

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPEMENT OF YOUNG MUSICIANS: FIRST RESULTS OF THE ALUMNI PROJECT

Heiner Gembris

Daina Langner

Institute for the Research on Musical Ability and Advancement of the Gifted (IBFF)
of the University of Paderborn, Germany

ABSTRACT

The alumni project¹ deals with the career of music students after they have finished their education and left the music academy. It examines how graduates of music academies manage to integrate into professional life and what problems they face on the job market. Furthermore, the question of how adequately the education at a music academy prepares instrumentalists and singers for the job market is dealt with.

The survey was carried out via postal questionnaires which were administered to a total of 2080 alumnis from seven music academies all over Germany. Most of all of them graduated between 1995 and 2002. Altogether, 659 questionnaires (32 %) were returned.

Preliminary results show that:

- most of the musicians earn their living with several musical activities, partially with non-music part-time jobs.
- the number of full-time engagements varies enormously with the different instrument groups.
- Altogether, 33% of the graduates (n=610) who leave the music academy manage to get a full-time job in the field of music.

1. BACKGROUND

The transition from music academy into the job market is a critical phase in the career of professional musicians. Everyday observances, statistics on the job market and empirical studies show that the job market for musicians has been subject to a structural change during the last few years, consisting on the one hand in a general reduction of regular employments, while on the other hand the number of applicants is rising (HEFCE Report 11/98; Mertens, 2002). At the same time, the importance of part-time employments is increasing. In some countries such as Great Britain this development has already gone on for some time. For Germany, with its large number of orchestras and opera-houses, it is a relatively new development. A major cause for this is the closure of altogether 29 concert, opera, chamber and radio orchestras since the German Unification in 1990. Today, the overall number of German orchestras amounts to 139 (as of early 2002). This means a reduction of 1714 (ca. 15%) music positions

(Mertens, 2002). In addition, audiences – especially young people - are less interested in conventional classical concerts. Up to now, these tendencies have not been considered regarding the education of young musicians.

2. AIMS

The alumni project considers the question, how music academy graduates get into the (music) job market. Among other things, it analyses character and number of employments and how graduates assess their education with respect to the demands of practical working life.

3. METHOD

The survey was carried out via postal questionnaires which were administered to a total of 2080 alumnis from seven music academies all over Germany. Most of all of them graduated between 1995 and 2002. Altogether, 659 questionnaires (32 %) were returned.

4. RESULTS

610 graduates of the total sample (N=659), most of which graduated between 1995 and 2002, definitely left the music academy, i.e. they did not pursue any extension studies after graduation. 33% of them achieved a full-time position in the music market. This survey focuses only on four groups: string players, orchestral-wind players, singers and pianists who studied „instrumental training“ (Künstlerische Ausbildung) at their music academies. Some of them continued their studies after graduation, whereas others left the music academy. Our report deals with these definite „leavers“ (n=418). The range of employments between the instrumental groups is wide, depending on which instrument has been studied.

Table 1 displays the size of the four instrumental groups.

	instrumental training	percentage of total sample N=659
strings	160	24%
winds	108	16%
singers	100	15%
piano	50	8%
Σ	418	63%

Table 1: Number of graduates who studied instrumental training at their music academies.

¹ the alumni project is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)

The following tables (2-5) show the types of employment(s) the musicians earn their livings with.

Most of the graduates earn their living with several musical activities. In the four instrumental groups, they amount to over 80% (tables 2-5). Similarly, in all four groups, the percentage of graduates who organize their living with a mixture of musical and non-musical activities reaches about 13%. A small percentage (3%-7%) does not earn their living with their instruments. In the piano group, all graduates of our sample earned their living with musical activities. Freelance jobs include a wide range of working activities such as deputy activities, gigs, orchestral depping, fee-based teaching at music schools, private teaching, limited appointments (e.g. orchestra internship or maternity leave substitutions.)

strings (n = 160)			
	music-jobs	music & non-music jobs	non-music jobs only
freelance	34%	10%	2%
permanent employment	42%	1%	3%
	(38% in orchestra)		
part-time	3%	-	-
others	2%	2%	1%
Σ	81%	13%	6%

Table 2: Sources of income of the string players who studied instrumental training.

The majority of singers and pianists is working freelance, whereas the string and wind players singers are more often permanently employed. The winds are the group with the highest percentage of permanent employment and the smallest rate of freelancers. The permanent employment can be in an orchestra, but also at music schools as instrumental teachers.

winds (n = 108)			
	music-jobs	music & non-music jobs	non-music jobs only
freelance	27%	11%	5%
permanent employment	49%	1%	-
	(42% in the orchestra)		
part-time	1%	-	-
others	4%	1%	2%
Σ	81%	13%	7%

Table 3: Sources of income of the orchestral-wind players who studied instrumental training.

singers (n = 100)			
	music-jobs	music & non-music jobs	non-music jobs only
freelance	42%	11%	1%
permanent employment	38%	1%	1%
	(28% choir, 12% solo)		
part-time	1%	-	-
others	3%	1%	1%
Σ	84%	13%	3%

Table 4: Sources of income of the singers who studied instrumental training.

The pianists constitute the instrumental group with the smallest permanent employment rate. These permanent employments are in general at music schools as instrumental teachers.

pianists (n = 50)			
	music-jobs	music & non-music jobs	non-music jobs only
freelance	60%	10%	-
permanent employment	14%	-	-
part-time	8%	-	-
others	4%	4%	-
Σ	86%	14%	0%

Table 5: Sources of income of the pianists who studied instrumental training.

5. CONCLUSIONS

These results emphasize the high significance of working freelance. It should be considered that the data might be biased due to the possibility that rather the more successful graduates returned their questionnaires. Therefore, the results may portray the job market more positively than it actually is.

4. REFERENCES

- HEFCE Report 11/98 – Review of music conservatories. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/index.htm> (visited 2003, march 17).
- Gembris, H. (2000) Was wird aus ihnen? Sängerinnen und Sänger zwischen Ausbildung und Berufspraxis. XII. Jahreskongreß des Bundesverbandes Deutscher Gesangspädagogen, Nürnberg, 28.-30. April 2000.

3. Mertens, Gerald (2002). Orchester, Musiktheater, Festivals in Deutschland. Eine Bestandsaufnahme. *Das Orchester. Zeitschrift für Orchesterkultur und Rundfunk-Chorwesen*. 50 Jg. / H. 7-8 (24-31).
4. Mills, J. & Smith, J. (2002). Working in music: becoming successful. Paper presented at the IBFF Conference, University of Paderborn, October 2002