

Practising creativity

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AHRC RESEARCH CENTRE FOR MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AS CREATIVE PRACTICE

Background: Creativity

➤ Generally no 'single' creativity – creativity can be conceptualised through four different perspectives:
person, product, process and *press* (Rhodes, 1961, Runco, 2004)

Person: refers to intra-individual factors such as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007; Beghetto, Kaufman, & Baxter, 2011; Tierney & Farmer, 2002, 2011, Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994)

Product: different types of creativity, depending on the level of novelty a product or idea may have within a given culture (Boden, 1992)

Process: developmental aspects of creativity (Beghetto and Kaufman, 2007)

Press (Environment): refers to external influences such as cultural or social constraints (Glück, Ernst, & Unger, 2002; Hennessey & Amabile, 1988)



Background: Creativity in musical performance

- Performance as one of many activities that is included in frameworks of musical creativity (Leman, 1999)
 - Research mainly focuses on the processes of creating new musical material as in compositions and improvisations (Sawyer, 2003, Deliège & Wiggins, 2006; Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007 (pp.127-144), Kleinen, 2003 Rosenbrock, 2005)
- it becomes ‘a matter of huge personal significance, even financial survival’ (Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007, p.85)



Project overview: Major studies

- Student cohort questionnaire 1
- Focus groups interviews: Teachers' concepts of creativity
- Observation 1: 'Inside the teaching studio'
 - Video observation + video recall
- Observation 2: 'Inside the practice room'
 - Video observation + video recall
 - Practice diaries
 - Performances
 - Pre- and post-performance questionnaires
- Student cohort questionnaire 2

'Inside the practice room'



'Inside the practice room'

AIMS:

To get a better understanding of:

- Students' experience of creativity in the development of an individual interpretation of a piece
- The relationship between creative processes in practice on the one hand and performance on the other



'Inside the practice room'

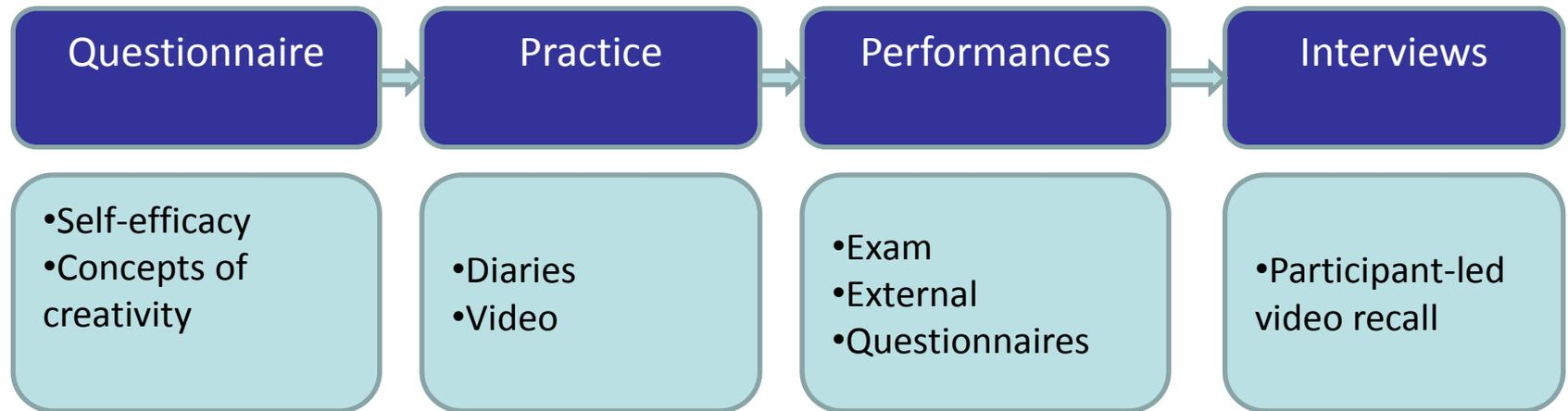
RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What are the processes involved in creative work as students practise a piece?
- How do individual creative decisions develop?
- What is the relationship between technical issues and creative ideas?

Longitudinal study with multiple elements, including video recall



Longitudinal Study elements



Participants and measures: 1

- 12 classical music students,
(3 piano, 3 violin, horn, double bass, bassoon, organ, guitar, percussion)
 - UG and PG
 - taking an end-of-year recital exam
- Documented preparation and performance of one piece during 3 designated weeks
 - 5 students videoed their practice and took part in interviews

Participants and measures: 2

Today we draw on material from the five students who had cameras

- Video recall interviews referring to practice videos
 - Diaries
- Diaries: structured information about each practice session, e.g. interpretative intentions and decisions, the reasons for them, technical work, and 'inner techniques' (adapted from van Zijl & Sloboda, 2011)
- Video recall: participant-led process of identifying and discussing significant passages in practice footage (based on Rowe, 1999)



Video recall: 1

- Participants viewed footage alone and chose excerpts to show and discuss in recall session

Viewing guidelines

When you watch a video, please try to identify moments or passages that were important to you. Some examples could be:

- you felt creative in your performing or practising
- you felt spontaneous, or you took a risk
- you understood something about the piece that you hadn't understood before
- something new emerged in your approach to the piece
- you learned something that helped you to be more creative or original in performance
- you found or tried out a new idea for interpretation
- you made a decision about how you wanted to perform or interpret the piece
- you felt that you were able to perform according to your own ideas
- you felt that you weren't able to perform according to your own ideas

Video recall: 2

- Through interviews we identify creative 'episodes'
- Episode = a chunk of meaning or unit judged to be a significant happening in the learning context
- Can refer to states of mind, experienced mental processes, and/or actions
- Different lengths - a moment to several minutes

In: James, M., Wise, K. & Rink, J. (2010). Exploring creativity in musical performance through lesson observations with video-recall interviews. *Scientia Paedagogica Experimentalis*, 47(2), 219-250.

Overview of practised sections documented
in diaries & creative episodes as revealed in
interviews



Overview of practised sections (diary)

<i>Practice session</i>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Exam	10-12	Performance
<i>No. of practised sections</i>	Violin	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	3	2			
	Vibra.	3	3	2	4	4	6	7	4	7		-	
	Bass	1	3	1	2	1	3	6	4	3		-	
	Organ	3	5	6	6	5	4	2(7)	3	2		3	
	Horn	2	4	2	2	2	4	3	5	5		5 4 2	

181 sections practised

Overview of creative episodes (video)

<i>Practice session</i>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Exam	10-12	Performance
<i>No. creative episodes</i>	Violin	2	3	-	-	1	3	1	-	-			
	Vibra.	-	-	1	-	1	1	3	-	-		-	
	Bass	-	-	-	-	1	-	(1)	-	-		-	
	Organ	-	1	1	3	-	1	1	1	-		-	
	Horn	5	4	4	3	2	4	2	2	2		231	

60 creative episodes in total (34 horn, 26 all others)

Thematic analysis of interviews



Thematic analysis method

- Inductive approach
- 6 analytical steps (Braun & Clarke, 1996)
- The findings have been shared with some of the participants for their feedback

- Today we draw out two groups of themes:
 - Processes in forming one's own interpretation
 - Ways of working

Processes in forming one's own interpretation (1)

First level themes:

- Character: looking for and/or naming different characters in a piece
 - then you've got other things you can work on in the bottom line, and kind of giving them characters like 'I'm not in a rush,' 'cheeky' (vibraphone)
- Emphasising or finding contrast and variety
 - I started working on... how to make it more interesting by emphasising the accents and the difference, because the music, as it's written {TURNING PAGES} actually does have different accents (horn)
- Experimenting/exploring ideas
 - I'm experimenting with different types of singing (horn)
 - experimenting with different contact points and attacks of the bow to achieve different characters (violin)

Processes in forming one's own interpretation (2)

➤ Clarifying own ideas/opinions

- to me at least [...] you know it's not 'waaa' style jazz trumpet, it's more of a/ you're singing something [...] and it's almost like you're crying out loud, to me (horn)
- the way I viewed it was [...] I thought that's the melody and this right hand thing is just something that's kind of going along like a machine (vibraphone)

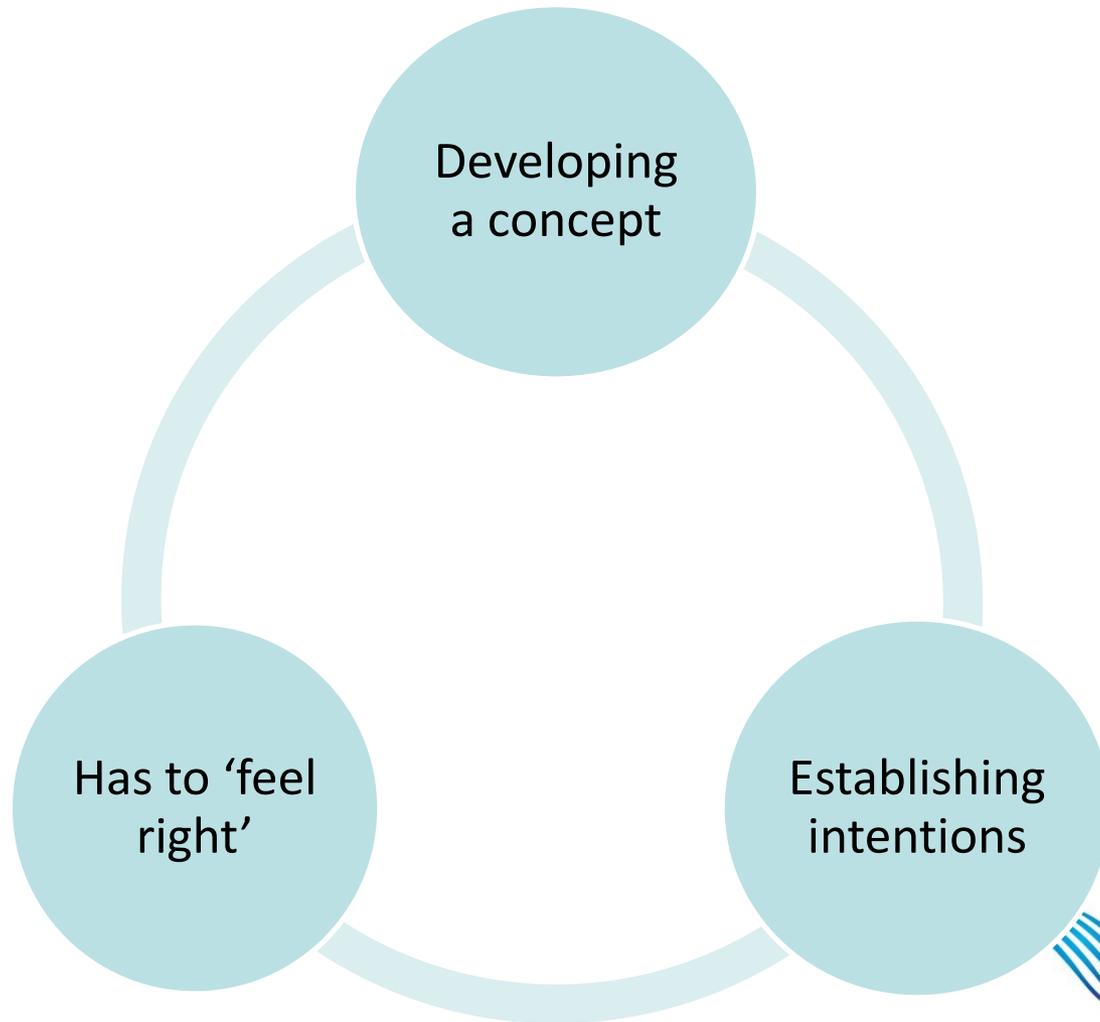
➤ Problem identification and problem solving

- I started to realise that the... um again the arpeggios were very cool but (...) there needed to be an emphasis on some and whether the beginning or the end, there needed to be an emphasis on one of the points of each one... in order for it to make musical phrase. (...) I was thinking (...) how you can link from one, I could link from that to the next with the next one with the repeated notes, so that then the arpeggio didn't, no longer became um this kind of... vertical but but horizontal (horn)

➤ Revising ideas and decisions over time

- I had kind of a very focused sound which I ended up changing later on (violin)
- so change the sticking, solve the problem [...] erm in fact I then changed it again later on (vibraphone)

Processes in forming one's own interpretation: Second level themes



Two ways of working:

‘Musical parameters-led way of working’:

Characteristics:

- Score-led
- Intentions expressed as seeking balance and form of different musical elements in relation to the whole
- Focus on immediate sound (i.e. what can be perceived)
- Vibraphone player and organist

‘Emotion/narrative-led way of working’:

Characteristics:

- Emotion-led
- Intentions expressed as seeking emotional meaning or effect, stories, and expressive images
- Focus on emotional impact (i.e. what can be felt)
- Violinist, double bassist, and horn player



Examples: 'Musical parameters-led way of working'

Sub-theme: 'Form and balance':

- within those there are certain micro details that are quite important but there's also like a big/ it feels like there's a big picture which is... the most important thing not to mess up' (Vibraphone)

Sub-theme: 'Balancing elements':

- because naturally when you kind of approach/ sort of on the vibraphone this is the bottom fifth {PLAYS PIANO} and when you get up towards this it starts to naturally be a stronger sound just the nature of the bars so erm this is I've got written here more low notes F F# and G... then here worked on sound erm balancing the chords speed of tremolo, speed of crescendo (Vibraphone)

Sub-theme: 'Clarity or emphasis – what can be heard'

- before I was using a different sort of trio sonata registration having the right hand on a eight foot on the lower manual and the left hand transposing down an octave on the other manual at a four foot/ the four foot stop, so that the sound is very very similar, which is fun but (...) if there isn't enough interest in the (...) in both sounds, you can't tell what part's doing what which is fun and a nice thing to do in some trio sonatas but this feels (...) nice for this particular one to be able to hear all the parts more clearly (organ)



Example: 'Emotion/narrative-led way of working'

Sub-theme: 'Emotional effect':

- you can make a lot more of the quiet dynamics without having to work so hard you can make them really magical (violin)

Sub-theme: 'Imagination – visual/auditory imagery':

- I thought it was this was the kind of singing that you would do... in um like a night time with a guitar very everything very ... Spanish like you can imagine Spanish as it is you know, guitar and the moon and then there I so I heard myself which I didn't remember saying 'moon', 'luna' that's moon, so I was trying to you know having that thing (horn)

Sub-theme: 'Story/narrative'

- I really felt like that was the story I needed to kind of help me ... play the music (violin)

Sub-theme: 'Emotional concept of piece'

- (...) what's going on now something incredibly weird and mad, and then it starts slowly, slowly picking up a lot of tension growing somewhere, somewhere really ... mm like really intensively, but er but with a/ with this steady pulse it/ e/ mm it's a scary piece the whole piece I felt was ... was very ... scary and mad and ... you know mentally not stable. (...)
(double bass)



Conclusions



Conclusions

- Creative process is not linear
 - Solutions are for the moment, not final
- Challenging polarities between technical and expressive elements
 - Process about negotiating and integrating multiple aspects of performance (by working out a technical problem changing the expressive,
- More than one approach
- Widening concepts of practising



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