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**Becoming a musician:  
a longitudinal study investigating  
the career transitions of  
undergraduate music students**

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## **Becoming a musician: a longitudinal study investigating the career transitions of undergraduate music students**

*Karen Burland*

### ***Abstract***

This thesis examines the nature of the transition between training as an undergraduate musician and choosing whether or not to pursue a career as a professional performer. Previous studies of musical development have focused on children's skill acquisition, but few have considered the roles of motivation, practice, and the social environment in the transition into the music profession. Musicians making early career choices are also progressing through one of the most critical life-span changes – from adolescence to young adulthood – and little is known about how the psychological changes occurring during this time influence a musician's development.

A two-year longitudinal study was conducted with a group of 32 musicians who, at the beginning of the study, were undergraduate music students attending either a British music college or university. Eight interviews were conducted with each of the participants. These were primarily qualitative in design, being either structured or semi-structured and the data were analysed using qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. The findings indicate that distinct characteristics defined the musicians who chose to pursue a professional performance career which differed from those for whom music became an amateur interest. The results suggest that the four factors of motivation, musical identity, learning styles and coping strategies interact and influence the career choices of the musicians. It is suggested that an individual's musical identity and his/her coping strategies play an integral role in the process of becoming a professional or amateur musician. A Dynamic Model of Musical Identity Formation and Career Choice is proposed in order to depict and explain the complex process of becoming a professional or amateur musician in adulthood.

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*Chapter One***Introduction*****1.1 Overview***

Previous research in musical development has tended to focus on changes during childhood and adolescence and has attempted to establish those factors that have the most influence on the successful acquisition of musical skill. However, there has been little consideration of the process by which adolescent musicians develop to become professional adult performers. Life-span theorists suggest that individuals continue to change and develop from birth to old-age, but developmental psychologists working in music have neglected to consider how life-span transitions affect musicians. Of all the life-span transitions, moving from late adolescence to young adulthood is thought to be the most stressful due to the changes in personal relationships, working patterns and other related demands (such as buying a house, or starting a family). An associated demand placed on the individual during this time of transition is the formation of a personal identity. The current thesis is an attempt to gain an insight into how a musician's experiences during childhood and the adolescent to young adulthood period (undergraduate training) influence future career choices. It also aims to understand how those experiences interact with the associated life-span transition, focusing in particular on the ways in which an individual's musical participation influences and interacts with his/her self-concept.

***1.2 Theoretical underpinnings***

The current thesis draws on the theoretical framework offered within the domain of social psychology, since a great deal of research investigating both musical development and life-span transitions emphasises development as a dynamic and interactive process between the individual and his/her environment. The choices made by individuals are not simply the result of absorbing influence from the surrounding environment, but rather they are dependent upon their perceptions of, and responses to, those experiences. Therefore, a fundamental feature of this thesis is to understand how individuals perceive

their social environment and how their perceptions of self and their experiences determine the career path that they choose to follow.

### ***1.3 Methodological approach***

In order to capture fully the musicians' experiences of the transition, I carried out a longitudinal study. Interviews were conducted once every three months over a two-year period as the participants approached the end of an undergraduate music degree at either music college or university and decided whether to work as a musician, or find an alternative career. It was important to find an appropriate framework for collecting data which would be effective in exposing the self of the participants and provide sufficiently rich data to enable meaningful analyses of individuals and groups of individuals. A primarily qualitative approach is adopted although, due to the large amounts of rich data collected during the initial stages of the study and the time-consuming nature of transcribing and analysing the data, the middle period of the study used quantitative questionnaires which incorporated elements of qualitative data. To my knowledge, no research of this kind has been undertaken before, and so this thesis addresses questions of theory and method from domains other than music performance research in order to clarify the complex topic of how and why musicians do or do not become professional performers.

### ***1.4 Analytical approaches***

The qualitative interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 1999), a technique which focuses on the perspective of each participant as an individual yet, through eliciting themes, allows comparisons between participants. It was important that an individual's unique story was considered in isolation, but also critical that certain commonalities of experience and change be exposed. The quantitative questionnaires used during the middle phase of the study collected categorical data and these were examined using analyses of frequency of cases (chi-Square) in order to explore central differences between the groups of musicians. Descriptive statistics are used in the analysis chapters to demonstrate the changes occurring within certain variables during the middle phase of the study.

### ***1.5 Reflexivity***

As a musician myself I had considered pursuing performance to a higher level after completing my general music undergraduate degree, and therefore my role in this research will inevitably have an influence in terms of the way in which the data are approached and interpreted. Reflexivity is a central component of this kind of research, as it allows for the analysis to be an interactive process between the participants and I. The added insight that my own experiences and values can offer the process of research must not be overlooked.

### ***1.6 Structure of thesis***

In the following chapters I present details of my theoretical and methodological approach, analysis of the results and findings from three perspectives, and a discussion which draws together the themes which appeared to play a fundamental role in musicians' career transitions. The work is structured as follows; Chapter Two is a survey of previous research in musical development, focusing specifically on the environmental factors thought to contribute to the acquisition of musical skill. It also considers research from music psychological and other related psychology domains that have examined how to achieve excellence, focusing on motivation, styles of learning, practice, and personality characteristics. Theories of life-span development are discussed in some detail, with a specific focus on the development of identity and self-concept as important features of the transition under investigation in this thesis. The chapter concludes by considering psychological research investigating career transitions and briefly discusses the transition into higher education as an example of how previous research has attempted to investigate other significant life transitions. The literature discussed in this chapter provides much insight into the data analysis presented in later chapters and provides a framework within which the data can be understood.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework for the study's methodology. It begins by considering the limited number of studies which examine the professional development of musicians, examining the methodology employed and discussing how

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such research needs to be extended in order for a detailed understanding to emerge. A pilot study that I conducted (Burland, 2000) is discussed as an example of how the research techniques that I use in the study presented here are effective in collecting the kind of data required. The chapter proceeds with a more detailed discussion of longitudinal and qualitative research techniques and the theoretical underpinnings, such as reflexivity, and the benefits of using a multi-method approach. An outline of the research design is then provided, the participants are introduced, and the formulation and content of the interview schedules is discussed. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the analytical process.

Chapter Four is the first of four chapters to present and discuss the findings of my investigation. It considers the fundamental differences between the two original groups of participants – music college and university students. The chapter discusses how the two groups of musicians are distinguished by their perceptions of positive and negative experiences, their belief systems, motivations, and personality characteristics. This chapter provides a context for the remaining chapters and demonstrates that the long-term goals of the participants influence their perceptions and belief systems.

Chapter Five focuses on those musicians who, at the end of the study, wished to become professional performers. It examines in detail the ‘performers’ perceptions of their experiences and the ways in which they coped with struggles and setbacks. Their belief systems, personality characteristics and relationships with music form a central part of the discussion, and the concept of a ‘performer’ identity is discussed. Having discussed the data, some additional research literature focusing on the psychological nature of coping, and strategies for coping, is presented in order to more fully understand and clarify how it relates to the performers’ experiences.

Having considered the factors that appear to have determined the performers’ choice to pursue a professional career in music, Chapter Six examines the transition of the non-performers. It focuses on the experiences of this group of musicians, many of which are similar to the performer group, and discusses how the non-performers appear not to have

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developed strategies for coping with negative experiences during their musical training and have different relationships with music and contrasting priorities for their musical participation. The notion of an ‘amateur’ musical identity is discussed as an influential factor affecting these musicians’ choices to pursue careers other than music, yet still maintain some active involvement with music.

The analyses to this point focus on the generalisations that can be made from the data, but Chapter Seven presents three detailed case studies to provide insight into the difficulties encountered by the individuals during the study. The three individuals’ stories represent the ‘transition’ at its most extreme and exemplify the importance of musical identity, self-beliefs and coping strategies during the transition from training as a musician and entering a profession, be it in performance or not.

Chapter Eight discusses the central ideas of the thesis and draws them together in a model representing the transitions of the two groups of musicians. Finally, Chapter Nine evaluates the research and considers its implications and directions for future studies.

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*Chapter Two*

**Becoming a musician**

***2.1 Introduction***

The origins of musical ability have been widely debated and researched by music psychologists over the past twenty years, but as yet there is no definitive and generally accepted explanation. The debate is problematic because it is inevitably centred on the nature/nurture debate which ‘sticks’ at the point that individuals or families have biological heritability. However, the influence of the surrounding environment is difficult to disentangle from the role of genetic make-up. The resultant circularity of the discussion illustrates that we are inevitably the product of nature and nurture.

There is clear evidence to show that individuals in western societies pass through certain stages of cognitive and physical development at similar ages (Piaget, 1969; Bee, 1992) and equivalent models have been proposed in relation to the acquisition of musical skill (cf. Shuter-Dyson and Gabriel, 1981). Whilst research of this kind suggests some kind of genetic programming, it is commonly accepted that the extent to which an individual’s potential is achieved relates to the surrounding environment.

Personality studies demonstrate the complex interaction of individual and social factors that contribute to behaviour and the acquisition of skill. These are explored throughout this chapter, through examining research in psychology and music psychology, and factors such as motivation, identity, and styles of learning are considered. The emphasis in the thesis is on the interactive nature of the individual with his/her social environment, and therefore theories which take this perspective are considered.

***2.1.1 Personality***

As far back as Greek and Roman drama, individuals’ personalities have always been understood in terms of ‘types’, and there are many ‘trait’ and ‘type’ theories in the

psychology literature which explain personality in these terms (Cattell, 1956; Eysenck, 1976). Humanistic psychologists, whilst adopting a more person-centred approach, also claim that personality is shaped by inherent characteristics: individuals are innately driven to achieve self-actualization and achieve their potential (cf. Rogers, 1977, in Zimbardo & Weber, 1994: 389). However, some psychologists question whether human behaviour can be explained in terms of traits and innate characteristics, and suggest that individuals' behaviour should be considered in relation to the impact of the surrounding environment. The emergence of social-learning and cognitive theories emphasise the relationship between situational and cognitive elements. In Personal Construct Theory, for example, Kelly (1955) views people as scientists whose thoughts and feelings are closely linked to their perceptions (constructs) of the surrounding environment: an individual's constructs are the dimensions which predispose him/her to behave in some ways rather than others.

One's personality is constituted by one's own particular, idiosyncratic perspective on events: one's construct system. So it follows that each of us is similar to or different from another person to the extent that our construing is alike or different. (Burr & Butt, 1992:39)

Mischel (1977) also combines an emphasis on cognitive theories with elements of social-learning theory. Mischel believes that our values and beliefs are derived from the observation and imitation of role models and stimulus-response couplings in our own experiences. The result of these different approaches to understanding personality is a compromise between the two:

Behaviour depends on an interaction between qualities of the person and qualities of the physical and social environment. (Deary and Matthews, 1993: 299-300, in Kemp, 1996:15)

The majority of research investigating the personalities of musicians has been conducted by Kemp (1996), who identifies particular personality characteristics common to all types of musician (e.g. performer, composer, teacher). Whilst he uses the dimensions of personality as the basis for his research, Kemp does acknowledge an interaction with environmental factors:

I wish to take the view here that the musician's development is a product of the kind of person that he or she is, as well as the prevailing environment in which the development of musical talent is allowed to take place and flourish. (Kemp, 1996: 15)

Indeed, in the general musical development literature, recent progress in the nature/nurture controversy has led to a general acceptance that talent cannot be explained

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exclusively by either perspective (Radford, 1994).

The above discussion of personality development has aimed to provide a justification for the focus on social and environmental factors throughout this thesis. Establishing the direct role of innate characteristics is problematic and, as I have discussed, modern psychologists have reached a consensus that there is an interaction between biological and social factors. It is possible, through research, to gain a more detailed understanding of environmental influences on human development and this can subsequently enable an exploration of how the research findings can be applied in a practical way to enhance the development of individuals. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the environmental factors which are considered to enhance an individual's musical development. The research presented in this thesis does not disregard the role of innate characteristics, but concentrates on the examination of musicians' experiences with and perceptions of their social environments as a way to better understand how to assist their transition into professional life.

Studies of musical development have previously considered development from birth until the end of adolescence, but there has been little account of what happens as the musician enters young adulthood and continues to mature. There are many different theories of what makes a successful child musician, but few relate to adult musicians. This chapter:

- Provides an overview of the important elements contributing to musical development and achieving musical excellence;
- Discusses why a life-span consideration of musical development is necessary, highlighting why it is critical to focus on the adolescent to young adulthood transition in particular;
- Discusses psychological theories of career transitions and examines how they may be relevant to our understanding of becoming a professional musician.



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## **2.2 *The social environment***

It has been suggested that infants' neural structures predispose them to engage in particular kinds of activities, thus constructing their own environment (Locke, 1993, cited in Harris and Butterworth, 2004: 39), and Bouchard *et al* (1990) have shown that identical twins reared apart often end up with similar environments because their genes predispose them to find similar sources of stimulation. This perhaps adds to Gardner's (1993) perspective on how ability continues to develop into adulthood. He proposes that there is a strong interaction between 'cognitive potentials' and 'the resources and opportunities provided by surrounding culture' (Gardner, 1993). It seems, therefore, that despite powerful genetic factors, development is dependent upon the availability of suitable resources in the surrounding environment. An example may be musical life at home, which can be more or less stimulating according to the interests of parents and siblings.

The roles played by parents, teachers, peers, and schools or colleges are fundamental to the developing musician's social environment in terms of imparting knowledge, support, and motivation; without these contributions, a musician's development is far less likely to be successful. Furthermore, a successful musician is not simply a recipient of influence from significant others, it is the way s/he interacts with, perceives, and reacts to the social environment that is vital (Weller, 2004).

This section aims to discuss those environmental factors which influence the development of talent and the acquisition of musical skill. I include in this discussion research into 'giftedness' and 'talent', encompassing a range of abilities from chess to mathematics, as well as music<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting here that this thesis is not concerned with musical prodigies, although the participants' enrolment in either a music college, or on a university music degree course suggests that they have a high level of musical skill.

### **2.2.1 Parents**

Drawing from literature about talented children in all domains, research indicates that the most successful children usually have highly supportive parents (Sosniak, 1990; Kemp, 1996; Sloboda & Howe, 1991; Bastian, 1989, cited in Gembris & Davidson, 2002: 22; Manturzewska, 1990, Bloom, 1985), and the type of support they provide is wide-ranging, as listed below:

1. Originally initiating the interest
2. Moral support
3. Providing a warm and loving environment
4. Reciprocal working relationship
5. Practical support (e.g. transport, finance)

An influential study, ‘The Development of Talent Research Project’, led by Benjamin Bloom (1985), which investigated the emergence of exceptional talent in a number of fields (sport, music, mathematics), considered the impact of the home environment on the developing talented child. The project provided insight into some of the critical factors in the development of talent and, of relevance here, the ways in which other people play a central role in that development. It is noted in the report that a child’s introduction to their particular talent area usually occurs with the interest of at least one parent. The role of the home environment and the specific ways in which parents stimulated their child’s interest in a particular area was strong. For example, “vacations, weekend outings, or interactions among family members frequently included activities in the talent area” (Sloane, 1985: 447). The project demonstrated that the parents’ pursuit of their own interests in a particular area created situations that intrigued the child, and in turn the child’s interest was rewarded with opportunities for him/her to participate in the activity and therefore to acquire simple skills. This is not to say, however, that the parents of successful musicians must be professional musicians themselves: research indicates that successful child musicians are less likely than children of average musical ability to have musically active parents (Sloboda & Howe, 1991). Sloboda *et al* (1994) argue that such children are perceived as special by their non-musical parents which in turn motivates continued musical study.

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Parents also provide materials when they perceive a potential interest:

One three-year-old “was going around the house tapping out rhythms on the furniture.” His parents’ response was to buy a toy drum, “just so he could have an instrument to play with” (Sloane, 1985: 448-449).

With evidence such as this, it is hardly surprising that the home environment is often considered to be more important than school for musically gifted children (Freeman, 1979, cited in Winner & Martino, 1983: 272). Freeman believes that without a supportive home environment, children are likely to give up learning in their chosen field. For example, she found a close relationship between talented children’s IQ scores and the type of educational support provided by parents. Verbal interactions and joint activities between parent and child, in addition to the number of books and musical instruments in the home, contribute to the successful acquisition of skill (Freeman, 1991; Badur, 1999, cited in Gembris & Davidson, 2002: 21).

Successful adult musicians who showed early talent acknowledge the daily involvement of a parent, who was perceived to care, who often sat with them whilst they practised, thus instilling a structure of discipline (Winner & Martino, 1983; Howe, 1993; Ericsson *et al.*, 1990; Manturzewska, 1995, cited in Gembris & Davidson, 2002: 21). Thus, a developing child uses his/her parents’ interest as a form of motivation: if the parent is enthusiastic about the child’s emerging skill, then the child perceives the activity as something worth pursuing further (Sosniak, 1987). Overall, research indicates that talented children have strong family ties and warm relationships between members (Mönks & van Boxtel, 1985) and consequently the child has high regard for his/her parents (Kemp, 1996).

It seems, from the literature, that if a child is to become successful in their chosen domain, then there must be mutual respect between parent and child. It has been shown, for example, that parents who work with their children rather than telling them what to do have the largest influence on their child’s achievement (Freeman, 1991). As an extension of this, Sosniak describes how the development of exceptional pianists was the result of a constantly changing relationship between parent and child.

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The willingness and ability of the family to change in response to the pianist's development seem to have been very important ingredients in the pianists' successful learning. Obviously, some of the pianists' opportunities had to be made available or at least permitted by the parents. Also, since opportunities taken advantage of led to more opportunities and became educational advantages, if the parents had not continued to invest themselves in their child's music-making, the pianists might well have fallen behind other aspiring musicians their age whose parents were growing with their children (Sosniak, 1987: 527-528).

The notion of parents "growing" with their child seems significant here. In a study of musicians of varying ability, from those who learned for a short period of time and subsequently given up, to those labelled as 'specialists', Sloboda *et al* (1996) discovered that the parents of the latter category increased the amount of time they spent listening to music, which the authors interpreted as the parents' increasing commitment to their child's musical development. Freeman (1985) found a similar trend, describing how as gifted children develop, the parent learns about the talent area alongside the child.

The support provided by the parents of musicians and gifted children has been shown to be consistent throughout the child's development (Davidson *et al*, 1996; Sosniak, 1990). In addition to describing how the degree of parental support was generally higher when the child was experiencing frustration or failure (Sosniak, 1990), Sosniak (1987) describes how parents place priority on their child's music-making over other household chores.

They also learned to live with, and enjoy, the noise of music-making at all hours of the day and night. The parents' respect for and appreciation of the child's music-making inspired the child further, and so on (Sosniak, 1987: 528).

The level of commitment demonstrated by the parents of talented children is not simply restricted to the kinds of moral support described so far; parents have also been shown to go to enormous lengths to support the practicalities of their child's development. Parents are generally responsible for providing transport to rehearsals, lessons, auditions, and competitions, and such commitment can occupy much of a parent's free time, in addition to the direct economic costs of such activities (Bloom, 1985; Freeman, 1985). The parents of the successful child musicians in the research by Sloboda and Howe (1991) also displayed a keen interest in their child's instrumental lessons, ensuring that they observed lessons and obtained regular feedback from teachers.

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The discussion so far suggests that parents play a central role in initiating, supporting and motivating their child's pursuit of expertise. Other family members are also important, although perhaps not to such an extent. For example, siblings can provide a source of inspiration and external motivation to the developing musician (Davidson *et al*, 1997). The role of others in motivating the child to practice and initiating systematic practice skills through rewards and encouragement is critical during the initial stages of learning as a form of external motivation (Ericsson *et al*, 1990). However, if a child is to become a successful musician it is important that such external motivation becomes intrinsic motivation (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996). If a child is to become a successful musician, they must begin to connect with music in an emotional way:

The child must become possessed by music...it can happen any time between the ages of ten or so and fourteen. Suddenly the child begins to sense something happening and he really starts to work...it happened to me when I was eleven (Isaac Stern, cited in Winner & Martino, 1983: 276).

The role of motivation is discussed in more detail below, but it is worth noting here that without parents intervening in their child's musical development in the ways discussed above, it is unlikely that a developing musician will sustain learning long enough to develop the kinds of intrinsic motivation described in the above quote.

The benefits of positive parental support of the kinds discussed above seem to correlate strongly with the successful acquisition of skill, but such positive parent-child relationships are not generalisable: the relationships that children have with their parents can vary greatly (Tannenbaum, 1986). Some parents may create a negative environment by placing pressure on their child to succeed, valuing the vicarious enjoyment their child's musical participation offers and instilling a fear of failure.

Additionally, there is evidence that the pressure that a parent places upon a talented child can be intense (Howe, 1993), and this can be detrimental to the child's development (McClelland, 1955; Howe, 1990; Gallagher & Coche, 1987). Gallagher and Coche (1987), for example, suggest that some parents use their child's success as a symbol of achievement, often as compensation for their own feelings of inadequacy. Often the parents of talented children can invest "too much of the energy and ambition that might

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otherwise have been directed to their own lives” (Howe, 1993: 89) and the consequence can be feelings of increased anxiety in the child and his/her parents (Gallagher & Coche, 1987). The danger of parents living vicariously through their child’s achievements is the emotional pressure it can place on the child (Freeman, 1985; 1991). The pressure to succeed perceived by talented children can cause them to feel as if they have to subdue their personalities and miss out on opportunities to play and be creative (Freeman, 1991).

One of the few generalisations that can be made about people of outstanding achievement is that they have to be fiercely independent and self-directed. It is clear that there is a tendency for some families of child prodigies to be rather inward-looking, with parents and children possibly too dependent on each other... We can see the possibility that, in some cases at least, the circumstances that make it likely that a child will be a prodigy contain elements that may not be ideal for that child to develop into an adult who makes the best use of his or her capabilities (Howe, 1993: 89).

Whilst this thesis does not consider the musical prodigy, Howe’s description of the potential dangers of intense relationships between parent and child is applicable in light of the literature discussed above. If a co-dependent relationship exists between parent and child, it is possible that the child may have difficulties becoming an independent adult (Howe, *ibid*).

One further consideration here is that perceived pressure can make the developing child fear failure if they do not manage to attain the highest standards of excellence expected by their parents: the developing child does not wish to disappoint their parents (Howe, 1990).

The role of parents in a child’s development is a critical one; a supportive, inspiring, stimulating home environment is important to the acquisition of skill in any domain. However, the parent-child relationship is not always a positive one and, as I have shown, can often have a detrimental impact on the child’s skill acquisition and their personal development. The research discussed here suggests that parents have the most impact during the early years of development, although there are limited studies, to my knowledge, that have examined the role that parents play in the lives of adult professional musicians. Burland (2000) found that the parents of the professional performers in her sample continued to play a fundamental role in the musician’s life, being described by one participant as his “feet on the ground”. It is anticipated that as musicians enter the

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transition from training as a musician to becoming a professional performer, their relationships with their parents will remain strong and supportive, but play a less practical role than when they were children.

### **2.2.2 Teachers, schools, and higher education**

In the same way that parents are important for providing support and stimulation, teachers also play a central role in the acquisition of skill. Teachers are a vital source for providing the necessary technical skill and musical knowledge, but they also influence musical tastes and serve as role models (Gembris & Davidson, 2002: 23). Research suggests that the earlier a child starts formal education, the more likely they are to achieve high levels of success (Sylva, 1994, cited in OFSTED Review of Research, 1998: 2). This OFSTED report emphasises the effectiveness of schooling in terms of its ability to positively enhance the student's self-perceptions, and enable them to "develop intrinsic motivation, curiosity and love of learning" (ibid: 3). An inspiring teacher, for example, can help the child to discover the intrinsic reward to be gained by studying a particular area of skill (Csikszentmihalyi *et al*, 1993).

Research indicates that the amount of time spent learning is positively correlated to the individual's level of musical expertise (Hallam, 1998; Sosniak, 1993). Additionally, the nature of learning and the musician's interactions with, and perceptions of, their teachers are fundamental: as a musician develops it is important that his/her style of learning and interactions with instrumental teachers adapt to suit his/her changing needs (Sosniak, 1993; Davidson *et al*, 1998).

Davidson and colleagues investigated environmental factors in children's musical development and the results suggest that the personality of the teacher has a significant impact on the young musician (Davidson *et al*, 1998). They found important distinctions between first and subsequent teachers: the high achieving 'specialist' musicians perceived their initial instrumental teacher positively - as friendly and chatty, and therefore a good player, whilst the students who had given up before the commencement of the study perceived their first teacher negatively – as unfriendly and therefore a bad

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player (ibid, 1998). Davidson *et al* interpret this finding in terms of the musicians' motivation: it is important for a child's first instrumental teacher to establish a friendly rapport in order to be perceived as supportive, and consequently become a motivating influence.

In the section on parents, I discussed how children from families with strong family ties tended to be more successful, and this seems to be true for the teacher-student relationship. Successful children generally seem to "form close familial-type bonds with their teachers in the initial period of learning" (Davidson, 1997: 214). Davidson *et al* (1998) do note, however, that whilst a friendly relationship is vital during the early stages of learning, this is less important as the child develops and begins to place greater emphasis on the importance of the teacher's qualities as an educator. This may be related to the nature of the feedback provided by teachers: it has been suggested that the toughest teachers gain the most respect because they offer clear and relevant feedback which allows pupils to gain increasing control of their development (Csikszentmihaly *et al*, 1993). Without adequate feedback, improvement will be minimal, and efficient learning impossible (Ericsson *et al*, 1993; Csikzentmihalyi *et al*, 1993).

Despite evidence suggesting the importance of a changing relationship between student and teacher, it appears that a student's need to feel a personal bond with his/her teacher is consistent, even during late adolescence and young adulthood. For example, Csiksentmihalyi *et al* (1993) suggest that those teachers who are able to recognise the emerging personal needs of the child and offer counselling for personal problems, are likely to be distinguished as memorable teachers.

In a study of university-aged students, Kingsbury (2001) describes how a positive relationship with the instrumental teacher was considered by the students to be a necessity. One explanation for a talented child's apparent need for a close relationship with his/her instrumental teacher is that s/he have a need to feel like an individual, rather than be perceived only in terms of his/her particular skill (Frëeman, 1991). The development of interpersonal relationships between teacher and student may help the



latter to feel respected, which in turn provides him/her with self-confidence and motivation.

The majority of the literature discussed above concerning the impact of teachers on their students focuses on children and young adolescents, but in an examination of instrumental and vocal lessons in a music conservatoire in the United Kingdom, Gaunt (2004) found evidence emphasising the importance of a close teacher-pupil bond in young adults:

The intensity and privacy of the relationship resembled the intimacy of personal or therapeutic relationships more than conventional teaching/learning relationships; on the other hand there were none of the structures of training or supervision, which professionalize therapy (p. 64).

There seems to be mixed evidence concerning the changing teacher-student relationship as the child develops. Whilst the above quote from Gaunt (2004) suggests that warm relationships are as important at the highest levels of training as they are for beginners, other research indicates that a good interpersonal relationship with an instrumental teacher is less important than a shared dedication to the domain (Sosniak, 1990). In order to understand how the teacher-student relationship develops from initial involvement to achieving levels of excellence, and to facilitate further discussion, it is worth considering the three periods of learning outlined by Sosniak (1990; 1993).

1. Central to the first phase of her model is encouraging interest and involvement: the emphasis is on fun, playfulness, and exploration, and any sign of interest or participation in the domain is rewarded. Instruction tends to be informal, with little attention on objective measures of success and, consequently, the learner becomes 'hooked' and is motivated to pursue a further interest in the field.
2. There is a shift during the second phase of learning from play to a focus on detail and precision. Teachers impart technical skill, domain-specific knowledge and vocabulary, and its rules and logic. The student values constructive criticism from teachers and experts in the field as much as they had valued the external rewards (such as applause) provided during the first phase: the student begins to develop an objective sense of achievement which provides a sense of accomplishment. The relationship between student and teacher changes from one

of love to respect: teachers provide high levels of support and encourage their students to participate in public and extra-curricular activities.

3. The transition into the third and final phase is considered to be the most difficult. The student studies with master teachers who are recognised for their high levels of expertise in the field, and teachers now focus on the search for personal expression rather than concentrate on technical precision which was characteristic of the previous phase. The teacher-student relationship is no longer dependent upon a close bond, but rather a shared passion for the domain. The student immerses him/herself in their talent in order to achieve levels of excellence.

The nature of the teacher-student relationship, the ultimate aim of which is to enable the student to achieve excellence in a particular domain, seems quite unlike the kinds of relationships the students may have with other people. As discussed above, Gaunt (2004) discovered that the music conservatoire students in her study seemed to have intense relationships with their instrumental teachers and it has been suggested that for adolescents and young adults, mentors “are essential for providing intellectual stimulation, emotional support and entry into the professional world” (Subotnik & Arnold, 1993). Ethnographic studies of American conservatoires have found similar trends:

Once they become members of a teacher’s studio<sup>2</sup>, students are generally expected to show loyalty to the teachers by attending their recitals, helping as page-turners, publicizing the teacher’s accomplishments, and celebrating birthdays and successes. Teachers, in turn, are likely to favour their own students over those of other faculty members by helping them get engagements and jobs (Nettl, 1995: 71).

The implication here is that there must be a reciprocal relationship between student and teacher: students are expected to support their teachers, and vice versa. Nettl describes how in American music conservatoires the prestige of studying with a particular teacher is of paramount importance, and the quote above goes some way to highlight the kind of extra-musical commitment expected at the highest level of learning – reminiscent of the idea of familial-type relationships between student and teacher discussed by Davidson (1997). Being selected to study with a prestigious teacher enhances the confidence of the

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<sup>2</sup> *Studio* refers to a group consisting of a teacher and a their students and often forms the basis for cliques within the American conservatoire system.

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student, and simply spending time with the teacher/master by observing their performances and socialising with them results in the student “learning attitudes and habits and ways of working that they often were not even conscious of learning, simply by being in the presence of the master” (Sosniak, 1985: 61).

In a similar ethnographic study of an American conservatoire, Kingsbury (1988) reports the words of one of his participants to highlight that the prestige of belonging to a particular teacher, in addition to the student’s perceptions of his/her teacher, motivates the student:

And I guess since we care so much for her, too, she believes in us and she takes such personal interest in us that I not only didn’t want to let her down, I want to continue the reputation of her students. And we’re all close and very supportive of each other as well... If you’re in her studio or in Ellen Tatum’s... you’ve got your foot going in the right place, you know, you’re lucky, because they are the two best teachers (Kingsbury, 1988: 42).

These two quotes highlight that whilst it is important for a student to respect his/her teacher, or mentor, the warmth of the teacher-student relationship does not necessarily diminish in the way that has been suggested by other research: it is possible that a close bond between a student and his/her mentor is necessary for the kind of reciprocal support and promotion described by Nettl (1995).

The relationship between a student and his/her teacher is clearly an important one, and seems to become increasingly critical as the musician reaches high levels of expertise. Without the guidance of a mentor, for example, it is unlikely that the musician will successfully complete their transition from training as a musician to entering the profession (Manturzevska, 1990). Teachers are responsible for the technical and professional development of the musician and play an important role in motivating and supporting the student. However, when considering the educational environment of the developing child from school to higher education, the nature of the institutions themselves cannot be overlooked.

There has been relatively little research investigating the nature of the actual institutions to which developing musicians belong, rather the focus has been on the nature of the teacher-student interactions as I have discussed above. In the literature concerning gifted

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or talented children generally, there is evidence to suggest that the school environment can have adverse effects on the child. For example, when attending specialist schools children experience feelings of anxiety and humiliation (Sloboda, 1990; Freeman, 1996). The Calouste Foundation Report (1978) highlights how boarding school environments are potentially unhealthy for musicians due to the high levels of competition which can lead to musicians becoming prone to depressive tendencies and feelings of inadequacy (Kemp, 1996). Such 'hot houses' (as they are sometimes called) can result in the child under-developing key personality characteristics and social skills (Howe, 1990), and developing a fear of failure alongside the false perspective that there is no middle ground between success and failure (Burns, 1980).

Studies of the impact of higher education institutions in relation to music and/or the gifted and talented are few, but of key importance to this thesis. In the field of science, research investigating the career paths of winners of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search (Subotnik and Steiner, 1993) discovered that a poor choice of undergraduate institution led to attrition from university science courses due to a "dearth of mentors, a lack of opportunities for undergraduate research rather than poor academic performance or waning interest" (Subotnik & Steiner, 1993: 153). Clearly, the quality of undergraduate education has a significant impact on an individual's motivation to pursue further interest in his/her domain.

Henry Kingsbury's (1998) ethnographic study of an American music conservatory showed that the students often expressed frustration with the "foibles of institutional communication" (p. 36) and the design of their courses:

Numerous students expressed irritation about what they saw as a highly unsatisfactory institution (from unsatisfactory courses and seemingly inappropriate course requirements to run-ins with particular administrative offices) and yet were devoted to or admiring of their own principle teacher (p. 39).

This finding may be related to the individuals' own motives for choosing a particular conservatoire. It was mentioned above that the prestige of studying with an eminent teacher was central for the musicians in his sample, perhaps explaining their dedication to their teachers whilst expressing their dissatisfaction with other elements of the institution.

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Another interpretation may be that the students' goal for their undergraduate studies is to progress as an instrumentalist/vocalist, rather than to be concerned by the academic elements of the course.

One further element of higher education, which is true for school life as well, is the competitive nature of the environment. This is perceived by the students as political in nature, ranging from membership in particular cliques to orchestral seating positions (Kingsbury, 1988). The danger observed by Kingsbury is the potential effect it has on the students' relationships with music, as shown by his report of one participant's experiences:

The conservatory social environment posed a threat to her own beliefs about music, purity and power...the politics of the conservatory are corrupt, but the music remains pure – the grail in a cesspool (1988: 43).

Whilst the evidence presented so far implies only negative outcomes of the institutional environment, other research indicates that such environments can be perceived as supportive. For example, Freeman (1991) describes how one student's academic and musical achievements declined significantly after leaving her specialist music school. Kingsbury also notes that the cliques, which can create feelings of isolation in some students, also act as "solidarity groups, and in this aspect they are experienced as highly beneficial" (1988: 43-44).

The above overview of the role played by teachers and institutions in musical development can be summarised in four main ways:

1. Aside from parents, teachers play a critical role in providing the necessary technical knowledge and skill, and in motivating and supporting the developing musician;
2. The nature of an instrumental teacher's personality is crucial at different stages of a musician's development;
3. It is important that students form a close familial-type bond with their instrumental teachers, although it is unclear how vital this is at the higher levels of learning: it is suggested that a close teacher-student relationship is necessary

in order to absorb ways of working and communicating with others as a professional;

4. The institutions themselves can have both a positive and negative influence on the musician, although there is limited research that has specifically investigated the impact of higher education institutions on the development of musicians.

It is expected in this research that teachers will play a fundamental role in the lives of the musicians participating in the research presented in this thesis. However, it is hoped that more detailed information about the students' (possibly changing) expectations of their teachers, and the nature of their relationships will emerge.

### **2.2.3 Peers**

Before progressing to discuss other elements that are considered to lead to excellence as a musician, the role of peers as a form of social influence must be briefly examined. As I mentioned above, the cliques described by Kingsbury (1988) can be perceived as an important support network. Research on gifted children in schools indicates that being surrounded by like-minded peers is important for three reasons: firstly, the child needs the companionship of other people of similar ability for emotional support (Freeman, 1986); secondly, the talented child needs the stimulation and motivation of being with other people of the same ability (Feldhusen, 1986); and thirdly, they need to work at a faster pace than 'normal' children in the classroom, thus being with similar ability peers will enable them to progress faster (Freeman, 1991). One final factor is that role models close in age and expertise to the student (often referred to as 'idols in touching distance' (Hall, 1969)) can have more influence on the talented child than a master in the field (Sosniak, 1990). Slightly older students are used for setting goals to be mastered and because they are close in age, the younger child can identify with the older, simply because they can see, in close proximity, that they are not alone in their pursuit of expertise.

The role of others in the development of musical expertise is vital. However, despite the support and motivation they provide, there are other elements that may complement the developing musician's interactions with others. In research investigating the predictors

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of achievement and dropout in instrumental lessons, Hallam (1998) found that the support and influence of parents and teachers was important, but an inconsistent predictor of learning outcomes. She suggests that factors such as the self-determination and motivation of the child, in addition to his/her ability to understand instructions, are perhaps more important. Other research indicates that self-direction, self-confidence, sense of commitment, and persistence can also effectively produce high standards of performance (Howe, 1990). The next section focuses on the extra-musical factors such as motivation, practice, and individual differences that contribute to an individual achieving the highest levels of musical performance as a professional performing musician.

### ***2.3 Achieving musical excellence***

As discussed above, a developing musician is not simply an inactive recipient of the influence and support of others: it is the way an individual perceives and responds to his/her experiences that is crucial. The aim of this section is to provide insight into the elements, outside of the role of others, unique to each developing musician that can determine their success or failure as a musician. The section will consider:

1. The role of motivation as a driving force behind the hard work and dedication required to acquire expertise as a musician;
2. The role of practice in acquiring skill;
3. The psychological skills and personality traits of successful musicians.

#### ***2.3.1 Motivation***

Understanding individuals' motivations to pursue an activity, to dedicate the necessary time and effort to acquiring skill, and to persevere in the face of failure and setbacks has been a fundamental question researched in a variety of ways and from a number of different psychological schools of thought. Such research also tries to account for why some individuals achieve high levels of expertise whilst others do not, choosing instead to withdraw from their pursuit of skill when faced with obstacles. For example, the Munich Longitudinal Studies of Giftedness which began in 1985 (cited in Subotnik & Arnold, 1983:152) followed 26,000 children and found that their achievement was related to personality factors such as motivational drive. There are many different theories of

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motivation, but this section will concentrate on five that may have particular relevance for understanding what drives some young adult musicians to choose a career as a performer, and others to choose careers that are unrelated to music:

1. Achievement motivation and Expectancy-Value Theory
2. Attributional motivation
3. Self-efficacy
4. Styles of learning
5. Interactive motivation

This section provides an overview rather than a detailed discussion of these five different approaches to understanding motivation. In doing so, it considers the potential applications for understanding the drive behind young adult musicians undergoing career transitions into what is considered a notoriously difficult profession to penetrate.

### ***2.3.1.1 Achievement motivation***

The theory of achievement motivation (Atkinson, 1957, cited in Watt, 2001; McClelland *et al*, 1976, cited in Zimbardo & Weber, 1994: 314) is linked to Murray's notion that individuals have a 'need to achieve' (1938, cited in Weiner, 1992: 166). The 'need to achieve' reflects an individual's concern with improving performance, obtaining feedback in order to improve and accepting personal responsibility for a performance so that s/he can feel a sense of satisfaction from performing well. The 'need to achieve' is thought to motivate and direct behaviour, and Murray suggests that individuals can vary in the levels at which they feel such a 'need', but for some, it is the desire to overcome obstacles or difficult tasks and, in doing so, attain high standards. McClelland (1963, cited in Zimbardo & Weber, 1994: 314-315) suggests that individual differences in the 'need to achieve' may relate to cultural and societal emphasis and there is some research evidence which confirms this suggestion. Central to this approach is an individual's need to push themselves to the highest possible levels of expertise and to surpass others:

[Achievement motivation is the desire] to accomplish something difficult. To master, manipulate or organize physical objects, human beings, or ideas. To do this as rapidly or as independently as possible. To overcome obstacles and attain a high standard. To excel one's self. To rival and surpass others. To increase self-regard by the successful exercise of talent. (Weiner, 1992: 164)



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The desire to achieve is accompanied by certain actions which are summarised below:

- Intense, prolonged, repeated efforts;
- Focus;
- Determination to achieve and perform tasks as well as possible;
- Stimulation by the presence of others and the enjoyment of competition;
- Will power.

The 'need to achieve', therefore, may stimulate an individual to dedicate him/herself to the preparation of a particular event or goal, completely immersing him/herself in the task and striving for high levels of achievement. The 'need to achieve' also relates to the surrounding environment and the extent to which an individual achieves may depend upon the level of competition, support, or motivation provided by other people.

According to this theory of motivation, tasks of intermediate difficulty will appeal more to individuals with a high level of motivation (Weiner, 1992) than those who are lower in achievement needs and empirical research has shown that the former will persist in working on a task described as 'difficult' for longer than the latter (McClelland *et al*, 1976, cited in Zimbardo & Weber, 1994: 314). As part of this approach, aspiration is related to prior successes or failures with the task. Research by Weiner (1992, cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) demonstrated that prior success in a task generally increased aspiration, whilst experiencing failure was likely to decrease levels of aspiration. Atkinson's (1957) development of the basic model was to combine the constructs of needs, expectancy, and value, which he termed "achievement motives, probability for success, and incentive value" (Watt, 2001: 2). The two basic achievement motives relate to 'hope of success': the need to achieve is a result of a conflict between a hope of success and a fear of failure (cited in Weiner, 1992:168). The achievement motives reflect the individual's personal and internal contribution to the model, whilst the expectancy and value components relate more to environmental factors, such as the task situation or the nature of the task (Watt, 2001). The incentive value may be a particular score in a test or pride experienced as a result of task performance.

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It is clear to see how the theories of achievement motivation described above are relevant to musicians, especially older children intending to become professional performers. Task dedication, determination and will power are obviously all necessary if the individual is to spend the required time alone practising and as the previous section described, the role of other people as stimulation and inspiration is critical in order to motivate the individual to strive for particular levels of performance and achievement.

However, current interpretations of achievement motivation are more influential and widely accepted within the field of psychology, primarily because they account for the individual's own values and expectancies from the perspective of personality and social psychology.

### ***2.3.1.2 Expectancy-Value Theory***

The premise behind this approach is that ability and expectancy beliefs are critically important (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000). Eccles' Expectancy-Value Model of Achievement-Related Choices (Eccles, Wigfield, & Shiefele, 1998, cited in Eccles *et al*, 2004) proposes the psychological and social elements that influence achievement. The psychological element relates to an individual's personal beliefs about his/her ability, his/her likelihood of success, and the values s/he attributes to a particular task, whilst the social are connected to the beliefs and behaviours of significant others, such as parents and teachers (Eccles *et al*, 2004).

There are four components considered to be key to this model and they are thought to determine the strength of the individual's motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000):

1. Attainment value or importance;
2. Intrinsic value;
3. Utility value or usefulness of the task;
4. Cost.

The first component refers to the importance placed by the individual on performing well on a particular task, and incorporates the individual's self-beliefs: if an individual's self-concept relates to high levels of performance in a particular domain (music, for example),

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performing well will be important to them (O'Neill & McPherson, 2004). The second and third components can be related to the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation respectively. The former refers to the individual's enjoyment of an activity, and can have important psychological and emotional consequences for the individual, whilst the latter relates to their future goals, such as a potential career. The final component relates to whether or not the individual perceives the cost of an activity, such as invested time and effort, to be worth the outcome (ibid).

The expectancy-value model has been usefully applied in music development research in terms of understanding children's motivations to learn a musical instrument. McPherson (2000, cited in McPherson, 2004: 3) found that children's musical expectations and values prior to learning an instrument shape and influence their development.

Interviews with the children before they began instruction show that they had formed a clear view about their valuing of and expectations for their future music learning despite none or very little previous musical experience. They could differentiate between their interest in learning a musical instrument, the importance of being good at music, whether they believed their learning would be useful to their short- and long-term goals, and the cost of participation in terms of the effort needed to continue improving... Even before commencing, many children were also able to provide a definite view of their own potential compared to their peers, and this subsequently "coloured" their perception of whether they would ever be any good at music" (McPherson, 2004: 3).

This research also highlighted that those children who had predicted that they would only learn an instrument for a few years progressed the slowest, regardless of the time spent practising at home. Students who predicted longer-term musical participation into adulthood, achieved higher levels of performance and often attributed intrinsic motivations, such as a love of music, as explanations for their musical participation (O'Neill & McPherson, 2004).

The theories of motivation discussed so far relate to the individual's need to achieve, dependent upon a need for success determined by his/her self-beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (more on intrinsic/extrinsic motivation will be discussed below), and the perceived costs of pursuing a goal. The expectancy-value theory raises questions of self-efficacy and perhaps underestimates the role of self-belief. The role of self-efficacy will be discussed below, after a brief consideration of attribution theory, which

proposes that an individual’s achievement is related to the extent that s/he attributes success to effort, ability, level of task difficulty, or luck (Weiner, 1992).

**2.3.1.3 Attribution theory**

According to Weiner (1992) humans are motivated to understand why events occur, and these retrospective judgements of performance are thought to have motivational effects (Weiner, 1985, cited in Bandura, 1991: 71). Rather than simply experiencing ‘success’ or ‘failure’, Weiner believes that it is the individual’s causal attributions for the outcome that influence their expectations of performing well or not in the future (Weiner, 1986; 1992, cited in O’Neill & McPherson, 2004: 36). There are three main components of attribution theory (Weiner, 1992):

1. Locus of causality (either the external environment/situation or internal to the individual);
2. Stability (whether the internal or external cause is stable or unstable over time);
3. Controllability (whether future task performance is controllable or prone to volatile change).

The model of achievement attribution is summarised below (based on Weiner, 1979, cited in Hogg & Vaughan, 2002: 87):

	Internal		External	
	Stable	Unstable	Stable	Unstable
<b>Controllable</b>	Typical Effort	Unusual Effort	Consistent help or hindrance from others	Unusual help or hindrance from others
<b>Uncontrollable</b>	Ability	Mood	Task difficulty	Luck

**Figure 1. Model of Achievement Motivation (Weiner, 1979).**

The model accounts for a difference between how individuals perceive ability and how they perceive effort. For example, if a young musician attributes success in an exam to personal ability and high levels of practice, his/her feeling of pride and self-worth will be stronger than if s/he attributed their success to an easy examination or due to having a 'lucky day'.

Ability is viewed as something internal, stable, and beyond a student's control ("I can't do this because I'm not a good musician"), whereas effort is seen as internal, unstable, and controllable ("If I do more practice I'll be able to play this piece"). In addition, students who perceive their success as being due to internal reasons such as effort are more likely to have a higher sense of self-worth (self-esteem) than students who believe their success was due to external reasons, such as luck (O'Neill & McPherson, 2004: 37)

Evidence suggests that individuals who possess personal or internal perceptions of control are more able to cope with failure and adapt better to their environment (Weiner, 1976). Expectancy for future performance is related to the stability dimension of causality: if failure is perceived by the individual as caused by low ability or task difficulty (stable), then expectation for future failure will be increased. If, however, volatile causes are attributed to failure, such as bad luck, or lack of effort, then future performances could be anticipated to be better. In a study of musicians taking instrumental exams between the ages of 9 and 18, McPherson and McCormick (2000, cited in O'Neill & McPherson, 2004:37) found that 50% attributed their success to the amount of effort in practice or during the exam. The students generally exhibited healthy attributions before commencing the exam: if they performed well they could attribute their success to the amount of effort, if they did not perform well, then they could attribute a lack of preparation or effort during the examination. Students who perceive their performances to be related to ability approach tasks differently to the students who attribute success to effort: the former are less likely to feel that increased effort will benefit their ability to become successful performers (Arnold, 1997, cited in O'Neill & McPherson, *ibid*; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

### **2.3.1.4 Self-Efficacy**

Related to all of the achievement motivation theories discussed so far is the idea that an individual's self-beliefs have a key influence on their expectancy for future performances (Bandura, 1991).

Self-efficacy can affect choice of activities. Students who have a low sense of efficacy for learning cognitive skills may attempt to avoid tasks, whereas those who judge themselves more efficacious should participate more eagerly. Self-efficacy also is hypothesized to affect effort expenditure and persistence. Especially when facing obstacles, students who have a high sense of efficacy for learning should expend greater effort and persist longer than those who doubt their capabilities (Schunk, 1987: 233).

In the area of music, self-efficacy has been shown to be a strong predictor of performance in situations such as instrumental examinations (McCormick & McPherson, 2003, cited in McPherson & Schubert, 2004: 67; Pitts *et al*, 2000, cited in Chaffin & Lemieux, 2004). Research shows that students form their efficacy values based on prior performances, feedback from others, and physiological states (Bandura, 1982, cited in Schunk, 1987: 235). Generally, success raises self-efficacy and failure lowers it, although once a strong sense of self-efficacy is developed, occasional failures are unlikely to have such an impact (*ibid*), although this is not always the case (Schunk, 1987). Schunk discusses how the educational environment can affect an individual's self-efficacy: students working on tasks and experiencing success should develop high self-efficacy, and teachers can validate this sense of efficacy and help to sustain motivation by emphasising the importance of skill knowledge and acquisition (1987: 242).

As the student makes more internal attributions for his success and failures, self-efficacy becomes increasingly important. For example, if a student makes internal attributions and feels a sense of personal responsibility for his achievement (or lack thereof), but does not have a sense of self-efficacy, he could become discouraged and ultimately stop practicing. However, if internal attributions for successes and failures are accompanied by a sense of self-efficacy, the student not only feels personally responsible for his progress, but also feels confident that he will indeed have the skills and ability necessary for further improvement (Chaffin & Lemieux, 2004:32).

Understanding motivation is clearly complex and the theories presented so far emphasise its dynamic nature. Motivation relates to the individual's internal perceptions and external environments, and the two components are reciprocally related. A fundamental feature of an individual's success in a particular field is also related to their style of learning (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and ability to understand instructions (Hallam, 1998).

### ***2.3.1.5 Styles of learning***

The differences in individuals' styles of learning are not explicitly considered in this thesis, although there is one perspective worth considering which relates to the theories of

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achievement motivation discussed so far: mastery oriented versus learned “helplessness” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

The helpless pattern...is characterised by an avoidance of challenge and a deterioration of performance in the face of obstacles. The mastery-oriented pattern, in contrast, involves the seeking of challenging tasks and the maintenance of effective striving under failure (Dweck & Leggett, 1988: 256).

The authors explain this phenomenon in terms of goals – either performance (gaining favourable, external judgements of performance) or learning (focus on increasing levels of competence). The authors’ empirical research supports this hypothesis and suggests that individuals focused on performance goals were more prone to the “helpless” orientation, whilst those who were concerned with increasing competence exhibited the mastery orientation (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Integral to their theory is the interplay between intelligence theories, which help the individual to formulate goals.

Some children favour what we have termed an *incremental* theory of intelligence: They believe that intelligence is a malleable, increasable, controllable quality. Others lean more toward an *entity* theory of intelligence: They believe that intelligence is a fixed or uncontrollable trait. Our research consistently indicates that children who believe that intelligence is increasable pursue the learning goal of increasing their competence, whereas those who believe intelligence is a fixed trait are more likely to pursue the performance goal of securing positive judgements of that entity or preventing negative judgements of it (Elliot & Dweck, 1988: 262-263).

Their theory is summarised in figure two below, which demonstrates the interaction between the individual’s theory of intelligence, goal orientation, and behaviour pattern.



<i>Theory of intelligence</i>	<i>Goal orientation</i>	<i>Perceived present ability</i>	<i>Behaviour pattern</i>
<b>Entity (Intelligence is fixed).</b>	Performance (Goal is to gain positive judgements/avoid negative judgements of competence).	High  Low	Mastery oriented (Seek challenge; high persistence).  Helpless (Avoid challenge; low persistence).
<b>Incremental (Intelligence is malleable).</b>	Learning (Goal is to increase competence).	High or Low	Mastery oriented (Seek challenge that fosters learning; high persistence).

**Figure 2. Theories, Goals and Behaviour Patterns in Achievement Situations  
(Dweck & Leggett, 1988)**

Considering the application of styles of learning to a musical context, it could be that those students who are motivated by the prestige of a good performance may be less inclined to pursue a career as a performer in the face of the inevitable obstacles associated with the profession than those musicians who are motivated by the personal satisfaction of achieving increased levels of competence. The idea of internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) rewards is one which is frequently discussed in the musical development literature and relates to the theory of interactive motivation (Bigges & Hunt, 1980).

### **2.3.1.6 Interactive motivation**

Many theories of motivation discussed so far have highlighted the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors to motivation. Research investigating gifted and talented children, and, more specifically, exploring musicians, demonstrates that extrinsic motivation is important in the early acquisition of skill, but has to be superseded by intrinsic motivation



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if the child is to become successful in his/her field of expertise (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996; Nicholls, 1983; Manturzewska, 1990; Zha Zi-Xiu, 1985). Examples of extrinsic motivation may be rewards like approval, or punishments, such as criticism (Sloboda, 1990). For talented children, external rewards may include “grades in school, prizes in competitions, money, status, or another incentive for performing actions that is external to the action itself” (Csikszentmihalyi *et al*, 1993:109). Intrinsic motivation is the interest in an activity for its own sake, and so an intrinsic reward is “the fun, enjoyment, and curiosity one feels as one performs in the domain” (*ibid*).

Intrinsic motivation is fundamental: it is one of the three contributory factors in the development of talent according to Howe (1990), the others being practice and experience in the field. Renzulli (1986) considers the ‘task-commitment’ component of his three-ring conception of giftedness to be similar to intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is reliant on the feedback from others since many aspects of acquiring high levels of expertise are not inherently enjoyable: becoming expert in a field requires hard work and many hours alone practising (Ericsson *et al*, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi *et al*, 1993). In such instances, some extrinsic reward, such as evidence of improvement or praise for working hard are necessary to maintain the individual’s intrinsic motivation (Ericsson *et al*, 1993): interactive motivation, then, is the interaction between the self and the environment, the simultaneous and mutual interaction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Bigges & Hunt, 1980).

### **2.3.1.7 Flow theory**

Intrinsic motivation is thought to provide the child with positive, or optimal experiences, which they strive to experience again – a phenomenon labelled as “Flow” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1992).

Flow is a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself... The depth of involvement is something we find enjoyable and intrinsically rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1992: 59).

Flow experiences are additionally dependent upon clear goals and immediate and unambiguous feedback. The perceived level of challenge is also important to the flow

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theory approach: a balance between the ability of the student and the level of the challenge is necessary (challenges = skills) (ibid). If the challenge is too easy then the student will become bored, but if the task is too difficult the individual will become anxious (O'Neill & McPherson, 2004).

Research investigating flow in musical participation found that high achievers in a specialist music school were more likely to report flow experiences than moderate achievers (O'Neill, 1999, cited in O'Neill & McPherson, 2004: 35-36), although the relationship between flow experiences and success could not be fully confirmed due to other variables such as the moderate achievers' negative perceptions of the support and competition within the institution.

Motivation is linked to a person's self-concept - his/her perceptions, interpretations, and evaluations of the self and his/her abilities (Feldhusen, 1986). Nicholls (1983) distinguishes between three types of achievement motivation, one of which is labelled 'ego-enhancement' which refers to individuals who are primarily concerned with being perceived as good or able (cf. performance orientation, Dweck & Leggett, 1986), but he notes that the best kind of motivation is intrinsic.

The discussion above has provided an overview of some of the different theories of achievement motivation and has considered the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the importance of flow experiences. The theories discussed above emphasise the different facets of motivation, although it seems that motivation is reliant on the individual and their perceptions and styles of learning. It has also been suggested that motivation is a dynamic process – a reciprocal relationship between the individual and his/her environment. The theories of attribution, self-efficacy and styles of learning may have the most relevance to understanding professional musical participation, since they emphasise the interaction between an individual and his/her social environment, the theoretical perspective adopted in this thesis. This overview has explored possible explanations for a musician choosing to seek high levels of expertise and potentially enter the profession as a performer, but also to understand their dedication to the domain in

terms of the amount of effort and perseverance during challenging times. The next section, therefore, will consider the role of practice in the acquisition of musical skill.

### **2.3.2 Practice**

There is no doubt that practice is essential to acquire expertise as a musician, and research has demonstrated that level of achievement is directly related to the amount of time spent practising (Ericsson *et al*, 1993; Sloboda *et al*, 1996). For example, evidence suggests that approximately ten years experience (Sosniak, 1985; Simon & Chase, 1973) or 10,000 hours of practice (Ericsson *et al*, 1993) are necessary before standards of excellence can be achieved. A model of practice outlining three phases of preparation in the development of adult expertise (Bloom, 1985) is summarised below:

1. Introduction to activities, beginning of instruction and deliberate practice;
2. Extended period of preparation, the result of which is full-time commitment to the field;
3. Continued commitment until such time that the individual can earn their living as a professional performer, or gives up the activity.

This model emphasises the extended period of time necessary to achieve excellence in any field of expertise. However, it has been suggested that practice alone is not enough: an individual's motivation to practice, as discussed above, and his/her personality also play a role (Kemp, 1996). Other research also indicates that approaches to practice, for example, (Gruson, 1981, cited in Sloboda, 1999: 91; Miklaszewski, 1989) may determine the differences between musicians' levels of attainment. There are five dimensions of effective practice outlined by Chaffin and Lemieux (2004): Concentration (an "appetite" to learn a new piece); Goal Setting (identifying goals for each session of practice); Self evaluation (detached evaluative comments are characteristic of musicians who practice more); Strategies (such as overcoming technical difficulties, where to begin a session of practice, or memorisation techniques); The big picture (an overall impression of the shape of the piece).

Amount and styles of practice are clearly contributory factors in the acquisition of musical skill, but I do not wish to enter a lengthy discussion of practice, since the

interviews do not concentrate on the role of practice in the participants' musical lives, rather they attempt to obtain an overall picture of the musicians' perceptions of their experiences and their self-perceptions. Therefore, the next section will examine the personality characteristics thought to be important in musical development.

### **2.3.3 Personality characteristics**

The above discussion regarding motivation highlighted key personality characteristics necessary to attain high levels of expertise. High levels of concentration and openness to experience (Csikszentmihalyi *et al*, 1993), self-determination (Mönks & van Boxtel, 1985), and a need for freedom and independence in thinking and acting (Manurzevska, 1978; Kemp, 1996) are characteristic of high achievers.

Although the gifted and talented literature has much to offer in terms of understanding how they are different from the 'average' population, empirical research investigating musicians and performance is relatively scarce (Wilson, 2002:197). The little research in this area indicates that there are four main personality dimensions that characterise musicians (Kemp, 1997):

1. Introversiion/extraversiion;
2. Independence;
3. Sensitivity (Pathemia);
4. Anxiety.

Musicians are usually considered to be introverts, although there seems to be variation amongst different types of musician (Kemp, 1981). Research by Kemp (1997) discovered that musicians are typically self-contained and he speculates that this may be due to the kinds of work patterns essential to the acquisition of musical skill. The long hours of practice demand sustained periods of isolation, and Kemp suggests that music attracts self-sufficient individuals who may be socially aloof. He discusses how musicians' detachment allows them to find solace in their music-making and suggests that such a deep involvement with music enables the musician to find their own identity. The ability to spend so much time alone and to seek solace in music is thought to indicate an inner strength and resolve to master their skill, and also to provide some structure or

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order to their internal lives. One final consideration here relates to the ability of introverts to perform better on tasks which require high levels of concentration due to their higher resting states of arousal (Eysenck, 1967, cited in Kemp, 1997: 28). Conversely, extraverts are more likely to perceive such tasks as monotonous, and research has indicated that extraverts' performance on tasks deteriorates earlier than introverts (Stelmack & Campbell, 1974, cited in Kemp, 1997: 29).

Independence is the second dimension considered to be common amongst musicians. Kemp (1997) suggests that the time spent alone creates an inner strength, which allows the development of independence in the individual. There is a developmental element to Kemp's model, which describes how young musicians tend to be dependent on those around them as external sources of support and encouragement, who help the child to develop good working habits and conscientiousness. However, as the child becomes older, s/he appears to develop personal autonomy, rejecting external forms of control. Kemp emphasises the importance of an environment which allows the individual personal space and freedom to allow his/her creativity and autonomy to blossom. The term 'field-dependence' (Witkin, 1965, cited in Kemp, 1997: 29) refers to people who tend to be autonomous and less influenced by other people, and Kemp relates this to musicians: perhaps the field-dependent nature of musicians enables them to be original and show imagination.

Sensitivity is identified as being stable across the musician's life-span (Kemp, 1997) and is related to imagination and outgoingness, which together have been labelled 'pathemia' (Cattell, 1973, cited in Kemp, 1996: 83). Pathemia is described as "engaging in an indulgent life of feeling, proneness to day-dreaming, and emotional sensitivity" (Kemp, 1997: 32) and this is particularly characteristic of musicians, and composers specifically. The result of pathemia is that individuals are understood to function more intuitively and do not tend to have a high level of cortical awareness (an absence of logical thinking and organisation), which Gardner (1983) interprets as significant to our understanding of musical performance:

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[Music] can serve as a way of capturing feelings, knowledge about feelings, or knowledge about the forms of feelings, communicating them from the performer or the creator to the attentive listener. (Gardner, 1983:124).

In his final dimension, Kemp (1996; 1997) describes how, in musicians, anxiety manifests itself in emotional instability and a form of frustrated tension, and also in terms of suspiciousness and apprehensiveness. He argues that anxiety is part of the inherent make-up of musicians and has found that it tends to emerge during higher education and continues as the musician develops his/her professional career. Kemp does not, however, deny that anxiety may occur in young children, especially those who attend specialist music schools due to the pressure and competition that is characteristic of such environments. It is commonly thought anxiety can be beneficial to performance (Wilson, 1997) as it provides a certain spontaneity and freshness. However, if tension is too great, then the performance quality will deteriorate.

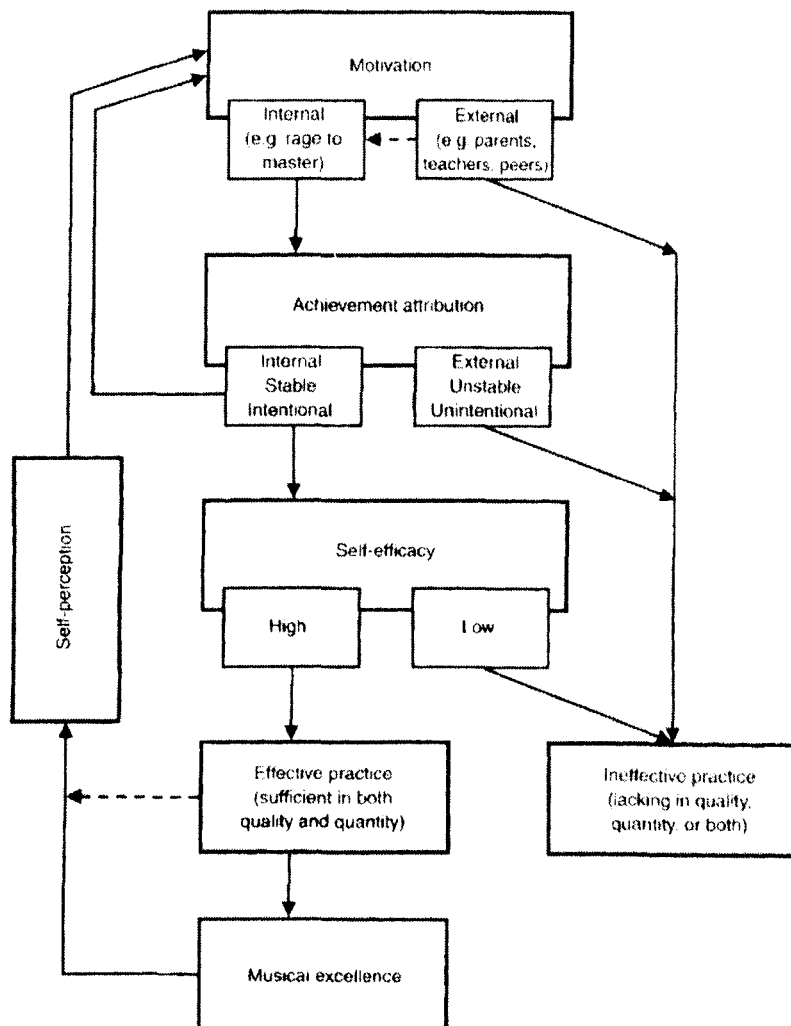
As mentioned above, little is known about the relationship between personality characteristics and performance. There are also problems in generalising the findings from researchers like Kemp (1996; 1997):

One problem is that personality characteristics such as charisma and stage presence are perceived with high inter-individual agreement, and they may constitute central criteria for the evaluation of musicians. However, even experts in the area of stage performance are unable to clearly define these characteristics. Despite their real-life importance, these concepts are elusive (Gembris, 2004: 311).

The difficulty in understanding musical success is that it is seemingly dependent upon so many different elements. Furthermore, understanding how to acquire high levels of musical expertise is different to an understanding of why some musicians choose to become professional musicians, whilst others who have previously attained similar standards choose to pursue other career paths. There are two models (of which I am aware) that describe the acquisition of musical expertise: Chaffin and Lemieux (2004) and Weller (2004).

### 2.3.4 Drawing the dimensions together

This section provides a brief overview of two models of musical expertise, which draw together the different elements discussed so far in this chapter. Figure three below, shows a model of the social antecedents of musical excellence proposed by Chaffin and Lemieux (2004), which integrates many of the ideas discussed so far in this chapter.



**Figure 3. A conceptual model of the social antecedents of musical excellence (Chaffin & Lemieux, 2004: 30).**

As shown in figure three above, their model combines the role of motivation with cognitive principles:

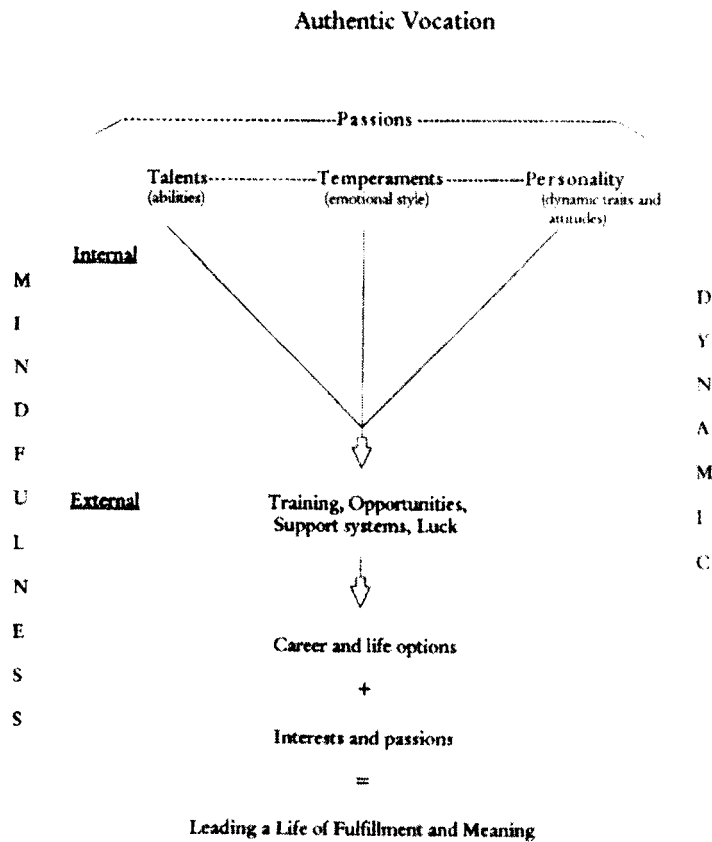
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Those who develop the deep commitment needed to master a musical instrument (1) play for their own satisfaction, rather than to please someone else or for other external reasons, (2) attribute their achievements (and failures) to their own efforts, and (3) feel that they have the capacity to improve (2004: 29).

The authors' discussion of their model is based primarily around practice, suggesting that effective practice is the central dimension determining an individual's musical excellence, although it is influenced by motivation and the individual's self-perceptions. Chaffin and Lemieux consider that their proposed characteristics of effective practice (see above discussion) are manifestations of a "rage to master" and that such motivation is dependent upon a supportive social environment and high self-efficacy.

A model of a different nature, shown in figure four, concerns 'Authentic Vocation' (Weller, 2004). Weller proposes a 'Whole Musician' model outlining the dynamic nature of the individual-institution relationship, and emphasises that the nature of the relationship is constantly changing. Weller's approach to the changes in a musician's life-course will be discussed in more detail below but her 'Authentic Vocation' will be briefly addressed here since it summarises the internal and external factors that contribute to an individual finding "the work one is meant to do, that is, work that provides the best fit for an individual's attributes, interests and passions" (p. 255).





**Figure 4. Authentic Vocation (Weller, 2004: 255).**

Passion, as a driving force, is central to this model and is responsible for connecting and motivating the individual’s talents, temperaments, and personality dimensions in the search for his/her true vocation. According to the model, passions also influence the external factors such as training and opportunity, and can help the individual to persevere through setbacks. The internal and external factors increase the individual’s self awareness of their life and career options which, added to personal interests, can lead “toward a life of fulfilment and meaning” (p. 256).

This model, like the one proposed by Chaffin and Lemieux, highlights the dynamic and interactive process that exists between the individual and his/her environment. The two models seem to be based on existing research literature, but do not refer to any empirical

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investigation. It is expected that the models will have direct relevance for the research described in this thesis, which will extend and question the concepts that each proposes.

### ***2.4 Development across the life-span and theories of identity***

In the previous section, Weller's model of the 'Whole Musician' was discussed. She proposed that a musician passes through a number of transitions from school, music conservatoire, entry into the career, a process which culminates in sustaining a career. Weller presented a table summarising the different institutional cultures associated with the four stages of a musician's life, and suggested that teachers do not prepare their students sufficiently for each institutions' expectations, requirements and lifestyle. The implication is that musicians and educators are equally unaware of the transitions involved during the process of 'becoming a musician'. As the discussion in this chapter has highlighted, musical development research has tended to focus on learning from birth to adolescence, in line with cognitive theories of development (cf. Piaget, 1969). However, there have been few considerations of what happens to musicians during the transition from late-adolescence into young adulthood, and beyond.

This section discusses:

1. The importance of considering musical development from a life-span perspective;
2. Why the transition from adolescence to young adulthood is particularly important in understanding the changing roles and identity formation;
3. The nature and roles of self-concept, identity, and possible selves.

#### ***2.4.1 Life-span development***

Life-span developmental theorists are concerned with how individuals change and develop throughout their lives. Numerous theoretical approaches have been used to gain an understanding of human development, including age-specific stages/periods (Erikson, 1959) and the centrality to development of challenges or goals (Hendry & Kloep, 2002). Life-span theories are dynamic since they generally emphasise the importance of an interaction between the individual and his/her environment, an emergent theme from the

literature so far. This section does not offer in-depth discussions of all life-span theories, rather it focuses on the general principles of the approach, and in doing so, discusses the implications for researching in musical development.

The basic philosophy of the life-span framework according to Baltes (1987) is summarised in figure five below.

### Tenets of a life-span perspective (Baltes, 1987)

#### Development is:

- *A lifelong process.* Development is not restricted to childhood. Both quantitative and qualitative development can occur at all stages of the life course.
- *Multidimensional and multidirectional.* Development occurs in a number of different domains, at different rates, and in a number of directions.
- *A process that shows some plasticity.* An individual's developmental course can, at least to some degree, be modified through life conditions and experience.
- *A process involving both gains and losses.* As well as involving growth and gain, development also involves coming to terms with decline and loss.
- *An interactive process.* Development is the outcome of interactions between individual and environment, both of which can influence its course.
- *Culturally and historically embedded.* Developmental rates and courses vary across different cultures and historical periods.
- *A multidisciplinary field of study.* Life-span development is not concerned merely with psychological factors. Biological, sociological, anthropological, and environmental factors can all interact and influence individual development.

**Figure 5. Tenets of a life-span perspective (Baltes, 1987)**

Baltes' theory may have relevance for musical development. It emphasises how development is unique to the individual, dependent upon his/her experiences with the

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social environment, but also on the individual's perceptions of experiences and his/her ways for coping with the challenges with which s/he is presented. Other theories in life-span development theory generally agree with these dimensions, although they may place different emphasis on their relative importance (Sugarman, 2001).

Theorists who propose age-related stages or periods believe that there is some kind of order which underlies development:

It is abundantly evident that, at the level of events, roles, or personality, lives unfold in myriad ways. I make no claim for order in the concrete individual life course... I do propose, however, that there is an *underlying* order in the human life course, an order shaped by... the periods in life structure development. Personality, social structure, culture, social roles, major life events, biology – these and other influences exert a powerful effect on the actual character of the individual life structure at a given time... It is my hypothesis, however, that the basic nature and timing of life structure development are given in the life cycle at this time in human evolution (Levinson, 1986: 11, cited in Levinson, 1994: 126-127).

Erikson's theory of life-span development (1959) is one of the most influential of the age-related models of the life-course in psychology. He divided the life-course into eight age-related stages, from birth to old-age, and described how each stage has a particular developmental task that has to be resolved before moving onto the next. For example, the fifth stage of his model, identity versus role confusion is relevant to adolescence. The developmental task is to establish a secure sense of identity, and if the task is not successfully achieved, then the individual will be left without a stable sense of identity.

A discussion about the challenges of adolescence is particularly relevant for this thesis, since my research project concerns individuals moving from their late teenage years to becoming a young adult. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is considered to be the most significant of the life-span changes and is thought to be stressful for both the individual, and those around him/her (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987). Gecas and Mortimer believe that this is due to the changing roles that occur during this stage of development, such as the transition from school to work, or the shift from relationships with peers and parents, to intimate relationships.

The nature of changing roles affecting the course of the individual's development links to Hendry and Kloep's 'Developmental Challenge Model' (2002). They discuss how the

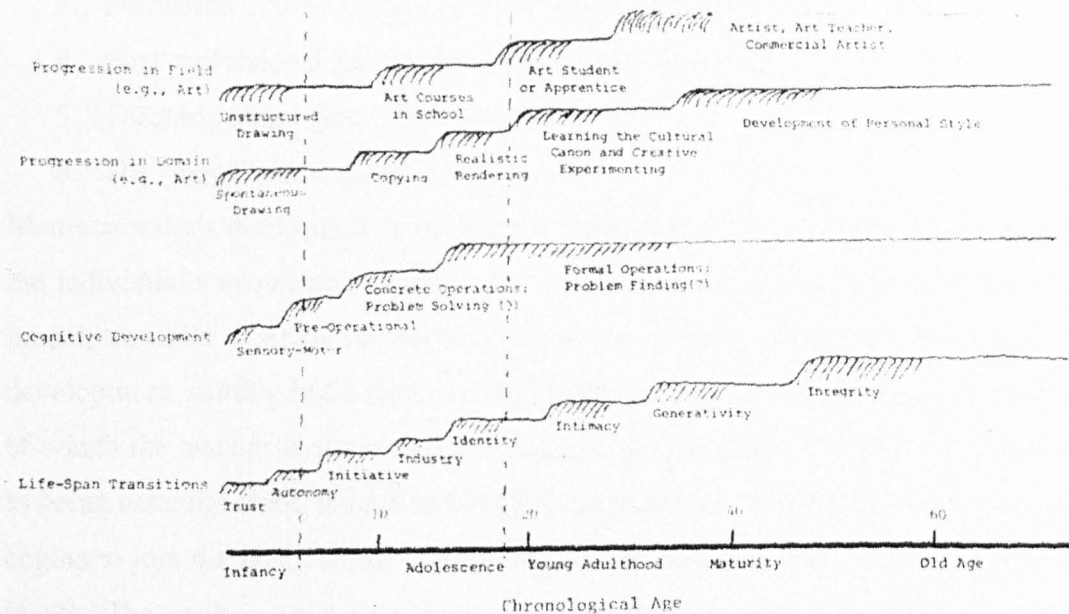
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transition into young adulthood is characterised by having to make a number of different choices concerning careers, social-life, leisure activities, and personal relationships.

This stage of the lifespan [young adulthood] creates a wide range of possibilities for facing 'challenges' and achieving 'tasks', but can also introduce risk behaviours into one's life (2002: 94).

The challenges with which the individual is presented help him/her to develop in strength and a establish greater sense of security – the role of developmental challenges, then, seems to be providing the individual with opportunities to find his/her own identity as a young adult.

Very few developmental theorists have attempted to model the life-span of artists or musicians. One model (shown in figure six below), which is not specifically related to music, is a timeline of the development of talent (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986). At the base of the model are Erikson's eight stages of development, and the model aims to represent transitions on a number of levels and show how they are connected to life transition and cognitive development, focusing in this instance on art. Its purpose is to understand the transitions and their dynamics in order to provide talented individuals with the necessary help and support, since it demonstrates that with chronological age, certain changes occur within the talent area, and the way in which they do so coincides with the individual's stage of psychological development.



**Figure 6. Timelines in the development of talent (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986: 281).**

As an individual matures biologically, so his/her cognitive capacities become more sophisticated and they become better equipped for succeeding within the genre, perhaps by transcending existing traditions and creating an individual style. The model indicates that as an individual develops so does his/her artistic capabilities and emphasises how important it is to consider the relationship between psychological development and musical skill acquisition across the life-span: clearly there is scope in such an approach, and it could be a useful tool for educators to assist the career development of their students.

There is one model of which I am aware that does consider the life-span development of musicians. Based on a retrospective study of Polish musicians ranging in age from young adulthood to old age, Manturzevska (1990) proposed a sequence of six stages in the life-span development of professional musicians:

1. Development of sensory-emotional sensitivity and spontaneous musical expression and activity (aged 0-6 years);
2. Intentional, guided music development (aged 6-14 years);

3. Formation and development of the artistic personality (aged 12/13– 23/24 years);
4. First professional stabilisation (aged 30-45/50 years);
5. Teaching phase (aged 55-65 years);
6. The 'judge' phase (aged 70+ years).

Manturzevska's description of each stage emphasises the importance of other people in the individual's acquisition of skill. For example, in the second and third stages of the model, the child is reliant on teachers: in the second stage the child undergoes enormous development, gaining basic technical and performance skills, and musical knowledge, all of which the teacher is responsible for imparting. Continuity of teacher is also regarded as being essential if the child is to fulfil his/her potential. In the third phase, the musician begins to join the professional community, and in order to do so, seeks role models and ideals. The teacher continues to play a crucial role in the master-student relationship and concentrates on technical aspects of performance in addition to developing the entire personality of the musician. Students that do not find a 'master' are likely to develop their personalities and beliefs within the social environment and peer groups, and this can reflect negatively in the student's professional and artistic development. The stage is completed with graduation from a higher music academy, and the period that follows is characterised by the student trying to establish themselves within the professional field. Students that have a 'master' are likely to be successful in the transition due to the amount of support and assistance with career choices, but those that do not are likely to have an erratic transition, which may not result in the anticipated outcome of a professional career as a performer.

The model proposed by Manturzevska is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, in terms of its methodological weaknesses, but it is striking that she does not consider how the individual's life-span challenges relate to musical development. There is little consideration of motivation, and she does not account for how an individual's identity as a musician may affect his/her determination to succeed. As the discussion above has demonstrated, development relies upon both social and personal factors, but there is little account of this in her model.

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In the last few years researchers have begun to consider the experiences of musicians as they leave the conservatoire and enter the profession (Gembris, 2004; Gaunt, 2004, Weller, 2004), but as yet, there is no published qualitative data about the musician's perceptions of their experiences, only statistical data reflecting the types of work that the musicians may pursue (a more detailed discussion of such theories follows in the next chapter).

To summarise, current theories of musical development do not account sufficiently for the role of the individual's identity formation during a key transitional phase (adolescence to young adulthood) as a motivating force. Weller's model for example, describes the importance of a passion for music for driving a musician in the pursuit of excellence, and there may be many similarities between a 'passion' for music, and music being a fundamental feature of an individual's growing sense of self from the adolescent to adulthood transition.

#### ***2.4.2 Self-concept, identity, and possible selves***

Understanding identity formation seems to be vital in order to understand the developmental process from adolescence to young adulthood since the period is characterised by making choices about the future that suit the individual's personality and needs. A brief consideration of identity theories is appropriate here for two reasons: firstly, if identity is a central goal to be achieved during the adolescent to young adulthood transition then it needs to be accounted for when considering musical development during this period; and secondly, an understanding of what identity refers to and how it can be defined is therefore a necessity.

The term 'identity' is used in a number of different ways across academic disciplines (Graafsma & Bosma, 1994: 176). Theories of identity range in scope from considering the individual as a self-contained unit, to being formed through our interactions with others (Hargreaves *et al*, 2002: 9-10). The terms 'identity' and 'self-concept' appear frequently in the literature, and they are often used inconsistently or interchangeably. The distinction between them, however, is an important one, and may have important



implications for understanding musical development. Since the research discussed so far in this chapter has focused on the interactionist nature of development, the following consideration of identity also adopts this perspective and focuses on social theories of identity.

The 'self' is "the essence of the individual person...the 'inner core' of the personality system" (Graafsma & Bosma, 1994: 181) and fundamental to an individual's understanding of him/herself is the self-concept, which is an individual's mental representation of him/herself (Graafsma & Bosma, 1994; Stets & Burke, 2003):

In general, the self-concept is the set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. It is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act toward us, our wishes and desires, and our evaluations of ourselves. The self-concept includes not only our idealized views of who we are that are relatively unchanging, but also our *self-image* or *working copy* of our self views that we import into situations and that is subject to constant change and revision based on situational influences...It is this *self-image* that guides moment-to-moment interaction, is changed in situated negotiation, and may act back on the more fundamental self-views (Stets & Burke, 2003: 133).

The self-concept then is not only an evaluation of who we are, but also can project who we would like to be, our 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) distinguishes between the actual self, the ideal self, and the 'ought' self, and Higgins argues that the latter two act as motivators for behaviour. Social Identity theorists (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) believe that an individual's self-concept consists of a number of different identities: personal identities and social identities:

This idea is rooted in James' (1890) notion that there are as many different selves as there are different positions that one holds in society and thus different groups who respond to the self. This is where identity enters into the overall self. The overall self is organised into multiple parts (identities), each of which is tied to aspects of the social structure. One has an identity, an 'internalised positional designation'...for each of the different positions or role relationships the person holds in society...The identities are the meanings one has as a group member, as a role-holder, or as a person. What does it *mean* to be a father or a colleague, or a friend? These meanings are the *content* of the identities (Stets & Burke, 2003: 136).

The many different identities that an individual has are therefore crucial elements of his/her self-concept. This relates to the above discussion concerning the different dimensions of self-concept: the concept of 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Cross & Markus, 1991) is an important potential framework for understanding an individual's motivation to pursue high levels of expertise in a particular field.

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Possible selves are thought to be based on past representations of the self, but are different from the current self, though connected to them (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are unique to the individual, although 'social' in that they may be the result of previous comparisons with others: "what others are now, I could become" (ibid: 954). An individual can have any number of possible selves, although they are influenced by his/her sociocultural context and social experiences and they are thought to have two primary functions that are central to understand change across the life-span:

First, possible selves are motivators; they function as incentives for future behaviour. They are selves to be approached or avoided. Second, by providing an evaluative and interpretive context for the *current* view of self, possible selves are instrumental in the affirmation and defence of the 'now' self (Cross & Markus, 1991: 232).

As an individual makes choices about whether to participate or withdraw from activities, possible selves help to simulate the anticipated event or role. Cross and Markus describe how this may motivate a young musician:

The adolescent who has been praised for her musical abilities may develop images of herself as an accomplished pianist, performing in the all-city talent show. Such possible selves become the incentives that fuel long hours at the piano practicing scales, new techniques, and chord patterns. With time, she may begin to define herself not just as 'someone who plays the piano' but as a 'musician' or as a 'pianist', and this label will provide a focus and organization for an increasing number of her actions (1991: 232).

It is clear to see how an understanding of an individual's self-concept and/or his/her possible selves is a framework through which to consider the motivations behind an individual's pursuit of musical expertise: it seems that in the same way that an individual can have an identity as a father or friend, a musician can have a musical identity which contributes to, and perhaps influences, his/her self-concept<sup>1</sup>.

In a similar way, understanding that possible selves provide a context for the 'now' self may provide insight into the impact of success or failure on an individual. The meaning attributed by an individual to a particular event can have particular significance to possible selves, whether or not the event is a success. For example, a young student who

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, musical identity refers to an individual's self-perceptions relating to, and dependent upon, his/her musical experiences, namely his/her interactions with others, reflections on ability and achievement, and his/her goals and ambitions: an individual can have a number of alternative identities, which each contribute to his/her self-concept. The definition of self-concept as used in this thesis, is that it is the individual's overall perception of self and is constructed of a number of different identities.

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has a possible self as, and aspires to be, a doctor and achieves a low grade in a music performance exam, may evaluate the result in a different way to a student who has a possible self as a concert pianist. The immediate impact of the result on the potential concert pianist may be initially negative, but it may have beneficial consequences in terms of the individual taking action to practice more, or in a different way (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986). In this way, it seems that possible selves and the 'now' self work concurrently: to experience a discrepancy in a current self can cause negative feelings, but has important implications for how the individual learns to cope with setbacks:

To prevent negative feelings, individuals must find a way to change their current self or to adjust or recalibrate their possible selves (Cross & Markus, 1991: 233).

Research suggests that adapting possible selves across the life-span can help increase individuals' feelings of life-satisfaction: individuals who reduce the number and attainability of possible selves as they reach old-age are more likely to feel satisfied with life than those who still have numerous and ambitious possible selves (ibid).

The idea of 'self' and achieving possible selves is clearly linked to the discussion of motivation above, taking a dynamic approach, yet trying to understand motivation from the 'inside out' – from the individual's perspective. The discussion of the theories of identity, self-concept, possible selves, and life-span highlights how the impact of life-span changes on the developing musician may be critical: a musician's progression from school to university/conservatoire and then potentially into a performance career coincides with the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Since the personal and psychological changes occurring at this time are related to the individual's emergent self-concept, it is likely that they will have some consequences for his/her musical development, and also that the individual's musical participation may have some influence on his/her emergent sense of self. An individual's self-concept, and the different identities contained within, seems to be an influential feature in his/her development in adulthood. In addition to the underlying demands of an individual's life-span development, transition demands (such as the transition into a new career, which is

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the primary focus of this thesis) are also related to, and influence, an individual's self-concept.

## **2.5 Career transitions**

This section examines research on the nature of career transitions, how they affect the individual and the role that self-concept and identity may play in negotiating such transitions in order to understand how the transition from training as a musician and entering the profession (a career transition) may progress.

The nature of the classical music profession is a precarious one. A study of the careers of German musicians reports that there may be on average 200-300 applications for one position in an orchestra (Gembris, 2004), indicating the extreme competition with which each musician is faced when seeking employment. Even when a job is secured, orchestral musicians experience dissatisfaction in the workplace (Seymour & Levine, 1996), yet many persevere and continue to work in the industry for the duration of their working lives.

There are two main questions that arise from the two studies described above: firstly, what do musicians need to complete successfully the transition from training to entering the profession; and secondly, how do musicians persevere in spite of the difficulty in penetrating the profession (if indeed they do)? The answers to these two questions lie partly in the discussion presented so far in this chapter: the successful transition into the profession and perseverance in the face of setbacks seem to be related to the individual's motivation and self-concept, or at least his/her identification with music.

Much of the research into career transitions emphasises that self-efficacy beliefs play a major role in individuals' career goals and their success in achieving them (Taylor, 1985; Solberg *et al*, 1998). The role of self-efficacy as a motivator has already been considered above, and so will not be further considered here, but there are other theories which shed further light on the success or failure of career transitions.

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The transition between school and work is thought to be difficult for four main reasons (Eccles *et al*, 1996). Firstly, there is discontinuity in the nature of school and work settings: in the former, emphasis is placed upon the individual working alone and unaided, whereas in the latter setting, it is more common for the individual to work as part of a team, using a number of resources and support systems within the work environment. This is linked to the second reason, which relates to the reward systems in the school and work settings: rather than receive individual rewards, such as a grade for an exam reflecting the individual's performance, work settings often reward the performance of a group of individuals working together. Furthermore, the importance of extrinsic rewards, such as financial status or power, or sanctions, such as the loss of a job, may be greater in the working world. The third difference between school and work settings is the nature of evaluation and authority structures: whereas in school the teacher is usually the prime contact for feedback, in the work setting there are numerous sources of feedback, from colleagues, department supervisors, and managers. The final difference relates to the need for the individual to have good interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others in the work environment, characteristics that are thought to be less important at school (Eccles *et al*, 1996).

Stage theories of career development indicate that in the first stage (of concern in this thesis), which occurs between the ages of 15 and 25, the individual explores and considers a number of alternative careers (Super, 1990, cited in Wrightsman, 1994b: 16). Achieving a sense of competence in the discipline is important during the first stage of a career transition (Sanford, 1971, cited in Wrightsman, 1994b: 17) and is characterised by the individual focusing his/her identity on a specific and durable career option.

Central to all theories of career transition is the notion of identity in one form or another. For example, Solberg *et al* (1998) discuss 'success identities' which are adaptable to any transitional setting:

Success identities consist of strong self-efficacy expectations, effective stress and time management skills, the ability to connect to the environment and individuals in authority, and positive well-being (1998: 28).

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According to this theory, self-efficacy beliefs affect career decisions, as individuals will choose occupations for which they have the necessary skills and ability to cope with any potential challenges. Stress management is intrinsically related to self-efficacy, since self-efficacy expectations affect the degree to which a task is perceived as stressful: if an individual does not consider themselves to possess the necessary ability to cope with a particular task, then anxiety levels will be high. Therefore stress-management is an important factor in a career transition, and is a concept that will be returned to during the analysis chapters as I discuss the ways in which the musicians seem to cope with their setbacks and disappointments. Social processes also play a role in career transitions: if an individual perceives a supportive environment s/he will feel more able to cope with his/her stress:

Individuals who perceive family as available for support benefit during times of stress by having fewer physical and psychological difficulties. Other social processes that relate to whether a person stays in an employment or educational setting involve a sense of connection to other individuals in the setting, and connection to individuals in authority (ibid: 6).

As with all of the research discussed in this chapter, the success of career transitions depends upon an interaction between the individual's self-concept and his/her social environment. Research suggests that changes in identity accompany career transitions, due to new roles, and the need for new skills, attitudes, and patterns of interaction (Ibarra, 1999).

As situation demands induce people to draw from, elaborate, or create new repertoires of possibilities, aspects of one's professional identity that have been relatively stable may change markedly. Socialisation is not a unilateral process imposing conformity on the individual, however, but a negotiated adaptation by which people strive to improve the fit between themselves and their work environment (1999: 765).

One theory, from the business domain, discusses the notion of how 'provisional selves' assist the individual as they begin a new career. Ibarra (1999) describes a process of adaptation as the individual uses possible selves to negotiate a new 'work' identity. This process has three distinguishing features:

1. Observing role models;
2. Experimenting with provisional selves;
3. Using internal and external standards as a way to evaluate provisional selves.

There are two imitation strategies described by Ibarra: wholesale (imitation of a particular role model), selective (adopting the characteristics of a number of different people,

“trying different styles” p. 778), and being true to self (the second part of the process which involves the individual finding congruence between adopted characteristics and those already existing). The role of others and self-reflection in the process of experimenting with provisional selves is vital. As mentioned above, there must be some degree of congruence between the individual’s provisional selves in terms of what kind of professional s/he already considers him/herself to be and his/her aspirations for what s/he would like to be. External evaluations from others are also important influences on the individual confirming or rejecting particular characteristics through the positive or negative feedback that they provide.

Work plays an important role in an individual’s identity: when you meet someone for the first time, one of the first questions is likely to be “what kind of work do you do?” An individual’s work identity is vital to his/her self-concept and consequently can have a fundamental impact on an overall sense of well-being:

To express dissatisfaction or boredom with or a waning interest in one’s work - particularly if one’s work is judged by society as fascinating and important, as in the case of many professions – is no easy matter. To face up to such dissatisfaction is literally to question what one is and to have to justify continuing as one has (Sarason, 1977: 57, cited in Wrightsman, 1994b: 21).

The career transition literature shows that an individual’s work has to meet with his/her self-concept, and often the relationship between the two can become distorted, especially whilst the individual is at the outset of his/her career, not wanting to refuse any opportunity. The consequence is that work hours become increasingly long, and the individual can begin to experience burn-out and an increasing resentment of the job (Wrightsman, 1994b). An example of how this can affect the musician is provided by Wrightsman, who quotes the famous ‘cellist, Yo-Yo Ma:

During my first years of performing, all the travelling and concertizing seemed terribly exciting. My management would call and ask if I’d like to give a certain series of concerts two years later. I’d be in the middle of dinner, and I’d say, “Fine, sure” – but eventually I’d be faced with actually having to play those concerts. I’d end up with as many as a hundred and fifty concerts a season. I was always flirting with getting burned out from exhaustion. So I finally sat down and wrote out a list of all the things I care most about. First of all, I promised myself that if I ever felt really burned out and lost enthusiasm for giving concerts I’d be responsible enough to quit... Second, I decided that every concert I played – no matter where, no matter if the city was big or small – was going to be special. Third, I accepted the fact that only one person is responsible for what’s going on, and that person is me. Fame and success are always being dangled before you. But you have to choose your drugs carefully. I have yet to find something that beats the power of being in love, or the power of music at its

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most magical... Finally I decided that it's not enough just to make time to be at home, I have to preserve the quality of that time. So, aside from practicing, I don't let professional obligations encroach upon my family life (1994: 25).

Finding a balance between work obligations and maintaining the intrinsic motivation to work, especially in the case of music, is vital. Career transitions are a difficult time in terms of the individual reassessing his/her identity as a professional, and research suggests that often this transition is complicated by a lack of sufficient preparation from the institutions in which the individual trained.

In a comparison of American and German school to work transitions, it is noted that current systems do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to acquire social and occupational competencies (Hamilton & Hurelmann, 1994). Similar findings emerge from studies into the training of professional musicians (Political and Economic Planning, 1949), which suggest that music conservatoire students often feel uncertain about their future and where their training may lead, and that whilst the individual may seek advice from professors, not all do, "the personal touch seems to be largely missing" (1949: 193).

Within the field of musical development, there have been no studies, to my knowledge, to have examined either the nature of the 'education to career' transition, or the impact that it has on the musician, yet it is clear that many of the themes discussed in this section, and the chapter as a whole, may be relevant to the potential professional performer. There has been a recent interest in the transition between school and higher education, with researchers and educators identifying that it is the most difficult of the education transitions due to a lack of 'planned transition' (Smith, 2002: 91). Many of the themes identified by researchers in this field are reminiscent of the challenges of career transitions, including: different styles of working (Ballinger, 2002; Lowe & Cook, 2003); different institutional practices (Clerehan, 2002); and different institutional and social environments (Smith, 2002). Such studies are united in discovering that a gap exists between students' expectations of university life and the reality (Ballinger, 2002; Lowe & Cook, 2003). Research considering the transition from school to studying music at university provides support for the research above, highlighting that the transition indeed



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caused anxiety in terms of practical, financial, and subject-related activities (Pitts, 2004). Pitts suggests that students require practical support at an individual level whilst they adjust to the “intense and sometimes overwhelming process of adapting to their new personal, social and musical circumstances” (2004: 223).

Whilst these studies into the higher education transition are not directly relevant to this thesis because they are concerned with a younger age group progressing through a different stage of life-transition, they indicate a need for a more detailed insight into students’ experiences during challenging periods in order to understand how to assist students in their transitions. Understanding the individual’s experiences is perhaps the only way to maximise any transition, although as yet, this has not been sufficiently applied to the music student-music professional transition.

Becoming a professional performer is notoriously difficult, and the period of transition between training at a university or conservatoire, and entering the profession is likely to signify a ‘make or break’ time for the individual. There is a clear need to investigate the process of penetrating the classical performance profession in terms of the individual’s 1) motivations, 2) personality, 3) external support, and 4) identity characteristics, but also 5) to examine how prepared the musicians feel for the transition. In doing so, it may be possible to understand, from an educational perspective, 6) how institutions can best assist the psychological, social, and occupational needs of musicians as they prepare to enter the profession. It is these six elements that are of primary concern in this thesis.

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## Chapter Three

### Methodology

#### ***3.1 Introduction***

This chapter focuses on the methodology used in this thesis to examine the transition from training to be a musician to entering the profession and the impact it has on the individual. The study takes a predominantly qualitative, longitudinal approach, which is arguably the most effective means for collecting the richness of information required for an investigation of individuals' changing experiences over a long period of time (Cohen & Manion, 1996).

This chapter begins by discussing the research procedures used in the few instances of published research in this area. The focus of the studies reviewed is on the developing professional musician, but many speculate retrospectively about the nature of the transition between training and entering the profession rather than investigating it prospectively and in real time. Second, this chapter considers the benefits of longitudinal research in comparison to the retrospective approach taken by previous research. Third, the appropriateness of qualitative techniques for researching this period of musical development is addressed. In relation to this, the interview schedules used in each period of the study are discussed, and the main themes of each are outlined. Finally, the participants are introduced and the procedure and analysis techniques are described.

#### ***3.2 Finding an appropriate framework***

##### ***3.2.1 The development of musicians***

An overview of research investigating the development of musicians is presented in the previous chapter and, as highlighted there, the only research to examine the entire life-span development of musicians is that conducted by Manturzevska (1990). She focused specifically on Polish musicians, collecting data from a group of 165 musicians aged between twenty-one and eighty-nine using structured interviews. The interviews were

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concerned with a variety of factors including family background, early musical experiences, artistic achievements, goals and priorities at different stages of the life course, and obstacles during career development. The interview data were supplemented by 'objective' sources such as concert diaries, programmes, reviews and so on. The use of structured interviews ensured that there was consistency in the data collected, an important consideration given the number of participants. Maturzewska acknowledged that the interview schedules were based on her own experiences of research in musical development and on the research findings of others (1990: 114). The key limitation of Maturzewska's research is that she based her six-stage model of musical development across the life-span on cross-sectional, retrospective accounts: asking participants from the older end of the age spectrum to reflect back on their experiences during the outset of their career is perhaps an unreliable method of data collection. It is improbable that an individual can reflect on the past twenty, or more, years of their life and remember with sufficient detail the day-to-day struggles and challenges they have faced, or the small achievements that at the time were so crucial, but fade in importance over time, since memory is notoriously unreliable (Ruspini, 2000). Cross-sectional design is also problematic, since different groups of participants are from different generations (as with the Maturzewska research). This means that each will have experienced different amounts and types of education and social conditions, and may have different values (Sugarman, 2001: 39-40). Therefore, caution must be exercised when trying to generalise the results. An individual's daily experiences shape the ups and downs of his/her development, affecting career decisions and perhaps more importantly, his/her motivation and determination. (Gianakos (1999), for example, examined psychology students' career intentions and found evidence that these elements play a crucial role, and it is likely that musical development is susceptible to similar influences). With unique and exploratory research of the kind presented by this thesis, and by Maturzewska's study, real-time, semi-structured interviews may have been more appropriate: structured interviews may limit or bias the information collected as there may be crucial elements omitted or not accounted for in the design.

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Projects of a similar nature are currently being undertaken in England and Germany. In 2001, The Royal College of Music (RCM) began their 'Working in Music' project, which aims to gain insight into the careers of musicians through interviewing, primarily on the telephone, the Conservatoire's alumni. A project of a slightly larger scale is that led by Heiner Gembris in Germany. He and his co-workers have collected data from the alumni of seven music academies throughout Germany. Most of the participants graduated between 1995 and 2002 and responded via postal questionnaire. The concerns of these two projects are strongly related to the issues arising in this thesis: amongst other factors, they are concerned with the career transition of music graduates, the difficulties they encounter and how educators can better assist their development. The focus on the published results of these two studies so far has been on the career paths of the alumni students, highlighting that more music conservatoire graduates than expected enter the music profession, but in the form of 'portfolio' careers<sup>1</sup>. However, there is little qualitative data reporting the individual's experience of this transition: how have they perceived and coped with the struggles? What emotional and psychological impact has the transition had on the musician? Whilst the two projects described above go some way to provide insight into the career paths of music graduates, the limited report of the individuals' personal experiences of, and reactions to, the career transitions leaves many unanswered questions. Therefore it seems necessary that research in this area consider the more qualitative and subjective nature of a musician's transition from training to entering the profession.

### ***3.2.2 Training to be a musician***

In order to gain an insight into conservatoire life, Henry Kingsbury (1988) and Bruno Nettl (1995) conducted ethnographies of two different American Conservatoires. Their daily immersion in conservatoire life, speaking to the students, teachers, and institutional managers, and witnessing important events, all contributed to a personal and detailed understanding of how such institutions operate and how they affect developing musicians. Such immersion in the life of a music institution and its students is probably the most

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<sup>1</sup> Rather than have one main source of income, such as a full-time member of an orchestra, it seems that musicians earn their living from a number of different jobs, such as teaching, playing in a number of different ensembles, and performing solo recitals.

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effective way to understand fully the nature of the transition from training as a musician and entering the profession, although it is obviously a time-consuming method of data collection. Nettle's and Kingsbury's studies highlight the importance of regular contact with the musicians over a prolonged period of time: speaking with the musicians in a detailed way at regular intervals over the two year duration of my study is perhaps the most appropriate way to trace the transition being considered in this thesis.

### ***3.2.3 The educators' perspective***

One project that has attempted to understand better how to enhance musicians' transition from graduating to entering a music-related profession is the Professional Integration Project initiated by Dame Janet Ritterman. The research consists of eight strategy studies written by educators from different types of music education institutions, including 'Preparing Music Undergraduates for Work' (Pearce, 1997) and 'The Professional Integration of Composers' (Burnand, 1999). The work by Pearce (1997) is particularly relevant for this thesis since it proposes that there are certain transferable skills that are important for music graduates, including personality attributes and skills of self-reliance. Pearce based his proposal on a review of literature from sources such as The Association of Graduate Recruiters and suggested that if such skills can be incorporated into the curriculum, the musicians will be better prepared for their chosen career. Pearce's research presents the first examination, as far as I am aware, of the additional skills that music graduates need in order to secure work: the recognition that musicians need skills other than high levels of technical competence is important although it is unclear in the report whether the practical suggestions for change could be implemented successfully. Perhaps some additional research investigating the impact of Pearce's proposals on the institution and more importantly on the students' transition into their chosen career is now needed.

The discussion above highlights that a more detailed insight into musicians' career transitions is required to supplement existing research in the field, and also that alternative tools for collecting and analysing data should be used. Previous studies have focused retrospectively on musicians' experiences as they attempt to penetrate the

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professional world of music, and often the bias has been on quantitative data. This has left a void in the literature which needs supplementing in order to fully maximise the success of musicians' career transitions.

### **3.3 A Pilot Study**

In an attempt to draw some of these methodological considerations together, Burland (2000) conducted a follow up study with a small number of musicians originally interviewed ten years earlier as part of a different study investigating social influences on children's musical development. The original study, conducted by Davidson, Sloboda, Howe and Moore between 1991-93, was concerned with whether or not it is possible to predict childhood success in music. Davidson *et al* used a sample of 247 children belonging to five groups ranging from those attending a specialist music school to those who had stopped learning an instrument at least one year before the study commenced. Data for the original study (cf. Davidson *et al*, 1998) were collected through structured interviews conducted with each child and at least one of their parents. The follow up study by Burland aimed to discover what had happened to twenty of the musicians who originally attended the specialist music school. Twenty participants were contacted through family contact details provided by the music school: obviously due to the elapsed time since the original study it was difficult to contact all musicians, and a sample of twenty was considered sufficient to enable a detailed insight into their experiences. Data were collected using semi-structured telephone interviews. The study revealed that there were distinct differences between the musicians who were in pursuit of a performance career, and those that had chosen to pursue other career paths, and suggested that there are three elements important in determining whether musicians are successful in achieving a professional performance career or not: methods for coping, positive experiences with others and within the institutions, and music as a determinant of self-concept. These three elements were presented as a 'Tripartite model of success', which represented the interaction between the three factors. The conclusion suggests that music as a determinant of self-concept was key to the way in which the individual perceived his/her social environment, and influenced the ways in which s/he coped with setbacks and obstacles.

From a methodological perspective, the study showed that the telephone is an effective medium for conducting interviews. The major advantage of conducting telephone interviews is that they overcome the difficulties of the participants' geographical dispersion (Robson, 2002: 282). There seemed to be little difficulty in building a rapport with the participants (Robson, *ibid*), and the study enabled an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the interview schedule to be used in subsequent research. The research served as an effective pilot study for the work described in this thesis: it provided an opportunity to find an appropriate methodological framework and indicated areas of interest that warranted more in-depth examination. One limitation of the pilot study was that asking participants to recollect their experiences and motivations over a ten-year period was unrealistic, and some occasionally found the questions difficult to answer on this basis. Therefore, it seems that in order to trace effectively the transition between training as a musician and entering the profession it is necessary to interview the participants at regular intervals over a sustained period of time.

### ***3.4 Methodological Issues***

#### ***3.4.1 Longitudinal research***

As discussed above, retrospective studies pose a number of difficulties: for each individual there are issues of recall bias in terms of motivation, attitude, and affective states (Ruspini, 2000), and the extent to which past events may be recalled is liable to vary greatly between different participants (Hinds *et al*, accessed 2004: 1). Furthermore, it is possible that recent events may affect the individual's interpretation of past events, and this may reduce the reliability of the research results (*ibid*). Other problems with retrospective research designs include the nature of the information that an individual can recall: whilst important events (such as a performance at a prestigious venue) can be recalled almost indefinitely, the habitual, day-to-day processes (such as practice) are forgotten almost immediately (Bradburn, 1983, cited in Singer & Willet, 1996: 268). Since the research described in this thesis relies on the participant's recall of regular events such as lessons and practice, and their subsequent affective states, it is paramount that the research design should account for the kinds of difficulties described above.

A prospective and real-time longitudinal study goes some way to overcome many of the problems associated with retrospective studies: since the study reported in this thesis is interested in the transition between training as a musician and deciding whether or not to pursue a professional career in performance it is important to be able to capture how the individual's perceptions of events and his/her future goals change over time. Longitudinal studies allow researchers to "follow the socio-psycho-economic development or behaviour of individuals over time" (Rajulton & Ravenera, 2000: 6) and, therefore, become the only way to trace how variables change over time, allowing the researcher to explore possible explanations for the participants' emergent behaviour (Menard, 1991, cited in Ruspini, 2000: 3). A particularly useful paradigm for understanding changes in behaviour and attitude is that of 'planned behaviour' (Rajulton & Ravenera, op. cit.): the authors believe that examining participants' intentions can reveal the motivations behind behaviours. They identify three elements which determine intention:

**Attitude toward the behaviour** which refers to the degree to which the person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour; b) a social factor called **subjective norm** which refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the implied actions; and, c) the degree of **perceived behavioural control**, which refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour depending on the past experiences of the individual as well as anticipated impediments, obstacles, costs and benefits. (Rajulton & Ravenera, 2000: 6)

Rajulton and Ravenera believe that these three determinants are linked: if an individual's perception of one element is strong, it has a direct impact on the strength of the other elements, and consequently on the strength of the intention. The paradigm described above seems particularly relevant for the research described in this thesis. The study is concerned with musicians' relationships with their peers and teachers, their psychological connection with music, and the impact these factors have on their ultimate career motivations. Since we are examining musicians' future intentions, the paradigm of 'planned behaviour' seems to be an appropriate framework for conducting the study.

There are several advantages of prospective longitudinal studies. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, they can provide insights into how social changes occur (Ruspini, 2000: 3). Secondly, although they involve a certain amount of retrospective recall in



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order to inform about occurrences since the previous interview, they are less susceptible to memory recall bias (Hinds *et al*, accessed 2004: 2). Thirdly, a number of interviews will ultimately collect more detailed information than a single interview attempting to collect all relevant information about an individual's life-history. However, there are a few disadvantages which must also be considered: when collecting panel data of this kind there is the danger of panel attrition (Ruspini, 2000: 4). In terms of this thesis, this could be due to participants deciding to cease their participation in the research, a loss of contact due to a change in their location, or through difficulty in contacting participants to arrange a convenient time for the interview to take place. The consequence may be a number of missing values at different stages of the study. A further danger with this kind of research is 'panel conditioning', that is, where individuals' responses may be influenced by previous stages of the study (Trivellato, 1999, cited in Ruspini, 2000: 4). Furthermore, participants may develop an unwillingness to participate in a long-term study as it progresses, or they may be affected in some way (perhaps in terms of the ways in which they perceive particular events, or remember specific occasions or reactions to events, for example) as a result of the study (Sugarman, 2001: 39).

In terms of the study reported here, panel attrition was a potential drawback. Indeed, due to the specific career transition being studied, the participants were likely to move away from their original location to either find work, or continue their studies elsewhere. A further difficulty relates to the increasing use of mobile telephones and the frequency with which numbers often change, which further complicates the process of contacting participants. However, throughout the two-year duration of the study, only three people out of an original total of thirty-five did not complete the study. When considering the personal nature of the interviews, and in the interests of protecting the participants, it was also important to control the emotional and psychological impact of the interview process (a more detailed discussion of this occurs in section 3.4.6).

The design of the study is primarily qualitative, although the middle period of the study is supplemented by quantitative data. The following sections will discuss the reasons why

qualitative data are the most appropriate for this study, and consider the arguments for a 'mixed-methods' (qualitative *and* quantitative) approach (Sale *et al*, 2002).

### 3.4.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a broad term which covers a wide variety of social research (Denscombe, 1999: 207). Perhaps central to qualitative research is its "concern with meanings and the way people understand things" and "concern with patterns of behaviour" (Tesch, 1990, cited in Denscombe, 1999: 207). Rather than collect factual data, qualitative research allows individuals to tell their own stories in their own words:

In the qualitative paradigm, reality is regarded as a human construction shaped by the cultural and personal conditions of the individual rather than existing independently. The aim of qualitative research is not to discover reality, but to explore different interpretations of that reality by constructing a clearer experiential memory which helps us obtain a more sophisticated account of things. Rather than seeking causality and predictions, the researcher aims at interpretive understanding (Bresler, 1996: 6).

Due to the subject matter of this thesis, this method of data collection enabled the participants to express their thoughts and feelings about their development and progress during their transition. The designs of previous studies had not fully answered questions in sufficient depth because they did not consider the individual's subjective perceptions of their experiences and surrounding environment (Trochim, 2004). By adopting a mainly qualitative approach to the research (in the form of semi-structured interviews initially), it seemed that I may gain a deeper insight into musicians' perceptions of their experiences than has previously been achieved and understand more clearly what motivates an individual to pursue a performance career and indeed persevere with the difficulties and setbacks associated with the profession might be achieved.

### 3.4.3 Theoretical underpinnings

The research approach emerges from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997). This technique is increasingly recognised within social psychology, and is connected to two important theoretical foundations: phenomenology and symbolic interactionism.

It is assumed that what a respondent says in the interview has some ongoing significance for him or her and that there is some, though not a transparent, relationship between what the person says and beliefs or psychological constructs that he or she can be said to hold. This approach can be described as adopting a *phenomenological* perspective... At the same time it

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is recognised that meanings are negotiated within a social context and that therefore this form of interviewing is also drawing on, or can be seen from, a *symbolic interactionist* position (Smith, 2001: 10).

Therefore, IPA aims to understand an individual's personal perceptions of a particular event rather than ask them to provide an objective account, "to discover meanings, not eliciting facts" (Smith, Flowers & Osborn, 1997: 68). The phenomenological approach emphasises the importance of understanding the subjective experience of the participants (Robson, 2002), the symbolic interactionist approach emphasises how meanings are dependent on social interaction (*ibid*).

### 3.4.4 Reflexivity

Of central importance in qualitative research is the role of the researcher in interpreting the interview data. The researcher as an individual has his/her own identity, values, and history and these will have some impact on the research (Robson, 2002: 172). The implications of this are discussed by Burr (1995):

[Objectivity is] an impossibility, since each of us, of necessity, must encounter the world from some perspective or other (from where we stand) and the questions we come to ask about that world, our theories and hypothesis, must also of necessity arise from the assumptions that are embedded in our perspective (...) The task of researchers therefore becomes to acknowledge and even to work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part this plays in the results that are produced. Researchers must view the research process as necessarily a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching (Burr, 1995: 160, cited in Colombo, 2003:1).

This approach acts against the doctrine of 'positivism' where the researcher and his/her respondents played distinct roles in the research process. The blurring of roles as described above by Burr links with Personal Construct Psychology (PCP: see Kelly, 1955) and the notion of 'constructive alternativism'. This approach is underpinned by the notion that there is no such thing as a factual, unambiguous answer to a question:

Once we accept the position that things and events do not have fixed, irrevocable meanings and that there is potentially infinite variety in the alternative meanings or constructions which may be attached to them... we can begin to appreciate why it is that people think, feel and act differently from one another (Burr & Butt, 1992: 14).

Bearing this in mind, it was important that I understood the impact that my own experiences and values would have on the data analysis and its presentation throughout the thesis. As a previous undergraduate student, and current postgraduate, in one of the institutions used in the study, I was aware that some elements of the analysis connected

with my own experiences. Such a personal connection with the subject matter is thought to be critical in the interpretation of the data (Davidson, 1998, cited in Borthwick, 1999: 69) as it enables the joint construction of meaning between researcher and participant thought to be so crucial in the PCP approach (Bannister, 1994).

Personal engagement with a research study is central to a reflexive approach,

*Personal reflexivity* is about acknowledging who you are, your individuality as a researcher and how your personal interests and values influence the process of research from initial idea to outcome....Marshall (1986: 197) acknowledges her level of engagement from the start: 'I have always chosen as research topics issues which have personal significance and which I need to explore in my own life' (Tindall, 2001: 150),

and in order to achieve a reflexive approach the researcher must be affected in some way by their research (Gouldner, 1970 in Robertson, 2000: 321).

According to Gouldner, a researcher truly achieving reflexivity recognises that the knowledge of the world cannot be advanced apart from their own knowledge of themselves and their position in the social world (Robertson, 2000: 321).

Therefore, my own insights into the experience of study as an undergraduate musician and wanting at one time to pursue a performance career are an important part of the conception and production of this thesis. This discussion is developed further in the final chapter when I discuss the conclusions and evaluations.

### ***3.4.5 A multi-method approach***

Due to the time-consuming nature of collecting, transcribing, and analysing qualitative data, and given the time-restrictions of the period of study, I decided that the qualitative data from the beginning and end of the study could be supplemented by a period of quantitative data collection in the middle period of the research. Therefore, based on the first two semi-structured interviews, a structured questionnaire was created. This would facilitate the collection of categorical data which could then be analysed using a) descriptive statistics to trace how variables change during the course of the study; and b) chi-square tests to examine relationships between variables.

Triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint, and, in doing so, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data (Cohen & Manion, 1996: 233).

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There are several advantages to adopting a multi-method approach. Firstly, it has been suggested that findings are the artefacts of method (Cohen and Manion, 1996: 234) and therefore, the use of contrasted methods can allow the researcher greater confidence in his/her results since they are less likely to be due to the nature of data collection. Secondly, a multi-method approach can facilitate interpretation (Robson, 2002: 372): quantitative methods indicate relationships between variables, but qualitative techniques can help to provide explanations. Finally, complementing qualitative research with quantitative can offer 'statistical generalisability' (Robson, 2002: 372): qualitative methods generally focus on the individual's subjective experiences and therefore do not enable generalisations to a wider population to be drawn. By adding the dimension of quantitative data collection, this is made more possible.

The nature of a longitudinal study is such that it requires a great deal of dedication from the participants, and an additional advantage to incorporating a structured questionnaire is that it took less time to administer and therefore, was less encroaching on the participants' lives. It is possible that the addition of this questionnaire to the study is partially responsible for the low levels of cohort attrition: since the structured interview lasted twenty minutes, participants were perhaps more willing to participate. Within the structured interview there were occasions for the participants to describe their answers in detail and if there was any response that seemed uncharacteristic of the individual or group, I followed it up so as to fully capture their experiences. The use of a multi-method approach, therefore, was an appropriate framework on which to base the study.

### ***3.4.6 Ethical considerations***

When conducting psychological research it is important to prioritise the psychological well-being of participants (British Psychological Society (BPS), 1991). In keeping with BPS ethical guidelines, all participants were informed about the precise nature of the research and the commitment that it would require. The participants were informed that the details of the interviews would be confidential, and any report of the data would not reveal true identities. This was particularly important for my study which often required the participants to discuss teachers, peers, and institutions. In designing the study, I did

not expect the interviews to have a negative psychological or emotional impact, as I took care to ensure that the questions did not probe too deeply into personal or emotional issues yet allowed the participants to talk as openly as they felt comfortable. It is likely that the study made the musicians more aware of how particular aspects of their daily experiences impacted on their career motivations, but the result seems to be only that they remembered certain events deliberately and more clearly than they may have done if they had been involved in a one-off interview. The result was large amounts of rich data from each participant. Indeed, many of the participants reported how the study had been useful in helping them to understand their motivations and goals, and had been a positive way for them to review their progress throughout the duration of the study.

### ***3.5 The participants***

Music undergraduates in their final or penultimate year of study were recruited from two different kinds of institutions and music degrees:

1. A Bachelor of Music degree at a British University (participants were in the second or third year of a three year degree);
2. A Performance Diploma at a British Music Conservatoire (participants were in the third or fourth year of a four year degree).

Participants were recruited in one of two ways: in the university (which I also attended) a presentation was given to the second and third year students outlining the aims of the study and describing what would be required of them if they participated. I asked for individuals to volunteer to participate if they wished to do so. At the Music Conservatoire letters were sent to the director of each department (woodwind and brass, strings, keyboard, percussion, vocal) who subsequently asked either for volunteers or recommended students to participate. This created an obvious potential for bias in the sample of participants since it was likely that the most highly motivated individuals volunteered to commit so much time to the research. However, upon first contact with the musicians it became clear that the sample was diverse and represented a range of abilities, aspirations and personality-types. Therefore, I felt that although there was a possible sampling bias, it would not detract from the quality of research in that all the individuals who showed an interest were seemingly quite different.

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In total, 35 individuals (19 from the university, 16 from the music college) volunteered to take part, although after the first interview, two of the music college participants decided to terminate their involvement in the study and during the middle of the study a further participant no longer wished to be involved. One participant from the university completed only the first phase of the study. Thirty musicians participated for the duration of the study, although data from 32 musicians is included in the thesis (18 from the university, 14 from the music college), since I decided to include the participants who withdrew after the completion of a full phase of interviews, even though they did not complete the study, since their experiences were typical of the group to which they belonged. It is also worth noting here that not all participants completed every interview due to difficulties in arranging suitable times to meet, but such cases were few.

The participants were all aged between 19 and 21 at the first interview. In total 7 males and 25 females participated in the study (1 male and 17 females from the university and 6 males and 8 females from the music college). The participants represented a cross-section of woodwind, brass, string, keyboard players and vocalists and it seemed after the first interview that each had a different musical history and relationship with music<sup>1</sup>.

### ***3.6 Research design and materials: overview***

Due to the complexity and time-consuming nature of longitudinal research, the study was divided into three periods of data collection, each with different aims and using slightly different data collection tools:

- **Phase One (Interviews 1 and 2: first 6 months of the study).**

Semi-structured interviews: establishing contact, collecting biographical information, exploring the participants' motivations, goals, and perceptions of their experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> Brief biographies of each participant are provided in appendix 6 in order to provide a context for their experiences as the reader proceeds through the analysis chapters.

- **Phase Two (Interviews 3 to 7: months 9 to 21 of the study).**

Structured interviews: based on the data from phase 1 I used quantitative analysis to explore how key variables were changing during the transition. These data were supplemented by opportunities for the participants to provide qualitative responses where they felt necessary.

- **Phase Three (Interview 8: month 24 of the study).**

Semi-structured interview: participants summarised their experiences over the two year duration of the study and projected how they hoped to progress over the next two years.

In the following section, I describe the aims of the data collection and how the data were collected in each of the three phases.

### ***3.6.1 Period one (interviews 1 and 2): semi-structured interviews.***

The focus of period one was to get to know the participants. This served two purposes: firstly, in order to find a context for each individual, I felt that it was necessary to collect details about his/her past musical experiences, motivations for initially studying music, and important influences on their development. Secondly, it is important in this kind of research, which asks the participant to discuss his/her inner thoughts and feelings, that s/he feels that they can trust the researcher (Robson, 2002: 541). Beginning the interview process with relatively easy questions about past musical experiences could be considered a 'warm-up' allowing both the participant and researcher to relax and feel at ease (Robson, 2002: 277).

Since the nature of the research was primarily exploratory, semi-structured interviews seemed to be the most appropriate tool since they are flexible, the researcher can adapt the structure of the interview, the wording of questions and explanations given, and insert or omit particular questions, according to their perceptions of what is appropriate for each participant (Robson, 2002: 270). This is critical when conducting research exploring a potentially complex issue:



The investigator has an idea of the area of interest and some questions to pursue. At the same time, there is a wish to try to enter, as far as possible, the psychological and social world of the respondent. Therefore the respondent shares more closely in the direction the interview takes and he or she can introduce an issue the investigator had not thought of. In this relationship, the respondent can be perceived as the expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell his or her own story (Smith, 2001: 12).

The interview schedule used for the first interview consisted of two main sections: the first collected biographical information based on the following themes:

1. The musicians' motivations to learn a musical instrument;
2. The musicians' early musical experiences and achievements;
3. The central influences on the musicians' personal and musical development.

The second part of the interview focused more specifically on the musicians' current experiences and their perceptions of them, and was based on the following themes:

1. The musicians' perceptions of their general standard of playing/singing, progress and achievement;
2. The musicians' perceptions of their teachers, instrumental/vocal lessons, and the institute to which they belonged;
3. The musicians' short- and long-term goals and ambitions;
4. The roles they perceived music to play in their lives;
5. The musicians' overall thoughts and feelings about their musical participation during the three months prior to the interview.

The first phase of the study was my opportunity to explore the elements perceived by the musicians as important to their development: these two interviews would form the basis for the rest of the study, and so the questions were designed to be open-ended, so as to allow the participants to reveal as much information as possible. The interview schedules for phase one can be found in appendix 1.

### ***3.6.2 Period two (interviews 3 to 7): structured interviews.***

As described above, the study used a multi-method design, and during the middle period of the study quantitative data were collected using structured interviews. Based on the analysis of the interview data from period one, two structured questionnaires were developed. One questionnaire was aimed at those either still studying or intending to

pursue a performance career and one aimed at those who were not: the first phase of the study revealed that the career intentions of the musicians may provide more insight into their experiences and so at the beginning of each interview during phase two I asked each participant whether or not they hoped to become a professional performer. This determined which interview schedule I used. The two questionnaires asked questions based on the themes below:

1. The musicians' perceptions of and reactions to their progress, lessons, and successes or failures;
2. The musicians' short- and long-term goals;
3. The role that music played in the musicians' lives;
4. The kinds of obstacles experienced by the musicians and their methods for coping with them;
5. The musicians' motivation for participating in music;
6. The musicians' overall thoughts and feelings about their musical participation during the three months prior to the interview.

The participants were presented with a number of alternative responses to each question, ranging from negative to positive statements, for example, and these were based on the data collected from all musicians during the first two interviews. There was, however, some flexibility in the design of the questionnaire: the participants were encouraged to choose an answer from those provided, but if they felt that those options were not representative, then they were asked to provide a more appropriate response. For some questions, such as number 28 ('How do you try to cope with difficulties and obstacles?') it was difficult to predetermine the kinds of responses that would be provided, and so this and others like it, were left open for the participants' answers. These were then coded after the second period of the study was complete (see the analysis section below for more discussion of this). The interview schedules for period two are located in appendices 2 and 3.

### ***3.6.3 Period three (interview 8): semi-structured interview***

The final stage of the research returned to the semi-structured interview format. The interview was based partly on the interview schedule used at the beginning of the study

and on the data which emerged during the middle period of the study, but also involved an element of retrospection over the two years of the study. The respondents were also asked prospective questions about their motivations for the next two years. The themes of the final interview as follows:

1. The musicians' perceptions of their general standard of playing/singing, progress and achievement;
2. The musicians' perceptions of their teachers, instrumental/vocal lessons, and the institution to which they belonged;
3. The musicians' short- and long-term goals and ambitions;
4. The roles they perceived music to play in their lives;
5. The musicians' perceptions of, and responses to, their development, experiences, relationships with teachers and significant others, and achievements over the past two years;
6. The musicians' perceptions of the role that music has played in their lives over the past two years and whether its role has changed;
7. How prepared the musicians felt for their transition into either a performance- or non-performance career;
8. The musicians' expectations for the next two years.

As with the middle period of the study, two interview schedules were devised – one for those intending to pursue a performance career and one for those who had moved away from music performance. This was the final opportunity for the participants to identify any key factors in their development throughout the duration of the study and for them to reflect on their experiences: this was the time at which they described in retrospect their feelings about the transition – a central concern of the study. The interview schedules for the final period of the study can be found in appendices 4 and 5.

### ***3.7 The interviews***

Interviews took place every three months over a two-year period resulting in a total of eight interviews with each of the participants. The first interviews were face-to-face, primarily to establish a rapport between the participants and myself (Robson, 2002: 282) but also so that I could maximise my understanding of the individuals during the

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interviews through the cues provided by non-verbal communication (ibid). Interviews took place in a quiet room, so that the participants felt able to speak openly and confidentially, and were tape-recorded with their permission. The participants were informed at the beginning of each interview that our discussion would be treated confidentially and any report of the findings would be anonymous. The first and last interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes; all other interviews were approximately 30 minutes.

As the study progressed it became increasingly difficult to interview the participants face-to-face as they moved away from their original location to pursue further studies or start new careers. Wherever possible face-to-face interviews took place but, increasingly, the telephone became the primary form of contact. As discussed above, the pilot study (Burland, 2000) collected data using telephone interviews and it proved to be an effective method for eliciting rich data, and avoided the potential problems of misunderstanding the participants due to a lack of non-verbal cues or failing to build a rapport (Robson, 2002: 282).

[Telephone interviews] share many of the advantages of face-to-face interviewing: a high response rate; correction of obvious misunderstandings; possible use of probes, etc. Rapport may be more difficult to achieve, but this is compensated for by evidence of smaller interview effects and a lower tendency towards socially desirable responses (Robson, 2002: 282).

Having established personal contact with the participants during the early stages of the study, I felt that it was appropriate to conduct telephone interviews as the study progressed, and did not consider them to have a negative impact on the richness of the data collected. All telephone interviews were also recorded with the participants' permission using an external microphone that plugged into the telephone line.

The structured questionnaires were more difficult than the semi-structured interviews to administer using the telephone as most of the questions provided a list of five alternative answers from which the participant was asked to select one or two, and many of the participants found remembering the alternative options difficult. However, due to the friendly relationships developing between the participants and myself, they seemed to

feel comfortable enough to ask me to repeat the options and take their time in deciding which answer to select.

Each semi-structured interview was transcribed for qualitative analysis, and the structured questionnaire was categorically coded in preparation for statistical analyses.

### **3.8 Analysis**

This study used a multi-method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative data. The semi-structured interviews (interviews one, two, and eight) were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997), and the quantitative data (interviews three to seven) were explored using descriptive statistics and chi-square comparisons of variables.

#### **3.8.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

Central to IPA is engaging with the text as a way to understand the individual's thoughts regarding a particular event, rather than be focused on the words *as* behaviours, as is the case with Discourse Analysis (see for example, Potter & Wetherell, 2001: 80-92). IPA enables the researcher to discover thematic elements which characterise the experiences of the individual:

Open-ended interviews enable the interviewees to follow streams of thought and explore in-depth experiences that are often unformulated, yet powerful in their lives. Rather than to fit data into pre-existing categories, the purpose is to reveal personal meaning (Bresler, 1996: 12).

The main aim of IPA, therefore, is to explore meanings rather than elicit facts, and it does so because the approach is both 'phenomenological' (in that it is concerned with the participant's personal perception of an account or object) and 'dynamic' (as it is not possible to directly or completely access the personal world of the participants). This is because access is dependant on, but also complicated by, the conceptions of the researcher, whose views of the issue are necessary in order to try and understand the individuals' personal world through interpretative activity. Subsequently, analysis cannot be truly objective because the resulting analysis is the joint reflection of both participant and researcher (Smith et al, *ibid*).

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The first stage of the analysis was to read the interviews several times, so as to become well acquainted with the text. At this stage of the analysis, notes regarding key words, emerging ideas, and issues that seemed important to each participant were made in the left-hand margin. The text was then re-read and in the right-hand margin important themes were noted. This procedure was adopted for each of the interviews, and whilst it was important to look at each interview from a fresh perspective, the themes that emerged from the first interview were used as a guideline, although anything new was considered to be equally important: this stage of analysis is characterised by a cumulative list of themes. At this point no information was deselected because it was the first stage in the organisation of material.

The second stage of the analysis was to look at the main themes arising from the previous stage, and to organise them into clusters of similar themes. In order to do this, the themes were examined and conceived as magnets, drawing other themes towards them. The goal of this stage was to try and create a coherent order for the themes (Smith, 1999).

In order to understand the basic differences between the musicians from the university and the music college, the data from the first phase of the study were organised according to the institution to which the participants originally belonged. The analysis of these data revealed that whilst there were trends within each institution, the participants would be better grouped in terms of whether or not they wished to become professional musicians, since there were distinct differences between those musicians who intended to pursue performance as a career and those who did not. It seemed from the initial phase of the study that the role that music played in the participants' lives, their perceptions of their musical experiences during the two-year duration of the study and their motivations and aspirations were quite different. Therefore, the data presented in chapters five, six and seven were based upon retrospective analysis: the musicians were organised at the end of the study according to whether or not they intended to pursue a career as a professional musician. It seemed necessary, therefore, to draw comparisons between these two groups in order to establish which factors influenced some musicians to pursue a professional

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performing career whilst others chose an alternative career. To this end, all quotes relating to each theme, and for each of the two groups, were organised together, in order that the comparisons could be clearly seen. Each quote was coded as follows: (Penny: I2, 3). The code identifies the participant, the interview (1 to 8) in which the quote is located and the page of the interview transcript on which the quote can be found. This coding system will be used throughout this thesis<sup>3</sup>.

### **3.8.2 Validity**

A potential difficulty with interviews is researcher bias, and given my own experiences within one of the institutions and past ambitions to become a performer, this was a central concern:

The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions. More particularly, these will include: the attitudes and opinions of the interviewer; a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondents in her own image; a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions; misinterpretations on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying; and misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 281-282).

In order to reduce some of this bias, the interview schedules were carefully formulated to avoid leading or biasing the participant and were tested with musicians not participating in the study so that I could ensure that the requested information was clear. During the interview process I attempted not to encourage or discourage particular responses with which I agreed or disagreed, and ensured that all participants' answers were explored as completely as possible. Once I had completed my analysis of the data, I showed it to an individual who had no preconceptions of what the outcome should be, and they confirmed the proposed themes. In these ways, I tried to maximise the validity of the research design and analytical process.

### **3.8.3 Quantitative analysis – tracing the transition**

The aim of the second period of the study was to explore how particular variables changed over the course of the study. The checklist nature of the structured questionnaire used in this study means that the questions were precoded: each response could be

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<sup>3</sup> All interview transcripts are available on request.

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objectively translated into a score (Cohen & Manion, 1996: 286) thus avoiding many of the problems often associated with coding qualitative data. However, bearing in mind that there were 32 participants in the study and many of the questions offered five alternative responses, calculating chi-square statistics was problematic due to the expected values often being less than five. Therefore, many of the responses were recoded: where there were five possible answers ranging from positive to negative perceptions, for example, these were reduced to two categories – positive and negative. Frequency analyses (chi-square) were used to explore the differences existing between the participants who were identified retrospectively as either performer or amateur after the completion of the study in order to determine the factors which may have influenced whether or not they chose to become a professional musician.

Due to the use of categorical data, it was difficult to conduct time-span statistical analyses and so chi-square comparisons were calculated for each round of interviews. Where necessary, the frequency analyses are presented in tables which contain the data from each of the five quantitative interviews that occurred in phase two. Line graphs are also used to explore and depict how particular variables changed throughout the middle period of the study.

The consequence of conducting a longitudinal study, primarily qualitative in design, is complicated data analysis: the emphasis in this thesis is on a qualitative report of the findings and uses the quantitative analysis to indicate unstable/stable variables or trends of behaviour and to complement the qualitative data. Comparing how the attitudes of the participants change from the beginning to the end of the study (the semi-structured interviews) also forms a part of the data analysis.

The chapters reporting the findings focus on four different aspects:

**Chapter 4.** Institutional comparisons focusing on the differences between the participants from the University and from the Music College

**Chapter 5.** The participants who, at the end of the study, intended to become professional performers



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**Chapter 6.** The participants who, at the end of the study, chose not to pursue a career as a professional musician

**Chapter 7.** Case study examples

Within each, general trends of behaviour are described and compared in an attempt to establish the elements that characterise each group. It is the examination of the transition of those individuals who chose to pursue a professional performance career (in chapter five) that provides a context and insight into why the non-performers chose to pursue a non-music related career. Chapter seven examines three individuals whose experiences were rather different from the other members of their respective groups, providing further support for the notion of performer and amateur musical identities discussed in chapters five and six.

The next chapter discusses the fundamental differences between the participants from each of the institutions in order to provide a context for the theories of identity proposed in subsequent chapters.

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## Chapter Four

### Characteristics of music college and university students

#### 4.0 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the participants in this study belonged to two different institutions. During period one of the study it was evident that the institutions attracted contrasting individuals. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to consider more specifically the ways in which the musicians in the two institutions were similar or different, as a means for providing a context for the study as it unfurled over the two-year period. Perhaps the clearest difference between the two groups of musicians was that they had different musical priorities and goals. The participants' emergent projections for the future in terms of their ambitions and concerns highlighted this and are briefly considered below.

#### 4.1 Projections for the future

It became clear during the first two qualitative interviews that the musicians from each of the two institutions had different perceptions of the role that music might play in their futures. It seemed that the majority of music college students were aiming to pursue performance as a career after studying as undergraduates and then postgraduates:

[My] ambition [is] definitely to become an opera singer that doesn't just live at the bottom of the scale. I want to have solo work definitely. (Music college: Kelly, I1, 4)

The university students, on the other hand, were less certain of their career goals and even their plans immediately following their graduation. The majority of music college students had professional performance goals whilst the university participants expressed more confusion regarding their future intentions: some of them wished to become professional performers, whilst others were uncertain. This is not to say, however, that the music college musicians were not worried about the stability of their future:

[If you] look at the music industry as a whole it seems to be struggling on...Every year, you think it's going to get worse, and it just carries on, so you can't feel particularly optimistic about it. (Music college: Eliza, I2, 15)

Generally, though, the music college participants felt fairly hopeful and positive for the future:

I think it's very possible at the moment [to achieve a performing career], I've still got a few years to just be here and that, because of my age, yeah, I think erm, I've got the potential to be an opera singer. (Music college: Kelly, I2, 11)

The kind of confidence Kelly expressed regarding her abilities was not evident amongst the university musicians, possibly because few had clear ideas about their plans after their studies were complete, or because they were not entirely happy with the path they had already chosen. As one university participant described:

I don't see any harm in doing it [a Postgraduate Certificate of Education], and if I get there and start doing it, and feel that it's not what I want to do, I can always quit...it's not really my life ambition or anything. (University: Violet, I1, 5)

Like Violet, a large number of the university students proceeded to study a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE): many considered a PGCE to be the only path after a music degree, rather than demonstrating a strong motivation to become a teacher. During the first stage of the study, a small number of university students expressed the desire to become a performer, but they seemed to form the exception to the observable trends of the university students. Similarly, a small number of music college students did not want to pursue a career in performance at the beginning of the study, but again they were the exception to the general trend of their group.

The future goals of the two groups of musicians seemed to be related to whether they attended the music college or the university (generally the former desired a performance career, the latter did not, although there were, of course, exceptions), and therefore this chapter continues by exploring further differences between the two groups of musicians. Their experiences with others (parents, peers, teachers), within the institutions, with music, and their motivations and general personality characteristics are examined as a means for establishing the more subtle differences between the two groups. This will enable an initial understanding of the contrasts between those who wished to pursue a professional performance career and those who did not.

## 4.2 Role of others

### 4.2.1 Parents

Drawing parallels with the literature reviewed, it was important to establish how the participants perceived the role of their parents. The qualitative analysis revealed that whilst the parents of both groups of musicians supported their child's musical participation, the ways in which the musicians from each institution perceived and described their relationships with their parents, and the support they provided, differed. Generally, the music college students perceived their parents to go to great lengths to support their music-making, whilst the university students' parents were often perceived as not providing enough support, although for some an interest in music did develop as the child became more musically skilled. Since the parents of the participants were not interviewed as part of this study, it was difficult to know exactly what kinds of support they provided: I was only able to assess how the participants perceived parental support. Therefore, the contrasts between the two groups' perceptions are demonstrated in figure seven below:

<b>Music college</b>	<b>University</b>
<p><b><i>Parents offered high levels of practical assistance:</i></b>            “My Mum would sit and listen to me doing my run-throughs, and my practises...she was really good (Charlotte, I2, 12).”</p> <p>“My Mum’s played a really big role, she’s always supported me and helped me find concerts and competitions and all those kind of things to do (Roz, I1, 4)</p> <p><b><i>Parents were perceived to go to extreme lengths to support their child:</i></b>            They’re just so proud...they came up, and erm, drove like five hours to get here, watched the show for three and a half, ate dinner with me, and left at like one in the morning...because they couldn’t get the time off work...they’ll do anything (Kelly, I1, 5).</p>	<p><b><i>Parents had a growing interest in music:</i></b>            He went and joined the choir two years ago to try and understand what it’s all about...It means a hell of a lot, and he does support me more than he used to (Judy, I1, 4)</p> <p><b><i>Musical parents were inspiring:</i></b>            I would possibly like to go into the kinds of things my Dad does, erm, playing for a living...if I’m learning a piece I quite often want to hear him playing it to see how he plays it...I do find myself playing in quite a similar way to how he plays things (Penny, I1, 4)</p>

**Figure 7. Summary of university and music college students' perceptions of parental support.**

The quotations presented in figure seven above demonstrate how the support provided by parents are in some respects typical of previous research findings, but there were distinct differences in the ways in which the support was perceived by the two groups of musicians. It appears that the parents of the university musicians were perceived as being passively supportive, by developing their own interests in music, or by acting as a role model. The music college students' parents, on the other hand, were perceived as being more actively involved in their child's musical development. Perceived levels of commitment seem to be the central difference here: the music college students seemed to feel that their parents were fully committed to their musical development, which perhaps made the musician feel special, and in turn provided them with confidence and motivation. High levels of active parental involvement during the acquisition of musical skill have been shown by previous research to be vital (Sloane, 1985; Sosniak, 1987; Winner & Martino, 1983), and indeed a fundamental element if the musician is to develop necessary levels of intrinsic motivation (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996). The university students did not describe this kind of perceived parental support, and the consequences were often negative:

I haven't been practising enough because I don't think anyone really has, well, I don't think they [her parents] really have as much confidence in what I could do (Penny, 11, 4).

Penny appeared to rely on her parents' judgements of her ability; the quotation above suggests that to some extent she blamed them for her self-perceived insufficient practice. Penny's interviews during the first phase of the study revealed that she seemed to have a low sense of self-efficacy, thus she would avoid challenging tasks (Schunk, 1987) and demonstrated 'helpless' patterns of behaviour (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Attaining the approval of her parents appeared to be important to Penny<sup>1</sup> and her negative perceptions of their support and apparent need for positive feedback from them suggest that her belief systems<sup>2</sup> and motivation were not appropriate for becoming a professional musician. Other university musicians described how their parents were seemingly uninterested in their musical participation: for example, Bobbi remarked that her parents had never made the

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<sup>1</sup> Penny's father is a professional 'cellist and in table one Penny is quoted as saying how inspired by him she was. Perhaps this was a factor in her need for her parents' approval, although this was not covered directly during the interviews.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this thesis the term 'belief systems' refers to whether the participants appeared to possess entity or incremental beliefs about the source of their musical ability.

effort to see her perform in a concert since she left home. It may be that if parents are not considered by their child to be supportive, the perceived value of the task diminishes, as does the musicians' motivation (Sloane, 1985).

The music college students also described how their parents were not always supportive, especially in terms of their pursuit of a career as a performer, but their responses were quite different:

My father's never really appreciated music...he's never appreciated why we all want to go into the arts. He's a business man...He can't really understand it...He has got a lot more into it...Winning the Freddie Cox [award] at college, you know, was a massive sort of, you know, stone for me...you know, stepping stone for me. (Music college: Alex, 11, 4).

I have always felt that...it's something they don't know about...they're academics and the thought of going to music college, it's very much...out of their control...it's a bit hard to say they're waiting for me to fail...they're proud of me at some level, but they're not terribly good at saying it to me...Music was something that they didn't really do, and I loved the fact that it was my little kind of secret language, and that was definitely a big thrill (Music college: Olga, 11, 6).

It was important to Alex that he had the support of his father, and by winning a prestigious award at music college he proved that he was a good musician. Olga, on the other hand, was motivated by music being 'hers', which made her feel special and perhaps increased her determination to continue her musical development. Despite the fact that the music college students perceived their parents to be unsupportive of them becoming professional musicians, they appeared to be determined to succeed. This suggests strong intrinsic motivation and a high sense of self-efficacy: the music college students must have believed that they had the potential to become good musicians in order to ignore their parents' concerns. This may also suggest 'mastery-oriented' learning patterns – the music college students were able to persevere despite challenges or a perceived lack of support (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

The ways in which both groups of musicians perceived their parents' support seemed central to the differences between them. The evidence discussed above supports previous research findings that suggest that parents play an important role in the development of musicians, but it appears that their role must be perceived to provide committed and active support. However, the data suggested that there was an interplay between the belief systems and learning patterns of the musicians with the external support of others: where parents were perceived as unsupportive, belief-

systems and mastery-oriented learning patterns seemed to enable the musician to cope.

Many of the themes discussed above were also relevant in relation to the musicians' perceptions of their teachers. Aside from parents, teachers are the most influential in the acquisition of musical skill, not only imparting technical information, but also providing motivation, inspiration, and helping the musician to develop a desire to perform (Sosniak, 1987).

#### **4.2.2 Instrumental teachers**

Much of the data suggested that teachers were a vital influence during the musicians' development, supporting previous research findings (Davidson *et al*, 1998; Sosniak, 1993; Freeman, 1991). However, the most striking difference between the two groups was the nature of the teacher-student relationship in the two institutions. The music college students, for example, perceived relationships with teachers to be close and personal:

She said, "my God, you know, you have so much, you're so special", and "I'm so proud of you", and "I'm so excited by your voice". (Music college: Olga, I2, 5).

She'll phone you up at home and find out how my rehearsals have been going...she's given me a lot of extra time for my exam...I can go to her with any problems. (Music college: Charlotte, I2, 8)

The music college teachers seemed to commit much time, energy, and thought to their students, and the result was that the musicians felt a personal connection with their teachers. Whilst evidence suggests that close relationships between teacher and student are not as necessary as respect for the teacher's ability (Davidson *et al*, 1998), the quotations above suggest that they are. In his research of an American music conservatoire, Kingsbury (2001) found that close relationships with teachers were considered by students to be a necessity, and the fact that Charlotte felt that she could turn to her teacher with any problems supports Gaunt's (2004) report of intimate, almost therapeutic relationships between music conservatoire students and their instrumental teachers. This is not to say, however, that the music college musicians did not possess high levels of respect for their teachers:

I couldn't wish for a better singing teacher...I mean he's fabulous, and he knows my voice inside out, he knows me very well, and we get on very well. (Music college: Alex, I1, 4)

I admire her, and respect her, and look up to her. (Music college: Kelly, I1, 11)

I don't think there is a better one [singing teacher] in the country, obviously I haven't been to every one in the country, but he is quite stunning. (Music college: Alex, I1, 11)

The first quotation above from Alex suggests that it was perhaps the close and personal relationships between teachers and students that influenced the musicians' high levels of respect for their teachers. The studies of music conservatoires conducted by Nettl (1995) and Kingsbury (1988) also found that reciprocal loyalty exists between teachers and students, with each promoting the other, and the third quotation above demonstrates the commitment of Alex to his teacher. The necessity of personal bonds, whilst retaining respect for the teacher is crucial: without this kind of mentor-student relationship, it is unlikely that a musician will choose to pursue a professional career in music and successfully complete his/her transition.

This is exemplified further by the university musicians' perceptions of their teachers:

I don't really think that much of him as a teacher, generally, because he's not dedicated or enthusiastic... he is doing it for the money. (University: Jodie, I1, 12)

I don't like the way she teaches... she tried to alter my bow hold when I first came and she wouldn't even take it, I had to offer her my bow because she couldn't explain how she wanted me to hold it. She wouldn't even take my bow off me and hold it how she wanted me to hold it, so she gave up. (University: Judy, I1, 15)

The university students provided little positive description of their teachers. The comments they made demonstrated a lack of respect for their teachers, with negative perceptions of teaching style and commitment to teaching. Such comments are far removed from the close relationships between the music college students and teachers, and the university students' negative perceptions appeared to have a negative psychological and emotional impact:

He doesn't always understand when you can't do something, and it's very much like, you've just got to go and practise it and practise it and practise it, but I'm like, well I have practised it and practised it, and I still can't do it. (University: Jane, I1, 15)

The ways in which the university students perceived their teachers caused frustration and it is likely that the consequence was a low sense of self-efficacy and motivation. The quotation from Jane above suggests that her teacher did not consider her needs as an individual, implying a lack of the kind of personal student-teacher relationship



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described by the music college students, and she did not consider that her teacher knew her playing “inside out”(as Alex commented about his teacher).

It appears that central to the student-teacher relationship during undergraduate training is a perceived close relationship with a mentor. The difference between the two groups of musicians may be related to the nature of the music college: teachers are a central figure in the music college student’s life – they have almost daily contact with them, and an individual’s instrumental teacher becomes almost like a guru. The university, by its very nature, may offer several possible role models, although the academic teachers work with larger groups in an academic context, and unlike the music college, instrumental teachers typically visit the university only once a week.

A further consideration here relates to the above discussion concerning parents. The university students generally seemed to rely on external feedback for confidence and motivation, and it is possible that without close and personal relationships with their teachers, this group of musicians had a low sense of self-efficacy, and were perhaps less able to cope with their negative teacher perceptions. Rather than take active steps to improve their negative perceptions of the student-teacher relationship, the university students were likely to demonstrate helpless patterns of behaviour (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and not rise to the challenge. It is difficult to confirm this thoroughly since there were few negative descriptions of teaching within the music college group, but when a music college musician had a negative experience with a teacher, they demonstrated mastery-oriented patterns of behaviour (*ibid*), in the same way as they did when faced with opposition from their parents, and they had strategies for coping with their frustrations. A detailed discussion of strategies for coping follows in Chapter Five.

### **4.2.3 Peers**

For both groups of musicians, peers were an important source of support and inspiration, but the relationships operated in different ways in the two institutions. Friendship seemed central to the peer relationships in the university, primarily for emotional support:

Friends - I don't know - help me just get through - I don't know - they're just there for me when I need them. (University: Edith, I1, 5)

Without even saying anything, we all...we all thought the same about the people, and how cliquy everybody was...we've sort of got the knowledge that each other thinks the same thing. (University: Edith, I1, 7)

The sense of belonging and support provided by friendships seemed central to the university students. Not belonging to the 'cliquy' group was made more bearable for Edith by the sense of belonging to a different group of friends, who shared similar perceptions, and is reminiscent of Freeman's (1986) research which suggests that talented children need to be surrounded by like-minded peers for emotional support. This was also true when the university students felt the pressure of impending work deadlines:

I think it's kind of the stage of the year we're at, and everything, the time of year, and everything, and everyone's just been getting really upset and stressed, and everything, but when other people are like that it makes me feel stronger. (University: Violet, I1, 12)

The university musicians appeared to be comforted by identifying with their peers and recognising that others were feeling equally anxious and pressured. Violet, for example, identified with her peers, but this enabled her to respond more positively to the pressure and motivated her to overcome the obstacles and find a way to cope.

Whilst friendship and emotional support were the central components of university musicians' peer relationships, this was not so much the case for the music college musicians:

We all played to each other...and that was really good, because you get some nice feedback...they say lots of helpful things, and because you're all in the same situation...you all know each other's music and things. (Music college: Eliza, I2, 4)

I've got one house mate in particular who's a, he's a very talented musician and he's a conductor, and he always does his most to make me get on with my career, which I think is, you know, one of the best things a friend can do. (Music college: Kelly, I1, 4)

Peer relationships within the music college appeared to be more related to work than the need for emotional support. Whilst it is likely that the music college musicians also relied on their peers for similar kinds of support as described by the university musicians, the former group only described their peers as providing music-specific support, and opportunities for furthering careers. The first quotation above is reminiscent of the 'studios' described in Kingsbury's (1988) research, which were an important support network for the conservatoire students in his study. Other research also indicates that working with peers of similar age and ability motivates and

stimulates the musician (Feldhusen, 1986), and can therefore enable the musician to progress faster (Freeman, 1991). Since the majority of the music college musicians intended to become professional performers, focus on musical interactions and making useful contacts for the future is hardly surprising. A common perception of the music profession is, for example, "it's not what you know, it's who you know".

Not all peer relationships within both institutions were described as positive, but again, how such relationships were perceived differed:

If I want to push myself or something, it's going to sound horrible, and I don't really want people listening to it [practice/rehearsal] because you know what people are like...people are always out to "oh God that was awful". (University: Violet, I1, 10)

Violet's concerns about what people would think of her singing ability whilst she was practising inhibited her willingness to work effectively and constructively during private rehearsal. Such behaviour suggests that Violet possessed performing goals (the need to gain favourable external judgements) rather than the more useful and beneficial learning goals (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). The music college students, on the other hand, presented a different picture:

I can easily look at what everybody else is doing and say but I'm not doing well enough, and what I have to remind myself of is how far I've come and I do think I've come a long way, but I think that I've suddenly...realised what I need to do, and that it isn't just one route for everybody. (Music college: Olga, I1, 27)

This comment is typical of the music college musicians and emphasises the differences between the two groups of musicians. Olga was aware of how she compared to her peers, but rather than feel dissuaded by concerns about not performing to a high enough standard, she recognised her strengths based entirely upon her self knowledge of her own progress and development. It is possible that in terms of personality characteristics, Olga was an independent musician, one of the personality traits associated with successful musicians (Kemp, 1997). Olga was not dependent upon external feedback or comparisons in order to maintain motivation, she had an inner strength which enabled her to reflect realistically on her progress.

The element which seemed to be most central in defining the differences between the two groups of musicians was the way in which each perceived the external environment, and it is possible that their belief systems framed their perceptions to some extent. The music college musicians appeared to be independent in their

approaches to musical participation, whilst also utilising external support positively, regardless of whether it was perceived as positive or negative. The university students, on the other hand, appeared more dependent upon external rewards, such as praise, validation, or success in order to maintain their levels of motivation. The discussion so far suggests that the two groups had different approaches to learning: the music college students demonstrated signs of mastery-oriented learning, whilst the university students were more likely to exhibit helpless behaviour, by not responding positively to challenges, and performance-oriented learning. It appears that these fundamental personality characteristics may be a primary factor in determining whether or not a musician chooses to become a professional performer.

#### 4.2.4 Inspiration from 'the greats'

It was noteworthy that only the music college musicians described being inspired by 'the greats'. This was manifested in two main ways: firstly, as motivation, and secondly, in terms of the values they placed upon music. Regarding motivation, Paula described the impact of hearing a professional performance:

That was the first time I'd like listened to trumpet professionally played, and I think that was quite, you know, inspiring, to think, wow, maybe I could sound like that one day. (Music college: Paula, I1, 4)

Many of the music college musicians told similar stories, and all seemed to serve as motivators and crystallising experiences (Csikszentmihalyi *et al*, 1993). Whilst this experience occurred during the early stages of her musical development, it was still referred to as an important moment in Paula's life as a musician, and she seemed to occasionally re-visit that experience.

The other way in which 'the greats' influenced the music college musicians related more to the musical values they possessed:

Benjamin Britten and the rest of the school that he left behind was something that has influenced my love of music and my want to improve my musicianship in every way...singers with commitment...commitment to what they're doing and singing, because I think you can tell. (Music college: Alex, I1, 3)

When I was small, I always used to like sort of Stefan Grappelli and Menuhin. I always wanted to [play] because, you know, they always used to do lots of jazz stuff. I always thought I wanted to do that. I always told myself I want to do a bit of everything. (Music college: James, I1, 3)

As the result of knowing about the values of composers and performers, James and Alex, and many of the music college musicians, seemed open-minded in their approach to their musical participation and used such knowledge as a guide for the kind of musician they aspired to become. This may represent a search for role models (Sosniak, 1993), and also suggests the early formation of provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999). Both examples above suggest that the musicians were forming ideas about the kinds of musician they would like to become.

#### **4.2.5 Institutions**

Whilst much of the discussion above is related to the behaviours and practices within the institutions, the musicians from both the university and the music college had strong feelings about the general nature of the institutes. A shared concern was their frustration with institutional politics:

Sometimes you feel a bit hard done by because there are politics in colleges and you see the same people getting through and through and that's a bit disheartening sometimes. (Music college: Kelly, I1, 8)

Because it's such a small department...if you fall out with someone it could go against you as it were...you just have at the back of your mind all the stuff they might not like, and they might be marking your final recital or something. (University: Juliet, I1, 10)

The perceived politics within the institutions, ranging from interpersonal relationships to favouritism in the provision of opportunities, supports the research by Kingsbury (1988). He describes how the perceived political system had a negative impact on some individuals' personal beliefs about music. The two quotations above imply a general feeling of frustration from musicians within both institutions, although it was perhaps the ways in which each group perceived the political systems that distinguished them:

It is the constant being on your toes, that they [the college staff] remember the bad things more than they remember the good things... God the energy that I'm going to need to go through it all again. (Music college: Kelly, I2, 8)

You do find that you're always fighting, fighting not to get forgotten...that happens a lot at college...but they're teaching you to be professional right from the start as well, to kind of have this professional attitude. (Music college: Linda, I1, 6-7)

I think the whole orchestra thing, and then the same person that was always in orchestra got into chamber orchestra as well...I began to think it must just be that I'm not very good...but you do when everyone else is doing things and you're not...because I just thought I couldn't play, and when I tried to play I couldn't because I was in a state. (University: Rebecca, I1, 9)

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There is a distinct difference in the way these three students perceived the institutional pressure and competition. Whilst Kelly (from the music college) described the direct emotional impact of the constant pressure to prove herself, she showed no sign of waning determination. This was exemplified further by Linda, whose description of ‘fighting’ indicates a perceived struggle, yet also suggests that she was not prepared to give up – like Kelly, she was determined to persevere. In contrast, Rebecca’s (from the University) experience of not being given opportunities had a direct impact on how she perceived herself as a musician, which in turn seemed to create increased anxiety when practising. Rather than create her own opportunities, Rebecca seemed willing to accept the feeling of being a less good musician than her peers and did not seek a practical solution in order to overcome the obstacle. The discussion in this chapter so far has suggested that the belief systems of the musicians had a direct influence on their abilities to cope with negative external feedback, and the above examples provide further evidence for this. It seemed that the university students possessed entity belief systems (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), and therefore did not seek to overcome challenges. The influence of such experiences on the music college students, on the other hand, appeared to make them more determined to succeed, suggesting incremental belief systems. Furthermore, the music college students tried to rationalise their experiences in terms of their future goals: since they were intending to become professional musicians, they valued the competition and sense of ‘fighting’ as preparation for their entry into the industry.

From the above discussion concerning the musicians’ perceptions of external support, it seems that there are fundamental differences between the music college and university students in terms of the way they perceived the support they were given and how they responded to it. Both groups of musicians experienced various forms of insecurities, and described how they needed support and reassurance from those around them. This is where the differences began to emerge. The university students seemed dependent upon the support that others provided and had negative emotional reactions when they experienced frustration or did not receive the help they required. The music college students experienced similar frustrations but seemed more able to view negative situations with greater perspective than the university students. The music college participants described much of their inspiration and motivation as located within the college environment, or the music profession itself, and seemed

already to be perceiving their experiences as preparation for a career as a performer. They expressed how inspired they were by musical ‘greats’, or simply by being within the college setting. There was little evidence of similar perceptions amongst the university musicians. It could be considered, therefore, that these factors are vital in the successful transition and development of the professional performing musician.

### ***4.3 Perceptions of development***

The majority of participants described positive experiences associated with their musical participation, from performing a good recital to receiving some complimentary feedback. By examining the participants’ descriptions of their positive experiences and their responses to them, it may be possible to gain a further insight into the similarities and differences between university and music college students.

#### ***4.3.1 Competitive achievement***

There were many similarities between the two groups in terms of the achievements they described, although there were many more instances of them in the music college, where students participated more frequently in competitions, auditions, and performance exams. The participants’ reactions to their achievements were also quite similar:

I’m quite respected at college now, you know, with Cox [prize] and everything else, it’s brought me, you know, I wouldn’t say stability, but I don’t know, I feel quite secure in myself at the moment. (Music college: Alex, I2, 8)

I got into Royal Holloway to do a Masters in performance which has boosted my confidence as well...They only take fourteen out of however many hundreds of applicants, so I’m quite chuffed. (University: Juliet, I2, 7)

These two quotations demonstrate how achievement enhanced the musicians’ confidence in their abilities and consequently their self-esteem, and the comments are typical of those provided by other participants. The previous section discussed how there were differences in the ways that the two groups of musicians responded to negative external feedback, and the two quotations above provide some support for interactive motivation theory (Bigges & Hunt, 1980): whilst the music college participants were motivated by negative feedback and experiences, they, and the university students, still required some external confirmation of their abilities as musicians. This was further exemplified in both groups’ reports of increased

confidence following noticeable improvement (in the case of the university musicians) or performing a successful recital (music college musicians). It could be considered that if, as suggested in the previous section, the university students were performance-oriented learners, positive feedback had the most impact on their motivation. The music college students, on the other hand, seemed to be motivated by both positive and negative feedback and experiences. However, it appeared that there was little difference between university and music college students in their need for external confirmation of their abilities.

### **4.3.2 Improvement**

The majority of participants in both institutions recognised that their playing or singing had generally improved during the three months preceding each interview, but the elements described as having progressed, and the intensity with which the improvement was perceived, was different for the two groups. For example, the university students spoke very specifically about the technical progress they had made, or described their general improvement:

My kind of slide action is getting faster, erm, the kind of, the quickness that I read ahead of the music is getting better. (University: Ellen, I1, 1)

The music college students did not speak in such specific terms about their improvement, rather reflected on the overall state of their playing or voice:

It's just coming on in leaps and bounds at the moment. (Music college: Helen, I2, 1)

I'd say on a scale of 1 to 10, I'd say about 15 or something, that's what it feels like, you know, when you're on a good patch you can make a tremendous amount, and it's worlds apart from what it was like. (Music college: Charlie, I1, 3)

The two quotations above are typical of the comments from the music college participants, and indicate the extent to which the musicians felt integrated and involved with their voices and instruments: both musicians above use physical and exaggerated images to describe their progress.

When the university students described their general improvement, the language used offered a complete contrast to that used by the music college students:

I think it's just kind of a steady uphill, I don't think that any specific areas that have... obviously practice is going to make you better. (Rolleen, I2, 2)



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This suggests that the university students had steady and less intense involvement with their playing and singing. Rolleen uses very detached language in the above quotation, offering a complete contrast to the music college students who seemed to spend a great deal of time reflecting on their skill as a way to enhance their technical development during practice. For example:

I think I've made a lot [of progress] in my mind, just about what you can do on your own, you know, the power of being really focused. (Music college: Olga, 12, 3)

This kind of comment occurred frequently in the music college interviews, highlighting the benefits of reflecting on forthcoming goals and challenges. To emphasise this further, the music college students also referred to a changed approach to their practice and music-making:

I've become more of a perfectionist I guess, so I've become more accurate and insisted on myself being more accurate more of the time. (Music college: Charlotte, 12, 3)

This is perhaps even more striking in comparison to the university students who did not appear to strive for perfection in this way:

I have to admit I was a bit slack and didn't really prepare for that either [a recital audition]...I've been doing so much singing I just thought well, they know what I can sing like...I didn't particularly work for that. (University: Joan, 12, 3)

This kind of attitude is typical of the university musicians, and is far removed from that of the music college students. The college students appeared to strive for perfection, were driven to achieve their potential, and their approaches to music were both practical and psychological. It seemed that the music college musicians dedicated a lot of time trying to achieve the highest possible standards whilst the university students did not. Self-efficacy and learning approaches may go some way to explain this finding: the music college students wished to achieve the highest level of competence and appeared to have high self-efficacy which motivated them to do so; the university musicians, on the other hand, seemed to have generally lower self-efficacy than the other group, which may have deterred them from facing challenges and seeking perfection (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Further differences between university and music college students were demonstrated by the musicians' perceptions of, and responses to, their struggles and setbacks.

#### ***4.4 Perceptions of setbacks and negative experiences***

There were distinct struggles associated with each of the institutions. For example, many of the university musicians reported feelings of boredom and decreased motivation whilst in the music college there were no such reports. This section considers the precise nature of the participants' perceptions of negative experiences, and examines their reactions to them as a way to understand more fully the differences between the two groups of musicians.

##### ***4.4.1 Fluctuating experiences***

In both institutions, the participants described occasions of feeling positive about their music-making and others when they felt extremely negative. There were, however, many more reports of negative experiences from the university students, and the reasons for such fluctuating experiences seemed quite different for the two institutions:

I find it weird, from one day to the next I can never tell how my practice is going to go, one day my flute will just sound amazing and it will be in no fault of my own, and then the other day it will be like trying to get blood out of a stone, just because he's not sounding very good. (University: Jodie, I1, 1)

Erm, it's been sort of up and down, I won that competition, so I was going through a really good phase then, and then after that I went on a music course which was brilliant, and I had a fantastic teacher, and I came back here and I had sort of exams which went well, and then after that I went through a phase of not really doing anything, because I didn't have anything to do...so, erm, it's been a bit of a lull, but now it's getting better again, and I'm trying to push myself again. (Music college: Roz, I2, 1)

The first quotation demonstrates the unpredictability of Jodie's playing and suggests that she felt as if she had very little control over how productive her practice would be. Jodie refers to her flute in a relatively abstract way in the above quotation, as if she had very little to do with its sound, and it seemed that the lack of control Jodie felt over her playing caused her a great deal of frustration, signified by her simile 'like trying to get blood out of a stone'. It could be considered, therefore, that Jodie was able to attribute a certain amount of blame to her flute when she felt frustrated by her playing, since she seemingly disassociated herself from the sound her flute produced. According to Weiner (1992), a possible explanation for Jodie's frustration is that she was trying to understand her fluctuating practice and did so by making external attributions – by placing the blame on her flute. The fact that she said that

her flute would sound amazing one day ‘through no fault of her own’ implies that she did not attribute success to personal ability, but rather unstable factors such as mood.

The music college students did not seem to feel the same lack of control over their music making, rather they attributed inconsistencies to external events, as described by Roz. Such fluctuating experiences did not have the same impact on Roz as they did on Jodie: the fact that Roz felt that she was just emerging from a less positive period seemed to have little impact on her – it was almost as if she expected a certain amount of ebb and flow in her music making. Perhaps more significantly, there is a sense in the above quote that Roz had control over how she felt about her playing – she identified the reason for the ‘lull’ and suggested that by pushing herself to play more she could improve her musical experience. Her internal perceptions of ability appeared to be stable and related to the effort she invested, which may explain her determination to ‘push herself again’ (Weiner, 1992). What seems to be emerging is that the university and music college participants had different ways of reflecting on their experiences. Perhaps due to their learning orientations and attributions, the music college students could reflect positively on their experiences, whilst the university students seemed to respond more emotionally to any difficulties they encountered (this will be examined in more depth in Chapter Five). This is emphasised further by the university students’ concerns about performance anxiety.

#### ***4.4.2 Performance anxiety: strategies for coping***

Participants from both groups expressed concern about performance anxiety, but there were many more examples in the university interviews. The impact of performance anxiety on the university musicians was quite extreme:

I thought I just can’t do a recital, because I’m not going to practise, and I’ll absolutely piss myself about it... (University: Rebecca, I2, 1)

But I’m basically worried about...when I have to do it [the final recital], whether I’m going to switch back to how I used to play because of nerves, and just not breathing properly. It’s not going to be a really good performance, because I will constantly be thinking, I can’t help myself, but be constantly thinking about it. (University: Katie, I2, 3)

As discussed above, Rebecca’s performance anxieties were so extreme that she decided not to perform a final recital as part of her degree. Katie was convinced that she would forget new playing techniques that she had acquired. Only two music

college musicians reported such self-doubts about their approaching recitals, but their descriptions and expectations were different than the university musicians:

I think I'll be very nervous, but as long as I can control my nerves and get enough performing experience in before then, I think it will be okay, but I do tend to suffer from nerves a bit, erm, not sort of so that I shake like a leaf, or anything like that, just in my tuning and general kind of tension creeps in when I play, erm, and I just can't seem to just go out there and play as though I was playing in a practice room where I can hear me and no-one else can...so, erm, if I can just keep performing until then, it should be alright. (Music college: Charlotte, I1, 6)

Sometimes I sort of shift around a bit if I suddenly feel a bit nervous, I sort of make weird erratic movements with my head or something, that I don't even know about, and people will say what are you doing, so that's definitely something I need to think about, and try and sort of eradicate that from my playing. (Music college: James, I1, 7)

Whilst performance anxiety was a potential hurdle for Charlotte and James, they both acknowledged that they could do something about it, once again suggesting that they possessed incremental belief systems: Charlotte recognised that she needed to gain more performing experience in order to overcome, or at least accommodate the impact of her anxiety. James, on the other hand, identified that the physical manifestation of his nerves could have an impact on his audience, and so acknowledged that he needed to address the problem.

The music college students also reported occasions when they had been unprepared for a performance or exam, but generally tried to reflect positively on the experience:

Stupidly, when I put the form in I put some new repertoire as well as stuff that I'd already done, so I had two new pieces which I had to learn in two weeks, and so I was very unpr-, I mean they went ok, considering, I couldn't expect them to go any better, they weren't disastrous, but erm, I had a chance to speak to the jury afterwards, and all their comments were directed towards those two pieces, but that way, that was encouraging, because the stuff that I had [prepared] they all liked... (Music college: George, I2, 2)

The situation described by George here could have been extremely negative, and whilst on the occasion he is reporting (an audition) he was not successful, he seemed to have expected the outcome, and rather than feel frustrated by the experience, he felt positive that the jury were complimentary about the pieces he had prepared. However, whilst it seemed that the music college students were more adept at coping with negative experiences than the university students, this was not the case when they were placed under extreme pressure:

I mean, it was just after Falstaff, or around the time of Falstaff, and I suppose it's just pressure, and going out, I don't know, I kind of fall back into the trap, you know, go out and I just have one, and do it every time, and it takes about a month to build up and suddenly I'm smoking again, so. (Music college: Alex, I2, 7)

The knock backs, getting ill, because I don't seem to be able to recover very quickly, I think because I had been quite up and down stress, I think that's made me catch things more, it's so frustrating when you think you're in the best possible voice, and then you get something, and it can be like something that you can't even make a note and you're sitting there getting frustrated because you just want to carry on doing it, and I think me trying to sing too early when I'm ill kind of makes it last longer, so that's frustrating, they're the downers. (Music college: Kelly, I2, 4)

The pressures described by these two musicians had detrimental effects, and both were seemingly unable to cope effectively. Alex's method of returning to an old smoking habit was surprising, given that he was a singer, and it was unlikely to be effective in solving the effect that the pressure was having on him. Kelly seemed to experience a great deal of frustration due to her illness, although implies that she knew how to cope with the problem. However, the fact that the music college musicians attempted to find some way to cope was quite different to the university group:

I just burst out crying in my practice because I just, I feel quite behind at the moment, I feel like I'm not making the most of what I could do, I could do better, erm, and just been quite negative really, I think that's probably because I'm not really, I don't think I'm practising as much as I should be, I'm not having enough lessons, erm, I think I've got, I've become quite negative about it as well, so I get disheartened and negative about it. (University: Penny, I2, 3)

Penny did not describe any attempts to resolve her frustrations and seemed to submit to her negative feelings rather than fight to overcome them, and this kind of response was typical of the university musicians.

It seems from the discussion above, that whilst the music college students had a number of strategies for dealing with some of the negative experiences they encountered, there were still some circumstances where they had relatively little previous experience, and seemed unable to cope effectively. It seems clear that struggles and difficulties, such as those described above, can have a negative impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of the developing musician. A final element to be considered in relation to this is the university students' lack of motivation for their music making and their boredom with practice.

#### ***4.4.3 Decreased motivation and boredom***

A number of the university students described how they disliked practice and had lost enthusiasm for music, and this consequently influenced their progress:

Because I learn slowly, I get bored towards the kind of middle of learning things, and developing them, and, and don't get anywhere fast at that kind of stage. Erm, and so it takes a long time to get from a kind of alright stage to a performing stage. (University: Bobbi, I2, 4)

There is a lot of technical work that I need to do, and I am quite bad at sort of, you know, at this point in time, practising always comes bottom of my list of things to do, which seems really odd, because it's my favourite thing, you know, I love to sing, I love to perform, but I just loathe practising. (University: Joan, I1, 6)

These two quotations highlight what may be a fundamental difference between the university and music college students. The fact that no music college musicians described similar or equivalent feelings about practice suggests that they were prepared to dedicate the necessary costs to achieve their career goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000). According to the expectancy-value model of motivation, the desire to become performers makes the task of arduous practice worth the outcome. This may explain the boredom and frustration expressed by the university students. For example, there is a dichotomy between Joan's evident love of music, and the hard work aspect of achieving high performing standards. It may be that because music was unlikely to become a professional pursuit for many of the university musicians, the required dedication to practice was not appealing to them. It could be considered that due to their future career goals, a lack of the necessary commitment to thorough and regular practice was a characteristic of the university student.

This section has demonstrated that there were distinct differences between the two groups of musicians in the ways in which they coped with obstacles. In many respects, the music college students were more able than the university students to deal with the setbacks that they encountered, but there were times, such as when placed under pressure, that the music college students were not fully equipped to cope. It also appeared that the university students had difficulty committing the necessary energy and enthusiasm to the entire process of preparing a piece for performance, demonstrated by the levels of boredom and decreased motivation expressed by a number of this group. Their explanations for this seemed to stem mainly from their lack of inclination to dedicate a large number of hours to their practice, perhaps because they had too many other commitments, or because so much hard work removed the pleasure and fun from their music making. It may be the case that the university musicians anticipated music being a hobby rather than career in the

future, and this may have influenced the dedication they were willing to commit, and also what they wished to gain from music – in this case, enjoyment.

Given that there seemed to be an emerging difference between the two groups in terms of the reasons for participating in musical activities, it is now appropriate to consider the motivations that the university and music college participants identified as driving their commitment to music.

#### **4.5 Motivation**

For both groups of musicians, enjoyment and love of music was a primary motivation for studying music as a degree subject. For example, both groups described how they had a basic love and enthusiasm for music:

I always knew that I loved music and that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.  
(Music college: James, I1, 2)

I was really enjoying it, it was by far my favourite subject, and I couldn't imagine going to uni and not doing it. (University: Rebecca, I1, 1)

The ways in which James and Rebecca describe their motivations to study music were very different. James spoke of a long-term love of music that drove his desire for music to play a major role in his future. Rebecca, on the other hand, projected the role of music to the short-term future of her university experience, but no further. Many of the other university participants spoke in a similar way to Rebecca, acknowledging that general enjoyment was their main motivation to practice and participate in musical activities. The music college students on the other hand, provided more specific explanations for why they perceived music as enjoyable:

The feeling of playing in a really good concert...of any sort...is such a buzz you get from that, that's better than, that makes all the preparation worthwhile when it happens.  
(Music college: Eliza, I1, 2)

It always gives me good. I enjoy doing it, and it's very...it's a very powerful thing, when it's going well, it's, spiritually it's very uplifting. (Music college: George, I2, 11)

These two quotations are typical of those from the music college students, and demonstrate how music offered Eliza and George more than the more general kind of enjoyment described by Rebecca from the university group. Music directly provided George and Eliza with heightened emotions, and the two descriptions above suggest that the responses were often quite intense, especially in the case of George, who described the impact that music had on him as 'powerful' and 'spiritually uplifting'.

There were no such examples of this kind of response to music from the university participants. This refers to the discussion above about the role that music played in the lives of the two groups. It seemed that the university students had a very general enjoyment response to music emphasised by the fact that their responses to musical activities were less intense and emotional than for the music college participants. This may be because the university participants were more likely to anticipate music becoming a hobby in the future. Further evidence for this suggestion is provided by the fact that many members of the university group described their motivation in terms of their own pleasure without the pressure of entertaining others:

I've always done it just for my own satisfaction, you know, and it's never been to, you know, entertain anyone else particularly. (University: Heidi, I1, 8)

There were several other university participants who felt this way about the function of music in their lives, providing further evidence for the possibility that one of the main differences between the two groups of musicians was that motivation was guided by their expectations for the future (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000). This is exemplified by the fact that the university students needed to have external goals to work towards.

Because I've had an audition to work for, to do my recital, it's actually given us something to work for, and I think that I'm very kind of blasé in practising, but if I've got something to work to, then that's, well personally better for me. (University: Ellen, I2, 1)

Ellen's comment here is typical of those given by the university participants, suggesting that they did not have an intrinsic drive to produce music, as did the music college musicians, rather they needed a goal to motivate them to work. This is perhaps even more significant, given that no such response was provided by the music college participants.

As a further demonstration of this, it seemed that many of the university musicians had a negative form of motivation to engage with musical activities:

[After graduation] I think I'll take a good couple of years just to try different things [performance opportunities] just so I don't regret it later in life, think I could have done that, and just see where it would have taken me. (University: Juliet, I1, 8)

Once again, there was no equivalent response from the music college musicians, and it is worth considering whether this form of motivation is constructive or not: the university musicians were not motivated to achieve something, rather they wished to avoid negative feelings in the future. It is worth considering whether such motivation



offers a suitable drive for the musician to achieve their goals. As the research literature indicates, the intrinsic drive that an individual has to pursue musical activities is a critical factor in the development of the professional musician and, without it, success is unlikely (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996; Manturzewska, 1990). The contrast in the music college students' descriptions of their motivation to pursue music highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation.

For example, a number of the music college participants described how they were motivated by the desire to fulfil their potential:

Because my voice is developing so quickly, and things are happening I'm just like, god, I couldn't take the time out, I want to see what's happening because it's so exciting, and I couldn't wait to waste time that I could be working on my voice. (Music college: Helen, I1, 8)

[I want] to become the best that I can be, you know, given my talent and given my ability, you know, to fully realise that, and hopefully that will take me to the places I want to go, you know, Covent Garden, the top houses. (Music college: Alex, I1, 6)

These two quotes demonstrate the different kinds of ambition that the music college students had. Helen focused on her short-term goal which, during the first phase of the study, was to maximise her vocal development. Alex, on the other hand, looked further into the future, expressing his desire to become a successful opera singer. The type of intrinsic drive to progress and develop illustrated by the music college participants was quite different from the more extrinsic forms of motivation demonstrated by the university participants, and is further displayed in the motivation that the music college musicians derived from a challenge:

I've just become more excited and challenged by all the things I don't know...music is something that is always challenging. (Music college: Eliza, I2, 17)

It's [studying music] brought so many opportunities for growth and sort of personally and vocally, erm, dramatically and such like...it's continually giving me things to work with. (Music college: Charlie, I2, 9)

Such positive ways of perceiving challenges were unique to the music college students and demonstrated how they were intrinsically motivated by music since it offered them the opportunity to progress musically and personally. The tone of both remarks above illustrates how vital it was to Eliza and Charlie to be challenged by their experiences as Eliza, for example, was excited by everything she still had to learn, and this further illustrates how the music college students were driven in a more intrinsic way to pursue a career in music performance. The intrinsic motivation

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described by the music college musicians allowed them to dedicate the necessary time and effort during practice, made them determined to succeed and helped them to overcome any obstacles they experienced. It seems from the discussion in this chapter so far that the music college musicians had a 'need to achieve' (Murray, 1938: 166), which may explain why this group of musicians enjoyed the challenges and opportunities for personal growth offered by their musical participation (Weiner, 1992).

The discussion above highlights that whilst both groups of musicians shared a basic enjoyment and love of music, the music college participants had a more intense connection with music. They seemed to be intrinsically driven to pursue a career in music performance; they were excited by the short- and long-term possibilities for fulfilling their musical and personal potential; and they were driven by their positive attitude towards challenges as a means for further extending themselves and their musical abilities. The university students, on the other hand, seemed to have a 'music as hobby' approach to music with many describing how they preferred to make music for their own enjoyment rather than for entertaining others. Their motivations seemed largely extrinsic – with many identifying that they required external goals to drive them to practice, and others describing how they wished to take opportunities now, rather than face feelings of regret in the future.

A clearer picture revealing a contrast between potential professional and non-professional performers is unfolding, and this is made more evident by the different personality characteristics of the two groups.

#### ***4.6 Personality characteristics***

From the qualitative analysis of the first two interviews, distinct differences between the university and music college students emerged in terms of the positive and negative personality characteristics that they seemed to possess. There were many shared characteristics, but attention is given here to the main differences between the two groups.

### 4.6.1 Perspective and realism

Both groups of musicians tried to reflect on their experiences in a realistic way:

Because I'm still only very young, especially for a mezzo, I've got to put things into perspective, and not get too eager, and get upset that it's not happening. (Music college: Kelly, I1, 5)

I'm just thinking, well even if I do really badly, it's really not the end of the world, and that's keeping a perspective on it. (University, Katie, I2, 8)

These two comments represent the kinds of comments provided by the two groups of musicians. The music college students, especially the singers, recognised that there was a limit to how much progress they were physiologically able to make, and doing so prevented them from feeling frustrated and disappointed. Given the close connection between the music college students and their musical participation this was critical, since it perhaps represented a form of strategy for coping with their frustrations. The university students, on the other hand, seemed more detached from their music-making: by keeping music at a distance, they were able to keep perspective on any negative experiences. There were many more examples of this type of perspective and realism from the music college participants, illustrating that this is potentially an important element distinguishing the two groups.

Related to this is the positive attitude and outlook towards performances that was characteristic of the music college students:

I'm not really that bothered about it...I don't see it as a competition anyway, I just see it as an opportunity to sing and enjoy myself. (Music college: Linda, I1, 9)

I kind of envisage it [final performance] going well, I think that's what you've got to do. (Music college: Charlie, I1, 12)

It is perhaps significant that this approach to performance was unique to the music college students, and the comments above are representative of this group of musicians. Linda demonstrated how the music college participants looked forward to their performances, as opposed to the university students who described high levels of anxiety. As part of this, as highlighted by Charlie, it seemed that the positive anticipation of an important event, such as a recital, was critical – perhaps because it could help reduce performance anxiety and the pressure that the musician may have placed upon him/herself.

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It seemed that the music college students already had a positive approach to performance, presumably because by this stage in their musical development they had given a number of assessed recitals for their degree qualification and were considering pursuing a performing career. Their positive outlook was music-specific, whereas the university students seemed to have a much more general approach, identifying themselves as positive people in all aspects of their lives. This was emphasised by the negative personality traits that each group of musicians seemed to display.

The music college musicians, for example, identified themselves as displaying signs of selfishness:

We are all thinking about ourselves, and if not our voices, the whole time. (Music college: Olga, I1, 13)

There was no evidence of this type of behaviour in the university interviews, suggesting that if the musician is to be successful they must, to a certain extent, act selfishly rather than selflessly. Further evidence for this was provided by the university students, who seemed to care perhaps too much about interpersonal relationships:

I'm always worried, well not always, but I'm sometimes worried about relationships...and that kind of thing, I get overly worried about relationships. (University: Jodie, I2, 8)

It seemed that Jodie wanted her relationships with others to be positive and non-confrontational, but it could be suggested that such concern was not particularly useful if she was to progress as a musician: it may be the case that to avoid conflict she had to sacrifice crucial opportunities.

A final consideration in terms of the negative personality characteristics of the two groups of musicians relates in many ways to the above discussion concerning motivation. Unlike the music college students, the university students displayed signs of complacency:

I have always been good at pulling the wool over her eyes, she thinks I do loads [of practice] and I don't. I just play an hour the night before and she would be gushing the next day. (University: Judy, I1, 15)

This comment offers a complete contrast to the approach that the music college participants displayed. It seemed that rather than work for themselves in order to

achieve their potential, as discussed above, the university students were only prepared to do what was necessary in order to get by: once again it seems that this group did not have an intrinsic drive to achieve and took their abilities for granted in a way that the music college participants did not.

It seems clear that there were distinct differences between the two groups of musicians in terms of the personality characteristics that they demonstrated. The music college students generally reflected on their experiences and future musical activities in a positive way and displayed personality characteristics that were likely to enhance their musical progress. The university participants, on the other hand, seemed to consider themselves positive and realistic in general, but displayed negative personality characteristics that were unlikely to help their progress as performing musicians, such as a lack of independence and reluctance to push themselves to overcome obstacles.

#### ***4.7 Summary and conclusions***

This chapter has considered the differences between the musicians attending the music college and university under investigation in the current study. It was expected that there would be distinct differences between the two groups due to the contrasted aims and objectives of the institutions and the students that attended each. It appeared that the participants attending the music college, with the exception of only one or two at this stage of the study, expected to pursue a career in classical music performance. Some of the participants attending the university wanted to become performers but the majority did not. Despite this basic difference between the two groups, it appeared that they also differed in terms of their perceptions of, and responses to, their experiences and relationships with other people.

For example, the music college musicians appeared to perceive their relationships with other people in a different way to the university musicians. The music college musicians, for instance, had close, personal relationships with their parents and teachers, but if the relationships had a negative impact, the students in this group were able to perceive the situation with objectivity and distance: it did not seem to have a detrimental effect on their progress. The university students, on the other

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hand, did not appear to have such close relationships with their teachers and exhibited a strong, mostly negative, emotional response to them. This was emphasised further by the responses of the two groups to peer comparisons. Both groups of musicians seemed, at some level, to judge themselves and their experiences negatively in comparison to their peers. Once again, this seemed to have a detrimental effect on the university students, whereas the music college students were able to detach themselves and recognise that they should judge their own progress objectively, in relation to their own achievements and development. It was perhaps the case that the university students were too reliant on others for positive feedback as a means to enhance their musical self-efficacy, because without such feedback, they were likely to feel negative about their abilities. Since the music college students seemed more independent and more efficacious, they were less emotionally affected than the university students by negative experiences and feedback from others.

It also seemed that the music college musicians were developing what could be considered a professional approach to their musical participation. They approached their studies with commitment and dedication and this was linked to the intrinsic motivation and connection with music that they demonstrated: they were generally able to perceive setbacks in a positive way, as a means to enhance their development, and seemed to have, or be acquiring, the necessary personality traits to help them succeed in their chosen profession. The university students, on the other hand, seemed to treat music as a hobby. They had a basic love for music, but were unwilling to commit the necessary dedication and energy to acquire the required levels of skill. Many expressed that they engaged with music as a means for entertaining themselves rather than others and reported decreased motivation and higher boredom levels when practising without external goals. This suggests that they had not acquired the necessary intrinsic motivation to become a professional performer. Furthermore, they did not seem to have developed certain personality traits that would help them progress in the field. They did not have the same 'killer instinct' as the music college students, being more concerned with what other people thought of them and/or their abilities as musicians.

This chapter indicates that there were indeed differences between the two groups of musicians and they seem linked to whether the individual was intending to pursue

classical music performance as a career or not. It seemed that at this stage of their development, the music college musicians already displayed intrinsic connections with music, ways for perceiving and coping with the struggles musical participation often presented and positive personality traits, such as mastery-oriented learning behaviours and incremental beliefs about ability, to help them progress within their chosen profession. This seems to indicate that there are some fundamental personality characteristics emerging around this time that may determine whether or not musicians decide to pursue performance careers and so attention is given in the next chapter to the more precise nature of the transition between training as a musician and entering the profession.

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## Chapter Five

### **What defines the transition from student to professional performer?**

#### ***5.0 Introduction***

Chapter Four provided a context for this thesis by highlighting that there were distinct differences between the university and music college students at the start of the data collection period. The differences were mainly related to the ways in which the musicians perceived their ability as fixed or malleable and perhaps related to whether or not they wished to pursue a career in performance. By the end of the study the data suggested that generally, the music college students intended to become professional performers whilst the university musicians did not. There were, of course, exceptions to this general rule: in the university sample, one participant intended to make music performance her career (Rachel) and in the music college sample, one participant did not plan for music to form the basis of his career (Tony). Since by the end of the study these two individuals did not reflect the general trends observed in the institution groupings, the two groups were redefined. Therefore, throughout the remaining chapters, the groups are redefined: as ‘performers’ (those who by the end of the research were intending to pursue music performance as a career), and ‘non-performers’ (those who by the end of the research were not intending music performance to form the basis of their careers). The performer group now comprises primarily music college students, with the addition of Rachel, a university student who decided to continue her studies at music college and aimed to pursue a professional performance career. The non-performer group consists primarily of the university students, with the exception of Tony, who was a music college student but decided not to pursue music as a career after the completion of his undergraduate studies. (It is also worth reiterating here that six of the non-performers originally intended to become professional musicians, but throughout the course of the study decided to pursue alternative careers).

Having established the potential differences between performers and non-performers, this chapter examines the development of the two groups over the two-year period of the current study. The primary concern of the research discussed in this chapter is to



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establish which factors characterise the transition from training as a performing musician to entering the profession and the chapter which follows explores the transition for individuals who trained as a musicians but decided that performance would not form the basis of their career. Many of the performers were still moving towards their goal and so proceeding through their transition at the end of the study, but a number were close to achieving their goals. The data reported below are a combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. As outlined in Chapter Three, I decided to use the themes derived from the first two qualitative interviews to create a quantitative questionnaire which was administered to the participants in the second phase of the study. This allowed the collection of categorical data that would facilitate chi-square analyses to compare any differences between the two groups of musicians. This is a technique used in similar studies investigating musical development which collected large amounts of data (Sloboda & Howe, 1991). The nature of the data collected and the size of the sample did not allow any time-span analyses to be conducted, and so descriptive statistics are used to trace any changes within variables that occurred across the five quantitative interviews. The chi-square analyses reported within this chapter represent the differences between the performers and the non-performers, and therefore, indicate important contrasts between the two groups of musicians.

This chapter considers the quantitative data, which highlight the elements that were increasingly, or decreasingly, important to the participants during phase two of the research<sup>1</sup>, and uses elements of the final qualitative interview to complement and build upon the statistical data (a section of the final interview asked the participants to retrospectively consider their experiences over the two year period under concern in the research). The main themes to be discussed are:

1. The positive and negative elements of the performers' transition;
2. The development of a musical identity as part of self-concept;
3. The role played by teachers and institutions.

These elements emerged from the interviews with the performers as important factors

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<sup>1</sup>The statistical analyses of the quantitative data in the following chapters are presented in the form of tables and highlight the differences between the two groups of musicians during each of the five interviews during the middle phase of the study.

influencing the success of their transition. This chapter begins by considering the participants' descriptions of the transition, and then attention is given to the three factors listed above.

### ***5.1 The transition between training and entering the profession: a critical period.***

The majority of participants acknowledged the critical nature of this time of transition. It is commonly accepted that the classical music profession is precarious in nature and also highly competitive, and the potential musical, emotional, and psychological impact of these factors on the individual cannot be underestimated.

You know, three, six months ago, erm, I...was negative towards the whole career in music and the future of music to me, so erm, so really I think I've turned the corner and that's really, I think it was a make or break situation, I came out of college, stepped back from it all, I think you know, it was either I was going to decide I was going to do something else, or decide that this was what I wanted to do, so think it's taken a bit longer than maybe it was going to, but yeah at least I now know that I can do it, and I don't know that I've always been certain, deep down, that it's what I want to do, it is now though. (Charlotte, I8, 21)

This demonstrates the kinds of dilemmas experienced by the performers when they first left the music college. By distancing herself from the institution and such intense involvement with music, it seemed that Charlotte was able to reflect upon the importance of music to her and her future. When a potential performer leaves an institution, the insecurity of not having the support of a 'safe' environment may result in the performer reconsidering whether they have chosen the right career – perhaps because there are not so many opportunities available, or because within the college there is less competition than in the profession. This is reminiscent of an example provided by Freeman (1991), which described how one music student's achievements declined significantly after leaving the supportive environment of her specialist music school. The notion of this being a 'make or break' time was echoed by many of the performers, with many expressing uncertainties about how they should try to find a job:

I've got to this point where it's like well, I've got to go and try and make a career now, but I don't really know exactly which way to sort of go. (James, I8, 2)

The implication from James' final interview was that he had avoided thinking about what he could do after leaving the music college, perhaps because he was uncertain

that he wanted to pursue a performance career. Indeed, James felt apprehensive about entering the profession:

I think it's just that I've got to this point where it's like, you know, I'm now doing a postgrad and it's almost like you go through the system, and it's like you do your undergrad, and then you're like, what do I know, it's like, oh I'll do a postgrad, it's almost like sort of putting off getting out there and getting a job. (James, I8, 3-4)

Perhaps once James had completed his studies, the pressure of entering the profession had a detrimental effect on his motivation – the tone of his statement is one of apprehension, and it is almost as if his anxiety about finding employment made him reconsider whether he wished to pursue a career in music.

Many of the performers reported how this two year period was a critical turning point for them, describing it as 'a rocky road' (Rachel, I8, 14) and 'make or break time' (Charlotte above; James, I8, 10). Previous research suggests that career transitions are a difficult time emotionally and psychologically for the individual (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987), and the performers' descriptions of their experiences is reminiscent of research which has investigated the transition *into* higher education (cf. Pitts, 2004), in terms of the support they required in order to complete the transition successfully. That such a large number of the performers acknowledged that this was an important period for them highlights the need for a closer examination of the factors contributing to their fluctuating feelings of insecurity and confidence that seemed to characterise this particular time.

The discussion in this chapter relates to the performers' processes of coping with experiences and feelings they perceived as negative. Their coping mechanisms related to the belief systems they possessed and seemed to be connected to their identities as musicians and individuals.

Following the presentation of the data, psychological theories of coping are presented in order to provide a context for the emergent strategies displayed by the performers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the performers' musical experiences shaped an emergent 'performer' identity. Chapter Six focuses on the experiences of the non-performers during the transition, and concludes by discussing the similarities and differences between the two groups of musicians.

### 5.2.1 *Uncertainty and feelings of self-doubt*

A characteristic of the transition was the uncertainty that the performers felt about the future, and about themselves as individuals and, as part of that, as performers. For example, Kelly highlights the anxiety that many performers felt about finding work:

It does get a bit scary sometimes because it's so much of my life to it and it does sometimes scare you, oh god, what if I don't do it, and sometimes I think I don't know, that's a bit scary sometimes. (Kelly, 18, 19)

Many of the performers shared Kelly's fear that after so many years of training to be a musician they did not possess other more adaptive skills that would allow them to seek employment in a different profession should they not be successful in becoming a professional musician. Kelly says three times in the quote above that she found that prospect 'scary', and this was echoed by a large number of the performers. Previous research suggests that musicians have many hidden transferable skills (Pearce, 1997) and although this is true, it is understandable that the performers were concerned about the transition. The classical performance profession is unstable and so there are no guarantees that everyone will be successful – and this element of the unknown seemed to contribute to the performers' feelings of insecurity about the future. This perhaps indicates the notion of an individual possessing multiple identities which contribute to his/her self-concept, as discussed in Chapter Two. It may be that a performer's musical identity is more fundamental during the transition than at other times.

By the end of the study, the performers had more confidence in their abilities than they did at the beginning of the study, but it seemed that certain times during the transition were characterised by negative emotions, with feelings of self-doubt and insecurity:

It's [negative] when you really put your heart into something and somebody will say, well that wasn't good, you know, and that happens to everybody, pretty much, erm, so yeah. (Eliza, 18, 12)

I've had moments where I've thought I'm kind of fighting something, I don't consider myself to be very naturally gifted...I don't know...I've said that to people before, and they think I'm, it's wrong, but as far as I'm concerned I'm not very naturally talented, I think I've in the past kind of fought for it, and while I don't necessarily work hard I do fight for it to improve myself. (George, 18, 19)

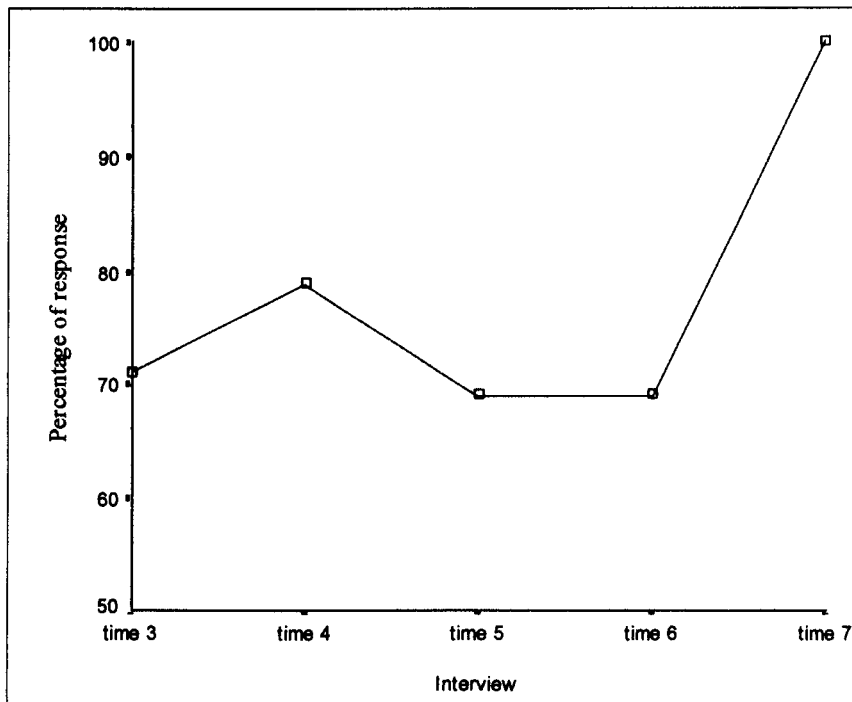
These two quotes demonstrate the fragility of the performers' belief systems during the transition. Eliza's quotation highlights the role that music plays in the identity of

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the performer: a criticism about Eliza's playing was taken by her to be a personal criticism. However, Eliza's means of coping was to identify with her peers, recognising that others shared the same experience, which may have helped her not to take the criticism so personally. Eliza tried to cope with her negative perceptions by surrounding herself in her peer environment. George's description of fighting emphasises the difficult nature of the transition. George seemed to lack confidence in his 'natural talent' implying an entity belief system, but conversely, his willingness to fight and persevere suggests that he was more driven by an incremental belief system. George may have compared himself negatively to his peers and so unlike Eliza, his support network did not assist his transition since it may have made him doubt his natural ability. However, he displayed strength of character and determination to succeed which may have aided his perseverance through the transition.

### ***5.2.2 Perceptions of chance and luck***

The uncertainty described by the performers appeared to be related, in part, to a perceived lack of control over their progress and success in achieving a career as a professional musician. This is illustrated in figure eight below, which highlights the percentage of performers who considered chance factors to play an important role in their success. By the end of the middle period, all of the performers identified that chance factors had a role to play in their success.



**Figure 8. Performers' perceived importance of chance and luck during the middle period.**

There were distinct differences between the two groups of musicians in terms of the role they perceived chance and luck had to play in their success, with the performers placing greater emphasis on these elements than the non-performers. This confirms further that the belief systems of the two groups were quite different yet central to their chosen career paths. The precarious nature of the music profession may exaggerate the perceived importance of chance and luck as critical elements and indeed many acknowledged the necessity of knowing the right people, and to be in the right place at the right time:

This Albert Herring I'm doing, I only got that because it just so happened that someone in the audience at a gig I did last summer heard me, and they'd only come for, by accident, they'd just seen a poster and thought, and they were supposed to meeting someone who cancelled at the last minute, and they just thought "oh I'll pop in and see this", and then I got this job from it. (Helen, I8, 6)

That sort of changed, again for a stroke of luck almost, where I happened to bump into someone who then started getting me lots of work. (Geoff, I8, 11)

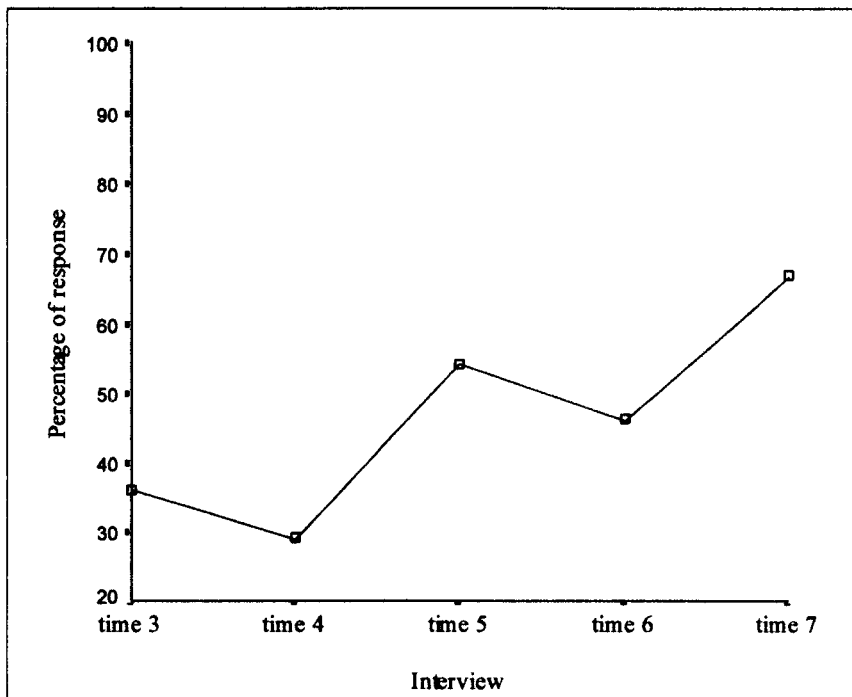
These two stories were typical of those told by the performers – a large number of them perceived themselves to be lucky and attributed a large part of their success so far to chance factors. The main emphasis seemed to be on contacts: on knowing the right people and meeting them by chance. The two quotations above refer directly to

chance factors providing opportunities for future work, and this seemed to further explain the implication that the performers felt they had no control over the direction their future careers may follow. The performers' apparent emphasis and perhaps reliance on chance factors may also have served as a type of coping strategy: by attributing success in part to factors beyond their control, the performers were able to protect their musical identities. It seemed that the performers were more prone to incremental belief systems, and therefore perceived a lack of progress in the profession as not necessarily due to their skill as a performer but because they had not been provided with the right opportunities.

It is worth noting that despite the performers' increasing confidence and security in their roles as performers, there was a gradual increase in the percentage of performers who experienced performance anxiety.

### 5.2.3 Feelings of anxiety

It is clear to see from figure nine below, that by the end of the middle period of the study, nearly 70 percent of the performers felt affected by some form of anxiety.



**Figure 9. Percentage of performers who report anxiety.**

The anxiety reported by the performers seemed to be manifested in a number of different forms. As discussed above, Kelly felt anxious about the future, describing how ‘scary’ she found the prospect of entering the profession or perhaps not finding any work, whilst others found it difficult to cope with the amount of negative feedback and rejection they were exposed to in auditions. Others also felt nervous about the process of performing:

[It was] a full recital and a lot of music to learn, but erm, it was really fun, good to do and some lovely feedback, but very nerve-racking somehow, because you know everyone in the audience and so, a different kind of nerves although they were supporting you, you sort of feel something to prove in a different way rather than when you do an outside audition and you just think, or an outside performance thing, you just think, this is where I’m at now, like it or lump it, I sort of had “oh, I’d like you to like this”, so it’s quite different. (Olga, 18, 6)

This demonstrates that the performers’ priorities for performance had changed and progressed during the transition: rather than focus on providing a note-perfect performance, the performers were concerned that they entertained their audiences and communicated the music in an effective way. Olga reflected on her performance anxiety in a positive way— it appeared that she placed varying levels of priority on her performances. For auditions she was less likely to pressurise herself to provide a ‘perfect’ performance because she wanted the panel to see her standard of playing, whereas in a public recital she was more concerned about providing a polished product. By reflecting on her performances in this way it seemed that Olga was able, to a certain extent, to control her anxiety. She approached her performances with a mature and realistic perspective which enabled her to control the potential anxiety caused by recitals, auditions, and the transition into the profession. Eliza, on the other hand, did not seem to cope with her anxiety in such a positive way:

I always have had problems getting nervous about auditions and when I’ve got nervous and then haven’t played well, you know, that’s always, it’s a struggle, so yeah, I think that’s the main problem, is doing auditions and having to put yourself through that. (Eliza, 18, 15-16)

The main source of Eliza’s concern was dealing with her performance anxiety. It is interesting to note that Eliza felt such performance anxiety, since at this stage of the study she was one of the only performers to have secured a full-time position with an orchestra; so evidently her anxiety had not interfered with her success in entering the profession. This suggests, therefore, that Eliza had developed some strategies for coping with her performance anxiety, and perhaps her acute awareness of how nerves



affected her was enough for her to compensate for them during important recitals and auditions.

The anxiety that the performers felt took many different forms and they seemed to have a variety of ways for coping, regardless of whether the anxiety was related to performance, the future, or their own insecurities. Feelings of regret also seemed to underpin the performers' negative perceptions of the transitional period.

#### ***5.2.4 Feelings of regret***

The nature of the regret felt by the performers took different forms: some performers regretted not playing well during auditions, some regretted missing opportunities and others regretted taking on too much work. Many felt that, had they taken certain opportunities, their experience would have been much different:

I just wish that I'd sorted out my practice routine better and sort of taken more opportunities, or at least tried to go for things more, that I didn't go for that I regretted not doing, I mean, just things like, like loads of trumpet players went for the Liverpool Phil job and I would no way ever think about doing that. (Paula, I8, 22)

Throughout the majority of the study Paula expressed insecurities about her playing, which in turn affected her attitude towards her music-making, but by the end of the study she had become increasingly positive and was certain that she would attempt to enter the profession (see Chapter Seven for a more detailed discussion of Paula's experiences).

Regret of a slightly different form was described by Charlie:

I couldn't believe it really, I was supposed to be there [music college] and get pissed for four years, and I never did particularly, I was too sort of worried about my voice and what the hell was going on with it, and erm, I think that was the trouble, that's what I should have been doing then, but never mind. (Charlie, I8, 15)

Charlie had learned that time away from music to relax was as necessary as the training itself, perhaps highlighting the importance of a balanced lifestyle during the development of the performer. By ensuring that he had other interests and means of escapism, Charlie was able to cope with his concerns. It has been shown that the performers had a strong personal connection with their music-making and the danger was that music could therefore become all-consuming. By recognising the need for non-musical activities, the performers were more able to control the negative psychological impact that music sometimes had.

The elements discussed so far illustrate the performers' personal reflections on their experiences and progress. The performers also offered more external explanations for their feelings of negativity about their transition, namely the role of the institutions to which they belonged and their teachers.

### ***5.3 Perceptions of the social environment***

#### ***5.3.1 Negative impact of institutions***

Many of the performers described how their perceptions of the institutions had a negative impact on their musical development and transition into the profession:

I can't help thinking as well that I'll enjoy doing things like that more when I'm not tied to this place, do you know what I mean, it's like, this building does get, everything about it I think I've just had enough, yeah, the people in it, the place, I just want to sort of get out and not be tied to this, and I think I'll enjoy it a lot more. (James, I8, 8)

James did not provide any specific explanations for his negative perception of the music college, but implied that he found it oppressive, competitive, and pressured; the consequence of this was that he had lost his enjoyment and enthusiasm for music. By the end of the study, James' doubt about his future as a musician seemed linked to his frustration with all aspects of his training.

In a more practical way, and further emphasising James' frustration, many of the performers felt that the music college had not prepared them for the reality of the profession:

I think maybe they don't prepare you really for the worst, they kind of, any place can build you up to be really, I mean there's so many good singers that go through here and you never hear of them after that, erm, so perhaps if they were a little bit more truthful to people then, that's the only downside I think. (Linda, I8, 15)

Only a small number of performers considered the music college to have presented an unrealistic picture of entry into the profession: many seemed to take for granted that it would be difficult to find work in the profession. Perhaps Linda felt that the college should have provided more specific advice about how to secure employment and the different possibilities open to her.

This is the view of Eliza and Charlotte:

I think there's lots, there's lots of silly things that I wasn't particularly prepared for like, well just things like starting freelancing and learning what to do with your finances, and

all silly things like that, but you know, that actually they didn't particularly prepare you for, and sort of going on trial in orchestra, no-one you know, sits down and says what they're looking for, or audition process, things like that, the actual sort of common sense things are a bit neglected. (Eliza, I8, 17)

I don't think the college has taught me how to earn a living at all, they've taught me how to play the 'cello, but as to earning a living it's not something that you learn here, it's something you just have to work out for yourself really, because at the end of the day they train us all to go and do auditions or go and sit in an orchestra or whatever, or sit in a quartet, but you know, not all of us are going to be able to do that at the end of the day, so, you know, there was never any kind of, well if you don't want to do this, then you could do this, or this, or this, you know, and there is so many things that you could do, but none of that was pointed out to us, so really at the end of the day you come out of here with a good technical knowledge of your instrument, but how to earn a living off it is not something that they teach. (Charlie, I8, 18)

As discussed in previous chapters, performers' careers tend to be labelled as 'portfolio' careers with income received from a number of different sources (Mills & Smith, 2003). This highlights important areas of concern to the developing musician: more focus should perhaps be placed on the more practical skills necessary for being a musician – about being self-employed, how to manage finances, how to self-promote, what the audition panels are searching for, and so on. It seemed that the lack of support in such areas of the performers' development had a detrimental effect on their transition into the profession and, if consideration was given to such factors, the musicians may have felt more equipped to pursue their chosen career. It could be the case that music colleges are wrong not to offer their students an extensive career development programme, highlighting the many alternative routes that a career in the music profession can follow. The work by Pearce (1997), for example, represented the first study of its kind to consider the extra-musical skills that musicians need in order to successfully secure a career. Research findings of this kind could be transmitted to the students in some way.

### ***5.3.2 Concerns about lessons and teaching***

The institutions themselves, as academic systems, were not entirely responsible for the performers' negative experiences during their transition. Related to the negative impact of the institution were the performers' own changing perceptions of their teachers. In the first two qualitative interviews teachers were viewed with much respect and admiration by the music college participants and teaching was highly valued by the students. However, it appears that there was a shift in the value placed by the performers on their teachers by the end of the transitional period. In the final

qualitative interview, many of the performers expressed concern about their lessons and the help provided by their teachers.

Many of the performers described how increasingly frustrating they found their lessons:

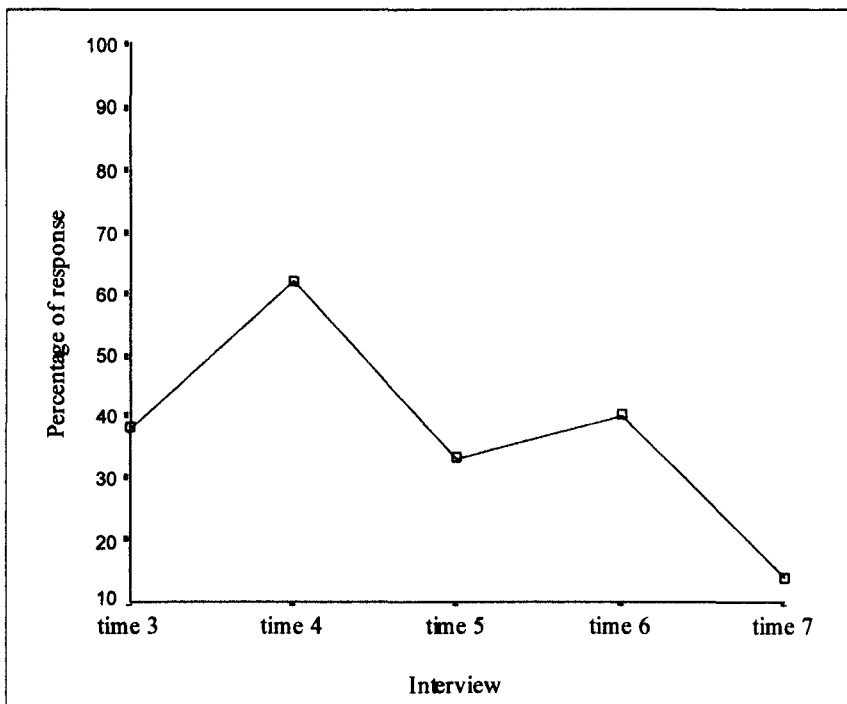
I mean I'd really like to do some more technical work, I think, I mean I think I often turn up and I say this is the note I'm struggling with, can you help me with it, and, and that's how I work, and I don't think she doesn't like that, erm, but I sometimes think maybe she'd have more to say if I had less to say, let her be the teacher. (Olga, I8, 12)

Olga's concern about the lack of the kind of teacher support that she required represented the opinions of many of the performers. She was aware of the weaknesses in her singing and seemed to have strong ideas about the specific elements of it that she wanted to improve. However, the implication here is that Olga was proactive in her lessons, finding her own explanations and solutions for the problem, thus almost negating the need for the teacher to be present. This type of reaction to lessons was typical of the performers in this study and indicates that they were becoming increasingly independent of their teachers. For example, Helen described a slightly different frustration she had with her teacher.

I think he's a brilliant teacher, erm, for certain things, like technique, erm, but he's a bit domineering, he likes things to be done his way, and from an artistic point of view I don't think he's particularly, erm, truthful or organic. (Helen, I8, 4)

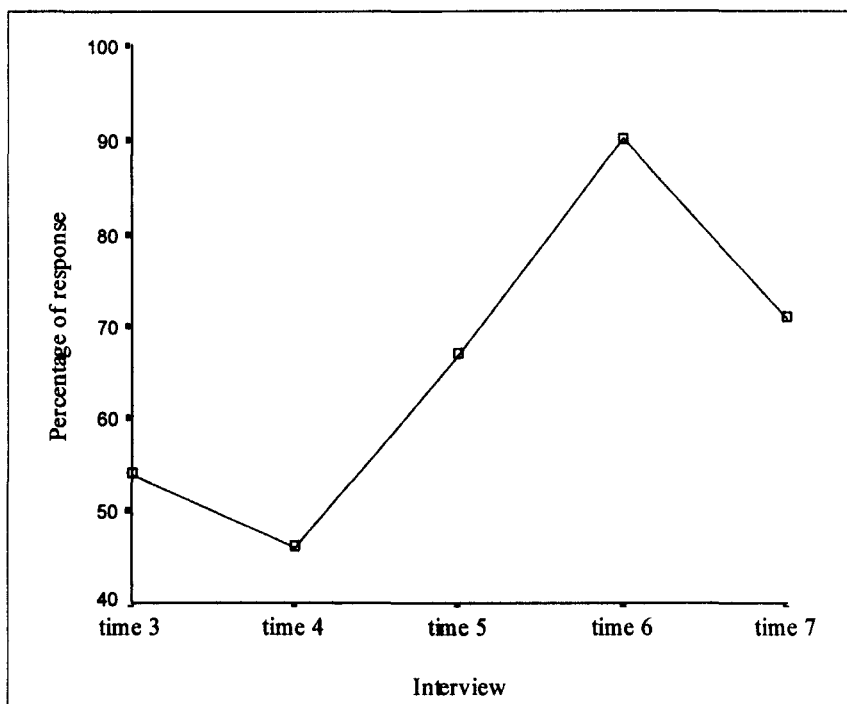
Both Olga and Helen represented the increasing independence of the performers during their training, an element which could be considered crucial if they were to become creative professionals with a unique performer character (Bloom, 1985). A further explanation for the performers' increasing independence from their teachers was perhaps that they were achieving a performance standard closer to that of the teacher. It is worth considering that if the positive progression towards independence of thought was perceived negatively by the performers then perhaps they did not recognise this factor as an 'aim and objective' of Higher Education. This raises the question as to whether the institutions should make such a goal more explicit from the outset.

The performers' increasing independence is illustrated in the descriptive statistics and as figure ten demonstrates, the performers perceived their teachers as increasingly unhelpful.



**Figure 10. Percentage of performers who perceive teachers as helpful.**

As shown in figure ten, by the end of phase two of the study, less than twenty percent of the performers considered that their teachers provided them with the help they required. There seemed to be a shift in the teacher-student relationship during this transitional period. Rather than rely on their teachers for practical help and assistance, the performers seemed to perceive the role of the teacher as one of inspiration and as a role model, whose ideals they wished to attain themselves (see figure eleven). This was implied by Helen above who perceived her teacher as 'brilliant' despite the artistic incongruence that seemed to exist between them.



**Figure 11. Percentage of performers who describe teachers as inspiring.**

Figure eleven above demonstrates that by the end of phase two of the study, 70 percent of the performers viewed their teachers as inspiring. Previous research indicates that role models are vital during the training to work transition if it is to be completed successfully (Manturzevska, 1990) and these data support such research. The performers may have differed from their teachers in their approach to music, but they still seemed to seek a professional role model to guide them in the right direction to achieve success. This was demonstrated by Eliza:

The last two [teachers] I've had have definitely been important, the last one particularly because he...see my strengths and what I was good at and encouraged me in the right direction. (Eliza, I8, 18)

It has already been shown that the performers became increasingly independent of their teachers. Whilst still providing specific technical and musical advice, there was an increased emphasis on teachers advising musicians about the profession and the niche to which they should aim. Despite the temporary feelings of dissatisfaction that the performers felt about their lessons, it appeared that they had a positive effect on the successful transition into the profession (Manturzevska, 1990). This may be related to research findings which indicate that mentor relationships enable the development of appropriate coping strategies (Wrightsmann, 1994a).

A final factor that relates to the negative elements of the transitional period under consideration here is the negative emotional impact of studying music and trying to secure a employment, which is considered in the next section.

#### ***5.4 Negative psychological impact of studying music***

There were many examples of how studying music had a negative impact on the performers: as discussed above, perceptions of teachers, institutions and the future contributed to their negative responses:

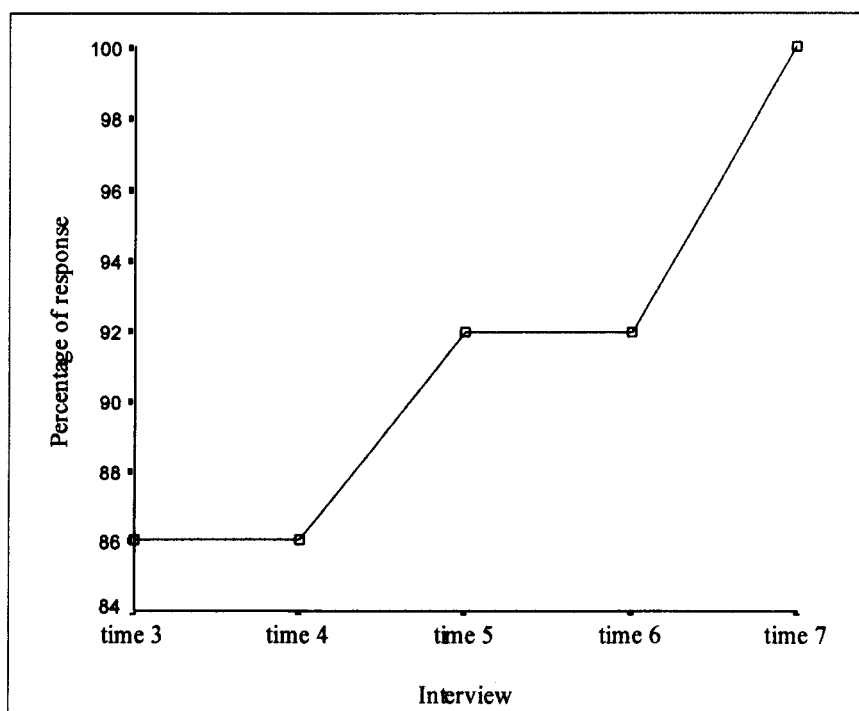
I think the fact that you're constantly battling with yourself isn't very positive, I mean I think you have to fight that. (Olga, I8, 25)

Bit depressed, bit depressed, not loving it [trying to secure work], erm, I don't know, it's made me, I mean because I've never really experienced it I'm, it's been a learning thing doing it, doing it, I mean living it, but erm, yeah, not much fun really. (George, I8, 5)

The language used by Olga and George in the above quotation is powerful, illustrating the extent to which they have both had to struggle with feelings of negativity during their transition into the profession. As discussed in Chapter Two, an individual's self-concept is constructed of a number of different identities, and it is possible that at this stage of the musician's transition, a musical identity had a strong influence on their personal self-concept. Two elements appear to be emerging as central to defining the professional musician. Firstly, belief systems of the individual were central. Incremental beliefs seemed to characterise the performers: rather than consider ability to be fixed, the performers were determined and prepared to fight for their success. The belief systems of the performer influenced the second important element – the formation of coping strategies, a characteristic unique to the performers, which enabled them to deal with obstacles and persevere despite the difficulties. Consideration of the performers' positive perceptions of their experiences provided greater insight into these two factors which seem to differentiate the two groups of musicians.

#### ***5.5 Positive features and outcomes of the transition***

As figure twelve below shows, not all participants in this group were entirely sure that they wished to pursue a professional career at the beginning of the study, but all were certain by the end of the study, hence their inclusion in the 'performer' group.



**Figure 12. Percentage of performers who wish to enter the profession.**

Table one below shows the musicians' responses to the question concerning their career intentions, and the chi-square analyses revealed that the performers differed significantly from the non-performers in their intentions to pursue a performance career, which suggests that their various experiences with music and with other people during this period of time confirmed their confidence in their ability to do so.

**Table 1. Chi-square analysis of the participants' career intentions**

<i>What are your long-term goals?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Perform	Not perform	Perform	Not perform	Perform	Not perform	Perform	Not perform	Perform	Not perform
<b>Performers</b>	12	2	8	3	10	3	8	5	9	0
<b>Non-performers</b>	2	14	6	13	2	14	2	15	0	13
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=16.081$ , df = 1, $p = .000^*$		$\chi^2=19.201$ , df = 1, $p = .001^*$		$\chi^2=21.477$ , df = 1, $p = .001^*$		$\chi^2=26.154$ , df = 1, $p = .001^*$		$\chi^2=22.0$ , df = 1, $p = .000^*$	

The performers' increased confidence in their decision to pursue a career within the music profession was further supported in the final qualitative interview, which highlighted that this group had developed a new approach to their music-making which helped them to perceive themselves more clearly as performers:



I was offered a place at the Opera Studio in London, but I turned it down because I didn't think I was ready for, it's a really intensive course and I don't think, there's a certain repertoire that they would want me to sing that I've never sung before, erm, I don't think it'd be right, I'd be playing catch-up all the time, and I think that would do more harm than good actually. (Linda, I8, 6-7)

I find it really important to do a warm-up when I get to work before we do a day's rehearsal which before I wouldn't necessarily have done ...if I've had a warm-up then I feel settled in for the rest of the day and it's fine, whereas, if I just go in straight, and because it's just so loud or whatever, or there's so many notes, you know, if I'm straight away worrying about the notes rather than my playing then I feel my playing suffers the whole day, it just doesn't feel quite right. (Eliza, I8, 2-3)

These two quotations were typical of the responses provided by the performers. They represent an increasingly mature approach to playing or singing and indicate how the performers tried to ensure they performed to their potential. Rather than be prepared to take opportunities because of the experiences they could offer, Linda would rather re-audition in the future at a time when she felt she could offer the course her full commitment and thus maximise the benefit it would provide. This kind of approach was far removed from the motivation to gain as much experience as possible, as described by the music college musicians during the first interviews, and demonstrates how, by the end of the study, the performers reflected not only on what experience could be gained from taking particular opportunities but also on what they had to offer as musicians. At the end of the study they seemed less inclined to take a job or placement simply because of the experience it would provide – it had to be relevant and likely to have a specific impact on their development and future career. This is reminiscent of the quote from Yo-Yo Ma in Chapter Two, which demonstrated how important it is for the musician to achieve a balance between choosing the right work and balancing it with time to relax. An additional consideration is that Linda wanted to make a good impression, but felt she did not yet have the necessary skills for the job. She was unwilling to take the opportunity offered as she may have jeopardised any future with the Opera Studio and seemed to be concerned with building a reputation as a performer.

Like Linda, Eliza wished to make a good impression. It is possible that she had observed her colleagues in the orchestra warming-up, or that she had learned through her experience of playing with this orchestra that she would perform better having done so. It represented a professional dedication to her work. Eliza seemed to be thinking about a future within the profession and wanted to both maintain her already

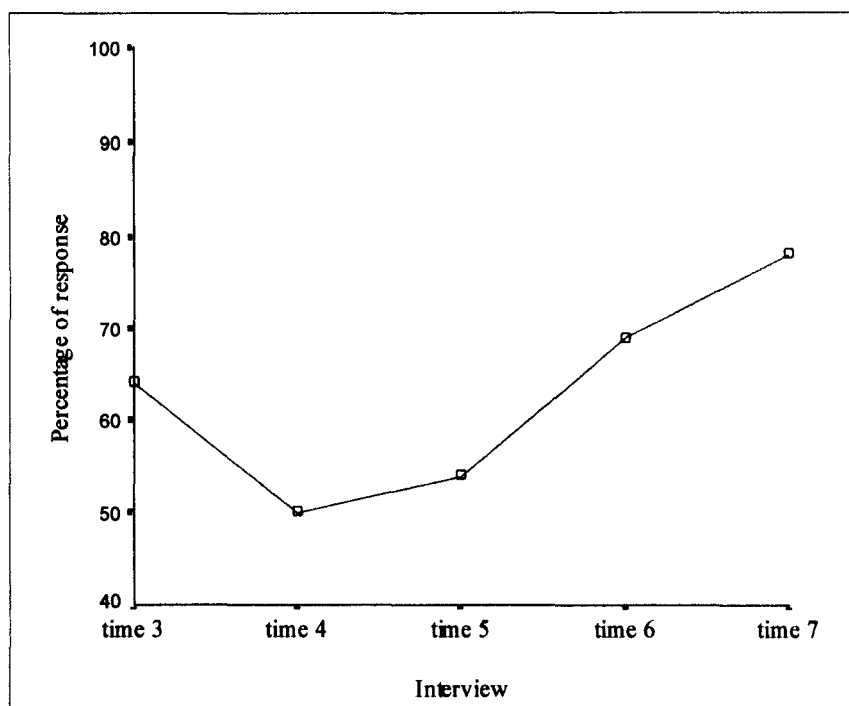
high level of skill and also, like any high level athlete, wanted to prevent any potential injury by not warming up thoroughly.

There was a clear shift in the performers' approach to music-making throughout the study, with the majority describing an increased dedication to and reflection on their musical participation. This was demonstrated by Olga, who described how her priorities for her singing were changing:

I don't know about in the last three months, but erm, using text, making text the priority I think, I had been very sound obsessed, and whilst I've spoken in a very sound obsessed way this evening I think I'm not performing in that way, I think I'm allowing the text to be the reason to sing, erm, and something I learned at the night class, you know the course I was doing, was kind of the reason you sing it is because saying it isn't enough, erm, and I try to remember that, erm, and that's helped. (Olga, 18, 9)

The above quotation demonstrates how, at the end of the study, Olga was beginning to consider her role as a performer and how to best communicate her musical and emotional intentions. She seemed to be moving away from being concerned wholly with the way her voice sounded from her own perspective and towards reflecting on how to affect an audience during a performance. This group of musicians wished to fulfil their potential, not only in terms of their technical skill, but more importantly as performers communicating emotionally and musically to their audience. This suggests that the performers had an increasingly considered approach to how their music-making would affect the audience (a more professional approach?). The performers seemed to rely on music as a way to communicate their emotions (see Chapter Four) and, as I suggested above, it may be that during the transition from training to work an individual's musical identity is the strongest influence on their self-perceptions and choice to become a professional performer.

The descriptive data suggest that the performers' determination to succeed motivated them to pursue their chosen career and perhaps provided the drive to develop the necessary dedication to the development of their musical skill. Figure thirteen shows that there was a gradual increase during phase two of the study in the number of performers who identified determination as a primary motivator.



**Figure 13. Percentage of performers who are motivated by their determination to succeed.**

It may be that, as the performers moved closer towards their goal of entering the profession, they needed to develop a firm sense of determination to help them achieve their ambitions. This was perhaps a result of the transition under examination; as the performers became more certain of their goals and their capability to achieve them, the determination to overcome the inevitable struggles and difficulties was necessary to successfully complete the transition.

Further evidence of this was provided by the qualitative interviews, in which it emerged that the performers enjoyed a challenge:

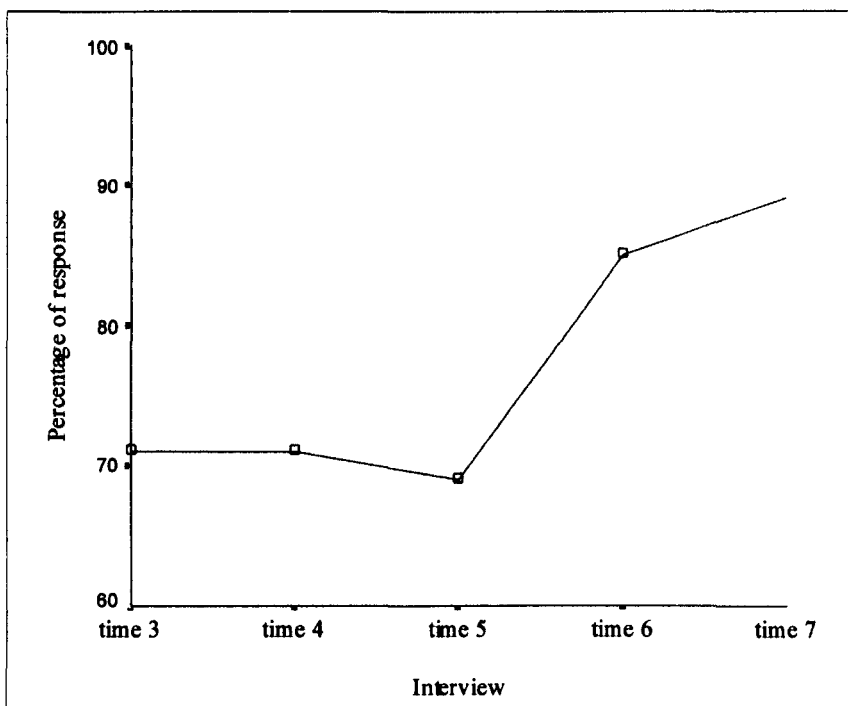
I think it's [music] intellectually very challenging, I like that I think, I've always enjoyed kind of mental stimulation, I used to really enjoy maths at school, and that kind of stuff, just that kind of mental stimulation, I, I get that from my involvement in music and in striving for high standards I think that kind of using your brain in that kind of driven way is stimulating, I think it's one of the biggest things I get from it. (George, I8, 12)

I was the lead role, and that was very exciting, because I'd never really done anything, and it was exhausting and frightening and stuff, but actually very rewarding and challenging. (Olga, I8, 6)

It seemed that Olga and George were both driven by the different challenges they perceived in music and through their approach to, and experiences of the challenges,

they developed more confidence in their capabilities as musicians. Rather than focus on the potentially negative feelings or outcomes of the transition and training as a musician, the performers tried to use such experiences positively as a guide for how to fulfil their potential.

The belief systems that the performers appeared to develop throughout the transition were perhaps further influenced by their success in various events. Previous research indicates that an intrinsic drive to succeed is an integral factor in determining musical success (Davidson *et al*, 1996), although it needs to be moderated by external sources (Bigges & Hunt, 1980). As figure fourteen shows, there was a gradual increase in the percentage of performers who reported that their success in events such as auditions and recitals acted as a form of motivation and inspiration.



**Figure 14. Percentage of performers who are motivated by success.**

The interview in phase three provided additional evidence for how success and positive feedback motivated the performers:

I did an audition in London for the orchestra that I did last year in Germany and it was, the trumpet tutor was there doing the auditions and erm, he spoke to me afterwards and he was like really impressed and he was like, what have you been doing since I last saw

you, and he thought I'd really improved, so that was really encouraging actually, and so he's just invited me to come back next year, and he thought I was really musical and stuff and really communicated it well on stage, so I was surprised at that, that did boost me quite a lot actually. (Paula, I8, 16-17)

The renewed confidence that Paula felt after the audition emphasises that whilst the performers had an intrinsic drive to perform, it needed to be moderated by external feedback. It was suggested above that the performers had a particularly volatile musical identity, which during this transition, appeared to have a particularly strong impact on self-concept. The theories of provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999) and interactive motivation (Bigges & Hunt, 1980) discussed in Chapter Two, suggest that individuals may rely on external feedback from other people to confirm or reject the emergent personality characteristics which enabled them to cope during times of transition. The case of Paula, who struggled throughout the transition, demonstrates how external feedback from a respected musician had a profound impact on her motivation and self-belief.

A further element connected to the influence of determination and success on the motivation of the performers was the difference between the two groups of musicians in terms of their motivation to fulfil their potential. Table two shows the musicians' responses to the question concerning whether or not they are motivated by a desire to fulfil their potential and the chi-square analyses reveal that there are statistically significant differences between the two groups in all interviews.

**Table 2: Musicians' motivation to fulfil potential.**

<i>Are you motivated by a desire to fulfil your potential?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Performers	14	0	14	0	13	0	12	1	8	1
Non-performers	4	12	9	7	8	3	4	13	2	11
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=17.500$ , df = 1, $p = .000^*$		$\chi^2=7.989$ , df = 1, $p = .007^*$		$\chi^2=9.151$ , df = 1, $p = .006^*$		$\chi^2=14.001$ , df = 1, $p = .000^*$		$\chi^2=11.589$ , df = 1, $p = .002^*$	

As part of this transitional period, the performers developed strong, intrinsic forms of motivation (determination to achieve goals and fulfil potential). This drove them to take part in auditions and competitions and to pursue a career in performance despite the struggles they may have encountered. This was illustrated by Linda:

[I want to] erm, get through Don Giovanni, erm, and just do a good job in Cardiff [Singer of the Year competition] really, yeah, you know, I'm not going, I'm not going in it to win it, I'm going in just to do my best really, yeah. (Linda, 18, 6)

Linda was motivated not by the prestige of winning the competition, but more by her desire to sing well for herself – to fulfil her potential and meet her own standards. In doing so, Linda was able to feel secure and remain self-confident in her abilities, knowing that she sang to the best of her ability, even if she was not successful in the competition. This suggests that the performers' engagement in musical activities enhanced their sense of self-concept as they were able to challenge themselves by setting personal goals and having the opportunity to fulfil their potential. They could also moderate their progress externally by their success in specific events.

The performers were further distinguished from the non-performers by the role that they perceived music to play in their lives. Table three shows the musicians' responses to the question which asked 'How central is music to you?' and the chi-square analyses showed that throughout phase two of the study, the two groups differed significantly, or near significantly, in their perceptions of music being central to them and their lives.

**Table 3. Centrality of music to the musicians' lives.**

<i>How central is music to you?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Most central	Not too central	Most central	Not too central	Most central	Not too central	Most central	Not too central	Most central	Not too central
Performers	11	3	11	3	11	2	8	5	6	3
Non-performers	2	14	7	9	9	7	3	14	3	10
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=13.274$ , df = 1, $p = .001^*$		$\chi^2=3.772$ , df = 1, $p = .052$		$\chi^2=2.696$ , df = 1, $p = .130$		$\chi^2=6.112$ , df = 1, $p = .023^*$		$\chi^2=4.180$ , df = 1, $p = .054$	

The performers indicated that music was very central, or essential to them, which suggests that in order to become a professional musician, music has to become a relatively integral part of the musician's life. A possible explanation for this may be that the personal connection the performers had with music contributed to their motivation and determination to pursue professional performance as a career and also to their identity as a musician. Perhaps this is a critical feature of the transition from training to entering the profession as such elements seem to be responsible for forming and enhancing an individual's self-concept and musical identity.

It appears from the discussion above that there were a number of positive developments during the transition from training as a musician to entering the profession, and these generally contributed to the individual's motivation and determination to continue with their studies and pursuit of a performance career. Indeed, the interviews in phase three indicated that the performers generally felt positive about their transition and their personal developments throughout.

I think I'm enjoying myself more now playing than I have been for the last two years simply because of that, because the pressure's off, and I can just enjoy it and because in a way you're, you know, I feel confident, I have been given a job, lots of other people could have been, and it was me, so I must be doing something right, erm, so I think that's the main thing, it is, you know, these two years are the difficult time for so many people, it's just hanging on and see what happens. (Eliza, I8, 14)

I'm feeling freer socially, somehow...more socialising, more going to see other stuff, somebody saying "I've got tickets to the cinema, or a play" or something, and doing other kinds of, it's still artsy-ish I know, but yeah, seeing other things, going away a bit...just getting out a bit, it's still ticking away, so I'm not panicking about it so much perhaps. (Olga, I8, 20)

The quotation emphasises the role that success played in Eliza's increased confidence – the fact that she was given a full-time job provided the reassurance that she was a good musician and was able to compete with the many other musicians also applying for jobs. Eliza also highlighted how difficult the transition could be, again emphasising how determined and focused a musician must be if they wish to enter the performance profession. Olga's new found relaxed approach to music was perhaps related to an increasingly professional approach to music<sup>2</sup>: she no longer needed to focus primarily on her musical participation. It seems that music had become a more routine and stable part of Olga's life, in much the same way as any job becomes and therefore she felt that she was able to concentrate on other aspects of her life. This may provide additional evidence for the theory of multiple identities – Olga's musical identity may have been central to her self-concept, but she was now developing other elements in her life that would enable her to forget work and relax. This represents a progression from the early interviews, when many of the music college participants expressed an inability to detach themselves from their musical activities. This suggests that music was becoming more like a job for these

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<sup>2</sup> By using the term 'professional' I am referring to a performance-centred approach characterising the musician's musical participation. Pleasing and communicating with an audience is a primary concern, but this group were beginning to consider music as a job – ensuring they were healthy and dedicated and they tried not to let their musical involvement become all-consuming (as is the potential danger with a professional performance career – recall Yo-yo Ma and his musical experiences in chapter two).

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musicians: music constitutes one part, probably the most significant, of the performer's self-concept, but in order for it not to be unhealthy, a more relaxed approach prevented it from becoming an obsession.

As the performers approached the completion of the transition from training to entering the profession they became increasingly confident in their abilities to do so, and developed a more professional approach to their music-making. The performers were mindful of what was best for themselves and their musical development. They were not willing to take all opportunities they were presented with – only those they felt would benefit them and to which they could offer something. The performers seemed to spend increased time considering their role as 'performer', showing more reflection on their performance priorities, again emphasising their increasing professionalism. They displayed strong intrinsic motivation to achieve their goals and fulfil their potential, and this seemed to be reinforced by their success in auditions and recitals. The self-concept of the performer was undergoing a transition during the change from training to work and a musical identity seemed to constitute a large part of it. The majority of the performers acknowledged that this was a critical time of transition and generally recognised the outcomes of this time as positive, especially given that they felt less pressured, more relaxed and more able to focus on other, non-musical aspects of their lives. Central to the developments that occurred during the transition was the musicians' ability to cope with the struggles and setbacks.

Research in musical development has tended to underestimate the stressful nature of the training to work transition and there has been no research (of which I am aware) that has considered the importance of coping strategies to musicians' development. The musicians' processes for coping seemed to be related to whether or not they chose to pursue a career in performance and appeared to be inextricably linked to their belief systems. The next section considers the psychological literature concerning coping strategies in order to provide a context for understanding the ways in which the performers appear to cope with their experiences during the transition.



### 5.6 Coping strategies: a research context

Research investigating successful athletes demonstrates that they have more effective cognitive strategies for coping than less successful athletes (Williams & Leffingwell, 2002). Therefore, it can be presumed that in order to succeed in highly skilled performance domains (such as in sport and music), it is necessary to possess strategies for coping with the pressure of competition and performance events, intense and isolated periods of rehearsal, and potential failure. Such strategies include rational thinking and self-talk, and positive focus and orientation (Gould *et al*, 1993, cited *ibid*: 76). Strategies such as these can counteract an individual's negative thoughts about ability: for example, instead of thinking of a performance in terms of an event where they may embarrass themselves, thoughts are reframed as an opportunity to see how much progress has been made and identify where improvement is still needed (Williams & Leffingwell, 2002). There was much evidence of these kinds of positive strategies amongst the performers in this study: Linda, for example, focused on what could be learned from the experience of singing in an international competition rather than on winning and towards the end of the study George discussed his enjoyment of challenging experiences.

Other research suggests that there are certain personal resources that influence an individual's ability to cope during times of transition. These include personal and demographic resources<sup>1</sup>, and psychological resources<sup>2</sup>. In terms of the study reported in this thesis, the personal and demographic resources of the participants were generally the same – they were all progressing through the same stage of life transition, were of similar ages and socioeconomic status and were all British. Therefore, a consideration of individuals' psychological resources may be more pertinent for this thesis. Sugarman (2001) suggests that:

A cluster of somewhat overlapping personality characteristics has been linked with more effective coping, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, mastery, internal locus of control, self-confidence, and flexibility. A thread running through many of these constructs is the extent to which the individuals regard their life experiences as being under their own control. At a higher level of generality, concepts such as optimism and hardiness also invoke this theme of personal control (2001: 154).

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<sup>1</sup> These refer to an individual's age and stage of life, such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Such cultural contexts provide the individual with different resources and available opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> The personal characteristics that act as a mediator between the challenges presented to the individual and the ways in which s/he responds to them.

The data presented in this chapter highlight that the performers were characterised by increasing levels of confidence as musicians and individuals, with strong ideas of their performance values and their ability to achieve their goals. The performers tried to reflect positively on their experiences and I have suggested that they possessed incremental belief systems, which enabled them to feel a sense of control over their musical development.

An individual's level of maturity and his/her personal values are also part of their psychological resources. Fiske and Chiriboga (1990, cited in Sugarman, 2001: 154) propose a seven-category typology, which suggests that a particular life event or transition is influenced by our values and priorities at the time. Their typology is summarised in figure fifteen below (from Sugarman, 2001: 154):

### **Values and priorities (adapted from Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990)**

- Achievement and work – economic competence, rewards, success, social status
- Good personal relations – love and affection, happy marriage, friends
- Philosophical and religious – including concern with the meaning of existence and adherence to an ethical code
- Social service – helping others, community service, etc.
- Ease and contentment – simple comforts, security, relaxation
- Seeking enjoyment – recreation, exciting experiences
- Personal growth – self-improvement, being creative.

**Figure 15: Typology of Psychological Resources (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990)**

Many of the themes discussed in this chapter are in line with this seven-category typology. The performers emphasised personal growth, enjoyment, achievement,

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ease and contentment, and good personal relations, which suggests that these are fundamental elements of the coping process for musicians.

Aside from the personal characteristics, the support systems available to the individual are also central to coping ability. Support may be provided by friendships, partners, and family, but also by institutions and communities (Toffler, 1970, *ibid*). Toffler presents the idea of ‘stability zones’, which allow an individual to cope with change and complexity during a transition. The stability zones are associated with people and long-standing relationships; ideas, such as a professional commitment to a cause; places, such as home which is familiar; things, comforting possessions; and organisations, with which the individual identifies. Chapter Four discussed the different ways in which the university and music college musicians perceived the support provided by their peer group, and the data suggest that being surrounded by like-minded peers was of great importance to the music college participants in particular. Furthermore, this chapter has discussed how the music college environment was of central importance to the performers in terms of preparation and motivation for entry into the profession.

There has been little consideration, as far as I am aware, of how musicians cope during the transition from college to work, but it is clear to see how the psychological theory may relate to musicians. As discussed in Chapter Two, the interaction between the personal characteristics of the individual and his/her environment is a central feature of development throughout life and the process of coping appears to be no different. It is striking that all of the musicians intending to become professional performers displayed evidence of coping strategies, such as recognising the positive benefits of negative feedback and experiences, and becoming increasingly independent and determined as musicians. As discussed in the next chapter, the non-performers did not seem to acquire such strategies for coping.

Throughout this chapter I have suggested that the performers’ musical identity was a central component of the self-concept during the transition from training as a musician and entering the profession. It is possible that an individual’s musical identity interacts with his/her belief systems and coping strategies, and so a more

detailed consideration of the nature of the performers' emergent musical identity is considered below.

### ***5.7 The development and definition of a 'performer' identity***

In addition to their general musical development it seems that the performers felt they had been through a psychological transition which had an impact on the ways in which they reflected on their musical and life experiences.

I mean I haven't specifically tried, I think besides dealing with say disappointment, I haven't made any effort to, to change in those ways, I think that's just me evolving as a person, I haven't kind of gone out to do that, so I'm neither disappointed or happy, it's just kind of evolved, I'm just reflecting on you know, that change really, so. In terms of dealing with these different, various experiences, disappointment, success, erm, motivation, unmotivation, stress, all these things, I think I'm pleased with my progress and dealing with those things. (George, I8, 15)

George's experiences shaped his attitudes and perceptions of his music-making, which implies that the performer identity is malleable and dependent upon the individual's experiences within the social environment (Sugarman, 2001). Whilst his comments were related to the way he perceived his reactions to his musical experiences, Olga demonstrated a slightly different form of development:

I think I've grown up, I think I've opened my eyes to the many ways that you can find yourself performing, rather than there being just one that I was crap at, so I think that's a big deal, finding that you can kind of, not exactly make your own route, but tailor your own way a bit, erm, I think that's been a big change, erm, the most, the biggest change for me has been feeling that I can do rather than I can't and that's just important to me, and it's not that I feel I can against all odds, but I did feel I couldn't and I was really fighting and I didn't know why I was still fighting, but I definitely wasn't quite ready to give it up, but I didn't feel I had real reason not to, and now I've found a reason not to. (Olga, I8, 26)

The performers' comments suggest that due to the nature of training at music college the focus is on what the musician needs to improve rather than on what they already do well. Perhaps a fundamental feature of this transition was the individual's recognition of what their abilities were and what they could offer as a musician, which in turn fuelled their motivation to continue searching for work. The kinds of comments provided by Olga and George were representative of all the performers and suggest that one of the most fundamental developments during this transitional phase was increased self-confidence, both musically and personally which serves as motivation for them to persevere despite the occasional setbacks they may have experienced. As suggested throughout this chapter, incremental beliefs have the most positive implications for the performers, allowing them to cope more successfully.

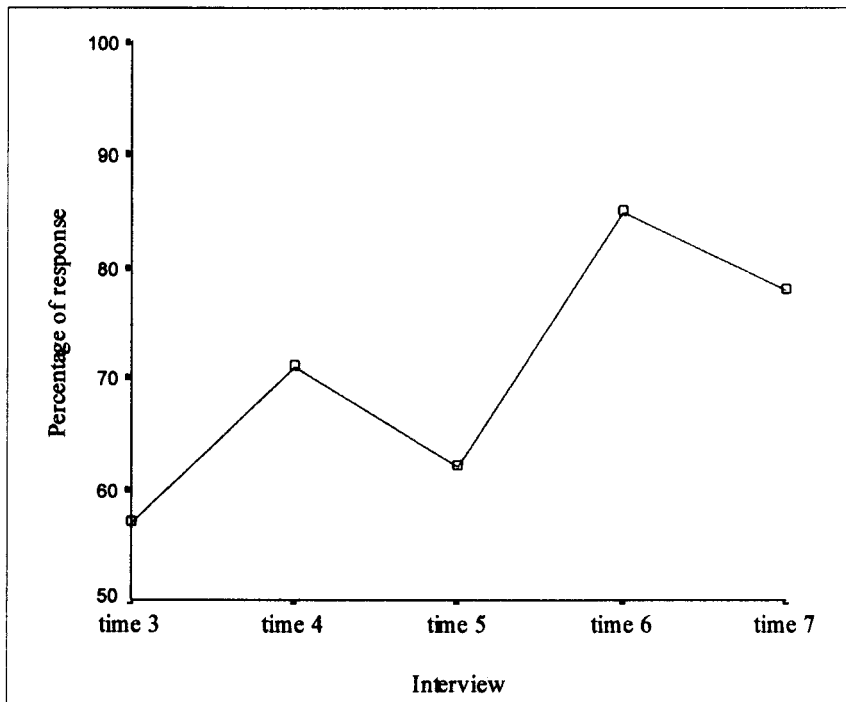
This was emphasised by the fact that over the duration of the study, the performers' engagement with music seemed to have assisted in their developing self-concepts and enabled them to develop a performer identity:

Because it's such a big part of me, I kind of see myself through the music, so if I'm doing well then that's good and when I'm not doing well, then that's terrible. (Charlotte, I8, 16)

It [music] gives you self-satisfaction and I don't know, it's a nice feeling, and it's good to know that you do something really well, at least you know one thing, you know, I might not know enough about any other stuff, but I know about singing I suppose and about music, erm, and also about how you feel, you really do look at yourself, there's something about music and being a performer that you really do question who you are, and I don't think I would have gone through the journeys I have done if I hadn't have done this. (Kelly, I8, 12)

The performers' perceptions of their musical ability seemed to shape how they perceived themselves as individuals. There was a strong interaction between the individual's identity in music and their personal self-concept during the transition and therefore the musicians' musical participation was a framework through which they could reflect upon themselves, providing opportunities to learn from different and extreme experiences. This again emphasises the ever-changing, malleable nature of the performer identity. The way Charlotte felt about her playing and performances determined how she felt about herself, reminiscent of the above discussion about how music had both a positive and negative psychological effect on the performer. Kelly strongly identified with music which provided her with self-confidence.

This is further supported by the graph in figure sixteen, which highlights that musical performances enhanced the self-confidence of increasing numbers of performers.



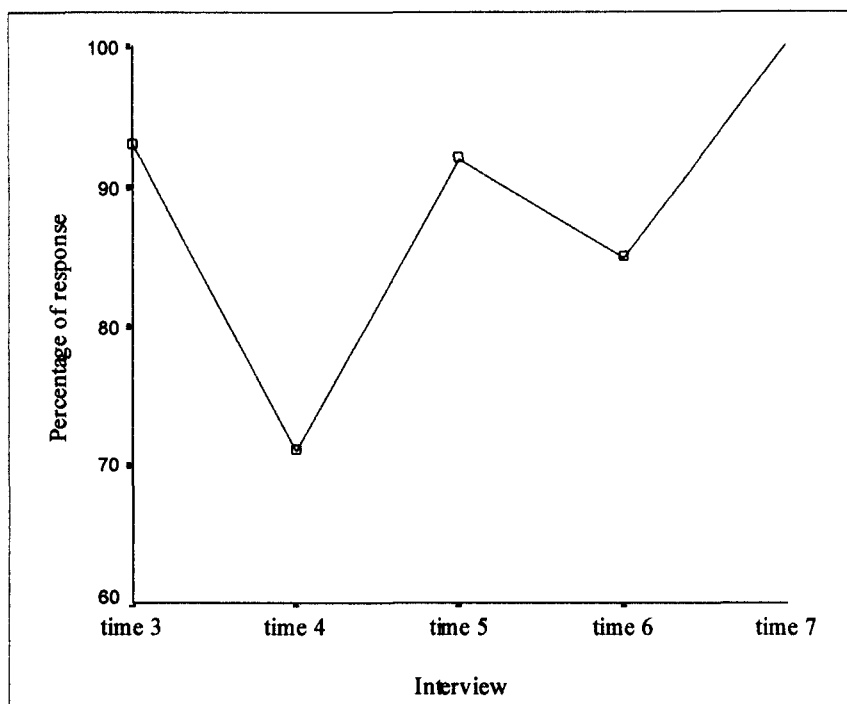
**Figure 16. Percentage of performers for whom musical performance provides self-confidence.**

Table 4 shows the musicians' responses to the question which asked whether or not musical performances contributed to their self-confidence and the chi-square analyses indicated that the difference between the two groups is near significance in interview 6 and statistically significant in interview 7. Approximately eighty percent of the performers acknowledged that musical performances contributed to their self-confidence.

**Table 4. Does music provide the musicians with self-confidence?**

<i>Does music offer you self-confidence?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Performers</b>	7	8	10	5	9	6	11	4	9	4
<b>Non-performers</b>	5	7	5	7	5	7	5	8	2	7
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=.067$ , df = 1, $p = .795$		$\chi^2=1.688$ , df = 1, $p = .194$		$\chi^2=.898$ , df = 1, $p = .343$		$\chi^2=3.458$ , df = 1, $p = .063$		$\chi^2=4.701$ , df = 1, $p = .040^*$	

To emphasise further how music contributed to the self-concept of the performers, the descriptive statistics indicated that music was perceived as offering the performers a means for self-expression.



**Figure 17. Percentage of performers who rely on music as a form of self-expression.**

Table five shows the musicians' responses to the question which asked whether or not music serves as a form of self-expression and the chi-square analyses reveal that by the end of this period, all performers believed this to be the case and that this was significantly different from the non-performers.

**Table 5. Music as a vehicle for self-expression.**

<i>Does music serve as a form of self-expression</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Performers</b>	13	1	10	4	12	1	11	2	9	0
<b>Non-performers</b>	8	8	11	5	10	6	11	6	7	6
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=6.531$ , df = 1, $p = .017^*$		$\chi^2=0.026$ , df = 1, $p = .596$		$\chi^2=3.480$ , df = 1, $p = .074$		$\chi^2=1.493$ , df = 1, $p = .212$		$\chi^2=5.712$ , df = 1, $p = .023^*$	

The fact that music was so vital to the way the performers perceived and expressed themselves suggests that this was a central feature of the successful transition from training as a musician to entering the profession.

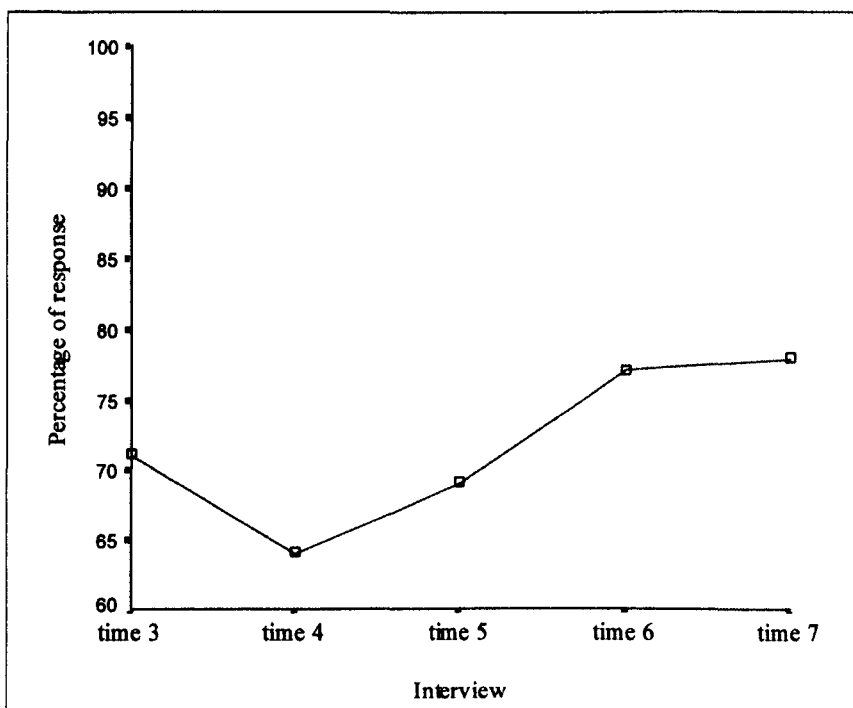
The interview in phase three provided more precise details about how music offered self-expression:

When it's going well I feel absolutely fantastic, you know, you don't want to stop, its just lovely, it's just great, it's such an expression, a freedom of expression, erm, that's what I enjoy about it, that's why I do it you know, that's what I suppose makes me open my mouth and make noises, erm, because it helps me to express myself. (Charlie, I8, 4)

I feel it is something that comes out of me that I don't have another way of channelling and it seems to be channelled successfully through music. (Olga, I8, 18)

These two quotations are typical of the performers' comments and suggest that music offered them an emotional outlet not offered by any other medium. Charlie, for example, felt constrained by other forms of expression such as language. The performers' motivation to perform stemmed from their dependence on and love of using music to express themselves and release their emotions.

This is perhaps related to the discussion above; rather than place an emphasis on technical skill, the majority of performers believed that the emotional content of the music should be prioritised. It may be that because music was such an emotional and personal experience for the performers, they wished to communicate their passion for music to an audience. This is reflected in figure 18 below, which demonstrates that increasing numbers of performers focused on improving their musical communication skills during their personal practice.



**Figure 18. Percentage of performers who identify musical communication skills as a priority.**



It seems from these data that music enhanced the self-concept of the performer and that during this transition the musicians developed a 'performer' identity. Music offered them an extension to the self – a means for communicating with others in a way that other means perhaps did not allow. The gradually increasing relevance of many of the variables discussed above further indicates how the identity of the performer, as a musician and a personality, resulted in the performers feeling more secure within themselves.

I've certainly done a hell of a lot of up and downing and changing I think, erm, and which I suppose has ended up as, I feel more settled, more, I suppose more pleased with, you know, where I'm at, erm, I think I've just kind of, again it's these priority things and just sort of sorted myself out a bit in terms of knowing what's important to me, erm, and I don't know [laughs], erm, become a proper person. (Rachel, I8, 14)

Rachel encapsulates the experiences of the majority of the performers here. It seemed that she had reached a state of equilibrium: Rachel felt comfortable with the role of teacher/performer that she had achieved. This was further emphasised by the fact that she described herself as having become 'a proper person', where both her personal desires and her career goals complemented each other and allowed her to feel confident in her new self-concept.

Linda also described increased willingness to accept herself as a performer:

God, I'm a lot happier with who I am as an artist and just generally, a lot happier, before, well, you know, before I was, you still have all your little insecurities and stuff, am I doing this right, am I doing that, is that good, is that, you know, but erm, I tend to go with my initial instincts now, a bit more and then just think right, well sod it, that's kind of who I am and stuff, so no, I'm a lot happier. (Linda, I8, 11-12)

The result of Linda's transition was recognising that she needed to be true to herself, having accepted herself as an independent performer. This suggests, therefore, that as the performer matures both musically and personally, so their performer identity emerges and develops.

The two quotations below were representative of the performers and illustrate how the performers identified their role as 'performer':

I've accepted myself and who I am, as, you know, a singer and stuff, and I'm not going to beat myself up, you know, about certain things, and just accept that everything happens for a reason, and it's usually for the best, so, I do believe in fate I think, so just take it as it comes. (Linda, I8, 14)

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I mean at the end of the day that's the whole point of music isn't it, when you're performing, not just for yourself, but for the audience, is to make them feel different things, you know, take them somewhere else, that's the point, so that with music it's like an escape for other people isn't it? (James, 18, 14)

These possible or provisional projections (Ibarra, 1999; Cross and Markus, 1997) of the performing self may motivate and support the performers' pursuit of their goals. It seemed that over the course of the two-year period of study, the performers evolved from a group of individuals who engaged with music on a daily basis, appearing to have a 'music student' or 'music as a serious hobby' identity, to a cohort of performers who demonstrated strong identification with music. Music helped the performers to construct an identity through which they could perceive themselves and develop personally, but also moderate and express their emotions.

### **5.8 Summary**

Based on the data presented in this chapter, it seems that the performer identity is an important factor in determining whether a musician will choose to pursue a professional performance career. Central to the performer identity are the individuals' belief systems (incremental) and strategies for coping with difficulties. The performers identified the two-year transition as a critical period which fluctuated between highs and lows: often the consequences of the latter were feelings of extreme negativity and even depression. The performers described negative experiences with teachers and their institutions, the main characteristic being a perceived lack of support both musically and in terms of starting a career. They also expressed increased feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about their futures, their own ability and performance, and many described feelings of regret at missed opportunities. However, these negative experiences, whilst having a temporary negative psychological impact, were viewed with perspective and realism, with the recognition that their musical development would ultimately benefit from the learning experience. It seemed that the central element differentiating the performers from the non-performers was their ability to cope in challenging circumstances.

Methods for coping with negative experiences were coupled with a more professional approach to music making: the performers had developed different priorities for their performing with an emphasis on communicating their musical ideas and expressing

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themselves, rather than a focus on technique. The performers seemed increasingly certain that they wished to pursue a performance career and as such they had increased determination and motivation to succeed and fulfil their potential. They perceived themselves through music and for many it was the only way they were able to express themselves. Throughout the transition the elements discussed above became increasingly important, as demonstrated by the descriptive data, and seemed to result in the individuals developing a 'performer' identity. This appeared to serve as a form of motivation for them to pursue professional performance. The transition seemed to be characterised by the development of this performer identity, with the musicians establishing their future career goals, confidence in achieving them and an increased awareness of how to achieve their goals. The musicians began to perceive music as a job rather than as something all-consuming as they did at the beginning of the study: they had a more professional approach, taking care to look after their long-term musical interests and capabilities. It seemed that the main goal of the transitional period for these individuals was to develop a performer identity, which played a central role in motivating them to pursue their career goals.

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## Chapter Six

### **Transition of the non-performer: developing an ‘amateur’ musician identity.**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

The previous two chapters of analysis suggest that the central influences on a musician’s choice to become a professional performer were the development of coping strategies and incremental belief systems. These two elements seemed dependent upon an interaction between the individual and his/her social environment (Bigges & Hunt, 1980), and contributed to the musicians’ performer identity. There was a reciprocal relationship between the musicians’ performer identity and the belief and coping systems they possessed, which in turn affected their motivation and determination to succeed. There was no evidence in either the quantitative or the qualitative data that the non-performers experienced developments such as these and in many instances, factors such as musical communication and motivation diminished in importance throughout the study. The current chapter focuses on the transition of the non-performer and has four main aims:

1. To identify the reasons why this group of musicians decided not to pursue music performance as a career;
2. To examine the nature of their transition into another area and the psychological impact it had on them;
3. To discuss the emergence of an ‘amateur’ musical identity, since in all cases they maintained an involvement in music-making;
4. To discuss a possible definition of an amateur musical identity in relation to other research literature.

The label ‘non-performers’ is adopted because at some stage during their development the musicians in this group decided that they did not wish to pursue a professional performing career. Six of the non-performers wished, at the beginning of the study, to become professional musicians, but their experiences during the transition made them reconsider their career goals. The non-performers decided to

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train as either primary school teachers (which generally means that they do not specialise in any particular subject), or secondary school teachers specialising in music. The other musicians in this group either entered a non-music related business career (in one case a management consultant), pursued a higher education degree in related subjects (a Masters degree in the Psychology of Music, for example), spent a year travelling, or worked in temporary jobs until they decided which career path to follow. (It is worth noting here that this group comprised mainly the university musicians with two exceptions: Rachel, who was originally a university student, proceeded to music college to continue her performance studies, and therefore belonged in the performer group; Tony who originally attended the music college decided not to pursue music as a career). The label 'non-performer' is not intended to imply that these musicians no longer participated in musical activities: the majority continued to play their instruments or sing, either on their own or in amateur organisations, or were intending in the near future to involve themselves in music-making again. Despite the varied routes that these musicians decided to follow, there were still many similarities between the experiences of the individuals within this group and their responses to them.

As with the previous chapter, the data reported are both quantitative and qualitative, with the latter providing a more detailed understanding of the differences highlighted by the statistics.

### ***6.1 Deterrents from pursuing music as a career***

It was highlighted in Chapter Five that throughout the two-year study period, the performers became more determined that performance was the career they wished to pursue. The percentage of non-performers who considered performance to be a career option, on the other hand, decreased over the two-year transition (see table one in the previous chapter). In order to place the transition of the non-performers into context, this chapter firstly considers the reasons why this group of musicians decided not to pursue music performance as a career.

### 6.1.1 Perceptions of the social environment

Three out of eighteen of the non-performing musicians identified that their teachers had a positive impact on their motivation to practice and engage in music-making, but the majority seemed to have different relationships with their teachers:

Having a flute teacher that I got on with, or that I felt musically inspired to work for would have been good. (Katie, I8, 13)

I think I wasn't particularly inspired by my 'cello teacher at Uni. (Penny, I8, 12)

These comments were representative of many of the non-performers' perceptions of their teachers. Katie and Penny felt dissatisfied with their teacher throughout the duration of their undergraduate degrees, which further emphasises the centrality of the elements of inspiration and perceived support in the teacher-student relationship.

Generally, the non-performers identified their lessons as detrimental to their self-confidence, as illustrated by Rebecca and Katie:

In my lessons here I go away thinking 'that was hideous, I'm dreading next week', so I think that probably didn't help. (Rebecca, I8, 14)

I didn't enjoy my flute lessons when I was having them at Uni, and I think that...it could have been very different, it could have been a lot more positive. (Katie, I8, 10)

The non-performers seemed unable to cope with the negative feelings they experienced following a lesson. It was implied by Katie that she held the quality of her lessons partially responsible for her feelings of negativity about her playing. The non-performers' responses to their teachers were passive and accepting, and rather than accept responsibility for a negative lesson, they tried to assign blame elsewhere. This suggests that the non-performers had not developed the necessary coping strategies to overcome difficulties. Previous research suggests that quality of teaching and the nature of the student-teacher relationship are vital for motivating, inspiring, and encouraging musicians to continue their music making (Davidson *et al*, 1998), but the data in this study suggest that the interaction has to be two-way – motivation and inspiration were not absorbed passively, rather the musicians had to respond to the teaching by finding their own goals and passion for music, and in doing so develop processes for enhancing and improving negative experiences.

### ***6.1.2 Negative perceptions of the institutions***

The non-performers, who had at one time considered becoming professional musicians, described how they did not perceive the institution to have successfully prepared them for the transition between training and a career in performance:

People were being negative about it, and really the only positive person I encountered about being a professional performer at university was [my teacher], but she didn't, she never portrayed it in just an enthusiastic way, it was always so pushy that that put me off as well, I think if, no-one ever gave it a chance really. (Judy, I8, 12)

[There was little] advice on how to go about going for performance [as a career], because I think, when I was thinking about it actually, I was getting lots of contradictory messages from different people within the university music department, one person would be saying 'do this', one person would say 'oh don't do that, do this, or wait...you don't want to do it yet, you're too young, wait a few years', erm, so I was getting all sorts of you know, messages that contradicted one another, so in the end I just didn't do it. (Violet, I8, 11-12)

Whilst Violet and Judy seemed to blame the lack of teacher and institution support for their decision not to pursue a performance career, there appeared to be a lack of drive or ability to make a decision. In terms of ability (according to staff and instrumental/vocal teachers' reports), Violet and Judy could have potentially followed performance as a career option, but a perceived lack of encouragement of this as an option appeared to have deterred these musicians from considering it. This may be related to the nature of the university as an institution since, as Chapter Four discussed, the majority of students who studied there did not seem to desire a career as a professional musician. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, the non-performers did not have the necessary belief systems, coping strategies and motivation to achieve their potential as musicians. This is further exemplified by the non-performers' perception of performance within the university.

As part of the final interview the participants were questioned about the factors they felt were necessary to become a successful performer. One such factor identified by many of the non-performers was the need for performance experience:

...the lack of, I think the whole department, well our department isn't that performance orientated...I think there could have been opportunities for performance kind of positive, bit more of a positive attitude towards performing, erm, I don't think there are any kind of performance, actually lecturers who are mainly focused on performing or instrumental, I don't think there was any kind of support about instrumental teaching, erm, and actually during my masters I haven't, I haven't had much support from the department, erm, mainly to do with performance, things like not really putting in postgrads in orchestras, or if you do want to do that you have to go and almost persuade them to do that. (Penny, I8, 12)

Objectively, there were a number of ensembles and opportunities to perform in place at the university. The attitude in the quotation above is reminiscent of the other comments of the non-performers discussed above. If the non-performers were not given opportunities by the institution, they did not fight to turn negative experiences to their own advantage, for example, by creating their own ensembles and performance opportunities. Some of this group blamed their lack of experience for not being able to continue studying performance:

The only thing you lack when you leave university with a music degree to go into the job in that industry is experience, and that's not the purpose of the degree really, and that's what I lacked was experience. (Joan, I8, 12)

It is difficult for university music departments to find a balance between practical and academic music since they place emphasis on both. There were generally fewer performing opportunities in the university music department than in a music college, but even so, musicians in both institutions reported frustration with a lack of opportunity to perform: competition for orchestral seats and solo opportunities was common in both. However, the difference between the performers and the non-performers was that the former, recognising the lack of 'ready-made' opportunities, created their own, or played regularly with organisations outside their institution. The non-performers, on the other hand, were more reluctant to do so. The performers' tendency to create their own opportunities where they perceived a void represented a form of coping strategy and as mentioned previously, the non-performers did not seem to have adequate coping strategies to deal with their musical frustrations (see section 6.1.4 for a more detailed discussion of this).

### **6.1.3 Parents**

As the study progressed, the non-performers made fewer references to the roles played by their parents in their musical development. In the first two interviews (see Chapter Four), perceived parental support seemed to have a profound influence on the participants' acquisition of musical skill, but by the final interview the non-performers made little reference to the impact of parents on their adult development. In some instances, the non-performers' parents made the decision not to pursue music as a career a difficult one:

I think I was in denial for quite a while, because there was pressure from my parents who really would love for me to go to music college, you know, and I know that they will be



proud of me whatever I do, but there's always that, my Dad can't really hide his disappointment of that really. (Joan, I8, 10)

I think especially because my parents were so keen for me to be doing that, particularly the choir that I used to sing with had an anniversary, and they printed this t-shirt that we all signed, and my Dad's the kind of person who really loves that kind of thing, so every time I get home he's got this t-shirt on...and he'll say things like 'you could be doing that' [laughs], but I mean that's just because that's what they're interested in I guess, but occasionally it's a bit difficult like that. (Heidi, I8, 13)

The commitment that the parents of musicians give during their child's development is often immense (Davidson *et al*, 1996) and therefore it is unsurprising that they vicariously enjoy the success of their child. The two instances above were good examples of this and as discussed in Chapter Four, parents seemed to have played a generally supportive role in the lives of all of the participants, although the specific nature of the parent-child relationship differed between the performers and non-performers. The non-performers seemed afraid of disappointing their parents which complicated the process of making career decisions and they did not seem to have tools that enabled them to cope with the pressure. The non-performers did not attribute the indirect pressure of their parents as a reason not to pursue a career in music, although it was possible that a fear of disappointing their parents was an added obstacle in the decision-making process and as such could complicate the transition of the non-performer.

#### **6.1.4 Pressure and competition**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the performers' belief systems and personality characteristics seemed to affect their ability to cope: the two groups of musicians differed in these three elements, as demonstrated by the non-performers' reactions to pressure and competition:

I couldn't live without it [music], but I don't know, the stress of it I suppose, you know being stressed about it...I didn't know what I was doing...all this kind of stuff, it was, within the context of the music department it does become quite stressful, because it is the focus of your life, taking it away from the focus of your life and making it something on the side makes it a lot less stressful. (Bobbi, I8, 12)

There's a lot of people who I've kind of felt put off about, by the kind of attitude towards practising and telling people how much they practice and kind of being friends but then trying to push other people out the way, and that kind of die hard attitude of you know, you have to beat everyone no matter what it takes. (Penny, I8, 11-12)

Bobbi resented the negative associations that music adopted during her degree, and it is possible that one reason for her not pursuing a career in performance was so she

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could protect her love of music. There were many comments from the non-performers which indicated a fear of losing their love for music. Penny seemed unwilling to adopt the 'killer instinct' often thought to be crucial to the development of the professional musician (Tannenbaum, 1986), so much so that it was presented by her as a deterrent from pursuing performance to a higher level. Both of Penny's parents were professional musicians, which perhaps provided her with a different insight into the lifestyle and characteristics of professional musicians. Perhaps having lived with and experienced the affects of a professional career as a musician also influenced Penny's decision not to continue her musical studies. It has been suggested already in this thesis that the ways in which the musicians identified with music was a defining factor in their professional development: it seems, therefore, that during this transition, the ways in which an individual's musical identity is constructed influences whether s/he chooses to become a professional musician or to sustain music as a hobby.

The transition through undergraduate training coincides with an important life-span development, the primary concern of which is identity formation, and whilst the experiences of the musicians partly shaped their values and attitudes, they were also responsible for the individuals' increasing self-awareness. The deeper self-insight that the musicians gained during this transition may have influenced whether or not they decided to pursue a career in performance. Indeed, there was much evidence from the final interviews to indicate that the non-performers increasingly realised that they did not possess the necessary characteristics to succeed.

## ***6.2 Feelings of insecurity***

The non-performers felt they lacked the necessary musical skill and personality traits required to succeed. Tables six and seven show the musicians' responses to questions concerning how they perceived their playing/singing and the extent of their progress. The chi-square analyses revealed that the non-performers were more likely than the performers to describe their music making in negative terms, describing little progress and negative feelings about their ability as musicians.

**Table 6. Musicians' perceptions of their musical participation.**

<i>How do you feel in general about your playing/singing?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
<b>Performers</b>	10	4	11	3	7	6	9	4	6	3
<b>Non-performers</b>	6	10	5	10	2	13	9	7	5	5
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=3.453$ , df = 1, p = .063		$\chi^2=5.992$ , df = 1, p = .014*		$\chi^2=5.241$ , df = 1, p = .042*		$\chi^2=.513$ , df = 1, p = .702		$\chi^2=.540$ , df = 1, p = .395	

**Table 7. Musicians' perceptions of their progress.**

<i>Musicians' perceptions of progress.</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
<b>Performers</b>	13	1	13	1	11	2	11	2	6	3
<b>Non-performers</b>	17	9	9	6	8	7	7	9	3	7
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=8.103$ , df = 1, p = .007*		$\chi^2=4.269$ , df = 1, p = .080		$\chi^2=3.125$ , df = 1, p = .114		$\chi^2=5.088$ , df = 1, p = .029*		$\chi^2=2.554$ , df = 1, p = .179	

The interviews, however, revealed a deeper insight.

There are people that I know, and who I know how good they are, and I just feel like, I don't think I'm good enough basically. (Joan, I8, 2)

[I] kind of feel at the moment that I don't have the confidence to really think that I could become a professional performer...I don't think I'm positive or confident enough to actually go and audition for orchestras or you know, say to my parents or say to friends, you know, I want to be a performer. (Penny, I8, 7)

Comments such as Joan's were typical of the non-performers and demonstrate firstly, that they possessed entity beliefs (believing that their abilities were fixed), and secondly, that they judged their own abilities in relation to those around them. The quotation from Penny also highlights her reluctance to identify herself as a performer, perhaps due to fear of criticism from her friends and family. The non-performers did not seem to identify themselves with the act of performance: they felt reluctant to label themselves as performers and did not appear to use music for expression and communication.

Table eight indicates the amount of time the musicians spent making music. The chi-square analyses revealed that significantly lower numbers of non-performers than performers were actively participating in music throughout the duration of the study.

**Table 8. Time spent playing.**

<i>How much time have you spent playing/singing?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Every day	A few times a week or less	Every day	A few times a week or less	Every day	A few times a week or less	Every day	A few times a week or less	Every day	A few times a week or less
Performers	10	4	11	3	11	2	10	3	6	3
Non-performers	2	14	6	10	7	9	7	10	0	13
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=10.804$ , df = 1, $p = .001^*$		$\chi^2=5.129$ , df = 1, $p = .024^*$		$\chi^2=5.088$ , df = 1, $p = .052$		$\chi^2=3.833$ , df = 1, $p = .050^*$		$\chi^2=11.917$ , df = 1, $p = .031^*$	

Perhaps the absence of performance opportunities, or an unwillingness to perform, further enhanced the insecurities of the non-performers. This could be explained by a fear of failure or criticism: perhaps by playing for themselves they could maintain their enjoyment of music making without any pressure. Previous research suggests that after experiencing success, some individuals may withdraw from placing themselves in similar situations again in case they should fail or perform less well, and in doing so, individuals are able to protect their self-concept (Covington & Omelich, 1979). Table nine indicates the musicians' responses to the questions which asked whether or not they were motivated by successful performances. The chi-square analyses indicated that when the non-performers were involved in performances they did not subsequently feel motivated to be involved in others.

**Table 9. Musicians' motivation following successful performances.**

<i>Are you motivated by successful performances?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Performers	10	4	10	4	9	4	11	1	8	1
Non-performers	5	11	8	8	6	10	6	11	3	10
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=4.821$ , df = 1, $p = .028^*$		$\chi^2=1.429$ , df = 1, $p = .206$		$\chi^2=2.892$ , df = 1, $p = .092$		$\chi^2=9.216$ , df = 1, $p = .003^*$		$\chi^2=9.214$ , df = 1, $p = .008^*$	

This suggests that the non-performers were not motivated by the pleasure derived from public performances but perhaps that they wished to enjoy music-making for its own sake and the pleasure it provided.

The non-performers had a self-perceived lack of skill and identification with making music for public consumption which deterred them from pursuing a career as a

performer: they had clear ideas about the elements necessary for success but felt that they did not possess them.

I think a lot of it had to do with personality, so I think, you know, we had some fantastic teachers, we had, you know, I learnt some fantastic stuff, but a lot of it, you know, no-one could have taught me to have a different opinion of myself and a different opinion of how I sang or whatever, or give me that kind of personality that's flagrant enough to kind of be a really fantastic performer if you see what I mean. I guess there are lots of different reasons, you do need to increase confidence for that sort of thing, there just seemed to be some people who were just really performers, and some people who just aren't. (Heidi, I8, 12)

Heidi considered inherent personality qualities were necessary in the development of the successful musician and her belief that she did not naturally possess these qualities influenced her choice to pursue a career other than music. An emphasis on natural talent is shared by a number of the non-performers and perhaps helps to explain their self-perceived inability to become performers. The non-performers' belief that ability to succeed is fixed was a theme which frequently occurred during the study, and the majority of students considered themselves to lack the necessary qualities to become professional performers:

I just haven't got that kind of stamina, that kind of determination. (Joan, I8, 5)

I haven't got, although I absolutely love music and I love performing, I haven't the ambition that it takes, especially with singing, to do it. (Juliet, I8, 14)

The two quotations above are representative of the sample and highlight how the non-performers considered certain personality characteristics, such as strong determination and ambition, to be crucial in pursuing a professional career. As described by Heidi above, it was perhaps an emphasis on entity beliefs that deterred the non-performers from pursuing performance as a career: because they did not consider themselves to possess the necessary qualities, they thought there was little point in trying. Perhaps the non-performers' self-perceptions were partly responsible for their lack of determination to succeed as a musician. The non-performers did not seem to perceive themselves as performers: they did not consider themselves to have the necessary characteristics to become professional musicians and this fits with the notion of 'possible selves' discussed in Chapter Two (Cross and Markus, 1991). Without a projected possible self of a professional musician, it is possible that the musician will not choose to become a professional performer. The non-performers seemed keen to protect music as something enjoyable, whilst at the same time maintaining a positive self-concept.

Indeed, rather than develop a 'performer' identity, the non-performers seemed to begin acquiring an 'amateur' musical identity: like Juliet, a number of the non-performers expressed how much they loved their musical participation and did not wish to lose their enjoyment through the pressure of competition and earning a living. Indeed, it was the impact of negative experiences that was a deterrent for many of the musicians in this group.

### ***6.3 Negative psychological impact of music***

The non-performers often perceived their surrounding environments as negative and this was detrimental to their motivation to practice and to pursue performance as a career:

[Music] was the one thing in life which could ever get me down, but also at the same time was the thing with all the big highs in it, so erm, and generally speaking, I'm a, you know, level-headed and laid back guy, and I suppose that little bit of, of, well that big sort of fluctuation in that area of my life was probably a little off-putting. (Tony, I8, 6-7)

The non-performers disliked the psychological and emotional fluctuations that performance caused. It seemed that this, alongside the insecurity of the profession itself, was a major deterrent for this group of musicians:

There's just no certainties at all, and the rejection is just so hard, you know, if it is your life, that for me would be impossible, you know, I have to have stability. (Joan, I8, 9)

[The] uncertainty of not having a yearly salary, and little things like that, erm, I just don't think I would enjoy the lifestyle, my brother's doing it, you know, and he's very ambitious, and he just goes out there and gets it, whereas I like a bit of security [laughs]. (Juliet, I8, 14)

The financial insecurity of the music profession and the psychological instability they perceived it to offer clearly did not suit the needs of the non-performers and the way they seemed to cope with difficulties and setbacks. There was no evidence in the interviews that the non-performers had developed any strategies for coping with their musical experiences, and this was a general trend throughout the duration of the study.

A possible contributory factor to this apparent lack of coping strategies was the fact that the non-performers (as compared to the performers) were much less likely to ask their musical peers for advice and support, preferring to seek advice from friends who had little connection with music. Table ten indicates the musicians' responses when asked whether or not they asked their musical peers for advice and support. The chi-

square analyses indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the performers and non-performers in interviews three, four and six.

**Table Ten. Musical peers as primary support network.**

<i>Do you ask your musical peers for advice and support?</i>										
	Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Performers	12	2	13	1	11	2	13	0	8	1
Non-performers	6	10	8	8	8	8	8	9	8	5
<b>Significance Value</b>	$\chi^2=7.232$ , df = 1, $p = .007^*$		$\chi^2=6.531$ , df = 1, $p = .017^*$		$\chi^2=3.804$ , df = 1, $p = .058$		$\chi^2=9.832$ , df = 1, $p = .003^*$		$\chi^2=2.006$ , df = 1, $p = .178$	

Significantly more non-performers than performers asked non-musical peers for advice and support. The importance of support networks for coping were discussed in the previous chapter, and it is likely that without peer-group support the non-performers felt isolated in their development: they did not have the same opportunity as the performers (who mainly used their peers as a support network) to observe the actions of high-achieving others and therefore were unlikely to learn what would aid a successful transition into the profession. The importance of peers as role models was discussed in Chapter Two and the data presented here supports previous research findings (cf. Sosniak, 1990). Perhaps the non-performers, with an increasing awareness that they did not want to pursue performance as a career, felt that they could identify more easily with friends who worked in non-music related careers because they could provide more general advice and support. This suggests, however, that the support network provided by peers from within the same institution is vital in establishing the necessary strategies for dealing with setbacks and, without that support network, a transition into the music profession may be problematic. In fact, several non-performers admitted that they were unable to cope with any difficulties they experienced:

I think a lot of the time I just ignore things, just kind of carry on going along with things, not think about problems. (Penny, I8, 6)

Many of the non-performers throughout the two-year period described how they would avoid confronting difficulties and this may represent another of the more fundamental personality characteristics that differentiated the two groups of musicians: the non-performers demonstrated low resilience to struggles and had

little self-reliance and independence. For example, the non-performers were unable to cope with the pressure of preparing for performances:

I think music now is, it's probably more important to me...it's probably more important to me generally than it had been in the past, although in the past I was doing more music and much more involved in it. I couldn't say why. Stepping back from it [music] has helped that. (Katie, I8, 13)

I suppose the break as well has made it even more obvious, I used to love this piece and then when I was playing it all the time I got bored of it, I hated it, I hated this little bit that I couldn't do, and I'd just get really wound up about that, but having had the break and gone back to it, it's, well yeah, I still can't do that bit, but I will be able to one day, and I am enjoying the rest of it again, rather than seeing it as a big brick wall, I've got back to enjoying it. (Bobbi, I8, 10)

The pressure of studying music was detrimental to the non-performers' enjoyment of making music. Time away from musical activities provided a different perspective, and helped to renew an enthusiasm and love for music. The implication of these two quotations is that the transition through undergraduate training, which offered exposure to a great deal of musical activity, led the non-performers to the realisation that music was not something they wished to do every day of their lives. Perhaps as they proceeded through both their career and life-span transitions the non-performers established the role that they wished music to play in their lives given their own personalities and long-term goals.

So far attention in this chapter has been given to the non-performers' explanations for why they chose not to pursue music performance as a career. More specific details of the precise nature of the transition should now be considered as a means to better understand their development during this two-year period.

#### ***6.4 The transition into a new profession***

The majority of non-performers felt that they had changed a great deal over the two years:

I can do stuff [in my new job] without having somebody to hold my hand through it, and I'm quite prepared to sort of sit down and debate things with people now, whereas in the past I might have said 'oh yeah, ok, yeah if that's what you want, ok I'll do that', erm, but now a bit more opinionated, well not opinionated, but I've got a viewpoint on it, I've had, I've got an idea about how things should work as well. (Jane, I8, 4)

I think my personal development has been really good as well, I feel much more confident as a person and who I am, it sounds really corny, but you know what I mean, erm, but that's all kind of tied in with doing well and stuff. (Rebecca, I8, 13)



These two quotations represent typical responses and illustrate the increased confidence that the non-performers developed during their transition into a non-music related career. This was far removed from the earlier interviews where the non-performers often displayed low confidence. It could be considered that once this group of musicians were in a different profession, in which it was possible for them to progress and succeed, they began to achieve more, and therefore felt more comfortable with themselves and their careers. This seemed to be true for a number of the non-performers:

Actually now I feel able to cope with that, because I've, you know, I decided, I suppose relief really, that I don't have to say 'well, actually I still want to pursue, I'm definitely going to pursue this performing career in x years, and in fact, you know, it was a bit scary to go, well actually I don't know if this is what I want now, but actually now it's more of a release, and I think that's quite a positive development. (Joan, I8, 10)

I think probably sorting myself out over work, erm, because it's just made me so much happier at home, at work, anywhere. (Beth, I8, 9)

Music often had a negative psychological impact on this group of musicians: for many an inability to cope with setbacks and negative experiences was a contributory factor in their decision not to pursue a performance career. Once the non-performers had made a choice about which profession to pursue, and realised that they were not obliged to continue with music (as in Joan's case) the musicians seemed much more content with their careers which had a positive influence in their personal lives. This seems to support further the notion of multiple identities contributing to the overall self-concept of the individual. It is possible that the non-performers' work identities and possible selves now had more impact on their self-concept than their musical identity, which had subsided whilst they attempted to penetrate a different career. Now the musicians were not exposed to the psychological fluctuations of studying music, they seemed to have developed more self-confidence.

The non-performers' satisfaction with the career choices they made resulted in a transition towards greater self-awareness and a feeling of satisfaction:

I've got a better idea of what I am capable of doing, who I'm capable of being, erm, the things I enjoy doing, erm, I'm not quite so afraid of being me, because I'm not the easiest person to get on with, I'm not, I suppose everybody's unique, but I don't know, I feel like I kind of stick out in a lot of ways, like silly trousers to start with, erm, you know, there's not many people, how many twenty-two year old females do you see doing scout things every weekend, one, but I don't care, I enjoy it, erm, and I'm perfectly happy to turn round and say 'I don't care what you think'. (Bobbi, I8, 11)

I know more what I'm about now, what, I suppose what life is about now, in a really cheesy way. (Katie, I8, 9)

In comparison to the beginning of the study, the non-performers generally seemed more content in terms of their work, musical, and consequently, personal identities. By finding a career that increased feelings of self-efficacy and perhaps changed the individual's belief systems, they became more content with their lives. However, the route to achieving such a level of satisfaction was not an easy one: in many ways the transition for the non-performers was more difficult than for the performers as the former were faced with choosing which profession they wished to pursue. In many cases this involved acquiring new skills and a different professional identity. Consequently, many of the non-performers found this a particularly challenging time:

I am, it's not old, but I'm twenty-three so I haven't got a set structure any more, whereas I had at uni...do your A Levels, do your degree and then decide what to do, and I'm at the 'decide what to do'. (Katie, I8, 9)

Many of the non-performers described the difficulty they had in knowing the best career route to follow. Several expressed how they were unprepared for life following their degree, especially because for the first time in their lives there was no short-term goal for them to achieve: until graduation from university there is a convention for students to complete GCSEs, A Levels, and a degree. There are few directly related careers for musicians, especially those studying within a university, and many do not wish to pursue teaching as a profession. Katie was still uncertain one year after her graduation and she felt as though she was drifting with no purpose.

Those that have entered a new profession faced different challenges:

I think it's just been a difficult time anyway, kind of transition thing, and it's [being a postgraduate student] not the same as being an undergraduate, at all, in any way, it's just difficult getting used to that, so hopefully, in a few months time I'll be back on track again and be enjoying it more. (Rebecca, I8, 16)

Many of the non-performers in different professions had to learn new working methods and many, like Rebecca, did not seem happy with their current situations and were already considering changing jobs:

It's all been, it's all so uphill at the moment, up in the air rather, I don't know where I'm going to end up in six months time, erm, I'm in a job I hate, I really want to get out of it, I don't know whether I'm going to be in Sheffield, I don't know whether I'm going to be in Glasgow, or I don't know, the Congo or whatever... (Bobbi, I8, 3)

There was much uncertainty surrounding the transition of the non-performers and this was accentuated by many feeling unfulfilled in their jobs. The Professional Integration Project (Pearce, 1997) highlights that students do possess a number of

transferable skills, although they are often hidden, and therefore unusable. The need for musicians to develop new working methods supports much of the literature concerning career transitions: musicians generally spend much time alone practising, and to move to a work environment where they must work in an office and as part of a team, with different political and hierarchical systems that may present challenges for the individual (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987). For many of the non-performers, the role that music played in their lives was diminishing and given the love of music and the enjoyment it offered, this may have contributed further to their feelings of dissatisfaction.

### ***6.4.1 Changing position of music***

Compared to the performers, the non-performers described that making music was less important in their lives and identified ‘being busy’ as an obstacle to their music making. Due to the nature of the transition into a non-music profession the non-performers could not prioritise time to make music especially because it had little significance to their potential new careers. Indeed, the majority of the non-performers described how music was now less important to their lives:

At the moment it's not that central, my job is the central thing in my life and that's so diverse and involves so many different subjects that music can't be central to my life at the moment. (Judy, I8, 4)

This comment was typical of the non-performers and illustrates how immersed in their new professions they had to become in order to succeed.

Although the non-performers were focused on finding new careers, the lack of music in their lives was not something the non-performers were happy about:

I want to do it more, I miss kind of choral stuff more than I have done before, and I guess at Christmas as well because everyone's doing concerts around, choirs that I used to be involved in were doing concerts and I wasn't involved with that, so I did miss that. (Heidi, I8, 2)

The non-performers all acknowledged that they missed the presence of regular music making in their lives and for many, as Heidi implies above, there was an element of nostalgia and regret that it would not have such an active role in their lives as it did when they were students. Indeed, a small number of this group struggled to adapt to their new professional identity in which music played no role, and this is discussed in more detail in relation to Judy in Chapter Seven.

Many of the non-performers hoped to find time to start playing again once they felt more secure in their new jobs and the majority expressed a desire for music to always play a role in their future:

I can't really imagine not being really involved with music at all, I don't want to ever not play the 'cello. (Penny, I8, 14)

I think definitely, erm, I'll always, always sing, and I think you know, I'll always get a lot of enjoyment out of it. (Joan, I8, 13)

Music was something that the non-performers did not want to lose due to the enjoyment it provided, but others expressed feelings of obligation to maintain their musical involvement:

[There is] certainly a little element of keeping music going, erm, lest it disappear completely, erm, which I mean, if it did disappear completely, in a sense I wouldn't be sorry if it seemed like just the way things were going, but a little part of me does sort of think, well look, you know, you've done this for so long, and you've enjoyed it so much, you just can't let something like this disappear completely, even if you're not doing it all the time, so there's a little sense of duty to myself I suppose, erm, after all those good times that I had, sort of thinking well, look, if you can get anywhere near any of them again, they're going to be good fun. (Tony, I8, 16)

Tony was realistic that the role of music in his life would naturally diminish, but given the years of commitment that musicians make in order to reach a high enough standard to study music at university or music college it is impossible that music will not be intrinsically related to the individual. Once again, the notion of an individual possessing a number of different identities is revisited. Whilst the non-performer's musical identity may no longer have had such a strong impact on the individual, s/he still had a connection to music which was unlikely to be lost. This explains the desire that the non-performers had for ensuring music would always be a part of their lives, but they had to accept that its function would always be different. Music became primarily social for the non-performers and almost entirely for their own pleasure.

### **6.5 Music as an amateur interest**

The interview in the final phase of the study revealed a striking shift in the ways in which the non-performers perceived music and what it offered them. Music was now a hobby for the majority of non-performers:

I would like to keep it [music] as a kind of, you know, erm, a sideline type thing, because I, I do enjoy it, but I don't think it's meant to be central in my life. (Rolleen, I8, 7)

At the beginning of the study, Rolleen intended to become an orchestral musician, but after a series of rejections from music colleges, she had to find an alternative career. There is evidence in the quotation above of a transition from intending to pursue a career in performance to realising that music belongs as a hobby. At the end of the study, the non-performers reported only positive gains from their involvement in musical activities:

It's [music] a big social aspect because I go to see bands and you know, going out drinking and stuff like that, and hopefully if I join something it's going to be you know, social, I think meeting people through a band or whatever. (Ellen, I8, 11)

Playing music was no longer the primary focus of the daily lives of the non-performers, yet it still formed the basis of their social activities in a number of ways. Watching live music was an incentive for socialising with friends and it seemed that the non-performers were always aware of the background music when they socialised in other ways. As described above, many hoped that music would play an important part in their future and it seemed that they were motivated by the social nature of their musical participation.

It's [music] brought me into contact with other people who enjoy it, erm, especially at our local choir, erm, just nice you know, it's brought us new friends in the sense that it is you know, just new people that we're doing things with. (Tony, I8, 11)

Music helped Tony and his wife (also a participant in this study – Beth) to integrate themselves into a new community and feel a sense of belonging: it seemed important to Tony that he was with people who also enjoyed making music, perhaps because he felt that it provided a common ground on which to base new friendships.

Once music was not such a priority, the non-performers described how they found it more enjoyable:

Just before Christmas...I was getting to the point where I just really enjoyed it, and I wasn't worrying too much about tone or technique, it was just playing and loving it, and that was fantastic. (Katie, I8, 2)

Comments such as these were infrequent during the earlier interviews with the non-performers, which perhaps emphasises that this group of musicians found the pressure and hard work detracted from the love of music they had previously established throughout their earlier musical development. The non-performers seemed to be gradually less concerned with improving technique and musical communication and as discussed in Chapter Five, were less concerned with fulfilling their potential, and now played infrequently (see tables 2 and 8 in Chapter Five).

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With renewed opportunity to play “purely for pleasure” (Bobbi, I8, 14) and when they wanted, the non-performers seemed more motivated to play and depended on music for relaxation:

I've really enjoyed playing actually, I've just felt really relaxed and I think because I'm not, because I'm not putting all my, any pressure on myself and I don't think that anyone else is. (Beth, I8, 3)

It's [music] given me a lot of enjoyment and a lot of relaxation, it really de-stresses me. (Judy, I8, 7)

Music was returning to an amateur rather than professional (as it was during the degree) interest for the non-performers and it seemed that they were happy with its new position in their lives. The key difference was their reason for engaging with music:

It's there because I want it to be there, not because it has to be there. (Katie, I8, 13)

The non-performers wanted music to feature in their lives and they called upon it whenever they chose. The contrast was that the performers relied on music for financial security and, although they had chosen a career in music, this created an important difference in their perceptions of, and responses toward, their music-making. This was signified, for example, by the way the performers tended to perceive music as a job to leave behind at the end of the working day.

The freedom that the non-performers felt towards their music making was further emphasised by the fact that rather than feel worried about their level of skill (as discussed above) they were quite pleased with any performances or rehearsals they were involved with:

I'm aware that it's not what it was, but that doesn't bother me actually, it's good enough for what I want to do with my playing. (Judy, I8, 2)

I've sort of come to a good point at the moment, so it's been quite successful and I felt really pleased with 'The Creation' and stuff, so, I didn't feel 'oh I wish I could have sung better', I felt I sang to the best of my ability. (Juliet, I8, 2)

Such satisfaction and acceptance of a performance or practice session was rare in earlier interviews, representing the transition that had occurred for these musicians. It seemed that so long as they derived pleasure from their music-making, the musician identity was protected, even though the contribution that music made to it had changed. Robert Stebbins has written extensively about his research investigating the

experiences of the amateur performer, and in his discussions about the many guises of 'casual leisure' he emphasises that all are hedonic, providing the amateur musician with 'a significant level of pure pleasure, or enjoyment' (2001: 305). However, he is keen to illustrate that amateur musical participation can also be rewarding and constructive for the individual (1992: 2), and can make small contributions to the individual's sense of self (2001: 308).

Although the non-performers were motivated by the enjoyment of music and the social benefits it provided, many still required specific goals to play or sing:

If I'm going to play seriously I should probably try and have something to aim for, maybe try and play in a concert or that kind of thing. (Katie, I8, 4)

I think that the wedding's quite a good thing to sort of head for, you know what I mean, like something, otherwise I'd just be kind of wandering around aimlessly thinking it's something that I might want to do one day, it's nice that that's there. (Heidi, I8, 4)

It seemed that this group of musicians had some difficulty in forgetting the discipline of practice and playing seriously. Perhaps this was another guise of the obligation to play discussed above, with the non-performers feeling that making music was only worthwhile if it had a focus. Indeed, other research evidence suggests that amateur musicians often feel obliged to participate in music due to the social interactions that are inevitably entailed (Mitchell, 1969, cited in Stebbins, 1976: 67). However, the enjoyment and pleasure it offered suggested that this was not the case – it may simply be that due to the many years of practice and dedication to music it was difficult to accept and accommodate a new form of engagement with music.

Indeed, at the end of the study, the non-performers' primary engagement with music was no longer only performance:

Just because I love it, and like I'm always interested to hear what new bands have brought out, or you know, how they've recorded this song, or you know, which producers are working on that album, which record label have they come from, things like that...I just enjoy reading about, I enjoy reading music press and I enjoy you know reading things like that. (Ellen, I8, 12)

Listening...sometimes it's just noise, sometimes it's because it wakes me up, cheers me up or whatever. (Jane, I8, 8)

At the end of the study, all of the non-performers were involved in some music-making, either on their own or in amateur choirs or orchestras, but several had developed greater enthusiasm for reading about music, as in the case for Ellen, or like

Jane, listening to music. This suggests that whereas playing or singing may have previously been an emotional release for this group of musicians, they had now found an alternate outlet for their emotions.

It is evident that whilst music was no longer the focus for the non-performers, the role that it played in their lives was important. They missed regular contact with musical activities and were keen to maintain contact with music in the future. This group of musicians still seemed to have a musical identity and perceived themselves as musicians, although as suggested above, its function in their lives and self-concept was now different. The majority acknowledged that music was a hobby or amateur interest and the fact that it provided such enjoyment and relaxation alongside their need to continue playing or singing suggests that they were forming a different kind of musical identity.

### **6.6 The formation of an 'amateur' musician identity**

The non-performers seemed to be intrinsically connected to music, illustrated by their determination for it to always feature in their futures and by the enjoyment it offered now that the pressure had diminished. For example, this group of musicians considered music to have helped them to form their self-concept:

[It's] a time to find out who you really are, because the one thing with music, I've noticed in a lot of places, erm, musicians have the right to be as weird and wacky as they want to be, you know, if you want to wear stupid trousers, or go out and do whatever you want to do until whatever time of day, with whoever, musicians won't bother, because they're such a bizarre bunch anyway, but it doesn't make any difference, you can be exactly who you want to be, erm, so it's good for helping you build your own self. (Bobbi, I8, 9-10)

Musical involvement gave Bobbi the freedom to experiment with different identities (Ibarra, 1999), the result of which was finding an identity with which she was comfortable, though not as a professional musician. The notion of 'music in identity' (MacDonald *et al*, 2002) is well reported in terms of musical preferences (Tarrant *et al*, 2002), with musical taste affecting friendship group membership and how an individual is perceived by others. It is likely that similar processes occur during undergraduate training, as exemplified by Bobbi experimenting with provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999). The concept of music contributing to identity was further emphasised by Katie and Judy:

I am more sort of at peace with myself now that I'm playing the violin again, and I'm doing it for me, and it's the first time I've ever done it for me. (Judy, I8, 14)



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It doesn't change me completely playing, but it, it does, I do feel quite happy and relaxed and [laughs] it's a bit extreme, but kind of whole, sort of, it felt right to be playing again. (Katie, I8, 3)

It seemed that music was important to the self-concept of the non-performers, even though it was no longer such a priority in their lives. The concept of music contributing to identity is difficult to define and the data suggest that these individuals did not feel complete without music in their lives: the fact that they missed music, that they were fearful of it diminishing in the future and that it provided such enjoyment emphasises how vital it was to the individuals' sense of self, even though it was no longer the focus of their lives.

The non-performers did not possess the same 'professional' musician identity described in Chapter Five, but rather one that could be described as an 'amateur' musical identity. The overriding motivation for the non-performers to engage in music-making was the enjoyment it provided and the way in which it completed the individuals' sense of self. Music appeared to contribute to the identity of the non-performer and seemed to be connected to its function in their lives:

I think you get a lot more freedom of expression with being able to like, like in terms of Church, I play the violin at church, in a kind of worship way, and I don't know if there are some things that you can express in music that's not, and I'm really blessed with that kind of thing, do you know what I mean, that you can, like you think, if you just go into a room and you can just kind of pick up your clarinet and just play, and that's erm, that's a real amazing thing to be able to do. (Heidi, I8, 10)

...emotionally, it [music] does make a difference when you've...when you're feeling down you can play some music it might liven you up, or that kind of thing. (Katie, I8, 10)

Music now acted as a form of support when these individuals experienced difficulties, or wanted to express something that words perhaps would not allow. Whilst music was the main priority it was often the source of their anxiety, and now it was a sideline or background to their daily lives, they could rely on it as an emotional outlet. For many, music was even more fundamental:

It's just such a big part of my emotions, or plays such, it relates to my emotions, not a direct link, but it's just there, I can't ever live without it, it's too big a thing, you know. (Bobbi, I8, 7)

The implication is that, perhaps unconsciously, music featured in the daily lives of the non-performers and as such, it was something they depended upon. It seemed that the non-performers needed the position of music to be one of enjoyment and pleasure

because for them it acted as a form of escape from their professional lives. This is perhaps emphasised by the way they listened to music as a way to alter their emotional states – to wake up or relax them after a stressful day. The concept of music as self-therapy seemed particularly strong for the non-musicians and it could be considered that this was a contributory factor in their decision to keep music as an amateur interest rather than a career.

As both an indication that the non-performers were developing an amateur musical identity and an explanation for what this might be was a comment from Juliet:

I don't think I would want to do it as a job because I think it would take the love of music away, because my brother's an opera singer and you know, he doesn't do a concert unless he's paid for them now because it's his living, you know, whereas I just love being able to sing, and it not being my, you know, money-maker. (Juliet, 18, 3)

A personal and emotional connection with music was no less significant for the non-professional musicians than for those for whom it became a career. Both groups of musician loved and enjoyed making music, but the difference between them was related to the position they wished for music to have in their lives. When music becomes the sole means of income, doing music for 'the love of it' is diminished. It seems that a distinguishing feature between the performers and the non-performers was the latter group's need for music to be a source of enjoyment and relaxation – so that it did not become pressured. This decision may be related to the fact that they had not developed ways to cope with the difficulties and setbacks often associated with being a musician: the evidence presented here suggests that a possible explanation for this is that the non-performers' experiences with significant others (teachers, peers, parents, siblings, idols) did not equip them with the practical and psychological tools necessary for success as a professional musician.

Defining an 'amateur' musical identity seems somewhat problematic for two reasons:

1. There is no universal understanding of what an amateur musician is;
2. The individuals in this study all have different types and quantities of engagement with music.

Literature examining the nature of amateur engagement in music is varied. A common misconception is that amateur musicians are not very able (Topp Fargian, 2002), or are distinguished from professionals because they receive no fee for their musical activities (Russell, 2002). These elements are often true, but more than this,

amateur musicians have a love of music that motivates them to practice and attend several rehearsals a week (Stebbins, 1992). Amateur musicians may play alone or with other people, or may be keen consumers of either live or recorded music (Stebbins, 1997). The fact that the non-performers may have considered pursuing music as a career does not necessarily cause too much problem in defining an amateur identity in music. Although the intentions of the non-performers may have originally been different they perhaps did not develop the type of professional musician identity described in Chapter Five. Researchers are keen to highlight that being a 'professional' does not automatically imply a higher level of skill than amateurs (Topp Fargian, 2002: 32), and Stebbins (1976) suggests that the differences between amateurs and professional lie mainly in attitudes:

- 1) Confidence is a prominent quality of experienced professionals, but less developed among amateurs.
- 2) A difference in perseverance distinguishes these two groups for ... the professional knows he must stick to his music when the going gets rough.
- 3) The greater perseverance of professionals is fostered, partly, by their greater continuance commitment. They experience pressures to stay in music as a livelihood, which are rarely, or never, encountered by amateurs.
- 4) Professionals evince a degree of preparedness that is commonly lacking among amateurs. By "preparedness" is meant a readiness to play music to the best of one's ability at the appointed time and place.
- 5) Finally, professionals and amateurs have different self-conceptions; they conceive of themselves as either professional or amateur (1976: 55-56).

As discussed throughout this chapter, the belief systems of the professional and amateur musicians in this study were quite different in terms of their self-perceptions of musical ability and this, coupled with the amateur musicians lacking appropriate coping strategies and possible selves as professional musicians, may explain why the non-performers did not wish to become professional musicians. Music was the focus of their lives during their degrees, but their perceptions of and responses to their experiences at university, with the course and other people, increased their awareness that music did not belong at the centre of their lives, but rather was a way to enhance and complement the career route they chose. It could be argued that one result of their transition through the undergraduate degree was the formation of a secure and long-lasting relationship with music.

## **6.7 Summary**

The overriding motivation for the non-performers to engage with musical activities was their love of music and a fear of its role diminishing in their lives. This coincides with much of the literature on amateur musicians and partly explains their decision

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not to pursue performance as a profession. During the course of their undergraduate training the non-performers often found music to be a negative rather than a positive experience: without developing the necessary coping strategies (as demonstrated by the performers), music was not enjoyable and in order to avoid music permanently being perceived as negative, the non-performers chose not to pursue a career in music. This is not the only explanation for their decision but highlights how the musician identity of this group was threatened by the negative experiences which inevitably had a detrimental effect on the emotional and psychological state of the non-performers. Music now offered the non-performers only enjoyment and pleasure, emphasised by the absence of any descriptions of negative musical experiences. A central element of the amateur identity then, is a love of music and a desire to protect its position in the life of the musician.

Related to this was the function that music played in the lives of the non-performers at the end of the study. Music, either heard or performed, offered a form of escapism, relaxation, and was an emotional outlet. Music was considered by the non-performers to have helped them form their identities and their dependency on it in times of stress and pressure highlights how music was an intrinsic part of the amateur musician. They relied on music only for the functions described above, which illustrated that the non-performers used music to define themselves: music helped to maintain the individual's feelings of self-worth by confirming that even if their professional lives were not entirely positive they had other skills which offered enjoyment and feelings of personal satisfaction. This was further emphasised by the performers' increased feelings of contentment regarding their playing or singing ability, even if their levels of skill had decreased. Music offered social benefits, through interacting with other musicians in ensembles or as an incentive for watching live music and this further confirmed the identity of the non-performers as musicians. Psychological literature indicates that we construct our identities through our comparisons with those around us (Stets & Burke, 2003) and in this way the social environment in which the non-performers made music enhanced their identities.

An amateur musician identity, therefore, is comprised of: a love of music which offers the individual only positive and enjoyable experiences; a dependency on music as an escape from their professional lives – either as relaxation or escapism; and an

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identification with music which, through its relationship with other aspects of their lives, and their interaction with other musicians positively confirmed their perceptions of self.

It may be the significance of these elements to the individual throughout their musical development that influenced their decision not to pursue professional music as a career: perhaps the increasing realisation that these factors are important to their psychological well-being led to the decision that music should not be the centre of their life, but rather a complement to it.

### ***6.8 Comparing the performers and the non-performers***

This chapter, and Chapter Five, have discussed the perspectives and characteristics of the performers and the non-performers, but a brief consideration of how the two groups compare is necessary in order to begin to understand the differences between them.

The performers and the non-performers appeared to have a strong connection with music, and both described how they could not imagine a life without music. Music enabled both groups of musicians to develop a sense of self, in which a musical identity was a component: they all shared a love of music. In addition, the two groups shared similar experiences, describing negative and positive experiences with teachers, peers, institutions, performances, and daily musical involvement. However, differences between the performers and the non-performers began to emerge when their perceptions of, and responses to, their experiences were examined in greater depth. Figure 19 below summarises the main differences between the two groups of musicians.

	<i>Performers</i>	<i>Non-performers</i>
<b>Motivation</b>	Motivated by perceived challenges (for example, task difficulty, perceived lack of support); competition; determination to succeed and to fulfil potential; previous success; enjoyment; and love of music.	Motivated by the enjoyment offered by participating in musical activities; a love of music; and a desire not to lose regular contact with music.
<b>Coping Strategies</b>	During the transition certain coping strategies emerged, including: positive reframing of tasks, challenges, and prior negative experiences; support from peer group; positive outlook; and introduction of non-music related hobbies for escapism and relaxation.	No evidence of coping strategies, although support is sought from non-musical peers.
<b>Belief systems</b>	This group seemed to possess incremental belief systems, recognising that tasks could be achieved with effort, optimism, and by seeking support.	This group seemed to possess entity belief systems, believing that ability is fixed regardless of effort or attitude. This was emphasised by the group's tendency to assign blame to external sources rather than accept responsibility.
<b>Identity</b>	Throughout the transition this group gradually developed a 'professional performer' identity, with a professional attitude towards their musical participation, experiences, and future goals.	Throughout the transition this group gradually developed an 'amateur' musician identity, the primary motivation being the desire to enjoy making music.

**Figure 19. Summary of the differences between the performers and non-performers.**

The summary in figure 19 above highlights the central differences between the performers and non-performers in terms of their attitudes and responses towards their musical experiences. The four elements at the foundation of figure 19 appeared to be

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the most significant in determining whether a musician would eventually become a professional or an amateur musician. The ability to cope with negative experiences appeared to be of central importance to the long-term musical goals of the musicians, and it was striking that the non-performers did not appear to possess any such strategies. The relationship between the four factors described in figure 19 is a complex one, and requires closer examination. The next chapter considers three detailed case study examples in order to understand more fully how the four elements may interact and influence the development of the young adult musician.

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## Chapter Seven

### Case Studies

#### 7.0 Introduction

The previous three chapters focused on the general trends displayed by the music college and university students and the similarities and differences between the performers and non-performers. However, throughout the duration of the study, there were individuals who acted against the general trends of their group – either within the university/music college groupings discussed in Chapter Four or the performer/non-performer groupings discussed in Chapters Five and Six respectively. The stories of these individuals are particularly insightful, especially regarding the ‘performer’ and ‘amateur’ identities discussed in the previous two chapters. Judy, for example, was an exceptional violinist at the university who – so it seemed in interview one - was destined for a performance career, but she decided against the wishes of her family and teachers to become a primary school teacher. Geoff was the only student at the music college not to continue with postgraduate study and decided to try to find performance work immediately after graduating and his experiences provided a unique insight into the struggles of finding a professional career in music and the impact they have on the individual. Paula struggled more than any other music college participant throughout her undergraduate studies with feelings of insecurity and doubt that she would pursue performance as a career. However, she persevered and after moving college to study as a postgraduate her outlook completely changed. She began to perceive the feedback she received from teachers and peers in a more positive way, and consequently became more confident in her ability to succeed as a performer. The aim of this chapter is to provide detailed case studies of the experiences of these three individuals, each with a different story, in order to place the theories of emerging amateur and professional identities detailed in the two previous chapters into context. By examining their unique stories it is possible to see how the role that music plays in the musicians’ sense of self is critical to their determination and motivation to either pursue a career in performance or in an unrelated domain.



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The case studies incorporate both the qualitative and where possible descriptive data in order that their individual transitions be fully understood.

## **7.1 Judy**

Amongst the university participants, Judy's story was particularly distinctive. Whilst she was studying for her degree, Judy was perceived by teachers and students alike to be destined for a career in performance as a soloist or an orchestral musician. However, during her degree she realised that she did not want pursue a career in performance but wished to become a primary school teacher, specialising in English Language and Literature. During her teacher training, Judy stopped playing the violin completely. Her experiences as a music student in the university offered some insight as to why individuals who show great potential as musicians sometimes choose not to pursue a professional career in music. I shall explore her journey chronologically, attempting to theorise, where possible, her behaviours.

At the beginning of the study Judy described how becoming a professional performer had been her life ambition:

I've always wanted to do it. I think, I learned with the Suzuki<sup>1</sup> method, which meant at the age of three I was looking at the eighteen year olds playing, and aspiring to be as good as they were, so I've always been wanting to be good at it...it's just been a gradual progression. (Judy, I1, 2)

She described how music had always been "really quick and really natural to me" (I1, 1) and how she had never really considered a career other than music. However, her experiences with other people and institutions and her own personal goals discouraged her from pursuing music as a career.

### **7.1.1 Parents**

Judy was a violinist, and due to the nature of the Suzuki method her mother was highly involved in her musical development:

She's [Mother] been involved in everything, she used to go on the music courses with me and all the lessons and practice at home with me, which was great when I was young, but a bit annoying when I was a teenager. But, erm, so she became less involved, but I

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<sup>1</sup> Within the Suzuki method of training children begin to learn the violin as early as the age of two years. Training begins with the child's mother learning how to play, practising in front of the child and treating the violin as a special object. Suzuki believed that this would make the child yearn to play the violin and once s/he demonstrates the motivation to learn, they are given an instrument and taught to play, initially by ear, and eventually using musical notation (cited in Winner & Martino, 1983: 274).

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wouldn't be where I was today without her support and, you know, the amount of money and time she's put into it like that. (Judy, I8, 3-4)

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two suggests that parental support can be positive (Davidson *et al*, 1998; Freeman, 1993), but such parental involvement may be obstructive to a child's musical development in some cases, since many children like the special identity that being the only family member to play the violin (in this case) offers (cf. Borthwick and Davidson, 2002). Indeed, the quote above implies that despite the support, the relationship wasn't always a positive one, and this is further explained below:

It ended up that she was taking credit for, what in the end, was my hard work and that sounds really mean. I don't mind her taking some of the credit, but she's quite an overpowering, possessive mother. Not very good at letting go, so you have to force her to let go like that. (Judy, I1, 4)

Judy's perceptions of the vicarious enjoyment of her mother was regarded as undermining her sense of personal achievement and it can be hypothesised that this may have inhibited Judy from developing her individuality – both personally and musically. Judy's use of the words 'overpowering', 'possessive', and 'force' imply her need to feel independence from her mother. Maternal over-involvement seems to have had a detrimental impact on Judy's relationship with her father:

I've probably always strived to get him to pay attention to the violin. I think he was probably narked that I spent so much time with mum, or that she spent so much time with me, because that's what the Suzuki method involved, and I think it's not until my mum's let go that he's been able to kind of find an interest in it really. He went and joined the choir two years ago to try and understand what it's all about, because they're not musical, so he didn't know anything about it. So yeah, it means a hell of a lot, but he does support me more than he used to. (Judy, I1, 4)

Judy's musical development seemingly created a divide between her parents, with her father feeling unable to relate to her music making. It is impossible to know the dynamics of Judy's mother and father, but it is possible that Judy might have been aware of some underlying tension between them. Whilst she was pleased at the increasing support shown by her father, it seemed that the pressure to please her parents was a central feature of Judy's transition. The pressure to make music to please her parents made Judy's career choice a difficult one, but she eventually decided that her own interests, not her parents', should be her primary concern. However, her experiences with teachers and within the university also played a critical role.

### **7.1.2 Teachers and institutions**

During the first two interviews it emerged that whilst her teacher was highly supportive, Judy found her lessons frustrating:

She literally sits in the corner of the room, as far away from us as she can get and talks at us, and when I think about it she's not actually been giving me any musical pointers or anything...she's not actually helping me shape the music in any way...I'm getting cheesed off with it, that's another reason why I haven't been practising. She's not inspiring me in any way. (Judy, I1, 4)

Judy felt that she did not receive the guidance she required from her teacher and on many occasions described how her teacher did not match her teaching methods to the individual:

I don't like the way she teaches, and I don't think that's just because I like to learn by listening, I think you can't, I know because I teach myself, I can't just explain to my pupils how I would like them to play. It seems like, she tried to alter my bow hold when I first came and she wouldn't even take, I had to offer her my bow because she couldn't explain how she wanted me to hold it. She wouldn't even take my bow off me and hold it how she wanted me to hold it, so she gave up. (Judy, I1, 5-6)

This is one example of a number of frustrations that Judy had with her teacher yet she also described how she strived not to disappoint her teacher during performances: in the same way that Judy perceived inadvertent pressure from her parents it seemed that she felt obliged to please her teacher and work harder than she might otherwise:

What she thinks of my playing is very important. I would hate to perform and for her to be disappointed in what she just listened to. (Judy, I1, 6)

It appeared that Judy placed a great deal of pressure on herself, perhaps in order to please others, and it was only in the final interview that she described how she had to start thinking of her own needs above others:

I am stubborn and I'm also eager to please everybody, especially my mum, but it just got to the stage that I knew I had to, if it was going to be my career for the next forty years I had to do something that I wanted to do and that I was going to be happy in. (Judy, I8, 11)

The enjoyment that music brought Judy once it was no longer her focus emphasises that her motivation whilst at university was primarily extrinsic – to please her family and teachers.

### **7.1.3 Obligation to please others**

When Judy explained to her parents that she intended to become a primary school teacher, she met with much opposition:

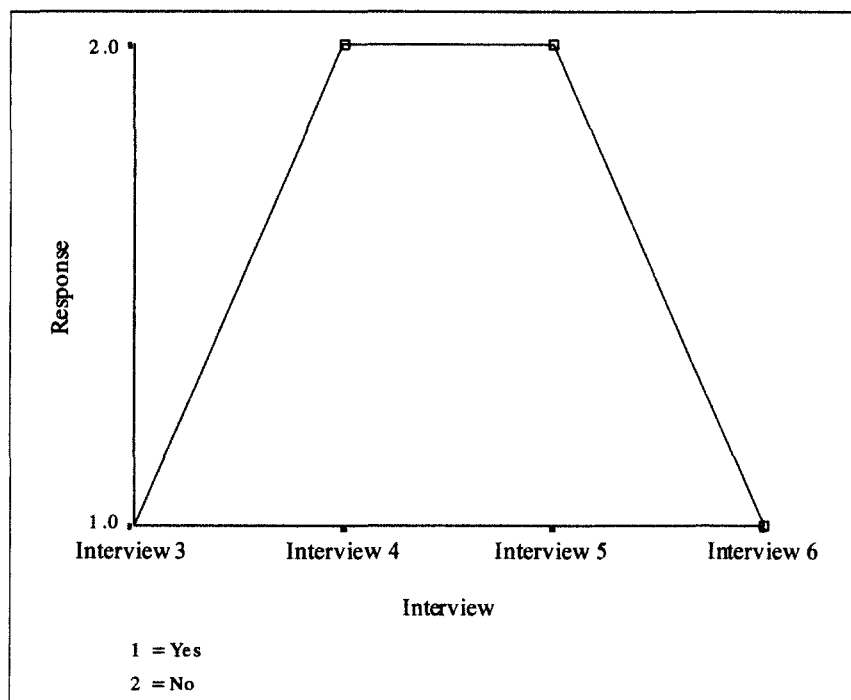
Dad's like "well I don't understand why you can't go into performance" and so I turn round and say "well I'd rather try and pass on my musicality onto hundreds of other

people, why is that so wrong”, try to like really exaggerate it to make him understand that, oh, I ended up having a huge argument with him about it, I don’t understand why they can’t accept that I’ve made a decision about what I want to do for the first time, and they just don’t accept it, just because it’s not what they want me to do, and I don’t know why he’s [father] so suddenly so worried about me playing the violin either. (Judy, I2, 8)

Perhaps the vicarious enjoyment that Judy’s parents gained from her success influenced their lack of willingness to let her pursue a different career. They seemed unsupportive of Judy’s goals and unwilling to listen to her explanations. There is a tone of resentment apparent in the above quotation as Judy was unable to understand their position. In fact, she stated in the final interview that she directly rebelled against them:

I’m stubborn really and because everyone else was wanting me to do it, I wouldn’t, because I wasn’t wanting to do it for me. (Judy, I8, 8)

Part of Judy’s transition seemed to be characterised by her attempts to make her own position felt – to ensure that people close to her understood her ambitions and desires. Music appeared to contribute to a divide between Judy and her family, so much so that she did not turn to her parents for advice and support during the middle phase of the study, as figure 20 below illustrates:



**Figure 20. Judy’s response to the question ‘do you discuss difficulties with your parents?’**

Her violin teacher responded in a similar way when Judy received the news that she had been accepted onto her chosen education course and the result was again negative:

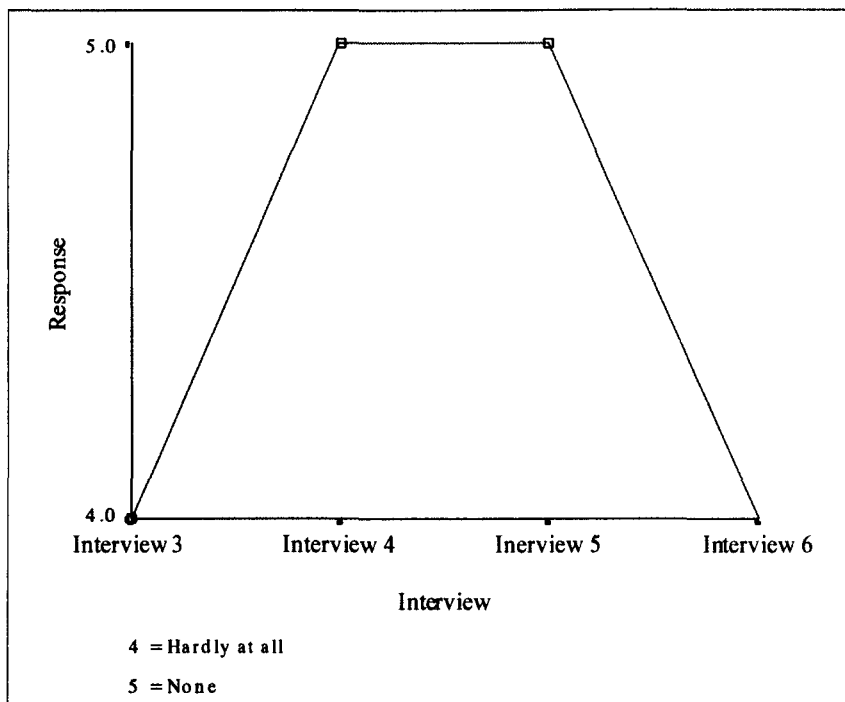
I'm finding I'm actually resenting what she's got to say about what I want to do, I resent the fact that she's telling me I shouldn't go and teach the violin when she's sitting there teaching the violin herself, erm, and to my knowledge, she didn't do a load of playing when she was, like she didn't go into it professionally. (Judy, I2, 9)

Bearing in mind that Judy rebelled against her parents' wishes for her to pursue performance, the apparent double standards of her teacher seemed to have had a similar impact. The tone of the quotation above suggests that Judy had little respect for her teacher at this point in the interview process and again signifies a potential contributory factor to her decision to move away from music as a career.

The pressure she felt is not only from those with whom she had direct contact. On many occasions she described her frustrations with the university and their expectations of her:

They'll [the Music Department] never excuse the third years to let some first years have a chance, which is what we'd really like to be honest, I mean it wouldn't have bothered me if I hadn't played in the Verdi at all, erm, but on the other hand, I don't know, they do make you feel bad if you do suggest you can't fit things in, and as it is, I've refused to do the rehearsals for the chamber orchestra for the festival, erm, and I'm getting all kinds of black comments about that. (Judy, I2, 5)

During the final semester of the third year the students had a large workload and many struggled to maintain their commitments to university ensembles. When Judy tried to address her time management difficulties she was met with opposition from the conductor of the orchestra. Judy felt that her lecturers did not try to understand the pressure that she was under and the consequences of her feelings of duty and obligation were stress and anxiety. The pressure to please her parents and teachers resulted almost in burn out – a desire to have a complete break from music.



**Figure 21. Amount of time spent playing (Judy).**

At the beginning of the study, Judy reported playing for several hours a day, either in rehearsals or individual practice and figure 21 represents the decline in musical participation immediately following her graduation and during her teacher training. From the data presented above, it seems that Judy's motivation to make music was largely extrinsic – as a way to please those who had given her high levels of support, but it is likely that these factors in combination contributed to gradually decreasing motivation to pursue performance as a career.

#### ***7.1.4 Experiences of the profession***

Throughout the duration of her degree and whilst she was still considering becoming a performer, Judy gained some experience playing with a professional orchestra. However, her experiences there contributed to her realisation that this was not the career for her:

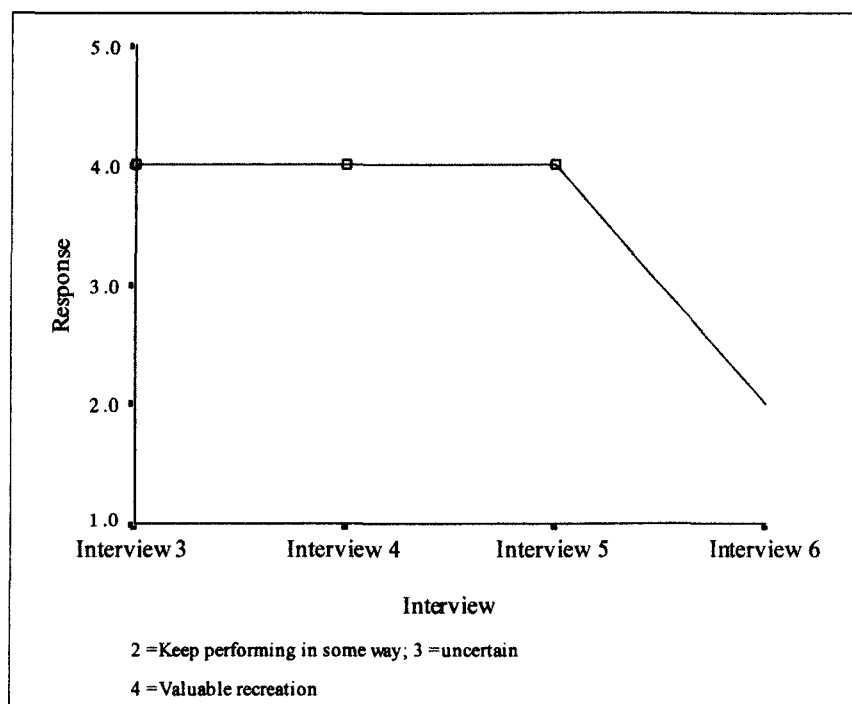
I got a placement with an orchestra, with that orchestra, and they're all cynical, I've sat in several places, I've sat in the middle of the first and been told by all the forty year old men not to join an orchestra because it's a crap life and then I've sat at the back of the seconds with an old woman who is really cynical because the leader of the seconds is a young woman, really bitchy and horrible, and so that made me think about it, but I still thought, because I wanted to play the violin, that was my only option because as much as I loved to do chamber music because I've been so involved in chamber music, and unless

I go to music college, with all due respect to everyone here, I can't find the players and I don't want to go to music college. (Judy, I1, 7)

There are three factors here that denote Judy's resistance to a performance career: potential loss of enjoyment, competition, and desire to develop intellectually. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly for Judy, the suggestion from a cynical orchestral musician that playing in an orchestra is 'a crap life' may have been perceived by her as an indication that to earn a living from music means diminished enjoyment of music. She was already experiencing the negative impact of pressure from her parents and teachers and implied on several occasions in the early interviews that she feared she was already losing her love of playing the violin:

I'd like to start enjoying my violin again...I want to stop being pressurised. (Judy, I2, 15)

Perhaps for Judy, the thought of music becoming the focus of her life coincided with continued pressure: in order to protect her enthusiasm for music making she needed to keep it as a hobby rather than a career. This is reflected in figure 22 below:



**Figure 22. Judy's long-term musical goals**

The graph shows that at the beginning of the quantitative interviews (interview three, which for Judy was just after the completion of her undergraduate degree) Judy

wanted music to be on the sidelines of her daily life – as an occasional hobby. However, by the end of the study she realised that she would like music to remain an important part of her life. Her desire for music to be a hobby was obviously not sudden and appeared to have existed as she approached the end of her undergraduate degree and started her teacher training. Once Judy had no pressure to perform she seemed happy for it to be used only for enjoyment.

Secondly, the competitive and ‘bitchy’ nature of the music profession was a further deterrent and first hand experience of this within a professional orchestra highlighted to her that it was a continual struggle throughout professional life and not simply restricted to the training period:

It can get quite competitive and I don’t like that, I very much work for myself, not to compete with anyone else and I don’t like it when people are negative towards me if I’ve done well and things, or if I don’t play well it works the opposite way round as well, because people almost expect me to do well and then if I don’t that can get quite nasty as well. (Judy, I1, 9)

As mentioned above, a musician of Judy’s standard was unusual in a university context and as such she met with frequent malevolence from her peers, as shown in the quotation above. Judy claimed not to possess the competitive streak she perceived in others and the lack of the ‘killer instinct’ (Tannenbaum, 1986) perhaps further contributed to her concerns about becoming a professional musician.

The final consideration here is the fact that Judy did not want to go to music college. In the second interview she explained that “I came to university to study, which is why I didn’t go to music college” (Judy, I2, 13), which suggests that she wanted the stimulation of academic learning, rather than the focus on performance skill mainly associated with music colleges. All three factors discussed here may serve as explanations for her desire not to attend music college and to pursue a performance career: because Judy lost her enthusiasm for music during her degree she now wished to regain the enjoyment it once offered. She disliked the competitive element of music – perhaps because she did not have the same ‘killer instinct’ as others and she wanted to feel challenged and stimulated, elements she may have felt a career in performance would not offer. The descriptive statistics indicated that Judy’s short-term goals included the desire to fulfil her potential and acquire different skills and these did not change throughout the study. It is possible that Judy did not consider



that music would enable her to achieve her goals of developing herself intellectually and therefore needed to find a career that would enable her to do so. This further supports the idea that Judy experienced some kind of burn out from music: because she had learned music from such a young age, she may have felt that she could not acquire as many new skills as she could in a different profession.

A further factor which contributed to Judy's decision to pursue teaching as a career was her desire for a secure future:

It's not really a very stable kind of thing to be doing...I want a family, so the way I look at it is there's no point in going into a job that I'm going to be stuck for fifteen years in a lifestyle that doesn't suit that, because I think that's something that I have to consider. (Judy, I1, 8)

There are many aspects of the performance profession that deterred Judy from entering it and this additional reason further supports the idea that she was unsuited to a career as a musician. Her needs and ambitions (her possible selves) contradicted the lifestyle of a musician and from this point of view her decision to pursue a different career seemed logical.

### ***7.1.5 A changing identity***

As discussed in Chapter Six, the transition into a new career can be quite problematic as it involves learning new skills and forming a new professional identity. Judy described how she deliberately concealed that she was a musician when she started her PGCE because "I was allowed to be me instead of being a violinist" (Judy, I8, 5) and this proved to be a turning point for her. There were many indications in Judy's interviews that she felt repressed by her musical identity: she believed that other people judged her entirely by her musical ability rather than her personality:

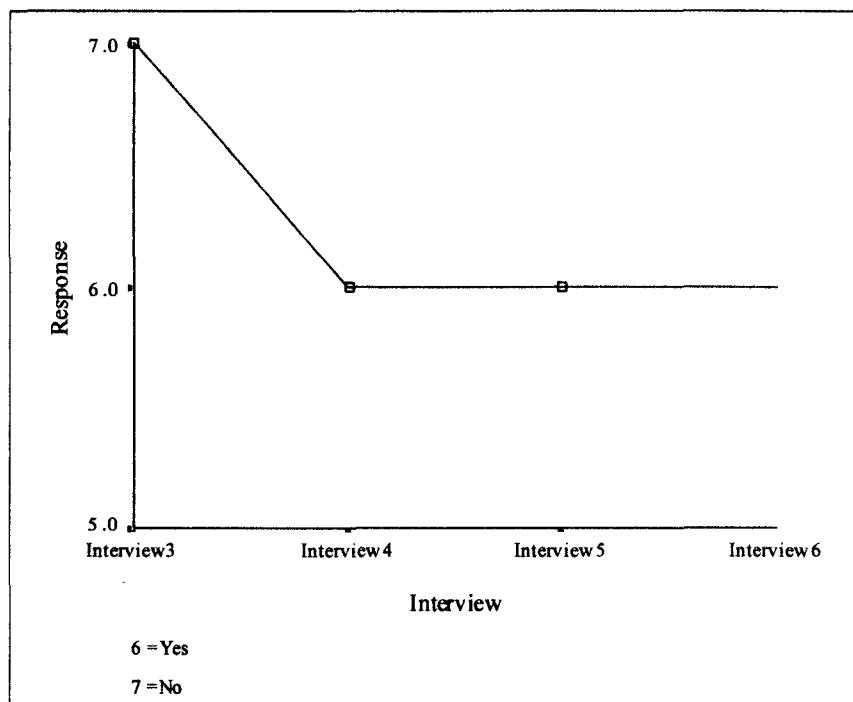
I was never just Judy, I loved it so much last year just being Judy and to find that people actually, I had so many friends, I've got more friends from my PGCE last year than I got from university, and that says everything to me, I was always the violinist in the corner...I resented it so much, and I still do resent the fact that I haven't got lots of friends from university because of that, I can't blame the violin for everything, but it did, I mean even when I was younger, you know, I spent so much time playing the violin I was never any good at anything else, erm, well that's not true, but I never felt I was very good at anything else. (Judy, I8, 13)

Judy is perhaps an example of how accelerated musical development can overpower the individual: whilst she appreciated her parents' support and intervention during the

early stages of learning, Judy began to resent their role in her musical development – she felt pressured to please them and her teachers and her music making became extrinsically motivated, by her desire not to disappoint. Her enjoyment of music decreased and was associated with negative social relationships which Judy did not wish to encounter. However, in the final interview, after a break from playing during her teacher training, Judy felt ready to start playing again, but for very different reasons:

My motivation is me, and it's the fact that I used to enjoy it so much, and something went wrong, really wrong for me to have hated it so much as well, erm, so two complete extremes, I know they're supposed to be really close together as well aren't they, those two extremes, but the motivation now comes from within me, it's my love of it. (Judy, I8, 13)

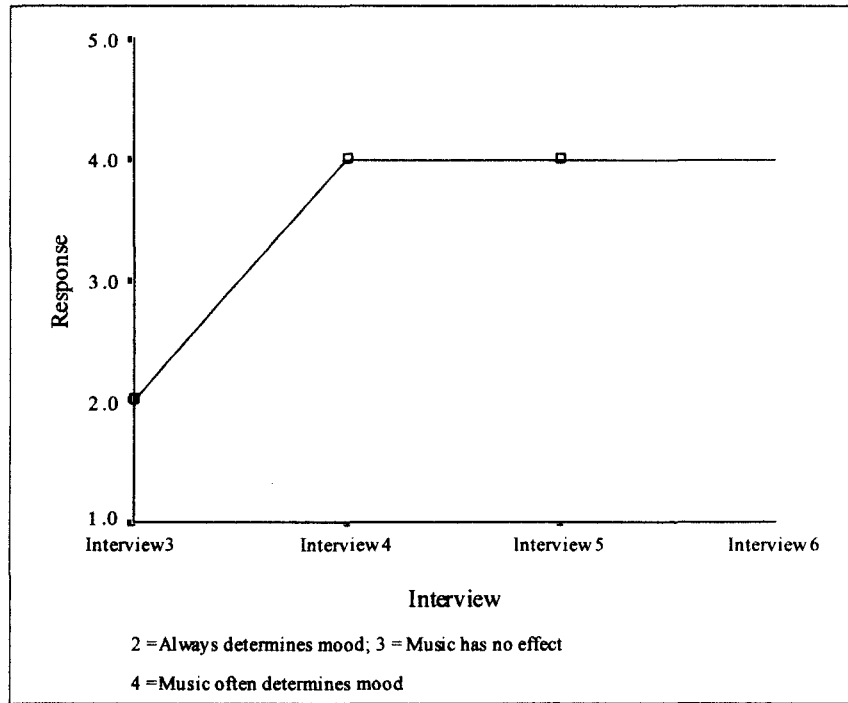
Clearly the central factor in her decision to choose a different career was the pressure and intensity of her experiences during her musical development. She now involved herself with music for the enjoyment it provides, and this is illustrated by figure 23 below:



**Figure 23.** Judy's response to the question 'Does music provide enjoyment?'

Judy now treated music as a hobby: she listened to music as a form of escape (see Chapter Six) and played only when she wanted to. As such, music had less

psychological impact on her and as figure 24 below highlights, music had progressed from something which always had an emotional impact on her, to something which occasionally affected her emotional state.



**Figure 24. Emotional impact of music on Judy.**

At the time of the final interview Judy chose for music to reflect or change her mood, rather than let her negative perceptions of her music-making affect her psychologically, as it did at the beginning of the study:

[Music] hasn't brought me anything for ill...and for good it's, it's given me a lot of enjoyment and a lot of relaxation, it really de-stresses me. (Judy, I8, 7)

Her negative associations with music seemed to have diminished, but it was only the complete break from music that enabled that to happen. As a member of the non-professional and university groups in this study, Judy's experiences have provided an example of how professional development needs to be considered throughout undergraduate training and perhaps beyond: it was during the first half of her degree that Judy's perceptions of music and what it was to be a musician were crystallised and in her case they proved to be a deterrent. Judy's story was more extreme than the other participants in this study although is reminiscent of the work of Sosniak and Freeman. Judy was considered to be a highly talented musician, but the pressure she

perceived her parents, peers, university and teacher to place upon her, alongside a lack of appropriate strategies for coping, resulted in Judy deciding not to become a professional performer.

### ***The performers***

Within the performer cohort there were two cases of transitions that were potentially unsuccessful: Geoff left college after his undergraduate degree and tried to find a career in performance but became disillusioned due to the difficulty he had finding work and Paula struggled throughout her undergraduate training with feelings of inadequacy and doubt, but finished the study feeling positive that she wanted to enter the profession. Both represent examples of how experiences with other people and within the profession can be debilitating to the developing performer, but their stories represent the strength of character and motivations required for a successful transition into the performance profession.

## ***7.2 Geoff***

Geoff was a 'cellist, and when the study began he was finishing the fourth year of his undergraduate degree at the music college. As the discussion below demonstrates, his consistent long-term goal was to become an orchestral musician. However, his journey to achieving this position was not an easy one. Unlike any of the other conservatoire musicians, he left college after his undergraduate degree to pursue a career as a performer. He experienced a great deal of disappointment and frustration and at times considered terminating his pursuit of a performing career. However, Geoff persevered, and at the end of the interview period he was beginning to earn an income as a performing musician. This section will examine Geoff's experiences as a way to further understand the factors necessary to persevere and maintain determination despite the difficulties encountered as a professional musician.

### ***7.2.1 Motivation***

His goals throughout the study were to become an orchestral musician, his main motivation being the enjoyment playing music provided:

I've had amazing feelings of elation after doing the concerto and one of the orchestral concerts we did was the best I ever played in, and the buzz you get from it is absolutely something I've never experienced in anything else, erm, I woke up still on a high the next

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morning after the concert, and I've never had that before, and think when you give a performance and it goes really well, I think the buzz you get takes some beating. (Geoff, I1, 9)

Music incited a powerful emotional response in Geoff and throughout the study he attempted to achieve similar crystallising experiences such as the one described above. Geoff frequently referred to his enjoyment of music making and this seemed to enable him to persevere when he experienced setbacks. He reflected positively on his performing experiences and was motivated by his success and progress:

I think in this internal 'stage'<sup>2</sup> that I did, I think the work that I did towards that paid off very well, it was the best mark I've ever got, and I hadn't expected it to go as well as it did, so the whole, the knowledge that I can get marks like that now has set me up very well for my diploma. About a year ago I'd never have thought I'd reach as high as that mark. (Geoff, I1, 9)

It is perhaps unsurprising that Geoff was motivated by his success and enjoyable experiences and it might be expected that when he encountered setbacks he would respond in an equally emotional, although less positive, way, but this was not the case.

### 7.2.2 Coping strategies

Geoff developed certain strategies that enabled him to counteract potentially negative emotional responses:

Occasionally when you don't get the marks that you were hoping for, it can be slightly demoralising...you have to be able to use it constructively, bounce back, correct what they say was wrong, and aim for better next time, and it usually works. (Geoff, I1, 5)

He emphasised the importance of taking a break from music when he felt it was having a negative psychological impact ("I think doing exercise relaxes you afterwards, and being relaxed makes you play better, so I think the two go hand in hand", Geoff, I2, 7) and he seemed to successfully maintain a sense of perspective concerning his musical involvement. As the quote above demonstrates, Geoff tried to use any experience as an opportunity to learn and improve and it was this outlook that seems to have assisted him in his transition as a performer. His determination to improve, and confidence that he could do so, emphasised Geoff's incremental belief system, which enabled him to cope with the struggles he experienced.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Stage' refers to a regular assessment process that occurs at the music college, which involves the musicians performing a short recital to a panel of teachers from the institution. There are three stages in total, and once the third is complete the musicians are recommended to external orchestras and concert organisers should extra musicians be required.

Geoff tried to be realistic about his abilities: he acknowledged that he was not “a star” (Geoff, I1, 4) and so not destined for a career as a solo performer, which is why he wanted to become an orchestral musician. Throughout the study Geoff demonstrated other similar personality characteristics that seemed to equip him with the resilience necessary to enter the performance profession. He claimed to “enjoy competition” (Geoff, I1, 5) and seemed determined to succeed in his transition to performer:

I mean, I know competition’s very stiff, but I can give it my best shot, and I think it should get somewhere near, if not there straight away. (Geoff, I2, 10)

Geoff seemed to possess many of the necessary personality traits discussed in Chapter Four: his apparent strength of character and levels of motivation and determination appeared to provide the necessary tools for entering the profession. His experiences over the duration of the study were not entirely positive and it is likely that these characteristics were partially responsible for his perseverance and resulting success. Additionally, Geoff seemed to have a strong connection with music.

I can’t imagine what life would be like without it, it’s sort of been part of it now for two thirds of my life, and I can’t remember ever not playing an instrument, so I think I’d find it very hard to live without it (Geoff, I1, 6).

Music was a fundamental feature of Geoff’s life and he seemed to find security in its permanence. He could not remember a time when he did not play, suggesting that he defined and perceived himself primarily as a musician and this was likely to relate to his musical determination and motivation. If this was the case, to be unable to engage with music on a daily basis could potentially have had a negative emotional and psychological impact on Geoff.

### ***7.2.3 Coping with rejection: music and well-being***

Geoff left college upon completion of his undergraduate degree because he did not think it was necessary to continue his studies – he thought it was expensive and did not understand why further training was a requirement for entry into professional musical life. Following his graduation, he began to apply for jobs with professional orchestras, but received only rejections. At the beginning of this period he continued to play and have occasional lessons, but his frustration with the system gradually increased throughout subsequent interviews: when he received his rejection letters his

lack of experience was cited as an explanation. He felt that he was in a 'Catch-22' situation and he began to feel that the likelihood of finding a job was hopeless.

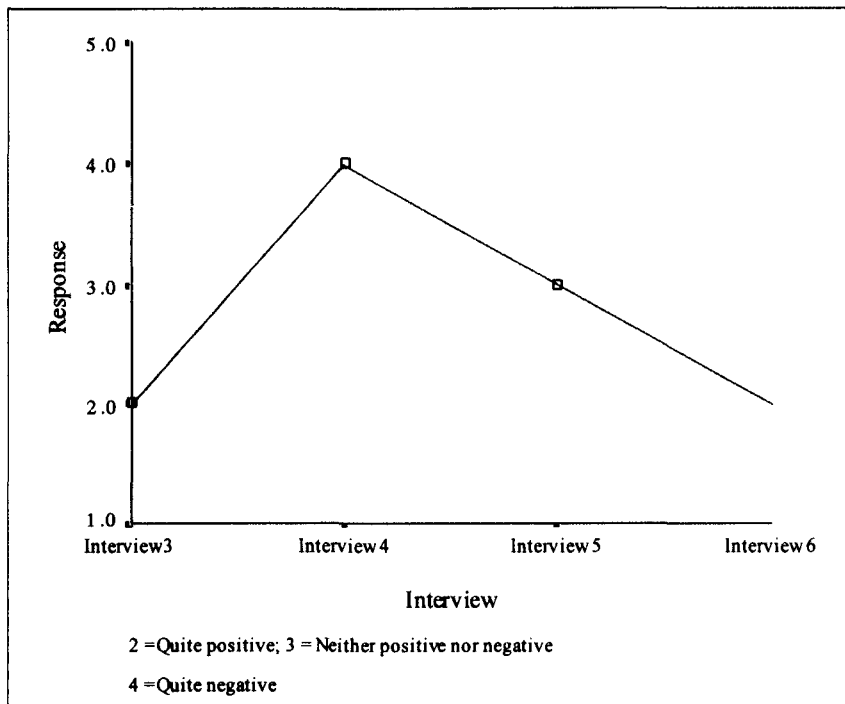
I was quite miffed when they - Hong Kong - didn't give me an audition, because, I mean, if that was just for a normal tutti section job, and you think, well, who are you to say I'm not good enough, when you haven't even heard me play, so just for someone who might have a professional few concerts would get an audition, but they might not be very good, it has been known, so on the basis of that it seems a bit unfair, I know probably a lot of people would have applied, and this is just one country they advertised it in for an international job, so you can understand why, but it's a bit of a knock back. (Geoff, I2, 11)

Geoff's response to the rejection was surprising given the coping strategies he displayed in response to other similar situations. This may be because he realised the difficulty of the situation: he needed orchestral experience to progress, but was unable to get the necessary experience without being offered work. Whilst studying, the college offered a safe environment: despite competition and pressure, not fulfilling potential during performances was part of the learning process and could aid further development – perhaps a reason for initially deciding to study at music college. It could be that musicians perceive situations differently when they have left the relatively safe environment of music college (Freeman, 1991): a main priority has to be earning a wage, thus the musician has to demonstrate that they are as good, if not better, than other musicians in the wider community. The increased importance of succeeding alongside a greater amount of competition resulted in Geoff doubting his abilities and feeling inadequate.

In the fourth interview (about six months after finishing his undergraduate degree), Geoff described how he had still been unsuccessful in obtaining orchestral work and felt like he was at a "brick wall" (Geoff, I4, 12).

I've not even been offered an audition for anything and I just think 'what else could I do?' – as far as experience goes I've done everything I could – it makes me think 'what's the point, what do they want?' (Geoff, I4, 12).

As figure 25 below demonstrates, Geoff experienced a low peak of discontentment as a general mood state at this time.



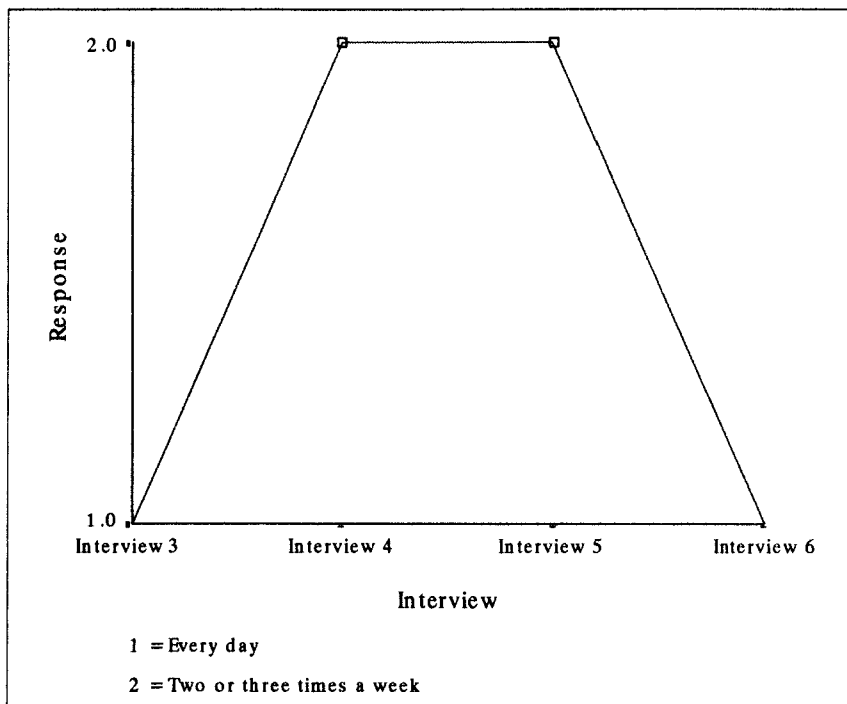
**Figure 25. Geoff's response to the question 'How positive are you?'**

This was reflected in his lack of confidence for finding a job as a musician: "I just feel my chances are quite slim at the moment" (Geoff, I4, 1). Clearly Geoff's employment status at this point in the interview process had an extremely negative impact on his musical- and self-confidence. In order to survive financially he had to find non-music related work and therefore he began work in an office as an administrator. The descriptive statistics indicated that Geoff experienced increased levels of boredom as a direct consequence of the job and this coincided with his negative state of mind.

When I'm stuck doing something I really don't want to do, the days drag. I don't enjoy it, there's no way I can claim it brings enjoyment (Geoff, I5, 12)

As suggested above, music was a fundamental part of Geoff's self-concept. Without the opportunity to earn his living as a musician he felt less content within himself. He said at the beginning of the study "I can't imagine life without music to be honest" (Geoff, I2, 6), but through necessity he was living his life "without music". As demonstrated by figure 26, Geoff was playing less during the middle of the study than at any other time: he found little time for playing because "when I get home I'm often tired and I'm not in the mood to practise" (Geoff, I4, 2).





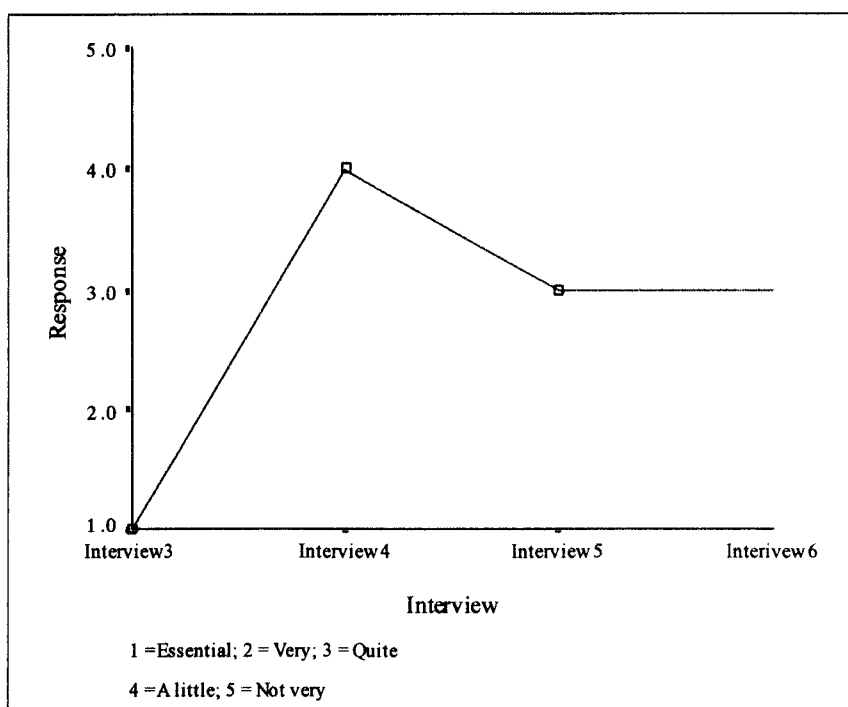
**Figure 26. Amount of time spent playing (Geoff).**

It seemed that Geoff became increasingly disconnected from his enthusiasm for and love of music. Music became less central to him during this time than at the beginning or end of the study, as shown by the graph below, and his priorities for playing were changing:

Practising is a release from the boredom, and that's spurring me on to get other work, because I want something to do (Geoff, I3, 10).

I'm more playing for fun than working – I'm not spending what I consider enough work to spend doing technical work, if I do any, and then I don't play for a few days, it's just not worth it. So I'm doing it for fun rather than to improve. (Geoff, I4, 7)

This was far removed from the enthusiasm expressed by Geoff at the beginning of the study. Music had seemingly become an escape from his daily routine of work and was a way for him to both relax and feel challenged.



**Figure 27. Geoff's response to the question 'How central is music to you?'**

Figure 27 shows that music was obviously still important to Geoff's life, but played a different role and was less of a daily focus. It was almost as if Geoff used music as a source of comfort:

More than anything...music helps me to cope [with boredom from work]. I didn't realise it for a while, but it does. (Geoff, 15, 10)

Geoff seemed to need music in his life – perhaps because it was important to how he perceived himself as an individual and it is noteworthy that in interview six, following the realisation described in the quote above, that Geoff had made a number of important changes in his life and restarted his pursuit for a performance career.

#### **7.2.4 A drive for change**

By the fifth interview music was beginning to play a more important role in Geoff's life (see figures 26 and 27).

I think the thing that got me practising again was a couple of reasons. I joined an amateur orchestra, a very good amateur orchestra and the thing that got me practising again was after the first concert I realised I was missing it. I'd not practised since I started working and when I got home the last thing I wanted to do was more work and I realised if I want to make progress I have to put the hours in, so I started to learn a new piece, so I chose a piece I liked and that's the only way to get motivated again, and it worked, that's what got me going. (Geoff, 15, 12)

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It is possible that the connection that Geoff had with music meant that he would not feel satisfied unless he was playing on a daily basis and this also goes part of the way to explain his boredom and discontentment as an office administrator. However, it was Geoff's determination to become a professional musician and his incremental belief system, in conjunction with his reliance on music, that finally resulted in him re-establishing his daily practice routine and search for a career in music.

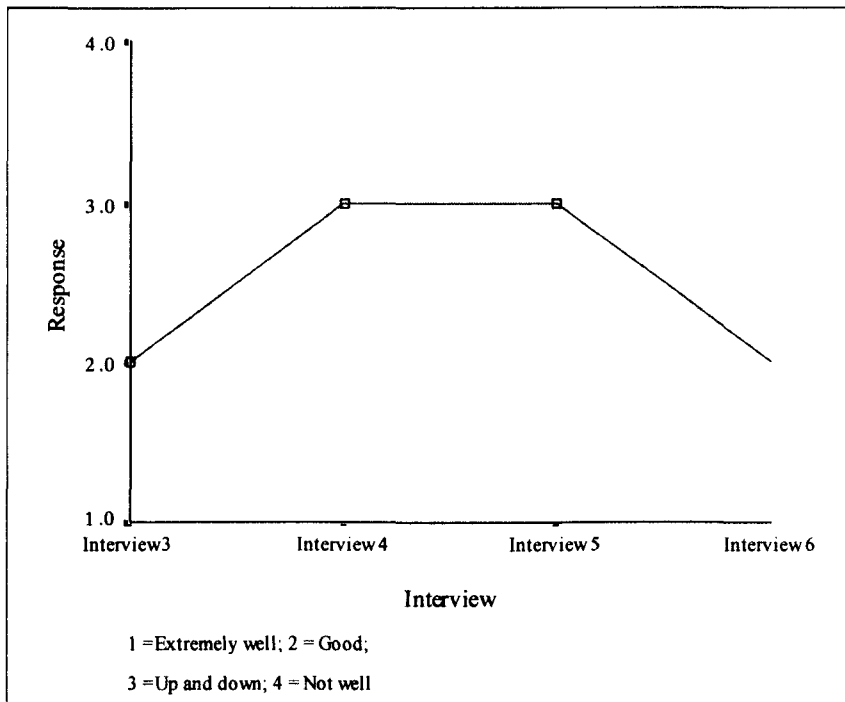
By interview six Geoff defined himself as a self-employed musician, having decided to leave his temporary job:

I gave up the office job to concentrate on it – I was fed up with the office job (Geoff, I6, 2)

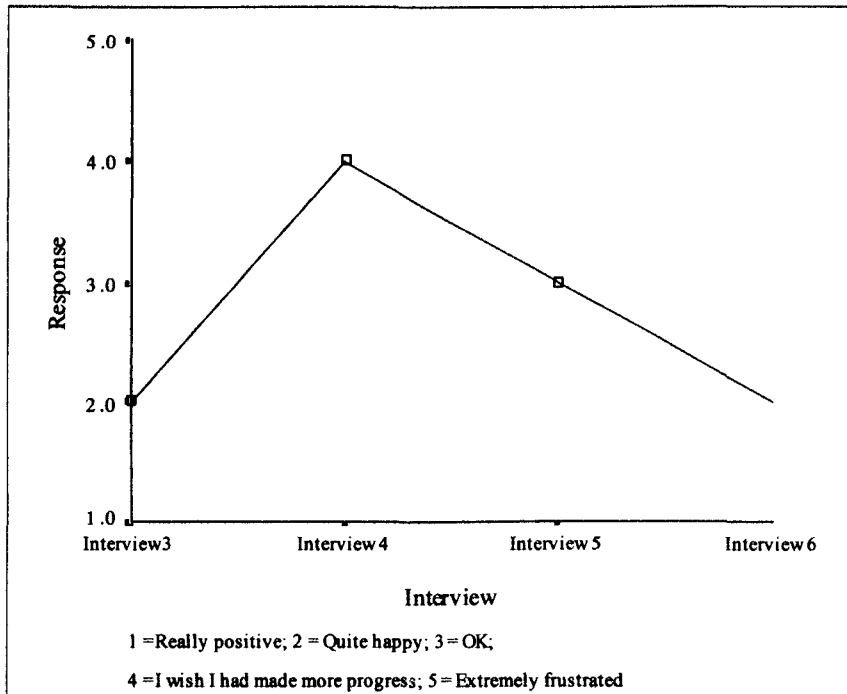
The change in Geoff's outlook as a consequence of his decision was apparent in all aspects of his musical engagement, expressed by a gradual incline in positive ratings of his playing and musical progress (see figures 28 and 29), in addition to many of the elements discussed above. This is partly explained by the fact that he was simply doing more playing now, but the change in his attitude from doubting that he could achieve a career in music in interview four, to believing once again (as he did at the beginning of the study) that it was within his grasp, cannot be ignored:

It's all been pretty positive. I have enough gigs to live off and it's made me realise a career in music is not so unlikely (Geoff, I6, 12)

It is possible that Geoff needed to have a break from pursuing a performing career in order to re-establish his motivation and connection with music: he realised whilst working in a non-music related job that he was discontented and frustrated without music.



**Figure 28. Geoff's response to the question 'How is your playing progressing?'**

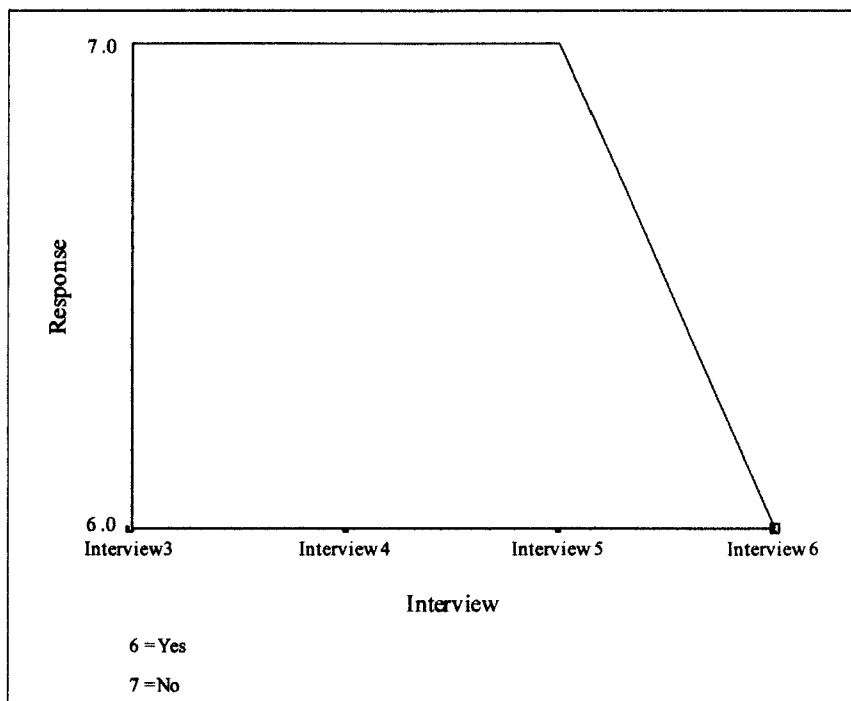


**Figure 29. Geoff's response to the question 'How do you feel about your progress?'**

It seemed that Geoff's personality characteristics were largely responsible for his perseverance throughout this difficult time of uncertainty, although he did acknowledge that another factor also played a role:

When I started working in the office last year, erm, and I wasn't getting any playing work at all, from probably about November right through 'til right at the end of April or something like that, erm, you know, you start thinking 'well what am I supposed to be doing here, trying to get a career in music or trying to work in an office?' that was, that was not a good feeling, but erm, that sort of changed, again for a stroke of luck almost, where I happened to bump into someone who then started getting me lots of work. (Geoff, 18, 10-11)

The role that Geoff considered luck to play in his professional development remained constant throughout the duration of the study and was consistent in this respect with the performer group as reported in Chapter Five. This chance encounter with an old friend allowed Geoff to reinitiate his pursuit of his chosen career and the more professional playing he was involved with the stronger his determination became, as demonstrated by figure 30 below.



**Figure 30. Geoff's response to the question 'Are you motivated by your determination to succeed?'**

Figure 30 demonstrates how Geoff found increased motivation as a result of his determination to achieve his chosen career. The factors discussed above in relation to

Geoff's experiences throughout the study all seem to have contributed to his gradually increasing determination.

### **7.2.5 The transition**

As discussed above, Geoff found the transition between graduating from music college and trying to enter the industry particularly tough:

I think when you're at college it's a little bit like your head's in the clouds, an awful lot of people, and probably me the same when I was there, but erm, I think you wise up pretty quick once you come out and the first wave of letters go out to the orchestras and you get about two responses and neither of them positive, you know, it soon becomes very apparent that it's going to be harder than you thought, but at the same time it's quite fun to do. (Geoff, I8, 10)

Geoff's retrospective analysis of his experiences summarises the steep learning curve that the musicians seemed to experience as they attempted to secure employment: Geoff indicated that he was naïve in his initial expectations of finding work easily, but implied that he had learned from the experience (in the same way he perceived negative performances during his time at college) and was now able to reflect positively on the process. This seemed to be a primary way in which Geoff and the other performers coped with the trials of the transition and it could be that without such determination and resilience, Geoff would not have succeeded in returning to his pursuit of a professional career. He seemed to have a professional distance from music, again like the other performers:

I hope it'll [music] be able to sustain my lifestyle really, and make me earn a living out of it properly. (Geoff, I8, 11)

As discussed in Chapter Five, music was perceived by Geoff (and other performers) as a career choice. Whilst Geoff seemed to have a strong connection with and dependence on music, he maintained a certain professional distance and realistic perspective which enabled him to cope with the difficulties he encountered. For example, Geoff was still disillusioned with elements of his transition at the end of the study:

I still really want to get into a professional orchestra, so any time there's an audition going I still apply for it, it's just no one seems to be giving me auditions at the moment. (Geoff, I8, 4)

Despite this, however, his overall state of mind was positive and he felt better equipped to cope with the difficulties:

I feel like I'm a lot more, more realistic, or slightly more cynical I suppose, about what the chances are of going on and getting an orchestral job, erm, whilst I still think it's

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feasible, I don't think when you're at college you ever realise quite how hard it's going to be. (Geoff, 18, 9)

Geoff's experiences after leaving college to beginning to establish himself as a professional musician highlight just how challenging the transition can be. He was unique in this sample as the only student to attempt the transition without postgraduate training, but his personality characteristics of self-confidence, determination, and strong intrinsic motivation enabled him to begin his completion of the transition. Without his methods for coping it is unlikely that Geoff would have been as resilient to the rejection and difficulties he faced.

In contrast to the determination, self-belief, and the development of coping strategies exhibited by Geoff, Paula's experiences were different and her transition was a time of much self-doubt and insecurity.

### ***7.3 Paula***

Paula was a trumpet player and was in the penultimate year of her undergraduate degree at the music college when she was first interviewed. From the outset of the study, Paula appeared to struggle with her experiences in the college and her playing. She seemed unable to cope with setbacks and pressure and consequently often seemed to lack confidence in herself and her abilities as a musician. Paula described at the beginning of the study how her long-term ambition was to become an orchestral musician but during the middle of the study she began to doubt that she was capable of achieving her goals and entered a period of much uncertainty. However, by the final interview Paula's attitudes and perceptions towards her playing and experiences had transformed and she was more confident in her ability to achieve her long-term goals.

There were a number of elements that contributed to Paula's arduous transition through music college and postgraduate study at two different institutions, resulting in her eventual determination to pursue a professional performance career. Her experiences within her original institution, with other people (namely teachers), her approach to practice and her relationship with music all seemed to be contributory factors in the difficulties she experienced, but also to her successful progression through the transition.

### ***7.3.1 Personal perceptions of musical ability***

As mentioned above, Paula experienced much insecurity throughout the first year of the study.

I feel it's [my playing] is inconsistent, that's the problem, it's quite frustrating, because I do like my sound, I think that's probably one of the best things about my playing really, but then again, that's if everything's working well, but other times it will be awful, just not working kind of thing. (Paula, I1, 4)

This quotation summarises Paula's fluctuating experiences at music college: she implied that she could not rely on the quality of her playing from one day to the next. Although she was not completely disillusioned, her overriding perception of her abilities seemed to be negative.

One of the most consistent themes of Paula's interviews was her concern with practice technique:

I've got a tendency to be quite disorganised with my practice, and be careful, it sounds weird, but like I spend too long like warming up, and or, technical stuff at the beginning, which is probably quite strange, but I think it's partly, I put off, I seem to just put off the stuff that I really need to do. (Paula, I1, 1)

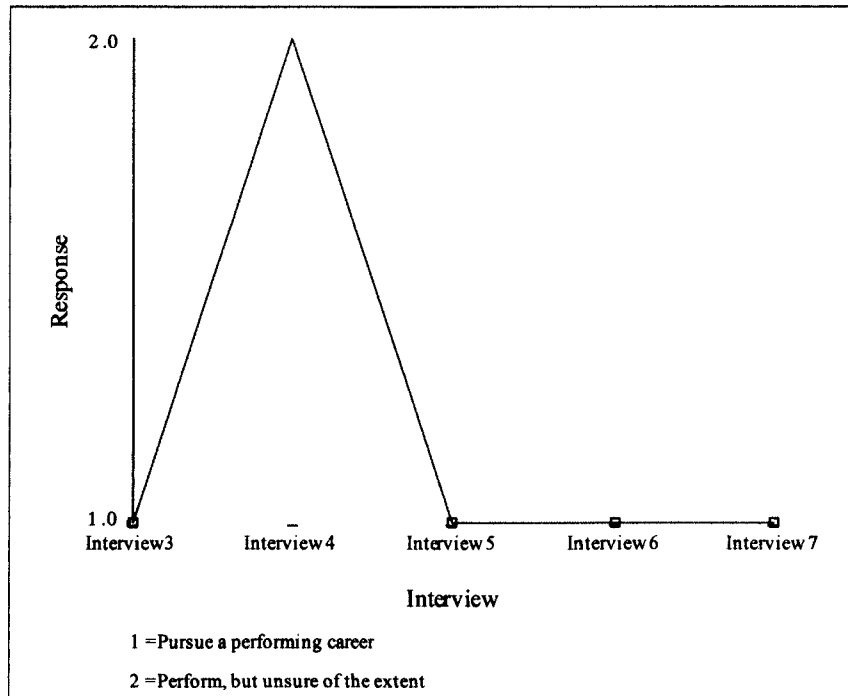
This comment about her practice was typical of Paula's other interviews throughout the study: she often described her frustration at her lack of progress because she had spent so long focusing on only one aspect of her playing, and usually one with which she was satisfied. Paula's tendency to defer the most necessary elements of practice suggests that she was trying to avoid the negative feelings that may be evoked by working on them. Confronting the challenges of a particular piece or technique may have resulted in feelings of inadequacy, further fuelling her already low confidence. By concentrating on the elements of her playing that she could control Paula was perhaps more able to protect her musician identity.

In the second interview, Paula's short-term insecurities began to affect her long-term goals:

I don't know, it really could go either way [whether she has a future in music or not], it's kind of, because I just have varying experience about it, but I keep remembering how I really used to love it, and if I can get that back and believe in myself again, then I think I can really go somewhere with it, but it is kind of a personal thing, I suppose that's the thing, it does carry over, and if I'm not improving constantly I feel like kind of, I don't know, sort of, I'm just sort of too scared of it at the moment, so I can't just go for anything [auditions/competitions] that affects my playing. (Paula, I2, 11)



The implication here is that Paula did not trust her ability to succeed as a professional musician: her lack of progress seemed to affect her personally and consequently diminished her motivation to pursue a career as a performer (see figure 31 below).



**Figure 31. Paula's long-term goals.**

Her diminished love of music (see below for a more detailed discussion of this) may be related to her loss of motivation to become a professional musician. This also raises the issue of how a musician's connection with his/her music-making has repercussions for their musical identity: the implication from Paula here is that her negative perceptions of her playing contributed to her insecurities as an individual. In Chapter Five the relationship between music-making as a determinant of identity was raised and Paula's narration displays the connection clearly. Whilst the performers were distinguished by their ability to disconnect themselves from the impact of negative musical experiences, Paula, at this stage, did not seem to have any strategies for coping with her negative perceptions of her musical ability.

Whilst Paula's insecurity may be connected to her personality, the interviews revealed other explanations. Indeed, as the next section shows, her experiences with teachers and within the institution had a profound impact on her self-confidence and

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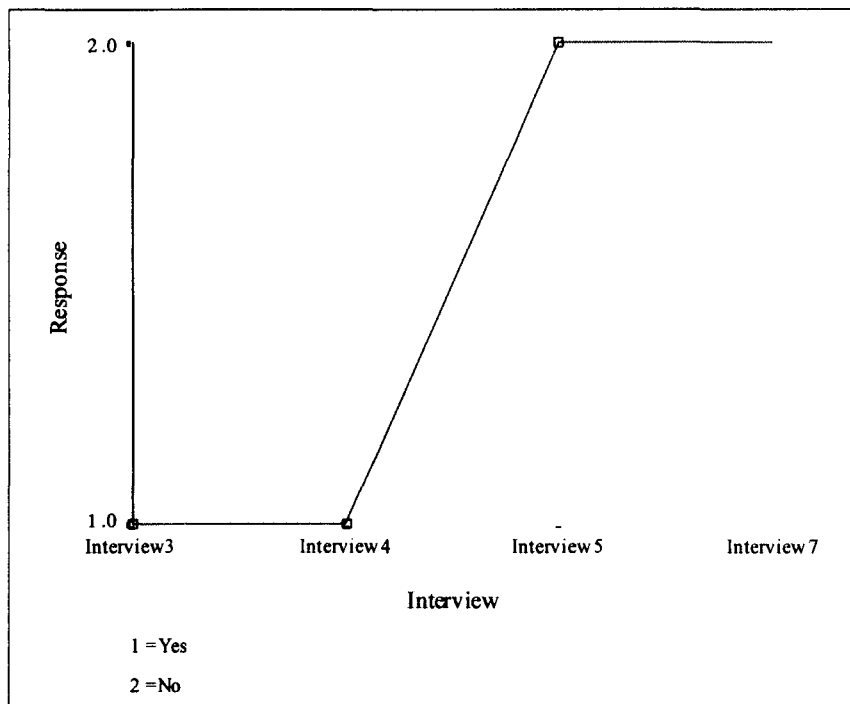
seemed to be the main catalyst affecting her motivations to pursue a performance career or not.

### ***7.3.2 Teachers and institutions***

At the beginning of the study Paula found her relationship with her teacher a difficult one:

I...often don't feel quite at ease, it's kind of, I do think it's a good relationship really, I mean but I feel, I suppose that's good to be a bit nervous with your teacher, but I don't think, I often don't play my best, but then, sometimes he doesn't say anything, well he does but, like he'd pause, and you don't know what he's thinking, and it's a bit awkward sometimes...I do think he's a very good teacher, but he's just got funny philosophies, you don't know how his mind works sometimes. (Paula, I1, 3)

She seemed confused by her relationship with her teacher. The language she uses in the quotation above highlights this, with some contradictions in content. She was unsure how to perceive and respond to her teacher and her reaction to this situation seemed to be one of nervousness which affected the quality of her performance in lessons. Paula's perception of her instrumental lessons is further emphasised by figure 32 below, which indicates that it was only after she changed teachers towards the end of the study that her opinion changed (see below for more discussion about the change in Paula's experience towards the end of the study).



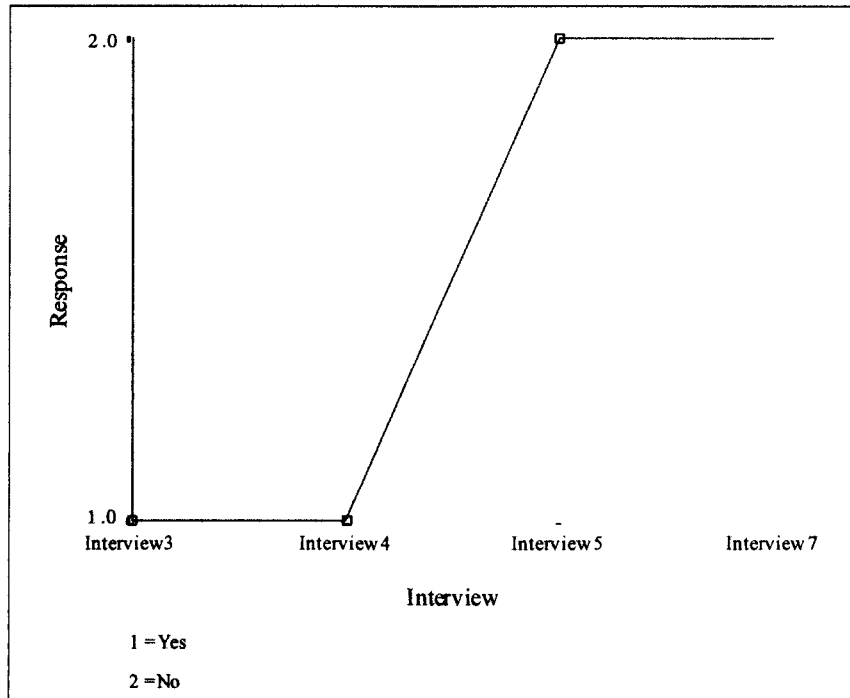
**Figure 32. Paula's response to the question 'Have you been experiencing difficulties with your teacher?'**

The interviews with Paula revealed that she relied on her teacher as the primary source for her musical development. This represented a contrast with many of the other performers since during the duration of the study they generally demonstrated increased independence of their teachers (see Chapter Five). The behaviour of Paula's teacher during lessons seemed to provide the foundation for her personal perceptions of her playing:

I think I feel even worse about my playing since I've had him as a teacher...I had one bad lesson when I almost cried in my lesson...it was because I was, I couldn't play it, and it just, but he was quite understanding, but he didn't really make me feel much better. I don't think he quite, he doesn't understand me in a way, just sort of gets a bit frustrated. (Paula, I2, 6)

The way in which Paula expected her teacher to 'make me feel better' is perhaps indicative of her expectations from the music college: rather than use her time there as an opportunity to develop musically and create her own opportunities, she was dependent upon them being given to her by her teachers and the institution. This is reminiscent of the non-performers who rarely tried to shape their own development (see Chapter Five). Unlike the other performers, Paula did not seem able to use these 'bad lessons' as motivation to improve by the next lesson – indeed, during the early

stages of the study it seemed to have the opposite effect. Figure 33 below demonstrates that whilst she was completing her undergraduate studies she would leave lessons feeling frustrated.



**Figure 33. Paula's response to the question 'Do you feel frustrated after lessons?'**

It is interesting to note that in the early interviews Paula would often indicate that the day of the interview was not particularly reflective of her general experience at college. However, the explanation she provided always related specifically to a bad lesson:

It's just a particularly bad day with my lessons as well, it's nothing to do with me, it's just a bad day, I just feel like my answers might be a bit biased. (Paula, I1, 9)

This may serve as a possible explanation for Paula's insecurities at college, but the fact that her attitude to lessons and other frustrations transformed when she began her postgraduate studies at a different institution suggested that this was not entirely the case. Paula's lack of confidence seemed to be specifically related to her first music college, highlighting the extent of the impact that the choice of institution can have on a musician's development (Subotnik & Steiner, 1993).

Paula responded in a mixed way to the environment of her first music college:

Just like being in college, and there's such amazing players there, and some really gifted people, and it's quite, it is inspiring just to be there, and erm, yeah, it's just like sometimes you go to a concert and think 'wow, I can't believe I'm at this college, with these people' kind of thing. (Paula, I1, 8)

Obviously being in the music college environment made Paula feel special and the presence of 'idols within touching distance' was a motivation for her. However, it seemed that Paula felt slightly intimidated by how good she perceived her peers to be. Indeed, she said on a number of occasions during the study that she found the college environment to be negative:

It's partly me...but it is the atmosphere in college as well, partly, because everyone's so good, and it makes you just think 'oh', I mean, and when you're being criticised, and sort of, I don't know, you have to, it is harder though...it's just the pressure really of always being, you feel like everyone, you're always being listened to, you just have to really, erm, sort of find a way to ignore that and do what you want to do, and take what you need for you, rather than being bogged down with things generally, and with all the little silly politics that go on really. (Paula, I1, 7)

Paula seemed to compare herself negatively to her peers during the beginning of the study. It is interesting here that she recognised how she should cope with the negative social elements of the conservatoire, but as discussed above, she had not yet succeeded in doing so. For example, she expressed frustration at the bias she perceived within the college:

It's just stuff like with the, how they organise the ensembles and things like that, using sort of a little list of you know, kind of, who always gets the good parts, and it's never, anything's actually said, but that's the way things are really...doesn't do much for your confidence really, but erm, it's all, yeah, I understand that's the way it has to be because they have to put their best players in for the prestigious concerts and stuff, but. (Paula, I1, 8)

Paula was aware of the rational explanation behind the choices made by the college, although it still had a negative impact on her. Trying to perceive such frustrating situations with perspective was an indicator that she became increasingly aware of how best to maximise her transition through the use of certain coping strategies.

It was perhaps an indication of the negative influence of the music college on Paula that she rediscovered her love of music through an external performance:

I played in a brass ensemble...it was just a scratch performance, but it was really good fun, it was just in the Easter holidays, I think it was because there was no pressure, and there was no-one from college, and it didn't matter and it wasn't, it was quite amateurish anyway, but then I actually played really well, because I felt like more confident to play and not care about anything, so that was really good. (Paula, I2, 2)

The music college seemed to repress Paula's desire to make music confidently and the experience described in the quotation above perhaps helped to remind her of why she wanted to pursue a professional career in music.

Indeed, towards the middle of the study, Paula's approach to her musical development began to transform as she started to take more responsibility for her progress:

The main thing is that I've been recording myself playing and listening back to it – it's useful to hear what I'm doing wrong and then try and improve it. I've also been writing a diary of practice more often – I'm trying to be more organised – writing comments. I used to be very disorganised, with very random practice. (Paula, I3, 7)

It may be the impending final recital which motivated Paula to organise herself and her practice – but this approach was far removed from her attitude at the beginning of the study. In this respect Paula was becoming more like the performer group – she needed the external motivation from a performance in order to dedicate the hard work required.

Paula also began to develop other strategies for coping:

I try and do other things to relax – like go swimming or do some things with friends. I try and be more organised and write stuff down. (Paula, I4, 10)

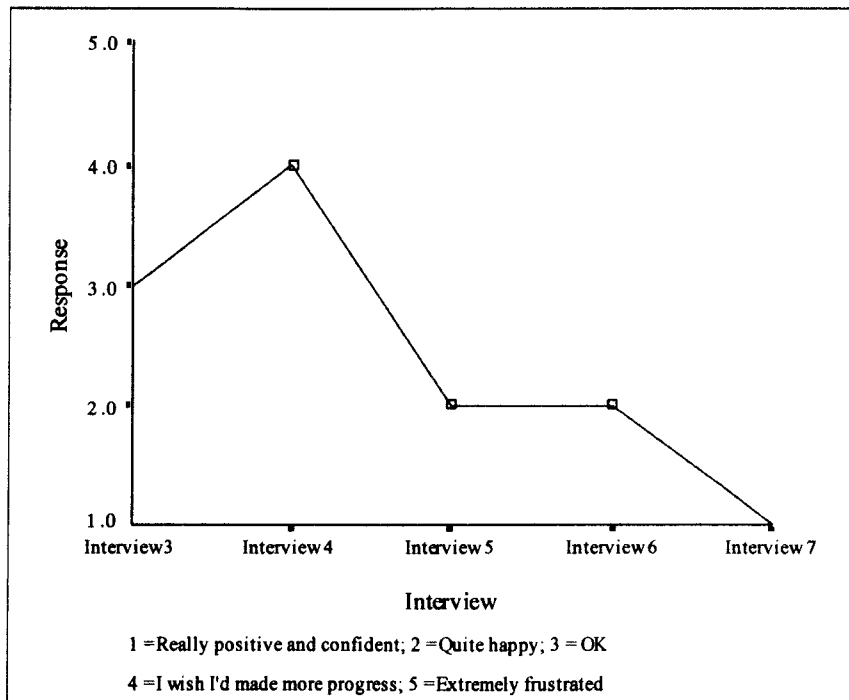
By taking active measures to improve her situation, Paula's outlook became much more positive and she was offered a place on a postgraduate course in a different institution.

### **7.3.3 A transformation**

It was at the time at which Paula began postgraduate study that her experiences as a music student completely changed from largely negative and frustrating, to positive and inspiring:

My teacher is very inspiring and encouraging. I'm enjoying it a lot more and I'm getting more opportunity to play which is what I was missing. I feel more confident and feel like I'm making more progress with the blocks I had before I left...I'm really glad I carried on because I almost stopped...I am really enjoying it. (Paula, I7, 12)

The impact of a different teacher and environment and perhaps the element of success on achieving a place at a different institution had a strong impact on Paula's outlook. As figure 34 below illustrates, her attitude towards her playing increased from a negative rating to the most positive rating.



**Figure 34. Paula's response to the question 'How do you feel about your progress?'**

The opportunity to play in more ensembles seemed to offer Paula a feeling of worth within the new college and perhaps she felt that there was a purpose for the isolated practice that was necessary to become a musician. This raises an interesting consideration for music colleges and universities: whilst it is important for the profiles of the institutions that they present the most able students to perform, it seems that it is the experience and opportunity of playing with the ensembles that has a stark impact on the confidence and motivation of the developing musician and therefore will affect the way in which they progress.

The biggest transformation in Paula by the end of the study was her increased self-confidence:

My biggest achievement has just been kind of a mental thing, gaining some more confidence in my playing, I think that's made the biggest impact on how I actually play really, and I sort of believe in myself more than I did and hoping that I'll do some more major achievements in the future [laughs]. (Paula, I8, 20)

This emphasises the importance of the psychological well-being of the developing musician. When Paula felt she was underachieving, missing out on opportunities and

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not receiving the support she felt she needed, her confidence was low, but as soon as she entered what she perceived to be a more supportive environment there was a noticeable improvement in her descriptions of her playing and personal life. It is perhaps surprising that Paula persevered throughout this particular transition – there were times when she seemed close to giving up her goal of becoming a professional musician. However, throughout the study and despite her negative experiences, Paula maintained that her motivations were enjoyment, determination to succeed and the desire to fulfil her potential – these elements were unchanging throughout the course of the study. The key elements to a successful transition from training as a musician and entering the profession are confirmed by Paula’s experiences: motivation coupled with necessary support and opportunity seem to be crucial to the success of the developing professional performer and override the negative experiences of day to day life.

#### **7.4 Summary**

The case studies discussed here illustrate how factors such as the support from others, strategies for coping, relationships with music, and musical identity can influence the decision of a musician to pursue a professional performance career or not. With the case of Judy, the pressure she felt from her parents and teachers, and her desire to maintain her enjoyment and love of music was the incentive for her to pursue a career in teaching, whilst it was the way Geoff missed music as a daily feature of his life, coupled with his determination to succeed that motivated him not to terminate the pursuit of his goals. Paula’s experiences highlight the importance of a supportive environment – emphasising how sensitive musicians can be and illustrating the importance of professional experience as a motivator and validation of musical identity. The individuals discussed in this chapter acted against the trends of their groups (performer or amateur) but their stories indicate how the elements discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six interact during the transitional phase between training as a musician and entering a chosen career.



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## Chapter Eight

### **Discussion: what factors *are* central to becoming a professional musician? Towards a model.**

#### ***8.0 Introduction***

This chapter discusses the fundamental factors shown by the data to influence whether or not a musician chooses to become a professional performer. This thesis suggests that musicians' perceptions of their experiences during the transition between training and work are related to their belief systems, coping strategies, levels of motivation and musical identity, and the relationship between these four elements is the concern of this chapter.

An important factor that differentiates the professional performer from the amateur musician is the development of coping strategies, which appear to affect the ways in which the two groups of musicians respond to their experiences and also influence their future career choices. Previous research investigating musical development has not identified coping strategies as a factor for consideration, although it seems they may be the defining characteristic of the professional performer, especially given the precarious nature of the classical music industry. This chapter considers the four factors (coping strategies, belief systems, motivation, and musical identity) suggested by the data in this study to be most central in determining whether or not a musician chooses to become a professional and, if so, whether or not the transition is successful. This chapter also examines the nature of the relationship between them, discussing the extent to which each element plays a role.

#### ***8.1 Coping strategies***

The central contribution of this thesis is the finding that the formation of coping strategies is a critical factor which distinguishes the professional performers from the amateur musicians. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven indicate that the experiences of the performers

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and amateurs are similar, but the ways in which both groups perceive and respond to them are quite different.

Coping has been defined as:

...constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, cited in Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003: 103).

As discussed throughout this thesis, entering the classical performance profession is a challenging transition, and one for which the performers in this study did not feel prepared. The performers, as opposed to the non-performers, displayed a number of different cognitive and behavioural strategies for coping with the negative experiences they encountered and therefore the above definition of coping is a useful framework for the following discussion.

The strategies demonstrated by the performers ranged from actively seeking to overcome a particular problem to managing any negative emotions caused by the obstacle. For example, the performers tended to respond to negative performance experiences by using the feedback to improve future recitals, or by working harder for the next event. Such strategies have been termed ‘problem-focused’ strategies in Sport Psychology<sup>1</sup>, and are defined as follows:

Problem-focused strategies refer to cognitive and behavioural efforts to try to alter the source of stress. Examples are to solve the problem, obtain information, plan in advance, learn new skills, or to increase effort (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003: 103).

Problem-focused strategies, then, are the active measures used by the individual to improve similar behaviours in the future.

The other kind of coping demonstrated by the performers related to the management of negative emotions: individuals used various techniques, such as reframing a negative

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<sup>1</sup> As discussed in Chapter Six, there has been no research, of which I am aware, that has considered how professional musicians cope with the inevitable struggles of the music profession. Drawing parallels with Sport Psychology seems valid since there are many similarities between the two in terms of the commitment required, performance demands placed upon the individuals, and the competitive nature of the professions.

experience in a more positive and therefore more useful way. These types of coping have been labelled 'emotion-focused' strategies:

Emotion-focused coping strategies are aimed at reducing the unwanted and physical and emotional arousal. These include strategies such as mental and behavioural disengagement, denial, or acceptance (ibid).

Emotion-focused strategies may include what Gould *et al* (1993, cited in Williams & Leffingwell, 2002) refer to as positive strategies – rational thinking, self-talk, and positive focus and orientation.

Figure 19 (in Chapter Six) summarises the ways in which the performers coped with negative experiences, and it seemed that the performers used a variety of problem-, and emotion-focused strategies. As suggested by the data presented in Chapter Six, however, the amateur musicians did not possess any strategies for coping, although they tended to seek emotional support from peers. Research suggests that whilst social support networks are important to coping behaviour (Toffler, 1970, cited in Sugarman, 2001), they do not enable individuals to cope with the source of the anxiety; rather they help the individual to manage negative emotions (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003). It is striking that the amateur musicians' attempts to cope ended with seeking emotional support, often accompanied by an unwillingness to accept responsibility for the outcome and blaming external sources. Such behaviours are not conducive to effective coping:

...others excessively attribute factors externally...to coaches, conditions, or officials. This kind of thinking allows athletes relief from all responsibility which is counter to good performance and effective coping. Athletes need to realistically and rationally evaluate performance outcomes and to accept responsibility when it is appropriate to do so (Orbach *et al*, 1999, cited in Williams & Leffingwell, 2002: 78).

The performers, on the other hand, whilst perhaps initially seeking emotional support, would then try to reassess the experience in terms of how it could help them to improve.

Seeking emotional support is considered to foster a return to problem-focused coping. Within a sport context, this could well be the case because the coach is very often viewed as an influential factor, and thus positive feedback from the coach will have an impact on the athlete's perception of the situation (ibid: 112).

Previous research in musical development indicates a vital role for teachers as the musicians begin to penetrate the profession (Gaunt, 2004; Nettl, 1995) and the data presented in this thesis suggest that the teacher's role is perhaps even more important than previously realised: the teacher may play a fundamental role in enabling the

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musician to cope with the struggles associated with the profession. This may also be true of the peer relationships amongst performers. Chapter Five highlighted that unlike the non-performers (who relied on non-musical peers for emotional support), the performers tended to rely on peers for career-specific support and it is possible that when a musician is on the brink of entering the profession, peers play an equally important role in the coping process.

Problem-focused strategies may be more effective in enabling the individual to cope since they are thought to be related to an individual's perception of 'controllability'.

What we do know is that in order to employ problem-focused strategies one has to perceive a certain degree of control. Perception of control, then, is related to lower perception of stress. Thus, it may be that an athlete who is predominately task-oriented experiences less stress due to higher perception of control, and when stress is perceived, mostly problem-focused strategies are employed (Williams & Leffingwell, 2002: 112).

Controllability is a key component of Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1992) and can offer some insight into the process of coping. If a musician perceives success to be controllable through effort, for example, then s/he is likely to have higher self-esteem. Consequently, such a musician is more likely to adopt problem-solving strategies, since s/he has internal attributions for their success or failure; that is, through increased effort or change, success in the future is likely. The non-performers generally tended to assign blame to external factors, such as their instruments not working properly (in the case of Judy, for example), or did not believe that they had high ability as a musician. Their attributions did not, therefore, allow them to find a logical way to cope, since they generally seemed to attribute uncontrollable causes for success or failure.

Research suggests that performance goals may also have an impact on an individual's ability to cope (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003). Pensgaard and Roberts investigated coping strategies amongst Winter Olympians, and discovered differences between task- and ego-oriented athletes:

Athletes who are predominantly task-oriented and have internal criteria of determining success may be better equipped to cope with stress, while athletes who are ego-oriented and have external criteria of success, such as outperforming other competitors, may be especially vulnerable to perceive stress and suffer possible performance decrements (ibid: 102).

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The discussion in Chapters Five and Six suggested that the non-performers were concerned about their ability in comparison to their peers and whilst this was also true for the performers at the beginning of the study, by the end it seemed that they were more concerned by only their own development and progress. For example, in the final interview Olga described how she had progressed from concerns about how her voice compared with other singers to recognising that, as a singer, she had different qualities to offer. This suggests that the performers were more task-oriented, whereas the non-performers were more ego-oriented. Whilst I have no data to confirm fully the goal orientations of the participants, it seems that as the performers progressed through the training to professional transition, they became more task-oriented – focusing on their goals and ambition to succeed. The non-performers, on the other hand, seemed to focus on how their abilities compared to others', and consequently became less inclined to perform in public.

It could be hypothesised that the performers were better able to cope as they seemed to use performance-oriented strategies and be task-oriented. However, this still does not explain fully the distinction between the performers and the amateurs. The goal orientations and coping processes used by both groups seemed, in part at least, to be related to their belief systems.

## ***8.2 Belief systems***

A thread running throughout this thesis, which relates to the above discussion about goal orientations, is that the belief system of the musician influences his/her perceptions of the social environment and any subsequent behaviour. An individual's style of learning is thought to be linked to his/her personal theory of intelligence, goal orientations, and perceived ability (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Possessing either incremental or entity beliefs about ability seemed to be a central distinction between the professional and amateur musicians in this study. The performers generally tended to exhibit incremental beliefs, which seemed to be inextricably linked to their goal orientations and coping strategies: despite occasional setbacks or negative experiences, the performers were determined to succeed and believed that they would do so. After unsuccessful

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performances or auditions the performers did not give up, rather they were motivated to work harder and improve the weaknesses in their performance skills. This was emphasised by one performer in particular (George) who described himself as “fighting” to achieve his goals. Incremental belief systems are defined by the individual believing that their abilities are “malleable, increasable, controllable” (Elliot & Dweck, 1988: 262) and are associated with learning goals, where an individual’s main aim is to improve his/her levels of competence. Learning goals seem to be equivalent to what Pensgaard and Roberts (2003) term ‘task-oriented’ behaviours (see above), and are the opposite end of the spectrum to performance goals (or ego-oriented behaviours), where the individual is concerned with gaining positive judgements, or avoiding negative judgements, of competence.

The amateur musicians seemed to possess entity beliefs, whereby their musical ability was perceived as fixed and uncontrollable. When faced with criticism or frustration, the amateur group sought to avoid similar experiences in the future. The amateur musicians seemed more concerned than the performers with external judgements of their ability. For example, Violet was so concerned about what her peers would think of her ability whilst she was practising, that she would not practise effectively in case she did not sound good. As a result of the amateur musicians’ entity beliefs and performance orientation, they seemed to demonstrate helpless behaviour: they would avoid potentially challenging and negative experiences.

It is possible to see how the musicians’ belief systems may relate to their coping strategies: entity beliefs, by their very nature, lead to the perception that nothing can improve ability, whilst incremental beliefs allow for the possibility of improvement. As discussed above, the performers exhibited a number of cognitive and behavioural strategies in order to cope with and overcome difficulties, whilst the amateur musicians sought support only to diffuse negative emotion, not to find a solution in order to improve.

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This perhaps goes some way to explain further why the amateur musicians did not choose to become professional performers: a focus on performance goals inevitably leads to the desire to participate in music only when it will be a positive experience. Chapter Six highlighted that by the end of the study, the main aim of the amateur musicians was to enjoy their musical participation and not be subjected to the inevitable emotional and psychological fluctuations that being a professional musician entails. By removing the pressure of competitive performance, the amateur musicians were able to maintain an enjoyment of music and to protect their self-concepts (see below for more discussion of this). Conversely, the performers were excited by the challenges that being a professional musician could offer and developed strategies for coping with the negative elements of the profession. For example, by the end of the study, the performers had developed other hobbies that enabled them to relax and escape from the pressures caused by their musical participation.

There seems to be a distinct interaction between the musicians' belief systems and the development of coping strategies. The emergent picture is that the route to becoming a professional musician is not as straightforward as previously presumed and there is a complex interaction between a number of factors that distinguish between professional and amateur musicians. The interaction between beliefs and coping, for example, also seemed to influence the musicians' motivation to participate in music as a career or as an amateur interest.

### **8.3 Motivation**

The element uniting the performers and the amateur musicians was a shared love of music and this was unchanging throughout the study. The enjoyment that making music offered the musicians was a powerful force and it was a central consideration when career choices were made. The performers' love of music was a primary motivator for entering the profession and many of the group described how they could not imagine working in any other industry with as much enjoyment. The amateur musicians' love of music was an incentive *not* to become a professional performer because they wished to maintain their love of music without it being tarnished by negative experiences.

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As discussed so far in this chapter, the two groups of musicians had contrasted perceptions of their musical participation and their explanations for why music was so enjoyable were equally different. For example, the amateur musicians were motivated wholly by the social benefits of making music with others and the enjoyment their musical participation offered. Conversely, the performers were motivated by competition and challenges. Olga and Alex, for instance, described how their parents were unsupportive of their decision to become professional singers and both were determined to prove that they could succeed. Furthermore, Olga was motivated by the fact that her parents were not musicians, and enjoyed the fact that music was 'hers' and not shared with her parents. As a group, the performers were determined to fulfil their potential and succeed as musicians.

A further contrast between the two groups was that, by the end of the study, the majority of the performers were motivated by their success in past events, whilst the number of amateur musicians who reported being motivated by success decreased gradually as the study progressed. Throughout the study there were significant differences in the performance opportunities that the performers and non-performers perceived to be available and it could be considered that without the opportunity to perform, there were few circumstances where the musician could experience success and a subsequent increase in confidence. The effect of such elements, as discussed throughout the chapter, was that the non-performers were unlikely to have the opportunity to develop positive self-beliefs and methods for coping. Without an opportunity to break the cycle of negative self-perceptions as a musician through giving a successful performance, for example, the non-performers were likely to increasingly believe that abilities are fixed and that nothing could improve their skills (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Whilst an intrinsic love of music and drive to succeed was evident in the performers, it was notable that they still relied upon external feedback for motivation. The research literature suggests that, if a child is to become a successful musician, extrinsic motivation must be superseded by intrinsic motivation – the love of making music for its own sake



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(Sloboda & Davidson, 1996; Nicholls, 1983; Manturzewska, 1990). However, the results from this study question that finding, and suggest that intrinsic motivation has to be moderated by extrinsic feedback. The performers seemed to be primarily intrinsically motivated: they loved their musical participation, were determined to fulfil their potential, and believed that they could do so. However, some external reinforcement of the performers' self-beliefs was necessary in order for them to sustain their motivation, belief systems, and consequently, their coping strategies. It is worth noting here that external motivation does not necessarily have to be perceived as positive: many of the performers were motivated by negative feedback since it provided them with a way to improve and develop. In contrast, the amateur musicians seemed too dependent upon external feedback for motivation, and when it was primarily negative, were unable to cope and use the information positively. Furthermore, the amateur musicians showed no evidence of the same intrinsic drive to achieve their potential in music as the performers.

It seems that rather than rely on either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, a distinguishing feature of the performer is that they are subject to interactive motivation (Bigges & Hunt, 1980) – a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. The belief systems and coping strategies of the performer enable him/her to use external feedback in a positive way, regardless of whether the feedback is positive or negative. Where entity belief systems are in place, any critical feedback will be perceived as a negative judgement of ability, which cannot be altered, and therefore motivation is likely to decrease.

The three elements of coping strategies, belief systems and motivation, seem to be closely interwoven, with a change in one affecting the others. The interaction between these three elements appears to influence the musical identity of the individual and affect whether the individual develops a professional performer or amateur musician identity.

#### ***8.4 Musical identity***

Chapters Five and Six considered how the performer and amateur musical identities could be defined. The performer identity is characterised primarily by the individual perceiving and expressing him/herself in relation to his/her musical involvement.

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Throughout the transition the performers became increasingly determined to succeed within the profession and to achieve their potential, and as such had acquired the skills that would allow them to do so. As the performers became increasingly aware of their long-term musical goals, so their perceptions of, and approaches towards, their musical participation evolved. Similarly, the emergent amateur identity was framed by the musicians' increased realisation that a professional performance career would not match their life goals of raising a family, or working in a stable profession, for example. The amateur musicians' focus was on music becoming a source of relaxation that would offer only positive and enjoyable experiences.

A useful framework for understanding how an individual's identity can motivate behaviour is that of possible selves theory (Cross & Markus, 1991). According to this theory, possible selves motivate and stimulate future behaviours. The possible self of 'becoming a professional musician' enabled the performers to endure the struggles, setbacks, emotional and psychological fluctuations, and the long hours of isolated practice or rehearsals that they described. Once the performers had decided that they wished to enter the profession, their priorities for playing/singing began to change: for instance, a previous focus on technique changed to a concern with how best to communicate with the audience and provide an enjoyable recital. Also notable was the shift from relying on teachers for technique-specific support to requiring advice about how to penetrate the profession and make contacts.

Equally important is how a musician's possible self may help him/her to cope with setbacks: whilst negative experiences may cause a discrepancy between the 'current self' and the 'possible self' initially, the musician will then be motivated to make some adjustment to one of the two selves in order to resolve the conflict. For example, throughout the study, Olga was concerned that her voice had a different quality to her peers, and this was emphasised by the feedback that she received from auditions and competitions. However, towards the end of the study she realised that it was the unique quality of her voice that she wanted to develop in order to find her own performer identity. The cause of her concern was recalibrated as a positive and unique feature

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which characterised her as a performer and suggests that an individual's musical identity is malleable and can be adapted, as the individual recognises different meanings of what it is to be a professional performer, for example (Stets & Burke, 2003).

Possible selves theory also provides an insight into the experiences of the amateur musicians. Whilst music was of central importance to this group throughout the study, increased realisation that they did not want to pursue music beyond higher education caused a shift in their priorities for participating in music. During the first phase of the study, many of the amateur musicians had planned to enter the performance profession, but their experiences during the transition affected their career goals. As discussed above, many of the amateur musicians perceived there to be few available performance opportunities and the result of this was decreased motivation, perhaps related partially to entity beliefs and a lack of suitable strategies for overcoming the perceived lack of opportunity. Without opportunities to perform, it is possible that the amateur musicians' musical identities began to change, with their self-perceptions of being a performer diminishing gradually. Consequently, in order to reconcile the discrepancy between the 'now' and 'possible' self, the amateur musicians had to adjust their goals (Cross & Markus, 1991), and the result was that performance was no longer a priority and was superseded by making music only for their own enjoyment.

Life goals, such as having a family, reliable income, and emotional stability also contributed to the formation of the amateur identity: an increasing realisation that such possible selves were not consistent with a professional performance career may have motivated the amateur musician to find an alternative career. It is worth reiterating, however, that whilst the amateur musicians do not wish music to form the basis of their career, they do retain a musical identity, which contributes to their personal self-concept: music is a part of who they perceive themselves to be (Stets & Burke, 2003). Music is an everyday feature in the amateur musician's life, either by listening, or playing/singing, and many believed that through participating in music they were able to form their current self-concept.

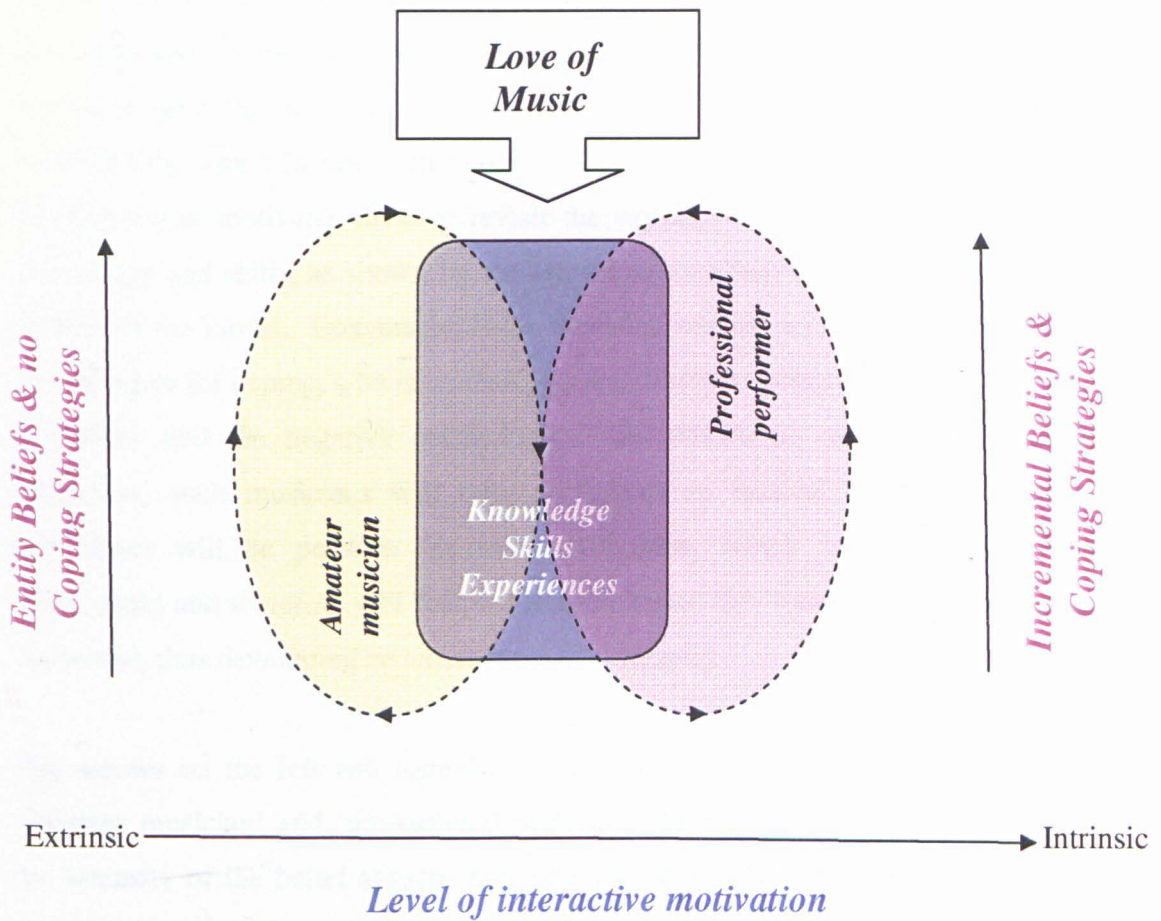
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The identities of the two groups of musicians appeared to rely upon the elements of coping strategies, belief systems and motivation, yet the relationship seems reciprocal, and the musician's identity also influences the three other elements. The relationship and interaction between the four elements discussed in this chapter is a complex one, and provides much insight into why some musicians become professionals, whilst others choose alternative careers, yet maintain regular contact with music. It seems as if an individual's musical identity, consisting of 'now' *and* 'future' selves, may be the primary determinant of career choice: the participants' decisions to become either professional performers or amateur musicians seemed to be founded on their life ambitions, the intensity with which they relied upon music for communication and emotional release and the extent to which they perceived music to be a 'part' of themselves. In turn this influenced their motivation and ability to cope.

The next section considers in more detail how the coping strategies, belief systems, motivation, and musical identity interact and result in the pursuit of music as a profession or as an amateur interest.

### ***8.5 Towards a model***

An individual's musical identity seems to be the primary determinant of whether s/he chooses to become a professional performer or maintain music as an amateur interest. The model in figure 35 below is my hypothesis for the how coping strategies, motivation, belief systems and musical identity interact whilst the musician completes the transition and makes future career choices.



**Figure 35. A Dynamic Model of Musical Identity Formation and Career Choice.**

The model in figure 35 represents the process of becoming either a professional performer or amateur musician during the transition from training to career. At the top of the model is the shared love of music which motivates music undergraduates. During their training, represented by the central blue box, the musicians share similar knowledge, skills and experiences, their perceptions of which relate to whether they possess incremental or entity beliefs about ability, and have adequate strategies for coping. As shown on the left and right hand sides of the diagram and discussed above, incremental/entity beliefs are inextricably linked to the development of coping strategies: it is unlikely that an individual possessing entity beliefs about ability will formulate positive strategies to persevere through challenging experiences.

The arrows in the centre of the model represent the different paths that can be taken by the musician: if the musician possesses incremental beliefs and, therefore, coping strategies, they will maintain a high level of intrinsic motivation (moderated by extrinsic motivation<sup>2</sup>), which in turn contributes to their determination to become a professional performer and motivates them to revisit the experiences of performing and acquiring knowledge and skills, as shown by the arrows surrounding the 'professional performer' portion of the model. Conversely, if the musician possesses entity beliefs and therefore no strategies for coping, s/he is increasingly less likely to perform in public due to a fear of failure and the negative psychological and emotional reaction that may cause. Therefore, such musicians will only participate in musical performance when the experience will be positive (extrinsic motivation, which influences their intrinsic motivation) and therefore will follow the route round the 'amateur musician' portion of the model, thus developing an amateur musical identity.

The arrows on the left and right hand sides of the model, and the placement of the 'amateur musician' and 'professional performer' labels, show the relationship between the intensity of the belief systems and extent to which the individual possesses coping strategies. It can be hypothesised, for example, that the performing musician who possesses firm incremental beliefs and has developed highly effective and refined coping strategies is likely to achieve greater success as a performer than the musician who possesses only moderately effective coping strategies. Without possessing high levels of self-belief that s/he can succeed and overcome obstacles, the performer will not be inclined to engage in the necessary self-promotion required to obtain employment. The amateur musician who believes that his/her ability is fixed and has not successfully acquired strategies for coping is less likely to participate in music regularly and for enjoyment, than someone who has more flexible coping strategies. For example, an amateur musician needs to be able to accept the fact that s/he no longer performs to the

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<sup>2</sup> Ideally, both groups of participants experience interactive motivation, as demonstrated by the line underneath the model, although the amateur musicians are more likely to be motivated extrinsically because they chose to participate in music only when the experience would be positive. The performers, on the other hand, were driven by their love of music, regardless whether the experience was positive or negative: therefore they demonstrate greater intrinsic motivation.

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same level as during training, or possibly as frequently, and if s/he cannot then s/he will feel frustrated and perhaps less inclined to participate in music. If this is the case, then an amateur musician may no longer make music, but spend a greater amount of time listening and attending live performances, for example.

The final characteristic of the model is that the process of progressing through the model is a constant one, but is also susceptible to change at any given time. Should a performer's perceptions of his/her experiences become less positive then s/he may consider terminating the pursuit of a performance career. As noted above, without a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the performer may feel less able to cope and persevere during times of difficulty. Similarly, an amateur musician who becomes increasingly involved with performance may begin to develop greater intrinsic motivation and belief systems and consider the pursuit of a professional career. The infinity sign formed by the two circular portions at the centre of the model represents the constant and cyclical process of musicians' perceptions and evaluations of their musical experiences.

The model proposed in figure 35 represents the ways in which a musician's musical experiences during a career transition are connected to a complex interaction between their belief systems, coping strategies, motivation and musical identity. The process is prone to continual change and adaptation as the individual's goals and ambitions develop and change. In order to demonstrate how the model reflects the data collected in this thesis, a case study example is provided below.

### ***8.6 The Dynamic Model of Musical Identity Formation and Career Choice: a case study example***

As an example of how an individual's perceptions of his/her musical experiences can create fluctuations between different musical identities, the case of Geoff (see Chapter Seven) is discussed below in specific relation to the model in figure 35.

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There are three clear phases to Geoff's experiences during the transition from training as a musician to securing work as a professional performer. During the first phase, at the beginning of the study, Geoff demonstrated high levels of intrinsic motivation to become a professional performer, and described crystallising experiences which were a constant frame of reference for his performance goals. He left the music college upon completion of his undergraduate degree, feeling confident that he would successfully secure a career in the performance profession without further training. As Geoff progressed through his transition he had a possible self of a professional musician and seemed determined to achieve his career goals. During this phase of the study, Geoff was following the professional performer portion of the model – characterised by high levels of intrinsic motivation, the ability to reflect positively on his experiences, and the belief that he could achieve whatever he wanted. This motivated him to practice in order to maintain a high level of skill, to continue performing recitals, and to apply for auditions.

About one year into the study Geoff had still not successfully secured employment and was becoming increasingly frustrated with the competitive nature of the industry: he had not been offered any auditions, despite applying for a large number of positions. Having removed himself from the music college environment and no longer receiving regular tuition, Geoff did not have access to as much external confirmation of his abilities as he did during his training. He seemed uncertain about what else he could do to secure work within the music profession, and so, through necessity, started to work as an office administrator. Due to the obvious time commitments of full-time employment, Geoff practised less, and the impact on his general state of mind was obvious – he felt discontented with his job, but also seemed to have lost enthusiasm for his pursuit of a professional performance career. His experiences at this time represented the second phase of his transition, and were characterised by a move away from the professional identity he had previously exhibited, and a move towards the amateur musician portion of the model. Geoff required some external confirmation of his abilities as a performer and when he did not receive any, his self-confidence and ability to cope began to diminish. He was at a loss for how to secure a career in the performance profession, and so music gradually became less important than the need to survive financially, and he



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stated that he would only play for fun and as relaxation, rather than to achieve greater competence. These are the characteristics of the amateur identity and it seemed that this was the path that Geoff would continue to follow throughout his adult life.

Towards the end of the second phase, Geoff described his boredom working as an office administrator and had realised that he missed music being a daily feature of his life. It is possible that the discrepancy between his 'now' self of being an office administrator was so incongruous with his 'possible' self of becoming a professional musician, that some change was required. His discontent might also have related to a feeling of incompleteness: without regular contact with music it seemed that Geoff felt like he was not being true to himself. He decided that the change had to be in his work and so resigned and reinitiated his search for employment within the music profession.

The realisation that he would only be happy working as a musician motivated Geoff to start playing regularly again and so he joined an amateur orchestra. A chance meeting with an old friend, who started to offer him opportunities to perform, reinforced his performer identity and self-belief that he could succeed as a musician. It was at this point, during the third phase of his transition, that Geoff's determination to succeed increased, and he began to follow the path around the professional performer portion of the model once again. Once Geoff secured enough performance work to support himself financially he became more positive and his ability to cope increased. At the end of the study he explained that he felt more able to cope having experienced such struggles and was more aware of how difficult it would be to attain an offer of a position in a professional orchestra. He seemed determined that he would work as a professional musician and believed that he could realistically achieve his goal of becoming an orchestral musician.

### ***8.7 The importance of musical identity***

The examination of Geoff's experiences during the transition indicates the extent to which the four elements of coping strategies, belief systems, motivation, and musical identity are interwoven. A change in only one element is enough to stimulate a move

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from one path to another. As demonstrated by the case of Geoff, an individual's musical identity seemed to have a strong influence, especially when considered in terms of his/her possible self. The discussion in Chapter Five indicated that the performers in particular had a close personal connection with music and it is perhaps the relationship between the individual's musical identity and his/her self-concept that is of central importance to the model. The motivation for Geoff to reinstate his pursuit of a performance career was the discrepancy he felt between how he was spending his time feeling bored in an office job, and how he wanted to spend his time as a musician. Judy's experiences (discussed in Chapter Seven) emphasise this further. Whilst Judy was an undergraduate student she seemed motivated by the need to please other people. She enjoyed her musical participation less and less and eventually reached a point of saturation, whereby she did not want to play her violin at all and chose instead to study a Postgraduate Certificate of Education. She described how she felt others perceived her in terms of her violin playing only and was concerned that she was never given the opportunity to 'be herself'. In terms of identity theory, this can be understood as a discrepancy between the person she was trying to be in order to please others and who she really wanted to be – someone who enjoyed playing music for herself and for fun (Cross & Markus, 1991). Her life goals of having a family and a secure income would not be met by a career as a professional musician and so, against the wishes of those closest to her, she became a teacher and not a musician. It could be argued that without the need to resolve the discrepancy between her 'now' self as a violinist and her 'possible' self as a primary school teacher, Judy would have continued to pursue a professional performance career.

It is clear to see that there is an interaction between coping strategies, belief systems, and motivation, which culminate in either a professional or amateur musical identity. A musician's identity seems to be central to defining the career paths s/he chooses to follow. The process of transition is a cyclical one, as performance experiences enhance or undermine the musician's identity, and the process is susceptible to adaptation according to a change in one of the elements. The implications of the model and an evaluation of the research is provided in the following chapter.

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*Chapter Nine***Evaluations and Conclusions*****9.0 Introduction***

This thesis identifies the fundamental factors of coping strategies, belief systems, and motivation as important to the development of an amateur or professional performer musical identity, and the subsequent impact these have on the musicians' career choices. The interaction between the four main elements is a complex one and they are closely interwoven: a change in one has a subsequent effect on the others. Having demonstrated how the musician develops and adapts during the transition between training and choosing a career, through the richness of qualitative and quantitative data presented in this thesis, this chapter considers the implications of the study for musicians and music educators.

***9.1 Implications of the research***

The study contributes a wide range of findings that have implications in terms of the transition between training as a musician and choosing whether or not to pursue a professional career in music. The findings indicate that whilst the social environment is important as a support network, there is a complex interaction between the musician's motivations, beliefs about the source of his/her ability, coping strategies, and ultimately, his/her musical identity. It is the dynamic interaction of these four elements that results in the individual's eventual career choice. The study extends the limited amount of previous research in this area, highlighting that there are a number of previously undervalued, or insufficiently considered, factors that should perhaps be addressed by higher education teachers and institutions. This section discusses the practical implications of the research.

### **9.1.1 Developing coping strategies and belief systems**

I suggested in Chapter Eight that an individual's beliefs about the source of his/her ability were closely linked to his/her strategies for coping with the inevitable struggles and competition associated with the music profession. As I have said in previous chapters, the relevance of coping strategies has not been addressed in relation to the acquisition of musical skill, but is prevalent in research in other highly skilled performance domains such as sport and athletics. Sports psychologists, for example, believe that the most successful athletes possess positive strategies for coping (Gould *et al*, 1993, cited in Williams & Leffingwell, 2002: 77), and the findings in this study suggest that this is also true for musicians.

It is possible that teachers and parents, the primary sources of support for the musician, could play an important role in enabling a musician to develop appropriate strategies for coping following negative experiences. The data presented here, and elsewhere in the research literature, suggest that the primary role of the teacher is to impart knowledge and encourage and support the development of musical expertise. However, it seems that as musicians progress through the transition from training to work, they need to cope with increasing numbers of setbacks and obstacles, but some musicians do not have the resources to do so. By transmitting particular values for, and approaches to, individual performance, teachers and parents may be able to change the outlook of the musician. For example, by focusing on the benefits of negative feedback, such as the opportunity to improve current weaknesses, rather than on the negative emotional repercussions, teachers and parents may instil such an approach in the musician. Other approaches may include teachers focusing on the learning opportunities of a particular event before it takes place, rather than on the outcome as a sign of success or failure. If teachers and parents can help the musician to reframe such events, then s/he may begin to reflect on their experiences differently. Furthermore, the nature of the feedback provided by teachers should be constructively critical, rather than simply framed in terms of 'good' or 'bad'. If feedback can be framed in terms of how it can help the musician to improve, rather than make the musician feel negative about his/her ability, then this may further enhance the likelihood of the individual learning from negative experiences. Such

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suggestions are perhaps also relevant for musical training during formative years, perhaps once a dedication to the domain has been made by the young musician, as a way to manipulate the belief systems before they become too ingrained.

A particular source of frustration for many of the musicians was the perceived favouritism of institutions towards particular performers. As demonstrated by the data in this study, a perceived lack of performance opportunities was a contributory factor in the amateur musicians' negative perceptions of their abilities, since they were denied external confirmation of their performance skills. Institutions should perhaps consider providing opportunities for all musicians: there was a noticeable difference between the professional and amateur musicians in terms of their willingness to create their own opportunities, which perhaps further emphasises the performers' drive to create music, but nonetheless, this is perhaps something that could be encouraged by the institutions. The nature of higher education learning is that it aims to encourage independence in students, but this study suggests that there is a need and scope for assisting young adult musicians to acquire such skills.

### ***9.1.2 Recognising the musicians' emotional and psychological needs***

It seems that there is a void between the technique-specific skills provided within the higher education institutions, and the kinds of support required by the musicians. This relates in part to the previous section, in terms of providing knowledge about how best to cope, but is also connected in part to the individual's need to feel emotionally and psychologically supported. The musicians' need for performance opportunities in order to validate self-perceptions of ability is one example of how external feedback is of central importance to the musician. The performing musicians, in particular, had self-concepts that were strongly connected to their musical participation, and as such negative criticism was perceived as a personal flaw. This relates in many ways to the formation of coping strategies, but also suggests that the musicians need to feel supported in order to progress. This is emphasised by the relationships between the performers and their teachers as compared to the amateur musicians and their teachers: the performers described close, personal bonds with their teachers, whilst the amateur musicians did not.

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The implication of this finding is that the close bonds between teachers and musicians are important if the musician is to be successful in their transition into the performance profession. This may be related to the performers' need to establish their own sense of performer identity, and this suggestion is supported by their descriptions of needing less technical support in addition to their frustration when teachers did not allow them to express the music in the way in which they wanted. Teachers within higher education perhaps need to recognise that as musicians approach the end of undergraduate training, so the teacher's role must change: once a musician has achieved the high levels of skill necessary to enter the profession, the teacher should allow, and encourage, the individual to find his/her own 'voice' – an individual way to communicate the music to an audience. This was an increasing concern of the performers, and emphasises their preoccupation with becoming a performer and entertaining their audience.

### ***9.1.3 Transmitting career-specific skills and knowledge***

The data revealed that the performers felt unprepared for their transition into the performance profession in terms of the practicalities and the emotional impact that it would have. Many of the performers felt that their institutions had not prepared them for the realities of the industry in terms of the competition for work, although others felt that the competitive nature of the music college was enough preparation. I discussed above how many of the musicians seemed to suffer due to the competition for performance opportunities within the institution, and so it is difficult to know how the institutions can achieve a suitable balance in this respect. It seemed rather than prepare the musicians for the reality of the profession, the institutions could have presented more information about where employment could be sought. Many of the singers in the performer group, for example, explained that the music college emphasised career opportunities within a small number of the bigger opera companies, and did not offer advice on where else opportunities could be found: given the nature of the 'portfolio' careers that musicians have in today's society, mentoring schemes with ex-students, for example, may help to prepare younger musicians for the training-work transition.

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Related to this is the performers' perceived need for more practical advice, such as the financial legalities of being self-employed, as many professional musicians tend to be. It seemed that the music college in particular had prepared its students to be skilled technicians, but not to become professional musicians, with all that entails: whilst a small amount of work has considered the potential and characteristics of suitable training programmes (Pearce, 1997), the students still appear to perceive a need for more practical support and advice.

The implications of this study mainly point towards the performers' readiness for the performance profession and how institutions can maximise the transition of their students. There appeared to be a void between the kinds of support that the musicians seemed to need, and those that the institutions were providing. It is not possible from the data collected in this study to understand fully why this is the case, although with increasing research considering how education can suit the needs of its students (cf. Pitts, 2004), this is something that music colleges and universities need to address.

## ***9.2 Evaluating the research***

Many of the potential shortcomings in the research design were discussed in Chapter Three, although it is useful to evaluate the study in the light of its findings. With a sample of 32, all studying in the North of England, it is difficult to generalise the findings to a larger community of musicians. However, there were clear trends in the data that seemed to support the proposed distinctions between the professional and amateur musicians. The participants were all aged between 19 and 21 at the onset of the study, and all British citizens. This was helpful in reducing the extraneous variables of the study, but it might have been preferable to interview musicians from different locations within the United Kingdom, or from different cultural backgrounds. Musicians from different cultures, for example, may have different priorities for, and relationships with, their musical participation and this might provide deeper insight into why some musicians choose to become performers and others do not. However, this was not possible in this study as the sample would have become too large to manage.

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The focus of the study was on Western classical performance traditions, and whilst this represents the tradition in which the majority of professional musicians train, the findings cannot be generalised to other domains such as Jazz and Popular Music which have their own patterns of learning (Green, 2002). Furthermore, by focusing on performance, the career development of composers has been excluded in this study, and it is likely that their success as a professional will be characterised by a number of different and contrasted factors.

A further consideration is whether I have successfully and sufficiently managed to capture the changes occurring during the transition from training to work. The nature of qualitative research and categorical data (as used in the second phase of the study) is that it is difficult to quantify and draw meaningful relationships between variables. Therefore, it has only been possible to speculate about the nature of the transition, rather than statistically validate my hypotheses. Whilst the data presented demonstrate striking differences between the two groups, a more efficient method for tracing how the variables fluctuated throughout the study (such as collecting numeric data to facilitate time-span analyses of the data), would perhaps have allowed for a more detailed understanding of the transition.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, my past intentions of becoming a professional performer and subsequent decision to concentrate on my academic studies, in addition to my undergraduate and postgraduate studies occurring within one of the two institutions in this study, will have inevitably influenced my analysis and subsequent discussion of the data. Obviously my knowledge of the organisational structure of the university was more detailed than of the music college, as was my awareness of departmental politics. Having known some of the university participants for a year before the study commenced meant that I was more familiar with their past experiences and personalities than the music college participants. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, I was more able to identify with the university students who chose not to pursue performance as a career since that was the route I myself had chosen. As an undergraduate student I felt frustrated with my instrumental lessons and unchallenged by what I perceived to be a



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generally unenthusiastic and unmotivated group of peers. Despite this, however, I formed a number of ensembles and enjoyed my musical participation very much. My choice to concentrate on academia was founded in the result of my final recital, which was lower than anticipated and with which I was very disappointed: my grade for my dissertation on the other hand, was extremely high and influenced my decision to pursue an avenue in which success was more likely. I was also aware that I do not consider myself to be 'less' of a musician simply because I did not become a professional: I play in a number of ensembles and derive more pleasure from making music than I did when I was a music student and therefore, I was keen to ensure that the amateur musicians in this study were not portrayed as 'unmusical'. My additional insight into the transition of the non-performers ensured that I did not present their experiences as being stories of 'unsuccessful' musicians, rather I tried to understand the factors that influenced their *choices*. My choice not to pursue a career as a professional performer also provided insight into the differences between the non-performers and the performers in terms of recognising how the two groups differed in their motivations, ambitions and relationships with music.

### ***9.3 Future research directions***

The research presented in this thesis highlights a number of significant elements influencing the career transitions of musicians and, given the unique contribution that they make to our understanding of musical development, could benefit from further study. Four possibilities for future research are described below.

#### ***9.3.1 A follow-up study***

By the end of the study, a number of the musicians were either in postgraduate education (primarily the performers) or still in pursuit of their chosen career. The time limitations of doctoral study did not allow me to fully capture the entire career transition of the participants, and so future research could attempt to discover their career choices and the role that music became to play in their lives. Given the fluctuating experiences of Geoff, who was unsuccessful in his initial attempts to secure a performance career, but eventually succeeded, it is possible that the career paths of the other musicians from both

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groups may also have changed. Examining the entire duration of the training to work transition may provide deeper insights into the career transitions of musicians.

### ***9.3.2 A broader focus***

As discussed in the previous section, one of the shortcomings of the research was that it only considered performers within the Western classical music tradition. The transition of performers within other genres, such as jazz, may be characterised by a different range of contributory factors. Jazz musicians, for example, need to develop different skills than classical musicians, since improvisation often forms the basis of their performances, whilst high levels of technical skill are a necessity.

The nature of becoming a professional composer is likely to be very different from the performer, although it is possible that they will also depend on similar kinds of ‘portfolio’ careers as the performers. The increasing use of technology in the creation of all genres of music, including Western art music and electroacoustic music, is also likely to influence the development of composers in terms of a potential need to acquire new skills and techniques: this may present the composer with constantly changing demands that need to be overcome. Furthermore, there are fewer opportunities for a composer to hear performances of his/her own compositions, and so it is possible that the kinds of external validation required by the performers may be quite different for the composer.

### ***9.3.3 The educators’ perspective***

The research presented in this thesis represents the students’ perceptions of their experiences within two higher education institutions. Whilst the students describe a perceived lack of career-specific support, it is necessary to investigate the educators’ perspectives in order to understand the reality in full. Interviews with instrumental teachers, heads of departments, and the senior management may indicate whether or not there are differences between the values and priorities of the staff and students, what the differences are, and whether or not it is realistic to implement changes in order to fill any void between the two. It is likely that the educational practices of universities and music

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colleges are steeped in tradition, and such a study could highlight whether or not such values are still relevant for today's musicians.

#### ***9.3.4 The relationship between musical identity and performance skill***

This study suggests that musicians can possess an amateur or professional performer musical identity which may influence their career choices. This suggestion is based on the participants' perceptions of, and attitudes towards, their experiences during undergraduate training. One way to extend the theoretical discussion and the model proposed in the previous chapter, is to look at whether or not there are differences between two such groups of musicians in terms of *actual* performance skill. Is there a noticeable difference in how the performances of the performer and amateur musicians are perceived by an audience? Consideration could also be given to how instrumental teachers and institutions perceive the students, as a way to understand the musicians more completely.

Further research of the kinds described above may provide additional insight into an area of musical development that is, as yet, in its infancy. Research can highlight ways in which the career development of the individual can be maximised. Such research may complement the theoretical model proposed in the previous chapter, or indeed, indicate ways in which it may be adapted to depict the transition more completely. The career transition of the musician is perhaps more difficult than any of the other transitions, and this thesis has added a new perspective on how and why musicians choose to pursue a professional career in music or maintain it as an amateur interest.

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