who was among the first to identify and conceptualize the studio "as a full-fledged musical instrument" and in 1979 gave a lecture with the title "The Studio as Compositional Tool" (Moorefield 2005: 53). Moorefield (2005: 54) explains: "Here the recording

studio is effectively a meta-instrument, a way to shape entire compositions. It is a score and orchestra rolled into one."

The Internet nevertheless expands the studio's possibilities as something that provides inspiration and ideas as tools for making music. Due to his age, Olsson still remembers a time when using the Internet was very expensive and it was not available everywhere all the time (Olsson 2017a), whereas, for example, Vepsäläinen started his producing career at a time when the Internet was constantly and ubiquitously available for the purposes of listening to reference material (see chapter 3.2.) The Internet and the fact that it has enhanced and greatly expanded how and how much reference material can be listened to, is nevertheless only a tool, through which agents can feed their creative ideas. (see also Auvinen 2016: 26.) It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Listening to reference material opens up an important aspect of the discussion about the *creative agency* of the producer (and as a by-product about that of the musicians, too). As I have discussed in chapter 1.3.3., Toynbee (2003: 102–104) holds the idea that musicians, and I would imagine other content creators or artists as well, hold on to a romantic idea of creativity. This means that content creators would assume that "music comes from within and is a direct product of the psyche of the creator" (Toynbee 2003: 103). A constant search for inspiration from online external sources like Spotify would nevertheless suggest firstly that creativity is far from the romantic ideal, which has long ago been paradigmatically refuted by ethnomusicologists, cultural musicologists and cultural studies scholars alike, and secondly that the musicians of the band Blind Channel and the producer Olsson themselves have a very non-romantic kind of conception of creativity. Furthermore, the fact that the musicians of Blind Channel acknowledge that they need help in their creative process from a producer (Blind Channel 2016) supports the idea of a non-romantic view of creativity. Also, the producer Olsson himself facilitates a very collective kind of production process by distributing responsibility, thereby strengthening the observation that the agents refute the romantic ideal. Olsson (2017) explains:

> Then the band did some programming, or this Joel [Hokka] from the band, I listened to his programmed tracks and decided which are usable; they were mainly very good material. Then I programmed more and I used an assistant called Minna Koivisto. She made some additional programmed tracks as well.

This statement even further strengthens the notion that Olsson's view of the creative process is very collective, not romantic in the sense of elevating individual, exclusive agency. Holding on to a romantic ideal of creativity would most likely result in a different kind of creative process, one in which inspiration is not sought from external sources. This could again have an effect on the end product as well. However, the degree to which agency is widely distributed and inspiration sought from external sources depends on genre expectations and might thus vary between different styles of music. One could, however, argue that the premises of the romantic kind of creative

agency, where creativity is intrinsic and arises from within the individual, are overall impossible to test; we have yet to find a creative agent who has not been surrounded by cultural and social structures and thus inevitably been affected by them. Based on my findings presented in this section, I find Toynbee's (2003: 104) idea that creativity is still treated in the 2010's as a mystical process, which "ignores the social nature of authorship in all forms of culture, including music", as somewhat exaggerated, at least in the context of record production and among the agents involved in the process. It might, however, still be true among consumers and listeners.

## 5.4 Social Dynamics between the Producer and Other Creative Parties

In the intrinsically collective process of record production (e.g. Hennion 1983: 160), the social dynamics of different agents involved are at the core of creative agency. In this section, I will discuss the social dynamics between the producer Jonas Olsson and the members of the band Blind Channel. I will analyze and discuss the different kinds of social interactions they engaged in and how these interactions laid down the foundations of the social structures which constructed the agency of the producer. By doing this my aim is to answer my sub-question related to what the producer's role is with respect to other creative parties in the studio and how these relationships support the agency of the producer.

### 5.4.1 The Producer as Enabler

When working with Blind Channel, one of Olsson's main roles was to be a facilitator. He provided the band with the tools and the know-how which enable the members of the band to realize or bring forth their creative ideas (Olsson 2017a). When working with bands, Olsson (2017a) tries to avoid dominating the creative process too much or else the band becomes something it is not. When working with individual artists, however, the situation is different, as often the "artist and the producer form the band and they can throw around ideas" (Olsson 2017a). The case of Vepsäläinen and Ida Paul (chapter 3) is a good example of a project like this. Olsson (2017a) elaborates:

> In a way, I can provide them with tools. The band might have a very good idea about what they what to achieve but they don't necessarily have the experience or the tools to achieve what they want. If we, for example, listen to reference material with the band and they hear a sound that they like, I know that "it's done this way" or "we could do it like this".

He clearly differentiates his role depending on whether he works on a project with a band or an individual artist. The producer should not be too dominant in a band

project or else the outcome becomes something completely different than was originally intended. Olsson (2017a) discusses this point:

> When working with a band, you must take into account, for example, that you can't always go for the end result but sometimes it is good to give the band [space] – Giving prefabricated solutions in every situation isn't [the best way] even if I had some – It doesn't always work when working with a band – It is good for a band and it is important from the aspect of the result that [all the solutions] don't come from outside.

This view highlights the importance of social sensitivity, an awareness to feel when to take a stronger stand on an aesthetic decision and, on the other hand, when to give more space to the musicians. Despite the fact that he strongly emphasizes the importance of not being too dominant, at times Olsson did take very strong stands against certain aesthetic suggestions which came from the musicians. For instance, at one point the guitarist Joel Hokka wanted to add some vibrato to his playing, Olsson said: "no fucking vibrato" (FD 29.11.2017). Even if this sounds like a total dismissal of a creative idea on the producer's part, it might also be an example of how well the producer reads the social situation; if the mood is right and the right person is at the receiving end of the comment, sometimes it is necessary to take a strong stand to advance things. Moreover, this mode of communication with expletives places him on a similar social level with the musicians. One wonders if this changed with, for instance, female musicians, although field observations in the first case in this study (chapter 3) suggest no difference in modes of communication between males and females (FD 1.10.2015).

### 5.4.2 The Importance of Social Networks

For Olsson (2017a) it is nevertheless important to provide better solutions in the creative process when and if a band seems to be taking the wrong turn. He (ibid.) elaborates:

> If a band has an idea they want to do and they know it needs to be done a certain way. [For example] "We want strings here" and then they start to fumble around for ideas among themselves like "hey, I used to play the cello", then I can suggest that "maybe we should get a string quartet here. Then they ask me if I know someone and I go "yeah, I had a group come here last week", and we ask them and it costs this and this much and it's good for this project.

This perspective highlights the importance of a strong social network. An extensive social network of creative agents seems to strengthen the agency of the individual producer as it expands the creative possibilities the producer can provide her/his

clients. As I have discussed in subsection 5.3.7., when producing 'Alone Against All' and 'Can't Hold Us' with Blind Channel, Olsson used an outside producer called Minna Koivisto to do additional programming on the song 'Can't Hold Us'. He (Olsson 2017b) explains:

> From a production perspective, this represents a nice project as I don't have to screw in each and every screw myself, in a way... the band has a vision and then I help them realize it and then I do what I'm good at, produce vocals and sounds, and then I send it to Minna like "could you do some nice additions here". For example, the arp[eggio] at the end [of the song 'Can't Hold Us'] was coded by Minna. In a way, completely outside of the box as Minna doesn't do this kind of music and she… is more distinguished in the realm of electronic music.

Olsson (2017b) adds that he likes to do projects in which he "organizes a team" rather than doing everything himself "in the old Finnish manner".

An indication of Olsson not taking the role of an "artist" in the project and with Blind Channel, and of the project being driven by the band's vision is that at times Olsson was, as I mentioned in the previous section, replaced by his assistant Kane Heinonen (FD 30.11.2016), who also mixed the two songs that Olsson and Blind Channel worked on. In addition to distributing agency and emphasizing the collectiveness of the creative process, this highlights the perspective, according to which the band's creative visions are the driving force in the project, not Olsson's visions. This nevertheless requires that Olsson as the producer, whose responsibility is to ensure that the end result is as good as possible, trusts his assistant Heinonen and the members of the band. Moreover, Olsson assumed a sort of a proxy-presence in the studio during the time he was gone. As Olsson's assistant Heinonen, the vocalist/guitarist Hokka and the second guitarist Porko were working on a guitar passage and discussing the guitar sound for the intro of the song 'Alone Against All', Porko commented: "Jonas [Olsson] would say at this point that it doesn't affect record sales" (FD 30.11.2016). Thus, the working history that Olsson and Blind Channel share affects the band's aesthetic judgment to some extent, even if Olsson is not present. This view connects to Burgess's (2013: 14) idea of a so-called "facilitative producer", who "…may connect with an artist early on in his or her career by making the production process seamless. If the artist becomes successful, he or she may see no need to change the formula, and the facilitative producer may become indispensable."

This view is strengthened by Blind Channel's desire to work with Olsson for as long as possible. According to the vocalist/guitarist Joel Hokka from Blind Channel (2016):

> In my opinion, definitely as long as possible. Maybe we could try to make a single with an American producer or something, but at the moment we feel like

> it is such an essential part of the Blind Channel sound and its birth, that it could go wrong if someone else was doing it… I would say that [we will work together] as long as he works as a producer and we are a band.

Olsson's crucial role in the beginning of the band's career could be seen as similar to George Martin's role when he worked with the Beatles (Burgess 2013: 15). Even if Olsson himself doesn't assume artistic agency when working with Blind Channel, he has nevertheless had such a great influence on the sound of the band that he is in a way omnipresent; he has an effect on the band's work even if he is not constantly physically present at the studio.

### 5.4.3 Social Dynamics and Technology

As Olsson and Blind Channel worked on the two songs, the original 'Alone Against All' and the Macklemore cover 'Can't Hold Us', they worked as a collective in the control room. Even if Olsson led the collective, the members of the band often sat in the control room, listened and commented on individual takes and, for example, sounds. Furthermore, every now and again Olsson would need their assistance in remembering, for example, the structure of the songs and shorter melodic passages within the songs. As is the common practice in a recording or production session, all agents taking part in the production process stared at the computer screen, which usually displayed the so-called arrange window of the project, which shows the recorded tracks as visual waveforms. The musicians looked at the screen even when they were recording, given that they were playing in the control room, for example, when recording bass and guitar, and not in the separate recording booth. (FD 29.11.2017.) Often times when a musician had a comment, he would look at the screen and perhaps point to the passage on which they were commenting. This reflects Williams's (2012) ideas about how the emergence of the graphic display in the studio shifted power relations between engineers and musicians, giving the opportunity to acquire more information about the process and thus giving the musicians the possibility to provide more input in the creative process. He (ibid.) argues (see also section 3.4.3. in this study):

> The presence of the graphic display in the recording environment significantly alters the collaborative process, wresting secretly held knowledge from the control of engineer and producer, thus extending the role of the musician beyond the performance stage, while simultaneously exposing vulnerable human weaknesses in a harsh, unblinking light.

Williams (ibid.) argues that the key to how great an influence the graphic display has had on the recording process lies not merely in the fact that it presents information, but also in how the *kind* of information it communicates affects the status of the

individuals of the creative collective. He (ibid.) goes on to discuss how the graphic monitor in a way has liberated the musician from the power of the producer or the engineer. From the musician's perspective, the producer or the technician might become irrelevant as s/he can take over the means of production. (ibid.) Williams (ibid.) continues:

> For many musicians, the promise of total control over the recording process, and the liberation from studio hierarchies provides the incentive for investing time and capital in mastering DAW recording technology, a development not always championed by the displaced technicians.

This notion, combined with the fact that the price of production technologies has dramatically decreased and thus become more accessible within the past few decades, could beg the question of why a producer is needed in the first place. The question of the need for an outside producer is relevant especially in the case of Blind Channel, as one of the band members, the guitarist/vocalist Joel Hokka does production work himself (and with Olsson on other artists) and thus would have the technological know-how to carry out a project without an external producer (Blind Channel 2016). Furthermore, some of Hokka's production work from the demos they sent to Olsson before the actual sessions started would be left in the final versions of the songs (Olsson 2017a). As I have stated before, the members of the band Blind Channel nevertheless see the producer Olsson's involvement as a crucial part in their success and in the development of their music (Blind Channel 2016). Perhaps the fact that the band technically could produce their music on their own puts an emphasis on the importance of the producer's *aesthetic judgment* and decreases the importance of pure technical know-how from the producer's part. Therefore, the notion that digital technology as a structure empowers the musician technologically will strengthen the producer's creative agency, as in the ability to make and effect decisions (McIntyre 2008) from an aesthetic point of view. Even if the musicians could seize the means of production (see Benjamin 1936) and had the *ability* to effect aesthetic decisions they wouldn't necessarily know *what* decisions to effect. This perspective also plays well with Olsson's remarks on how technology is always subordinate to creativity and aesthetic judgment (Olsson 2017a, see section 5.3.). On the other hand, the fact that the musicians have some technical knowledge can highlight the lack of it and emphasize the producer's superior knowledge of and experience with music technology.

### 5.4.4 The Importance of Having Fun

As I have discussed before in section 5.3., when working with Blind Channel, Olsson as the producer had an important social role in keeping up the mood while they were working. Olsson and the band goofed around a lot while they worked. Jokes included both music-related and non-music related. At times Olsson and the band had fun

laughing at parody music videos. They especially liked to watch funny videos that play around with stereotypes related to the music industry. A good example of this is the band Sum 41's song and music video 'Still Waiting' (Sum 41: 2009), which they watched together in the studio (FD 16.12.2016). In general, Olsson especially told lots of jokes during studio production and recording sessions (FD 27.-30.11.2016). According to the singer/rapper Niko Moilanen (Blind Channel 2016): "We always expect good sessions. I also expect that we are going to have fun. The producer is important also from a humor-perspective. We work long days and it is important that the atmosphere stays good."

This notion strongly reflects views presented by Horning (2013: 202, 208–209) about the importance of having a good time during lengthy studios sessions with no exact ending times. According to Horning (2013: 208), the desire to spend more time in the studio, which emerged in the 1960's in response to issues that have to do with the creative process, initiated "sweeping changes in studio design". Client comfort became an important part of work in the studio, which was to have more of the feel of a living room rather than an "institutional aesthetic" (ibid.). This phenomenon, which emerged hand in hand with the rise of the independent studios of the 1950's and 1960's, can be extended to social issues as well. This resulted in ramifications for the social role of the producer. According to Horning (2013: 202): "Artists often chose an independent producer with a track record of hits who preferred working in studios "and with his own people who 'generate the right vibes'."."

The same applies in the case of Olsson and Blind Channel. Blind Channel chose their own producer before even getting a record contract for reasons related to Olsson's chart success, aesthetic views and capabilities and social presence (Blind Channel 2016). This observation would support the importance of the producer's social role and ability to interact in a way that makes people feel good, especially when contrasted with opposing examples. Burgess (2013: 17–18), when writing about producer Rick Rubin's collaboration with the heavy metal band Slipknot, discusses how the lack of social interaction on the producer's part can be counterproductive to the production project as a whole. Burgess (2013: 17–18) writes: "He [Slipknot front man Corey Taylor] said Rubin was there only "45 minutes a week" and would "lay on a couch, have a mic brought in next to his face so he wouldn't have to f***ing move …. And then he would be, like, 'Play it for me'"."

Later on, Burgess (2013: 18) discusses how Taylor sees Rubin as overrated and overpaid and how he would "never work with him again as long as I f***ing live… I only saw him about four times". This highlights the importance of the producer's presence both physically and socially, as was the case with Olsson and Blind Channel. Furthermore, the importance of a positive presence and a good vibe of good feelings came up in many instances (see section 5.3.3.). Olsson didn't hesitate to give even overwhelmingly positive feedback whenever he had the chance and there was a reason for it (FD 29.11.2016). This would emphasize not only the importance of the physical and mental presence of the producer but also the *quality* of presence s/he provides.

This seems to directly affect the social environment, the social structure of the creative collective, the overall creative process and thus becomes an important part of the producer's creative agency.

## 5.4.5 Break Talks

Creative work requires breaks. When working with Blind Channel, sometimes Olsson took solitary breaks, for example during editing, to rest his ears (FD 28.11.2016). At other times, he went out for a necessary walk "to get some air" as the intense work phase in progress required heavy concentration from him (FD 29.11.2016). Most breaks which Olsson and Blind Channel took were nevertheless very social in nature and featured lots of discussions. Breaks included both spontaneous breaks during, for instance, editing when someone comes up with a good story or during longer, more or less predetermined lunch and coffee breaks. (FD 27.-30.11.2016; FD 19.12.2016.) Many break discussions concerned the music industry in Finland and at large. For example, on December 19th, 2016, Olsson and Blind Channel were recording and editing vocals. They stopped what they were doing to discuss a paradox in the Finnish music business. The discussion stemmed from the fact that Blind Channel had just returned from a gig in London. They discussed how, if a Finnish band has a gig in England or in the United States, it automatically generates a sort of a "hype" among their Finnish fans and audience even if the gig itself was very small and insignificant. According to the members of Blind Channel, people automatically think that a band is doing well if they have a gig in the anglophone world. Members of Blind Channel had noticed this in their social media feed when they published a picture of them in London on their Facebook page (Blind Channel 2016b). On the contrary, if a band is not doing anything in the USA or in the UK, the public tends to think that the band is "out". As an example, Olsson mentioned the band Poets of the Fall, who tour Russia on a regular basis and play to crowds that average at 5000. In Finland, they are nevertheless considered to be "out" because they don't tour the USA or the UK. (FD 19.12.2016.)

As I have discussed in chapters 3 and 4, this kind of talk could be seen as a waste of time from the perspective of the current project as they don't directly drive it forwards. On the other hand, discussions like these could be seen as a form of extremely important social glue as they strengthen the intersubjective web of meaning and build a sense of being a part of the same field. (see section 4.2.3.). In addition to what I've discussed in section 4.2.3., in the case of Olsson and Blind Channel, this could nevertheless have another dimension as well. As Olsson is significantly more experienced, as he has been in the music business far longer than members of Blind Channel, it could be seen as a form of prepping (Auvinen 2016: 17) the band members for the music industry. In this manner, Olsson could be understood as a kind of a coach for the members of Blind Channel. This contributes to Olsson's agency and makes him a kind of a professional mentor, something more than only a content creator in the project at hand. Furthermore, a role like this could be understood as being an important

part in the construction of the collective creative agency of the producer and the band. Socializing around issues not directly related to the current project can be understood as building a sphere of trust, which again strengthens the overall creative agency of the collective. A lack of this kind of social dimension could again be harmful to the achievement of a common creative goal (see Burgess 2013: 17–18).

Olsson and the band members also had rather long discussions during predetermined lunch breaks and coffee breaks. Sometimes these discussions had even less to do with the music business, and sometimes discussions roamed around completely other areas, like for instance the moon landing (FD 29.11.2016). On December 19th, 2016, Olsson and two members of Blind Channel, guitarist/vocalist Joel Hokka and vocalist/rapper Niko Moilanen took a long break and went to the grocery store to get lunch and to the pharmacy to get painkillers for Hokka. They sauntered along, taking their time and discussing slowly and without haste the music industry and especially the different kinds of platforms like streaming and radio, on which artists can get their music heard. Hokka went to the pharmacy and we went into the store to get lunch. After leaving the store we waited for Hokka to return from the pharmacy. Olsson and Moilanen discussed music theory. They especially discussed harmony and Olsson explained to Moilanen how strong harmonic tensions like the dominant fifth are frequently avoided in popular music compositions. (FD 19.12.2016.) This reflects the reality of the fact that Moilanen, contrary to other band members, and Olsson both have knowledge of music theory as they both have studied music in formal music education programs (Blind Channel 2016; Olsson 2017a). They both have the ability to discuss music theory and therefore they are able to engage in conversations on yet another level of musical knowledge apart from the music industry, chart success or household names. This emphasizes the importance of the producer having a broad knowledge of music, which again enables her/him to interact with collaborators on multiple levels depending on the other party's knowledge and background. The possibility of interacting on many different levels with musicians again can be understood as something that strengthens the producer's agency in the eyes of the musicians s/he works with.

### 5.4.6 The Importance of Experience in Social Interactions

Reflecting on Olsson's experiences from the earlier days of his producing career sheds further light on how experience and success bring authority in the studio process. Olsson initially started his studio career as more of a recording engineer than a producer. He started to shift from being a recording engineer to becoming a producer (or producer/engineer) by exercising aesthetic judgment and expressing opinions on the musical content. Without a proper track record this was nevertheless difficult. Olsson (2017a) elaborates: "My friends' bands or bands of friends of my friends came to record demos and I was kind of the guy who could record these things and maybe mix."

After acting as a recording engineer for a while, Olsson (2017a) noticed that he started getting musical ideas. He (Olsson 2017a) elaborates:

> Like “maybe this thing here which doesn’t mix very well, could be mixed better if we played the same chord or something”… “There’s two things in the same register here with the same rhythm playing on top of each other, so it’s hard to separate them, but if they were played in turns, it’d be easier”. So, kind of through this kind of simple optimization.

As I’ve discussed in subsection 5.2.4., Olsson nevertheless faced problems in getting his own creative ideas through early in this career. According to him (Olsson 2017a), the reason was that he didn’t have a track record and he therefore lacked authority. To get his own musical ideas across, Olsson started to “purchase” for himself the right to produce the songs by giving customers a discount. He (2017) elaborates: “If normally we would have done two songs, now we did three. I used some of my own time on the project – it was funny since I kind of gave them more services and kind of payed for it myself. But that was the kind of leverage that I needed [to get my own ideas across].” He didn’t have to do this for very long. With time the quality of his productions developed and the groups he worked with accepted the idea that he could have something to say about the content of the music. (Olsson 2017a.)

As I’ve discussed in subsection 5.2.4., the notion that experience and success promotes a producer’s status in the studio reflects back to McIntyre’s (2008) ideas on how a track record strengthens a producer’s agency. In other words, the bigger the names a producer has produced, the greater the authority accorded to the producer and thus the stronger his/her agency. McIntyre’s (2008) view naturally reflects the reality at the very top of the international music industry. The same is nevertheless true on a smaller scale. The interior decorations at Olsson’s studio reflect this perfectly. Olsson’s (2017a) experience and track record were relevant also in the beginning of his co-operation with Blind Channel. This brings an aspect of authority and raises the question of who has the last word when individuals in a creative collective formed by the producer and the band members disagree. As I’ve mentioned before, the initiative to work specifically with Olsson came from the band (Blind Channel 2016). The choice of producer, however, had to be approved by the record label, as the record label was the one paying the bills. Olsson (2017a) discusses the situation: “The music industry is funny in the way that specific [chains of command] do not apply. They vary between projects and it requires strict discretion about where things are at a given moment.”

Olsson (2017a) thus emphasizes the importance of sensitivity in the social setting of a recording project. He (ibid.) elaborates on the trinity of the band, the producer and the record company:

> With experienced people like Riku Pääkkönen, who probably has done hundreds of projects with hundreds of bands… I think that the hierarchy is a little bit like this, that he's first signed a band and the band has suggested me as a producer. Then he's kind of like checked from somewhere, that is this [Jonas Olsson] just some random figure… and then he's seen that "OK, he's worked with these and these people"… It's kind of like looking at my CV and going "yeah, this probably will work out".

Furthermore, Olsson (2017a) suspects that the record label executive has called around and asked about him. He (ibid.) continues: "Sometimes people do this. And then the guy at the other end says that "yeah, he's a good guy, he finishes his work off" or "he's probably the right guy for the job", then he finds that he can trust me." Here, Olsson provides perspective on how the music business works from the producer's viewpoint. Employment relationships are formed through informal processes strongly based on personal relationships rather than through formal career paths (cf. Negus 1996: 62).

Olsson (2017a) nevertheless emphasizes the importance of the artist's own artistic view: "At least I myself think that if I sign some artist to my own company, and wish that everyone thought the same way, that the artist her/himself should preferably have a strong vision of what s/he wants to do." Thus, for Olsson the producer's job is to strengthen the essence of the artist's visions, not to impose the producer's vision onto the artist. According to Olsson, ideally the label shouldn't have to "steer" the artist anymore but just to make sure that the artist works with the right people for the end result to stay coherent. He (ibid.) elaborates (ibid.): "So that it doesn't accidentally fly out of the window like "oh no, this became a jazz odyssey", unless you intend to aim at making a jazz odyssey." This attitude naturally puts some expectations onto the artist as well and refutes the idea that the right producer can make anyone a successful artist in music.

Here, the importance of experience is manifested in multiple ways. Firstly, experience brings credibility and strengthens the producer's agency in contrast to other actors. Secondly, experience can be seen as strengthening the agency of the producer in the broader context of the field (see e.g. McIntyre 2008). Having experience results in knowing more people and earning a reputation among a larger peer group. When a customer might ask around before interaction, experience and a good reputation strengthen the producer's credibility and thus the potential for agentic action is enhanced in the eyes of potential customers. Consequently, customers are then willing to confer agency on the producer because they are convinced that this person is competent and can help them. This can be seen as a sort of a positive circle of strengthening attributions of agency; the more a producer gains experience, the more s/he is known in the field of peers and the more s/he gains authority and agency in the face of the social structures of the music industry. This again might strengthen the

producer's agency within an individual project where the artists are willing to invest the producer with authority in the overall process of record production.

### 5.4.7 The Importance of Social Interactions in Bringing Out the 'Magic'

One of Olsson's aims in his collaboration with Blind Channel is to bring the "magic" out of the artist's performance. This aim is most strongly manifested in Olsson's collaboration with the lead singer. He (Olsson 2017a) explains:

> Something, so it wouldn't sound like there's just some kind of a figure who sings into a microphone but would sound like music. Something to make it sound like a record, that certain kind of magic comes into the music. If, for example, the vocals are very out of tune, the magic can't happen.

This perspective highlights the importance of the vocals as a constructor of meaning in the whole (e.g. Lacasse 2000). Olsson (ibid.) elaborates on the vague concept of "magic":

> It's kind of a general thing... of, for example, people play together at a band practice and at some point, hopefully the groove kind of locks, that could be the magic. Similarly, the vocals can lock together with the music, so that it's in good time and good tune and it sounds like the [singer] believes in what s/he is singing, that certain kind of magic.

The idea of bringing out the "magic" can be understood as the goal and partially the result of all social interaction in a production project. At least the social interactions between the producer and the musicians must be seen as an important element in it. The fact that Blind Channel chose Olsson as their producer is no accident and as I have argued in this section, the way Olsson interacts with the musicians socially played a big part in Blind Channel's choice to continue to work with him (Blind Channel had already worked with Olsson on an earlier project). Furthermore, social interactions play a big part in how the members of the creative collective consisting of Olsson and Blind Channel see their collaboration affecting the end product. This notion reflects Horning's (2013: 202) view on the rise of the independent studio, which led to artists preferring independent producers and studios who bring the right kind of feel to the process.

The right "vibes" can be understood as stemming from the social interactions that the producer and the musicians have. Therefore, social interactions which take place during a production project can be thought to influence the artistic and sonic end result. The idea of one of the producer's tasks being to "bring out the magic" strengthens the ambivalent, unclear and wizard-like role of the producer. The concept of "magic",

which either is or isn't there (Olsson 2017a), is confusing at best and the ways in which this "magic" can be drawn out of the artist depend on so many different factors, including the social realities that are being constructed by the agents of the creative collective during a production project. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of the social interactions between the producer and the artist(s) during a production project are key in understanding the agency of the producer.

## 5.5 Conclusion: The Producer as Facilitator, Collaborator and Nexus

In this case study I knew the producer Olsson beforehand although not to the same extent as I knew Vepsäläinen. This can also be seen as a key to being able to observe the production process in the first place (cf. Bennett 2011), especially since Olsson would have had to be sure that my presence would not affect the production process too much. As I entered the field for this case study, however, I did encounter a brief moment of uneasiness (FD 27.11.2016); I was a new person entering an already to some degree fixed social setting. This uneasiness, however, faded away fairly quickly in my estimation. Furthermore, during a later session Olsson told me that he had not noticed anything that would indicate that my presence would have affected the overall behavior of the people involved in the production process. As far as reliability goes, the multi-method approach I have chosen here increases the degree of reliability, as findings gleaned with reference to different kinds of materials support each other. The generalizability of this case study is once again a question that arises, especially as every ambitious band or musical act can be assumed to try their best to be different and stand out. Given the standardization of music production technologies in the current music industry, I would argue that at least a significant amount of the results I have shared here would apply to other producers and projects. While I am not a hard determinist, technologies do steer the actions of their users, to some extent unifying the practices of different producers. However, a certain degree of individuality certainly remains.

In this chapter I have explored the agency of the contemporary producer by analyzing producer Jonas Olsson's work with the band Blind Channel. With this case study, I have aimed at bringing in contrast to my other case studies of the home studio pop producer Mikke Vepsäläinen and the classical producer Seppo Siirala. I have attempted to show how the agency of the producer can be understood as formulated through five different structures: 1) those related to the music industry; 2) those related to existing social structures formulated in relation to the social networks of the producer; 3) those related to physical structures of the studio and technology; 4) ideological structures related to music technologies and 5) temporal structures related to the conventions of record production. I have dealt with the technological nature of the studio process, discussed how the use of digital technology influences the process

and how creativity in music production is to a great extent a socio-collective process. I have examined ways in which the producer's agency is actively formulated through interactions with technology and through the social interactions which the producer and the musicians engage in. Furthermore, I have discussed how the possibilities afforded by digital technology enhance and strengthen the producer's agency by making it easier for her/him to alter the traditional temporal structures of the production process. This again expands the ways in which the agency of the producer can be disseminated among a group of agents and in which the producer can consider different social aspects of other agents in the creative collective. Olsson's agency as a facilitator reflects the way in which he works with the band in the studio. Richard James Burgess (2013: 9–19) has provided a typology of producers of which "facilitative" is one category. He elaborates: "…this category of producer often starts out as an engineer, programmer, musician or co-writer. The artist is the primary creative force in the recording, and the role is to support, facilitate, and maximize the recording of the artist's idea." (Burgess 2013: 14.) Similarities can also be found between Olsson and what Burgess calls a "collaborative" producer type: "…overall, they share the creative load. The result has a fresh identity that may be an extended or expanded version of the artist's but not one that is overtly distinctive of the producer." (Burgess 2013:14.) Especially the collaborative producer's trait of connecting "with an artist early in his or her career by making the production process seamless" appears to be of great importance in this case study.

Olsson clearly differentiates his role depending on whether he works with a band or an individual artist. This observation highlights the fact that this chapter has offered one particular view of a producer's agency: namely, the way in which the producer's agency is formulated in a band setting. In a setting like this the producer shouldn't be too overbearing or else the outcome becomes something completely different from what the artist had originally intended. This includes avoiding a too strong role when it comes to presenting creative ideas so as to prevent the band from losing its own musical essence (Olsson 2017a). It is nevertheless important to provide better solutions when and if a band seems to be taking a wrong turn (ibid.). When working with individual artists, however, the situation is different, as often the "artist and the producer form the band and they can throw around ideas" (ibid.). The difference between working with a rock band and an individual pop artist here might arise from values attached to genre conventions. Blind Channel as a rock band might need to remain relatively strong agents in relation to their music in order to stay authentic (Frith 2012: 207–208) by manifesting their own self-expression (Moore 1993: 57), which are values attached to rock. Consequently, the producer needs to keep a certain distance to the essence of the music. Also, in order to be able to perform their music live and have it sound similar to how it sounds on a record, which again is an important aspect of rock (Warner 2003: 4), Blind Channel needs to perform their parts in the studio even if the producer enhances their performances through digital technological practices. This also highlights the importance of playing skills and technique, which

are central to rock aesthetics (Frith 1983: 36). The comparison of Olsson's and Vepsäläinen's work in this study brings out the essential difference between rock and pop. The former is often *realized*, though here heavily enhanced, whereas the latter is altogether *created* in the studio (Warner 2003: 4). The sound of contemporary rock, however, is definitely more a creation of studio work than the sound of, for example, classical music (see chapter 4).

Analyzing Olsson's work with the band Blind Channel with reference to Burgess's (2013: 14) producer typology would make Olsson closest to that of a facilitator. He provides the band with the means and the know-how which enable the members of the band to realize or bring forth their creative ideas. Means include both physical structures like the studio and social structures like other collaborative agents. Know-how includes both aesthetic judgement and technological ability. Also, being familiar with the domain of existing works (McIntyre 2008) seems to be of great importance in the formulation of the producer's know-how and thus the agency of the producer. This know-how as "tacit knowledge" acquired over a long period of time through experience could also be seen as instrumental in bringing out the "magic" from the music. Perhaps the nature of this kind of knowledge is key to understanding the vagueness of the term "magic".

The idea of the producer's main task of bringing out the "magic" in the music brings the discussion of the producer's role and agency back to Albin Zak's (2001: 172) notion: "The question often arises: 'What exactly does a record producer do?'". Thus, the vagueness of the term "magic" at the same time contributes to our understanding of what the producer does and further obscures it. Perhaps the idea of the "magic" in the music being so hard to verbalize to begin with is explained by Richard Middleton's (2000: 29) observation that in vocal performances the "paralinguistic dimension is often as important as direct verbal meanings". If the important meaning is embedded in something that is non-verbal, it might be hard to express it verbally. Understanding the "magic" of the music can hardly be attained by analyzing musical end products in terms of traditional music analysis. The "magic" of the music can rather be analyzed using methods other than traditional music analysis that are more associated with analyzing and interpreting cultural meaning through a hermeneutic process (see e.g. Lacasse 2000). I would argue, however, that the elements constituting the "magic" in the sonic end product from the perspective of the producer should be seen as a result of the socio-technological interaction between the producer, production technology (including the studio), the musicians and other agents involved in the production process. In understanding this dynamic Howlett's (2012) idea of the producer as "nexus" becomes useful. He states: "I propose the concept of the record producer as a "nexus" between the creative inspiration of the artist, the technology of the recording studio, and the commercial aspirations of the record company." (ibid.) He further elaborates: "The art of the record producer is achieved at the nexus of the song and the performance, the engineering and the industry." (ibid.) My observations and analysis in this chapter would point especially to the way in which Howlett (2012)

emphasizes the importance of the social qualities, like for example empathy, for the agency of the producer. The case study I have presented in this chapter resonates with these ideas and strengthens the idea of the producer as a “nexus” at least in production processes where the songs or pieces have been pre-composed for the most part and in which the producer works with a band which consists of multiple members. The “magic”, which the producer is helping the artist to create in her/his music, can thus be understood as the result of a multifaceted socio-technological process in which many creative agents work together as a creative collective coordinated by the producer.

# 6 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I will provide an overview and a summary of the main findings I have made in this study. I will draw conclusions about the producer's agency in general by further comparing and contrasting my case studies. Finally, I will evaluate the validity, reliability and generalizability of this study and provide thoughts for further research on the topic of the producer's agency in record production. As I have already provided conclusions after each main chapter (3, 4, and 5) and made some comparisons between my case studies within these chapters, I will keep this closing conclusion and discussion fairly succinct.

## 6.1 Object of Research

My objective in this research was to study the production of both popular and classical records from a cultural perspective. The emphasis of my study has been on the creative agency of the producer: that is, the producer's capacity to make and affect decisions in the process of record production. In addition to the concept of creative agency, I have used the concepts of cultural space and technology, which I have defined in section 1.4. I have used them as operative concepts in my analysis. I have paid special attention to and analyzed the formation of the producer's creative agency in contrast to structures. These structures have included physical structures like the recording/production studio, social structures like the music industry, conventions related to music production as structures, structures related to cultural conventions in each case, and structures related to technologies and technological practices. I have done this through three different case studies. My first case study concentrated on the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen and his work on a pop song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' with the singer Ida Paul in a home studio setting. In my second case study, I discussed the role and agency of the classical composer Seppo Siirala in his production work on the composer Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 performed by the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta in a concert hall setting. In my third case study, I analyzed the creative agency of the producer Jonas Olsson in his production work with the rock band Blind Channel on the songs 'Alone Against All' and 'Can't Stop Us' in an independent commercial studio setting.

The fact that I have analyzed and compared the agency and role of the producer in

different styles of popular music and in classical music within the same study using the same methodology and theoretical framework is one of my, I dare to say, innovative contributions to the research field of the study of the art of record production. To the best of my knowledge, this has not been done in an ethnographic research setting in the past. Having applied a myriad of methods and analyzed various kinds of materials in this study, I have found that the aspects related to the role and agency of the producer are best dealt with by examining the social relations in the music production studio and how technological practices and spaces contribute to the formation of these social relations. In my case studies, I have examined the question of the producer's creative agency by analyzing the producer's responsibilities and activities in the various stages of the music production process. Furthermore, I have examined how technological practices and various studio environments as both physical and cultural spaces facilitate the producer's agency. Also, I have discussed how ideas and values related to the production process steer the producer's agency.

I have drawn from ethnomusicology as well as cultural musicology as I have conducted firstly fieldwork and interviews and secondly, in one form or another, music analysis or musical close reading (close listening) in each case study (on the concept of close reading in multi-method research, see Richardson, 2016). As the same framework has offered a good basis for all of my case studies and the same methodological choices have provided the means to successfully study each of the included record production settings and processes, regardless of musical style or canonical tradition, I stand behind the now quite commonly held view that the historical boundaries between ethnomusicology, cultural musicology and traditional musicology are becoming even less relevant than previously. This notion would apply at least to the study of record/music production, where the central focus of research is on the process, the technologies used in and the agents involved in record (or music) production, not on the completed works and what meanings they convey to the listener; it would be impossible to gain deeper insight into record production as a cultural process from the perspective of the creative individuals involved by examining completed recordings alone. In my case differentiating between ethnomusicology, cultural musicology and musicology is even harder; I have studied a *cultural process* that is formed by an activity which is very strongly centered on producing a *work* by means of traditional *ethnographic methods.*

## 6.2 Creative Agency in the Different Case studies

A clear difference between the roles of the classical music producer and the popular music producer is the degree to which the producer takes part in the compositional process. In my first case study (chapter 3), which took place in a home studio environment and in the realm of electronic pop music, the producer and the singer took equal roles in the compositional process. The producer's creative agency was therefore strong at every stage of the music making process up until the mixing phase. In my

third case study (chapter 5) of a rock production in a commercial studio environment, the producer took some responsibility for the arrangement and touched upon composition a little bit, even if the songs were mainly composed and arranged before the producer stepped in. In my second case study (chapter 4) on classical music production, however, the producer took no part in the compositional process. The music was fully composed and all the parts of all the instruments had already been written and arranged into a score prior to the recording process. This naturally reflects classical music traditions, which can be understood as cultural structures that guide the formation of the producer's agency and her/his role in record production; the roles of different agents are separate and there is very little overlapping. The composer pre-composes the music before recording, the musicians play the music as written on the score, the recording engineer sets up the recording gear and records, and the producer makes sure that the musicians play the right notes and play rhythmically accurately, gives feedback to the musicians on their performance, decides if more takes need to be recorded and makes sure that the overall recording sounds good. Thus, the creative agency of the classical music producer is most strongly manifested in the editing process, which the producer takes care of alone and constructs the performance from the recorded takes. The social role of the producer can be nevertheless seen as an important part of overall creativity as s/he contributes to the creative agency of others. In popular music the producer is involved with more aspects of the musical content in the pre-production or pre-recording phase. My material would nevertheless suggest that in the production of classical music records aspects related to the selection and perhaps minor adjustments of the recording space become more relevant than in popular music, even if the conventions and traditions of the orchestra involved in the process and/or financial realities restrict the producer's agency. This includes also situating the musicians in the recording space whereas in popular music a producer typically records in one more or less fixed studio only and this studio is usually more or less her/his own studio and not used by other producers or engineers. A far more important space in the production of popular music, however, is the digital space of the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) accompanied by a digital display. This is the space where tracks are created, programmed, and/or the sounds of real instrument tracks are heavily manipulated.

## 6.3 The Producer's Agency and Technology

This difference between the production of classical and popular music leads us to the producer's uses of technology. My findings support past ideas about the notion that in popular music the producer uses the studio, and especially the DAW in an instrument-like fashion during the recording process. This includes creating sonic material and tracks and manipulating sounds with the DAW. Music technology is much more than just a means of recording performances. This aspect of music production is lacking from the production of classical records where the aim is more or less to reproduce the

ideal live performance. This is demonstrated, for example, in the degree to which activities that belong to the recording process and activities related to the post-production stage get mixed temporally. In the production of a classical music record, at least in light of the case study in this research, all sonic material is recorded before post-production begins. No editing or mixing takes place during the recording process. One reason definitely is the tighter recording schedules in the production of a classical record, which are predetermined by the schedules of a rather sizable orchestra, the conductor and the recording engineer. Musicians work to the clock and have union breaks. Their workdays cannot be made longer even if suddenly a burst of creativity was to occur. Also, a sizable organization like a symphonic orchestra cannot easily adapt to changes in plans and thus must obey premeditated schedules and plans. Therefore, all the sonic material must be recorded during a rather tight time frame. There is no time to edit or mix during recording. In the production of popular music, however, editing is frequently done during the recording process in between takes. This makes it easier to manage the project especially as recordings take place on different days as opposed to a single recording day. This emphasizes the fact that studio in itself is also a musical instrument and an important element from all perspectives of the musical content in popular music.

Despite the differences between the producer in popular music and in classical music, a major resemblance between all the producers I have studied here is that their agency has at least to some extent been constructed through their uses of studio technology. The difference is that in popular music the producer uses studio technology in the process of composition and/or arrangement whereas in classical music the producer's hands-on use of technology is limited to the editing process, in which s/he constructs the performance from the vast amount of recorded raw material. In popular music, on the other hand, the producer uses technology to directly meddle with the performance and/or to manipulate it, whereas the classical producer mainly organizes the recorded material to formulate a coherent, albeit imaginary, performance. These aspects have in essence made this piece of research a comparative study of how genre expectations and cultural considerations influence the ways in which producers deploy technology in music production. As such, I think this study potentially provides a model for the further research of other instances where people use electronic music technologies to meet creative aims and in which cultural considerations play a role. For example, one could study how musicians use technology in live music situations within different genres and cultural contexts. Furthermore, this research model can be extended to any instance where people deploy technology in a setting where cultural considerations affect the values and practices of agents.

## 6.4 The Producer's Activities: Feedback and Editing

In this study, I have demonstrated some of the differences between the role and agency of the producer in popular music and the producer of classical music. In summary, my

materials would suggest that the contemporary producer of popular music, independent of genre, takes an active role in content creation. The producer is an effective participant in activities related to composing and/or arranging music. Despite the differences between the role and agency of the producer in classical and in popular music, two key activities were nevertheless very strong in the formation and definition of the producer's role and agency in all of the case studies in this research. These activities were *giving feedback* to artists during the recording process in the studio and *editing recorded* material during or after recording sessions.

Giving feedback to artists (musicians, singers, conductors) as the producer's key activity seemed to serve the same function in all of my case studies; to help to improve the artists' performances. The main purpose of the producer's feedback remained the same regardless of genre, recording space or project. However, in my second cases study (chapter 4) on the classical recording project, the producer's feedback aimed at the accurate representation of the score. Therefore, the producer's feedback was often concerned with rooting out wrong notes, bad sounds or inaccurate rhythms. My third case study (chapter 5) to some extent followed the same pattern when it comes to the producer's feedback to the musicians/artists. In my first case study (chapter 3), however, the producer's feedback could also result in new arrangements as the phases of recording and composition intertwined, which is typical in the production of pop music.

As said, the activity of editing played a big part in defining the producer's role and agency in all case studies. The difference in editing between the case studies, however, was in the extent to which it was done to construct a performance as opposed to creating a composition and/or arrangement as well as constructing a performance. In my second case study on the production of a classical record (chapter 4) the producer's editing activities aimed purely at constructing the performance from a myriad of recorded takes to make the final sonic result represent the score as accurately as possible. On the contrary, in my first case study on a home studio-based pop production (chapter 3), the producer's editing activities, in addition to constructing the vocal performance, were an important element in the compositional process as they affected arrangements and song structures, even melodies. This again highlights how record production as a technological practice and composition intertwine in popular music. Often in popular music, recorded, or in the case of my first case study, digitally "programmed" sonic material, is treated as raw material which takes form and shape through editing, whereas in classical music composition and editing a performance are separate activities. My third case study on a rock production in a commercial studio (chapter 5) was positioned somewhere between the two where the aims of editing are concerned. A major difference in the editing process between my two case studies on popular music (chapters 3 and 5) and my case study on classical music (chapter 4) was the mixing of editing into the studio recording process. As previously noted, in my case study on classical music, editing and thus the construction of the recorded performance into its final form took place after the recording sessions. In the cases of

popular music, editing happened simultaneously with the recording sessions, although there were some differences between the two cases of popular music. In the home studio-based pop production case study (chapter 3), editing was integrated into the recording process to such a degree that it was almost impossible to distinguish between recording and editing in the studio process, and both activities formed an important part in the compositional and arrangement process as well. In the rock production case study (chapter 5), however, the producer usually took small editing breaks in between recording sessions, thus making the editing activities more separate from recording. To my understanding, these differences in the producer's working practices stem firstly from practical necessities such as available studio spaces, schedules and financial realities which prevail in different production settings. These can be comprehended as physical structures. Secondly, these differences stem from ideological, historical and cultural differences in conceptions of the ontology of music and genre conventions, which can include to some extent questions related to the authenticity of the artist in different genres. These can be understood as socio-cultural structures that have an effect on the formation of the producer's role and agency in the record production process.

In regard to technology, I might conclude that the producer in my case study on classical music production had a more conservative take on which technologies should be used and how. This is not to say that in the production of classical records digital technologies would not be used in the production process. Quite the contrary; in light of my case study, the producer embraces the full potential of digital technology in the editing process of the recorded performance. I see this as a necessity rather than a conscious choice between different alternatives. Without a multiple-take approach and heavy editing which goes with it, the production team would not be able to produce a product of viable quality in the current market considering the limited time for recording sessions, especially when bearing in mind the technical challenge of the musical piece in the classical case in this study. The extent to which digital technologies can or are used in the production process is nevertheless constrained by values and ideas about authenticity, which here means the degree to which recorded sonic material may be manipulated. For example, in the production of a classical record in this study the producer would not touch the pitch level of an individual note; the pitch that a musician has played must stay the way it was recorded and must not be altered by digital technologies. It is nevertheless not an ideological problem to record several takes and choose the one in which the musician plays the right note, even if the producer must edit the right combination of the right pitches from snippets as short as 10 milliseconds. This is, however, also a result of aesthetic choices. When an orchestra is recorded all at once and sound sources are not isolated, meddling with the pitch of one instrument would affect others too, which eliminates the possibility of digital pitch correction in post-production. The choice of recording all at once can also be understood as an ideological choice steered by values related to what a classical orchestra piece is supposed to sound like. This situation differs from the production of

popular music, in which the producer uses any technologies or production techniques that improve the music under production. No stone is left unturned and the latest technologies are used in the quest for improved creative ideas and solutions. The Internet works as a prime example. In both case studies on popular music production, the Internet, which provided access to all the music in the world, was an important tool in the creative process. In classical music, on the other hand, the Internet was merely a tool for communication. These notions reflect different socio-cultural conventions embedded in classical musical practices and in the practices of popular music production, which include ideas about authenticity and the ontology of music. It does, however, seem like studying the production of classical records somewhat automatically invites questions about the ontology of music more strongly than studying that of popular music. This stems from the fact that classical musical practices and conventions had already been developed before recording sound was possible. Popular music, on the other hand, has developed interconnected with electronic music technologies and therefore the relationship between the ontology of music and audio recording is, I would argue, less problematic, or problematic in ways which did not arise from my research material. This has an effect on differing notions of the producer's creative agency between classical and popular music.

Values and ideas embedded in music technology as a social structure also steer the way we think about and how we comprehend the agency of its users, that is the producers in this study. The idea of the producer as a "programmer", which I have discussed in chapter 3 and to some extent in chapter 5, is a prime example. The producers in my first and third case studies did not write any actual code, i.e. they didn't "program" in the actual sense of the word, to produce sounds. The activity of making synthesized tracks was nevertheless comprehended by producers as "programming" as opposed to recording and editing sound played on live instruments by musicians. This shows how the technologies we use in music production, in this case computers and the DAW, direct the way in which we comprehend actions and activities. This, I would argue, affects the way we understand the role and agency of an agent using the technology, i.e. the producer. Terms describing activities are borrowed from fields in which a technology originally was used. This reflects earlier findings on how recordists became engineers even if they lacked actual engineering skills in the original meaning of the word.

## 6.5 Contributions to the Research Field

As previously noted, I would claim that my principle contribution to the study of the art of record production is that I have brought to scholarly discussion an ethnographic in-depth comparison of different producers who have worked on different projects representing different musical styles. Moreover, I have discussed the agency of a classical music producer and producers of popular music in the same ethnographic study. This is an angle that I haven't encountered in previous research. My main

contribution on a more abstract level, however, is that I have broadened the understanding of how agency is constructed in creative processes. More specifically, I have produced new knowledge on how technological practices, social settings and cultural conventions together form a complex, intertwining set of processes through which the agencies of individuals are constructed in the creative przocess. As I have discussed, technological processes and practices intertwine with and contribute to how social settings play themselves out in the process of record production. Furthermore, the use of studio spaces influences the formation of agency. Compared to earlier research on agency, I have drawn attention to the multifaceted nature of agentic construction. I have perhaps provided more angles on the formation of creative agency in the record production process than has been done previously.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study is furthering our understanding of agency in general. What is implicit here is the idea that the formation of agency is very case specific. Specific details, like genre and other individuals, related to a creative project at hand contribute to the agencies of those involved to a greater extent than, for example, generic identity groups, like race, gender, and status, that the individuals might belong to. However, these characteristics related to an individual can be important but on a case by case basis. Therefore, I would argue that at least in the context of record (music) production, to study the formation of agencies of the individuals involved, one must study the relationship of the structures and the desires and aims of the people involved in the cases individually and at a very concrete level. To get a realistic picture of agency, one cannot make assumptions based on the external characteristics or identity groups of the people involved.

By analyzing case studies in different genre settings side by side, I have made the idea of how cultural conventions and genre expectations affect agentic construction at the grassroots level more explicit compared to earlier research, which either relies on writings from or interviews of famous producers, or, if ethnographic, investigates agentic construction inside one specific setting without direct comparison. Therefore, the student of music production from an ethnographic perspective has earlier had to read separate pieces of research on cases of different production processes and compare them to one another. Here, I have provided a directly comparative aspect on the study of agency which the research field has previously lacked. The best example of how this research has broadened the understanding of the construction of agency in creative processes might be the idea of the producer as 'tracker'. I see this as a manifestation of how technological practices which are guided by cultural convention and genre expectations influence the producer's self-definition of her/his agency, and this influences the role the producer assumes and steers the producer's actions in the studio. The fact that this was specific to one of the case studies and not the others strongly points towards the dominating effect of how cultural considerations and conventions play a role in agentic construction, even if the available technologies and the affordances that they provide are the same in each setting. My results are, however, somewhat limited to these case studies and to the methodologies I have chosen, and

what I have stated here is naturally not in any sense a final truth.

To my knowledge, this study is the first comprehensive study to deal with the formation of the producer's role and agency through the idea of the producer as *tracker,* a concept that arose from my research material. As I have shown, this is a genre-related term heavily restricted to producers in the pop genre leaning towards the electronic or EDM aesthetic. The producer as *tracker* has in my understanding emerged in connection with the use of digital technology and the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation), in which the tracks and timeline of a song or piece of music are visible on a visual screen in the recording program. Although earlier research has included descriptions of music making situations where the producer has been in the role of a tracker in the same way that I have described in this study, the term tracker has not explicitly been used or it has only briefly been mentioned without deeper analysis on the formation of the role and agency of the tracker.

The comparison of the case studies I have chosen for this study has strengthened the idea that the music (or record) producer in the 21st century is a creative agent, creativity meaning that aesthetic decision-making is at the core of the producer's agency. The producer's creative agency, when understood as the ability to make and effect aesthetic decisions that bring novelty to the domain in the form of musical differences is formed in relation to structures. These structures include socio-cultural structures, such as historical conventions and ideas about the ontology of music, physical structures such as studio spaces, their acoustic capabilities and music technologies, and social structures such as the music industry and technological practices. Also, the setting in which the producer works and the people that the producer works with contribute to the formation of the producer's agency; the producer's agency is stronger in a studio that s/he owns than in a concert hall that is the primary workspace of an orchestra. Also, in cases where the studio is owned by the producer, a producer with a strong agency might alter the physical structures of the studio, which again might feed back into strengthening the producer's agency. The strength of agency here refers to the extent to which an agent can move within a structure or alter it; the stronger an individual's agency is, the more s/he is able to move within or influence the structures s/he engages with. Here, moving within the structure refers to making and effecting aesthetic decisions in the record production process. Altering structures, then, would refer to the ability to make changes in the studio, the technological environment and the social settings of the process.

Lastly, earlier research on producers in the context of musical records in the western world has been rather canonically oriented. Studies have concentrated on established and possibly famous star producers who have produced international hits with famous artists. My research has concentrated on western producers who, even though they are professional producers, are not strongly visible in the media, have not produced international hits or are in the early stages of their producer careers and have thus not been canonized. Previous research on non-canonized producers has mostly focused on non-Western producers.

## 6.6 Validity, Reliability and Generalizability

The generalizability of an idiographic study like this is always a valid question. As I have explained in the introduction and pointed out in the conclusion of each separate analysis chapter, I do not intend to suggest that all of the results presented in this study would be true of all producers at all times working in similar situations, nor do I think that it is the goal of an ethnographic study of this nature to generalize to this extent. My aim has rather been to produce deeper knowledge of how the producers' agencies are constructed in the face of different kinds of structures. In this, I would claim that my research questions and methods have been successful. I do not believe that any producer can be an outlier to the extent that conventions and the production culture surrounding them would not affect their ways of doing things. Therefore, I would argue that there are at least some working practices that all producers share. Furthermore, I would argue that because my case studies represented very different producers in different production settings, together they justify some generalizability, at least as far as the results that show clear similarities between the three. In all case studies the producer provided extensive feedback to the artist(s). Additionally, producers in all case studies used digital music production technologies to edit and construct performances based on their own aesthetic judgments. However, my case studies were all on Finnish producers and the production projects happened in Finland. Therefore, my results are somewhat limited to the Finnish context, although I am sure that some overlapping with producers from other countries does exist, especially as production practices are increasingly becoming internationally uniform.

## 6.7 Further Research

As I discussed in section 6.5, the producer as a *tracker* is something that requires more research in the future. My research material hints that the producer/tracker or tracker/producer is increasingly becoming a standard role in the popular music production mainstream. Outside of the present study, this has not yet been studied comprehensively and it is something I will look into more in the future, preferably in an international context. Another area I would like to address in my future research is the role and agency of female producers. As I mentioned in my introduction, I wanted to include female producers as participants in this study. This, however, did not happen for reasons (that I hope are) not related to me or the approach I have taken. Also, the role and agency of female producers has not been studied to a sufficient degree yet. This is something that I would like to address in the future. Finally, the role and agency of the classical producer is something that definitely needs further research. Especially interesting would be to study the change in the classical producer's role and agency along with the change in music or record production technologies. Due to the small number of classical producers in Finland, this would require an international research setting and a different point of departure in the research. Perhaps a historical

component would bring more context and depth.

All in all, this study has been an eye-opening experience for me. The process of music production is a complex enterprise beyond anything I imagined prior to starting work on this study. It is essentially a socio-technological process led by the producer. Having conducted an in-depth study of the producer's creative agency in music production, I believe I have acquired a comprehensive understanding of how agencies are constructed in the face of technological, social and physical structures. I hope readers of this study have also been able to form a more nuanced understanding of music production and of how the producer's role and agency are formed. It is my hope as well that this study could provide a methodological framework for future studies on any similar socio-technological processes.

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## Research Materials

### Interviews

Blind Channel (2016). Interview with Blind Channel 30.11.2016 at DesignCafe, Helsinki. Length 37min 34sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Elts, Olari 2016. 10.3.2016 at Original Sokos Hotel Tapiola Garden. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 17min 56 sec. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Mäemets, Enno 2016. 23.3.2016 at Enno Mäemets's home in Myllypuro, Helsinki. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 1h 15min 8 sec. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Olsson, Jonas (2017a). 24.1.2017 at InkFish studio, Helsinki. Length 1h 39min 30sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Olsson, Jonas (2017b). 24.1.2017 at InkFish studio, Helsinki. Length 7min 33sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Olsson, Jonas (2016a). 27.11.2016 at InkFish studio, Helsinki. Length 13min 38sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Olsson, Jonas (2016b). 28.11.2016 at InkFish studio, Helsinki. Length 9min 32sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Siirala, Seppo (2016a). 8.3.2016 at Espoo Cultural Center. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 22 minutes 42 seconds. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Siirala, Seppo (2016b). 10.3.2016 at Espoo Cultural Center cafeteria, Espoo. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 1h 34 min. 9 sec. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Siirala, Seppo (2016c). 30.5.2016 at Helsinki Music Center cafeteria, Helsinki. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 52 minutes 37 seconds. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Siirala, Seppo (2015). 26.11.2015 at Siirala's workspace in Ondine's building, Malmi, Helsinki. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 1h 34 min. 9 sec. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Tüür, Erkki-Sven (2016a). 12.3.2016 at Espoo Cultural Center, Espoo. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Length 13 minutes 2 seconds. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2015a) Helsinki, 7th Floor Studio, 10.3.2015. 1h, 10 min, 15 sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2015b) Helsinki, 7th Floor Studio 30.9.2015. 36 min, 15 sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2015c) Helsinki, 7th Floor Studio, 1.10.2015. 3 min, 17 sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2016a) E-mail interview. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Question list sent 2.2.2016, reply received 2.2.2016. Interview in the possession of the author. 6 pages.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2016b) Helsinki, 7th Floor Studio, 14.4.2016. 27 min, 33 sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2016c) Helsinki, 7th Floor Studio, 14.4.2016. 23 min, 51 sec. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2016d) E-mail interview. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Question list sent 15.4.2016, reply received 15.4.2016. Interview in the possession of the author. 4 pages.

Vepsäläinen, Mikke & Paul, Ida (2016a) Helsinki, 7th Floor Studio 18.2.2016. Interviewer Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in the possession of the author. 1 min, 39 sec.

## Scores

Tüür, Erkki-Sven 2010a. *Symphony No. 8.* Henry Litolef's Verlag / C.F. Peters. Leipzig, London, New York. Producer's copy. Copy in the possession of the author.

## Sonic Materials

Tüür, Erkki-Sven 2016. *Symphony No. 8.* Final Edit. Mp3-file in the possession of the author.

Paul, Ida & Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2016a) 'Yksisarvine_sessiodemo_0'. *Unpublished production demo of 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä'.* [Mp3] Obtained January the 14th 2016 and is in the possession if the author.

Paul, Ida & Vepsäläinen, Mikke (2016b) 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä_stripped_demo_2'. *Unpublished production demo of 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä'.* [Mp3] Obtained January the 14th 2016 and is in the possession if the author.

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## Released Recordings

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## Video Clips

Video clip 2. March the 8th 2016. Length 2 min 45 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Espoo Cultural Center cafeteria. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video clip 3. March the 8th 2016. Length 32 seconds. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 7. May the 12th 2016. Length 1min 16 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 8. May the 12th 2016. Length 3min 17sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 9. May the 12th 2016. Length 2min 1sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 10. May the 12th 2016. Length 38sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 11. May the 12th 2016. Length 14sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 12. May the 12th 2016. Length 30 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 13. May the 13th 2016. Length 46 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 14. May the 13th 2016. Length 13 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Edit Room. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 15. December the 19th 2016. Length 15 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 16. November the 27th 2016. Length 2 min. 59 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 17. November the 29th 2016. Length 20 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 18. November the 29th 2016. Length 17 sec. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

Video Clip 19. February the 15th 2016. Shot by Tuomas Auvinen at Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. MOV-file in the possession of the author.

## Photos

Photo 1. March the 12th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 2. March the 12th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 3. March the 12th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 4. November the 27th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 5. November the 28th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 6. November the 28th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 7. November the 27th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 8. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 9. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 10. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 11. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 12. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 13. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

Photo 14. February the 15th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Mikke Vepsäläinen’s home studio, 7th Floor Studio. Photo in the possession of the author.

## Field Recordings

Field Recording 1, Recorded at 7th Floor Studio, Helsinki, (audio) on 18.2.2016. Recorded by the author. Mp3-file in the possession of the author. Duration 20 min 41 sec.

Field Recording 2, Recorded at 7th Floor Studio, Helsinki, (audio) on 1.10.2015 Recorded by the author. Mp3- file in the possession of the author. Duration 6 min 45 sec.

Field Recording 3 Auvinen, Tuomas (2016d) Field Recording at Espoo Cultural Center on 8.3.2016. Recorded by the author. Mp3-file in the possession of the author. Duration 3min 44sec.

Field Recording 4, Recorded at Edit Room on 12.5.2016. Length 1h 45min 9sec. Recorded by Tuomas Auvinen. Mp3-file in possession of the author.

## Online Materials

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Tapiola Sinfonietta. Rehearsal Schedule. Week 10/2016.

*Harjoitusaikataulu*
*Viikko 10 / 2016*

Olari Elts, kapellimestari
Frank Braley, piano
Meri Englund, konserttimestari

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ma 7.3.* | | | | |
| *Tapiolasali* | Kotiharjoittelu | | | |
| *Ti 8.3.* | | | | |
| *Tapiolasali* | 10:00 | - | 11:20 | Ravel: Hanhiemo |
| | 11:50 | - | 12:50 | Tüür: Sinfonia |
| | 13:00 | - | 14:00 | Tüür: Sinfonia |
| *Ke 9.3.* | | | | |
| *EKK:n eri tilat* | 10:00 | - | 11:00 | Stemmaharjoitus: Olari harjoituttaa puhaltajia, muut sektiot itsenäisesti |
| *Tapiolasali* | 11:15 | - | 12:30 | tutti / Ravel: Hanhiemo - Ravel: Konsertto - Tüür: Sinfonia |
| | 13:00 | - | 14:00 | Tüür: Sinfonia |
| *To 10.3.* | | | | |
| *Tapiolasali* | 10:00 | - | 11:20 | Ravel: Hanhiemo - Tüür: Sinfonia |
| | 11:50 | - | 12:50 | Tüür: Sinfonia (mikäli tarpeen) - Ravel: Konsertto & solisti |
| | 13:00 | - | 14:00 | Ravel: Konsertto & solisti |
| *Pe 11.3.* | | | | |
| *Tapiolasali* | 10:00 | - | 13:00 | Kenraaliharjoitus: Hanhiemo - Konsertto - Sinfonia |
| | 19:00 | - | | KAUSIKONSERTTI 5<br>musta puku, musta paita / musta iltapuku<br>Olari Elts, kapellimestari<br>Frank Braley, piano<br>Meri Englund, konserttimestari |
| (18') **M. Ravel: Hanhiemo-sarja** (2222-2000-13-hp-[cel]-str)<br>(20') **M. Ravel: Konsertto pianolle ja orkesterille G** (2[2=picc]2[2=c.ing]2[2=es-cl]2-2110-13-hp-str-piano solo)<br>---<br>(31') **E. Tüür: Sinfonia nro 8** (2222-2200-01-str) | | | | |
| *La 12.3.* | 11.00 | - | 14.00 | LEVYTYS / Ondine |
| | 15:00 | - | 18:00 | LEVYTYS / Ondine<br>Olari Elts, kapellimestari |
| (31') **E. Tüür: Sinfonia nro 8** (2222-2200-01-str) | | | | |
| *Su 13.3.* | - | | | |

# Appendix 2. Photos

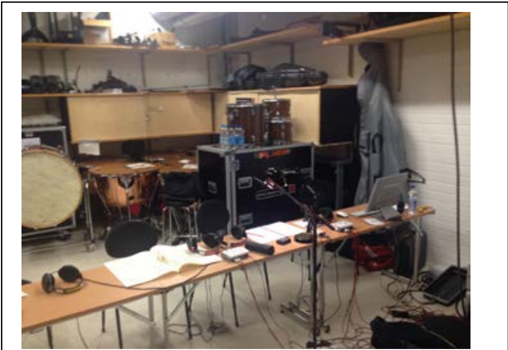
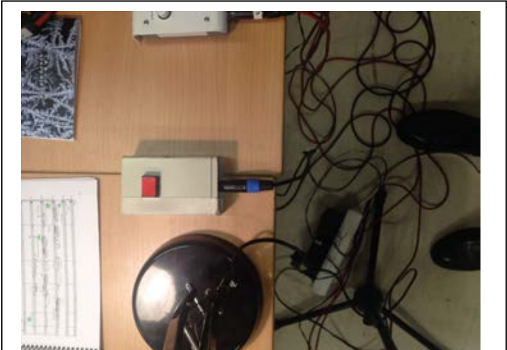


Photo 1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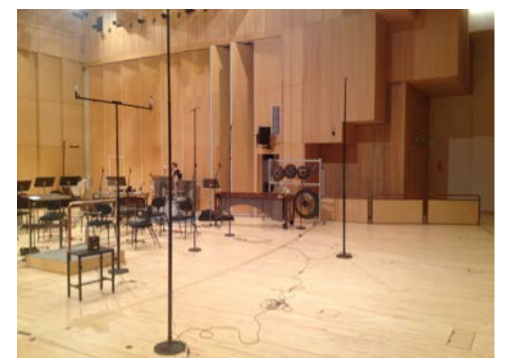
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Photo 4

Photo 5

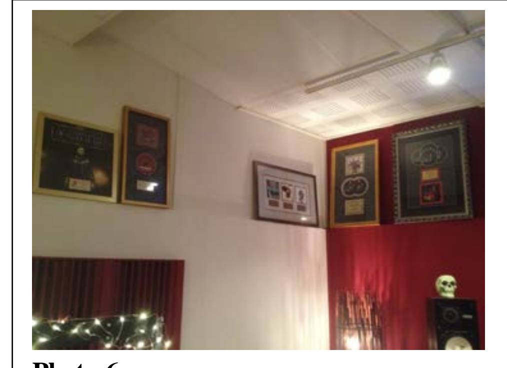
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Photo 7

Photo 10

Photo 8

Photo 9

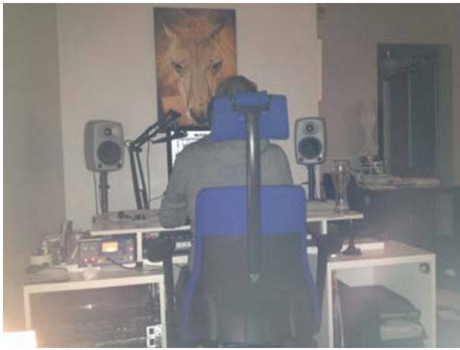
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Photo 12

Photo 13

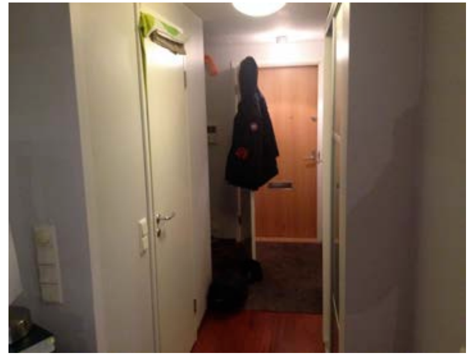
Photo 14

UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Painotalo Painola, Piispanristi 2018

ISBN 978-951-29-7518-1 (PRINT)
ISBN 978-951-29-7519-8 (PDF)
ISSN 0082-6987 (Print)
ISSN 2343-3191 (Online)