More than the practice room: exploring the conservatoire student experience

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to investigate how students navigate and reproduce culture in the conservatoire, in contrast to much research in this area which has focused on teaching and learning in formal contexts. My primary aim is, therefore, to explore the conservatoire as a separate institution within higher education. I investigate how students experience conservatoire culture, analysing influences on the student experience as well as how students' experiences of conservatoire culture relate to their development. To answer these questions, I employ a framework that takes a view of culture and tradition as active processes within an organisation, utilising concepts from Giddens and Bourdieu.

I developed a case study of three UK conservatoires, conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with current conservatoire students and staff and participant observation at each conservatoire. This methodology allowed me to develop a nuanced understanding of how a student experiences aspects of life such as extracurricular activities and the teaching and learning relationships in the conservatoire. Additionally, these methods enabled me to look at how the student experience is shaped through peer relationships and notions about the profession. Through thematic analysis, I investigate the complexities of conservatoire culture which include embedded messages about practising and the music profession. I explore how students engaged with culture and how they viewed the conservatoire way of life, focusing on their ideas about free time versus practice time as well as perceptions of conservatoire hierarchies. I also examine the primary study tutor's influence on the student experience, including students' ideas about the ideal student-tutor dyad and perceptions of the tutor as a mentor. The thesis helps build an understanding of the conservatoire student experience that can be used in the creation of HE policy that is fair and inclusive to this student population.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of:

my grandma, Beverly Prostrollo

my aunt, Hope Prostrollo

and my uncle, Mike Erickson

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

As a young violist in the United States, I regularly commiserated with my friends and peers about the excitements and the burdens of our music lessons, about how nervous we were before an audition or how excited we were to have had a breakthrough during a lesson. It was through these interactions that I began to develop an understanding of the culture around me and how my own experiences related to those of my peers; I was learning where I fit into my community as a performer. As time passed, I also cultivated an interest in the welfare and well-being of those music students who are (or could be) prime candidates for conservatoire[1]-level training. From these experiences and interests grew my principal motivation for taking on this research project. My interest in conservatoire culture stems from a combination of years of experience in the music industry and listening to the education experiences of those of my peers who went on to engage in serious musical training.

My journey as a young, serious student musician took a familiar, relatively ordinary path of one-to-one lessons with private tutors from the San Antonio Symphony, until the dissolution of the major symphony orchestra in 2003. Under constant financial stress and administrative mismanagement, the musicians took pay cuts (many musicians earning near poverty-level wages) to keep the orchestra functional until, in the end, the orchestra was forced to fold before the 2003-2004 season. The San Antonio Symphony employed my primary tutors who were among those forced to develop new income streams to cover the loss of their stable, salaried income, and personal health insurance coverage. Experiencing this sense of loss further deepened my interest in understanding the professional music career and those who choose to pursue it. At that time, my musical mentors were out of work, and the reactions of indifference from non-musicians in my life suggested to me that the great depth of training and the personal dedication (and sacrifice) of a musician are often misunderstood or completely unknown outside of that community.

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[1] a primarily vocational institution that specialises in providing single-subject music and music performance training beneficial to a job in the performing arts. The conservatoire is commonly separated into faculties. It is typical to see a faculty for each instrument type (e.g. woodwind or string). Furthermore, a student studying under one tutor is commonly referred to as member of that tutor's studio. Depending on the size of the institution, there may be multiple studios for a single instrument, or if the conservatoire is relatively small, all musicians of a specific instrument may study together.

After high school, I went on to study music at New York University and during my own studies, I took part in the music performance community by playing in symphony orchestras, studio sessions, film score recording sessions, and discovered the industry behind music performance. My peers ranged from popular music guitarists, musical theatre ingenues, to virtuoso pianists. It became clear to me throughout my conversations with these musicians that many of them felt their decision to study music performance was misunderstood by their families—a frequent comment being that parents believe a conservatoire degree is too narrow and does not develop the essential life skills that they believe are integral to other degree programs. These conversations with my peers helped me to refine my interest in the role of higher music education and in how students experience and construct conservatoire culture.

Although my interest stems from experiences in the United States, I chose the UK as my research focus out of both necessity and convenience. United States federal regulations dictate that as a recipient of federal student loans, I was not permitted to conduct fieldwork in my home country. However, when I began looking at UK conservatoires, I could identify a number of similarities between my own experiences as a music student in America with what I was observing in the UK. This allowed me to interact with participants on a deep level, quickly building a rapport as someone who understands and can sympathise with the multiple facets of conservatoire life. But, while my background as a musician was beneficial in many aspects, it also created difficulties when interviewing participants. By exploring a community so close to my own, I sometimes took my knowledge for granted. I realised I could easily miss opportunities to investigate the unspoken understandings and experiences of the conservatoire, precisely because my own experiences and understandings were so similar.

Student experience and the conservatoire

When considering how to build a research project that examines student culture in this specialist setting, I spent time looking at studies that sought to accomplish a similar task. While reading through the literature, it became apparent to me that ethnographic methods would be the most useful way to examine a wide scope of conservatoire culture, including the “outside-of-classroom life” that Moffatt (1991) suggests has been historically largely overlooked in the field (p. 45). Meanwhile, ethnographic studies of university students such as those conducted by Nathan (2006), Moffatt (1989), and Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strause (1961) look deeply at how students navigate culture in their institution and their perceptions of

the "college life"[2]. These ethnographies suggested to me that an individual's out-of-class experiences[3] are significant contributors to how a student forms attitudes and values and career outlook, among other motivations and goals during their time as a student. I found that this idea was generally supported by a number of accepted theories and models of how students encounter characteristics of their institution and how these then affect how their perceptions and beliefs change throughout the course of their studies (see for example, Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). An aspect of one such theory is Chickering and Reisser's (1993) description of six major points of influence students encounter in HE that affect their personal development.

By getting to know this research area I have gained a better grasp of how important it is to understand the student experience within the HE context and, for instance, how this information can help to "shape policy, to provide services, to improve institutional and teaching behaviors" (Silver & Silver, 1997). In addition to the pursuits of HE scholars, the phrase 'student experience' has become increasingly incorporated by schools into marketing plans and by national ranking schemes to showcase aspects of student life. This is illustrated in the UK by instruments such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey. While useful in many contexts, to an on-looking prospective student considering where to apply for conservatoire, these surveys can run the risk of homogenising a diverse student body, leaving out more nuanced aspects of conservatoire student life. Student identity is complex and can be influenced in a number of ways that are not necessarily easy to measure, such as socialisation and other dimensions of personal growth (see Weidman, DeAngelo, Bethea, 2014).

Until recently, the conservatoire has been relatively overlooked within the field of HE research but this has begun to change as recent years have seen an increased interest in unpacking conservatoire pedagogy and the unique learning-teaching transactions of the setting. Some recent conservatoire studies have focused on certain elements of culture in the conservatoire (for example see Gaunt, 2006; Presland, 2005). However, they leave ample space to further examine how a student's understanding and motivations are affected by the culture in the conservatoire, especially in consideration of their informal experiences of that culture. In his

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[2] a phrase describing the 'outside-of-classroom' life of students, as used by Moffatt (1991, p. 44)

[3] a phrase used by Kuh (1993; 1995) to generally illustrate the student lifestyle, unconfined to the formal classroom exchange

ethnographic study around conservatoire students at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, Kushner (1985) describes a new course that attempted to broaden students' perspective on social interactions as performers and the perceptions of students on the course. This report reveals some of the unique characteristics of the conservatoire's physical environment as well as how students interact with the organisation, maintaining a primary focus on the course within the school. Another ethnographic study that has remained prominent in conservatoire research is Kingsbury (1988), a foundational study of the American conservatoire since its publication. Kingsbury's exploration of the American conservatoire illuminates many of the more nuanced practices of the US conservatoire as an institution and is still, notably, regularly cited by British scholars when discussing conservatoire culture in the UK. I have used these studies here as examples to showcase that there is a gap in conservatoire literature that examines the student experience of contemporary conservatoire culture in the UK and a call for such literature, since even relatively out dated studies continue to be widely cited.

Peering into the conservatoire context

As I stated, all my research takes place within the UK music conservatoire landscape, and as part of this thesis, I have suggested that a deep understanding of the conservatoire student's experience of HE is largely missing from existing student experience literature. Both mainstream universities and conservatoires are degree-awarding institutions but are fundamentally quite different. Unlike the university, conservatoires are pedagogically focused on the performing arts (most typically music) and are often mono-technic[4]. For this study, I will look at music students in three conservatoires – two are mono-technic, focusing on music performance and music professions, while the last conservatoire is a multi-disciplinary polytechnic that houses other performing arts programs.

A primary hallmark of the conservatoire which sets itself distinctly apart from mainstream university programs, is the regular one-to-one lessons a student has with an assigned primary study tutor[5]. After being accepted to the conservatoire, a student is paired with this tutor (Hays, Minichiello, Wright, 2000; Presland, 2005; Nerland, 2007) and usually remains

[4] I am using mono-technic as a term to describe an institution provides education on a single discipline, such as music

[5] this is the primary means of student-tutor interaction, and the conservatoire curriculum is organised around this relationship

with them throughout their studies. This relationship takes on the contours of a master and apprentice relationship, wherein the student develops insights about the lifestyle and expectations of a professional musician from their tutor. This kind of student-tutor relationship in music performance studies goes back centuries: Beethoven studied with Haydn as his tutor and Hummel had a similar relationship with Mozart[6]; and according to the websites of several conservatoires in the UK, it would seem that the opportunity to learn from a specific tutor is a driving force in the continued popularity of the conservatoire.

In the UK, the conservatoire continues to be a popular HE option for musicians. For example, in the 2018 cycle there were over 15,000 applications submitted via UCAS Conservatoires (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2018). Possibly responding to the interest in conservatoire education, researchers have begun to try to understand how students navigate conservatoire studies and what changes they undergo throughout their studies. The most common method to accomplish this has been to look at the formal one-to-one learning-teaching transactions and outcomes (see Presland, 2005; Gaunt, 2006; Serra-Dawa, 2010; Collens, 2015). I consider this research interest to be important to the field of HE because a better understanding of this dyad has the potential to benefit many different education settings as another perspective of teaching. However, the conservatoire is more than this pedagogy and students' ideas about how they navigate culture in the conservatoire are a necessary part of how the conservatoire functions. Examining how students experience culture in the conservatoire contributes to current understanding about how these students think about their place in their community and their role in society, and as a result, helps paint a more complete picture of the conservatoire landscape.

The objectives of this study

The increasing prominence of student experience in education policy suggests that how a student navigates HE has become more relevant to policymakers and more of a focus for researchers. It is my opinion that the increased use of (non-academic) tools to record student experience, as a means of evaluating and marketing institutions to prospective students, has perhaps bolstered the output of research in the field. However, researchers have been creating theories surrounding students and how they experience HE for decades. One such researcher that I refer to in this thesis is Arthur Chickering, who has remained an important figure within the field of higher education research. His research suggested that several

[6] for more in-depth examples of these significant student-tutor dyads see Mann (1970) and Kroll (2007)

aspects of HE have the potential to affect and change students. In the current policy climate, using primarily survey tools to measure aspects of the student experience leaves out a lot of the nuance of the student's HE journey. For instance, in the article "*Institutional differences and student development*", Chickering, McDowell, and Campagna (1969) suggest that colleges adhere to the assumption that "differences in general climate, in rules and regulations, in student-faculty relationships, in curriculum, teaching, and evaluation…" (p. 315) have a great influence on that student experience. The assumption that aspects of an HE environment can have a direct impact on students is reinforced by the findings of Mayhew, et al. (2016) that "[a] host of significant relationships between environmental dimensions and various psychosocial outcomes and attitudes and values" (p. 540) can be observed in students within an institution. This thesis illustrates how culture in the conservatoire is a distinctive vocational higher education setting and therefore comparisons with other mainstream settings are largely unhelpful. Chickering, et al. (1969) go on to describe the relationship between HE institutions and students as notably non-uniform and complex, stating that "college impact is not simple, unitary, and clear cut" (p. 325). This relationship between a student and their surroundings is still certainly no less complex than it was fifty years ago, and my thesis has the potential to augment the understanding of HE student experiences in the UK by investigating the conservatoire as a non-mainstream HE institution.

The national student experience surveys tend to be primarily concerned with mainstream university settings and prioritise the variables encountered as part of that student experience. Meanwhile, a recent study by the Office for Students examined the first subject pilot of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes framework (TEF) (Office for Students, 2018). In the executive summary is an explanation that there is insufficient data to look at the quantity of one-to-one contact time between student and tutor, which is the defining characteristic of the conservatoire. In both the instances of national student experience surveys as well as the subject-level TEF assessments, the instruments that have been designed to apply to a wide pool of institutions fail to address the important, defining characteristics of the conservatoire. Therefore, a focused investigation of the conservatoire as a distinctive institution will stand to benefit the thousands of current and future UK conservatoire students; with this in mind, it is hoped that this study can improve the experiences of future conservatoire students. My thesis also makes a contribution to HE in a more general sense, by providing valuable information for policy decision-makers when addressing specific issues regarding general student satisfaction, health, and welfare in a variety of HE settings.

Research aim and questions

I made the decision to embark on this research project because much of conservatoire research conducted in the last several years has been primarily concerned with developing a better understanding of the pedagogical aspects of conservatoire education. While this line of questioning is an important and very worthwhile endeavour, I believe the wider, informal student experience of conservatoire culture needs to be better understood. My primary aim is, therefore, to explore the conservatoire as a unique institution within higher education, with many informal practices and customs. This knowledge could help educators and other academic authority figures to more fully appreciate how a conservatoire student experiences culture in higher music education.

To investigate this aim, I ask the following questions:

- How do students experience conservatoire culture?
- What are the main influences on the student experience?
- How do students' experiences of conservatoire culture relate to their development?

To answer these questions, I have constructed an ethnographic-style multiple case study. As I indicated earlier, there are a handful of important ethnographies that look at the university student experience, but the conservatoire student experience deserves to be understood in its own context. Taking an ethnographic-style approach to three conservatoires allowed me to investigate the nature of the student experience of culture at three separate institutions and how those students constructed and navigated those cultures. The three conservatoires each represent one case in this multiple case study. While there are significant, unique aspects of each setting, I anticipated that there would be many overlapping experiences and perceptions that would allow me to consider aspects of how a conservatoire student experiences culture.

In constructing this multiple case study, ethnographic methods such as in-depth, semi-structured interviews and participant observations of the environment were used in order to record the range and diversity of experience amongst students. This approach has generated data that is more than just a collection of several students' perspectives, instead providing a deeper understanding of the conservatoire student experience. Using interviews and observations in all three settings, I have uncovered rich data that highlights the importance of a nuanced understanding of how students experience this vocational HE and how those experiences may relate to student development.

Concluding thoughts

The purpose of this introductory chapter has been to provide background and context for the development of my thesis. I have explained the origin of my personal interest in music student experiences and how that interest led me to explore these research questions. By briefly looking at the conservatoire context, I have argued that the characteristics of the setting are unique in the HE landscape. While the nationally administered student experience surveys of HE institutions can offer a valuable look at the needs and outcomes of students in general, these tools fail to provide a nuanced look at the conservatoire experience. I have briefly outlined my research questions which aim to look specifically at conservatoire culture, with a particular interest in the informal experiences of students. With this study, I provide a nuanced, multifaceted look at conservatoire culture as a different kind of HE experience.

The following chapter provides a more in-depth account of the history of the conservatoire and how the evolution of the institution in Europe has created a unique setting within the UK higher education landscape. This helps to provide an account of how the conservatoire has developed, alongside but also independently, from the university setting. By the end of the chapter, I will have painted a picture of conservatoire education in the UK that helps contextualise my research questions in this unique setting and describe the groundwork from which the research design was constructed.

Chapter 2 - Painting the landscape: the conservatoire context

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to introduce the context of the research, the conservatoire, by exploring its history and looking at recent literature to examine how elements of history are evident in contemporary conservatoire culture. As an HE institution, the conservatoire has many unique characteristics and pedagogical practices that set it apart from other mainstream, non-vocational higher education. I explore in detail how the conservatoire is heavily rooted in the practice of one-to-one tuition, looking at the development of this unique learning-teaching exchange, and how hierarchies and the notions of talent and practice have influenced the nature of the student experience. To accomplish this, I give a brief overview of the institution's origins, followed by a description of the contemporary conservatoire landscape, which introduces the student-tutor relationship (a more in depth discussion of this relationship within the research's conceptual framework is provided in Chapter three).

The second half of this chapter briefly looks at the discourses of the conservatoire that have evolved over time, with social media providing a new platform for students to engage with. I introduce the case study sites, briefly describing how each one is situated within the historical context of the conservatoire as an institution. By providing individual accounts of each location, I introduce the music schools in the context of the historical conservatoire. My aim is to provide a more detailed, albeit partial, picture of the UK conservatoire context through three of the conservatoires in the UK; this will also help to define the contours of conservatoire culture in the context of my thesis.

What is the conservatoire?

The conservatoire is a specialist training school for the performing arts. Its origins date back to 16th century state-run Italian orphanages, called *conservatori*, which were "run as boarding schools by the clergy" of the Catholic church (Bukofzer, 1947, p. 407). By the mid-17th century, four of these orphanages became focused on musical training, debatably to "preserve … the science of music from corruption" (Grove, 1900, p. 394). During this time, the predominant method of musical training was the apprenticeship model, but the *conservatori* had also built themselves a reputation as world-leading music education institutions and were the only professional music schools in Europe (Sanguinetti, 2012). In a 17th-century publication, Giovanni Andrea Angelini Bontempi noted the daily learning routine of these early *conservatori* students as one of intensive study. The author reflects that the morning

consisted of four hours of technique and skills practice as well as an hour of exercises, overseen by a master teacher, while the afternoon would entail three hours of theoretical and literature study and the day would close with more playing, listening or composing (as cited in Bukofzer, 1947). Graduates of these schools would go on to travel Europe as Italian masters, highly sought after for their expertise (Sanguinetti, 2012).

While certain elements of the contemporary conservatoire pedagogy can be seen in the early Italian institutions, the conservatoire took on a more familiar form after the founding of the Paris Conservatoire in 1795. One of the practices instituted by the Paris school that can still be seen today is the central use of one-to-one tuition to teach students their primary study instrument. The school also transformed music education insomuch as they developed a competitive foundation amongst the students, one of "rigorous examinations and competitions," (Rink, 2001, p. 82) to ensure that all students were playing at the highest level. Following the model of the Italian *conservatori*, the Paris Conservatoire was a state-funded professional music school that became a central figure within the French identity. Bauer (1947) refers to the centrality of the Paris Conservatoire in the French music community, when he wrote of his own experiences, that nearly "every one of the French musicians he knew in Paris had been educated at the Conservatoire" (p. 540). The apprenticeship-model that had been the dominant method of music training in Europe had to concede prominence to the Paris Conservatoire model.

However, this dyadic method did not disappear entirely. As I previously mentioned, the Paris Conservatoire adopted aspects of the apprenticeship-model in its use of one-to-one tuition as a central teaching method. This model allowed tutors the freedom to adopt different teaching methods that might benefit students of different abilities to assure improved artistic outcomes. By the early 20th century, a piano tutor at the Paris Conservatoire, Isidor Philipp, wrote about the independence afforded to the institution's tutors, noting that "professors are allowed the greatest latitude with respect to the means they employ: the end in view is all that matters" (Philipp & Martens, 1920, p. 218). This liberty in teaching became a major influence in the evolution of the European conservatoire model. By the late 19th-century, there were five '*ècoles de musique*' in France operating under a broadly similar structure (Grove, 1900, p. 394) and the practice continues to be the central hallmark of contemporary conservatoire pedagogy as noted in the literature (see for example, Burwell, 2012; Gaunt, Creech, Long, and Hallam, 2012; and Persson, 2000). It is also worth noting that in today's conservatoire, obtaining a degree from a conservatoire or similar program, engages a student in a practice

that has become known as being “classically trained” (Cottrell, 2017, p. 8).

The contemporary UK conservatoire landscape

From the time of the earliest Italian *conservatori*, the conservatoire has maintained a perception of being a place for the highest achieving, or most talented music students. In his report about an innovative course at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Kushner (1985) evoked this perception when he noted that students at the time “have grown up in a culture of personal achievement and the acme of that culture is attendance at the conservatoire” (p. 23). Bull (2019) refers to the practices of the contemporary conservatoire as “codified and passed-down” (p. xiii), perpetuating the white, middle-class priorities that have long accompanied the classical musician identity. Outside of the conservatoire, music as a subject has endured a number of setbacks, an example of which is the implementation of accountability measures such as English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The measure, launched in 2015, has negatively impacted the number of students taking up GCSE-level music and other creative subject study. According to Savage’s (2018) argument for a systematic approach to music education, “59.7% (393) of the researched schools highlighted the EBacc specifically as having a negative impact on the provision and uptake of music in their school” (p. 114). Despite this, the continued popularity of conservatoire study is seen in the number of applications to UK institutions. The End of Cycle report for 2018 reported that students have increasingly sought out UK conservatoires, with an increase in applications of nearly 30% since 2012 (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2018).

Kennell (2002) suggests that the conservatoire is historically located within a separate, specialised “performance culture” that is distinctive from the university setting (p. 243). Within this performance culture, students must negotiate institutional hierarchies that are often based around perceptions of musical talent and performance ability, aiding in the creation of what Kushner (1985) describes as “ambient rivalry” within the conservatoire (p. 5). This culture presents itself early in a student’s application process. Witnessing others performing at an audition or entrance test provides an incoming student with a chance to assess how their abilities compare within the group of prospective students (Juuti & Littleton, 2010) and they begin to determine their position within a hierarchy of their peers. At some entrance tests or auditions, the results are physically posted for anyone to see, or results may be available to see in other ways (ibid). Posting rankings like this is a physical example of the hierarchy that students continue to monitor throughout their studies. There is a minimum threshold, however. At auditions for UK conservatoires, students will already have necessarily obtained

a high degree of musical skill before the audition as the completion of at least ABRSM[7] Grade 8 level is "the minimum required for conservatoire entrance in the UK" (Hallam, Creech, Varvarigou & Papageorgi, 2019, p. 2). In addition to the many auditions and performances, this kind of rivalry is accomplished by promoting practices such as the master class[8] and competitions. In her study of conservatoire hierarchies and how students perceive their position within them, Perkins (2013a) suggests that students are constantly assessing themselves against their peers. They are acutely aware of where they stand at any given time and this affects what and how they learn. Furthermore, Perkins found a perception that certain students are at 'the top' of the hierarchy, which provides a kind of order for students to evaluate their own position among their peers.

The need to reassess their position constantly continues throughout a student's time in the conservatoire and their relationship to 'talent' "actively shaped by multiple social contexts and relationships rather than being an inherent quality within a person" (Davies, 2004, p. 804). This is problematic considering the term 'talent' is used widely to describe the competency and value of an individual as a performer and is largely subjective (see Scripp, Ulibari & Flax, 2013 and Sloboda, 2000 for examinations of how the notion of 'innate talent' is misconceived). Discussing the subjective notion of performance talent and worthiness, Davies (2004) notes that in her research, students felt as though the "most 'talented'" performers deserved the most performance opportunity (p. 817). However, background, socio-economic class, age, and position within the hierarchy account for differences in how students perceive this idea of meritocracy.

Another catalyst for negotiating the institutional hierarchy is the student's one-to-one, primary study tutor. While the audition is one of the first steps to attending a conservatoire, the student-tutor dyad can be formed early on by the practice of a one-off lesson often called a trial lesson or consultation lesson. If both student and tutor are happy with how the lesson proceeded, considering things like competencies and personalities, then the tutor will agree to take on that student (see websites of several UK conservatoires Leeds College of Music, n.d.; Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, n.d.; Royal College of Music, n.d.; Royal Northern

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[7] Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, an examination board that awards diploma qualifications in music in the UK

[8] classes wherein a student performs a work and a critique of that performance is given by a prominent expert to an audience of students

College of Music, n.d.; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, n.d.). Should a student be offered admission, they will then join the tutor's studio[9]. The task of transferring expertise and skill from tutor to student via one-to-one tuition further supports the construction of a hierarchy wherein a student does everything possible to be at 'the top' (Perkins, 2013a), and the notion of 'talent' continues to play an important role (Persson, 2000).

Social perceptions in the conservatoire and the influence of the tutor

The beliefs and behaviours that make up conservatoire culture often begin in early childhood music lessons. As a young student takes on more one-to-one tuition, the tutor can shape perception of the social and cultural norms of the conservatoire – the expectations and lifestyle that follows them into the conservatoire and throughout their performance life (Coulson, 2010). Young students learning the basics of an instrument often become increasingly focused as their technical and artistic expertise (and the influences of the tutor) grow. Certainly, some form of early instruction is usually necessary before a young student can consider applying to study at a conservatoire because the institution's role is to refine existing skills, as illustrated by the requirement of an ABRSM Grade 8 certificate.

The prospective conservatoire student is often steered to audition at a specific conservatoire by the desire to study under a specific tutor, based on that tutor's particular expertise (Presland, 2005). This student-tutor dyad resembles the master-and-apprentice dynamic that was common of musicians in pre-conservatoire Europe (Jørgensen, 2000**;** Rink, 2001), while existing within the structure of the contemporary conservatoire institution. The one-to-one lessons that happen throughout a student's studies can take shape in any number of ways based on what is most suitable for the student and tutor. Presland (2005) explains that the nature of conservatoire learning allows for flexibility for a student to receive their tuition in a way that best suits them,

> some thriving on longer lessons delivered every 2–3 weeks and others benefiting from a 90-minute lesson delivered on a regular weekly basis. Students also seek contrasting levels of practical support from their tutors outside lessons and differing degrees of emotional involvement (p. 245).

Suggesting that the 'differing degrees of personal involvement' play an important part in a student's experience, Gaunt, et al. (2012) note that a student will take heed of the experience of their tutor and other professional musicians around them, finding mentors in authority

[9] A collective term for the students who share the same primary study tutor

figures. These mentors teach with “authority derived from mastery of technique and experience in the application of that technique” (Kushner, 1985, p. 31), and will further transmit perceptions of the music performance community, including aspects such as the acceptance of certain musical works as the cannon of required repertoire for an instrument (Froehlich, 2002). Stated another way, this learning-teaching transaction provides the tutor an opportunity to impart technical expertise in addition to more nuanced information, their experiences and understandings of the music performance community and attitudes about those experiences (Nerland, 2007).

Furthermore, Nerland and Hanken (2002) talk about the contemporary one-to-one dyad in terms of the intimacy created by the extensive, regular time spent together. The student and tutor can sometimes develop a bond that Kennell (2002) compares to that of a child and parent. The tutor is, therefore, often in a position of substantial power in terms of how a student perceives conservatoire culture. And this position as an authority, mentor, or parental figure in the one-to-one setting means they are able to affect a student’s views of the cultural and social norms of the music community. This dyad is best understood as highly varied and relational, wherein the personalities, beliefs, and perspectives of both parties significantly influence the formal and informal aspects of the relationship. Because of this complex actuality, it is a difficult relationship to generalise about.

‘Talent’ and ‘success’ within the research landscape via *Music, Talent & Performance: Conservatory Cultural System*

Despite being just over thirty years old, Kingsbury’s 1988 influential ethnography of an American conservatoire, *Music, Talent & Performance: Conservatory Cultural System,* continues to be utilised in research literature that discusses matters of culture in the conservatoire and the classical music performance community. The study has become a foundation for much of our understanding of what happens in the conservatoire community. There are a wealth of examples of studies that refer to Kingsbury to understand or define aspects of conservatoire or classical music culture. Some recent examples of how Kingsbury’s research has been utilised include: unpacking what has been included under the term ‘classical music’ (Bull, 2019), exploring the performance community’s beliefs about talent (Coulson, 2010; Hill, 2018), and how the physical characteristics of one American conservatoire connect to the idea that the conservatoire is central to music performance training (Burwell, Carey, & Bennett, 2017). Considering its prominence in conservatoire literature, I found myself re-familiarising with the institution via the themes found within

Kingsbury's (1988) study. Many of the themes of the author's work remain relevant three decades after its publication, and are still so prominently referred to in conservatoire literature to explain and define aspects of environment and community. As a foundation for examining the contemporary conservatoire landscape, I look at the author's insights about the notions of 'talent' and 'success' and how recent literature parallels those notions in terms of how students interact with the performance profession, how the studio construct affects student hierarchy, as well as how the talent of a tutor is perceived by the community.

Student interaction with the profession

Since the founding of the Paris Conservatoire in 1795, the conservatoire has been a professional music school. However, unlike other some professional schools, conservatoire students come into regular, often informal contact with the profession throughout their studies. For example, according to Kingsbury, it is not uncommon for conservatoires to have a gig office that allocates paid opportunities to students. Similarly, students are also likely to find their own opportunities to earn money through music, interacting with professional music performance people outside of the conservatoire environment. However, Kingsbury likens this 'professional' income-earning experience to a summer student job rather than as a kind of professional activity undertaken at a student-level. While the author makes a valuable argument, I take the view that since no formal qualification is strictly required to engage in a music performance career, the work done by conservatoire students cannot be dismissed as 'non-professional'. Considering the previously discussed notions of 'talent' and the hierarchies of music performance, it might be better to suggest that the experience Kingsbury dismisses as akin to a 'summer student job' could be seen as hierarchically low-level interaction with the performance profession.

Nevertheless, Kingsbury bases many of his ideas about student performance experience on the generally bleak understanding that most students will struggle – and fail – to build a sustainable career from music performance and, therefore, the work done at the student level does not qualify, because many will not be able to build adequately on that experience (p. 19). The author argues that, "[a]lthough it is only occasionally spoken aloud, there is a general understanding that only a small minority of the graduates of the conservatory will be able to make professional careers as performing musicians" (p. 56). Since the publication of Kingsbury's study, it has become increasingly routine for students to address the difficulties of finding regular, full-time employment as a performer. Conservatoires have also started incorporating ideas about the portfolio career as the performer's future; however, unrealistic

expectations are still common. Bennett and Bridgstock (2014) address the state of career expectations in their paper that examines conservatoire student perceptions of employability versus the realities faced by graduates. They found that many students reported feeling unprepared for the "enforced entrepreneurship" that accompanies a professional performance career (p. 274). I think Kingsbury's (1988) uncovering of the near-unspoken understanding that most students will not be able to build a sustainable career in the profession, strengthens Bennett and Bridgstock's (2014) findings about the lack of effective career preview that exists in the conservatoire. Similarly, Bennett (2009) found that even though most students had expected to maintain a portfolio career, they weren't aware of the nuances that accompanied that kind of professional life. Students remarked that while they knew they would have to take on more than one job, they hadn't considered the emotional or psychological cost of a financially precarious living.

In his ethnographic study of American conservatoire students, Ellis (1999) explores how these students develop ideas about what a career in music performance looks like as well as how they form a lasting commitment to a career of unstable employment. The author presents data around how students perceive the career. His findings diverge from those of Kingsbury and others in suggesting that by the time a student reaches the conservatoire, they are well aware of the precariousness that will characterise their professional life. These findings point to what is likely inconsistency regarding career preparedness in the conservatoire and different ideas of what constitutes preparedness. Where one group of students may report feeling well-prepared, with realistic expectations of the career, many others do not, as is reported by Kingsbury (1988) and Bennett and Bridgstock (2014). These variable findings across several years suggest to me that there is nuance in what constitutes preparation and how one thinks about it. Nevertheless, despite studies that report the instability and shrinking prospects of building a sustainable performance career, higher music education continues to be popular, as evidenced by the UCAS End of Cycle Report for 2018.

Pedagogical lineage and the studio

I have begun to develop the argument that there is ample opportunity for a student to evaluate their position within the conservatoire hierarchy, a common measure of which is the studio system. Kingsbury (1988) described instrument studios as a kind of clique, operating as a marker of social status within the conservatoire. He states that these cliques "…are the locus of much intense negotiating of the musical status of both students and teachers" (p. 42). I have already touched on the role of the primary study tutor in the conservatoire

hierarchy earlier in this chapter but the studio system entails more than just picking a tutor that seems like the best; instead it requires the tutor to navigate the hierarchy alongside the student, buying into the idea that some teachers are better by virtue of who taught them, thereby perpetuating this belief system. To explain this idea, Kingsbury invokes the notion of 'talent' into his analysis, suggesting that the status of a studio is tied to the perception of how much talent a tutor has. Persson (2000) provides a helpful description of this, introducing the concept of pedagogical lineage in which "talent is occasionally identified with certain traditions more than with the demonstration of proficiency in actual performance" (p. 27). The concept of pedagogical lineage is, therefore, something that features prominently in artist biographies as a kind of talent or value measure.

Kingsbury talks about seeing programs and bulletins with biographies of new tutors, peppered with the names of distinguished performers under whom the tutor had studied. The notion of pedagogical lineage illustrates how the relationship between the tutor and student reinforces the idea that subjective perspectives on talent create hierarchical authority and benefit one's position in the music performance community. This is because, as Kingsbury said, "the names listed in these pedagogical lineages are chosen carefully; only the most distinguished names will be mentioned" (p. 45). Haddon and Potter (2014) describe this concept as more closely aligned with the language of genealogy, suggesting that the "authority of teachers, often supported by historical lineage of past teachers descended from a specific performer or composer, appears to provide compelling grounds for continuing existing practice and protecting and preserving the received models of performance" (p. 129). This concept suggests that the conservatoire, and the music performance community, maintain the belief that when a student studies with a tutor of distinguished pedagogical lineage, the student is imparted with the wisdom of the other distinguished performers in that lineage.

Further expanding on this concept, Riggs (2006) explains that a prestigious pedagogical lineage is an opportunity for a conservatoire to capitalise on the desire to study with a famous tutor. In this way, both student and institution ascribe significant importance on tutor lineage and both groups then play a part in reconstructing this value. At the same time, the student might be potentially pushed into joining a studio based on how this might benefit the tutor in terms of their position within the conservatoire and the professional community, rather than looking for a good match between tutor teaching style and student learning style. In other words, by placing such high significance on the learning credentials of the tutor, students are

hierarchically rewarded for studying with a ‘top’ tutor even though the learning-teaching transaction may be a poor fit. Even the success of a tutor’s previous students can positively affect a tutor’s credibility and a student’s aspirations, as one student interviewed by Kingsbury (1988) explained: “I want to live up to the kind of reputation that her students have set before me…” (p. 41). This is another example of the institution benefitting from the perpetuation of these value constructs placed on talent and prestige.

The perception of prestige and talent are apparent in many aspects of the conservatoire. Kingsbury (1988) addresses the complex relationship that a student has with their peers during an interview with one student about their transition from an Ivy League university to the conservatoire. It is in this conversation that the author uncovers some of the intricacies of student relationships in this competitive environment. Despite moving from a prestigious and highly selective university that has its own history of competition and hierarchy, this student had not expected to encounter the large amount of what she saw as conservatoire politics. She recounted that there was “…all this cordial chit chat, but people always have their ulterior motive” (p. 42). The author suggests here that the student is critical of others’ ‘ulterior motives’ as self-serving for the benefit of other students who are looking to enhance their place within the community; students build networks among their peers through studio study and tactically choose studios that will benefit their position, and therefore influence the student hierarchy, a process that Kingsbury (1988) refers to as the “intense negotiating” of status.

The notion of tutor talent

Kingsbury writes about the role of the tutor as a gatekeeper of what is acceptable within the confines of conservatoire culture, a confirmation of my perception that some of the beliefs and ideas that a student may have about the conservatoire have been reconstructed over generations. In his explanation of where pedagogical lineage can be seen, Kingsbury comments on the significant amount of space that was dedicated to tutor biographies in the institution’s printed bulletin, listing their achievements and accolades, suggesting it is often in this space that the performer convinces readers of their reputation. However, as Burwell et al. (2017) point out, even though a tutor may have a distinguished biography, there is often no mechanism in place to ensure they are knowledgeable about effective teaching. In their study of the isolating aspects of studio teaching, they suggest that the prestigious tutors “who become role models looming large in the isolated setting of the studio are unlikely to have had specialist training in instrumental or vocal pedagogy” (p. 16). But despite the lack of

standardised teaching credentials, or proof of effective teaching, the perception of prestige is what often drives a student's desire to study with a particular tutor. For example, Davies' (2004) study about student perceptions and experiences of the learning process at a UK conservatoire found that

> [s]tudents whom the most prestigious teachers and musicians perceive to be 'talented' prior to, as well as during, their studies at the Conservatory believe that they have more 'talent' than students previously or currently taught by tutors with less prestige (p. 804).

Students often have an idea of who they want to study with before coming to the conservatoire and certainly this decision is more complex than just aiming to study with the 'top' tutor. A student will also want inspiring tutors, those that provide a platform for technical and musical progress and personal development (Mills, 2002). But even then, the author suggests that students are also appreciative that their tutors are at the "top of their profession as performers" (ibid, p. 79). Therefore, some desire for distinction exists even when a student gives consideration to a tutor's reputation as a teacher.

The perception that a tutor provides guidance beyond musical or technical mastery seems to be common throughout the institution. Purser (2005) interviewed conservatoire tutors about their teaching practices, and all agreed that the role of the tutor was to provide more than simply "technical virtues". All the tutors he interviewed agreed in "the value of treating conservatoire training as more than an education in playing a particular instrument" (p. 297). Building on this, tutors also agreed that "it would be unrealistic, both practically and educationally, to consider the preparation of students for the music profession as the sole purpose of conservatoire training" (ibid, p. 290). In other words, these tutors seemed to feel that part of the one-to-one lesson was to increase the student's employability beyond solely a performance career. This suggests a divergence between the way a tutor understands how to signal their value and employability as teachers of music performance, through highlighting the prestige of their past achievements and tuition, and what they perceive to be the purpose of one-to-one tuition. The legacy of the perception of prestige appears to be so deeply embedded within the conservatoire framework that despite feeling that one-to-one tuition should be more than technical skills, and training for one kind of career, tutors continue to adhere to the longstanding priorities.

In addition to their relationship with their primary study tutor, students rely on other sources of learning. Gaunt et al. (2012) found that when considering the role of the tutor in the

professional development of students, suggesting that "the data also demonstrated instances where learning collaboratively with and from peers were significant components in students' professional development" (p. 40). In addition to the community support that students receive from peers in performances and rehearsals, more subtle kind of learning happens as students interact with each other on an informal basis. Meanwhile, technological advancement seems to have only increased the opportunity for students to interact with each other and continue to reconstruct these messages about the conservatoire structure.

Social media as a tool for reconstructing discourses of the conservatoire

Social media permeates many aspects of everyday life and acts as a platform for individuals to broadcast how they see the world around them. While looking at social media within the conservatoire community, I became aware of the online world that students regularly engage in, especially the meme[10]-ification of conservatoire life. Where previously the discourses of the conservatoire would be reconstructed within individuals and within groups in the classical music community, social media has created a worldwide community, allowing musicians from all over to engage with the ideas that have been so prevalent throughout the history of the conservatoire. Below, I have included descriptions of a small handful of recent examples of how the notion of instrument practice, which dates to the early days of the conservatoire, are reproduced by this digital medium. These examples come from Facebook and Instagram, posted by an American youth symphony, a widely popular classical music radio station, and a violinist duo made famous on YouTube.

The first example of music student culture translated online as an Instagram post that shows a pie chart with a different coloured, one-quarter size slice. The title of the chart, "Should you be practicing?" certainly insinuates that there is only one correct answer. The chart itself answers that question; the pink three-quarters size section is labelled "yes" and the turquoise one-quarter size section is labelled "yes, but in turquoise". This is a popular meme, the many iterations of which signal aspects of life wherein there is supposedly one obvious answer. This social media post signals that to a musician, and certainly a student, the importance of practicing is paramount and insinuates that all of their time should be spent practicing.

Also, I think it is fairly provocative that this meme was posted from an American youth orchestra's account. This organization is showing followers that it embraces the importance of

[10] a meme is, most simply put, an image that includes superimposed text

practising, and it would be expected that its follower base consists at least partially of the orchestra members. My own research is concerned with the UK conservatoire, but social media and the ease of sharing content is such a global phenomenon that this aspect of the culture is difficult to constrain to specific geographical boundaries.

The next example I came across is of a Facebook post by leading classical music radio station. This post seems to be aimed at music students, the text reading “Me trying to find motivation to practice during break:” and below is a picture of a man on a tall ladder looking out into the sky as if looking far into the distance. This meme assumes that students will be expected to practice during term breaks and also that they will have little motivation to do so. It seems reasonable to think that the station’s social media team thinks this post is something that their followers will find relatable. The station’s Facebook account has over three million followers who, presumably are in large part are the target for such posts, which further suggests that radio station believes the meme captures a sentiment listeners will relate to. Both examples transmit a message that there is a strong expectation of practice a lot but also implies that the expectation is not being met.

Finally, the last example is from the Instagram account of a popular violinist duo. Made famous by their YouTube account, which has nearly 1.5 million subscribers, their Instagram account has just over 370,000 followers. The post that I have included below shows one half of the duo playing violin and wearing a t-shirt printed with “Eat Sleep Practice” and a repeat sign. The t-shirt is not overtly the focal point of the post, but it is centrally framed in the picture and signals the expectation to practice that is seen elsewhere on social media platforms. A cursory search shows more than a dozen online stores, including the duo’s merchandise store, which features several other shirts that espouse similar messages. The instant nature of social media content publishing has created an environment where musicians – students and professionals - are able to find content they can relate to and curate personalized feeds of like-minded people. From these posts, and the many more that I could have included, I feel I have been able to glimpse inside the music student experience. The internet and social media have created a contemporary record of the persisting perceptions and feelings of this community.

How my case study sites reflect the history of the conservatoire

Overall, UK music conservatoires are modelled after the practices set up by the Paris Conservatoire. As in France, the thought of providing a place for high-level music training (ideally free of cost), was at one time a part of the national identity. It was during the Victorian era that the framework for the contemporary UK conservatoire model was largely established. Ball (2019), critical of the customs that have endured from these early days, suggests that contemporary conservatoire culture safeguards many of the early practices of the classical music community, reproducing Victorian ideas of class and gender in the process. The following sections describe some of the history of the three institutions visited during my fieldwork and at which my interview participants study or studied. In addition to extensive field notes, sketches and photographs were taken of the locations and were used to compile a concise description of each location.

Knowing these physical layout and general locations within the UK is useful when thinking about the community around the conservatoire, such as the potential resources available to students. Throughout the three following descriptions, I have tried to paint a picture that will allow the reader to understand the many similarities and differences across the settings and how students interact with their setting, while maintaining as much anonymity as is possible within such a small group of institutions.

- **Conservatoire of the North** (CON) is the largest of the three institutions and is central within a major city in the northern UK
- **Music City Conservatoire** (MCC) is the smallest conservatoire and is housed in an affluent area of a major city
- **Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire** (QMC) is located near a large mainstream university in a major city

Being centrally located within a big city, MCC adheres to many of the common physical perceptions of a 'top' conservatoire as a stately marble-clad building and readily advertises famous alumni dating back to the early days of the institution in the late-nineteenth century. The main building is located a short distance from several important cultural institutions, lending a further sense of prestige to the conservatoire. Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire, also primarily focused on classical music education, is in a rather different location. The brand new, state-of-the-art building is located outside of the city centre near a mainstream university. This conservatoire is visually in keeping with the modern aesthetic of many newer

concert halls and opera houses in metropolitan areas around the world. Its location near a larger university also means that student amenities, such as accommodations, are easily accessible and interactions between students of different disciplines may be more likely. And lastly, CON is located in a city in the North on the edge of that city centre, near several production studios and dance company spaces. Founded later than the other two conservatoires, CON focuses on the decidedly non-classical (though offers some opportunities in classical music too). This conservatoire puts a heavy emphasis on their unique offerings that set it apart from other institutions, such as the variety courses offered which focus on contemporary music and careers.

Each of these three conservatoires generate different cultural environments because they are in very different parts of the UK and represent different socioeconomics in part due to the histories of these geographic locations as well as the physical buildings that make up the campus. In an attempt to get a more well-rounded perspective of the conservatoire student lifestyle and conservatoire culture, I made a point of familiarising myself in these different locations to get a sense of how each location is situated within the history of the conservatoire.

Conservatoire of the North (CON)

The Conservatoire of the North is the youngest of the three institutions visited on my fieldwork. Its main building seemed to me to align itself with the contemporary arts industries, in a combination of its modern architecture and its proximity to several other businesses in the creative industries and broadcasting companies. During my fieldwork, I informally interacted with staff and students. I gathered observations from these encounters in my field diary, noting the characteristics that seemed to create its particular institutional personality; I was particularly interested in anything that set it apart from what has come to be expected of the conservatoire. I wrote in my notes that:

> The overall ‘vibe’ of [the school] is certainly unpretentious and laid back - which is not to be confused with easy or unprofessional. To personify this atmosphere, I would say that the institution is more interested in saying ‘yes’ than it is in saying ‘no’ [to new practices] … [for example, this school] has taken the ‘traditional’ classical concert format and allowed pints of beer into the halls … they've programmed business-centric master classes alongside the traditional performance master classes (Field Diary, 2 March 2017).

While adhering to the customary structure of the Paris Conservatoire model, namely in that

one-to-one tuition and a schedule of master classes was offered, this conservatoire has cultivated an apparent institutional atmosphere of innovation. This is evident in the size of their non-classical genre programs, which form a significant part of their prospectus.

Furthermore, when I inquired about posting flyers to advertise my study to potential interview participants, I learned that their notice board was accessed digitally. This is a space online where students post advertisements for rooms to let, performance opportunities, and other things that would be expected on a physical notice board. I posted a digital flyer with additional information leading to the research project's Facebook page and my contact details. The digital notice board suggested to me that there is an institutional desire for technological integration, a feeling that was reinforced by the quantity of student computer labs, banks of PCs, and digital room signage that showed room reservation information and times. This school straddles the customs and practices of the conservatoire model while incorporating new ideas and concepts, seemingly without feeling beholden to the traditions that have evolved since its establishment.

Music City Conservatoire (MCC)

Music City Conservatoire is located in an affluent area of a major city. The main building gave off an impression of grandeur, the red carpets and brass fixtures elicited a time in which Western classical music was the culturally prominent performance genre. The recital rooms are reminiscent of formal entertainment rooms that would be found in stately manors. The school uses imagery that reinforces the norms of the conservatoire that have developed over the last 200 years, from the architectural embellishments to the photography on the website showing orchestra performances in large theatres and concert halls. The legacy of the Paris Conservatoire is most visible here, as there are (physical) notice boards for different instrument faculties housing photographs of several instructors' studios.

This school is a mono-technic institution, with a strong emphasis on classical music programs. A student canteen, located away from the marble floors and hardwood staircases, proved the best space to post flyers, as there was a regular stream of students filtering through the doors. Sitting in the canteen one quickly realises the prominence of classical music, as periodically an opera riff was heard, someone at the next table was making reeds for a bassoon, and an advertisement for a violin luthier[11] flashed on the digital advertisement

[11] maker of stringed instruments

screens. While making observations in the canteen, I noticed that there was a lot of emphasis placed on the past (Field Diary, 17 May 2017), especially in publications and marketing materials, which list prominent alumni and staff as well as imagery that elicited an 'old world' feeling.

Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire (QMC)

The Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire is located in a city that is home to many universities, and is situated outside of the city centre. The modern-style architecture of the conservatoire gave the impression of bridging the contemporary industry outlook with an appreciation of the established culture of the longstanding conservatoire model. The physical aspects of the school were sleek and modern, reflecting many concert halls in America and Europe. The school advertises itself as a state-of-the-art school, suggesting of itself that it is well-placed to produce successful professionals because this state-of-the-art environment assists and amplifies the tutors' and staff's teaching expertise. In my field notes I wrote that the school felt like it was "on the edge of town" (6 July 2017 Field Notes) and thus slightly removed from other major music performance venues and organisations.

In this school, a multi-disciplinary conservatoire, the emphasis seemed to be on classical music performance. By mirroring the look and feel of large, contemporary concert halls the school promotes an image of a conservatoire that embraces the customs of professional classical music. The impression that I got while visiting was that it promoted the idea that classical music as a genre and performance community should hold on to the practices that have evolved throughout time, while integrating technological advances. Highly skilled, non-classical ensembles practice in the school and there is a gig office that helps students with performance opportunities, such as positions as background musicians for recording sessions. This suggested to me that there is an attempt to manage the traditions of the classical music profession while cultivating contemporary tastes and recognizing developments in how music is created and consumed.

Further thoughts about the settings

Alongside these contrasts, central to all three conservatoires is one-to-one instruction and the focus on refining skills the student already has and preparing them for entry into the professional music community. Each setting provided an abundance of practice rooms and I could observe students throughout, in various states of concentration. The practice room environment, with some students appearing to be camped out in long-term practice, further

solidified my perception that the settings adhered to the premise that technical skill and artistic fluency are the top priority. Despite being in geographically and demographically different parts of the country, it seemed to me that each institution was connected to an active music performance culture. All three settings seemed reasonably insulated from much non-music or non-musician interaction, even when nearby to people in other disciplines. In some instances, this seemed due to the layout or location of the school or faculty while in others, it seemed that student groups would self-segregate by sitting together at a table or location away from others. The physical locations along with the layouts of the buildings did not appear to promote very much meaningful interaction between conservatoire students and students from other disciplines, where this was a possibility. One exception was at CON where the placement of the café meant that students would pass through on their way to classes and rehearsals, even if they didn't stop and sit down. This made the café feel like a hub where students could meet and interact with others.

Alongside the similarities, each of the conservatoires was also unique as an institution. The atmosphere of CON gave the impression of being firmly rooted in the contemporary music performance industry, retrofitting present-day departures from the Western classical performance culture to suit the customs of the conservatoire model. Music City Conservatoire, conversely, seemed to lean heavily on the Paris Conservatoire model and projected grandeur, one that evokes ivory towers and excellence. I see QMC as straddling these two worlds, attempting to bring the 'old world' and the contemporary music landscape together. It was evident that each conservatoire perceived different priorities in terms of the conservatoire's social role. While the guiding principles of the conservatoire as an elite institution of music training were evident in each setting, the priorities that were visible in each location varied greatly.

Concluding thoughts

Conservatoire-model education started as an environment where musical training was almost entirely composed of a formal apprenticeship and then evolved into the boarding school-like Italian orphanages of the 1600s, to the archetypal Paris Conservatoire in 1795, which laid the foundation for the contemporary conservatoire model. Overall, the institution has maintained an emphasis on the Paris Conservatoire-model of artistic development, based on one-to-one tuition free from many structured pedagogical constraints. The long history of the conservatoire as a professional music school have imbued the institution with many social and cultural norms that persist today. A reliance on the traditions of the past, however, does

not guarantee a conservatoire student an opportunity to explore the range of career opportunities that have come into existence over the last several years (Bennett, 2008; Smilde, 2009).

In this chapter I have introduced the history of the conservatoire model and positioned that history against my experiences of three contemporary UK conservatoires. By doing this, I have developed a foundation to suggest that the conservatoire context is unique in its purpose and role in current higher education. The competitive nature of the conservatoire student experience, the need to navigate hierarchies in relation to the nebulous notion of 'talent', remains at the foundation of the conservatoire. The student-tutor dyad, taking the form of a master-apprentice relationship, creates an opportunity for the tutor to pass on their own perceptions and beliefs about the social and cultural norms of 'classical training' and depending on the how a student feels about their tutor (as a mentor, parental figure, or a more distant authority), can significantly impact the student's perceptions and personal development regarding the music profession. The three settings visited throughout the duration of my fieldwork highlighted these norms in varying ways; where one institution might focus on the contemporary state of music performance careers, they also acknowledged norms entrenched in the conservatoire model that another institution might hold to. In each setting, I found innovation and change, alongside various degrees of adherence to conservatoire traditions.

Chapter 3 – Assembling the tools: my theoretical framework

Introduction

The aim of this study is to better understand conservatoire culture and the student experience of that culture. In this chapter I set out to describe the theoretical concepts I am using to frame my research and explain why I have decided to use them. As a researcher, I have come to understand that the interpretations, perspectives and beliefs of those within the conservatoire community are necessary to address my research questions, thereby generating an in-depth understanding of conservatoire culture. To do this, two critical concepts have been cultural reproduction and organisational culture. I am concerned with the individual's beliefs, values, and behaviours – in other words, their way of being. The hierarchy of the conservatoire and the use of power in negotiating that hierarchy, constructs a complex environment for students to navigate. Looking at the conservatoire in terms of organisational culture has been useful to explore that system. In many ways, the conservatoire as an organisational culture is thought of as highly 'traditional' (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995). I therefore also employ Giddens' (1994) concept of guardians as a means of looking at tradition as a living, changing element of the conservatoire. By utilising Giddens' concept alongside the notion of cultural reproduction, I can look at tradition as an active process and as practices, rather than an unchanging, stagnant fact. By expressing culture in this way, I am signalling that the conservatoire itself has practices unique to that environment, which are necessary to recognise in order to investigate my research questions.

Through adopting an ethnographic approach and through the concepts introduced above, I set out to examine conservatoire culture as it is experienced. Throughout this thesis, 'culture' refers to the different aspects of a student's experiences of their community and the ways in which the students talk about these experiences, rather than a set of pre-defined guidelines. The second half of the chapter explains how the concepts of symbolic capital and habitus allowed me to connect the individual conservatoire student to the larger community. Where possible, I looked at the many aspects of a student's background experiences through the lens of habitus and symbolic capital, which gives an insight into who makes up the conservatoire student community. Previous experiences with private music tuition or family involvement with music, for example, could affect a student's thoughts about how they experience conservatoire culture. Put another way, the past education of a student may affect the way a student experience the traditions of conservatoire education. These facets of an individual's background should be useful for developing an understanding of the student experience.

Overall, combining these concepts has helps me to gain a deep understanding of conservatoire culture, by positioning the individual student as an actor within a larger community. The concepts that make up my theoretical framework build a lens that allows me to explore the cultural reproduction of each conservatoire setting as both unique and as part of the larger UK conservatoire culture. This chapter introduces in more detail these conceptual tools and how they have been used to explore how students experience conservatoire culture.

Conceptualising culture and tradition in a higher education organisation

Culture is produced and maintained by the individuals who make up a community or group; in the context of my thesis, the conservatoire is that community. When a student starts a conservatoire course, it is often the first time that they have lived independently and are in charge of their own decision-making. In Western society, this period of time as a young person in HE has long been seen as a phase of change, of increased autonomy, personal growth, and of increased personal control of one's life (Chickering, McDowell, & Campagna, 1969; Moffatt, 1991). Part of this phase of change includes developing beliefs about the norms and values that will influence a student's life going forward. Individuals enter as students of an HE institution and are confronted with "a negotiated order that emerges through interactions between participants" (Hallett, 2003, p. 135). Then students must constantly negotiate this social structure, even outside of the classroom, and this will affect the way they experience the course itself and the wider world around them.

In order to examine the student experience of conservatoire culture, I employ Kuh and Whitt's (1988) interpretation of culture within the HE organisation. The authors explain that an institution's authority figures communicate, or negotiate the organisational culture, therefore defining culture in their higher education setting and contributing to the meaning-making that occurs amongst the individuals within that institution. The authors describe this idea of culture as comprised of:

> …persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus (p. 6).

By approaching culture in this way, I frame my research around the underlying patterns that are embedded within the conservatoire. This examination of the conservatoire is underpinned

by the understanding that it is the actions, habits, and beliefs of students and staff that reproduce and change the institutional culture, thereby linking the small-scale practices of individuals to the institution as a community. Pettigrew (1979) builds on this idea of organisational culture as the composite actions of members. He suggests that culture is generated by members of the organisation and therefore, norms and beliefs are revealed through both formal and informal behaviours. The active negotiation between members of an organisation, are the interactions that reproduce culture – and that reproduction is dependent on the members agreeing to and engaging in certain practices.

Organisational culture is also negotiated through the language used to promote certain values and practices, for example, through the university referring to students as members of a 'family' instead of simply 'students'. This use of familiar language that connotes inclusiveness and unity when referring to the student body, can influence how a student sees the institutional hierarchies and their experience of the overall conservatoire. I am also interested in how students use language to suggest certain norms within the conservatoire and how they are reproducing or rejecting these ideas. When approaching the student experience, it is important that I employ a concept of culture that allowed me to see how individual actions play into the community culture. Using this lens, I try to avoid seeing the conservatoire "from a distance", as Fine (1984) put it. Instead of an inert relationship between students and faculty, I examine the institution as relations that are being continuously negotiated. Students navigate the hierarchy and participate in social processes, recreating (or rejecting) the norms that are transmitted to them. Looking at any HE institution from this granular perspective involves maintaining attention to how the individual practices and behaviours form and are formed by those of the group which inform the organisational culture.

More generally, the idea of culture as active processes is also referred to as a way of life (Rosman, Rubel & Weisgrau, 2009). I incorporate this approach to culture into my thesis because it provides a basis for a broad exploration of what makes up a conservatoire student's way of life consisting "of the things people make, their behavior, their symbols, beliefs, and ideas" (ibid, p. 5). I see these "patterns of meaning" (Geertz, 1973, p. 89) as providing a way of communicating one's attitude and disposition to others within the community. When looking at the conservatoire through the lens of organisational culture, there could be a danger of confining the experience to the formal learning-teaching transactions and norms that accompany the pedagogical exchange. The purpose of

incorporating this broader idea of culture with that of organisational culture, is to express the student way of life as not limited to those formal interactions. By seeing the student ways of life as cultural reconstruction (or change), I am able to look at personal experiences in a more nuanced way, to include the inherited values and other aspects of personal history that affect an individual's ideas about social class or culture. This compound lens provided me with the conceptual tools with which to explore an individual's beliefs and practices as well as to contextualize their experience within that community, thus communicating "what it means to be a part of the organization" (Hallett, 2003, p. 129).

While the remit of HE institutions is to impart knowledge to students and to prepare those students for entry into a professional community, as suggested by Carnoy and Levin (1985), it goes beyond the formal learning-teaching transaction and consists of more than what is contained within the walls of the building. For instance, peers, the student union, and even the signage and amenities within the building and in the case of the conservatoire, ensemble leaders, perpetuate an organisational culture that will shape a student's way of life and behaviour. In the conservatoire setting, I consider the primary study tutor as the institution's primary authority figure tasked with transmitting their ideas about acceptable values and practices to their students. I have argued that it is not uncommon for students to plan their conservatoire auditions based on their preferred tutor; I therefore want to examine how this particular authority role, unique to the conservatoire, contributes to the reproduction of conservatoire culture for their students.

Examples of how tutors reproduce the organisational culture of the conservatoire can be seen in both the content they use and their practices. With regards to content, the conservatoire as an institution has long prioritised the works of a relatively small number of composers, such as Mozart and Brahms (Nettl, 1995), often known as master composers or similar. Where each musical instrument has a canon of repertoire generally accepted amongst practitioners, the tutors tend to choose a repertoire based on that canon. This is one example of tutors acting in their role as authority figures, thereby transmitting values and practices that shape the conservatoire student's understanding of the community; students then utilise this accumulated knowledge of classical music norms to make decisions. The tutor may not articulate a detailed reason why they have assigned these specific pieces of music, but the tutor nonetheless reinforces and reproduces that value for their student. The one-to-one dyad therefore provides a generative relationship for transmitting accepted norms, a dyad that permeates the formal teaching transaction, influencing how a student comes to experience

many aspects of conservatoire life, both formal and informal.

Tradition and guardians of culture

The term ‘tradition’ is often entangled with ‘culture’, understood as a reproduction of an accepted set of values and norms. In this thesis, I use the term ‘tradition’ to describe these accepted values and norms as a living process of cultural reproduction measured by how things are done as well as by how it is believed things ‘should’ be done (Giddens, 1994). In looking at tradition in this way, I identify primary study tutors as individuals who act as gatekeepers of what is acceptable within conservatoire community culture. Giddens (1994) calls these individuals ‘guardians’. These guardians are people in positions of cultural power, generally regarded as having significant accumulated knowledge about the community culture, and therefore capable of deciding what behaviours are acceptable within the community culture (ibid, p. 82). Employing this concept as part of my framework has enabled me to examine how the tutor’s accumulated knowledge of music, the profession, and life is thought about by students, and how it affects their experience of conservatoire culture. Using the idea of tradition in this way means that I was able to evaluate the actions and beliefs of students in relation to, and as part of, the history of the community.

Giddens’ (1994) concept suggests that tradition within a community is comprised of "… active processes of reconstruction” (p. 76) that are continuously filtered by its guardians. The behaviours and beliefs deemed allowable by these guardians are then reproduced until a time when a different process has been widely adopted by other guardians and community members and therefore becomes the new tradition (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992). Building on the idea that tradition exists as an aspect of culture that values a set of norms and behaviours and is maintained by guardians, Giddens (1994) talks about a "...binding force which has a combined moral and emotional content" (p. 63). I understand this to mean that behind the typical social actions of a community are feelings and emotions and that this is also part of what makes the behaviour tradition. The addition of value judgment and emotion in a group also brings out Halbwachs and Coser’s (1992) notion of collective memory about which the authors say, "[w]hile [collective memory] endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember" (p. 22). This idea is embedded in Giddens’ (1994) notion of guardians insomuch as the accepted tradition is so because the collective group members continuously accept it. As conservatoire students receive one-to-one tuition and the transmission of cultural values takes place (and therefore tradition), the students reproduce those values. From a distance, it may appear as a

wholesale acceptance of static traditions, but by looking at individual students it also becomes clear that a lot of negotiation occurs which can change the idea of what may be considered tradition.

Hallett (2003) has described those who fill the guardian role as negotiators who engage in various practices within an organisation and are imbued with legitimacy by those who value the practices in which the negotiators engage. The perceived the legitimacy held by guardians as being deployed as symbolic power, or the power to define the situation (p. 134). When a tutor's authority is established, it comes from a position where "… a causal link is assumed to exist between the state of affairs described and the event of the person making the utterance" (ibid, p. 100). This extends beyond technical or artistic mastery, requiring experience seen as legitimate by their students. Halbwachs and Coser (1992) explain that often these guardians will have required a lot of time to become known as such and perceived as having the necessary knowledge. Because this happens over time, guardians are often elders within the community:

> …the old are the guardians of traditions not just because they absorbed them at an earlier point than others, but also undoubtedly because they are the only ones to enjoy the necessary leisure to determine the details of these traditions in their exchanges with other old people and to teach them to the young during initiation. In our society, an old person is also esteemed because, having lived for a long time, he has much experience and is full of memories (ibid, p. 48).

The notion of guardians as older specialists of their culture locates the guardian within the community as a person who is trusted with deciding matters of social action. Examples of guardians of culture that embody the causal link between a community culture and its members can be seen, for example, in senior religious figures who advise what behaviours are acceptable within the boundaries of their religion or elder family members who influence younger members' thoughts and beliefs about society. People in these roles are usually thought of as knowing how to embody the values of their community; they have legitimate experience as considered by the followers or family members. Therefore, they have the power to define what social actions and beliefs are acceptable within a specific community. These individuals are experts, especially competent in their respective areas, but they are also holders of accumulated wisdom about both the observable and unobservable aspects of their community. A technical expert does not satisfy the role of the guardian of culture; it is the accumulation of wisdom that allows one to act as one.

In his book arguing for the problematisation of 'tradition' as a social concept, Boyer (1990) differentiates between someone extraordinarily competent in an area (an expert) and the individual with significant accumulated cultural knowledge (a guardian of culture). To be extraordinarily competent in an area implies "… that [that person has] acquired an accurate representation of a certain domain of reality, so that their utterances describe what the domain really is" (ibid, p. 99). Halbwachs and Coser (1992) examine the role of guardians as those who help to maintain social norms and the guardian's accumulated experiences facilitate veneration of these authority figures within society. The conservatoire tutor as guardian of tradition therefore maintains the community's norms as they have been understood historically and interprets those norms. Considering this, I make the case that conservatoire tutors are guardians as they are often held in very high regard by their students and the wisdom students gather from their tutors affects their thoughts about the observable and unobservable aspects of conservatoire culture. While a tutor's musical expertise is a vital part of being a sought-after tutor, it is in the role as guardian that they make a lasting impact on their students that extends beyond performance.

The filtering of culture that happens as a result of a guardian promoting certain activities or practices is transmitted both explicitly and implicitly through certain behaviours. As I argue, guardians play a significant role in cultural reproduction within a group and how that group's cultural 'patterns' are reproduced. In the conservatoire, many common 'patterns' have persisted for generations and from a distance, some behaviours look much as they did in the conservatoire's infancy in the 1790s, such as the practice of one-to-one tuition, master classes and performance competitions. These practices are described by Philipp & Martens (1920) and again, decades later, in Bennett (2005), with little discernible change. However, by looking at tradition within conservatoire culture as active and evolving, I examine tutors as facilitating and filtering the reproduction of that culture through negotiations with their students. Accounting for the continuity and the evolution of tradition in this setting is necessary, considering the distinctive manner in which institutional hierarchies are constructed in the conservatoire, affecting how culture is transmitted to music students.

As I previously discussed, the one-to-one student-tutor arrangement is a central component of conservatoire education and has been since its inception. This one to one learning-teaching transaction creates an environment in which the passed-down teaching of skills and knowledge are valued. At the same time, there is often no specific, formal teaching qualification required to become a conservatoire tutor (Odam, 2004), and for many tutors, the

lessons learnt as students become the basis for their teaching; they then transmit the values and norms to their mentees that were communicated to them. Considering this, the guardians of culture concept was also useful when looking at how the tutor fulfils this role within students' accounts of their experience of conservatoire culture. Since the institution is reliant on pedagogical methods that transmit knowledge through one-to-one learning-teaching transaction, this conceptualisation of tradition has an important role in the ways that I examine students' experiences and accounts of being a student in that setting. The continued prominence of a specific set of behaviours (such as adherence to a canon of repertoire), show that the community is still dependent on many of these traditions as social norms.

Within my conceptual framework, I utilise the concept of guardians in conjunction with organisational culture to build a conception of culture that accounts for the way culture is transmitted in the conservatoire, with the guardians corresponding to the authority figures in an organisation who Kuh and Whitt (1988) describe as communicating culture with other members of the organisation. The central position of the conservatoire student-tutor relationship as a master-apprentice like relationship is a distinctive dyad within HE; the lens created through the combination of these concepts enabled me to analyse its unique qualities. Adding this lens to my framework enabled me to contribute to the conservatoire research conversation, by extending the role of the tutor beyond that of the formal teaching transaction, and beyond that of a one-to-one tutor. By looking at the tutor as a guardian, I position the tutor as a filter through which the practices and norms of conservatoire culture are passed, a filter that is imbued with their own wealth of experience navigating the classical music performance and conservatoire communities.

Culture and power in the conservatoire

The actions of those within the conservatoire are not given equal value within the organisation by its members. In an organisation with authority figures who try to manage the values and beliefs of its members, culture can be influenced by those who hold significant symbolic power. The social hierarchy signals that students have different experiences and opportunities based on their position within the hierarchy (Perkins, 2013a); however, authority figures such as tutors, as I have argued, have great influence on how culture changes due to the legitimacy that accompanies the role. Tierney (1988) recognised that the experience of culture within an organisation is often taken for granted or unrecognised by its members, but "[that] these assumptions can be identified through stories, special language, norms, institutional ideology, and attitudes that emerge from individual and organizational behavior"

(p. 4). The author further suggests that these groups often give only a passing recognition to organisational culture, and it is only when a crisis has emerged that they pay purposeful attention to the role that culture plays within the institution.

In 1965, Stinchcombe described organisations as “social relations deliberately created, with the explicit intention of continuously accomplishing some specific goals or purposes” (as quoted in Hallett, 2003, p. 129-130). This interpretation of an organisation is reflected in the conservatoire and in the ways in which discourses around talent, priority setting and success are constructed and reconstructed. Within the conservatoire, the one-to-one transmission of beliefs and values between the tutor and student is the tutor’s interpretation of the goals and purpose of the conservatoire and of the student-tutor dyad. Illustrating how disparate these interpretations can be, Nerland’s (2007) case study of two student-tutor dyads found that one tutor instilled in their students the need to be a caretaker of instrumental tradition while the other instilled the idea of the “sovereign artist”, interpreting the music in their own vision (p. 412). This example can be looked at through the lens of organisational culture. The motivation behind both tutors in this example is to teach technical and artistic mastery, but each tutor interprets the purpose of that teaching differently and thus transmits certain values and beliefs to their students as they pertain to either interpretation. Neither interpretation is more correct than the other; instead, the two interpretations illustrate how these authority figures recognise the purpose of the conservatoire differently. This points to an important aspect of reproduction in organisational culture, because it reinforces primary study tutors as the organisation’s principal authority figure to a student. I incorporate the idea of power within a hierarchy into my framework to strengthen my argument for the tutor-as-primary authority in a student’s experience of conservatoire culture.

In order to connect the individual student experience of conservatoire culture with the hierarchies of the institution, I also apply a Bourdieusian lens to my findings. By employing the idea that culture is shaped by the interactions of individuals within an organisation, Bourdieu’s symbolic capital and habitus provide a useful conceptual framework for looking at how the interactions of individuals shape organisational culture (for an example of this see Hallett, 2003). Bourdieu (1991) describes the inequality of power amongst members of an organisation. He discusses how this inequality affects the reproduction of social structure as symbolic power, which is invisible or unstated and “can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (p. 164). While these parts of Bourdieu’s theory of practice are described in more

detail in the following section of this chapter, the notion of symbolic power is important to organisational culture because it can affect the "situation in which the interactions that comprise the negotiated order take place" (Hallett, 2003, p. 133). As the principal authority figure that a student will experience in the conservatoire, I argue, the tutor, imbued with symbolic power, is in a uniquely influential position in terms of impacting the student experience.

Another factor shaping the student experience as they navigate the social hierarchy relates to Bourdieu's concept of social capital, also playing a part in the creation of power within the conservatoire. This conception of non-material capital ties together the individual and the community by examining how one's connections to other people impact their position within the community. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital, saying that;

> It is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to … membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (p. 21).

I have interpreted this concept to mean that as a member of a particular community, 'who you know' is a primary influence in one's social navigation. The quality of the connections, as well as the quantity of connections, leads to a strong social network, and therefore an increase in an individual's social capital and ability to move up within the organisation hierarchy. A conservatoire student's network is composed of family, association or club members, school alumni, or any number of people who are part of the community and have a legitimate social relationship with the individual. These relationships impact the individual's social experience of the community and therefore, a larger network of connections has a greater potential to benefit the individual. Bourdieu (1986) rationalises this idea by explaining that "the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize" (p. 21). This extract clarifies that the social relationship, or connection, needs to be willing (or obligated) to act at the individual's appeal. It is also worth noting that certainly the strength and makeup of this network is also likely to be affected by economic capital as access to certain resources and spaces can be gained through these material means.

The notion of social capital is conceptually needed within my thesis. An examination of the conservatoire as a social hierarchy requires a lens for looking at how individuals negotiate that hierarchy and affect changes in their position within it, through unobservable capital.

Organisational culture provides a lens that accounts for the nature of the conservatoire as a constructed community with authority figures, guiding the direction of culture reproduction. By using this conceptual lens alongside guardians of tradition and power within organisational hierarchy, I am attempting to construct a framework for looking at how a student navigates conservatoire culture. This frame examines how students are led to reconstruct certain persisting beliefs and practices, or traditions, within the conservatoire community.

Concluding thoughts on the use of culture and tradition

When a student begins a course at a conservatoire, it is often their first opportunity to take control over their decisions. This formative time allows students to develop durable beliefs and values that are influenced by the culture around them. In an organisation, there are particular authority figures who manage the transmission of culture, filtering ideas about behaviours and beliefs. In the conservatoire setting, these authority figures are the primary study tutor, who has a direct influence over what values and practices a student inherits, thus influencing the way of life within the conservatoire. By acting as a filter, the tutor acts as a guardian of culture, making decisions not only about what is allowable behaviour but also how those in the community *should* behave. As guardians, the tutors in the conservatoire are at the top of the organisational hierarchy. Used together, the conceptual lenses of organisational culture, guardians and hierarchies of power allow me to see the ways in which the student is connected to the conservatoire. I am able to see how their behaviours are inherited and look at how their beliefs about the conservatoire link to the transmission of culture. As an organisation with distinctive practices, multiple lenses are necessary in order to see the construction of the conservatoire hierarchy and the experience of the students as they negotiate their own position within it.

How cultural capital and habitus benefit the conceptualisation of culture

Determining how to approach the concept of ‘culture’ when exploring the student experience of conservatoire culture was the first step when embarking on this research. In order to devise the conceptual compound lens as I have just discussed, I looked to Bourdieu’s work in schools. Bourdieu’s (1996) analysis of elite French schools describes the students’ reproduction of culture as involving more than simply their experience of the rules and values of the school and as going beyond the expectations that are placed on them. Instead, Bourdieu’s description of school culture goes beyond the most easily observable qualities of a group to comprise the norms, beliefs, and practices that Kuh and Whitt (1988) define as culture within an organisation. Bourdieu (1996) explains that:

> the shared turns of phrase, the particular kinds of jokes, and the characteristic ways of moving, speaking, laughing, and interacting with other, and especially with like-minded individuals, that create and forever sustain the immediate complicity among schoolmates (which goes much deeper than a simple solidarity founded on shared interests) and tense all the effects attributed to the “freemasonry” of the grandes ècoles (p. 83).

I have interpreted this to mean that Bourdieu sees culture in the elite French *grandes ècoles* as affecting students in ways that go beyond the readily observable pedagogical, administrative, or physical characteristics of the setting. By drawing parallels between the *grandes ècoles* and “freemasonry”, Bourdieu suggests that the behaviours of the students between each other is paramount to cultural reproduction within that setting. Also, Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau (2009) suggest that the importance of the meanings behind the words and behaviours when referring to culture as "…the human behavior, symbols, beliefs, ideas, and the material objects humans make” (p. 1).

Like the *grandes ècoles* of France, the conservatoire is an institution that has long been considered the apex of a music education. Looking specifically at the conservatoire as an organisation, there is a distinctive ‘freemasonry’ aspect to it in regard to its systems and symbols, many of which do not feature strongly in the mainstream HE setting, an example of this ‘freemasonry’ being the unspoken understanding that practice expectations are different depending on what instrument you play, or the idea that certain studios are somehow inherently better than others. In order to examine the ways in which students receive and react to these, it is necessary to build a lens for determining what aspects of a student’s life and background influence how they experience and respond to conservatoire culture. In this thesis, I therefore use Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and habitus to help conceptualise the way students relate to each other and to their tutors, and what cultural signals influence the way they navigate conservatoire culture. Where it was possible in my research, I also look at elements of a participant’s family and social background in relation to cultural capital and habitus, to contextualise their account of the conservatoire experience.

With Bourdieu’s social order of a community or social space in mind, Hallett (2003) explains that social hierarchy can be examined through the lens of the three forms of capital: “…people exist in relation to one another (primarily) based on their economic capital, cultural capital (credentials, titles, tastes), and social capital (networks)” (p. 130). While there are different types of capital, Bourdieu (1987) suggests that cultural capital is especially evident in

education. I have chosen to use Lamont and Lareau's (1988) explanation of cultural capital as "widely shared, high status cultural signals". These signals include attitudes and preferences as well as the more easily defined goods and credentials (p. 156). I am interested in the cultural signals that are important to conservatoire culture such as pedagogical lineage and tutor prestige or which ensembles or competitions a student participates in. This lens allows me to investigate these important aspects of the student experience, where the experiences may be similar across students and where those experiences diverge. These concepts have been applied to many areas of education research from explorations of learning cultures in the conservatoire (Perkins, 2013a) to institutional habitus and the university honours student experience (Weissmann, 2013). In both cases, the authors employ aspects of Bourdieu's theory of practice to look at how legitimised knowledge of relevant institutional structures and internalised attitudes affect the student experience of their institution's organisational culture.

To distinguish between cultural capital and habitus, Sullivan (2002) explains that "whereas cultural capital consists of the possession of legitimate knowledge, habitus is a set of attitudes and values" (p. 149) and it is the habitus that "determines the actions" (p. 151) of an individual. These concepts work alongside each other to influence an individual's thoughts about their cultural environment. According to Perkins' (2013a) study of learning cultures, habitus is an important concept in the field of conservatoire research because the habitus allows students to learn "how to be" the musician that they seek to become (p. 206). Habitus, as a sub-conscious aspect of cultural and social reproduction, provides an individual with "an agentive role, acting on the dispositions of the habitus" (Hallett, 2003, p. 130). According to Dumais (2006), where cultural capital is structured as a classification tool within communities, habitus is the internalised form of the social structure and provides a social guide. Both cultural capital and habitus provide tools with which to analyse an individual's understanding of their reality and the way in which they navigate the social structures they are confronted with.

Although the tutors are guardians in this setting, students do not come into the conservatoire as blank sheets. The students bring their accumulated experiences, their beliefs and dispositions, with them. The student's history, such as their experiences of private music tuition and any family experience of the music performance profession, are elements that colour their ideas and thoughts, which in turn affect their interactions with culture in the conservatoire. The idea of personal history as being an important aspect of how one

experiences the present is explored by Hallett (2003), who said that “individual practices within organizations are informed (but not determined) by habitus (linked to a position in the broader social order)” (p. 130). While it is not a central theoretical consideration, I use the concepts of habitus and cultural capital in the analysis of my data to explore how these elements are interconnected in shaping the conservatoire student experience. This enables a nuanced analysis of the way that habitus interacts with conservatoire tradition and the individuals participating in conservatoire culture. Overall, Bourdieu’s concepts allow me to account for the development of an individual’s values and beliefs, which, in turn, assist with the recreation of cultural practices and tradition.

Cultural capital

A central element in Bourdieu’s theory of practice is cultural capital. By putting the concept to work within HE, one can see that an institution would value cultural capital as “a measure of rank, indicating an agent’s position in the structure of the distribution of cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 303). To define the concept more succinctly, Bourdieu (1977) describes educational attainment as cultural capital analogous with the role of money in economic capital (p. 187). Adopting cultural capital as an aspect of my theoretical framework has allowed me to investigate how the accumulation of cultural capital affects the conservatoire student experience. Lamont and Lareau (1988) define cultural capital as the “institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion” (p. 156). A couple of examples of these signals include an individual’s education, their ability to speak knowledgeably about a culture, as well as all other elements of cultural taste (Barker, 2004). I interpret this concept to mean that an individual experiences the attitudes and preferences of a culture, therefore developing a deep understanding of the surrounding community. Consequently, this individual would have a social advantage within the community over those who lack similar experience.

Bourdieu (1996) uses the concept of cultural capital as a lens to explore the French classroom in his book, *The State of Nobility*. He takes the *grandes ècoles* as an example of how schools utilise the accumulated capital of students to maintain a certain level of exclusivity; in the case of the *grandes ècoles*, for example, students are expected to maintain a very high level of work with little help from the teacher. To illustrate this, the author cites a teacher describing the high-stakes homework marking policy and its assignment submission requirements:

> I require an extra space between paragraphs. They [students] have to hand in a detailed outline along with their papers. Five spelling errors gets them a zero. I mean I don't even finish correcting – when I get to five errors, I stop reading, I give them a zero, and I put down my pen… (p. 86).

This practice described by the teacher favours students with high levels of accumulated cultural capital: students at these elite schools are more likely to have had the benefit of tutors, elite schooling and parents who themselves have achieved a high level of educational attainment and, therefore, pass along habits and information to their children. Students who have not had the benefit of this implicit learning must practice and learn these norms as they encounter them, challenges that students with cultural capital do not have to face. Similar to Bourdieu's (1996) argument, DiMaggio (1985) observed that cultural capital impacted high school students' likelihood of attaining additional help from teachers and other school authority figures. An argument in their study on educational attainment suggests that these teachers have a tendency to spend more time with those who are already well-equipped with cultural capital based on the idea that students with more cultural capital are more likely to engage the teacher for the help, in part because they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging in the school environment.

This situation illustrates why his 1986 work, *The Forms of Capital*, Bourdieu prescribes cultural capital as a means of benefitting young children. He suggests this, stating that accumulation of cultural capital starts almost immediately after birth, but "…only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital; in this case, the accumulation period covers the whole period of socialization'' (p. 49). This notion of cultural capital allows me to look at how a student's experience of the conservatoire might be affected by their existing cultural capital and the extent to which it is perceived as an opportunity to accumulate cultural capital.

Embodied cultural capital, which is cultural capital in "the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47), is described by Swartz (1997) as personal character with a cultivated appreciation and understanding of cultural goods. Prior's (2014) elaboration of embodied cultural capital in terms of its role in what it means to be an amateur musician, is especially useful to my research. He suggests that musicians who come from the middle-classes often have more cultural resources available to them than those from the working-class, such as music recordings and other forms of art. These resources, therefore, allow an individual to interact with music and create an environment wherein it is more likely

that the individual will cultivate an appreciation for music-making. Additionally, middle-class families, by definition, have more financial resources (in essence, economic capital) than working-class families. With the cost-of-living burden lessened (or even eliminated), a conservatoire student will be able to pursue a career that offers less financial stability, such as that of a musician. The availability of economic capital would certainly provide easier access to additional resources and interventions for a student to be well-equipped to handle and respond to the cultural practices of the elite *grandes ècoles*. However, economic capital does not necessarily translate into cultural capital and one should not assume that a household with high levels of economic capital places value on embodied cultural capital such as appreciating art forms.

Institutionalised cultural capital is another form of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) describes this form as:

> objectification which must be set apart [from the preceding two states of cultural capital] because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (p. 47).

Swartz (1997) suggests this institutionalised state refers to the educational credentialing system, namely higher education (p. 77), that the higher the academic credential, the more cultural capital is embodied in that degree (e.g. a PhD holds more capital than a bachelor's degree). To reflect this, I conduct my fieldwork in three conservatoires that each promote a certain image and have accrued certain reputations and in terms of students, I interview students of different degree levels and backgrounds. Specific to the conservatoire setting, the students I interview play different instruments and therefore have different perspectives of the conservatoire and of music performance, based on the many accepted cultural norms that come with playing certain instruments. The fact that students may navigate conservatoire culture differently depending on the instrument they choose to play rather than the degree they will be receiving makes the conservatoire setting distinctive. In contrast to other non-vocational HE settings, the certification itself is not what is most sought after and instead who one studies with and the networks one builds count for more. This idea is an idea that I will look at in more depth based on my own findings. When approaching my fieldwork, I observe that the institutionalised cultural capital conception of education and credentials is notably different for the conservatoire student when compared to the mainstream university student, for whom the end goal will be a specific degree. This is one reason why it is so important to consider the conservatoire as an institution distinctive from mainstream higher education.

It is important to reiterate that high levels of accumulated cultural capital are not analogous to a higher position in terms of social class but that different cultural elements and objects play an important role in how a student thinks about their own position. The availability of objects such as books, music, and art in a family are indicators of higher cultural capital than those families without similar resources (or families who do not place a significant value on those resources), so while access to cultural resources cannot be assumed to lead to an accumulation of cultural capital, the value of early access to these resources is an important reason for considering students' backgrounds when investigating their ideas about conservatoire student culture.

Habitus

As part of Bourdieu's larger theory of cultural reproduction, cultural capital is intrinsically linked to habitus insomuch as the cultural resources such as books and music (and therefore cultural capital) available to the individual inform their 'way of being'. Because of this, I feel that the two concepts would be the best tools for explaining the student perspective of the conservatoire. In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu defines habitus as an individual's "capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that represent the social world, i.e., the space of lifestyles…" (p. 170). However, the term 'disposition' is often used when describing habitus specifically because it suggests a sub-consciousness. I have chosen to deploy the concept of habitus, therefore, as translating to personal, durable dispositions that play a largely unconscious role in determining an individual's interactions with their environment and society (Hallett, 2003; Swartz, 1997). In terms of education, a study of joint-honours student experiences (Weissmann, 2013) describes Bourdieu's habitus as "internalised structures which constantly reproduce structures of cultural dominance" and therefore "a useful starting point to explain the experiences of joint honours students" (p. 263). Building on the definitions of culture and tradition, I reflect on how the varying experiences, backgrounds and beliefs of conservatoire students are interwoven and linked into broader conservatoire organisational culture as well as creating change in the fabric of that culture. The concepts of habitus and symbolic capital provide tools that allow me to better explore the relationship between a student's background life experiences, their way of life and their resulting experience. I became specifically interested in how habitus is embodied differently in students and how different backgrounds may enable students to navigate conservatoire attitudes and expectations more easily. Therefore, I look at the resulting dispositions and way of life of the

students as acquired throughout their life.

As I have described, habitus differs from cultural capital insomuch as it is the set of firmly held dispositions that an individual internalises rather than external forces. The creation of habitus is dependent on “structures constitutive of a particular type of environment … [to] produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures…” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). Hallett (2003), describes habitus as a central concept to Bourdieu’s theory of practice because it underlies the actions and dispositions of those within the group. According to Thomas (2002), these dispositions are “embedded within everyday actions, much of which is sub-conscious… Although there is an on-going process of re-structuring of the habitus, change is slow” (p. 430). Also, habitus is deeply internalised and generates action (Swartz, 1997, p. 101) and the deep, ingrained dispositions are central to that action. Within the conservatoire, specific values and norms have permeated the traditions and culture of the institution. Much of this culture is reflective of the generations-old practices and processes developed in the early days of the conservatoire. In response to these practices, Perkins (2013a) suggests that it is time "…for researchers to investigate the notion of cultural change in conservatoires, recognizing long-held traditions and habitus, as well as the wider fields of power in which conservatoires' cultural practices are constructed" (p. 207). She found through her research that students take part in the conservatoire, learning their place within the organisational hierarchy and that their position within that hierarchy "relates to what and how they learn" (p. 197), which is an embedded value within the conservatoire student habitus.

Using habitus as part of the lens to look at the student experience enables me to look more deeply at the students within the conservatoire context as individuals. This is because by employing habitus, the "…individual personality differences as a result of genetic differences, upbringing, and particular life experiences" (Rosman, et al., 2009, p. 72) become observable. The values adopted by their family affect the student experience; the experience of living in specific neighbourhoods or communities, and so many other variables in life, build an individual's habitus and shapes their thoughts about the surrounding community. Employing habitus within my framework allows me to explore these aspects of a student’s interaction with conservatoire culture.

Concluding thoughts on cultural capital and habitus

Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in its different forms, along with habitus, provides the

lens to examine the relationship between a conservatoire student's accumulated life experiences and their beliefs about the conservatoire student culture. The concept of habitus is also relevant when considering personal agency within a community and the individual's role within the independent social structures. The common music performance socialisation experiences of conservatoire students, such as music lessons and programs, are resources that help to build the student habitus. I also believe that an individual's disposition is a powerful influence on how they navigate the social structure of their community. I have decided to utilise both cultural and social capital to look at the beliefs and thoughts of an individual gained through past experiences, family values and the quality of their social connections within the community.

In order to more thoroughly understand the individually diverse nature of the conservatoire experience, I also look at the student experience as one informed by a student's cultural capital. This kind of non-material capital, brought into the conservatoire by a student, will affect the way they experience the organisation's culture and the notion of a musician's way of life. Looking at the individual experience of conservatoire culture through these theoretical lenses allowed me to explore the conservatoire culture from a perspective that kept the individual student experience central within the data collection. The conservatoire course of study can be, in many ways, a very self-contained experience. From the deeply rooted tradition of one-to-one tuition to the different instrument and genre specialisms, each student may potentially have very different curricular experiences. While collecting data about the background of participating students was not my primary data collection objective, I made note of this information as it arose and became relevant. In my analysis, I utilise this information to highlight the effects that these concepts may have on the student experience. As I have argued, each student comes into the conservatoire with background experiences that have moulded their thoughts about the conservatoire; employing these conceptual tools enables me to examine ideas of culture within the conservatoire student community. In other words, these concepts help me to understand how a student's life experiences, education opportunities, family involvement in music performance, chosen instrument, and other aspects of their background might have influenced and shaped their experience of conservatoire culture.

Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, I have discussed the concepts that form my theoretical framework. Assembled together, these conceptual tools build a sort of compound-lens which allows me to investigate

the student experience of conservatoire culture as well as to support this investigation by looking at how other aspects of the organisation influence that experience. In order to effectively examine my research questions, I look to theoretical concepts that should allow me to assemble an image of the cultural landscape of the conservatoire that would highlight its distinctive characteristics as an HE institution. Even more crucially, I want the depiction of this UK higher education landscape to be coloured by the beliefs of those who are interacting with it. This process took me to explanations of culture as a community and the concept of guardians of tradition, which provides a lens with which to look at tradition in a similarly dynamic manner.

In addition, the work of Geertz (1973) and Rosman, Rubel, and Weisgrau (2009), in which culture is seen as inherited expressions, behaviours, and practices, allowed me to develop depth in my analysis of the data, looking beyond the readily observable behaviours and customs occurring within the conservatoire. Since many of these behaviours have spanned decades (and in some cases, centuries), I wanted to be able to investigate this continuity. By utilising a definition of tradition based on the exploration of cultural experience and inheritance of beliefs (see Giddens, 1994; Halbwachs and Coser, 1992), I avoid painting the heritable practices of the conservatoire as inert. Since I have taken on the conceptual lens of conservatoire culture as an active, persistent process, I apply a similar lens to tradition within the setting. I decided to do this by adopting the notion of guardians who are given the role of deciding what actions or beliefs are allowable within the tradition of a given institutional setting.

With culture as the conceptual foundation of this thesis, the student consideration is the door to that foundation. By engaging aspects of Bourdieu's theory of practice, cultural and social capital as well as a brief look at habitus, I look at the student's background and history and how that might influence their ideas and beliefs about conservatoire culture, which in turn influences how they might choose to participate in it. Using these theoretical concepts builds a lens that allowed me to convey the breadth of individual experience within the three UK conservatoires. These notions help me to explore how differences in background affect a student's experiences and how they think about their time as a conservatoire student. Using Bourdieu's concepts as part of this compound lens allows me to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the conservatoire landscape and the shape of the conservatoire experience or way of life. This perspective provides a way of connecting the individual and their experiences to the community culture. I have aimed to employ these

concepts together in order to reflect the role that students play in the development and reproduction of cultural norms and behaviours in the conservatoire. I highlight student habitus and cultural capital alongside the conservatoire culture as a way of understanding how these elements of one's life affect the acceptance or denial of aspects of culture. When assembled together, these theoretical concepts create a compound lens that allows me to frame my data around distinct areas of the conservatoire; any one of the concepts by itself would have been inadequate. This lens allows me to look deeply at the lived experiences and qualities of the student experience of conservatoire culture.

Chapter 4 – Building a framework: methodological considerations

Introduction

This chapter looks at the methodological decisions that I made in the development of this thesis as well as those that came up during data collection and analysis. I discuss my research journey, from my research design influences, through data analysis and writing up. In his case study of students at an American university, Moffatt (1991) observed a lack in understanding of the daily lives of students in the educational research landscape, and he noted that outside-the-classroom life had been ignored in scholarly research (p. 45). A lack of study about the informal experiences of students suggested an opportunity for me to develop research questions that would provide useful context to the HE student experience. In building a research design around this notion, I tried to keep the student's personal experience of conservatoire culture as the central focus. Case study methodology allows me to bound my research, framing it around conservatoire culture and the conservatoire student. Employing ethnographic tools, primarily in-depth interviews and participant observation, are especially useful as a means of looking deeply at the conservatoire experience.

In addition to detailing my research journey, I have also included a detailed description of each of the three conservatoire sites. This is in order to introduce the field work sites as a formative aspect of my research journey. To analyse the data collected from each of the conservatoires, I use thematic analysis (TA) and build a comparative analysis of the themes that arose across the sites. This is an established tool for qualitative researchers; in this case, it is also the most suitable approach to analyse conservatoire culture across the students and cases. All of these decisions are woven together to allow me to take a contextual perspective of the student experience. This perspective enables me to position myself as a metaphorical traveller throughout each of the cases, exploring the physicality and the ways in which students interacted with their school, encouraging them to "tell their own stories of their lived world" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 48). Therefore, the methodological tools used to develop this thesis created a strong framework for exploring my research questions around the students' experiences of conservatoire culture.

Seminal studies that influenced the design of this research

A handful of ethnographies and case studies carried out within higher education settings had a significant influence on how I built my methodological framework. It was through reading

these studies that I came to the decision to employ ethnographic methods in conjunction with case study to explore my research questions. In addition to studies set in mainstream university settings, Kingsbury's (1988) seminal ethnography of a US conservatoire was a guiding tool in developing my research questions. This study, discussed in-depth in chapter 2, continues to be cited in conservatoire literature as an example of conservatoire culture and therefore helped in determining what questions might be relevant within the conservatoire community. However, in an effort to create a study that would be useful and influential to the broader HE community, I also drew on two other ethnographic HE case studies.

The first of the two higher education ethnographies is Moffatt (1989)'s study of American university undergraduate students, *Coming of age in New Jersey: College and American culture*. This research primarily draws on participant observation data, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (among other data collection tools) collected from students living in the Rutgers University dormitories and an exploration of the extracurricular behaviours of those students, later discussing his conclusions with his students and noting any adjustments that were necessary. By focusing on students in university accommodations and investigating outside-the-classroom behaviours of those students, Moffatt (1989) helps to paint a landscape of student life. This landscape provides the reader with a more holistic account of the university student way of life than a study of the formal learning and teaching transactions would provide.

I drew particular inspiration from the focus in this work on the in-depth exploration of outside-the-classroom culture and student perceptions around their experiences navigating that culture. This study provided a springboard for the development of ideas about how I might approach the construction of an ethnographic-style case study focussed on conservatoire student experiences. The author utilised the qualitative tools of ethnography over the course of ten years, setting out to "grasp the ... mentalities" (ibid, Preface) of the American university student. I decided to use some of those tools in my investigation of the conservatoire student mentality toward the organisational culture. Notably, the author develops a dialogic representation of the student experience and involves the student participants in "the interpretative process" (ibid, Appendix One, para. 2) by teaching students about the data collected and recording their thoughts and observations about what they've learned. Even though this was outside the scope of my thesis, the underlying reflection on the data collection process is something I tried to keep in mind when conducting interviews with participants. Reflexivity has become an essential part of ethnographic research and Moffatt

(1989) maintains a reflexive voice, allowing the student voice to be heard – often in a raw, unedited form – throughout the seven sections that comprise this ethnographic case study. Through this approach, the author reveals a rich understanding of the student experience that might otherwise be unseen by educators and policymakers, coinciding with my own research aims.

It was by looking at Moffatt (1989) that I began to pay attention to the idea of reflexivity towards the data as it was collected and this is evident in the design of my research in that I began to review and do some preliminary analysis of interviews as they happened. In subsequent interviews, I could then inquire and refine how I approached interview questions and observations. I tried to take an authentic approach to the student experience and the outside-the-classroom culture. Overall, Moffat's work highlighted the need for me as researcher, community outsider and insider, in terms of my own experience of music in higher education, to maintain reflexivity throughout the data collection process and the empirical writing process.

The second ethnographic case study that significantly influenced the development of my thesis is Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strause's (1961) *Boys in White*. In this study, the authors look at the highly skilled, specialised environment of a medical school and the effect that medical school culture has on those students. They explain the decision to focus on student culture at the start of the book by saying that "[w]e do not consider curriculum or subject-matter, in which we have no competence, except as they become objects of attention, interpretation, and action on the students' part" (ibid, p. 5). The study is a rich account of medical school student culture and how the unique challenges of the environment, especially those that dealt with the specialist nature of the school, affected those students. By focusing on culture and student perceptions, the authors avoid a central focus on the formal learning-teaching transaction as it happens within the classroom. When approaching my own research topic, it felt like a natural progression to think about how the highly specialised environment of the conservatoire affects students.

Something that resonated with me while reading *Boys in White* was the authors' attention to the population they were studying. As I mentioned in chapter 1, I came to this thesis through a desire to be of service to higher music education students. The authors stated a similar desire to produce research that is of interest and use to the population they were looking at:

> [w]e studied what was of interest to the people who we were investigating

> because we felt that in this way we would uncover the basic dimensions of the school as a social organization and the student progress through it as a social-psychological phenomenon (p. 20).

The authors focus on one specific population of students and they attempt to understand the experience of those students (beyond the formal learning-teaching transactions) for their benefit. These aspirational aspects of Becker et al. (1961) helped me to develop and clarify my own motivations through the methodological design of this thesis.

In other ways, the influence of Becker et al. (1961) is visible within my thesis, as mentioned briefly above, because of the focus on a highly specialised, skilled community in higher education. Like in medical school, a conservatoire course of education can often span multiple degrees and certificate qualifications. From the time a student enters the conservatoire system as an undergraduate until they leave with a terminal degree or qualification, it can take upwards of seven to ten years and sometimes longer. And while a music performance student and a medical student have different experiences based on the substantial difference in subject matter, Becker, et al.'s study (1961) suggests, in my view, that any student in a highly specialised group requires substantial resolve to stay in HE for that length of time. The authors' description of the effects on these students of a near-decade long studentship could be applied equally to students in the conservatoire environment for whom:

> [a] prolonged professional training is part of the experience of a large and increasing number of young people in our society, young people who are - physically and in most social respects - fully adult. … However, in their chosen professions, they still have ahead of them an extended period of a sort of adolescence during which they are asked to show adult competence and learning, without being given full adult responsibility (ibid, p. 5).

This in-depth ethnography mirrors some important aspects of my own research questions and motivations for conducting my research. I opted to draw methodologically from this study because, like the authors, I wanted to produce a thesis that is of interest to the community I am investigating and is also beneficial to those outside of that community. About their position and motivation as researchers, they state,

> … we believed that before we could understand variations in student thought and action we needed to discover relevant dimensions along with those thoughts and actions varied, the common elements which might be thought to differ from one student to another (ibid, p. 22).

Another aspect of their study that influenced the development of this project is the exploratory nature of the work. By using ethnographic-style tools in my own research, looking at conservatoire student participants and exploring the links between their beliefs, perceptions and experiences generated a multi-layered understanding of what happens in the conservatoire.

Becker et al. (1961) make concerted efforts to avoid emphasising one student's perception or behaviour over another and instead seeks to uncover the culture of the medical school organisation and the student experience of that culture. To understand the perspectives and experiences of students the authors "...did not propose hypotheses and confirmed or disprove them so much as we made provisional generalizations about aspects of the school and the students' experience in it" (p. 22). Similarly, I wanted to employ that ethnographic absence of positioning, exploring the perceptions and behaviours of conservatoire students, without attempting to justify any single position.

Moffatt (1989) and Becker et al. (1961) provide insight into what it means to explore HE culture and the student experience. They have influenced my decision to utilise data collection tools from ethnography, including in-depth interviews and participant observation. This is because both studies utilised these tools to build a more holistic understanding of the student populations they were interested in. They avoided focusing on the formal learning and teaching transactions and instead focused on the individual and collective student experience in its entirety, which I try to accomplish in this thesis. The motivations for conducting the research, to be useful to those studied as well as beneficial to those outside of that community, also influenced the development of my methodological framework.

Connecting methodology with my research framework

Looking at these studies, which take place within very different HE institutions, I started to see a framework that would allow me to investigate my research questions. The studies by Becker et al. (1961), Moffatt (1989), as well as Kingsbury's (1988) ethnography of a conservatoire, provided a methodological foundation for the development of my own research motivations and for a research design that would allow me to explore both the context of conservatoire culture and the student experience. I decided to approach the exploration of the conservatoire student experience from a place curiosity in the students themselves. In doing so, I too aimed for an empirical narrative that contributed to a deeper understanding of what goes on in the life of a conservatoire student, and would be useful to those outside the

institution.

A case study approach provided the framework for the research from which I was able to draw boundaries around my case, the UK conservatoire. By constructing a multiple-case study of three separate conservatoires, I could look at the institutions individually while also allowing similarities and differences in the student way of life to emerge from the analysis. By drawing on the experiences of students in different conservatoires in the UK, I was able to build a picture of what a general student experience looks like in the United Kingdom. The use of ethnographic methods (namely, in-depth interviewing and participant observation) to generate my data, I was able to address my research questions with regards to how cultural construction happens in the conservatoire and how conservatoire culture shapes the student's experience of higher music education. An important part of the decision to utilise this framework was because case study and ethno-methodologies have been widely used as a way of learning about and understanding communities and groups within our society - in the instance of my thesis, the conservatoire student community.

Theories of student experience

In reviewing the literature on the HE student experience, I was introduced to the existing, established theories of student development (in this case referring to a student's psychosocial development). I was particularly drawn to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) *Seven Vectors of Undergraduate Development*. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory belongs to the psychosocial strand of student development theories and tries to understand and describe the nature of change in the HE setting. By utilising the perspectives imbedded within the Seven Vectors theory, I grounded my research in the field of student experience.

The seven vectors of undergraduate development proposed by Chickering and Reisser (1993) appealed to me because of the introspective element. Initially introduced by Chickering in 1969, the authors revised the seven vectors in the 1993 publication and the model continues to be utilised by researchers to look at the student experience (for examples see Duran & Jones, 2019; Yang & Brown, 2016). My interpretation of the model is that as a student goes through university, they experience new situations, different people, and therefore they begin to perceive themselves and the world in new, more nuanced ways. Each of the vectors reflect aspects of cognitive and affective development, such as the ability to manage emotions (vector 2) and establishing identity (vector 4). According to the authors, as a student goes through HE, they should have developed in some capacity in all these seven

categories.

Especially pertinent to my research, the authors talk about how the HE environment can influence a student's development, creating the conditions that affect the impact an institution has on the individual student. The authors describe the major influences of environmental components that affect development along the seven vectors, which include: clarity and consistency of objectives, size of the institution, the formal learning and teaching transactions, residence hall arrangements, the faculty and administration and student culture (including friendship groups) (ibid). As I read more about the potential for these components to affect student development, I decided that 'student culture' as well as 'faculty and administration' as major influencing factors of student development should be implemented as part of my methodological perspective because these major two influences are about the interactions of members of the organisation, which I would likely be able to observe.

Building an ethnographic-style multiple-case study

Ethnography began as an exploratory research methodology, originating in the field of anthropology and historically was used to "[describe] the world views of foreign cultures" (Westbrook, 2009, p. 9). Two examples of early anthropologists who utilised ethnography were Margaret Mead and Bronislaw Malinowski. They travelled to unfamiliar territories to live amongst unfamiliar people to record observations of their community, participating in the daily life of their research subjects. Ethnography was a means to study unfamiliar tribes in faraway places. This early kind of ethnography resulted in what Moffatt (1989) calls "cultural descriptions" (Appendix One, para. 1). It is utilised to look at all kinds of populations in order to better understand the ways of life of those within them and has become one of the major methods used to research educational settings (Walford, 2009). Succinctly put, ethnography is "the work of describing a culture" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3) and the ethnographic methods I draw on rely on the utilisation of multiple sources of information in order to attempt to describe culture within the community. In this contemporary form, the key strength is its emphasis on understanding the perceptions and cultures of the communities studied, which has made it useful for studying different groups within comparatively more familiar societies.

The use of ethnography to study institutions and smaller populations within society acts as a gateway to a deeper understanding of people with a certain set of experiences. In their book, *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe the mechanics of the methodology as involving,

> the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry (p. 3).

Through prolonged involvement with those who are being studied, the researcher is able gradually to enter their world and gain an understanding of their lives. As Walford (2009) explained, ethnography has become a major method for conducting education research, so it was a natural transition to utilise ethnographic methods to explore the student experience. With this ethnographic-style multiple-case study, I aimed to broaden the landscape of specialist HE research, to begin to develop an understanding of the outside-the-classroom life of students. By bounding my thesis around three separate cases, I was more fully explore the different ways students experience culture in their institutions. Becker, et al.'s (1961) methodological design of their ethnographic case study of the student experience of medical school influenced my research design in keeping central the research questions as well as the methodological commitments and I recorded and analysed the data as it is affected by these elements. Every participant at each of the sites helped me to weave a tapestry of UK conservatoire culture that reflects the nuances of conservatoire culture rather than being simply a collection of experiences.

I applied my understanding of the different conceptions of student development to the building of the case study framework. Case study methodology is well suited for exploring the complexities of human experience (Stake, 2005) and provides the most suitable methods for answering my research questions. I decided to take my research to three separate institutions in order to explore how culture and student experience differs across multiple conservatoires. Authors have used ethnographic-style and single-sited case study methodologies in varying ways to explore aspects of the conservatoire community (for example see: Persson, 1996; Perkins, 2013b), but while these studies look at aspects of the student experience in the conservatoire setting I want to frame my research around the student experience of culture and in multiple conservatoires more holistically.

To accomplish this, I conduct what Street (2013) refers to as an ethnographic-style approach to research. By this, I mean that I take the reflexive aspects of ethnography, especially qualitative data collection techniques, and incorporated them into my framework. I employ qualitative data collection tools familiar to the anthropological practice of ethnography,

including in-depth interviews, participant observation, field notes, and a relatively small amount of document and record analysis (see: ibid, p. 76; Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2013). The data found at the individual level is used and evaluated as part of a collection of experiences that lead to a better understanding of the institution (Stake, 2005), which will contribute to the evidence base regarding the student experience in the conservatoire. Adopting an ethnographic approach to in-depth interviewing allowed me to ask students not only about their current experience but beyond that year of fieldwork, inviting their perceptions of and reflections about past experience, and how those experiences related to their present self.

Beginning fieldwork

Before I was able to begin my fieldwork, I had to consider the ethical implications of my research. Submitting my ethics application to the UEA School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee in November 2016, I was cleared the following month. In response to feedback from the committee, I clarified that when referring to participant observation, I was referring to what Spradley (1979) calls moderate participation. In Spradley's (1979) explanation of participant observation, at one end of the continuum is full participation, which involves making notes, while acting as a member of the group being observed; at the other end of this continuum, the researcher is present within the group, but not explicitly partaking in the surrounding activities. However, he also points out that the researcher may shift position and must navigate the field accordingly. Non-participation, at the opposite end of the continuum, would include learning about a culture by watching TV, for example. After clarifying my position as researcher participant and drawing up information sheets and informed consent forms for all the different types of participants (such as student or staff), I was cleared to begin fieldwork.

At the beginning of this journey, I had already confirmed one of the three sites and so was able to start my data collection almost immediately. I was welcomed to this first conservatoire as an observer but restricted to public spaces and events – I could not observe one-to-one lessons or classroom lectures (I would, however, be allowed to attend the master classes and course showcases which were ticketed events open to the public). Also, I was asked to limit my interviewee recruitment to those who approached me as opposed to using more active recruitment methods such as handing out flyers or approaching students and asking them if they would be willing to talk to me. Because of this, I began snowball sampling (Robinson, 2013) early in the process. As it was January at this first location, this timeframe happened to fall during reading week, and meant that the conservatoire was very quiet for the first few

days of observations before students returned for the start of a new semester. While I would have preferred students and staff present and going about their regular activities throughout the entirety of my time at the conservatoire, this initial period of relative quiet was beneficial for orienting myself to the physical layout and characteristics of the building. I took the opportunity to acquaint myself with the campus and the surrounding areas, such as coffee shops, pubs, and other public spaces. I would later do the same thing when I arrived at the other two settings. In addition to familiarising myself with the physical characteristics and surroundings, this time served as an opportunity to have a look at the institution's website and student information. It was useful to be able to juxtapose this online and printed documentation with the physical orientation.

During my fieldwork at the first conservatoire, I was introduced to someone who was a staff member at what turned out to be my second fieldwork site. By following up with that individual, and agreeing the same terms as the initial conservatoire (specifically, that I wouldn't repeatedly approach students while I was on campus and that I would not try to observe lectures or one-to-one lessons), I was invited to conduct observations of public spaces. I decided to pursue this conservatoire as my second fieldwork site because it is located in a different part of the country and presents a different institutional image, as described earlier in chapter two. At this point, I decided to approach a third conservatoire that was in another distinct part of the UK. By approaching the administration over email, I was told that I would be welcome to visit and make observations but, in keeping with the previous two schools, I was not allowed in to classrooms during lectures or attend one-to-one lessons. The restrictions of where I was allowed to make observations was not problematic because my research focus is on the informal experiences of culture rather than the formal learning-teaching transactions.

During my initial period of scoping observations at each setting, I also began the process of advertising for participants for in-depth interviews. I had planned to accomplish this primarily through recruitment posters and an email sent by the administration, but these methods did not prove fruitful. I received two inquiries through these methods at the first site and only one ended in an interview. Additional means of recruiting participants were local Reddit pages (for instance, r/London), LinkedIn searches for students of the conservatoire, and identifying and messaging the administrators of student-run Facebook groups to ask whether they would be willing to ask their members if they would be interested in participating (I did not ever request to have access to any group's individual membership information). These methods produced

a handful of participants, but the most fruitful manner of identifying potential participants was through the snowball sampling, which I discuss in more detail in the following section and used this recruitment method at each conservatoire.

While the physical flyers and emails did not directly produce many participants, they did help to build my presence at the conservatoire. When talking to students, I was able to point to a flyer or mention an email that was sent out as a way of building rapport and showing them that I was on campus and a legitimate researcher. It is worth noting, as well, that the flyers and emails provided a link to a dedicated Facebook page that explained my research project as well as who I am (with a link to my own individual Facebook page). The purpose of this was to provide another means of answering questions and providing information as well as giving participants a way of seeing who I was and build a sense of trust.

I spent roughly eight weeks at each of the three conservatoires. Because of the timing of the fieldwork I had to arrange my schedule in order to ensure that I had a similar amount of time at each conservatoire. At two of the three settings, I arrived around the summer holidays (at the end of the holidays for one site, near the start of the holidays for the other). Nonetheless, I was able to conduct hundreds of hours of observations, watching students interact with their surroundings and each other. My focus on the non-formal interactions meant that scheduling firmly within the academic year was not crucial because there were some students around, even out of term time.

Additional ethical considerations

When conducting interviews, each took place on campus at a location of the participant's choosing. I let each participant decide the location of the interview in an effort to be sensitive to how they might feel about talking about their experiences in an institutional environment. However, most participants suggested meeting in the familiar, public area of the student union café. I provided each interview participant with an information sheet and consent form for them to read through and also went through both documents with them before beginning the interview. I discussed with them the potential benefits and risks involved in participation, specifically, the potential to be identified despite any steps I took to anonymise them; these were discussed with all participants and they were told that they have the right to opt-out throughout the course of the project, up until the submission of the thesis. Permission was sought and granted to record the interview in each case. Participants were then sent a summary of their interview, as well as the transcript, and were invited to edit their responses

before data analysis. Summaries were provided as I thought participants were more likely to read a short summary rather than a full-length transcript and I wanted to increase participation in this confirmatory process where possible. To each of the institutional gatekeepers, I offered to provide a tailored report or presentation of my findings and the general themes that arose tailored to their institution, however none of them followed up on the proposal.

All personal data is held having applied the appropriate security and encryption in keeping with the Data Protection Act of 1998 and GDPR. Should any information have arisen that suggested a participant was in personal danger, I would have complied as a mandatory reporter and notified the institution of that danger. Luckily, this precaution was unnecessary. For my own personal safety, I put a safeguarding plan in place wherein I always kept to public spaces to conduct interviews and my partner was informed of my transportation and location plans each day. All accommodation information was also kept with my partner in the event of an emergency.

Initial observations at each of the case sites

At each of the three fieldwork sites I explained to the individuals who facilitated access to the institution, and granted my fieldwork permissions, that I would make every attempt to anonymise their campus but that due to the small number of conservatoires in the UK, however, it was possible their institution could be identifiable to a knowledgeable reader. These initial observations of the three sites are compiled from my field diaries and observation notes taken throughout my fieldwork.

Conservatoire of the North

The Conservatoire of the North is a modern-style multi-level building, adjacent to the city centre, roughly a five-minute walk from several mainline public transportation stops. The CON building is tucked behind a row of buildings, many of which are home to many arts and culture organisations. Across the street from CON is one of the arts buildings, housing a bar/live music venue, a casual dining restaurant, and rehearsal space for a dance company. The main CON building is made from tall glass windows and metal, with bright accent lighting. Throughout my observations, there did not appear to be much pedestrian footfall around the area except for people going into one of those buildings. There are also multiple coffee shops within a short walk populated with young, fashion-conscious people drinking coffees and eating small sandwiches. At one of these shops, if you walk past the cashier and

barista stations that are positioned directly next to the door you get to a gallery area that is set up with artwork and benches, which people are sat at with coffee and chatting.

When you walk inside the main CON building, you are immediately greeted by very clean-lined, modern décor. On the ground floor are several lifts that people use for transporting PA kit, drums and amps. The Scandinavian-looking furniture complements the contemporary architecture. By continuing inside, you reach a café area. This area is large, and several doors lead to corridors of classrooms, practice rooms, and computer labs. There are over 50 tables, mostly small tables that would comfortably seat two people. In the centre of the floor is the serving area where you can order coffees, buy sandwiches and jacket potatoes, and bottled drinks and beyond this area are larger tables and several booths that would comfortably seat 4-6 people. There are digital advertisement boards that feature ads for:

- Health and wellbeing services
- Accommodations advertisements
- Professional and academic services help

On every table in the café is a stand-up Perspex display featuring a week's 'What's On' calendar. This includes concerts, outside of campus gigs, and course recitals.

Through a windowed hallway, you get to the staircase that leads to the large performance theatre. Up the stairs, you get to the reception area that has a coat check area and space for a ticket taker and a bar area. Beyond the reception area is the theatre. Upon walking into the theatre, you see the stadium-style raised seating where the seats are bolted to each other and to the floor, similar to other theatres. The stage area is styled with light-coloured wood floors and walls with hanging mics coming from the ceiling. There is a door on the other side of the stage, stage left, that leads to the backstage area.

During my time at CON, there were several master classes that brought in noteworthy performers to critique student performances in front of their peers. I attended a flute master class along with about ten classical flute students, as well as a social media marketing master class, contemporary take on the format. During this session, a social media marketer critiqued several students' social media presence and provided advice. This session had approximately thirty people in attendance. There were also advertisements for student performances, both on and off campus which ranged from jazz bands to solo singer

songwriter shows. I attended a jazz performance program recital that filled the smaller black box-style performance space. Off -campus events advertised on flyers on tables and posted around the building were at popular bars and music venues around the city. Walking up and down the main stairwell, each floor had a list of everything found on that floor, for example:

Floor 4

Staff offices (careers, student services)
Large ensemble practice room
Recording studios
Computer lab

The library is split between music books (e.g. Songwriters on Song writing, Orchestration, Encyclopaedia of Popular Music, etc.), CDs and Vinyl records, and sheet music. A 'New Stock' stand has a book on Cultural Theory, a Saxophone Manual, among others. During an observation, I noted:

> "There are about half a dozen people in the library looking at the book and media stock, it is as quiet as one would expect a library, but the blue-haired person at the desk has been louder than I expected her to be. Several people sat in the library are on laptop computers. The back of the library houses about fifteen PCs, about half are in use. Two students have on headphones and appear to be diligently working on something while two others seem to be on Facebook, having a conversation with each other. One person is reading in the corner. One person on a MacBook appears diligently working on something" (16 February 2017 Field Notes).

Music City Conservatoire

The Music City Conservatoire is in a wealthy borough of a major city, which is evident from its stately building facades and the expensive retail stores that dot the streets around the public transportation. The walk from the closest transit stop is less than a ten-minute walk, through rows of cafes and restaurants and past several important cultural institutions popular with tourists. The conservatoire is situated next to administrative buildings as well as being adjacent to a public area where several young people are sat with instrument cases and clear plastic lunch boxes.

The reception area is decorated with carpet floors and wooden ornaments, and brass fixtures line the walls. The hallway to the right leads to floors of practice rooms, classrooms, and a staff canteen area that is set up in a modern style with sleek white tables and chairs, with a

couple of small soft seating areas that people seem to use for reading and other non-food-related activities. Despite the modern styling of this staff room, the architecture of the building remains the same as in the reception area – antique looking wooden floors and fixtures such as ornate moulding along the walls.

Going down the stairs to the ground level, you walk through a courtyard to the main performance theatre and its dedicated reception area, the library, and other empty spaces. Throughout the main reception area and surrounding corridors, you can see marketing material for the new renovations which include state-of-the-art performance and rehearsal spaces. The library is narrow and long, the entrance at one end of the room that you can only access by showing your student ID card. The stacks of hard-bound, gold-lettered sheet music books and music history books are nearly floor to ceiling, and surprisingly several windows since the room does not seem to gather much natural light.

The other hallways of the building lead to classrooms and practice rooms as well as a small recital room that is home to short, weekly public “rush hour” and “lunchtime” recital that takes place in the early evening. During this recital, a small handful of students perform one or two pieces. The recital I attended was sparsely attended, some audience members appeared to be classmates of one performer, and at least two other audience members were the general public, chatting about how they each came to know about these concerts.

The hallways have a similar atmosphere as the reception area, very old and, at one time, presumably very grand. Elements of modernisation are evident for example, in that tablets dotted around the building that will allow students to reserve and view room reservations. If you turn down another hallway to the left, you are met with notice boards along the long walls, some empty, some with headings such as “Woodwind Faculty” and feature photographs of a wind ensemble or information for staff. Other notice boards and paper flyers posted directly on the walls feature information for Student Union elections and Union activities taking place in the coming weeks. One flight down from ground level there is a small workshop which, on most days, included a technician who would tend to various instruments, surrounded by brass and string instruments and lots of non-electric tools and implements.

Inside the student union area are the union officers’ offices, a bar with beer/ale on tap, a hot food bar, and a coffee menu. There are games tables next to several sofas and soft footstools where people can relax. I observed students sitting with their shoes off and feet

tucked under themselves as they read and listened to audio through their headphones. This seating also includes mains and USB plugs. There is one electronic sign featuring ads for the student philharmonic chorus, school amenities, and local music shops. People in the student union seemed generally content, engaged in eating, chatting with other people, sleeping, making woodwind reeds, and looking at their phone. Occasionally a group of boys (I never witnessed girls playing) would pick up a game of pool or snooker, as well.

Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire

Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire, on the edge of the city centre, is next to a local university, which allows conservatoire and university students to intermingle. The building is very modern and sleek, matching the surrounding buildings. The interior of the building is covered in metal fixtures and wood accents with large square stone tiled floor. Inside of the revolving doors, the security desk made for two guards (staffed with one guard during my time there), which also serves as an information point and guide to direct members of the public to performances and other public events. The guard was able to tell me what public performances were happening that day and where to get tickets. The reception area is at the ground level through glass doors, both standard and revolving.

From the security desk, you continue into a large reception area, which is large and open with ample lighting through tall windowed walls and a café area with seating arranged so that people can interact with each other from across the sofa and long tables dotted with chairs along the perimeter. I observed four or five people sat in this area at any given time, casually talking with people and drinking coffee or bottled drinks. The windowed wall that shows the hedges and trees outside is lined with tall cocktail-height tables, each with tall chairs that people also use for drinking and eating.

There is a large staircase to the left and a slightly smaller staircase to the right. The larger staircase leads to practise rooms, ensemble rehearsal space, classrooms, and two performance spaces. The recital hall has a wood-floored stage, while opposite the stage is the audience seating area that is set up stadium-style, with each row higher than the last. The ceiling is open with acoustic tiles hanging throughout the space, as many similar spaces have. The smaller staircase leads to administrative offices and other small meeting spaces. There is ample overhead signage, in a similar style to a department store, leading you from one department to another, and wall signage that tells you what you are immediately approaching, for example:

<- Black Box Theatre
-> Practice Rooms

This is useful for students going to classes and for the public heading towards a performance. The area surrounding QMC includes a few fast food and convenience store options, but outside of the campus, the area is not built up for heavy pedestrian activity. There is a large carpark being built near the conservatoire, evidence that commuting by car is expected. A relatively short walk, about fifteen minutes, gets you to city centre shops and restaurants, as well as public transit hubs. I was at QMC just as the academic year was getting started, and therefore, the number of people observed in the building grew as classes got underway and use of facilities such as practice rooms and rehearsal spaces became busier.

Participant observations and document collection

One of the primary methods of data collection I utilised was participant observation, ranging from descriptive to focused and selective observations (Spradley, 2016). I decided to use this method because it not only “enhances the quality of the data obtained during fieldwork”, as DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland (1998) says, it “enhances the quality of the interpretation of data” (p. 264). I conducted some initial scoping observations as well as participant observations and collected documentary evidence to further deepen my findings. Upon arrival at each of the three conservatoires, I began a short scoping period alongside document collection and analysis, wherein I oriented myself to that individual conservatoire - the physical makeup of the campus as well as the processes occurring within the site. During these first few days, I would walk around each floor of the building and around the campus, getting to know the layout and the places a student was likely to find themselves. Spending time observing the physical characteristics of the building and getting to know my way around helped me to orient myself as to how a student would interact with the environment and the different ways that they might perceive their surroundings.

After figuring out where students seemed to congregate, I worked on becoming comfortable in that space, taking note of how students appeared to use those spaces. These notes helped me to get to know the general ambience within the three conservatoires and also provided useful keys as to how I might approach interviews with students in that setting. This scoping period helped me to become acquainted with the culture of the conservatoire as it exists

within that specific environment. I recorded these observations through the use of field notes, for example:

> the wide set of steps in front of the conservatoire is seems to be a popular spot for groups of students to sit and eat lunch brought from home (many square plastic food boxes to suggest this) … I recognised several students from the conservatoire on the steps. One in a group of girls talks about how hard it is to be motivated because all she has left is the final concert, that she still makes herself come into college but is looking forward to being done. She knows she will miss the school once she graduates but that 6 years is long enough to be at one place (8 May 2017 Field notes).

These field notes helped me provide a foundation of knowledge regarding the institution that provided a context when going into the interviews or analysing documents. Then, based on these field notes, I asked questions from interview participants regarding how they felt about the physical space, the way people used the space, or what they thought about my perceptions about the ambience in the school.

Alongside these preliminary observations, the document collection period helped me construct each institution as a case. The conservatoire's website, their prospectuses, and materials that were made freely available to students inside the building (such as gig flyers, scholarship information posters, and concert series brochures) provided another perspective from what I learned through the initial observations. These documents provided a way of seeing how an institution chooses to characterise itself, the language and the ways it projected itself to the student body, thereby providing an insight into the image that the conservatoire wants people to see. Participant observation began after the short initial scoping period and this small documentary collection, in an effort to acquaint myself and understand the culture of each site – both the explicit and more implicit aspects. DeWalt, et al. (1998) describes this kind of data collection as "a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied" (p. 260). The 'common and uncommon activities' of conservatoire students are primarily social situations such as moving between classes, relaxing in the café, and public concerts or master classes.

My aim, with regard to the participant observation, was to understand the student's viewpoint and perceptions of conservatoire culture to the extent that it is possible, without being a student, myself. With these observational field notes, it was possible to contextualise the

experiences of the participants with more accuracy. This was because a more complete understanding of their environment helped me to draw more accurate conclusions from their experiences. I attempted to see the student experience from the student's perspective, attempting to recognise the unspoken rules that govern the conservatoire and how those rules are understood or, potentially, subverted.

In-depth interview

The in-depth interview is an accepted ethnographic tool (Walford, 2009; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and was central to my data collection. I decided to use this form of interviewing, as opposed to structured interviews or surveys, because with this tool, a researcher is able to look deep into the participant's "social world" (Miller & Glassner, 2016, p. 52). Throughout this thesis and in my data collection, I use Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault's (2016) definition of in-depth interviews as "face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (p. 102). I conducted interviews in a single session with the potential for follow-up correspondence if the participant was willing and thought of more they would like to tell me.

In her book, *Interviewing for education and social science research*, Mears (2009) suggests that this kind of qualitative interview solicits a participant's personal experiences and stories and a "powerful point of entry" into their experiences and way of life (p. 15). Since my research questions aimed to understand the subjective perceptions of students, in-depth interviews seemed the obvious choice. Mears (2009) approaches the interview from the position of building a 'gateway' that connects a particular community with those outside of the group. I was particularly drawn to this approach because so little is known about conservatoire students (relative to mainstream HE students) in higher education literature. My motivations were to understand the ways conservatoire students experience their day-to-day life and provide a platform to help those outside the conservatoire, so I took several cues from this gateway research approach.

In order to gain experience with interviewing, I attended an intensive interviewing workshop at the University of Surrey. Run by the university, this workshop was the first opportunity I had to build interview questions and a semi-structured interview schedule. One of the most useful devices for this was writing down all the questions I might ask to get at detailed information. With one sticky note per question, I then arranged the notes into 'zones' which ultimately

became the jumping-off points for the interviews. The concrete ‘zones’ became questions that served as a springboard to help the interviewee to think about their experiences and beliefs, such as “what does an average week look like for you?” Once they were talking about themselves and their way of life, I could respond to the nuances of their response, of their experiences and feelings about these experiences. Since there was no way of anticipating how each student would respond, the questions that would follow had to be individual to the participant. Mears (2009) suggests that interviewers must be able to hear the meaning of what the interviewee is saying beyond the literal words and to pay attention to the nuances of the interviewee, particularly in non-verbal cues and use of expression (p. 21). These are considerations that I tried to bring into the interviews. I tried to remain attentive and warm, while simultaneously trying to parse out the meaning underneath their words. This did not come easy, and it is a skill that I believe has improved greatly throughout my fieldwork.

I approached the fieldwork and interview process as a researcher, and therefore an outsider, but it quickly became clear to me that my position was not that simple. The interview schedule I developed was semi-structured, leaving ample space for participants to devise their own meaning and direction. I started each interview by asking the interviewee to tell me a bit about themselves; this was both to get an idea of their identity and background experiences as well as to help them become comfortable with talking at length. The printed list of questions started out as a tool that I leaned heavily on, in the beginning, but as I conducted more interviews, I became more comfortable interacting with interviewees. As I became more acquainted with my own interviewer persona, so to speak, I would ask very open questions, such as, “how is it, being a conservatoire student?” and “before you got here, is that how you thought it would be?” but always looked for opportunities to pick up on and further inquire about their perceptions. Admittedly, this aspect of interviewing was what I found most difficult.

While interviewing conservatoire students, I tried to build rapport by giving the participants some information about my own background as a performer. This decision was in consideration of Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault’s (2016) suggestion that a qualitative researcher should try to “construct a situation that resembles those in which people naturally talk to each other about important things” (p. 115). When offering my own experiences, I tried to do so in a manner that didn’t purposefully reinforce or negate their own experiences. I would often frame questions in this way, such as “this was my experience of being part of a tutor’s studio, is this something that happens here or is it pretty different?” My aim in doing

this, and by developing my semi-structured interview schedule, was to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable with discussing their beliefs and thoughts with me and to get closer to an honest account of their experience. This was an effective approach; however, it left the interview open to unspoken mutual understandings about the topics they brought up. My own inexperience with interviewing and past experience as a student musician meant that in early instances it was difficult to negotiate my position, vacillating between insider and outsider.

Along with the student interview participants, I also interviewed academic staff members within the conservatoire. I asked these interviewees to comment on aspects of the conservatoire such as what, if any, relationship exists between the teaching and administrative staff and student body, what role pastoral or counselling care plays in the conservatoire. These springboard questions helped me to identify and corroborate the students' perceptions about the conservatoire. Keeping in mind the need to be attentive to the nuance of the responses, I did not seek out so-called 'ultimate truths' about the conservatoire, but wanted to gain an understanding of how a teaching professional within the conservatoire perceives conservatoire culture. These interviews provided a useful perspective on the conservatoire student experience which helped to bolster the perceptions of students by placing them in another, slightly different, context within the community.

Sampling decisions

Throughout my fieldwork, I was able to recruit 20 participants for in-depth interviews. These individuals contributed significantly to my data, creating a richness of different experiences and perceptions of conservatoire culture. Those interviewed primarily included students but also a couple of faculty members and some amateur musicians who had explicitly decided not to attend the conservatoire. The amateur musicians who did not attend the conservatoire were members of an amateur orchestra in London that I was a member of. This group, while they did not necessarily help me to answer my research questions, did help to refine the contours of my inquiry.

The student participants included current conservatoire students at various stages in their studies, which means that there is still room for development in student identity (Creech et al., 2008). In some cases, participants found through recommendation or social media were very recently graduated (within 24 months of leaving the conservatoire). These students are included because early career development has taken place without being so far removed

from the conservatoire that the subjects' memory of their experiences has faded. Having participants at different stages of their study was important so that the development of identity over the course of their studies could be explored.

Across the fieldwork sites, the 21 participants were spread roughly evenly across the three sites. Some notable facts about the participants:

14 were students (11 musicians and 3 non-music performance students)
- 10 of those students were undergraduates and 4 were master's students or higher
- 4 students were international (European and non-EU)
- 1 was a self-described mature student
- 2 participants were Student Union Presidents
    - 1 was a musician, the other was a non-performer
- 1 identified as a religious minority
- 4 postgraduate students read for an undergraduate degree from a university
- The gender breakdown across student participants was
    - 9 female
    - 5 male

3 participants were tutors/faculty members at different institutions

The four amateur musicians played at a competitive level in Central London. These four musicians played in an orchestra that has a mission to provide performance opportunities for musicians who play at a high level but who have chosen to pursue non-conservatoire education. As I have suggested, these interviews, while not central to my thesis, provided me with an important perspective on conservatoire culture - the informed outsider.

The four participants in this category included:
- 2 alumni of Guildhall School Junior Conservatoire
- 1 alumnus of a music-centric state-run school (UK)
- 1 child of an active professional musician

From these interviews, I gained an insight about why a serious music student might decide to avoid the conservatoire and instead pursue another profession while continuing to perform to a very high standard. These participants also gave their interpretation of what the conservatoire is like, both from a student musician perspective as well as from the

perspective of having friends at the conservatoire; they shared with me what they thought their friends' lives were like as conservatoire students. This information was especially useful when interviewing current students because it provided a British perspective of how conservatoire culture is perceived. I tried to frame questions around this, telling students 'I've heard one particular conservatoire is more suited to a certain type of person' or 'only party people go to another conservatoire', asking them to tell me what they thought of these characterisations.

The process of recruiting participants was one of the most stressful parts of my fieldwork. Once I was in the field and I realised that I would not have a vast sample of potential interview participants due to the limitations presented on-site, it became even more important that I proactively seek out individuals who would be able to add depth and perspective to the data. As I have shown above, despite recruitment setbacks, I was able to learn about conservatoire culture from a varied group who provided rich interview data for the analysis. As I also briefly mentioned earlier, I attempted to identify interview participants by distributing a call for participants via email (sent by the administration to the current student body via existing email lists), and posters were placed throughout the settings and other nearby social gather places in the area. When these methods did not prove to be fruitful early in my fieldwork, I began asking the participants who I did manage to recruit for their referrals. I utilised snowball sampling as a matter of necessity but as noted in my field notes, it appears participants recruited via referral were willing to trust me as a researcher. Both the faculty participants that I interviewed were also gatekeepers at two of the conservatoires. It was a natural decision to interview these individuals that I had been in regular contact with. They provided a useful perspective of the student experience, as individuals outside of that population but directly involved with them. This meant that I was able to see how perceptions can differ (or not) from the perceptions of students actively engaging with conservatoire culture.

While interviewing the participants for this case study, I tried to consider specific elements of personal identity in an effort to achieve a variety of perspectives. In an ideal situation, I would have been able to interview a representative cross-section of the student population, but I was still able to collect rich data from those I was able to recruit. The sample characteristics listed below is what I tried to work from and keep in mind when screening participants, thereby allowing for potential theoretical replication between the cases (Yin, 2012); however, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of what makes a conservatoire student. I wanted to

consider these different elements of a person's identity because, where homogenous backgrounds could predictably create similar case results, different backgrounds have the potential to develop contrasting results. Utilising the sampling criteria Dibben (2006) uses in her study, with participant background and personal or family circumstances as a starting point, an effort was made to highlight specific qualities of conservatoire students.

Characteristics of a participant were considered, where possible:

1. Background - experience with music prior to HE, type of previous schooling, parental occupation
2. Identity - nationality, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age
3. Institutional Identity - what year of study they are currently in, principal instrument, involvement in departmental and institutional ensembles, principal tutor studio
4. Access to HE – are they a first-generation conservatoire student, was their conservatoire their first choice
5. Financial – has the student taken paid employment outside of music, educational funding situation
6. Social - extra-curricular social activities, friend groups

In many instances, these characteristics were brought up during the interview process and wherever possible, I have tried to highlight those elements in the analysis. However, when asking people for referrals it was not uncommon that the participant would specifically refer a friend because of their unique position, such as being from another country or being from a family of musicians. This helped me widen my sample to include different perceptions and outlooks that I otherwise would not have been privy to.

Thematic analysis of the data

As I conducted interviews with the participants, I began to summarise and transcribe the interview recordings. I decided to utilise thematic analysis (TA) because of its flexibility to fit my theoretical framework, as well as its position as a "foundational method for qualitative analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). As a method, TA is pervasive yet there isn't much literature that explains how to go about doing it. Braun and Clarke (2012) offer a concise definition of TA as "is a method for systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set" which then allows the researcher to draw out a sense of shared meaning across the data (p. 57). As Joffe (2012) explains, TA is a tool that helps to clarify how a group of people conceive of whatever phenomenon is being looked at. Since I was interested in exploring the conservatoire student experience, and

taking that exploration across three case studies, TA was the right methodological fit for my data analysis. I decided to present findings for each conservatoire separately within each empirical chapter. By doing this, I could draw comparisons between the institutions and cultivate a more nuanced landscape of the student experience across the themes that arose.

This allowed me to familiarise myself with the data and I began to see some of the themes emerge. I started to develop more nuanced questions in subsequent interviews, as well as deepening my understanding of my observations. While I was in the stage of familiarising myself with the data, I worked through the transcriptions to locate broad themes, initially coding them on paper with a pen and highlighter. These broad themes consisted of elements of the interview that seemed important (these were things that the interviewees said were important as well as aspects of their answers that intimated importance). It was at this stage that I began to see some broad themes emerge across interviews, especially in terms of the way students perceived the conservatoire (see: Appendix 2). At this point, I imported the interview and observation data into NVivo and transferred the broad themes from my printed papers to codes in the program (see: Appendix 3). All the observation and interview data were initially coded without specific concern for where the observation took place or which conservatoire the interviewee was from. This was because I wanted to consider the participants outside of the influence of their institution and how broad themes might translate (or not) across students' experiences.

I went through each interview and extracted these themes, adding them to the determined codes in NVivo. This step was a learning curve as there were a couple of false-starts in shaping the themes. As I have shown in Appendix 2, I was noticing some of the broad contours of the student experience but I failed to look more deeply at what participants were telling me. Looking beyond the words that were said and seeing the importance of how the interviewees used those words, is a skill that took practice, so much so that I ultimately scrapped my entire first attempt at developing a code tree. While it was disheartening to re-start the process of building on the broad themes, it ultimately allowed me to see the depth of information and insight that existed in my collected data. What resulted from the second attempt provided a solid foundation from which I was able to draw inferences and understandings across individual participants and across the three conservatoire cases. By doing this, I ended up with nineteen codes such as, student-tutor relationship, practicing, and guilt.

At this stage, I began to analyse the data more deeply. It was through looking at each broad theme that more granular levels of evidence emerged and informed my exploration of the student experience. For example, from the broad theme of 'practicing' came 'practicing-perceptions', 'practicing-environmental pressure', 'practicing-time management. It was at this level that I started to distinguish the similarities and differences between responses from participants and observations and how that reflected the different conservatoires and suggested that a comparative analysis of these themes across the conservatoires would be useful. The major themes were decided because these granular themes could be grouped into two major perspectives, how the student perceives the conservatoire and how they perceive their role in the conservatoire. Additionally, I decided to dedicate a chapter of my analysis to the student-tutor relationship due to the prevalence of the tutor in how students talked about their perceptions of the conservatoire.

Thematic analysis allowed me to analyse the data in a way that would "highlight the most salient constellations of meanings present in the data set" (Joffe, 2012, p. 209) in the conservatoire, as perceived by the interview participants. Ultimately, I was able to discover thematic patterns across these individual accounts as well as finding instances of when a participant - or the institution itself, as it happened - deviated from those patterns. By working to look beyond the surface of what participants were saying, I prioritised the feelings and perceptions of the interviewees as opposed to being interested in a precise retelling of the actions and activities involved in a conservatoire way of life.

Influence of discourse analysis on this study

An essential aspect of accessing human experience is through use of language. Gee (2005) describes the role of language as more than just a tool for transmitting information but as having a two-fold role "to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions" (p. 1). In other words, language is used to convey ideologies, beliefs, and values (Gee, 2005; Fairclogh, 1989; Qianbo, 2016). The understanding of language as a way to convey values is so pervasive that it is evidenced in situations that attempt to remove bias and subjectivity, such as news broadcasts or reports. When looking at data collected from the conservatoire and the interviews of conservatoire students, it was necessary to remember that "[m]eanings of words are … integrally linked to and vary across different social and cultural groups" (Gee, 2005, p. 53). This understanding was useful when analysing the experiences and perceptions within the conservatoire setting.

In order to understand cultural practices within the conservatoire and the participants in that culture, I looked at the collected interview and observation data. This was not full discourse analysis, but I brought forward the impetus of that methodology to apply it to some conservatoire materials. When analysing printed materials, I took into consideration Gee's (2005) explanation of language that "[w]hen we speak or write we always use the grammar of our language to take a particular perspective on what the 'world' is like" (p. 2, emphasis in original). This concept applies not only to the student perception but also to the conservatoire as an institution. The authoritative figures within the institution can promote an atmosphere (for instance, the metaphorical language used to describe the institution such as 'family' versus 'student body') that shapes a student's perceptions and values.

Concluding thoughts

This chapter has set out to describe my research journey. I have outlined the way I came to decide on an ethnographically informed case study framework, bounding my research around three conservatoires that each act as their own case. By borrowing from ethnography, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with conservatoire students about how they experience their time. I also interviewed a small number of academic staff within the conservatoire who were able to talk about what they thought the student experience was from their role as leaders. This allowed me to take the data that I obtained from students and determine whether that was reflected in what the students had said, or whether the administrators had an entirely different perception of the lives of their students. Additionally, I conducted participant observations in each of the three conservatoires. As Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) put it, with participant observation, "no other method can provide the depth of understanding that comes from directly observing people and listening to what they have to say at the scene" (p. 104). Being present at each of the three settings, witnessing the day-to-day lives of students in their home HE environment, allowed me to gain an understanding of the conservatoire way of life. The journey of fieldwork presented conceptual, physical, and ethical challenges but as each of these presented itself, the process of solving it followed.

After collecting the interview and observation data, I began analysing my findings. I chose to do this through TA because my research questions sought to explore the student experience, finding the connections and differences that existed across students of different backgrounds and histories. By locating these common threads, I was able to examine the student

perception of those commonalities, which might be very different from each other. From this analysis, I was able to identify aspects of the student experience which were common regardless of the conservatoire they attended, certain attitudes that existed primarily at one site or another, and meanings that students ascribed to their experiences that were unique to the conservatoire setting. The following chapter is the first of these empirical chapters which addresses conservatoire culture.

Chapter 5 – Exploring how students experience conservatoire culture

Introduction

In this chapter I will draw on the data collected at the three conservatoires and look at each conservatoire in turn in relation to what emerged after reviewing some of the broad themes that emerged in my data. I do this in order to develop a comparative analysis of how students engage with and interpret cultural values in the conservatoire, while also developing in-depth insights into the specific cultural practices of each institution. I will discuss these finding through the lens of organisational culture.

The conservatoire, as an institute of higher music education, is distinctive within HE insomuch as students are expected to compete against their peers for performance and career opportunities, whereas students in other disciplines at a mainstream university are not expected to directly compete against each other to the same extent. This kind of competition seems to create a difficult environment within which students build friend groups and peer communities and simultaneously, compete against them. However, certain aspects of the conservatoire student experience also seem to share similarities with other mainstream HE settings. For example, incoming students must learn how to navigate the institutional hierarchy – learn how to find adequate support, how to form new friendships, and how to build their peer support systems, among their other social needs. In my fieldwork, I noted that participants identified common discourses of culture within the community, through various and different forms of routine and practices. I explore these behaviours within the conservatoire and utilise the data to illustrate the highly varied and individualistic nature of the conservatoire student experience, ultimately creating a more detailed perspective of the advantages and challenges of that experience.

Career focus in the conservatoire

To examine the career focus of the conservatoire, it is important to understand the career that students are trained and prepared to encounter. The nature of the current-day professional musical career is understood to be predominantly that of a portfolio career (Scharff, 2015; Bennett and Bridgstock, 2014; Musician's Union, 2012; Bennett, 2008) as opposed to conventional contracted or permanent work. This kind of work scenario is referred to as a form of precarious work, characterised as such because it does not have stable hours or earning potential and receives no holiday or sick pay (Scharff, 2015). Musicians in this

scenario rely on a variety of income-earning jobs such as teaching and one-off gigs, part-time ensembles, and sometimes non-performance work to provide themselves with a sustainable income, instead of a single full-time position with an orchestra or ensemble. The early professional music career, as characterised by these irregular and often unstable work opportunities, appears to lend itself to a mentality of feeling obligated to take every opportunity for work that arises as a priority. This came up, not only throughout the interviews but is also part of my own experience as a musician. While the degree to which this applies to each participant varies, there is an understanding that students with strong social networks benefit from more opportunities than those students who have a smaller or weaker network.

During interviews, several participants brought up feelings of stress or anxiety about concerns like expectations and peer pressure (which I will go into in more detail later in the chapter). One of the most common examples of this is the feeling that they should always be practicing their instrument, even after long days of rehearsals or classes. Illustrating this concern, Cara, a flautist working on her master's degree at QMC and who had studied at the conservatoire as an undergraduate, remembers that as an undergraduate she spent "95% of the time practicing". She said this was because students expect – and are expected – to be high achieving, to win awards or competitions, and elite positions in orchestras and ensembles. These expectations are currently some of the dominant markers of a successful Western classical music career and Cara understood that if she wanted those things, it was the quantity of practice that mattered more than anything else. Cara's understanding of conservatoire culture is notable as it illustrates one of the ways that the profession bleeds into the culture of the school, affecting how she interacts with and think about her future career.

Meanwhile, I observed that a student goes through the conservatoire, developing ideas and beliefs about what to expect for their future; a typical news story they would encounter is one of the financial difficulties or dissolution of an orchestra, ballet, or opera (Timeline: A detailed history of the San Antonio Symphony's financial woes, 2018; York, 2013; Cooper, 2016). As an example of this generally negative industry outlook, MCC course leader Florence advised me that news and industry chatter of this nature influences the expectations a student will develop regarding the performance professions. She suggested that the media likes to talk about classical music as elitist and unnecessary and that there were often articles proclaiming that there would be funding cuts within the industry "and then you know, you have a 19-year-old entering into this profession, what kind of emotions do you think they would have?". Since music education is largely elective within the secondary school system

in the UK, it is not surprising to me that students who attend a conservatoire have varying and diverse knowledge of the current state of music performance professions. They may have been introduced to the demands of the performance profession early in their music training or they may have had to rely on media coverage like the kind Florence mentioned. Throughout my fieldwork, I observed students discussing their feelings about the career, about participation in professional-level gigs and about attending networking and industry events. Often these gigs and events arise from an individual's networks and student who comes into the conservatoire with strong social capital engage with the musician community on a high level. These students may have a very different perception of their experience than one who does not. It appeared to me that the conservatoire student, in general, tries to balance their performance studies with networking and gigging, therefore creating an environment wherein the transition from student to professional may feel gradual.

Prioritising practise above all

Throughout my interviews, I noted that one of the primary ways a student seemed to learn to navigate the conservatoire and the community was through their tutor. This relationship, which takes the shape of a master-and-apprentice relationship, has been a part of the conservatoire-style of education from its beginning. It creates a dyad wherein a student is usually expected to believe that their tutor has the final word in how and what they learn as students. In many cases, this seems to be a notion that students willingly adopt. However, I also recorded notable instances where students were aware of the idea that they should wholly accept their tutor's guidance and rejected it. For example, one of my interviewees, John, described a friend who felt that she couldn't tell her tutor she was interested in taking a student leadership role in the conservatoire because "her teacher had told her that she needed to spend more time on the violin". John told me this story to illustrate how hard it was for himself and his classmates to feel like they had agency to pursue a hobby that wasn't music performance and practicing because of how those hobbies are viewed by tutors. In this case, the student felt they had to keep secret their involvement in the student government, an institutional organisation set up for the benefit of the student body. John's anecdote highlights the power the tutor has over the student experience and their pivotal role in the reproduction of behaviours and beliefs within the conservatoire where performance practice is seen as a priority.

Some participants I spoke to talked about being told by their tutors that they should be constantly with their instrument, either by practicing, as was the case with John's friend, or

through more indirect ways. For example, Jacob and Emma talked about their tutors' expectations in terms of feeling the pressure to always be engaged in music. They explained that if they were not actively practicing, they felt pressure to be listening to specific recordings of their repertoire, which Jacob says "is kind of free time but it doesn't feel like free time". Jacob and Emma talked about their tutors' expectations in a way that echoed the story of John's friend. Their tone of voice and body language suggested that engaging in anything other than all-consuming practise and engagement with music would be unacceptable to their respective tutors.

I observed that the use of time spent engaging with music-related activities as a metric of dedication continued as the students transitioned into the professional community. One example of how a student could experience subtle peer pressure to adhere to this belief comes from Sasha, who studied cello as an undergraduate and postgraduate at Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire. During our interview, I asked her about free time, what it means to her and how she utilised it. After explaining that she did not have much free time because of a heavy rehearsal and performance schedule, she went on to talk about post-rehearsal customs and how often her interactions with her classmates are centred around music practice. The experience she described in this extract occurred at a short international training program she attended wherein she spent much of her 'free time' with the other musicians on the course, who regularly brought the events of the rehearsals into the 'free time' conversations. She said:

> I can appreciate good music and I can appreciate a time to talk about it … but when you're on a lunch break, what I would consider my social time, and you've had ten 'til five rehearsals for the last two days, the last thing you want to be talking about is 'Mahler's bar 84, is it a C-sharp or is it a C-natural?' … I think that if you spend all your twenties concentrating on practice, by the time you get to thirty-five onwards, you're gonna be so miserable.

She acknowledged the tendency to adhere to the accepted idea that to be a great musician she must be thinking about and talking about music performance, even in 'down time'. These expectations often seemed to come, in large part, from tutors, and implicitly, through social media memes, in the form of peer pressure or institutional policies. From my observations and interviews, it became apparent that the time a student spends practicing their instrument was seen as a quantifiable, and visible way to showcase their dedication to their music and future career. As students transitioned into the professional community, they seemed to take this aspect of culture with them: the need to not only be professionally competitive but also to

constantly prove their dedication to the profession.

Through my fieldwork, I came to see that the general expectation to practise and be constantly thinking about music was understood by several students as 'how it is', as a fundamental aspect of conservatoire culture, an aspect that was sometimes explicitly communicated to them but also implicitly conveyed through the behaviours of their tutors and peers. Some noted making a concerted effort to escape the pressure to engage continuously with music performance and adopted a number of strategies in the attempt to disengage with the anxieties and pressures of the conservatoire student life and culture, such as making space to spend time with friends or family who are not musicians, going somewhere to be in nature, or even just set a small amount of time aside each day to not think about music. These specific activities are not my primary concern, so much as the acknowledgement that they exist in the first place. The participants' recognition of ways of managing the feelings that come with conservatoire culture are what add nuance to the greater understanding of the individualism of the experience of the practices and behaviours that make up that culture.

Where these aspects of conservatoire culture were noted, to varying extents, by participants across the three conservatoires, to explore how conservatoire culture is experienced it is important to look at how students experience culture at the individual institutions. Each of the conservatoires I visited share a common purpose in preparing students for a career in music but the institutional priorities and values vary greatly. Therefore, in order to more fully investigate how students experience conservatoire culture, I have chosen to examine each school separately. This allows me to analyse the differences between the three institutions more deeply, followed by a comparative analysis.

Conservatoire of the North

As the youngest institution by several decades and the first in the UK to develop several innovative degree pathways, the Conservatoire of the North makes clear its desire to be set apart from other conservatoires. The heavy focus on contemporary music and alternate careers in music performance has created a less-traditional environment and the students I interviewed reflected this insomuch as they seemed to be less focused on the outcome of a traditional classical music career, such as an orchestral placement, after graduation. Of the many concert program flyers and event brochures I gathered on campus, there were fewer than a dozen classical music concerts that primarily featured the 'master' composers of Western classical music. On the other hand, there were several contemporary compositions

featured in the classical music programming, as well as installation works that featured classical instrumentation.

The administration has chosen to market CON as a place where students can fully immerse themselves in their studies, even late into the night. They advertise their opening hours as a prominent marketing point: the institution's website home page advertises that it is "[a] state-of-the-art conservatoire open until 3am … That means more time composing, recording and performing". Initially, I perceived this kind of marketing as increasing accessibility for students with varying schedules. Jesse, a course leader, noted that this out-of-hours building access was an important part of the student life: "they're always playing, doing something. It's not just about timetable sessions here, we're open until 3am and the building is busy until that point and its open again at half-past eight." This outlook toward the late-night and constant activity of students in the building suggests that students value the ability to utilise the building at night but it is also possible that by pushing these extra hours, students could potentially feel a sense of obligation to use those hours.

A crossroads of customary and contemporary conservatoire culture

By talking to students and overhearing their conversations in passing, I began to realise that it seemed to be common for students to treat their studies as interrelated with their career. From MCC students who would sit around a table discussing competitions and gigs their tutors were advising them on, to the creation of audition recordings filled with songs written as part of CON coursework, the vocational nature of the conservatoire was evident even in conversations between classmates. This aligns with my experience as well, at the height of my own music education many recording opportunities and paid gigs arose which impacted what repertoire I worked on with my tutor. Where a non-vocational university student may study for a test and then leave that material behind, a conservatoire student often seems to take what they learn and treat it as a vocational stepping stone. The culture of being constantly engaged in music practice, as I previously described, is perceived as part of 'the job' and the conservatoire experience. Jesse's comments about practice in the life of a performer reflect this: "[i]f you're a performer you need to be the best, you should be practicing around 6, potentially up to 8 hours a day to be quite honest." To partake in 6 to 8 hours of practice is a full-time job by itself, and when combined with coursework and rehearsals in which a student is required to partake, it seems unlikely that a student will be able to accomplish all of these tasks during a normal working day. Therefore, the late opening hours mentioned in the previous section would be necessary for many students. I noted that

some students at the other two institutions had notable experience practicing outside of regular hours; participants who were part of junior conservatoire programs or youth orchestras spent time practicing outside of the regular school day, which some suggested helped prepare them for the conservatoire culture around practicing. Many of the interview participants I was able to talk to at CON were studying contemporary genres and careers and therefore did not have the same kinds of background experience.

While this portrayal of performance practice (hours spent with their instrument in a practice room) is still a dominant understanding of practice, CON's focus on modern music industry careers and innovation in the conservatoire tradition, may allow students to find practice in other ways. Examples of these alternatives included providing rehearsal spaces like the black box theatre on campus, promoting gigs in non-conservatoire venues such as pubs or music festivals, and at home with portable recording, composing, and other technologies. The way that Sarah (undergraduate popular music student) talked about her daily routine was different from the many of classical performance students I interviewed at the two other conservatoires. When she spoke about her days, there seemed to be more separation between her studies and career. This meant that while she did what was required of her for her coursework, she also focused on getting her music out into the industry, for example, by submitting her recordings to festivals and playing gigs. She considered these tasks to be outside the confines of her course and separate from what she was trying to accomplish professionally, despite the overlap between her studies and professional aspirations.

Throughout my time at CON, I felt that there was a tension within the institution regarding the extent to which it drew on conservatoire customs and the extent to which it forged new territory untouched by those accepted customs. This was especially the case in terms of the tradition of long practice hours. Conservatoire of the North makes a point of departing from some of the more customary cultural aspects of the classical music conservatoire by focusing on contemporary careers and alternative genres of music performance. This is evidenced by how Riley and Sarah talked about their daily routines: their connections and interacting with networks played a large role in their lives. Meanwhile, at an institutional-level, there endures a tradition of believing that long practice hours are central to career success, such was the case when Jesse suggested that any student "should be practicing around 6 … hours a day". Students, on the other hand seemed to prioritise building their social capital by networking and making industry connections that are not always based on auditions and competitions.

Cultivating an institutional culture of collaboration

While walking around and acquainting myself with the school, I found a small booklet published by CON which included basic information and guidance about aspects of the music industry. In addition to providing a glossary of what people with certain job titles do, such as 'artist liaison', it contained interviews with alumni who were working in the industry. Many of the interviews highlighted the value and importance of networking, of sharing experiences with others in the industry and building community. This is a value that the school has cultivated through different aspects of the school. It is notable that as an institution CON has created a culture wherein the students and staff regularly interact outside of the formal learning-teaching environment.

Performance students at the school regularly participate in showcases and workshops in which they perform as solo musicians and ensembles with their fellow classmates. These showcases are part of the coursework for students, regular events for each of the different performance programs. The performance showcase I attended included a full audience, filled with students whose faces I recognised from interviews and master classes, tutors and administrators, as well as many others. Four ensembles played a full set, filled with renditions of standard jazz tunes and new compositions. One group even mentioned that they had recently returned from a jazz festival in Europe, signalling that the group is actively performing together outside of the requirements of their studies.

The large presence of students and individuals, who I recognised as tutors and staff members, at the showcase suggested to me that attending these performances was a common form of supporting performing students. The audience mingled with performers during the interval, drinking soft drinks, wine, and beer from the nearby student union café/bar. During regular business hours, the student union is a café and takes up most of the first level of the conservatoire, with a wealth of tables and seating throughout the area that acts as a concourse to other areas of the building. During my observations, I saw students using the space as a common area for reading, writing, eating, conversing and napping. The staff and tutors also regularly use this space as a place to meet, eat and relax. Jane, a tutor in the Music Business department, described the cafe environment as one where staff and students intermingle throughout the day. She said that often tutors will sit with students and eat lunch or use the cafe as a place to meet and discuss other things. This idea of the café as a place where students and tutors interact on a similar level, embodies an ethos of collaboration that is promoted in the curriculum through cross-program collaborations and

events such as the annual showcases that tutors and students come to see.

The school also tries to implement a culture of collaboration at policy-level. Jesse described the students as an integral part of the CON structure, saying "[w]e try to involve students in all of the decision-making processes, really. We have a student-staff forum where reps can talk… Any curriculum changes, we involve the students… [they're] part of the fabric." This contrasts with my perception of other conservatoires, where students seemed to be afraid to tell their tutors about anything that they did outside of practicing. Even though one-to-one contact time is significant in all three conservatoires, this kind of involvement between tutors and students at CON appeared to me to be a distinctive characteristic of this school.

The sense of collaboration, support and community is evident in the high attendance numbers at those performances I attended and in the informal interactions that take place at the café. In a similar regard, Jane told me that many of her tutor colleagues take great interest in their students' development as professionals. She explained that many try to help students to make music industry connections and provide assistance with career building and part of that includes a concerted effort to attend performances and take part in their musical life.

Concluding thoughts on CON

Conservatoire of the North, the youngest of the three schools, appeared to be less tied to customary conservatoire culture than the other two schools. The institution has a smaller classical music program that programs a lot of contemporary works in their concert series. From what I observed, they place a heavy emphasis on the pop and jazz genres, along with other non-performance industry careers. The small size and collaborative nature of the staff-student relationship seems to have cultivated a strong entrepreneurial atmosphere, as I saw in my observations, interviews, as well as looking at the institution's website, publications and prospectus. Several interview participants also confirmed this by giving examples of entrepreneurship that involved milestones of success such as building a submission plan for festival performances, being part of an already successful national music group prior to coming to CON and creating a social media brand for their music professional profiles.

The non-traditional nature of the CON curriculum (non-traditional in relation to the customary conservatoire focus) suggested to me that students feel more agency to improvise different avenues of music mastery, as opposed to the long, solitary hours of practicing so prevalent in

the other two conservatoires. This was in contrast to the notion that one course leader offered, suggesting that students should be practising 6 to 8 hours a day. The way students at CON approach a career in music appeared to be underpinned by the assumption that making connections with each other and the community is paramount, often even over practice time. From well-attended showcases to final projects, students seem to be interested in the music community around them and keen to be part of it more than they were interested in routinely practicing eight hours every day. I recorded instances of CON students prioritising non-traditional performance opportunities, such as was the case with Sarah and Riley, to hone their skills. However, this could also be a kind of pressure, albeit a different kind of pressure: that of building a self-sustaining career This seems to me to be a significant departure from the practices of the established conservatoire where value is placed on the solitary activity of practice.

Music City Conservatoire

The Music City Conservatoire is situated in an affluent area of a major city around the corner from several cultural institutions and maintains a worldwide reputation as an elite conservatoire. The main conservatoire building elicits a stately aesthetic, sculpted hardwood bannisters and marble staircases. The institutional focus on the customary high-standards of the classical tradition is also reflected on their website. The home page of the website features a full-screen image of a pianist performing in front of an orchestra in a glimmering, dark wood panelled concert hall and is emblazoned across the information page. This imagery serves as a backdrop for the gold award graphic highlighting the institution's results in the Teaching Excellence Framework. The beginning of the school's prospectus promises that students will find "agents, publishers, and bookers regularly attend our events" and students benefit from the opportunity to play with a number of the top UK ensembles.

The conservatoire has a reputation for training elite Western classical musicians. Their curriculum is rooted in the traditional pedagogy of classical music training as it has existed and evolved for over one hundred years, as mentioned on their website and the prospectus, which dedicates an entire section to notable alumni and their achievements. Whereas CON's program is small and in some cases, there is only a single tutor for a given instrument specialism, MCC is a larger institution and a student goes through a selection process wherein they are assigned to a tutor, or in some specialisms, a small handful of tutors. The website and signage in the building advertise that practice rooms here are open 24-hours. I found that during normal business hours, the practice rooms are mostly in use and finding an

empty and available practice room during these hours was difficult without having reserved one in advance. Postgraduate violinist David noted that his entire day's schedule was upended because his practice room reservation didn't get processed properly. Like the late-hours of practice rooms at CON, the 24-hour schedule may therefore be useful to those who are able to practise during unsociable hours as rooms are more readily available. Conversely, the 24-hour availability could also be seen as a tool to perpetuate pressure on a student to practise and remain constantly engaged with their music.

Students with portable instruments, on the other hand, can practise anywhere because they can pick up their instrument and find somewhere suitable. This was experienced as extra pressure by oboist Deanna, who pointed out that while a percussionist could be expected to practise long hours, if they need a vibraphone and none are available, it isn't necessarily deemed to be their 'fault'. I understood this to imply that students who can practise anywhere are subjected to particular expectations. This is further confirmed in the way MCC markets student accommodation, which is advertised as having sound proofed practice rooms right in the building as well as acoustically treated rooms that limit sound emissions so that students with portable instruments can practise in their building. Looking at the marketing brochure, the three levels of room (non-en suite, en suite and studio) share a few commonalities: small double bed, desk and chair, wardrobe, and the practice amenities that I mentioned. There is the sense that removing any barriers to practicing was viewed institutionally as a basic essential.

The cultural significance of practise as a way to show dedication in the conservatoire

The pressure to be constantly practising and constantly engaged with music at MCC seemed to be a point of tension for participants. The students I interviewed often contrasted the expectation to practise as much as possible and their desire to break away from this mind-set and find a workable balance between practice and other activities. Indeed, students sometimes spoke disapprovingly of those who they perceived as willingly engaging in the reproduction of this aspect of conservatoire culture. I also noted an awareness among students that there are often different unspoken requirements according to instrument specialism. For example, student participants seemed to agree broadly with the general understanding that vocalists are expected to spend the least amount of time practising and at the same time must pay special attention to their body because their voice is their instrument. The expectation then rises across the faculties, woodwind and brass students being expected to practise more than vocalists and string players feeling that they are expected to practise

more than anyone else. When I asked about this unspoken understanding, most students were, without hesitation, able to locate themselves along this practice time continuum, suggesting that this is an implicit cultural norm and shared understanding. I could identify with this notion, recalling good-natured banter amongst fellow musicians about stereotypes and expectations as a violist.

At MCC, there appeared to be no let up on the pressure to practise, even when illness struck. When undergraduate bassoonist Samantha took a health intercalation due to a minor bug that had steadily become severe due to her practice regimen, which consisted of hours of practice every day. Despite knowing that she should rest in order to overcome the illness, she continued to feel the pressure to carry on despite no one directly telling her to do so. She talked about feeling a need to work constantly on her music and even continued to practise in some capacity while home for a term break, after being told by her tutor not to pick up her instrument. During this time, she was so concerned with her progress and keeping pace with her coursework that she crafted a building from scratch to look like MCC, because she was physically unable to practise. She explained that she did this because she felt such a strong compulsion to practise that even when she couldn't, she felt she needed a connection to the conservatoire. After mentioning this, she immediately acknowledged that she felt "crazy" for being that devoted to working on her music and acknowledged that she needs to consider more time to rest and disengage from that mind-set sometimes.

Thus, alongside the pressure to practice, there seems to be an awareness that this pressure is sometimes to the detriment of a student's wellbeing. For example, in an effort to fight the perception that one must practice long hours, student government representative and clarinet player John wanted to help create a conservatoire environment where "students [understand] that they can do other things and not feel guilty … that they can practice, but then also having other interests is only going to enhance what they do here." He felt that his undergraduate experience at a mainstream university had given him insight as to how to bridge these two kinds of settings and incorporate an aspect of university life he felt would benefit conservatoire students.

Highlighting the culture that makes it easy to reproduce these expectations, Florence, who in addition to her role as a course leader, is a professional pianist and former conservatoire student in Europe and further abroad, acknowledged that practice time is often used as a quantifiable means of measuring dedication. Reflecting on her early piano education in

Europe, she realised that she had never been told the importance of taking a break. She said that she felt there was constant amongst MCC students and more generally, conservatoire students, before they even came to the conservatoire: "…it is so imbedded by the time they get here that it actually takes some serious guts to break the habit of working all the time." Her comment highlights the difficulty that some participants reported when attempting to justify taking regular time away from practice and their music, to achieve what they felt was a more satisfying work/practice life balance. To push back against the culture of practicing long hours, she suggested, one must have "a space in one's life to just, to get bored, [that] is very important. And that's my advice to them always … to find that space to take a break."

How students interpret an institutional culture of competition

The way students at MCC interacted with their peers suggested to me an acute awareness of their position within the hierarchy. As a tutor, Florence noted a pervasive competitiveness amongst students, often unspoken and implicit but present nonetheless. She noted how this was evoked even without actually interacting with another student: "[students] probably see their friends practicing in the room all the time, every day. So, there's peer pressure, there's all sorts of pressure." The simple act of seeing their peers practicing when they are not can cause anxiety or pressure for a student. Mary, a master's level vocal student, related to this culture of competition saying that "[at MCC] it can become quite obsessive and that's what I don't think is healthy." This pressure to practice is common across conservatoires; however, I was particularly aware of it at Music City Conservatoire. David (postgraduate violinist) discussed this idea of how "obsessive" students can be about practicing or proving themselves in response to a question about free time:

> …we're all quite ambitious here, to do something with our life … and we feel we can just carry on all day doing the same stuff and dedicate 100, 150%. [We are] dedicated to this one thing we are looking for and uh, I don't think that's the right way. But it's also really scary to dare to [have] free time … and you start thinking, all my competition what are they doing at the same time? And it's bad, that's the vicious spiral.

Overall, I noted students bringing up the competitive nature of conservatoire culture as an accepted part of the conservatoire experience. Mary's account of the lunchtime routine of sitting at a table in the café with her peers illustrates how pervasive this competitiveness is. She talked about how the group's conversation often turned into a discussion of who was booking gigs, and whether a person would be participating in various competitions or programs. These students, nearing the end of their studies, were competing for roles in the

school showcase and other outside, non-MCC productions. The competitiveness, according to Mary, would then continue throughout subsequent interactions outside of a performance setting:

> singers will sit around a table chirping about how much work they've got on or that they've this gig coming up which then makes you feel terrible because you don't have those gigs or you don't have anything coming up so you panic and think 'well I need to go and find something like that' so the time you would have had relaxing or learning some music that would be useful long term, you go and panic you've not got any gigs which is ridiculous because they're just saying that because they're concerned that they've not got enough going on. That's their insecurity that they're putting onto you. But every time, I pick up on it. Every time.

Later in the interview, she also described these same classmates, saying, "you really bond with the guys in your year because you do survive a lot. You take a lot of harsh criticism, you get a lot of dressings down and that really bonds you I think." So, on the one hand, it appears that classmates form a kind of support network, sharing experiences of stress and accomplishment in the academic setting, while simultaneously the same classmates reproduce a subtler form of competition and pressure. It seemed to me that students at MCC process the steep expectations that they feel as students of an elite conservatoire by actively working on mastering their instrument or music and to accomplish more, whether it is out of drive, out of fear, or something else entirely.

How certain kinds of performances are perceived by students differently

During my fieldwork at MCC I attended a handful of small performances that were part of a regular series that students participated in. These performances were short concerts in the early evening, aimed at allowing the public an opportunity to partake in classical music performance outside of the standard theatre or concert hall setting. The concerts that I attended took place in a small, formal recital room outfitted with twenty chairs and a grand piano. Each performance included three musicians, who performed for roughly twenty minutes each. These sessions were not well attended: at one concert, there were only four attendees (not including myself), two of whom were discussing how they come to these performances after work because they enjoy classical music. During this performance, four young people came in part way through the session and left before it had finished. I later observed these young people in the hall outside of the recital room talking with the performer they had seen, who appeared to be around the same age and friendly with the others.

Compared with CON where the recitals were well attended, the emptiness of the recital room was a surprise to me. There are many possible reasons why the recital room was not full (schedule conflicts seem possible, since the concerts took place in the early evening), but my experience was that there did not appear to be a significant culture of performance support amongst students. The collaborative culture that I observed at CON was not so evident at Music City Conservatoire. David, during our interview, shrugged off my inquiry about the lack of attendance, explaining that many postgraduates use these short concerts as a practice-run of repertoire for bigger recitals. Implicit to his response was that these smaller concerts are not a priority for the performing students themselves and therefore, other students do not feel the need to show up.

Concluding thoughts on MCC

From my observations and interviews at MCC, it was evident that the institution highly values its reputation as an elite, world-class conservatoire. In contrast to CON, their website shows images of classical music that involve opulent symphony halls and tuxedoed musicians. The culture amongst students is highly competitive, as demonstrated in the prevalence of talk about auditions and competitions, as well as more subtly in the ways that students interacted with their friendship groups. The focus on network-building at CON could be seen as ultimately competitive since it is about individuals acting in self-interest to get ahead. However, at MCC there appeared to be less of the overt collaboration or support I witnessed at CON, which may have contributed to my perceiving support and competition as a binary.

Constantly interpreting the actions of those around them, students at MCC talked about their peers as their competitors in the professional community, while also relying on them as a support system while going through the rigours of the conservatoire. Careers in music performance are precarious and at MCC it appeared that a prevalent interpretation of this precarity is that one must practice all the time in order to maintain an edge over ones' peers. More so than at CON, I noted that MCC students envisioned a career path that more closely resembled the customary orchestral musician's career. This may add to what I observed as the noticeably competitive culture of the school. I have shown how pressure in the conservatoire community does not solely come from the tutors or faculty but seems to exist subtly among peers, seen in the busy practice rooms and in student interactions which are coloured by implicit competition.

Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire

Queen's Metropolitan Conservatoire appeared to inhabit a space between CON and QMC in regard to an adherence to the customs and norms of the conservatoire. The school is primarily focused on classical performance but has developed Music Technology and Jazz performance degree pathways, as well as being home to a number of reputable non-classical performance ensembles that students can audition for (such as one which recently released a commercial album). The school has operated largely independently despite being affiliated with a university, allowing organisational decisions to be made without significant university involvement. At an open day I attended, parents and prospective students were told that students could take a course at the university but the student presenter sheepishly suggested that this was not especially popular amongst conservatoire students.

The school focuses their marketing on showcasing a conservatoire that has been updated for the modern needs of traditional conservatoire students, with regular social media posts as well as press releases on their website. The school boasts state-of-the-art performance and practice facilities open until late-night, every day. Similar to the other two settings, having all-hours practice rooms may be beneficial for some students with extenuating circumstances, or those who feel they work better during off-hours, but by advertising the opening hours as a point of pride, the institution is implicitly promoting the idea that students should consider utilising the practice facilities during unsociable hours. Because of the individual-centred nature of the conservatoire, each student may ascribe meaning to different aspects of the experience. As with CON and MCC, the long hours of the campus practice rooms allow for utilisation by students with irregular schedules, but this could also be seen as perpetuating the mind-set that quantifiable amount of time spent engaging with music is an important indicator of progress and dedication.

Building relationships in an atmosphere of both support and competition

As at CON, I noticed a tension among QMC students in that peers were viewed as both direct competition and forming their primary support system. Building a support group amidst the same people that are both direct and indirect sources of competition appears to be a major factor in shaping the student experience. As students enter the conservatoire, they look to make friends and cultivate a support network, an element that Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggest is a primary influence on the student experience. While doing this, however, they must simultaneously navigate the rest of the conservatoire hierarchy, in which individual students want to stand out and be viewed as accomplished amongst their peers. This indirect

competition (to stand out amongst their peers) is also accompanied by the overt competition of auditions and formal competitions that are common within higher music education. While discussing student culture at QMC, postgraduate flautist Cara reminisced back to her earlier years as an undergraduate. When asked to tell me about her experiences of the studio system in the conservatoire, Cara reflected on cultivating relationships in a competitive culture:

> …there's definitely some, kind of, groups and gangs of people that used to kind of stick around together and that's still kind of prevalent, if not even more so now. Smiley and happy to each other's face but yeah, it's something I've seen at every college, there is that kind of thing going on. It's just a different kind of way of how they show it and how proud - or not - of it they are or even acknowledge it. It's definitely a common music college thing.

Cara's characterisation of these peer groups as gangs is striking. While the term was used with an air of good-heartedness in this instance, it was clear in her tone and uneasy body language that these groups are cliques of students that can be a source of stress. However, shortly after, Cara spoke very positively about the culture of support: "[QMC] was good in the undergrad days, because it really nurtured me." Her peers represented cliques and competition on the one hand and being the source of nourishment on the other, illustrating the complexity of relationships within the conservatoire culture.

At QMC, students are separated into faculties by their general specialism (e.g. woodwind, brass, string, and vocal) and further grouped together by their specific instrument (e.g. string players are separated into violin, viola, cello, and double bass), much as they are at Music City Conservatoire. As I discussed in chapter 2, larger conservatoires such as QMC can have several primary study tutors within an instrument group, and those students who study with one particular tutor (often referred to collectively as a tutor's studio) find a built-in community by being part of that studio. Greta recently finished her undergraduate degree at QMC and had recently begun a master's degree at one of the London conservatoires. Discussing the differences between her time at QMC and her new program, she recalled the change in camaraderie. She noted that there was a considerable difference between life as a string player at QMC and in London, specifically regarding the competitive environment at the London conservatoire versus the sense of community she felt with her fellow instrumentalists at QMC:

> I mean [we] were literally glued together [at QMC], it didn't matter what teacher you had … [but here] you're actually fighting to have a job at some point, these are

> people you might need to compete with. Now it's settled down a bit after a while and now I do have some [cello] friends [at the London conservatoire] but it's nowhere near as a group feeling as it was [at QMC], I mean that's really one of the major things that I was really like 'Oh!'.

In one instance the string players are so tight knit, they are 'literally glued together', intimating a sense of support and camaraderie, while the London conservatoire instrumentalists are described very differently, as 'fighting' for work. Certainly, the London conservatoire, which also is a largely traditional conservatoire of the Western classical music focus, will have a different culture from Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire. However, what I found interesting was that Greta's desire to find the kind of peer support she had experienced at QMC, was thus far largely unmet. Her surprise at the stark difference between the QMC and the London conservatoire music student communities highlights the different experiences that one can have within a similarly structured conservatoire.

Culture at QMC is not especially unique insomuch as the structure and organisation that students find themselves in generally follows a traditional conservatoire environment. The students seem to be aware of the pressures and competition amongst fellow students, both direct and indirect, and I noted instances where students find themselves navigating the student body in an effort to build support systems that are necessary for a healthy personal development. The relationships that a student develops between their peers as well as with the conservatoire, will likely affect their overall experience of the culture and therefore their perceptions of conservatoire culture more generally.

Creating space within a culture of competition

One of the interview questions that I asked all participants was what, in their diary, a regular week looked like. When I asked this question, most participants were quick to add that there was no such thing as routine but that they could speak generally about the kinds of activities that make up their week. Because of the freelance lifestyle of musicians, and certainly conservatoire students as well, this was not surprising to me. Greta talked at length about how much her week varies and how much of an effort she must make in order to balance her health and wellbeing, with networking, conservatoire-related work and gigs. Cara, on the other hand, described her routine more generally. She explained that currently she spent 60-70% of her time on music, which included practice, rehearsals, lessons and other performing related activities, while the rest of her day was spent on administrative work which included emails, scheduling, invoicing and other paperwork tasks. As a flautist, it is easy to see how

Cara felt a sense of pressure to devote 70% of her day to performing, knowing that the rest of her day would be needed to keep up with administrative tasks. When talking about their routines and practices, I was struck by the resilience of musicians. When asked if there was anything she wished she had more time for, Cara noted that she would like to have more focus during her personal practice time because she feels that her focus dips quickly after feeling ambitious at the start. The diaries of both these students were predominantly filled with irregularly scheduled performance-related activities, which is not especially surprising, but I had expected to hear that they would like more time for non-music hobbies or 'free' time. This suggested to me that the mind of a conservatoire student is centred on music and related activities not as a job, per se, but as a lifestyle that one never really steps out from.

Sasha, alumnus undergraduate string player, echoed this disposition when she talked to me about the unspoken expectations that different instrumentalists encounter regarding self-guided practice hours. She described the students' relationship with practicing in a way that amounted to a continuum – the amount of time one was expected to spend practicing increased depending on where your instrument was situated within the unspoken understanding of institutional norms referred to earlier in the chapter. Sasha's understanding echoed the view of participants at MCC with regards to this continuum: practice time expected by conservatoire superiors (tutors and other academic staff), from least to most, was "vocalists, brass players, saxophone, woodwind, percussionists, string players." From the way Sasha explained these expectations to me, it seemed clear that there is an understanding that it referred to the practice done alone in a practice room or at home in addition to any orchestra or ensemble rehearsals. Recalling her free time as an undergraduate and evoking a notion of unspoken pressure to practise mentioned at MCC, Sasha talked to me about using her lunch break to wait in line for a practice room. She said that she and friends would queue for the 'first come, first served' practice room area, which allowed them an hour of practice time, saying, "as sad as that sounds, that's pretty much how the social scene would go." Students of different instruments may learn these unspoken expectations through interacting with classical music culture, by experiencing these constructs within the conservatoire and accepting it as 'how it would go'. For Sasha, queueing for a practice room – which would allow students to see each other engaged with practicing – and then proceeding to practice, was what immediately came to mind when I asked her about how she spent her 'free' time at Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire.

Feeling peer pressure by seeing classmates practicing through the windows of the practice

rooms, the tacit denunciation of taking time off for oneself, and projected feelings of competition amongst peers were all referred to when many QMC students spoke about how they spent their time. In some cases, these perceptions were tied to their position as students while at other times, were more generally related to the music performance community. The student and semi-professional identity often overlap when students compete to perform in master classes, audition for school ensembles or to have a place in showcase performances and other formalised competitive situations. These students repeatedly compete with their peers in an effort to feel accomplished or up to par with their classmates. Sasha spent otherwise 'free' time queuing for a practice room which was an hour that many others did not utilise while students like Cara or Greta talked about how they spent their time in more amorphous terms, estimating practice time as a percentage rather than specific time slots. QMC students talked a lot about the lifestyle of the musician, from both positive and negative perspectives but often pointing toward the culture of competition.

Concluding thoughts on QMC

As an institution, QMC appears to be more closely aligned with the priorities of MCC than Conservatoire of the North. From what I observed, the school maintains high expectations of their students regarding their technical mastery and artistic development. Upon entry into the institution, students seem to enter into a tacit understanding that music and practice come before other activities and that the work put into music is quantifiable (judged by hours spent in the practice room, number of gigs obtained, or other achievements). These expectations appeared to affect the relationships they built with their peers. The noted idea of cliques and 'gangs' of people within the school was more prevalent here than in the other two conservatoires. These gangs were discussed in both positive and negative terms, in that a tight-knit group of people provided a nurturing or supportive social group as well as being imbued with an institutional competitive culture that divided or students from each other or isolated them.

The pressure to always be engaged with music and their studies seemed a pervasive institutional characteristic. In one way, this was done by scheduling everything around rehearsals and practice, as explained by Greta, with priority being given to any performance-related opportunity. It was also notably important to manage perceptions, to make dedication visibly evident, by using a lunch hour to go stand in line and wait for a practice room that made one's dedication visible, as Sasha noted. In this way, QMC appears to cultivate a culture that echoes the Paris Conservatoire tradition.

Analysing culture across all three sites

At each conservatoire, I found what appeared to be a distinct culture and reputation. However, I also identified significant common threads in terms of the student experience. Each conservatoire followed the Paris Conservatoire format and adhered to the values that have emerged from that format to varying degrees. One commonality is the centrality of one-to-one tuition. All three institutions seemed to have similar expectations in terms of the level of musicianship new students needed. Furthermore, as all HE students, the conservatoire musicians had to adapt to the setting, learn to navigate the student body to find and cultivate a supportive community, and learn to manage their time and studies effectively. The specific pressures of the conservatoire were evident, of which the pressure to engage with their music studies and be building their professional network features widely in the accounts of students. These notions relate back to practise as a significant indicator of conservatoire culture. It is also notable that students at each institution talked about having to figure out how to navigate the conservatoire in a way that helped their studies, while simultaneously thinking ahead to their future careers and life after the conservatoire. The perception of having one eye on studies and the other eye on career was notable across students at all three schools.

Conservatoire of the North seemed to follow the customary conservatoire organisational structure and pedagogical format, while simultaneously attempting to transform some of these characteristics to work with new and emerging areas of the music industry. The institution sets itself apart from the other two schools is in its offer of degree programs in contemporary subjects such as music business and popular music. They maintain the practice of one-to-one tuition in these programs, allowing students to receive a traditional conservatoire education but rooted in the modern music industry. At all three of the conservatoires, I observed that the dyad of one-to-one is seen as the most effective pedagogy even outside of the confines of accepted institutional norms. For example, a Song Writing student at CON would study under a songwriter and a Music Business student should study with a tutor who has industry experience, both in a similar manner to which a classical violin performance student studies under a specific violinist. Where CON seemed to differ from MCC and QMC, despite similar organisational structures, is in the way students at CON spoke about their way of life. Students I interviewed spoke less about the pressure to practice long hours and spoke instead about the pressure of creating and building business and performance opportunities in the industry. Students at CON, however, still felt that discretion was necessary when interacting with their peers, as illustrated by Riley's description of

interactions with her classmates as sometimes feeling opportunistic and self-serving, rather than community-minded.

In the more traditional Western classical music-focused conservatoires, QMC and MCC, students appeared to feel more notably the pressure to engage constantly with their studies and practice. These students spoke of the (sometimes unspoken or indirect) pressure to compete with fellow classmates in an effort to feel or be seen as an asset to their tutor or institution. A conversation, noted in passing at QMC, involved a fellow student's appearance on a popular website and how they were 'fine with it' in a tone that suggested they were not actually fine with it. Observations like these elicited a kind of competitive tone, that the success of a peer may not be a welcome sight. Meanwhile at MCC, Mary discussed with me the psychological toll of hearing about fellow students' accomplishments in that it could lead to anxiety and ultimately burn-out. This anxiety or stress about the perceived successes of their peers seemed to originate from many places but had a similar effect, insomuch as individual students felt the need to keep practicing, keep listening to the repertoire, keep networking and struggled to resist the perception that 'taking a break' was practice time wasted.

However, the institutions appear to benefit from the successes of students: successful students can be used in marketing efforts such as 'notable alumni' lists in the prospectus and press releases to advertise the prestige of the performance programs. This may help transmit a sense of competition, one that seemed to me most acute at MCC, which as I described, has a reputation as an elite institution around the world and does list the accomplishments of their alumni for prospective students and general marketing. Participants at MCC and QMC, and to a certain degree at CON, spoke of competition amongst their peers as an inherent part of their experience of conservatoire culture. In the instance, mentioned earlier wherein Mary was sat with her peers over lunch chatting she noted very different feelings about this one occasion. In the scope of just a few sentences she went from describing her vocalist classmates with a sense of camaraderie to that of direct competition, anxiety, and stress. The prominence of competition within the conservatoire environment, in some ways, speaks to the cultural position of practising and also speaks to the influence that the performing career has on the conservatoire. In many cases, the competition reported by participants was brought on by gigs and opportunities that were perceived as career-forwarding.

Both QMC and MCC participants implicitly recognised an understood continuum of

expectations in terms of how much time a student should spend practising. Participants noted an understanding that vocalists were expected to practice the least amount of time to protect and care for their vocal cords. Woodwind and brass students were expected to practise more than the vocal students and string players were expected to spend the most amount of time practising. The position of various brass and woodwind instruments varied, depending on who was speaking. Participants suggested reasons for this, such as the fact that string players do not utilise their lungs to practice, but no one had a reason that they felt conclusively explained these different expectations.

Institutional characteristics and the effect on culture

Throughout my fieldwork, it became quickly apparent that there were multiple capital projects in various stages at the conservatoires. From new buildings to renovations of old buildings, the physical environment was evolving. In some ways, the changing aspects of the physical building that students spend time in, for example new state-of-the-art facilities, will undoubtedly have an outward effect on the ways in which students interact with the conservatoire and each other. However, the institutional culture does not change just by updating resources or renovating the architecture. The culture of the conservatoire is, in part, informed by the physical surroundings but the different characteristics that already exist across the three sites (Modern architecture versus stately Edwardian, for example) do not seem to have drastically altered the way that students interact with each other. At all three sites, students demonstrate dedication to the music performance community. The physical characteristics of the conservatoire, such as the architecture, do not seem to be as valuable to the culture of commitment and dedication to music as the ways in which these physical characteristics are promoted.

All three schools advertise their late-hours (or 24-hours) practice rooms as increasing accessibility without really addressing the fact that the embedded culture around practising could appropriate this policy point as further reason that a student should get at least 6-8 hours of practice into a day. This culture can be detrimental to students' work-life balance and put huge pressure on them which can be detrimental to their wellbeing. It is evident that each conservatoire community urges students to achieve to a high standard and seeks to provide the tools to make that possible, such as having facilities available to suit different schedules. While students with outside commitments may find these hours important as they may not otherwise be able to practice, the open-all-hours policy also implicitly conveys to students that they should practise at all hours. Each institution would communicate their priorities to the

wider student body through marketing and printed materials as well as in how the administration and staff choose to talk about policies. For example, at CON, the building's opening hours are made front-and-centre on the webpage and is a central selling point of the school, as confirmed by Jesse while QMC has a 24-hour live broadcast of performance and practice space availability on its website. MCC appeared to place an emphasis on their reputation as a historically elite institution, their high-achieving students and alumni being very visible in the student prospectus and website.

All three schools appear to emphasize the notion that that a student will both need and want to work hard and achieve a lot once matriculating. The origin of these values and priorities may be different for each institution but ultimately a similar message of aspiration and prestige is conveyed. Students at each location brought up experiences with the stresses and anxieties that come with the need to be competitive academically as well as in terms of performance and career-building. Whether this competition is explicit as in auditioning for the same part, or more implicit, such as competing over how much one practices, students at each site talked about pressures of the conservatoire in terms of juggling a variety of tensions. In these varying ways, practising seems to be a significant component of culture at the conservatoires. Meanwhile, the institutional culture helps to construct a hierarchy that has distinctive characteristics in each setting while also maintaining broadly similar cultural framework across each school.

Discussion of conservatoire culture through the conceptual lens of organisational culture

In this section, I return to the theoretical lens of organisational culture introduced in chapter 3 to explore the notion of conservatoire culture. By returning to this conceptualisation of culture, I draw out conclusions about the student experience of the conservatoire and develop a discussion about how students engage with the practices they encountered. And in doing so, I look at the conservatoire as an organisation with values and practices emerging "through interactions between participants" (Hallett, 2003, p. 135) that provide a frame of reference for meaning-making in the community. For instance, amongst the different performance and instrument groups, students talked about competing against others in formalised arrangements such as for parts in operas and slots in festival line-ups. Students also reported feeling a tacit rule that different families of instruments are expected to practice different amounts of time to be considered as meeting a minimum requirement. These feelings, both the formalised competition, and the implicit shared understandings, were mentioned by

students at each conservatoire, which suggests a pattern of norms that can be seen as characteristic of the conservatoire, regardless of setting. Tierney's (1988) suggestion that culture is often taken for granted by members of a community was evident when students were talking about the conservatoire. There were shared assumptions and even use of specialised language in referring to their experience within the organisation as givens. I observed this especially in relation to how students engaged with the competitive aspects of the conservatoire. In these situations, meaning could be inferred from certain behaviours around and responses towards competitiveness, such as the perception that one's peers were purposefully bragging about the amount of work they had lined up and the fear about taking time off from practicing because of how it might affect one's competitiveness. A certain amount of competition and peer pressure was perceived even during the most informal peer interactions so that students with experience in pre-conservatoire programs and one-to-one tuition were more likely to understand how to interpret and navigate those norms and have a greater understanding of the underlying norms and values that are embedded in the conservatoire experience.

The influence of the profession on conservatoire culture

The conservatoire is a vocational institution and as such, trains students in a way that allows those students to learn many of the practices, customs and beliefs that exist within the professional community. Students reported participating in professional activities alongside their education, developing ideas and beliefs about the music performance community that were informed by that experience. For example, MCC course leader Florence commented that only a couple of decades ago being at the "top of your profession" meant quickly finding a booking agent and being given opportunities, whereas succeeding in the profession today she felt required more than technical and artistic mastery. Instead, current students have to begin building their careers by "taking yourself out of the practice room environment". As Florence explained, the realities of the industry and profession have changed. Meanwhile, from my observations, organisational practices and culture are slow to change. For example, students talked about their tutors prioritising time spent in 'the practice room environment' working on repertoire over any other activities which illustrated the power that the notion of practising has in conservatoire culture. However, I do not want to suggest that there is a complete disconnect, in this way, between the professional community and the conservatoire. It was apparent throughout my observations and interviews that professional life filters into the conservatoire and many students had already begun to form beliefs about the professional community through their experiences of interacting with the profession.

Part of organisational culture is, according to Stinchcombe (1965), the “social relations deliberately created, with the explicit intention of continuously accomplishing some specific goals or purposes” (as quoted in Hallett, 2003, p. 129-130). I found that the professional community was connected to the conservatoire by the nature of its vocational, mono-technic qualities. This learning framework appeared to affect how a student formed beliefs and ideals about music performance and the professional community while still engaged in their studies. Therefore, the role of networking and contact building (which are often the social relations that are deliberately built-up for their post-conservatoire life) had a central role in how students engaged with the conservatoire and navigated the community. These relations were constructed within an implicit and broader discourse about the values in the classical music performance profession; students responded to those values by engaging in the behaviours that those values corresponded with. For example, Greta (QMC) talked to me about actively seeking out music networking events to build up connections that will be helpful to her career. Her routine included taking time to master the necessary repertoire while also prioritising both formal and informal social gatherings that would allow her to network and make professional connections. While it is surely prudent to have a positive attitude toward networking opportunities, prioritising them alongside the demands of learning repertoire, booking auditions, scheduling rehearsals, and other necessities seemed to be difficult for some students. Greta expressed the importance of taking a break from all those ‘necessary’ activities to rest and recover, even if it was just a mealtime break away from her cello. However, later in our interview, she illustrated the pressure to be constantly ‘on task’ by mentioning that if a job or audition opportunity arose during a much-needed period of relaxation, she would unquestioningly take it.

The pressure to take any audition or job opportunity that might arise, despite how it might affect their wellbeing, was common amongst the students I interviewed. For Greta, this response seemed to be shaped by the institutional values transmitted both explicitly and implicitly throughout her time at the conservatoire. She interpreted her experience as underpinned by certain values and beliefs about the professional community that had influenced her actions and decisions. The sense of obligation to take up any performance opportunity was evident in the accounts of participants in the other research sites. By contrast, Sarah (CON), speaking about her gig schedule, described performing with various groups sometimes every night of the week - without a day off - as “the best feeling”. This does signal to me that a conservatoire student’s relationship with the nature of their work can

be complex and is dependent on a number of things, such as how they interpret their early experiences with the profession and engage with the cultural values transmitted to them as students.

Engaging with different perceptions of conservatoire culture

Illustrating different perceptions of conservatoire culture, Greta described her experience at QMC in terms of her tight-knit cello studio wherein students were social and friendly, stating that she did not feel especially competitive with her studio peers. Sasha, also at QMC and also a cellist, but an outsider in terms of Greta's cello studio, had a different perspective, noting that not all cellists were invited to social cello player gatherings. What Greta experienced as social and friendly, was experienced by Sasha as cliquey. This illustrates how institutional structures, norms and practices can be interpreted and experienced by its members. Perkins (2013a) suggests that students learn their position in relation to their peers through participating in the practices of the conservatoire and one of these practices is to organise students into instrument studios, which then has its own internal hierarchy. Both students used the lens of their own experiences to draw different conclusions about this particular cello studio, illustrating how organisational culture comes from the meaning created by individuals and their interactions within it. In this example, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy in the studio are experienced differently, based on how an individual is positioned.

Greta and Sasha's differing perceptions of one cello studio also illustrate that relationships and interactions amongst students can be complicated, since two students can see a studio or group as embodying very different social characteristics – friendly and close-knit or cliquey and excluding. In another example, Mary (MCC) recalled an average lunchtime wherein she and her classmates subtly compared their relative positions within the vocal studio over food by talking about upcoming gigs and auditions. Instead of enjoying a casual conversation amongst friends, Mary stated that it "makes you feel terrible" because of the need to be seen as doing just a bit more than one's peers. Mary saw this conversation about upcoming gigs as students trying to make themselves feel secure in their social standing and in doing so, making her feel insecure about her position within the hierarchy of singers. Through such conversations, students maintain certain beliefs about competition in the conservatoire, which have shaped their behaviour in a way that fosters this kind of interaction and thus reinforces this kind of culture of informal competition.

The subtleties of the group dynamic between members of a single studio or instrument group

are one of the complexities of conservatoire culture. There is also an unspoken understanding of hierarchy within the broader student body, especially regarding what is expected of different instruments. Deanna (MCC) and Sasha (QMC) talked about the different expectations that exist for different instrument groups in generally parallel terms. They both mentioned differences in how long a student is expected to practice every day. Specifically, they mentioned a feeling that violinists and other string players are expected to spend their whole day practising, despite being told to be conscientious about the quantity of time they are in the practice room, given the strain it can have on their body. Both also mentioned their belief that a singer's course of study is less physically rigorous than other instrumentalists because of this tacit understanding about how much time a student is expected to practise. The frequency with which practise and practising came up during my conversations with students suggests to me that practice behaviours come largely from the assumptions and unspoken understandings of the conservatoire, transmitted both via institutional superiors and fellow students.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) talk about the development of relationships in HE as an important influence on how students change throughout their studies. Students learn how to build relationships and navigate the social norms and practices of the conservatoire. From my observations and from interviews, the distinctive learning context of the conservatoire certainly affected how those relationships formed and changed, particularly in terms of competition amongst peers and the hierarchies of the organisation. Some participants reported having a tight-knit group of conservatoire friends upon whom they relied on for emotional support (Riley [CON], Mary [MCC], Cara [QMC]) while others told me that they felt isolated from other students because of the sense of constant competition (Deanna, David [MCC]) and some perceived their peers from both perspectives at different points in the interviews. From my data, I conclude that the relationships formed in the conservatoire seem to be a significant source for how a student creates meaning in the actions and behaviours they encounter in the conservatoire organisation.

Students interpret and engage with conservatoire culture through the practices and behaviours that have been accepted in the institution. The prominence of competition in its many forms helps to create certain binaries that make up an important part of the student experience, such as camaraderie or contest and practice time or 'free' time. These cultural binaries can create complex experiences that can be difficult to navigate and are intensified by the unique relationship that exists between the professional music community and the

conservatoire. Meanwhile, the students I interviewed seemed to be very conscious of the need to prepare for post-conservatoire life and were engaging in networking and connection building early in their studies; this is a practice that is shaped by and at the same time, feeds into, the culture of the conservatoire. It is these underlying patterns and norms that influence how a student changes as a person and as a musician and it is these practices that suggest a kind of negotiated order in the conservatoire.

Chapter 6 – Forming a sense of place and self in the conservatoire

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore different perceptions of how students see themselves and their role within the conservatoire. I will draw on the data from each of the three conservatoires and as with the previous chapter, look at each conservatoire in turn in relation to the themes that emerged, in order to develop a comparative analysis of how the student's understanding of conservatoire culture shapes their engagement with that culture. I will explore the ways participants talked about their time, how they make space, and how they perceive their part in conservatoire culture. I will look at some of the mechanisms of conservatoire life that influence how students form their perceptions of how they engage with and challenge conservatoire culture. The varying ways that these mechanisms are employed by the participants illustrate the nature of conservatoire studies as leaving room for the student to form ideas about how to use their time and develop perceptions about the community. This analysis will connect the individual to the conservatoire hierarchy and explore how the individual engages with – and challenges – the norms of the conservatoire. In several instances, I will highlight specific participants and their ideas about specific aspects of conservatoire culture. This is because the notion of self and how they fit within the culture seems to be distinct to each student and looking at students individually contextualises how these students develop that notion of self. Following this analysis, I will discuss the theoretical implications of the student perceptions of place and self in the conservatoire through the lens of Bourdieu's symbolic capital and, briefly, habitus.

This chapter grew from a thematic analysis of the data, looking at how students talk about the different pressures they encounter, especially that of engaging with the notion of practicing and the influence of the profession on conservatoire culture. When coding the interview and observation data for this theme, it became increasingly clear that it would be unmanageable for a single chapter. I would need to address the pervasiveness of these concerns as central to the conservatoire experience and from multiple angles. Because of this, the data was further analysed within two distinct facets - the institution's environment and broader culture (which was detailed in chapter 5) and how the individual is connected to the culture, which is the focus of this chapter. From those steps, a more in-depth exploration of the individuality of the student experience of conservatoire culture emerged.

Conservatoire of the North

The Conservatoire of the North seems to take a great deal of pride in its contemporary take on conservatoire education, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, although the institution positions itself as different to a traditional Western classical conservatoire, participants still undergo a similar application and audition process as well as being allocated to a one-to-one relationship with a tutor in their given specialism. As a school, the administration told me about how they try to maintain a connection to students through the incorporation of the student voice into curriculum and school policy decision making. Undergraduate course leader, Jesse, describes how the school sees the students as an integral part of how CON runs. This is one of the ways in which CON tries to make an effort to show that they value a collaborative atmosphere and are interested in what students have to say.

The school seemed to have initially done this by building shared recording and performance facilities to be utilised by students across different courses together, teaching modules such as Collaborative Song Writing, and promoting the informal contact time that students have with teaching staff, as is the case with the café (both staff and students informally mentioned this as a point of interest when talking about the "vibe", or cultural atmosphere, of the institution). The administration continues the collaborative focus of the school by prioritising material and activities about new and emerging careers within the music performance industry, such as the Music Business and Pop Music pathways. This means that some students at CON who might otherwise forego a conservatoire education have these opportunities at CON, especially non-performers and performers of different genres. Institutional priorities like these have helped to create a distinctive student atmosphere when compared to the other two sites because it does not hold itself to all the same ideas of tradition and customs as other conservatoires.

Students I talked to discussed different aspects of their lives that helped them to manage the pressures and stresses of life at Conservatoire of the North. Sometimes the student's perceptions of the conservatoire were notably distinct, as I will show in the following two sections about Riley and Sarah, but participants also maintained some common threads. For example, each participant, regardless of specialism, had to learn new skills upon coming to the conservatoire to help them manage their time and notion of conservatoire life. They talked about the importance of friendship groups with whom they could talk about non-music topics, these conversations seemed to help them to relax and compartmentalise their studies.

Physical spaces were also discussed as an important part of time management for some participants: working in certain spaces allowed them to concentrate better or put them in a work-centred frame of mind. And finally, the act of planning and adhering to a schedule seemed to help CON students navigate conservatoire studies, creating a structure to what may otherwise be a largely unstructured day or week.

Riley: feeling like an outsider within a culture of collaboration

Students at CON often work with each other for personal projects, seemingly more so than I observed at the other schools. Collaboration is built into the curriculum, but also seemed to be an active part of the culture. In some instances, this collaboration manifests as community building opportunities, students getting to know their peers and working on various projects together (for class work and also extracurricular projects). But in practice, this can also be a source of alienation. Riley is a musician on the popular music course at CON, a few years older than most of her classmates, and she came to the conservatoire to spend time playing music while improving her skills. For her, performing was not something she anticipated making a lot of money from, but she wanted to improve her skills and enjoy the performance opportunities. As discussed in chapter 5, she was also a student who experienced much of the collaborative culture as a source of stress. When I asked her if being a student at the conservatoire had ended up being how she thought it would be, she said,

> [i]t's a bunch of people that the biggest thing in their lives is music and they want to do it all the time… I do find it kind of strange that when we have to do collaborative assignments and stuff you have to find someone that can play the thing you want to do when actually if I was left to my own devices I would be like, "hmm… do I like you, do I want to spend time with you? Do I think you're a good person?" Because I care a lot more about whether I think you're a good person rather than if I think you can play this riff. So that kind of, putting music above everything else is a bit odd to me. But also, I did come to a music school. You know?

While it is easy to connote 'collaboration' as a positive term, even progressive in the conservatoire setting, Riley found it to be largely stressful and often negative. She talked about the collaborative culture as being less about working with people because you want to and suggested that it was more about finding people whose abilities you could use to further some aspect of your music, whatever the project may be. I found it interesting that Riley seemed to consider interactions that, as she saw it, put music above any personal connection, as characteristic of the conservatoire experience. During our interview, she talked about her friends, mostly non-conservatoire people, and her hobbies which were mostly non-

performance activities like reading and skateboarding. Riley actively challenged many of the collaborative influences of the CON culture, not convinced that those kinds of social interactions were genuine or ultimately valuable to her. She had utilised social capital differently than might be expected of a conservatoire student, choosing to place her priorities elsewhere.

Sarah: balancing family and conservatoire life

The student culture at CON looks less familiar than some of the Western classical-centric institutions. Even though the structure of the institution is less overtly-centred on the one-to-one student-tutor relationship for some programs (although it is still an important part of the school's pedagogy and marketing strategy), some of the pressures and stresses faced by students are very similar. My observations suggested that a typical student at CON is striving to create a sustainable career in their chosen specialism, which is what students at other institutions would be aiming to accomplish by the end of their studies. This often appeared to result in substantial personal feelings of sacrifice on the part of the student or the student's support. I observed a strong example of this in my interview with Sarah. At the end of our interview, I asked her if she wanted to add anything additional before we concluded, and she responded,

> my parents moved 200 miles, my mom quit her job so that I could come here and because of that that made me work harder because I wanted to make it worthwhile for her, I guess. And also for me. Yeah, so finding the balance between work and relaxing. It does include a lot of mental breakdowns, but I feel like that's life.

The way Sarah interacted with the conservatoire, and with more abstract notions of her future, seems to be through this lens. From this short exchange about her family's sacrifices, it was apparent that she made decisions based on her feelings of responsibility to them in return for that sacrifice. Sarah went into a further education program in the conservatoire at the age of sixteen with the cooperation and sacrifice of her parents. She talked about this as a source for motivation to achieve her own definitions of success. However, although she talked about this as a positive thing in her life. It is also notable that she talked about her experiences as a conservatoire student as involving 'a lot of mental breakdowns,' which suggests that she also felt a great deal of pressure to be successful, which at times was difficult to manage.

How students find support when engaging with conservatoire life

Some students I interviewed brought up common dispositions when asked about

conservatoire life. Alan is an undergraduate international student studying Popular Music. During our interview, I asked him if student life outside of classroom time was an important part of his decision to come to the UK for his studies and to CON specifically. He replied that,

> [t]here's two sides of looking at it, the first one is having lots of free time and hang around in clubs and with friends and not really doing much at school which obviously wasn't my purpose because I came here to learn, if I have some free time, yeah that's cool too, but the main objective is to learn, not to have lots of free time. But, I'm really social. I'm a sociable guy. It helps for me to have some free time, but this definitely wasn't my main concern... The main thing was that the school teaches me things.

He later went on to talk about his friends, many of whom were not musicians or studying at the conservatoire, such as his girlfriend who was studying one of the sciences at a university in London. Some childhood friends from his home country had also come to the UK to study (specifically, London), and in order to maintain those friendships, he often took time out to go to see them.

It was apparent, to me, that while Alan considered seeing his friends as something he needed to do, he also found personal value in making those trips to London even when it did not easily align with his conservatoire work. He detailed the commute between his city in the North and London, saying,

> I'm always travelling to London 'cause I have some of my friends from another band in London and because of travelling it obviously messes [practice time] up. The road… to London is 5-6 hours in a coach so this back and forth obviously takes a lot of energy just to sit on the coach and then you go with the Underground one more hour, so the whole day is occupied with this so it's definitely not going to be a day when I play [my instrument] a lot.

The long hours spent on the coach between the North and London took Alan most of a day and therefore took away from any kind of performance practice; but the importance of seeing his friends overshadowed that sacrifice of time away from his music practice. Relationships with friends and family are an important part of life, and it doesn't seem to be any different for conservatoire students. These friend groups or communities provide a support system for students because they understand the individual beyond their music playing. In the first excerpt of this section, Alan talked about 'free time' as a rather unimportant aspect of his life and his tone was sincere, with a fondness for CON evidenced throughout the interview. This suggests that he came to CON genuinely interested in the school and what they could offer

him, nonetheless, he was predisposed to maintain social connections with friends and this took precedence over the academic demands on his time. Alan saw himself as both part of the conservatoire and fully dedicated to his studies, while also adhering to the value he placed on spending time with friends.

Riley also noted feeling a need to spend time with her established friends:

> I find coming here really rewarding and satisfying and it's enjoyable. But also, I definitely feel like I need to go and decompress with my friends. I think it's just a really different world, as well, that I have to just go and do that.

When talking about her desire to spend time with friends, Riley's perspective seemed slightly different place to Alan's. For her, the ability to talk about non-music and non-conservatoire related topics was an important part of maintaining a sense of self, which she accomplished by spending time with friends from outside the institution. As discussed earlier in the chapter, I located Riley as inhabiting a slightly different way of life than the 'typical' conservatoire student insomuch as her priorities were not as centrally aligned with building a strong music career. Her social network of non-musician friends acted as a retreat from her student life, which she characterised as both rewarding and occasionally alienating (due to the differences in values between herself, as a music student, and her conservatoire peers).

While Riley talked about needing to spend time with non-musician friends in order to 'decompress' from her student life, Rebecca enjoyed the camaraderie of going out with the other students in her tutor's studio. She said that, "on the weekends go out for drinks with the girls, [trumpet] people." Rebecca talked about the other, older, students in the [trumpet] studio with what I perceived as a kind of veneration and I considered that these nights out allowed her to feel a greater sense of community and friendship with her peers, especially those with whom she had the most in common musically. Although the CON students spoke about the time they spent with friends in different ways, in each case the way they place value they placed on friendship helped me to understand how students perceive their place within conservatoire culture. The shared cultures, interests, and histories between friends seemed to allow students an opportunity to compartmentalise or 'decompress' from whatever conservatoire-related stress or pressure had accumulated and relate to each other on a personal, non-academic level.

How students use physical space to engage with conservatoire life

While discussing her daily routine, Riley explained that the necessity to be in the building for

her practice time enabled her to compartmentalise the pressures of her studies and maintain a sense of personal wellbeing. She said she came to campus to work on conservatoire-related work:

> most of my practice is here, 'cause I can't do it - I don't have kit at home. And I try and do all of the school-based bits of work in the day time and then I have the evenings free to hang out with my friends and do other things. I treat it like a job in that sense.

By treating her studies much like a conventional job with regular hours done away from home, Riley was able to leave study-related matters on campus and therefore free herself so she could concentrate on non-music or practice related things outside of the hours she spent on campus. This routine was certainly facilitated by the fact that to have access to an instrument, and therefore to do a lot of her coursework, she needed to be on campus. In addition, by compartmentalising the different aspects of her identity via physical location, she noted that she felt good about herself.

In a less-regimented way (yet still physical location-driven), Sarah also seemed to use place as a way of helping her to define her identity as a student within the conservatoire. For instance, the coffee shop around the corner was, for her, the most "comfortable place to work..." About spending time there working on coursework, she said, "I just like the atmosphere in there, I just get so much done. Whenever I know I've got something to do I just go, get a coffee, and sit in there the whole day." When asked why that location was so conducive to productivity, she said, "I think that atmosphere of them [office workers in the café] doing real work makes me want to work harder at what I'm doing." While the idea that office work is more 'real' than a conservatoire student's work is itself notable, the fact that Sarah saw this café as a specific location where she could go to be productive seems to be in keeping with the idea of a de facto office space and helped her to manage her student responsibilities.

For both Riley and Sarah, the use of physical locations seemed to be a mechanism for managing the student experience and helping them navigate conservatoire life. In doing this, they internally allocated specific places such as the campus building or a coffee shop around the corner as places of productivity and were incorporated into their routines. For Riley, campus was a place where all necessary instrument practice or coursework could be completed and in turn, when she left the campus she felt free to partake in non-study or music related activities with friends. In Sarah's case, the coffee shop provided her with a

productive atmosphere different from the music college, that she felt was more conducive to completing non-performance related work, going there when she felt that she would benefit from that added atmosphere of what she perceived as legitimate 'working'. In this way, the physical locations provided a physical frame of reference for these students to structure their way of life and get coursework work done, thereby creating a routine within the relative freedom the conservatoire afforded them to complete tasks as and when.

How a diary can help students engage with conservatoire life

In addition to how students incorporated physical spaces into their way of life, the busy schedules of students seemed to affect how they experienced the conservatoire. Certainly, to be 'busy' is not unique to the conservatoire student experience. However, many of the issues that arose from it could be. At a quick glance of a typical conservatoire coursework day, there often appear to be large chunks of 'free time', but the expectations and demands on a student can quickly fill that time. Well acquainted with this phenomenon, Sarah had completed the CON pre-degree course before embarking upon the degree program. She outlined for me how this affected her as an undergraduate:

> I feel the degree, it's definitely a lot different to the [pre-degree course]… because we're only in 3 days a week… everyone else in the BTEC saw it as 2 days off but I wouldn't see it as days off. I would write songs all day. And I would come in to college and do extra work all the time. And then this year, I don't really have days to just sit and write songs because when I do have free days there's other things that I need to be doing which is a shame I think because I really enjoyed that time.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Sarah was supported by her mother who had moved across the country so that she could attend the pre-degree course. This seemed to increase Sarah's sense of responsibility to practise and work on skill mastery and in order to accomplish this, she scheduled her time carefully. She seemed to suggest that the pre-degree course at the conservatoire had given her a greater opportunity to develop and work on her own artistic identity, something she could do in the time between classes. The structure and workload of the degree program seemed to provide less opportunity to structure her own time around her specialism priorities, such as writing songs for her own fulfilment, as opposed to more administrative course requirements such as essay writing and other academic work.

Concluding thoughts about CON

By looking at how students perceive themselves within the culture and how they navigate the

social constructs of the conservatoire I started to see how CON students see their sense of self within conservatoire culture and how the collaborative environment is a significant quality within CON student culture. I observed what looked to be a collaborative culture and how it allowed students to connect and create community within the conservatoire but, like Riley described, it could also feel inauthentic or isolating for someone coming to the conservatoire from a different perspective about the music performance professions. Students seemed to navigate a range of stresses based on their personal perspectives and priorities. Looking at how students think about time spent with friends highlights how different people use their support systems and what role they have within an individual's life. Another important aspect of how a student navigates the conservatoire way of life appeared to be the physical environment, helping students manage the academic demands. These spaces could help students compartmentalise academic life from non-academic life, creating space to 'decompress' after classes and rehearsals, or allowing them to be more productive with coursework. Sarah went to a specific cafe to do module work because she felt there was an ambiance more conducive to 'real work' - which is how she referred to non-music performance related work. Each of the participants utilised these notions in a different way to develop a sense of self as they navigate the culture and manage their experience of conservatoire student culture.

Music City Conservatoire

The Music City Conservatoire has a reputation as a world-renowned, elite conservatoire. Considering this, it is not especially surprising that many students go on to have successful orchestral and solo careers, acquiring prestigious accolades. The high standards and expectations at MCC require students to manage their time and keep pace with their peers, something that is not always easy, even for the very talented musicians. The institution adheres to the customs that have developed in the conservatoire, primarily the traditions of Western classical music, including the role of the student-tutor relationship as one of master-and-apprentice. Regardless of social, cultural or educational backgrounds, many interview participants came to MCC with a formal music education either through extra-curricular one-to-one tuition, a junior conservatoire program, or sometimes both. To an extent, I argue that this background experience provides these students with social and cultural capital to draw on when negotiating the conservatoire environment, though the independence they need to manage for the first time is the same as in any HE setting. From interviewing students, it became apparent that this strong sense of social capital, cultural capital, as well as other skills and experiences, are a big contributor to the ways in which a student ultimately

determines their own sense of being within the conservatoire and their sense of self.

John: Recognising the classical musician identity

John had recently graduated as a postgraduate clarinettist and completed his undergraduate music degree at a mainstream university. He seemingly therefore had experienced a very different introduction to HE than many of those who entered the conservatoire directly after secondary education. Asked about the differences he saw between university and conservatoire culture, John responded:

> what surprised me is that I thought everyone at music college wouldn't want to talk about [music] because they are doing it all day every day but actually the undergraduates, they sit [around] and I hear them talking about music all the time, like all they talk about is music … generally all they're talking about is music or the music they are making so their recitals, they're 'this, whatever' or 'don't you love this piece,' 'have you heard this extract'.

What John seems to be implying here is that undergraduate conservatoire students are especially preoccupied with music when he compares the conservatoire to his time as an undergraduate at a university. He recalled his time at university, that he felt like he talked about music all the time but suggesting that it was perhaps because he wasn't engaging in music performance all the time like a conservatoire student would be. My impressions seemed to confirm this perception: conservatoire students (certainly in the two Western classical-based conservatoires) seem to be expected to spend a great deal of time listening to recordings of their repertoire outside of any academic necessity and to want to practice their instrument during their personal time. This also aligned with the experiences I encountered as a music student, that any available moment could be spent improving musically, in some way. The all-encompassing nature of these undergraduate students surpassed John's own enthusiasm for the work. John described this experience with a sense of exasperation, saying,

> when I first came [to MCC] I can remember on open days, hearing people talk about music all the time thinking 'oh I'm gonna love it here' and I do love it but then sometimes you just think 'man…'

Whether it is asking to put symphonies written by Gustav Mahler on the sound system whilst playing pool, or relaxing with a pint and talking about composers, classical music is an intrinsic part of student life at Music City Conservatoire. Students seemed to spend class time, practice time, and often their leisure time, engrossed in some aspect of the genre to the point where, to someone else, it can appear that classical music is most of a conservatoire

student's identity. From what John reported, his experiences at university helped him strengthen his social, and to an extent the cultural capital, to mould his dispositions toward such all-encompassing behaviour, to a level that was manageable.

Engaging with priorities and the expectations in the conservatoire

Throughout my fieldwork, I repeatedly came across instances of what seemed to be 'practising' as a kind of elephant in the room, so to speak. The notion that one should be practising followed many students around all day and influences how they perceive their own situation. Florence, undergraduate course leader and concert pianist, began studying music at the age of four. During our interview, she talked about her perception of where this notion of practice guilt comes from. According to her, the early student-tutor relationship dynamic is a potential source for it, within which the message is that one should constantly work on one's music: "you study music, you practice your piano, you don't have a holiday… you practice every day" and when students get to the conservatoire level "they're told 'you have to work hard! You have to work hard, practice! Practice! Do this, do that!'". What I observed was that this seems to dynamic continue into conservatoire education, a tradition carried on by tutors to their students, so that by the time students reach the conservatoire, this frame of mind can feel like second nature.

Both Emma and Jacob, current undergraduate performance students at MCC, told me that while they did not like the notion that they should practise constantly or engage even more with the repertoire, they still felt compelled to do so. Although these two friends had very different experiences of the conservatoire, from work load to priorities, both agreed that their respective tutors' expectations of them were not necessarily in keeping with their own priorities as musicians. I started to ask them, "Do you feel like you're under a lot of pressure to always be tuned into music and your…" at which point Emma enthusiastically interrupted the question,

> Emma: "they [tutors] tell you what music you should be listening to and it's always, it's not even necessarily music that I would choose to listen to…"
>
> Jacob: "But you feel like you should"
>
> Emma: "…but it'll be like, what I'm playing or what I've got coming up in orchestra or something"
>
> Jacob: "Yeah"

Both Jacob and Emma agreed that they felt that their tutors wanted them to be constantly working on their required music, and to be thinking about that music, even when they were

not practising. In other words, tutors expected students to go beyond simply working on the necessary repertoire, in a kind of constant state of practice. This account of their tutors' expectations was given with exasperation. Perhaps in any HE setting, a tutor would want their students to study or practice the subject matter, but in the conservatoire setting this seems to go beyond revising for an exam or practicing for a recital. The implication here is a total immersion in music, so that their identity is fully engulfed by music. The tone that both students used while discussing this suggested to me that they did not consider their tutors' expectations to be reasonable in the context of their lives and equally, they did not expect or attempt to achieve this ideal. It seemed that this led both Jacob and Emma to see their place within the conservatoire as in a deficit, before they had even started the day, because they were unable (or unwilling, as it were) to make music performance their entire life. Despite this, they chose to carry on with their studies whilst also rejecting the notion that they should aspire to that identity.

Creating space within conservatoire life

For some of the students at MCC, small rituals or activities that they brought with them from their past experiences and life outside of the conservatoire seemed to help them to create a space for themselves within the conservatoire way of life. For example, David reported making space for himself in how he spent his mealtime. He talked about having grown up with the belief that meals are a time to let go of preoccupations and relax for a short time. Therefore, for him, mealtimes were his free time:

> every morning that breakfast is like my little special moment and really there should not be any relation to what's gonna happen next in the day, it's me having a quite uh, I would say, a big breakfast … this little relaxation moment before starting the rush, and that's the most concrete free time moment that I can think of right now. Um… I guess every meal has to be completely, sort of, out of the job. I do think it's important just to have this moment to relax, however long it is. Yeah not trying to do some admin while you're eating, preparing something and listening to music at the same time, no I don't like to do that … just this moment, every day, you're not doing anything else.

As a postgraduate who was nearing entry into the full-time professional community, mealtimes were his chance to put away his instrument without feeling the guilt that seemed to haunt some students. He had learned early in his life that mealtimes should be a chance to put other thoughts and concerns away and incorporated this into how he interacted with the conservatoire way of life. However, for David, these mealtimes were also an especially

convenient time to disengage because you can do other things while eating, such as watch TV or read. His account of mealtimes as his primary 'free time' illustrated how difficult it can be, given the expectations to practice and work on other music-related tasks throughout the day, for conservatoire students to make time for other activities such as watching TV or reading for fun.

Mary grew up looking to her older brother, a conservatoire-trained singer, as a role model. She recounted that her brother placed importance on not being fully engulfed by music performance and valued putting distance between himself and those who perpetuated these expectations. To accomplish this, he cultivated friendships with like-minded people who also felt that it was good to have non-music hobbies and interests. Prior to coming to the conservatoire, Mary would look to her brother for cues about how to behave as a conservatoire student, which included taking time to engage in non-performance related activities, specifically touching on a need to be outside in a setting covered with greenery to counter the hours of rehearsals spent inside, away from nature:

> I think what he would do is choose to go play a round of golf somewhere and I know there's lots of singers who, once you're in the business, if they've got a day off rehearsals they'll go get in a round of golf. And it might be with other singers but that's ok because they're not doing singing so they'll talk about stuff that's not necessarily about the show they're working on, so I think that for lots of people 'cause you're stuck inside rehearsing a lot the thing you want to do is to get out.

At several points in our interview she mentioned the pressure to practice long hours and to talk about music constantly. To counter this, she followed her brother's example by taking walks outside and enjoying the nearby parks, specifically to be near and around greenery. In this way, she integrated the values of her older brother, how and why he valued time away from performing, into her own experience of conservatoire life and used those values in negotiating life as a conservatoire student.

How commuting and geography can influence student perceptions of conservatoire and performance life

Another example of how even necessary activities could be seen as time off to students, is in Mary's account of commuting. When talking about how actions and certain activities could affect how one handles the day, a couple of students brought up commuting as 'free time'. This was interesting to me because I wouldn't consider this to be free time; it is the time necessary to get from one place to another. However, for Mary and David this is time they

cannot use to practice so they reframed it as ‘free’ time. This seemed to highlight the pressure students feel to be completely engulfed in music. By reframing a commute as free time, one could argue that these two students have developed a mental mechanism for dealing with that pressure. Addressing this, Mary said,

> …sometimes just sitting on the train quite often you feel like you should do work on the train, you feel like you have to do stuff. I think because it’s a freelance thing you feel like even when you have those times of absolutely nothing going on you should be working, like you should be doing something but actually, you have to find stuff to do that isn’t music or else you’ll just go mad.

Her perspective was unconventional insomuch as a commute, as I mentioned, is not something I would necessarily consider as a chance to unwind. Mary’s comment that ‘it’s a freelance thing’ also illustrates the interrelatedness of the conservatoire education and the future career of a performer.

Where Mary saw commuting as an opportunity to unwind a little bit and avoid “going mad”, David was noticeably unhappy about time he felt was wasted by his commute, a period of time in the day when he is forced into being disengaged from music and from his studies. When asked about when he might have ‘free time’ to do whatever he wanted, he said,

> you spend a lot of time on transport so any time you have any appointment, rehearsal, lesson, lecture you know you’re gonna spend at least an hour and a half or more. I mean, if you’re really lucky and live really close, but that’s not my case. I mean, I don’t live that far but that’s the first struggle to schedule your time not to spend too much time in transport. Um, so you can already sort of take that time as part of free time I guess we have.

The precarious aspects and instabilities of a performance career may be what inform Mary and David’s interpretation of commuting as ‘free time’. It seemed to be that unavoidable activities were seen as time wasted and so were instead co-opted into being “time off” from music, whether welcome or not. From these accounts, these unavoidable activities may be seen in the context of the assumption that one should be constantly engaged with music and with one’s studies. Thus, they become periods of disengagement, such as how David viewed as wasted time and Mary reframed into free time, time that should be spent practicing or rehearsing.

Further to the notion of commuting, the physical boundaries of campus also seemed to influence the way in which students orient their schedules and workload. Some students

specialise in instruments that are hard to transport and are therefore required to be on campus to practice yet students with more mobile instruments schedule their day similarly and choose to get all their work done on campus. Mary took time away from HE and took non-music performance jobs between her undergraduate degree and coming to Music City Conservatoire. When she reflected on how this impacted the way she handled being a conservatoire student she said,

> I try and make sure that my work is done [on campus] so that's everything from admin… sending invoices, learning your texts, all that stuff... And quite often that involves going home, sleeping, and coming back again [but] even when it's not busy I still try to come in here just to keep the routine… And then it makes me feel like I've earned my time off because I've come in and I've done my work...

The use of the campus as a de facto office appeared to allow Mary to structure her day in line with what would be regular office hours, thus allowing her to feel able to take time out for non-music related activities. I observed that some of the boundaries that a student experiences, through necessity or just preference, can influence how a student perceives their sense of self and how they choose to conduct themselves.

How friendships maintained as students affect their sense of place in the conservatoire

One of the ways in which I observed students managing the pressures, expectations and stressors of life in a conservatoire seemed to be through cultivating their friendships. For example, both David and Mary mentioned how important the relationships they have with their friends are. They talked about the need to be away from the conservatoire setting and not engage with classical music or their musicianship. David explained that,

> some of my best musician friends are actually the people I don't need to talk about music with, so whether there are actually musicians or not may not make such a difference so no, just yeah, keep sane. Not talking about that for the rest of your day.

Friends provided David with an opportunity to retreat temporarily from conservatoire culture and talk about non-conservatoire subjects. Reflecting on her time as an undergraduate at a mainstream university, Mary talked about the value of

> trying to see people who are not musicians, trying to catch up with friends from home and friends from Durham who are not in this world (*looks around the room*) because I think that's really good for your psyche. Just to get out of the haystack for a little bit.

Mary referred to the conservatoire culture as a "haystack" that can be overwhelming;

spending time with non-conservatoire friends provided momentarily escape from that way of life and helps her to regain a feeling of balance. When I asked Emmett, a post graduate oboist, how he spent his 'free time', he also talked about enjoying taking part in leisurely non-conservatoire activities with friends. He explained that he and his friends "go out for dinner or a pub or a bar or the cinema or go out to the parks, go and have some tea" on a weekly basis. These activities seemed to be as regularly scheduled as his academic studies, a part of his weekly schedule, alongside his oboe studies, and an important part of his social life.

Not all participants gave such importance to spending time with friends. When asked 'what keeps you going', Deanna mentioned her dog as her primary source of motivation. Her dog has become her family and companion after losing her mother and other personal hardships. She told me how his simple presence is a source of family support and emotional motivation to carry on with her studies, despite the pressures. Thus, relationships of various kinds seem to play a vital role in how students handle conservatoire life. Relationships influence their actions and beliefs as well as providing respite from the stress of the conservatoire.

Creating and finding boundaries to build the notion of 'self' as musicians

I observed that students also built their perception and sense of self through how they handled personal limit setting. For example, Emmett had created a routine wherein he says,

> I don't practice, generally, after 8pm... Weekends I don't take, like, well other than working, but I would say yeah, I would quite often take one in every other weekend [off], I'll probably take a day where I really practice for an hour and then the rest of the day is non-routine.

This highlights that a performance career invariably involves unsociable hours. Wherein a conventional employee would likely see 8:00 PM as overtime, Emmett appeared to view this schedule as entirely reasonable and a personal choice that created a structure within which he could make time to meet with friends and do other things he enjoyed.

After years of struggling with the constant pressure to be engaged in music, long-time performer and musicologist and now conservatoire course leader Florence, talked about her realisation of the importance of creating some structured time for herself:

> for the first year and maybe more, I had to throw myself in and learn the ropes so there was no such thing as, you know, I wasn't worried about having holidays or time off. But it's only about a year and a half ago that I realised that I do need to have time off… Free time is something where I don't think about any professional

> elements that constitute what I'm doing, whether it's college research or you know, any creative outside activities.

Thus, scheduling seemed to be one way in which students can explicitly control their management of conservatoire expectations. For some, this comes more easily than it does for others. Where Emmett and Florence talked about devising limitations on their working or practicing, others reported having little opportunity to schedule time to disengage and thus took a bit of time before going to sleep to browse the Internet.

To counter the feeling of being overwhelmed by the expectations, Emma told me about the measures she took to ensure she had enough time to disengage from music and study-related activities:

> if I haven't had any free time during the day, I make sure I get at least an hour. I'd rather cut my sleep time short and get an hour of like, watching something or, just reading or something. So, I'd get at least like, an hour a day but even but that reduces, compromises my sleep time… I wouldn't be able to get to sleep if I didn't. I'd just lie there, so I dunno I just I need like an hour of not doing anything.

The need to disengage with the expectations and pressures as a student appeared to be so strong that, willing to sacrifice sleep needed for health and wellbeing, Emma chose to spend a certain amount of time watching videos and reading posts online before attempting to sleep. The amount of time a student has for scheduling different activities seems to be dependent on many variables. Schedules filled with coursework, gigs or practicing leave little time for disengaging from music-related activities. Nonetheless, participants notably did take time out of their schedule – whether entire weekends or time before bed each day – to disengage in recognition of the need to step away from music and from their studies.

Concluding thoughts on MCC

Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered the many ways in which students navigated the culture of the conservatoire and how they perceived their own position within it. The way they interpreted themselves and their own priorities seemed to influence how they handled stressors such as the pressure to practice long hours, to listen to and be engaged with classical music, and to participate in career networking at every opportunity. Some students described coming into the conservatoire with background experience that allows them to relate current experiences to those in their past, for example having had formal one-to-one tuition or having taken part in a junior conservatoire program prior to entering the conservatoire. These past experiences seemed to allow them to more easily cope with the

transition to the demands of the conservatoire. This would mean that other students must discover new strategies for managing their student life, implementing and weaving them together to try and maintain a sense of wellbeing or personal satisfaction. Interview participants reported instances of relationships cultivated with non-performer or non-conservatoire friends and family which allowed those students an opportunity to step away briefly from their music studies and relax, but also important is how a student manages their day. Furthermore, learning to organise and schedule seemed to be a vital part of conservatoire student life, allowing them to develop a sense of availability and freedom to stop thinking about their studies or music in general. Similar perceptions of space were reported at CON, by creating the perception of certain spaces as work spaces students talked about being able to structure their time or responsibilities.

From interviews, it appeared that sometimes creating space could provide a structure within a day, from the unavoidable tasks such as commuting or a routine of coming to campus every day at the same time, regardless of whether there were classes. When the notion of distance and commuting was brought up at MCC, students talked about the time spent in transit in terms of being confining and limiting. Students appeared to view this time very differently, from seeing it as wasted time or as potentially useful. Those I talked to at MCC had different thoughts about travel and commuting than at CON where students were able to walk. Alan, for example, said that he did not mind walking because it saves money and “you just put your headphones on and you get there sooner than you expect”. Alan also seemed to feel comfortable about the days when he had to travel to London and therefore was unable to practice. Meanwhile, David and Mary had defined negative and positive views of commuting and travel time. Regardless of how a student approaches their time, these perceptions seemed to be useful in helping students make sense of how they fit into the conservatoire way of life and how they saw themselves within it.

Queen’s Metropolitan Conservatoire

Students at the Queen’s Metropolitan Conservatoire are part of an increasingly common situation wherein the conservatoire has partnered or merged with a university. This can affect the structure of the programs or courses, depending on the institution, but in the case of QMC, the conservatoire has been seemingly able to operate without a lot of intervention from the university administration. Certainly it seems, one-to-one tuition is still the central component of the formal learning-teaching environment at the conservatoire and the institution therefore seems to operate quite differently from the university it is associated with.

Considering that the conservatoire has a distinctive structure and set of norms from the university, it is not surprising to me that there does not seem to be much significant interaction between the two groups. There are different institutional priorities and perspectives that create different cultures. However, I talked to some university students who told me they were looking forward to the upcoming year because they would now have access to the conservatoire's performance spaces, which was new for them. At a conservatoire open day, one student mentioned that students could take courses at the university and that its many clubs were also advertised to the prospective students. At the open day, as well as through talking to student leaders from the university, it seemed clear to me that more interaction between the schools was desired (at least from the university's perspective). This suggested to me that the university has identified a certain tension between the two organisational cultures and has started taking steps to blend one into the other.

Sasha: perceptions of the narrow-minded conservatoire

Historically, conservatoires have been solely concerned with training musicians. Even as this definition of the conservatoire evolves and changes to include other arts disciplines and careers, a culture of single-interest seems to persist. When asked what she thought about QMC student culture, Sasha described students who spend most of their time engrossed in their studies and classical music more generally. She told me about her experiences as an undergraduate string player saying,

> …the social networking that was going on [after a concert] was just completely bizarre to the real world. And sometimes I get caught up in that myself but even when I'm in it sometimes I think… this is not how you'd act normally outside of college… it's incredible… And I was, like, caught up in it… Until you remove yourself from it you don't know, you can't believe how petty things are and how small, 'first world problems' it is, just all a bit strange and crazy

In this excerpt, Sasha described what goes on in the conservatoire as existing in isolation from the "real world". She too had been engrossed in this way of life until she left the conservatoire system to do a master's degree at a mainstream university. I observed a lot of this kind of networking-type behaviour described in interviews from students. The influence of the profession was also evident in the institutions themselves, the physical flyers and advertisements, that projected the importance of career preparedness and professional opportunities. On a couple of occasions during our interview, Sasha spoke of how she had actively tried to separate herself from conservatoire student culture. She talked about being

concerned with how the mono-technic nature of the school filters down to the student's lifestyle, often leaving them quite unprepared for life outside the conservatoire setting.

Creating time to disengage with student life

External demands such as gigs or rehearsals, how a student learns to organise expectations, and how they maintain these moving parts, all contribute to the student experience and how a student perceives their place within the conservatoire. Two participants I interviewed at QMC specifically noted that it is important to schedule time for non-music or academic things. Greta referred to these times as an opportunity to "free up your mind." To combat the stress of her studies, Cara said she had recently begun to meditate, following a recommendation from a music psychology PhD student studying performance anxiety. She used the practice as a way to "get [her] thinking head on … focused for the day" when things became stressful in her average day which requires constant engagement with music studies, rehearsals, and performances. As these two students reported, meditation helps them to mentally prepare for navigating the challenges they faced as musician students.

Cara went on to say that if there was no chance to meditate in a day, she opted to go to sleep later than normal, pushing bedtime back so as to have a short amount of time to relax with a non-music related activity. This often involved online reading, social media and other sites. In her words, she used this time as an opportunity to "just kind of try to do something before going to bed just like half an hour, an hour going on YouTube." For her, the need to relax with a passive, non-music related activity was necessary for a better quality of sleep, although she was only able to do this by cutting sleep short, a symptom of the pressure to constantly engage with her studies. Greta also talked about other ways in which she took care of her mental wellbeing, specifically that she had decided to not compromise on sleep time, and as a result said 'no' to more evening social activities than she normally would. She noted that she weighed this priority against the evening networking opportunities and that if she felt she would benefit from being at one of these social events, she would attend. In talking to these two postgraduate students, it seemed clear that even with a concerted effort to get more sleep or make time for non-music activities, if a good enough opportunity presented itself, they felt obliged to adjust these priorities.

Influence of friendships on a student's notion of self as a conservatoire student

As Chickering and Reisser (1993) found, the development of relationships in HE is an important influence in how a student develops dispositions and priorities. For Sasha, time

spent with friends, mostly after rehearsals, was valuable time to unwind. Her ensemble would often gather at a nearby pub and utilise the time as a chance for some relaxing social time. In these instances, the conversation might be music or the day's rehearsals, performances or other activities. Being together in a different environment, away from the pressures of their studies, was a small but useful part of avoiding burn out. For Greta, similar opportunities were important, as was having a social life but she considered these occurrences only partially 'free time', "because [she feels she has] to do that to be a musician." Thus it seemed that Greta's career focus meant that even social time is seen as a networking opportunity.

For Cara, who has close friends who fall into both musician and non-musician categories, spending time non-musician friends "is such a great relief sometimes as well, [to] just be myself rather than a [flautist]." For her, the importance of these groups seems to be that they are non-musical spaces. Such friendship groups allow her, as a conservatoire student, to disconnect from her studies and from the demands of being a music student. For her, a big part of feeling successful as part of the conservatoire is the ability to step away temporarily from it. Whether interviewees talked about spending downtime with musician friends or non-musician friends, it seemed that the relationships a student has were integral to how a student navigated culture at QMC and how they perceived their own place within it. This seemed similar to what I recorded at Music City Conservatoire.

Developing priorities and values as students

Another way in which students seemed to develop a sense of self within the conservatoire was through how they managed their schedule. The conservatoire structure often affords students the freedom of self-scheduling many things such as rehearsals and longer-term benchmarks such as recitals. Individual modules and institution-led ensemble rehearsals would be timetabled, but students often reported being expected to organise and schedule other rehearsals, practice time and time to relax. Some participants I talked to prioritised their day with as many performance and practice opportunities as time allowed. But this required the ability to balance different repertoire requirements and expectations and have time to learn and practice it all. I observed an example of this in a common area at Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire. Two students remarked that there was no such thing as 'weekends' because of rehearsals and performances and one of the pair said she got 'too into' chamber music, which left little time for her to practice the rest of her orchestral and solo repertoire. These students appeared to be learning how to manage their time, developing priorities and making choices about what took precedence and where that put those priorities

within the framework of the conservatoire way of life.

Greta, a postgraduate cellist at a London conservatoire and recent QMC graduate, described how this part of life fit into irregular nature of a conservatoire student's lifestyle:

> this week I've been in rehearsals every day, and a concert last night, today I had an audition, I had another rehearsal, chamber music. I just knew I need the evening and tomorrow morning, well, a little lie in basically, to not touch my instrument, to not think about whatever it is I might think about in my practice. I just do something completely unrelated. So, you know exactly when you need the time off and I mean, obviously, there are a lot of times when you can't turn off because if I would have been in the position to have another audition tomorrow … then obviously, I couldn't have not done that [audition] because tomorrow is an easy-going day.

For Greta, having time to disengage played an important part in planning her schedule. However, that priority was quickly followed by a caveat that if a good opportunity were to arise, she would take it. This could be at the cost of time away from her instrument and by her own words, her own wellbeing, because work opportunities were the priority. After talking to students about what their day looked like, it became apparent to me that one indicator of how they felt about their own sense of self and position within the conservatoire hierarchy came through how they talked about and managed their schedule. Students seemed aware of the need to balance performance and rehearsals, but did not always feel they could or know how to.

Concluding thoughts on QMC

Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire, while innovative in aspects of its institutional approach, appeared to adhere largely to the historical traditions of the conservatoire. It is classical-genre centric and in this regard, has a lot in common with Music City Conservatoire. Students I spoke to at QMC talked about the pressures and stressors of everyday student life that included practicing enough, doing enough networking alongside managing other academic responsibilities. The ways they dealt with these pressures and positioned themselves within the conservatoire seemed similar to those reported at the two other conservatoires: learning to manage and prioritise their time. During very busy times, Cara talked about ensuring at least a short amount of time before bed to just peruse the internet or watch videos on YouTube. She reported that this allowed her to stop thinking about the stresses of the day and to have a better quality of sleep. To further combat the stresses of conservatoire life, she tried to meditate in the morning, before beginning her day. This time usually allowed her to

get into a positive headspace, to be able to manage the day successfully.

Cara was an example of how students learn to manage their time and prioritise their mental wellbeing to meet their responsibilities successfully. For her, spending time with non-musicians provided a sense of relief otherwise difficult to come by. She valued her time spent with non-musician friends and viewed it as an escape from her music studies, and the chance to draw on other aspects of her personality and interests other than her instrument. Friendships and time management were seemingly significant subjects when I was interviewing and observing QMC students. Both of which allowed students a chance to talk about how they perceived their own position within the conservatoire hierarchy and how they felt about that structure.

Looking across all three sites

While each conservatoire seems to have its own distinctive student culture and students from different backgrounds, with different experiences and specialisms, I identified some commonalities in the student experience across the three sites I visited. In keeping with Perkins' (2013a) findings regarding conservatoire hierarchies, what and how students learn within those hierarchies, students at each of the conservatoires reported instances that required them to evaluate their position within the conservatoire hierarchy and to reflect on how they saw themselves within that structure. Conservatoire of the North came across as the most overtly collaborative. While all three conservatoires engaged in collaboration to some degree, at CON this appeared to be a significant aspect of the institution's character, although Riley felt that the collaborative nature was more opportunistic. In all three schools there was the assumption that music and a musical career were the top priority for students. Again, Riley talked about the student culture at CON as students putting music above all other things, including in their interactions with each other. Both QMC and MCC appeared to adhere to more of the customs and traditions of the Western classical conservatoire and therefore had many similarities in terms of institutional culture. These seemed to centre around the one-to-one student-tutor relationship and how that dyad influences the ways in which students managed the rest of their student life.

Devising space within the conservatoire life

One of the ways in which students seemed to adapt to the conservatoire was through learning to create space in their diary. Creating space could simply be a structured schedule which included coming to campus every day at a similar time, even when it was not strictly

necessary. This was reported by students at CON and MCC as a way of mental organisation, staying on top of responsibilities, or compartmentalising different aspects of life. While this loose structure allowed a student to build certain perceptions of the conservatoire life, students could also create space in a more detailed, regimented way. Such was the case with Greta at QMC who created a detailed to-do list every day, which she could look at and rely on, to ensure she accomplished what was necessary. For Greta, creating a detailed schedule allowed her to free her mind to think about other things. In another instance of making space, Alan at CON talked about how he tried to meditate every day: "[e]ven being able to maintain a routine with this exercise, being able to have a couple minutes of focus on doing that makes me feel good about and makes me feel relaxed." Taking the time to meditate, knowing that it is something that will happen every day, reportedly gave Alan a structure he could rely on. In these instances, the student still had the freedom to break or change this routine, but building a reliable structure allowed them to feel organised. The creation of habits and structure, however loose or strict, helped these students to build their perceptions of place and self within conservatoire culture.

When talking about how they perceived and interacted with conservatoire culture, participants often brought up practice expectations and the competitive elements of conservatoire life. Participants at QMC and MCC reflected on their night-time routines, which elicited another perception of making space. These students reported the need to separate their mind from anything music or studies-related before going to sleep. Sometimes, this ability only came immediately before bed and they felt that the only opportunity to stop working on music was by cutting into their sleep time. These students described delaying sleep to clear their mind of the day's events, Cara (QMC) said that she would spend time on social media, reading on her phone or watching videos on YouTube before bed because otherwise she would not be able to sleep. Emma (MCC) reported that she would "rather cut my sleep time short and get an hour of like, watching something or like, just reading or something" if she hadn't had any "free time" during the day, even though it compromised her sleep. These pre-sleep routines suggest that the need to create some form of separation between conservatoire and non-conservatoire life is strong enough that students are willing to forego adequate sleep in order to perceive some form of space within their day where they are not thinking about their music responsibilities.

There are, however, more embedded ways that students reported making space in conservatoire life. For example, David (MCC) reported that he considered meal times to be

an important part of his free time. When I asked him what free time meant to him, he said that it was time to "switch off … from music related study [and] professional classical music related thought", that:

> every meal has to be completely, sort of out, of the job. I do think it's important just to have this moment to relax, however long it is. Not trying to do admin while you're eating, preparing food and listening to music at the same time. No, I don't like to do that, so probably when I eat would be free time.

Earlier on in the interview, David had reported feeling an immense pressure to practice because he felt that his competitors would be trying to improve and therefore so should he. His notion of free time as mealtime was therefore, unsurprising. This necessary part of his day had been streamlined with a 'moment to relax' to help him spend more time practicing. Meanwhile, Greta (QMC) reported that she had decided to decline invitations to post-concert or rehearsal drinks if the event impinged on her sleep schedule (because doing so would affect her mental and physical wellbeing, she noted). These two students created space at certain times in their day to step away from music. David utilised this necessary part of his day as his free time while Greta wanted a certain amount of time at the end of the day and assessed invitations to informal gatherings accordingly. As I have laid out throughout chapter 5, each setting has a distinct institutional culture and similarly, a student may feel the external and internal pressures of conservatoire life differently, based on their perceptions of conservatoire culture and their place within that culture.

Other sources for students developing a sense of self in the conservatoire

Among the ways in which a student handled conservatoire life, other sources such as the physical conservatoire campus or friendships were notably prominent. Students across the three settings reported using physical spaces in different ways in order to handle conservatoire life. For example, Sarah and Riley at CON described certain spaces as being more conducive to work and productivity than others. They used the campus and a coffee shop in the surrounding area as work spaces, where they could keep up with course work. They associated these spaces with being more productive and getting things done.

Other participants also seemed to utilise certain spaces as a de facto office space to help structure their day. David and Mary used the MCC campus as a de facto office space to work on administrative tasks and other paperwork, such as invoices and emails. The way these students thought about these spaces seemed to affect how they managed life as a conservatoire student. In addition to the physical spaces around them, students across each

setting described how time spent with friends was a way of dealing with the stress of conservatoire life. From both the interviews and my observations, I noted that these friend groups seemed to consist of either those from the conservatoire or non-musician friends from before they came to the conservatoire. The conservatoire friendship groups often appeared to be based on the convenience of post-rehearsal chats or drinks or gathering with peers in the same studio or instrument group. Students described the non-conservatoire friendship groups as important as they knew they would not be expected to discuss music or the conservatoire when together. Participants at MCC and CON noted the value of spending time with non-musician friends for the fact that these friends did not need them to talk about conservatoire life or music. These friend groups seemed to provide conservatoire students with a sense of community support and were accessible when they were most needed.

From my observations and interviews with students across all three sites, I noted that students seemed to devise ways of creating space in their daily life in the conservatoire to disconnect with the stresses or pressures of their student life. Students' varied background and experiences, in combination with the nature of conservatoire education, seemed to create opportunities for an individual to discern how to best create the necessary space. Ongoing pressures and stresses that students encountered in the conservatoire could be isolating, yet I observed many commonalities in how students handled them. For many students, the conservatoire is their first experience living away from home and the transition between schooling and professional work. It is a time of increased independence, often without someone guiding them through the process of learning how to schedule and organise their time effectively.

Furthermore, the ways that participants managed the demands on their time appeared to be determined by trial and error, until they discovered strategies that worked for them. One of these strategies seemed to be to utilise certain physical spaces to elicit motivation and productivity, to help create a distinction between 'work' and 'non-work' time, as well as providing a place to accomplish otherwise difficult tasks, such as practicing large instruments. Students also reported creating space in conservatoire life through their friendship groups. In my observations and interview notes, I saw that often these friendship groups were composed of fellow musicians and the time to 'unwind' after a concert or between classes was a welcome reprieve from the demands of their practice. However, students also reported preferring to spend some of their time with non-musicians because it afforded them an opportunity to disengage more fully from conservatoire student life, for a period. In some

cases, students said that the pressure to practice constantly or engage in networking activities could be eased through using a combination of these strategies. The networks cultivated by students as a result of these strategies, seemed to help them to develop ways to deal with conservatoire life. Depending on their background and the surrounding resources, a student's priorities and dispositions appeared to be affected by how they dealt with conservatoire life and how they saw themselves operating within it.

Discussion of forming of a sense of place and self in the conservatoire through the lens of symbolic capital and habitus

In this discussion, I use the concepts of symbolic capital and habitus to connect the student experience with the institutional culture of the conservatoire. I employ these concepts by looking at how participants perceived their place within the conservatoire and how they build symbolic capital as students. In my data collection, I observed examples of these concepts in participants who spoke about growing up in family and social environments that positively or negatively affected their disposition and attitudes toward conservatoire customs and tradition (such as Mary [MCC], Riley [CON], and Rebecca [CON]). However, institutional capital in the conservatoire was also evident in my data, if less overt than these embodied characteristics. The most notable of these properties that I observed was the general acceptance of an instrument's repertoire, a canon of masterworks, or the usual musical works that musicians learn for each instrument. Another way in which students envoked institutional capital is through their understanding and ideas about the reputations of the UK conservatoires. When I asked student participants to tell me what they thought about the conservatoires, they were usually able to rank or order the different schools based on their perceptions of what each institution stands for and what it means to be a student at the different conservatoires. When I looked at these rankings made by different students and talked to them about their ordered lists, I was able to infer that, generally, a London conservatoire education seems to be perceived as offering greater opportunities and prestige than conservatoires elsewhere in the country. It follows that having certain conservatoires in one's artistic biography will give a student more status within the community, and therefore more opportunities. This is an example of how conservatoires are used as cultural capital of the individual musician.

The student's ability to create a quick, casual ranking of institutions evokes Bourdieu's (1990) conceptualisation of education as a "measure of rank" (p. 303) within a social structure. A degree or certificate from the conservatoire seems to be a clear signal of institutionalised cultural capital and the reputation of the qualification-awarding institution can add to this

capital. Florence (course leader, MCC) thought that the reputation of a conservatoire is a constant source of pressure for students. Her explanation that, while getting into the conservatoire is cause for celebration, a prestigious institution continues to exert pressure on students to keep achieving musically. The conservatoire environment afforded students the prospect of gaining cultural and social capital through other facets of their education, as well. As previously explained in chapter 2, conservatoire students carefully chose their tutor, which in turn, influenced the competitions they were likely to enter and the repertoire they were likely to perform. The student-tutor relationship is looked at in greater depth in chapter 7; for now, I want to emphasize the role the tutor's guidance and advice plays in a student's capital. The conservatoire is a platform for students to develop as musicians and to gain cultural capital from different aspects of their education. This cultural capital is a necessary part of building a successful career and shapes how a student perceives that career and the journey towards it.

My data certainly gave the impression that students spend the length of their studies working on solo and orchestral repertoire, all of which does not seem to be considered equally (as suggested previously by the unspoken understanding of practise expectations and the accepted canon of repertoire described in chapter 5). As mentioned previously, for each instrument there is a canon of important solo works that a performer is expected to learn. To performers, these works are more than just melodies on a page. These appear to be cultural objects, existing physically in the community and requiring cultural understanding in order to see the infused value that goes beyond the physical characteristics of the object. Frequently, works that fall outside of this list of works are considered nonconformist and/or supplementary. Students who are aware of and understand their instrument's canon are able to choose a repertoire for themselves and generally understand how the community will perceive that choice. Deanna's (MCC) preference for modern works (as opposed to the customary canon of works) illustrated this point. She explained to me that the head of her faculty had expressed concern that she was not focusing on the accepted canon. This was a concern that Deanna and her tutor largely ignored because had chosen to learn those pieces with the understanding that they were unorthodox. Indeed, she seemed to have a good understanding of what repertoire was expected of her and frequently made the decision to subvert those expectations. While her actions were contrary to the customary practices of the conservatoire, it was through her understanding and use of these musical-works-as-cultural-objects that she purposefully took control of her experience of conservatoire culture.

Outlining different dimensions of cultural capital within the conservatoire also sheds light on how students engage with and navigate that culture. I saw this in repertoire expectations and the ways in which institutional reputations are perceived and utilised within the community. The cultural resources available to a student seemed to increase their cultural capital, especially when these resources are available at an early age. Greater cultural capital allows a student to make decisions that will help them to navigate the conservatoire hierarchy and learn their position within the hierarchy in relation to their peers.

Binaries felt by conservatoire students

The notion that there is 'normal' school as opposed to the conservatoire, or a 'real' job as opposed to being a musician are two of the binaries faced by conservatoire students. Participants reported different ways of perceiving themselves as separate from wider society. Prior to entering the conservatoire, Mary's brother would share his experiences of training as a singer, which allowed Mary to gain an understanding of what that high-level training would entail. Her brother's experiences influenced her own expectations, so that having received her undergraduate degree from a mainstream university, she felt she had a general understanding of conservatoire culture when she began her conservatoire studies. Mary talked about straddling two 'worlds' (her phrase) throughout her studies. With a brother who helped to teach her what to expect at the conservatoire, she held onto that knowledge until she got there. She noted that the time she spent at university allowed her to develop a friendship group with varied interests and career aspirations. From this accumulated experience, she found that once at the conservatoire, she valued time with these friends as it provided an opportunity to participate in these other non-music aspects of life. Similar to Riley's perception of the conservatoire as rather insular, Mary also talked about these non-musicians as being part of a different "world" and that spending time with them allowed her to stop thinking about the conservatoire for a brief time. These findings were interesting to me considering the mono-technic nature of the conservatoire. Because of this, students would have to make a specific effort to maintain these non-musician friendships across institutions, often across different cities (Cara, Greta [QMC], Deanna [MCC]).

The participants' ideas about their experiences and the world seemed to help to contextualise the conservatoire experience and how they perceived the conservatoire as an organisation. One recurring consideration in my data, when talking about a participants' ideas and perceptions of feeling like an 'other' in society, was how they conceived of the conservatoire in opposition to the mainstream university. Some participants readily talked about this in

terms of the differences and the benefits and drawbacks of both institutional settings (especially Mary [MCC], John [MCC], and Sasha [QMC]). During these discussions, participants noted the differences in culture between the conservatoire and the 'normal' university that led to acquiring different kinds of soft skills. Other researchers have also noted binaries in music education, especially the use of the word 'normal' to refer to mainstream education settings (Perkins, 2013a; Welch & Papageorgi, 2014). The use of the word 'normal' suggested that the alternative would be abnormal and opened an opportunity for feelings of division between the conservatoire student and other students, leading to a feeling of separation from the rest of their non-conservatoire peers.

The participants' perceptions of this binary, of living in a "really different world" (Riley) from other studies and professions and feeling outside of what is considered 'normal', suggested to me the perception of music performance as being low in the social hierarchy of work. This notion was reinforced when participants referred to non-music and non-performance work as "real work" (Sarah, Jacob). The idea that certain kinds of work and jobs are considered more 'real' than others is not entirely novel and has been noted in previous research (see Clair, 1996; Lair and Wieland, 2012). I found that participants used the term "real" in opposition to their own position (seemingly perceived as inferior) within the wider professional or social hierarchy. In one notable instance, Sarah (CON) utilised this idea of inferiority as a motivator for her academic course work. She would work on academic assignments at the coffee shop around the corner from campus because of the "real work" atmosphere of spending time with professional people, as though her academic work or music practice was less "real". In our interview, she said that she would often sit with a cup of coffee and work on her coursework there because the "…atmosphere of [other people in the café] doing real work makes me want to work harder at what I'm doing". Sarah's perception of the hierarchy of work seemed to be that her own position as a conservatoire student and performer was less legitimate than the others in the coffee shop. Despite this, the informal environment inspired her to be productive when working on non-performance academic work or administration tasks. Sarah's perception of "real work" as existing outside of the conservatoire was echoed by other participants when talking about non-music students or musicians as "normal people" in tandem with non-performance work as a "real job." Seemingly, these students have, in their own way, subscribed to the notion that their own chosen HE and career path do not fit within a mainstream culture and by association, identity themselves as abnormal, less-real or other negative connotations. Ideas around these kinds of separateness varied, ranging from thoughts about a university as a 'normal' school versus the conservatoire, of separation from

the rest of their non-performer social groups, or the idea that their role in society more generally existed outside what is “real”. From my observations and interviews, this notion that conservatoire students were in some way separated from mainstream society was a common experience.

How students bring in and build social capital in the conservatoire

Throughout my analysis I have explored the support networks that students were able to build through their social capital. This was the case with Alan (CON) who was a new member of a popular and enduring band in his home country. During our interview, it was clear that he viewed this position as prestigious, especially considering his young age. Meanwhile, Emmett (MCC) evoked the notion social capital when talking about how postgraduate students at the conservatoire tended to cultivate friendship groups based on who is “doing very similar stuff” such as genres of singers, orchestral bassoonists, or even those focused on learning historical performance. All of these perceptions draw on social capital, the forming of durable networks that help a student to negotiate their position within the community. An increase in social capital seemed to allow a student to navigate the social structures of the conservatoire more easily and build on their position to find a place within the hierarchy that satisfies their goals and desires.

I also noted that participants often referred to their pre-conservatoire environments and communities and how their expectations were affected by the resources of those communities when reflecting on their experiences and their initial expectations of the conservatoire. An example was Mary who talked the role her brother had played in giving her a cultural understanding of the conservatoire community, preparing her for the customs, behaviours and challenges that she encountered. Riley, by contrast, had few cultural resources that prepared her for the conservatoire and talked about how surprised she was at how career-minded her peers were. The research findings suggest that, in general, the cultural resources available to students before enrolling at a conservatoire translate into an accumulation of embodied cultural capital that makes it easier for a student to negotiate the conservatoire culture. This is similar to my own experience where young students who, early on, had studied with professional performers seemed to be more adherent to cultural norms present in the conservatoire than students who did not have that level of private tuition.

Usually HE students have to navigate the learning environment, develop friendships, build and strengthen social networks that will help them progress through their course of study.

What seemed different for conservatoire students was that, while building these support networks, they also often talked about feelings of direct competition with their peers in those networks. Competition seemed to be experienced at both an academic and vocational level because in many cases, they were auditioning against classmates for performance opportunities, including opportunities outside of the institution. Mary and David (MCC), Greta and Cara (QMC) all found themselves in competing with their peers inside and outside of the conservatoire environment. This element of competition appeared to add a layer of complexity to the task of building networks as it forms part of the way in which a student positions themselves within the cultural hierarchy of the conservatoire.

The networks built while in the conservatoire were also viewed by participants as vitally important to their career once they left the school (Cara, David, Alan [CON]). As these students moved through the conservatoire, they were also building their professional network, increasing their social capital through those connections. A student's future jobs and their associations with prestigious ensembles, individuals (such as specific tutors), and organisations (international competitions, for example) can positively affect how they are perceived within the classical music community. In what appeared to be a notable example of the role of social capital in the student experience, Riley (CON) talked about her concern about networking and her relationship with peers while thinking about what her expectations of the conservatoire were prior to enrolling. She also talked about the competitive nature of the conservatoire as a given, and seemed to see the setting as not great for fostering friendships. Conservatoire of the North appears to consider collaboration an important part of their ethos, however Riley reflected rather negatively on the group projects she had encountered during her studies. Rather than selecting peers based on their potential to help her position within the social structure of the conservatoire, she preferred to work with people she liked, people whom she would "want to spend time with" and were "good". These criteria for working with people are quite basic, but Riley intimated that as a music student it was not especially helpful to work within a group of people just because you enjoyed their company. The competitive nature, and what she felt was disingenuous network building, was part of the conservatoire experience. From the accounts of my participants it appears that by keeping an eye on network building in terms of their future career, students are seeking to increase their social capital – although they would not invoke that notion explicitly.

Mary (MCC) provided another example of the value of networks and social capital, particularly in relation to the professional community, in talking about the performers and

industry professionals she knew before coming to the conservatoire and how these acted as a support system while she was a student, offering her performance opportunities and supportive comments. She reported relying, in part, on this group of professionals to help her manage the pressures of the conservatoire, while also helping her to earn a living through the work opportunities. Thus Mary was utilising the strength of her social capital to build and maintain an income well before leaving the conservatoire, something much of the professional musician community has to do. However, many students did not have such pre-existing networks and rely on other sources of opportunities. For instance, Greta (graduate, QMC), used a gig newsletter at her new conservatoire to build her network in a new city and find new sources of income. She said that QMC also offered students the opportunity to find paid gigs with the help of a dedicated conservatoire department, but she had not utilised these kinds of resources until she was at a new conservatoire in a new city. After moving to the London conservatoire, Greta also quickly developed ideas for connecting with other local musicians, seeing casual post-concert events as networking opportunities, in addition to the conservatoire newsletter and other job boards. Her goal appeared to be to create a network from which she could find income and these activities helped her to increase her social capital and strengthen her networks.

While students seemed to build networks as a means to increase one's standing within the hierarchy of the conservatoire, thereby increasing and strengthening social capital, participants perceive a post-conservatoire professional life for themselves. John (graduate, MCC) spoke in a very matter-of-fact way about his life after the conservatoire in which, he said the best-case scenario would be to have consistent freelance work as a performer for about fifteen years and then move into "management orchestra roles". If after a year out of conservatoire, he had not made "waves" in freelancing, he would make that segue into administration even sooner. John talked about "making waves", in relation to the experience and connections he had made throughout his time at MCC and an active participant in student leadership organisations, particularly in terms of how the role had helped him to strengthen his curricula vitae for administrative roles. This illustrated how a student can think about their networks and their standing within those networks, even as students. Deanna (postgrad, MCC) also told me about her post-conservatoire plan, although was less specific about the timeline, commenting that she would probably leave performance for another field if she did not find enough performance work to build a sustainable income within "a few years". Her comments illustrated the awareness students have about the need to have a strong network upon leaving the conservatoire but also an understanding and acceptance of the lack

of guarantees in terms of establishing a stable footing within the professional music community.

From my interviews and observations, it is apparent that participants purposefully tried to develop connections and their professional network during their time at the conservatoire. They seemed to appreciate the need for networks and an understanding that these networks would help them to develop their social position within the performance hierarchy not only in the conservatoire but more importantly, after leaving the conservatoire. Some students seemed acutely aware of the need for reliable connections, telling me about how important they felt it was to build these networks while they were still students in order to give them a better chance of finding enough work after completing their studies. Social capital in the conservatoire appeared to be strengthened by forming bonds with their peers, despite being often in direct competition with those same peers. It also seemed to come from connecting with people who can give them experiences outside of the conservatoire setting to build a more extensive social network. In this way, students appeared to experience aspects of the professional community and form strong perceptions of their post-conservatoire life while they were still studying.

Habitus in the conservatoire

While looking at my data in terms of social and cultural capital adds a rich dimension to understanding the student experience of conservatoire culture and connects the individual to the hierarchy of the institution, looking at habitus, the “mental structures through which [people] apprehend the social world” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18), provides useful insight into how students see their place within the organisation. Where possible, I looked at what would be considered the conservatoire student habitus. My findings suggested that the tastes and dispositions of an MCC and QMC student are slanted toward the archetypal classical musician. By this, I mean that participants at these two conservatoires seem to have predominantly oriented their decision-making at the conservatoire level around those preferences, pursuing that prescribed way of being. Sasha (graduate, QMC) and John (graduate, MCC) both explicitly described their performance goals as finding a full-time orchestra job, which has been a viable and acceptable outcome for conservatoire students for decades. Meanwhile, CON participants appeared to be more predisposed to a frame of mind that included non-customary performance opportunities such as pop music festivals and bars. Riley and Sarah both referred to these kinds of gigs with satisfaction. I observed that CON generally attracts a different kind of student than those who attend MCC or Queens

Metropolitan Conservatoire. Also from my observations, it appeared that CON students are trained for a post-conservatoire landscape that does not centre around the well-established full-time performance format of the orchestra in which studying different genres of music has a place, and priorities and values do not have to align with the traditional conservatoire. Because of this, CON students seemed to inhabit some slightly different durable dispositions to what seemed to be similar across MCC and Queens Metropolitan Conservatoire.

In other instances, David (MCC) and Greta (QMC) talked about the value of diverse income streams and the value of building a portfolio career as a performer. For these two, the full-time orchestra future would be ideal but they also reported being open to other possibilities, mirroring the flexible outlook of CON students like Riley and Sarah. However, David and Greta also noted the distinct value of established aspects of the conservatoire lifestyle, such as concerto competitions and other well-established ways of determining cultural capital which I observed as absent from the CON student habitus. The overall attitude of participants seemed to be to put themselves in the best position to be successful performers - in the various iterations of what that meant to these different individual students. While not the main priority of my research, understanding how personal backgrounds and experiences build into a habitus that values similar aspects of conservatoire life, was important to gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the conservatoire experience.

Together, the elements of practice, culture, and tradition have provided a fruitful lens for exploring the conservatoire community. Symbolic capital in tandem with habitus, culture, and tradition comprise essential aspects of the student experience. These lenses allowed me to look at students' lives and helped me to better understand the contours of their lives. This exploration therefore makes an important contribution to understanding how a non-mainstream HE student negotiates and constructs culture within their institution. One of the primary examples of how this can really differ from mainstream HE was how the influence of the professional musician community on conservatoire culture creates a lot of competition between students. Participants made it apparent that they perceived the conservatoire and themselves to exist outside of mainstream HE and an important aspect of this is in the notion of 'work'. I observed that students were constantly engaging with competitions and auditions, while building networks and professional connections. This struggle seems to lead to complicated relationships wherein a student may be in direct competition with their peers in one moment and act as a source of camaraderie in another. Therefore, conservatoire culture seemed to be neither competitive nor supportive but somewhere in between and will feel

different for each student at any given time. Tacit ideas about the student experience could also significantly affect the student's perception of the conservatoire and their role within it. By learning where the perceptions originate, I have uncovered a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the student experience of conservatoire culture.

Chapter 7 - Tutor influence on conservatoire culture and the student experience of that culture

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to look at how the tutor influences the student experience of conservatoire culture. I will draw on the data collected at the three conservatoires and develop an analysis of how the student-tutor dyad affects the way a student engages with conservatoire culture. When I designed my research questions, I specifically wanted to address the relative lack of literature that focuses on student life in the conservatoire outside of the formal learning-teaching environment. However, when talking to students about this out-of-classroom time, it became clear to me that it would be impossible to separate the tutor-student relationship from these research interests. While the details of the student-tutor relationship and level of influence that the tutor has seem to vary, participants across all three sites brought up aspects of this relationship that affect their perspectives and dispositions toward the conservatoire and performance culture, both as students and as pre-professionals. The aim of this chapter is to explore how students talk about this relationship and how it influences their life. To accomplish this, I will briefly revisit the mechanics of the student-tutor relationship, more thoroughly described in chapter 2, before moving on to the analysis of my fieldwork data, followed by a discussion of the implications of tutor influence through the conceptual lens of guardianship and tradition.

As established in chapter 2, the conservatoire is built around the one-to-one teaching relationship and therefore, the tutor plays a central role in the student's life during their studies (Kennell, 2002). Historically, a music performance apprenticeship would take place under the guidance of one tutor, or 'master', while the development of the modern conservatoire has allowed music performance students to experience the one-to-one relationship in tandem with a classroom-based course. The tutor helps students in their studio develop perspectives on conservatoire practices, Frederickson and Rooney (1990) describe these learning-teaching transactions as skills "passed on through apprenticeship training" (p. 198-9). This influence can begin long before the student enters the conservatoire, as students will often take private lessons outside of the compulsory school curriculum (Howe and Sloboda, 2008). Also, while a student will have usually experienced other tutors prior to coming to the conservatoire, they will experience several other tutors and teaching staff in addition to their primary tutor, throughout their studies (Hays et al., 2000; Nerland, 2007; Presland, 2005). The findings in this chapter are supported by the literature, which describes

the student-tutor as a central relationship in a student's conservatoire life, one that can take on different forms such as parental, friendly, doctor/patient-like or collaborative (Gaunt, 2008).

Among my participants, former conservatoire student and MCC course leader, Florence, provided a concise example of how she feels the tutor-student relationship affects the student beyond music and performance technique. During our interview, she explained what her music education looked like when she started learning to play the piano with a private tutor at the age of nine; as a young musician, these early experiences shaped her perspective of practicing and performance life: "[y]ou study music, you practise your piano, you don't have a holiday as such, you practise every day." This kind of learned disposition appears to affect many students, as I explore in this chapter. Florence is aware that her experience is not unique, saying "*you* study" (emphasis mine) as a general statement that young people are often met with the expectation that they will dedicate much of their time and mental energy to practicing music. The tone of Florence's description made it apparent to me that as a young musician, her tutor expected practicing to be her top priority, more so than seemed potentially reasonable to her. But the master and apprentice-like dyad compelled her, from nine years old, to fill her time and mind with music practice. This is in keeping with previous research, for example by Howe and Sloboda (2008), who found that 41% of students in their study, aged 10-18, practiced more than an hour per day (over 300 hours per year).

Florence continued to develop the idea that the master and apprentice-like set-up allows the tutor to transmit their own priorities and values, and specifically, views of how one should conduct themselves. This is where the concept of guardianship and the construction of tradition in a community can be applied to the role of conservatoire tutors: the tutor communicates their beliefs about music performance and conservatoire customs to the student, and through them, shape the music performance community. These authority figures communicate emotional investment in certain practices and this emotional component is what separates traditions from the customs. Expanding on the notion that a student should spend as much time practicing as possible, and eliciting the idea of practicing long hours as a significant conservatoire tradition, Florence went on to say that:

> I think when students, or pupils, when they start their music lessons they're told 'you have to work hard you have to work hard, practice, practice, do this, do that' and I don't remember that I was ever told to take a break or anything. So, it is so imbedded by the time they get here that it actually takes some serious guts to break the habit of working all the time.

According to Florence, by the time a student musician enters the conservatoire, they have come to understand that the tutor knows best, and the tutor therefore has a great potential to influence the development of a student's durable values and priorities. I found that participants had a lot to say about this relationship and how it influenced the way they chose to organise their schedules, their student priorities, and the way they looked ahead to their future career, which I investigate throughout the rest of this chapter. Through interview excerpts, I will show how the student-tutor relationship seems to play an important role in shaping the student perspective and their experience of conservatoire culture.

How pedagogical lineage affects perceptions in the music performance community

Chapters 5 and 6 examined conservatoire culture and how the individual is connected to that culture, and in both chapters I mention the tutor in relation to that culture and the student experience. The tutor seems to be so important to the conservatoire experience that for many students, and for some the decision to audition for specific institutions was based on where their desired tutor is located. The importance of individual tutors was reflected in institutions' websites, by offering trial lessons to students who have an idea of who they would like to study. The decision of who to study with is important because a performer is often labelled, at least in part, by who they studied with. In this sense, tutors are an important form of cultural capital in the performance community (often requiring substantial economic capital to obtain as private tuition can be quite costly, in my experience). This element of music performance is known as pedagogical lineage and is documented in a similar manner to a familial lineage (Kingsbury, 1988), tracked through word of mouth as well as in biographies on websites and in concert programs, alongside other accolades. The use of this notion as a tool of career building is common within conservatoire culture and the wider performance community and appears to be used by performers to convey their abilities to people without use of their instrument. Throughout my fieldwork, I talked to students who engaged with pedagogical lineage without identifying it as such.

Pedagogical lineage is a concept common throughout the performing arts, including classical ballet instruction (Zeller, 2009). From talking to students and looking at websites and marketing materials, I observed that the performative aspect of the arts allows the achievements and community perception of a tutor to add authority and desirability to their teaching, allowing a student to then say that they have studied under a highly-regarded tutor. This is an important tool for identification within the performance community, stemming from

the idea of utilising a tutor's name in performer biographies and CVs to help illustrate their abilities – something that is difficult to convey on paper (Kingsbury, 1988). By looking at pedagogical lineage through the lens of cultural capital, evidence of an intangible cultural currency becomes apparent. More prestigious claims of this kind can provide a performer with greater movement through the conservatoire hierarchy. Each student will have their own reasons for wanting to study with a specific tutor, for example, the tutor's name recognition, teaching style or affiliation with a particular teaching pedagogy. In addition to these reasons, choice of tutor can play a role in one's future identity as a performer, which conservatoires they decide to audition for, and in some cases, how much energy they will exert to have satisfactory one-to-one lessons.

In this regard, Rebecca, Sasha and Greta all chose to audition at their current institution because of specific tutors, rather than on the merit of the institution alone thereby engaging in pedagogical lineage, albeit with underpinned by different motivations. Rebecca's decision to come to CON was based on the advice of her then-current tutor whereas Sasha and Greta made the decision independently as to who they wanted to train under for the postgraduate program. This illustrated their concern with building pedagogical lineage that will benefit them as individuals within a specific community. Rebecca referred to pedagogical lineage indirectly when talking about her decision to study at the Conservatoire of the North: "my [trumpet] teacher at home was taught by my teacher here so they have a connection so then I knew kind of had a connection with here..." Thus, Rebecca's pre-conservatoire tutor began Rebecca's pedagogical lineage by referring her to a tutor who would likely keep teaching Rebecca in a similar manner and transmit similar ideas and values about the practices of the conservatoire. The role of recommendation from her pre-conservatoire tutor was a seemingly significant influence on where Rebecca decided to audition, thereby shaping her biography as a performer and becoming central to that lineage.

Gaunt (2006) noted that the relationship with the tutor evolved over time and that students became increasingly independent of the tutor, through their guidance, as they student came closer to becoming a professional performer. It is likely that priorities change depending on where a student is in their education. Greta decided she wanted to study with her current tutor after taking part in a master class he had given. After the master class, she felt that it would be a good student-tutor match and when she approached him about joining his studio. She reported that he then told her to apply for the master's degree at her now current institution because that is where he teaches. She made her decision based on her

experience of his teaching and the feeling she got from his critique, a feeling that suggested to her that he could greatly benefit her technique and artistry. Meanwhile, Sasha was also about to start a master's degree. Before becoming his pupil, Sasha understood that her tutor as an elite performer who had achieved great success and was selective in that he only worked with high-achieving students. She knew she would have to work harder with that tutor than she had done previously due to the 'elite' nature of his teaching: "he is the teacher that takes the elite, he isn't going to take anybody who is below what he considers the 1%, I literally had to beg him to take me on." After finishing her undergraduate degree, mostly performing in what she called the "average category", she asked the tutor to work with her on her master's degree and to help her to achieve a higher-level of performance than she was otherwise capable at the time, thereby actively engaging with pedagogical lineage. The tutor she wanted to study with was associated with a high level of performance ability, both from his own accomplishments and learning as well as those of his students. However, students don't always feel a sense of control over their learning, which I will touch on later in the chapter.

How students form ideas about the profession from a tutor who they view as god-like

In conducting student interviews, I was not only interested in the tutor-student relationship per se but also in how students spoke about their tutors. According to MCC master's level student, John, clarinettist and student representative, for many students, the tutor is perceived as a wise authority, or 'sage' (Giddens, 1994), and participants appeared to take on the tutor's ideas of what post-conservatoire professional life and practice should look like rather unquestioningly. Having taken on a student leadership role, John began to observe the ways in which different students, tutors, and conservatoire administration interacted and influenced one another. He described the tutor's influence as huge, over any contact that might take place with other teachers or professional sources while they are at the conservatoire. This can be positive but can also be a shock when eventually a student encounters other points of view:

> …you do get a lot from one person [the tutor] and that's great because often they are your idol. But then other people will … say something different, or you'll get on into your profession and … if someone wants you to do something different you're like 'shit' because you don't get this [general music training] overview.

According to John, the centrality of this dyad, coupled with the attitude of the student towards their tutor who may be highly regarded or even 'idolised', leads to students sometimes seeing

the advice and guidance of their tutor as being infallible. This seems to be often at the expense of the student developing flexibility of technique and performance.

This is not to suggest that in the conservatoire a student will not experience other teaching styles and methods. Students do encounter other tutors, John explained, through small ensembles or other performance groups, as well as one-off occasions such as master classes. These students then may be faced with contradictory advice. In order for a student to navigate and develop the relationship with their primary tutor, they evaluate the guidance of the primary study tutor amongst the other teaching staff and tutors throughout their studies. John suggests that often students only follow the guidance of their primary study tutor while some are able to balance the information they are given and decide what to take into their practice, having developed the learning independence and critical thinking necessary to accomplish this. Cara, nearing the end of her career as a master's level student at QMC, touched on concept of the idol-like tutor when talking about what she would like to have done differently in her conservatoire student career, knowing everything she now knew:

> [I] had this idea of my teachers as being this god-like thing, I had such immense respect but It's kind of funny, it all kind of came crashing down when I was reaching my graduation point after my fourth year of music college and I just realised they're all, every single person that I met is a real human being, they have divorces and things happen to them. And it kind of did have an impact on me oh my gosh my world, my idealistic little naïve world was caving in on me, in a way. … I wish I would have been a bit more stubborn… not being persuaded by other teachers or influences too much.

In this reflection, Cara realised that her tutor and teaching staff were not infallible and were not able to necessarily give her perfect advice but this realisation came slowly. Cara initially saw her tutor as a kind of 'idol' and therefore followed their specific methods until she progressed toward the end of her studies, at which point she realised that she understood her own abilities well enough to make her own decisions about her music performance practice. In discussing the projects she was currently working on, Cara shared her understanding that how she organised her schedule, made a routine for quality practice time, and managed personal stress were aspects of her performance practice that were individual to her own needs and therefore, required her to make decisions for her own benefit rather than to fulfil the advice of a tutor. This example illustrates how her student identity has evolved and how she was developing a personal practice that was independent of her tutor.

These examples illustrate that the student-tutor relationship can be a complex part of student learning. The transmission of knowledge from tutor to student often is not a simple transaction but instead, a highly specialised interaction that is affected by personalities, past experiences, learning and teaching styles, emotions, and any combination of other factors. The customary role of the tutor is to communicate skills and knowledge to the student (Burwell, 2013, Frederickson and Rooney, 1990, Jørgensen, 2010, Loebel, 1982). In the conservatoire, the student can perceive the tutor as infallible, almost 'god-like', as John explained:

> …your teachers have a different physical make-up from you, different size fingers, they have different size lungs, mouths, lips like ability to resonate. … But they've [conservatoire students who start as undergrads] been doing that same thing for four years and I'm like, 'why haven't you looked outside the box, why haven't you said I'm going to have to try a different teacher?'

According to John, new students often come into the conservatoire setting expecting their tutor and the wider tuition staff to be beyond reproach, putting them 'on a pedestal,' as Mary put it, and therefore assume that all their advice must be implemented. Both John and Cara seemed to rely on their tutor to guide them through their studies and provide answers throughout this process; however, as they progressed through their studies, their perspectives on the role of the tutor in their education evolved to suit what they needed from them.

The primary tutor is a person of authority who I have conceptualised as a guardian of tradition in the conservatoire, concerned with not only "what 'is' done … but what 'should be' done" (Giddens, 1994, p. 65). From my data, it appeared that for students who see the tutor as the source of all authority, their guidance will be a major part of how the student develops their values and perceptions of the music community. From my interviews with students, it seemed this characteristic of the tutor-student relationship, by and large, meets with little challenge, apart from a small contingent of students who believe that this kind of relationship is not or has not been conducive to professional success.

Variations in the primary study tutor arrangement

On Conservatoires UK website individual, practical training provided to students is described as a cornerstone of conservatoire education. However, in some cases, participants reported having two or three principal study tutors who share the responsibility of providing practical training for each student. In these cases, the student may need to learn how to navigate

unequal distributions of power, as individual tutors may provide contradictory advice and guidance, leaving it to the student to determine what guidance to apply to their practice and synthesise it with their technique. Emmett, postgraduate-level oboe player at MCC, described the student-tutor arrangements in the woodwind faculty: "…we [oboe students] all tend to have at least two teachers, but last year I had four. … I think it's very different from a lot of other systems [in] that no one person takes ownership". Deanna, also a postgraduate-level oboe player, had four tutors and Samantha, a bassoonist and undergraduate-level student, also had multiple tutors.

Having multiple tutors appeared to be a learning-hurdle that a student must overcome because, as Emmett described to me, these tutors can make opposing recommendations. As an incoming student, it is difficult to determine whose recommendation to apply and how to discuss this with tutors you hold in such high regard. At MCC, John discussed this practice from the perspective of incoming students: "…you come in, in first year, and have three different teachers, you're not prepared to take on all of that information and you haven't been taught to distil that yourself." The implication is, then, that the one-to-one arrangement of a student to one individual tutor allows a student to take on the guidance of that tutor and receive more holistic advice than is possible when multiple tutors share the 'ownership' of a student's progress. Differently echoing the idea that the ideal format for a student's individual training is one tutor to one student, Sasha's master's-level tutor did not allow his students to study with multiple tutors because of the possibility for miscommunication. As a tutor, it is not necessarily possible to make this demand of the conservatoire's organisation of students but in Sasha's case, her tutor was able to put this stipulation on the institution for their students, she felt, because of his status within the institution. Furthermore, Emmett seemed to suggest that because each tutor's 'ownership' of the student's progress was shared, individual tutors could sometimes be less concerned about the student's development.

Post-graduate MCC student David also viewed multiple tutors as potentially problematic. Stating the importance of what he believed was a good student-tutor match, he described the variation in teaching personality and style that can occur across instrument group faculties:

> …obviously, your main teacher is the person who has, or should have the more influence on you … If you have really laid-back, friendly, easy going teacher, it's quite lucky that you can have an open-minded study life and if you have someone … that's really traditional or formal, that might not be the case at all. And you can have both because you have more than one teacher.

This excerpt from my interview with David illustrated the importance of the individual tutor in terms of qualities and teaching style, and the students' awareness that the kind of tutor one has affects how they learn. For David, a tutor with a laid-back personality who provides flexibility in lessons is something he appreciates. A student may have multiple tutors with contrasting personalities while their needs fall within one type of teaching style and it may not be possible to obtain two tutors who are complementary to those needs. This could be, then, particularly problematic if the student looks up to their tutor as an 'idol' or 'god-like person' as discussed previously in this chapter. In this excerpt, David contrasts the laid-back tutor and a traditional tutor in terms of teaching styles, recognising that each style has its benefits. However, an individual student may not benefit equally from both or understand how to handle the relationship with these different types of tutor simultaneously.

As I have shown, while the tutor-student dyad is the norm, a student may have more than one primary study tutor, or may see other performance tutors periodically, many of whom may give different or even contradictory advice. According to participants, the way a student responds to this can depend on how the student perceives their relationship with their tutor or tutors. John explained to me that the student's perceived role within the student-tutor relationship could create a situation wherein a student drastically alters their playing whenever they are given different advice:

> …in the first year, you know first year coming into college … you've got different teachers telling you different things. You're not prepared at that stage. But when are you prepared, you know, if you're not being taught how to think a certain way… you get to fourth year and have another teacher and if they change everything, well, then you got to spend your whole fourth year revising everything.

The 'everything' from this excerpt, John suggested, encompasses everything from performance technique, practice routine, the professional outlook, or any combination of the skills needed to be a professional performer. Further suggesting that the root of the issue is that "people … [want] to do exactly what their teacher tells them, from day one." John then described the hypothetical student who has done exactly what their tutor has taught them for three years only to come to the last year of their conservatoire education to be faced with a new perspective incongruent with what they had been previously taught. Faced with this new perspective, the student then invests a great deal of energy overhauling their performance practice. The sub text of John's account was, I believe, that if the student had been taught to think critically about their approach to music, they would not find themselves in the position of feeling obliged to overhaul their practice because they would not have relied wholly on the

guidance of a single tutor. Unlike in mainstream university, the aim of teaching in the conservatoire seems to be, in John's account, not to promote independence and critical thinking to transmit a particular set of values and beliefs about music performance and repertoire.

Whether a student has one primary study tutor or more than one tutor seemed to influence how they experience the conservatoire and being a conservatoire student requires the ability to navigate the relationship with the tutor(s), who are sometimes seen as infallible in their teaching or god-like due to their achievements or abilities. For students John, Emmett, Cara, and Sasha an adjustment in mind set seemed to be necessary from their early studies. While they reportedly felt the influence of their primary study tutor in studies, over time they developed an active voice in discussing their training needs with their tutors. This seemed to better allow them to be their own advocates, able to incorporate conflicting advice into their practice.

How students think about the boundaries of the student-tutor relationship

How one defines boundaries in the context of the student-tutor relationship is a notion that both parties will have to consider. As I described earlier, some students need their primary study tutor to act as a source of pastoral guidance and support while others prefer a distinct separation between their learning environment and social or personal life. These relationships involve different kinds of boundaries. The way students talked about how they perceive boundaries within their student-tutor relationship seemed to be an element that can change and evolve, just as the student's perception of the role of the tutor changes. Previously, I talked about Mary and how she described her tutor's help and support during a time when she was feeling burnt out. She then went on to describe the relationship with her tutor as a blending of formality and social friendliness:

> she's obviously, she's a friend, I'll definitely keep in touch with her when I leave. I'm gonna study with her for as long as I can. And I definitely think (*short pause*) we go for lunch, we hang out, and it's really nice, but it's not an unhealthy… it's not unhealthily close and it's not me wanting her to like me.

Within this functional and healthy relationship, Mary did not seem too feel entirely dependent on her tutor for guidance, although a marked admiration is still evident in her tone. Mary described a student-tutor relationship wherein the tutor is not so highly vaunted that as a student, Mary felt inadequate or unworthy in any way. Her tone connoted a sense of agency in that she felt she had an active role in their relationship. During our interview, Mary reflected

on her own teacher-student experiences to describe the ideal student-tutor:

> I think I'm very lucky … because I've had bad experiences with teachers before I knew where the boundaries are and I know how to keep that distance and how to manage that relationship. Because it's not just the teacher that has to do that, it's a two-way thing. You have to take your lessons, they have to bring their expertise and you find a way to work together. And I think of the people who … don't necessarily understand that so they wait for their teachers to give them repertoire, for example, or they wait for their teachers to help them decide their recital program, or they need them which auditions to go for and this kind of stuff.

An interesting take from this excerpt is the notion that students who wait for their tutors to make decisions for them are described as people with inadequate boundaries. For Mary, an ideal relationship seems to exist when the student feels that they have a voice in their education and musical direction, rather than relying on the tutor to lead all the decision making. Although an 'ideal' relationship can, of course, take many forms. Participants reported variation in what they felt is an ideal student-tutor relationship, the commonality between them seemed to be that both parties felt the same about what a productive student-tutor relationship looked like. Whether the relationship took on an informal, parental tone or one more like that of a doctor and patient, there was no one 'right' way to set the boundaries within the dyad.

Mary talked about the value of working together with her tutor as well as social aspects such as having lunch together, blending the social and formal learning in a way that most other participants did not. For Emmett, the social aspect was a less important part of his relationship:

> [once a year] we'll [ensemble members] have a concert and then go get a drink. Or one of our professors, we've been to her house, and she cooked us lunch and had a few drinks after. But yeah, I dunno my personal [thought] is that it's [a social relationship between a tutor and student] quite an intense, there are still boundaries.

Meanwhile, for David, too, the ideal student-tutor relationship seemed to be relaxed but with well-defined boundaries, one that allowed the opportunity for a tutor to give guidance on issues that go beyond repertoire or performance technique but one that rarely spilt over into socialising:

> I just think it's the right way to do, keep distance… I think if you're too friendly with your teacher I would be scared to not take the teaching seriously enough… Uh,

> because of that being nice, not having that same good pressure of learning, to have to bring [repertoire you have worked on] to someone important that you cannot, you don't want to disappoint this person. If it's a friend, a friend who's a little bit too forgiving [of] me, it couldn't work.

To David, the formality of a relationship is an important tool to maintain an attitude of learning in his one-to-one lessons. In a sense, both David and Mary appeared to establish agency and control over their learning by defining the relationship. David told me, "I'm not especially fond of super friendly, close relationships with tutors and students in general. I don't want to be too radical about that (*laughs*). I know for some people that works really well."

Developing further the idea of "good pressure", David noted a degree of formality in the relationship as intertwined with tutor's high expectations; these elements were crucial in enabling him to work hard and produce the highest quality work. Similarly, for Samantha, the idea of socialising and being very friendly with her tutors made her "cringe". For her, the crucial element to a positive learning environment was a good personality match between student and tutor. These perspectives on the tutor-student relationship show the diversity of needs and views. While David felt that he benefitted from a formal lesson, a relaxed student-tutor relationship is very important to other students, as is the case with Deanna. She described her tutor as "basically an aunty"; while her tutor had high expectations of her students and could be "brutal" as a tutor in terms of feedback, she also maintained a familiarity and closeness.

Learning how to cultivate a mutually beneficial balance in the student-tutor relationship seemed to be central to Greta's learning journey. During our interview, she recounted her master's level tutor and how their "involved" teaching style did not correlate with her own desire to keep social or personal issues separate from her music studies:

> [the tutor] was completely involved in my personal life. She could see I was struggling. I was also breaking up with the boyfriend blah, blah, blah … it was very personal. I think she's a lot like that with all of her students so it wasn't just me but, ugh yeah. I'm more of a fan of the whole stay-out-of-the-personal-life, if possible, because of what I experienced during my Masters. I think it's a bit dangerous. … The lack of actually focusing on the [cello] is not helpful, actually. So basically, I'm not a fan of the whole getting involved in whole the personal life and asking about how the boyfriend's doing 'oh and why you split up' and 'why it didn't work' and 'oh, you're single now, you're so lonely now'. It's like, what are you talking about?!

The tutor Greta described was seemingly known for being very informal with their students. Other participants at QMC had referred to that specific tutor as an example of a tutor who favoured an informal, social relationship with their students and described them as highly regarded and sought after. Greta clearly seemed to dislike this kind of relationship and what is striking is that she felt she had no say in the matter. Perkins (2013a) described how the hierarchy of the student-tutor relationship makes it difficult for the student to feel able to make suggestions and requests of their tutors. In this instance, Greta talked about engaging with her tutor socially – by discussing personal relationships and issues – despite feeling like it was “not helpful” to her cello studies.

Through my interviews, I observed that the ideal social boundary between students and tutors varied, sometimes greatly, between participants. Notably, Mary and Deanna valued a degree of intimacy in the relationship with their tutor, taking on the role as more that of a mentor than a master to be followed at a distance. The closeness these students felt with their tutor gave them a sense of agency in their studying that benefitted their learning experience. Emmett and David, by contrast, valued keeping their relationship with their tutor more formal, and limiting social interaction for the sake of the learning-teaching arrangement. This highlights the importance of matching the personalities and dispositions of students to tutors to enhance the student’s learning experience.

The tutor as a source of pastoral support

Another aspect of the tutor relationship that often arose during the interviews I conducted, at all three conservatoires, was the scope of tailored educational support that a student encounters during their conservatoire studies to suit their personal training needs. This often included a discussion about their tutor situation – whether they had one primary tutor or a small team of tutors and what they felt was an ideal or useful student-tutor relationship. For some participants, a close relationship seemed to be necessary to their learning and the tutor seemed to be an important source of emotional support. This parental relationship is discussed in previous research on conservatoires (see: Nerland and Hanken, 2002, Serra-Dawa, 2010). Participants reported on their preference to keep their non-performance life separate from their music lessons and chose to only discuss details of their life when absolutely needed, while many students fell somewhere in the middle. The idea of this continuum of experiences further suggested the notion that there is no one specific type of relationship that necessarily better than another.

In Mary's description of the ideal student-tutor relationship, a tutor's personal advice and support was a factor in her ability to cope with the pressures of the institution. Mary told me how she benefitted from the advice of her tutor during a time when she found herself struggling with the expectations and stresses of the conservatoire culture, intimating that without her tutor's support, she perhaps would not have continued with her course. There seemed to be a sense of agency in the way Mary was able to get the pastoral support she needed from her tutor. In this example, the tutor commented and advised not only on matters pertaining to her technique and performance goals but on her wellbeing:

> At the end of my first term I was having a complete wobble, as one does, and almost always happens in your one-to-one and I was worried about whether I should go in for the lieder [type of vocal music] competition next term so I was like, 'I know what I'm trying to do with it and I can't do it yet and I've been working on it all fucking term and I don't understand why I can't do it yet. I'm not stupid. I'm a person who sets a goal, achieves it, and moves on to the next one. Why am I not getting this?' And she was like, '[Mary], you're frustrated because you're looking at everyone else and they all seem to be doing really well, ignore them, put your blinkers on, you work for you, you are your own master, you are the only person that matters.'

The word choice of 'wobble' is notable, because while the word itself does not connote great struggle or chaos, that is how Mary used it, intimating that during this 'wobble' she felt burnt out, exhausted and even considered quitting the conservatoire altogether. All of these are feelings that do, in fact, suggest real struggle. Her account also illustrated how the tutor's role does not simply involve the transference of technical or repertoire knowledge. Indeed, for Mary the most useful relationship was one in which the tutor is a source of guidance that goes beyond the scope of technical skills and repertoire. By offering her a more holistic relationship, Mary reported being able to positively change her relationship with her peers, thereby developing confidence not only in the social sphere but in her own practice and accomplishments.

The informality in the student-tutor relationship described by a number of students was seen as "very English" by QMC international student Greta. Her first tutor in the UK as an undergraduate had a less structured teaching style than she would have liked but in the long run, she came to see the value of this laid-back approach to one-to-one teaching:

> It's certainly what I needed I think, it's hard to say because my teacher wasn't as… the first teacher was very English so basically… I don't think I would have actually studied without him and stuck to it, so for that I'm super grateful I had him.

After adjusting to a very different teaching approach and against her initial preference, it was the 'English' relaxed teaching and personality of her tutor actually helped her to "stick to" the course as a non-native English speaker in a new country. Her tutor's flexibility meant that Greta received the personal support she needed to maintain the confidence to continue her cello studies.

In these examples, the role of the tutor seemed to rarely consists solely in developing the technical skills of their students and pastoral support can be – or become – often of central importance for students. Mary and Greta describe some of the ways in which this kind of individual support shaped their experience. In Mary's case, her tutor helped her to meet the demands and expectations of conservatoire study during a time when she was visibly troubled, giving her the help she needed to proceed and to embrace a more helpful mind set. For Deanna, her tutor was a lifeline in the midst of personal tragedy. Despite being on holiday, the tutor rang to make sure that Deanna was ok. Deanna went on to say that she had "a lot of respect" for someone who can have that kind of relationship with their students. She suggested that other tutors were equally nice to her and their students but Deanna thought that these tutors would not have gone as far as hers did. In these accounts, there is an apparent appreciation for the familiarity that the tutor had with their situation and the intimate knowledge that the tutor had of their learning progress or personal situation, by virtue of the one-to-one relationship.

How a student engages with the notion of the tutor

Reflecting on the years spent as a vocal student at MCC, Mary recounted her studies with her tutor as one which taught her life lessons as well as musical technique. However, positioning the tutor as an idol-like master from whom to learn about all aspects of life detracted from Mary's sense of agency with regards to her own learning and personal progress:

> I think the trouble I've had in the past with singing teachers is that I've not just seen them as a technician I've seen them as someone who will tell me all about life and teach me all the things, put them up on this pedestal which is not healthy. I don't think. Because then you can get too involved, or when they don't give you opportunities or when they don't give you back what you're giving them you feel rejected so you feel like you're useless and it becomes a very unhealthy relationship.

Mary's description conformed to the tradition of the student-tutor relationship wherein the dominant approach to learning style involves imitating the tutor (see: Jørgensen, 2010,

Presland, 2005). Throughout her time as a conservatoire student, Mary's ideas about the role of the tutor evolved and by the time of my research, she had become more confident in her performance abilities and more independent in terms of learning new repertoires without the constant guide of her tutor. Talking about her tutor and her personal musical progress, Mary's interview suggested that she experienced an evolution in how she thought about the tutor: "I started off just seeing [my tutor] as this technician, someone to fix [things]… like a mechanic." This is a notably different description of the role of the tutor to the view I included earlier in the chapter wherein she expected her tutor to teach her about "everything".

In both instances, Mary identified the student-tutor relationship as a formal learning-teaching exchange, but the content of that teaching and learning seemed to change based on her evolving perception of the role of the tutor in her education. After starting lessons with her current tutor (as a postgraduate) she further amended her perception of the role of the tutor with reference to her previous tutor-as-mechanic metaphor:

> …you need the mechanics for everything. It's not just the mechanics of your voice, it's the mechanics of you as a person, as an artist, and how you come across in an audition. It's you as an artist, what you're planning, where you're headed, getting your goals set. And so, I think she's, between us, we've worked out a balance where she is mentor but at a distance.

By acknowledging that she needed a "mechanic" for more aspects than just the technical skills she had come to the view that her tutor could indeed teach her about everything. Throughout the evolution of her approach to her lessons and to her tutor, she continued to view their interactions as formal teaching opportunities, whether the focus was purely performance mastery or involved less academic aspects that involved the views or qualities of her tutor.

Participants also talked about how they benefitted from an informal relationship with their tutor, one in which the pastoral role and mentorship role overlapped and influenced all aspects of the student's life. These aspects included learning strategies to cope with a variety of outside stresses, workload and emotional issues. At MCC, international student David talked about the perceived differences between faculties in terms of the interactions between tutors and students that took place outside of the formal learning environment:

> …every teacher is different. Especially, depending on faculty … I've heard the brass faculty, they're really easy going and like to hang out, the woodwind faculty and string faculty is much more upright and… and formal. I don't know if the class

> just go together and go out or just hang out even at the canteen and uh, so it's more faculty per faculty cases. I think it's pretty easy going yeah, compared to [my home country]. They're much more squared and everything. It's also maybe the British culture and education and socialising is really important.

David perceived that faculties were very distinct in terms of the boundaries around formal and informal aspects of conservatoire life. He perceived teaching staff in certain faculties as people who might "hang out" with their students, in contrast to his own experience where teachers set themselves apart from student life, but was unsure about the extent to which this was also a cultural difference. From other accounts, "hanging out" is certainly not a general characteristic of conservatoire staff. Conservatoire of the North tutor Jane said that she did not socialise with her students in the canteen or at gigs but acknowledged that the institutional culture seemed to favour staff being heavily involved with the academic and social lives of their students. In other words, Jane perceived her own preference to keep the personal and social life separate from the work environment as dissimilar to the mainstream conservatoire attitude.

Thus, each student appeared to have a different perception of who their tutor was within the context of their life, depending on where they positioned themselves in their academic to professional journey. For some, their relationship with the tutor seemed to be laid-back and informal, and students were keen to learn beyond the mechanics of playing an instrument, about the life of a student and professional musician. Others understand the student-tutor relationship to be strictly formal and had precise ideas about what topics of conversation were acceptable within the context of this relationship. These perceptions, however, were not fixed but rather, seemed to change over time, as students developed personally and professionally, to meet external expectations and internal individual needs.

Learning independence as a conservatoire student

In this section I look at the idea of learning independence given the central influence of the tutor on a student's learning in the conservatoire. While conservatoire applications continue to grow year on year (UCAS, 2018), it is not uncommon for a student to attend a university for a bachelor-level degree before coming to the conservatoire to develop and hone their performance skills, which is something that came up on a couple of occasions when discussing how students perceive conservatoire culture. Further to his early description of the notion of the infallible tutor, John talked about using the learning agency he cultivated at university to consider how he applied the guidance his tutor and other teachers were

providing him. John came to MCC as a master's level student. He talked about how the critical thinking skills he learned as an undergraduate at a mainstream university helped him to navigate through the advice of his new tutor and synthesise the approaches of his previous private tutor and his conservatoire tutor:

> …when I came here, I realised that what my old teacher was telling me was not all right, what some of my other teachers were telling me here was not all right, but that was their own way … I could then put those together in a way that I wanted to play and what was the most useful. And I could address them [conflicting guidance issues] with my teachers and say so-and-so's told me this, so-and-so's told me [that]. This is how I feel when I play, what's the best way to get around [it]? And then again, if they didn't give me the advice that I thought was sensible, if I thought 'that's your way' … I had the skills to unpick things myself.

As a conservatoire student, John consciously applied critical thinking skills, which allowed him to take the advice of his new tutor and usefully synthesise it with what he had learned from his old tutor. John himself attributed the ability to consider critically his tutor's advice to his time as a university undergraduate:

> I don't think I'd have got there [to a high level of playing] if I'd have done 4 years at college here. I think the people I'd have been around wouldn't have been challenging me to think differently because they weren't thinking differently … I wouldn't have learnt to think in the same way.

It is also likely that as a post graduate student, he would have developed his practice and confidence as a musician to a greater degree than an undergraduate would have. Previous research shows that in the early stages of conservatoire studies, it is not uncommon for a student to see their tutor as someone to imitate unquestioningly (Jørgensen, 2010, p. 68), thereby possibly undermining the development of learning independence.

Having completed an undergraduate degree at a university prior to coming to MCC seems to be an important part of John's identity. He attributed his positive experience to this university student experience, suggesting that it may be harder for students without this experience to navigate the student-tutor dyad at the conservatoire, particularly in relation to conflicting or incongruent guidance given by individual tutors. Sasha's experience as an undergraduate at QMC illustrated the high dependency on the tutor that a conservatoire education seems to foster. Despite following the guidance of her tutor, Sasha found she wasn't keeping pace with the improvements she thought her peers were making:

> I didn't understand why everybody else was improving and I wasn't. … I just wanted

> somebody to tell me, because it clearly wasn't my work ethic, four to five hours a day practise - clearly the wrong sort of stuff because I … wasn't being guided where I was going wrong.

This suggested to me that her previous tutors were not engaging with her on a critical or individual level and therefore, the only strategy available to her was to imitate her, as Jørgensen (2010) found. However, after changing tutors she was able to find guidance that helped her to see how to improve her playing. Sasha's feelings about her previous tutor suggested that what she desired was a student-tutor relationship that reflected more of a patient-doctor tone, wherein her tutor would diagnose a problem which she would then work on.

Learning independence is necessary for any student and specifically important in the context of the conservatoire student. Throughout my data collection, participants used terms to describe their view of the conservatoire tutor such as "god-like" (Cara), "idol" (John), and phrases like "on a pedestal" (Mary) and "she terrifies me" (Deanna; Samantha). This hierarchy can create an environment wherein a student may find it difficult to question the advice of their primary study tutor. High regard for the tutor, compounded in the early stages of learning, in part, appeared to inform how the student perceives the tutor's advice and guidance. Where John attributed his ability to discern useful advice to his undergraduate university studies and the different methods of teaching that the university provided, Sasha attributed her recently acquired skill-level with her tutor's ability to engage with her technique and provide advice which has, in turn, allowed her to continue to progress in her skill development.

How students perceive power within the student-tutor dyad

Mary framed the student-tutor relationship in a way that was unique as compared to other students I interviewed in terms of her awareness of power relations and how this influenced a student's agency. She talked about reframing the student-tutor relationship in a way that allowed her to feel as though she had authority over her own learning, where often a student feels the tutor has the authority. She explained how she came about this perception:

> one of the girls I knew before I started here said to me, a really good way of looking at all of the coachings and all of the staff you meet is in your head, line up the team of five people that you will keep as your teachers when you leave. So, the people you would go to for a singing lesson, for a coaching, for language help, when you leave. And they're the people who make you feel good and believe in you. So, she

> was like, 'in a way, every time you go in for a coaching it's an audition for them as much as it is for you. Because you're told that everybody you sing to here could be on your audition panel at some point so don't fuck it up. Which is very helpful but also minorly terrifying. And not conducive to a nice learning environment because you feel like you're trying to impress them all of the time. So, for this really smart, switched on girl to say to me 'no no no, you eye them up and see what you think of them you know, are you somebody I want to work with when I leave' and just that different perspective I found very, very helpful.

Based on this advice, Mary seemed to be able to reframe the student-tutor relationship from that of a master-apprentice, wherein the tutor holds most of the authority, to one where it was the student who dictated the pace and direction of their own learning. In a reverse dyad, it would be the tutor who has to 'earn' a student's loyalty if they wish to remain their teacher, thereby disrupting the usual power dynamic and giving agency to the student. This reframing would not likely be made explicit and the shift in authority felt by the student may be unnoticed to the tutor. The way I understood this anecdote was that this frame of mind enabled to feel her own agency, like she has a say, in her lessons. For Mary, this reframing of the relationship increased her confidence in her own learning and enabled her to take an active role in the tutor-student relationship. For David, the possibility of agency came through the maintenance of clear boundaries in the student-tutor relationship:

> I think it's quite good to keep a good, reasonable distance between tutors and students. Tutors should always be available to talk about some other stuff than music if they feel they can help because we are young, growing up and we can be quite vulnerable especially in those studies. It's great to know that you can rely on your teacher as a confidante but in general it should if it becomes too friendly I don't think it's a good thing but I know people disagree.

In David's perception of a 'reasonable' relational positioning of tutor and student, responsibility for learning is shifted toward the tutor but with ample room for the student to find ownership of their own learning. David went on to give an example from his own experience:

> I definitely remember [a] deep conversation, I was having doubt, not necessarily about music but other stuff … he could sense that it was [getting] in the way of the teaching, of his teaching, or just of my, my improvement or whatever, he would bring that out. We would talk about this and that, was great… Once in a while that's ok for sure, it's really important, but I wouldn't pass this line.

Both Mary and David talk about the relationship in terms of how they maintained a degree of

control within their relationship with their tutor. For Mary, it was a change in mind-set that helped her overcome feelings of inferiority. David's strategy for maintaining authority over his learning was more subtle. His preference for keeping all conversations and interactions focused on music and learning rather than on his social or personal life were based on his belief that frequent social or personal discussion leads to an erosion of the student-tutor relationship.

Mary talked at length about her tutor and the relationship she had with her tutor after following her friend's advice. One of the strategies she adopted in order to take an active role in her lessons was picking her repertoire before approaching her tutor, rather than waiting for the tutor to dictate her learning path:

> I take music to [my tutor] and I'm like, "what do you think?" And she'll quite honestly tell me whether she thinks it's shit or not, or she's like "why are you singing that, it's of no use to you." And you're like right, ok, note to self not that kind of thing. And equally I'm very honest with her about when I'm auditioning for stuff, I'm like "is this something I should go for now, should I wait a year?" And she'll say "yeah, go for that now, mmm maybe give that a year" and so that's fine, I can plan around that because I trust her to know. She knows who I am, she knows what I can do, and that's great.

This seems to have led to a partnership that felt more equal but Mary emphasized that utilising her tutor's expertise in this way required confidence and an understanding of self, which may not be possible for some students in different situations. She reported how she considers her tutor's advice critically, even if for the most part she then took take that guidance on board. This suggested that it is possible to have a more collaborative rapport between student and tutor where the student is able to bring their own ideas rather than waiting for the tutor. In Mary's case, she had the self-confidence to take her tutor's opinions and decisions on board without compromising her own ideas and needs.

While so many students put the tutor on a pedestal, Mary was able to reframe the relationship so as to feel less intimidated by her tutor. By changing her mind set, Mary could see herself as a vital part of the relationship rather than being there solely to obtain direction from the tutor. David had clear views on what were appropriate topics of and tried to adhere to those self-set standards. While he occasionally had conversations with his tutor that were unrelated to the conservatoire, maintaining a boundary around the relationship preserved a sense of control over his life.

When the student-tutor relationship breaks down

When students and tutors do not share dispositions or beliefs about the learning process, the relationship can break down. I asked Mary if most students she knew at MCC were happy with the tutor or tutors they had been initially assigned to. From this conversation, I discovered that changing tutors was not uncommon in her faculty:

> [Some singers] don't get what they want from a teacher so they'll ditch them and move on to somebody else, even though perhaps long term that teacher might be better for them or that teacher's telling them things that they don't want to hear but they need to hear, if they don't like it they'll move on to somebody else … And it's normally quite dramatic because you know what singers are like. Egos get hurt and everyone starts chattering about it. And they don't necessarily do it in the right way, they'll email the teacher and tell them.

Mary's response was a reminder that the pairing and subsequent management of the tutor-student relationship is complex and that students are sometimes unhappy enough with their tutor's teaching methods or personality to act on it, albeit impulsively. As well as being a master's-level student, Mary is also a singing teacher, and she alluded to a tutor's perspective of teaching and in her own lessons as well as her perceptions of some of her peers. She suggests without hesitation that it is not uncommon that some of her peers will part ways with their tutor if they don't feel they are achieving enough or getting the guidance they want. In referring to 'egos', I got the sense that Mary had both tutors and students in mind. Reflecting on how she would address the situation as a student, Mary went on to say:

> … this is the other thing, if it was me I would sit down and say 'I'm not understanding this teaching style, I'm not getting this, can we work through it' and I try that a good 3 or 4 times before I then give up on it because actually they can't read your mind so if you're not getting it you need to tell them you're not getting it or you need to ask them for extra help. But they won't do that, they'll just ditch them and move on and you think, how is that gonna help you? So yeah, I have limited sympathy [with some students who change tutors].

Her experiences both as student and teacher, and her reflective skills enabled her to consider the appropriate course of action when the tutor-student relationship was not working. In her own relationship, she had worked out an approach that enabled her to work collaboratively with her tutor on her own learning, one that allowed her to think of her tutor as working for her. This sense of agency underpins her account of how she would approach a tutor that she was not satisfied with. However, many students will not have this capacity. When pairing

students with tutors, it is difficult to ensure that each pairing is equally successful and some students wishing to change tutors is inevitable. However, this relational breakdown can be messy and often hurtful to both parties.

Discussion of the tutor influence on conservatoire culture and the student experience of that culture through the lens of guardians

I now return to the theoretical lens of guardians in the conservatoire introduced in chapter 3 to explore how the tutor influences conservatoire culture and the student experience. By returning to this conceptualisation, I draw out conclusions about the student experience of the conservatoire and develop a discussion about how students engage with and contest the practices that they encounter as part of conservatoire culture. I suggest that the influence of this central relationship goes beyond the acquisition of skills and the formal learning environment and impacts how a student processes the normative practices of the conservatoire.

I have argued that a student's perception of the student-tutor dyad is constantly evolving and being negotiated. As an expert technician, the tutor is considered a "master in their own instrumental and performing field" (Gaunt, 2008, p. 216). But to limit the tutor to the confines of a technical expert would be to minimise the contextual, manifested wisdom that they have accumulated about the performance community and the conservatoire as an organisation. More than merely an exchange of performance skills and technique, the tutor appears to be a guardian of tradition in the conservatoire because they have local, specific wisdom that provides them with perceived authority because of that wisdom (Giddens, 1994). Throughout my data collection, I observed that the tutor has a status within the conservatoire that goes beyond their technical ability, the accumulation of their experiences and connections. From my interview data, it appears that a tutor who can provide students with insight and advice based on their experience of the conservatoire and their knowledge of performance communities is an indispensable part of the student experience. Ability to interpret the inner-workings of the performance career and the traditions of the community through their own experiences are what, I believe, make the conservatoire tutor a guardian of tradition. This authority affords the tutor the ability to influence the student's perceptions and beliefs about their future and the community they will be fully immersed in once leaving the conservatoire. The tutor holds what Giddens (1994) refers to as a "formulaic truth" about music performance and being a performer that is not always easily defined.

Many students seemed to have started forming an idea of what kind of personality and disposition they want in a tutor before applying to the conservatoire. Sasha and Greta (QMC), Mary (MCC), and Rebecca (CON) sought out their respective tutors when they applied to their conservatoire and in many cases, picked their conservatoire based on the tutor they wanted to study under rather than on institutional reputation. I spoke to a few students who consider the student-tutor dyad to be the primary reason for enrolling at a conservatoire (Mary, Greta) - more so than the reputation of the school itself. It appeared to me that in their minds, the lessons and decisions made with their tutor were of far greater importance than any that might be taken by other conservatoire authority figures (e.g. heads of faculty or course leaders) or themselves. Several participants also brought up aspects of their student-tutor relationship even when asked about their informal experiences of the conservatoire. These participants suggested that the advice and recommendations of their tutor had played a part in how they used their informal time as well as their formal time. They also reported that their tutor also shaped their perceptions about what was reasonable or appropriate, or as Giddens (1994) suggested what 'should be' done within the context of the community. Touching on this concept within the lens of organisational culture, Hallett (2003) described those within an organisation who have significant symbolic power as negotiators who engage in various practices within the organisation, infused with legitimacy by those who value the practices of the organisation. In the student-tutor dyad, this legitimacy is evident in the way that students talk about their tutor and in the at times reluctance to become independent learners. Legitimacy bestowed on the tutor can be viewed as symbolic power, the power to define the situation (ibid, p. 134), because of how students perceive the role of the tutor in shaping the musician they will become, which is not confined to the formal teaching environment.

From my interviews and observations, I have determined that a student's experience of their relationship with their tutor cannot be completely separated from how a student experiences the conservatoire more generally. For instance, some participants opted to go to their tutor for help with personal issues that were not primarily concerned with music, such as family matters. Participants described their tutor using language like "your idol" and being "up on a pedestal" (John, Mary [MCC]) even as they described their efforts to gain a sense of control over their learning, despite being part of a culture that has long accepted the tutor as the dominant source of power, the 'master', in the dyad. These feelings suggest that students who attempt to forge agency in their learning may face obstacles. Some participants discussed how power dynamics affected their relationship with their tutor and in some cases,

how they negotiated a power balance that they were comfortable with. However, not all were able to build a relationship with their tutor wherein they felt a sense of control over their learning. These students found other ways of handling conservatoire life, sometimes through control other areas of student life.

The tutor appeared to influence how a student perceives conservatoire culture and the practices of the community. This is a compelling aspect of conservatoire culture to explore. In Presland's (2005) study of the student perspective on the tutor relationship, one student was reported as admiring their tutor and considered the lessons to be "an opportunity to absorb as much information and advice as I could, rather than a chance to enter into dialogue and discussion" (p. 240). The student in this study reported similar ideas about the student-tutor relationship as I found in many participants of my own research, such as Sasha's desire for a prescriptive tutor or Mary's early desires for the tutor to teach her everything. In the same study, another student stated that "you needed to know your tutor 'as a friend', and that such contact created an important perspective and acted as a 'reality check'" (p. 242) within the conservatoire. These ideas brought up in Presland's (2005) study support my own findings that the nature of the student-tutor relationship is a continuum of experiences, wherein a parental, collaborative, or patient-doctor-like tone can provide a productive dyad. Productive learning-teaching transactions appear to allow for the tutor to provide insight into the student's development as a performer, a necessary aspect of the tutor acting as guardian, influencing social solidarity (Giddens, 1994).

In my own findings, Deanna counted on the familiar tone of her student-tutor dyad to allow a reciprocal frank honesty between them wherein a similar consideration is an honest conversation about issues. Within this collaborative relationship, she made it clear that she trusted the guidance of her tutor over anyone else. For example, Deanna explicitly ignored the head of faculty's concerns over her repertoire choices because she felt that her tutor understood and supported her desire to break away from the traditional progression of repertoire, to perform more modern works. The authority with which the tutor is imbued in the conservatoire by successive cohorts of students renders them guardians of tradition in the conservatoire. Within the classical music performance community of the conservatoire they are seen as having the requisite experience to be able to decide what beliefs and behaviours can be considered as aligned with the cultural properties of the given community. More simply put, a guardian is an individual who is given the authority to interpret what actions and behaviours are considered acceptable within the traditions of the community and in Deanna's

case, even with occasional purposeful breaks with the customary practices of the conservatoire.

While some students value an informal, familiar relationship with their tutor, others prefer to keep the relationship more formal and compartmentalised. At QMC, Greta appreciated the closeness that she felt with her fellow cellists but did not readily appreciate how familiar her tutor was, and the frequent questions the tutor asked about her personal life. At MCC, David felt that impersonal professionalism was necessary in lessons, with only occasional reference to life outside of performance, in contrast to Deanna's preference for a personal, familiar relationship with her tutor. In all cases, the student afforded their tutor an authority to determine essential aspects of their musical life. These decisions included repertoire selection, helping a student pick competitions and programs to apply for, and provide other forms of guidance in addition to the learning-teaching transaction of performance mastery.

Overall, my findings showed that the tutor seems to be a central figure for every conservatoire student, and the hallmark one-to-one tuition creates the ideal environment for a tutor to influence a student's beliefs and dispositions. While the tutor embodied the characteristics of the expert, insomuch as they have achieved a high level of technical and artistic mastery that the student hopes to achieve, they are also a guardian of tradition within the conservatoire or even within the instrument group. Participants talked about their tutor as someone who passed on beliefs about music performance and what it would mean to be a performer, a formulaic truth. These beliefs could take a number of forms, from how much students should practise to what achievement meant in the performance world. The subjective nature of music performance allows a tutor room to recreate the past through their one-to-one practices but also allows an intentional break with tradition if the student is able to forge sufficient agency. Many of the habits and behaviours within the conservatoire have been recreated for generations due to the tutor acting as guardian of tradition and the development of perceptions and beliefs about the conservatoire community that happen within this dyad. The tutor-as-idol, so to speak, may not always sit on a pedestal but still acts as a guardian of culture in the conservatoire.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, the student's relationship with their primary study tutor appeared as fundamentally central, it overshadowed any sense of the student experience outside of the formal learning and teaching transactions. Because of this, I came to the decision that the distinction between 'classroom time' and 'outside-the-classroom time'

was not necessarily useful. Instead, my findings suggest that the formal learning-teaching elements of conservatoire study bleed into other aspects of the student's time in ways that make it difficult to separate the 'classroom' from the rest of the student's experience. This is the case, I found, because the tutor seems to be a central figure for developing and affecting dispositions and beliefs in the conservatoire. As such, it would be useful to look at the tutor as a guardian of conservatoire tradition. They are individuals with localised wisdom, with the power to guide the development of a student beyond their technical mastery. All of this points to the conservatoire student experience as built on the embodied dispositions and understanding of students, and the evolution and reconstruction of the culture of two-hundred-year-old conventions.

Chapter 8 –Summary of analysis

Introduction

In this chapter I will revisit and highlight the major findings of my research and summarise those findings across the three conservatoires and in relation to my conceptual framework. I look at conservatoire cultures in terms of how students experience the informal culture of the institutions and my aim in doing so was to locate the conservatoire student experience within higher education research and contribute to the scholarly understanding of conservatoire education. To accomplish these aims, I employed an ethnographic-style case study approach within which I utilise the concepts of organisational culture in tandem with social capital to look at conservatoire culture and the hierarchy that exists within it. Giddens' (1994) notion of 'guardians of culture' was used to explore the ways in which tutors are perceived within the conservatoire community and how the tutor transmits traditions around the significance of practise and the profession. I also utilised aspects of symbolic capital and habitus in order to connect individuals' experiences to conservatoire culture, drawing attention to the diverse ways individual students navigate their institutions and engage with their culture.

Exploring conservatoire culture through ethnographic-style case study

In this section I will explain how by choosing an ethnographic-style case study methodology, I was able to explore conservatoire cultures, uncovering more layers of how students engage with (and contest) culture in their community. The multiple-case study approach came from a desire to enrich my understanding of how conservatoire culture is experienced across different institutions. While a handful of ethnographies or ethnographically-informed studies have been conducted in the conservatoire, they were typically single-sited and sought to answer specific questions about certain aspects of the conservatoire. In this thesis, I wanted to focus on student experiences at multiple conservatoires in order to compare how culture is constructed at each site.

Each of the three institutions at which I conducted fieldwork operated generally within the framework set up by the Paris Conservatoire, while also diverging from that model in different ways. By interviewing and observing students at each location, I was able to learn about the breadth of students' experiences across the conservatoires. I chose sites in distinctly different parts of the country, offering distinctive institutional perspectives on music performance and being positioned differently in the higher music education landscape. At CON, I observed that students seemed less constrained by the traditions and practices of classical music, while

both QMC and MCC students seemed to feel more tethered to the practices of the conservatoire that have evolved over the last two hundred years. While conducting my research for this thesis, I uncovered a number of themes that were common to all the institutions: the cultural significance of practise, the influence of the profession on culture in the conservatoires, the notions of what kind of work or education is considered 'real' or 'normal', and making space for themselves. As I described in chapters 5, 6, and 7, students at each of the conservatoires seemed to engage with these themes in accordance with their own perspectives, whether they broadly accepted or challenged the customs and practices of their institution.

Understanding conservatoire culture through the concepts of organisational culture, guardians of culture, and symbolic capital

In this section I discuss how the conceptual lenses I have employed allowed me to investigate the major themes that arose from my data analysis. I look at each concept in turn and how it allowed me to uncover meaning in the findings.

Organisational culture

My findings seemed to reveal a number of themes common to students' experiences across all three sites while at the same time, students' experience of that culture was coloured by their own perceptions of the customs of their conservatoire. Therefore, looking at students' experiences required a theoretical framework that could accommodate the different ways that students navigate, engage with and challenge conservatoire life. The concept of organisational culture provided the lens that enabled me to look at the conservatoire as a culture of its own.

When viewed 'from a distance' (Fine, 1984), the conservatoire as an institution could be perceived as old-fashioned, firmly rooted in the classical music repertoire as a genre of music and professional performance community. Given the emphasis on student experience in policy making, it is important to identify where the general experience is meaningfully different. While the variation in student perspectives and feelings show that there is no singular kind of student at the conservatoire, and that across conservatoires the institutional ideals and practices may be different, I have also shown the ways in which the conservatoire as an institution is distinctive within the HE landscape. The physical characteristics of each site, as I described in chapter 4, varied in terms of distinctive architectural and design style,

creating distinctive atmospheres, but each elicited a sense of prestige with which a student could interact and identify.

The way students described a distinction between the space they inhabit and the rest of society, such as music performance work versus “real” work or the conservatoire versus “normal” school, suggested that these participants’ frame of reference is distinctly different from other aspects of society that they experience. Through the lens of organisational culture, I was able to investigate this “normal” binary as reported by participants and look into how some behavioural and assumptive patterns that exist outside of the conservatoire as an organisation, such as those I described, were interpreted by participants. I was also able to build an understanding of the cultural significance of implicit cultural norms like those around instrument practise. While I observed that it was expected that a student would spend much of their time practising new techniques and repertoire, the ways that students talked about practising suggested that there were more layers to this in terms of expectations, pressures and well-being. Practise seemed to be a way of quantifying one’s dedication and participants reported feeling pressure to spend all their time practising. Engaging in other activities engendered feelings of guilt. It seemed to me that the often implicit competitive aspect of the conservatoire was a significant contributor to these pressures.

However, there seemed to be important differences in students’ ways of life at the conservatoires I researched. The way that students and tutors at CON interacted outside the confines of the formal learning-teaching transaction and the cross-program contact between students seemed to be distinctive and suggested that collaboration was actively cultivated to facilitate networking and connection-making, resources that a student would be able to take with them after leaving the conservatoire. Meanwhile, for participants at MCC and QMC, interactions with their peers and tutors appeared to reflect the concerns of those individual students rather than collaborative ones. David at MCC suggested that it was “really scary to dare to [have] free time” because his competitors were likely to be practising more than him. It is important to restate that I do not want to suggest that ‘collaboration’ is always positive or that it negates a competitive atmosphere (as noted by Riley’s apprehensions in chapter 6). The use of phrases like ‘really scary’ and to ‘dare to’ have free time, implied that there are strong implicit expectations regarding what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. In fact, competition seemed ingrained into conservatoire culture. Where David’s feelings showcased this on an individual level, a wider example of this is the similarity in participants’ descriptions

of the hierarchy of practise expectations that the different instruments were subject to, something that was not made explicit within the institutions.

In chapter 5, I examined how this conceptualisation of culture works toward a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes the conservatoire student "way of life" (Rosman, et al., 2009). I looked at the distinctive ways the profession influenced culture at CON, specifically in terms of how the notion of collaboration was enacted within the institution. The ways that the profession seemed to bleed into the conservatoire learning context presented students with distinctive challenges when navigating the conservatoire. This is evident in how participants reported competitive or isolating perceptions of the conservatoire extending beyond studies and into their world as early career performers. The other significant way that the profession seemed to influence conservatoire cultures and students' experiences was through the transmission of ideas about what a performance career should look like. From my observations, it appeared that students were aware of a portfolio career as the likely reality of life after the conservatoire. The way they talked about networking and auditioning suggested that they were preparing for this path, however, the more traditional institutions did not seem to convey a similar understanding. Both MCC and QMC seemed to advertise their performance programs in ways that highlighted their adherence to the notion of orchestral or soloist careers as the likely result of conservatoire study.

Each conservatoire elicited distinctive behaviours which influenced the cultural practices of the setting. The notion of organisational culture allowed me to uncover what appeared to be the hierarchies of institutions and how these create space where the distinction between the learning environment and the profession is not always clear. At the same time, I was able to see some of the dualities contained within the beliefs and behaviours of the institutions and how those were drawn out at each setting.

Symbolic capital and habitus

By looking at conservatoire cultures through the lens of organisational culture in chapter 5, I was able to analyse the institutions. Also, by using symbolic capital and, briefly, habitus as an additional lens in chapter 6, I was able to connect the individuals to those cultures. Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital and habitus provided the tools with which to analyse the institutional cultures through the perspective of students' dispositions and attitudes toward the customs of each conservatoire culture as they are shaped by their experiences and

background. Even though a student's background is behind them, the effects of their upbringing, experiences, education and cultural heritage all appear play a part in how they perceive the institutional culture and lifestyle of the conservatoire.

My findings reveal that participants had very different notions of space and time in how they negotiated space and time in their day. The idea that a student seeks out ways to make space for themselves (consciously or otherwise) was something I observed as they articulated how they make sure they have time to disengage from music before bed by spending time on YouTube, or that they purposefully never do work during mealtimes. Whether or not physical space and locations were a component in how participants make space, the practice seemed to allow students to engage with their conservatoire culture; the ways they accomplished this often seemed to be reflected in their dispositions and attitudes inherited from influences in their backgrounds and past experiences. For example, Mary described the importance of stepping back from practising and rehearsing. She brought up her brother's preference for a round of golf on a day off as a behaviour that influenced her attitude toward making that space for herself. From the notion of making space I was able explore the dispositions and attitudes of a participant, from the background information they gave me, to consider how these might influence how a student engages with their conservatoire culture.

Referring back to the presence of binaries, particularly of 'real world' versus conservatoire, Sarah (CON) perceived the coffee shop near campus as a place where "real work" was done and therefore chose to do her work there. These binaries underpinned a tendency to think of non-performance work as more legitimate than the work done at the conservatoire. The notion of some work or activity being more 'real' or 'normal' has been documented by other researchers (for an example of this notion in higher music education, see Perkins, 2013b), and points to a larger social discourse that has affected, for instance, the way Sarah processes her social world. It appeared that participants had developed a way of seeing aspects of their lives as not fitting within the social norms they experience outside of the conservatoire. It was helpful to look at this data through the lens of habitus, how the participants' attitude toward this notion of being part of a culture less 'real' or 'normal' than other aspects of society could affect their experience of the conservatoire and how they made space for themselves in terms of time as well as location.

It was helpful to look at culture in relation to social capital to understand the ways in which students built a notion of 'self' and positioned themselves in the conservatoire. As described earlier in the chapter, one of the major themes that arose from my fieldwork was the influence of the profession on conservatoire cultures. To connect the individual to this idea, I looked at participants' attitudes toward the role of networking in the conservatoire, which provided different perspectives on the way the profession influences their experience as students. One example, described in detail in chapter 6, is Riley, who saw herself as outside of the culture of collaboration at the Conservatoire of the North. She challenged the notion of working across programs and saw tutor contact time outside of the classroom environment as wholly positive. Where others spoke of collaboration or working together, Riley saw disingenuous partnerships wherein parties used each other to get ahead. She suggested that this kind of all-consuming, "music above everything else" attitude was characteristic of music school. Her perception of herself as outside of the community was strongly connected to her rejection of this music-above-all attitude. The networks that she cultivated also seemed to reflect this attitude in that she sought the company of friends she had before coming to CON, with whom she was able to engage in non-music related hobbies. In this way, it appeared that Riley prioritised her social capital outside of the performance community, challenging the notion that she should practise constantly and create professional connections that would help further a music career. In this sense, she had a quite different attitude towards her conservatoire's culture, compared to other participants, prioritising aspects of her life and relationships that were outside of the conservatoire.

The value of strong social capital was evident in this prioritising of network building within the community, alongside the observed institutionalised cultural capital that comes with the more explicit value placed on pedagogical lineage and tutor prestige. By looking at the data through these conceptual lenses, I was able to see how participants seemed to feel the influence of the profession through their perceptions of networking and collaboration in the conservatoire. Also, as I briefly mentioned earlier, the cultural significance of practise was evident in the ways participants reported engaging with or contesting the idea that a student should be practising all the time. The student's perception of self and their place within their conservatoire's culture is affected by their durable dispositions and attitudes and the way they perceive the cultural signals produced by the conservatoire.

Cultural capital as a way of navigating classical music hierarchy was evident in such notions as pedagogical lineage. The large amount of space dedicated to listing past teachers or

notable alumni in performer biographies and institution descriptions on websites points to an accepted value in tracing your learning back to distinguished musicians and institutions. This kind of capital is a cultural signal that suggests an inherent meaning behind the name of your tutor and their prestige. The fact that participants reported choosing where they applied to study based on which institution their desired tutor was based at supports this idea. It is through the lens of cultural capital that I have been able to look at how students perceive where they exist in relation to others within the conservatoire hierarchy. Of course, these considerations also relate to economic capital. Access to elite tutors and institutions can be very costly. For some students, gaining access to cultural resources such as live classical music performances, junior conservatoire courses, and quality instruments was not a straightforward matter. Some participants noted personal financial or economic hardships which seemed to affect how they perceived conservatoire practices and customs.

The ways in which students responded to culture in their conservatoires were subject to their dispositions and attitudes toward the values and priorities they encountered in the institutional culture. I found that most participants were career-focused, coming to the conservatoire as an avenue into a performance career. In this sense too, Riley embodied a different disposition towards her conservatoire culture and the hierarchy of the community, in that she had come to music school simply to learn how to play her instrument better. I found that participants across all three institutions seemed to be aware of the importance of networking and making professional connections while studying, whether through collaborating with classmates whose expertise could be beneficial (CON) or by attending informal events after rehearsals (QMC, MCC).

Guardians

By using Giddens' (1994) concept of guardians of culture, I approached my findings through the lens of the tutor as a person of authority within the community, a 'sage' as Giddens suggests, with accumulated wisdom and experience of the community's cultural practices. The tutor appeared to be a significant influence on how students perceived the importance of practice as a cultural indicator of dedication to the profession. They fulfil a role that communicates not just the technical skills of how to be a musician but also conveys ideas about the norms and practices of the community, why things should be done in a certain way.

From several participants' accounts, it was clear that the tutor is held in this kind of high esteem, and sometimes idolised, by their tutee (John, Mary [MCC], Cara, Sasha [QMC]). In

this regard, it is not surprising that a student might take on the views of the tutor as their own. Cara, who at one point considered her tutors as “god-like”, admitted to being easily persuaded by her tutors and John described students unquestioningly following their tutor’s advice, implicitly suggesting that this was not always best for the student. The particularity of this relationship, wherein the tutor is perceived as the holder of knowledge about performance life, was often mentioned and it was readily apparent that it was a central aspect of student experiences of conservatoire life. In this power dynamic, the tutor is in a position of huge influence with regards to how a student looks at conservatoire cultures and feels about the traditions of their institution. Participants reported how tutors reinforced norms associated with the culture of practising. Evidence of this can be seen in the exasperation expressed by Emma and Jacob that their tutors expected them to always be listening to music they were working on. The implication seemed to be that their tutor did not simply want them to listen to the music but wanted them to engage with it at the expense of resting, conveying the implicit message that any form of activity or task unrelated to music would take them away from their music. This perspective on dedication and performing was taken on as an expectation and a pressure (whether they engaged with it, or not). Of course, cultural and economic capital also come into play when considering students’ responses to tutors. For instance, those students who, early on, are able to afford private tuition are likely to benefit from a familiarity with learning practices that will be useful in the conservatoire setting, such as listening to recordings of repertoire in ways expected by tutors.

I also found evidence that tutors influenced many of the participants’ perceptions of, and engagement with, the profession. For instance, Mary (MCC) reported that her tutor gave her advice on what competitions she was ready to apply for. Deanna’s (MCC) move away from the accepted repertoire for her instrument came from her tutor, who had encouraged her to make her own decisions in this regard. She described how the avant-garde piece that she was working on was disapproved of by other faculty members who felt she was doing herself a disservice by not adhering to the accepted canon. These examples demonstrated the power of the tutor in that the student, with the tutor’s support, was able to determine how to navigate the norms and expectations of the conservatoire community. In another example of how a tutor affects the student’s perception of the profession, Mary and her classmates had been told by their tutor that “everybody you sing to … could be on your audition panel at some point so don’t fuck it up”. This also showed how even in the learning environment, students are expected to perform as though they are building their professional connections or social network. Acting as a gatekeeper of cultural practices and norms, the tutor seems to

affect a student's personal development and not only how they proceed through their studies but their outlook toward the profession.

Many participants described their substantial connections with their one-to-one tutors, reporting the different ways in which their tutor's perspective and guidance influence how they think about the conservatoire and professional performance community. This was evident, sometimes subtly, in practices such as how tutors advise students as to which competitions to participate in. Alternatively, the tutor's perspective could be communicated through the values they endorse such as the tradition of engaging with practise above all other activities. Considering the importance of tutor prestige and the notion of pedagogical lineage, the conceptual lens of guardians provided a way to look at the tutor as a major influence in the creation of conservatoire culture and the effects of the student habitus. The ways students interacted with their tutors and their environment relative to their disposition seemed to affect how they build ideas about the conservatoire and the traditions that have evolved within it.

Conclusion

The results of my ethnographic-style case study of conservatoire cultures suggested that the conservatoire is an organisation with dynamic cultural practices, influenced by the tutors who are the guardians of those practices. Exploring cultures through the perceptions of students and through the lens of organisational culture, guardians, and symbolic capital allowed me to shine a light on what their experience looks like, an important part of which seemed to be how they interpret certain tensions throughout the conservatoire. Notions like the binaries felt by students emerged, to different extents, across all three settings. Whether a strong sense of the conservatoire as different from a "normal" education setting, or music performance not fitting within "real work", the notion of being different from other aspects of society seemed to play a significant part in how participants talked about their experiences.

Some of the other findings suggested that some students across all three settings appeared to have come into the conservatoire with strong support networks and a foundational knowledge of the norms and practices they would encounter. Other students may have found that building support has been a struggle within the conservatoire and rely on existing friendships and relationships outside of the setting. While everyone I interviewed seemed to have learned how to navigate organisational culture successfully, accepting or contesting the customs and traditions they encountered, generally those who had previous exposure to the setting seemed to have had an early perception that ended up being closer to their lived

experience. As such, the past experiences of students, coupled with the influences of the tutor, seemed to play important parts in how students experience conservatoire culture. In the following chapter, I theorise about what these findings mean for the conservatoire.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

Introduction

In this final chapter, I consider what my findings suggest about conservatoire cultures and students' experiences. I reflect on cultural practices that I found in the three institutions where I conducted research, the values that I observed such as the pressure to stay in the 'working' frame of mind, and how these were perpetuated by tutors. I then discuss how students' accounts of the conservatoire suggest a number of tensions that exist within the cultural practices of the conservatoire and those extending outside of the settings. Reflecting on how the research journey affected my own understanding of the conservatoire, I explore my personal development throughout this research journey. Finally, I discuss what the research means for conservatoire policy and practice and how it contributes to conservatoire knowledge.

Reflections on cultural practices

Amongst the most prominent findings of my research were the common norms and behaviours that conservatoire students shared. They appeared to have widely shared understandings of specialist practices which are specific to the conservatoire and ascribed values to them – whether or not they accepted or contested those values. They shared specialist behaviours and terminology, participating in an organisational hierarchy of which the tutor was a significant, central figure. Accepting and organising into studio groups as well as short-term teaching formats such as the master class were examples of some of these shared cultural practices and were indicators of cultural membership. I argued that the exchange of knowledge and expertise from tutor to student could be seen as a marketable good, with pedagogical lineage acting as currency for each participant, individually.

The norms and practices which "provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 6) seemed to be understood by most students. The ways students understood the norms varied, but were widely acknowledged. Many of these specialist practices I encountered, and students talked about, have been perpetuated for over 200 years. These deeply engrained traditions, the emotion tied to cultural practice, seemed to be a contributor to the evidence I found which suggested that the organisational cultures were resistant to change. This resistance seemed to be present despite what I observed as acknowledgement of the changing needs of

students and musicians. This seems to have created in some a sense of conflict, negatively affecting the mental health and/or wellbeing some of those students (Mary; Sasha; Samantha).

In each of the three conservatoires I researched, I observed instances that suggested the institutions understood the need for higher music education to reflect the current music profession. However, while the conservatoire has greatly evolved from its origins as an orphanage, in many ways it seems to have stalled at the point that the Paris Conservatoire became a dominant force rather than continuing to evolve to meet the changes occurring in the profession. One way in which this was evident was the utilisation of the Paris Conservatoire model in non-customary ways, such as music technology pathways at Conservatoire of the North. While it appeared that innovative thinking was an expressed priority for conservatoires, they nonetheless adhered to the longstanding conservatoire model as a core selling point. At an institutional level, I observed steps taken at each of the three case study sites which aimed to reflect the needs of current students (for example, wellbeing programming or services), however these steps were perceived by some students as superficial (Samantha; John) which could also point back to the emotional ties to the cultural practices, the traditions, of that Paris Conservatoire model. One explanation for this perception of superficiality could be that the implicit and explicit curricula within the institutions were occasionally at odds. By this, I mean that while students may see their institution explicitly incorporate contemporary issues and concerns into the official curriculum (in different capacities), they seem to experience the implicit values of the conservatoire as reinforcing older, less contemporarily relevant values.

I will explore the tensions arising from explicit and implicit curriculum in more detail later in what follows.

How the profession seemed to influence how students interact with their peers

I observed that the ways participants talked about relationships within the organisation and the broader performance community strongly suggested a value of placing career first, even as students were in the early stages of their conservatoire studies. I noted that knowing and engaging with people who were sources of potential work seemed to be a vital part of conservatoire student life and that this was perceived as necessary to build a successful performance career. In some instances, students talked about making a concerted effort to be present at social gatherings with other students because the other students could

potentially provide future work (Greta). Professional network building seemed to be such a prominent part of the conservatoire experience because of the regular interaction students have with the profession, even early in their studies. The influence of the professional community seemed to have created an educational environment which is principally interested in positioning students to be profitable in the profession rather than nourishing creativity and generating new knowledge.

Another example of how students talked about navigating conservatoire cultures was through their friendships. Students appeared to have distinct ideas about spending time with friends and how they found support. A seemingly common account was how students felt the benefit of having friendships unrelated to the conservatoire. Whether former university classmates, childhood friends, or even other musicians from outside the conservatoire, students repeatedly brought up these support networks as an important part of how they "decompress" (Riley) or as a "relief" from the musician identity (Cara) and those cultural influences of the profession. These kinds of support appeared to be an important resource for students to avoid burn-out as well as contributed to the tensions felt by students who question some of the practices they encounter. For these students, the ability to step out of the conservatoire frame of mind seemed to be especially important.

The professional community's influence on each conservatoire culture appeared to have a significant effect on how students engage with their peers, as well as outside relationships. Such strong involvement of the profession within the conservatoire seemed to create dispositions within students which often placed career building above exploration and discovery of new or different opportunities. At each of the three conservatoires I researched, the influence of the profession was portrayed positively, a selling point of each institution to students. From my observations, students did appear to find this useful and often positive (Mary), however, I argued that the substantial focus on career building often minimised the need for personal wellbeing (see: chapter 5). This influence seemed to be so engrained that any efforts to promote wellbeing resources within the institution were overshadowed and meant some students had to look outside the performance community for "relief".

Pressure to stay in the 'working' frame of mind

For some participants, the perceived need to grow professional connections and strengthen working relationships seemed to be a primary consideration when deciding how to spend their time. One example of this was how the conservatoire student's perception of career bled

into what would likely otherwise be perceived as leisure. Going back to Greta's description of how she prioritised her time, she explained her attitude toward the ritual of after-concert/rehearsal drinks with fellow musicians. She said she often partook in after-concert drinks with fellow musicians specifically because it afforded her a networking opportunity rather than considering it to be an opportunity to unwind. She seemed to be taking the opportunities that, on the surface, were about relaxing and unwinding and instead stayed in the 'working' frame of mind. These kinds of behaviours seemed to stem from the influence of the profession on the conservatoire which supported behaviours which, for some, foregrounded their career over being a student even early in their studies.

Related to the constant focus on career, I got an impression of what seemed to be a guiding principle for students which was that they should always be trying to improve their musicianship for the sake of career. For example, Emma brought up, with what seemed like some disdain, how her tutor wanted her to be always listening to recordings of her repertoire. In my own experience, musicians listen to recordings in order to gain insight about artistic approach to a piece. Noting the details and subtle differences between recordings is an active and involved process, rather than passive listening. While my experience is that this is a common practice, Emma's description suggested that her tutor felt that times where she wouldn't be practising should be used for listening to recordings which created an additional responsibility, additional work to her already busy and active schedule. I got the impression that these experiences lead Emma to feel less agency over her time and what could be considered time that she could be spending on other activities. This was an example of the expectations coloured by the profession that students talked about. The feeling that they should always be considering their future career in their regular interactions with people or the feeling that they should constantly work on repertoire, suggested that the conservatoire often fails to recognise the need to take a break.

The ways that students talked about their experiences as students seemed to suggest a shared understanding that the conservatoire is resistant to the idea that taking any time away from music. This took the form of focus on the career as well as musicianship. The pressure to think about how interactions between people could benefit your career seemed to affect how students experience the conservatoire and develop perceptions about the performance community. Students sometimes appeared to challenge this idea, making time to spend with non-musician friends in order to "decompress" from the intensity of the conservatoire. Some of these contesting behaviours may have evolved because of the conservatoire's long-

standing culture of competition and critique, which were built into the Paris Conservatoire framework. The influence of the profession bleeding into the settings also appeared to lend a sense of competition into the way students navigate conservatoire culture.

How cultural practices were perpetuated by tutors

In an HE policy environment which requires institutions to be increasingly finance-driven, the conservatoire seems to remain steadfast in adherence to the costly one-to-one teaching format. The persisting nature of the one-to-one arrangement, as a contemporary iteration of the master-apprentice arrangement, suggests that the tutor will likely continue to be the established, dominant force within the community. As guardians of conservatoire tradition, I suggested that the tutors transmit their values and assumptions of what behaviours and values are acceptable within the community to their students. The position of the tutor, in this way, brings out their usefulness in maintaining cultural practices sometimes seemingly at the expense of education and critical inquiry. This kind of transmission appeared to be highly valued in the three institutions where I collected data.

From the perspective of a student's personal development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggest a need for teaching that is flexible and encouraging of active involvement. I noted instances where this seemed to be happening for some students with their tutors, but that more generally there were feelings that the conservatoire was not aligned with flexibility and active involvement. While an individual may report that they feel creative nourishment and agency in their own one-to-one learning, they often reported that they felt other figures in the conservatoire sometimes appeared to hold an unfavourable attitude toward some of these practices (Sasha, Mary, John).

Implicit in my understanding of Giddens' (1994) guardians is the idea of a kind of policing of norms and behaviours. The collected data suggested that students seemed to view their tutor as their primary source of understanding the community around them in addition to being their source for technical skills. As such, I observed many instances of what I believe was a cultural policing within the conservatoire. Many of these behaviours and beliefs which tutors perpetuate seemed to be well known to individuals who have gone through the accepted music learning and education progression, more so than individuals who had not. One notable instance of this, as I mentioned in the previous section, was when Deanna detailed her experiences with choosing primary repertoire outside of the accepted canon and the negative reaction of others within the conservatoire faculty. She described the details of how

she arrived at her repertoire decisions with her tutor and the resulting disapproving reaction from other tutors within the conservatoire faculty.

While her own tutor supported her unconventional repertoire choices, she felt that most other tutors she encountered did not. In another instance of how tutors perpetuate specific cultural practices and police norms within the institution, Mary talked about how her tutor was a primary source of guidance about what competitions to prepare for. In the conservatoire setting, competitions have historically been an important part of building a career. Mary's tutor, therefore, seemed to help to maintain that practice by instilling within her the importance of taking part in these competitive events. Perpetuating behaviours such as dismissing unconventional repertoire as ancillary to an accepted canon, and promoting the value of competitions seemed to have helped create an environment which often valued continuity of tradition over innovative or critical thinking. Also, occurrences like these created tension within the institution, tensions between the curriculum, students, and institutional authority figures.

Ultimately the tutor continues to be central to the student experience and acts as gatekeeper of conservatoire cultures. However, that does not mean all students always buy into the traditions perpetuated by tutors. I found that some students, such as Deanna, acknowledged these traditions but actively contested and questioned some of them. These students often participated in the established cultural practices even though they did not necessarily buy into their importance. In these cases, students seemed to go through the motions of sharing in these behaviours even though they found themselves challenging their underlying value. When framed through this perspective of established practices, the enduring constructs that perpetuate the idea of the tutor-as-gatekeeper may be viewed as less about education than about maintaining a certain kind of cultural practice. By positioning tutor's role as a guardian of conservatoire tradition, of its norms and behaviours, the extensive power held by these individuals to perpetuate established cultural practices can be better understood.

Tensions within the conservatoire

Throughout my interviews, there were several instances where students seemed to question the value of what was perceived as the accepted norms and values of their conservatoire while also participating in the cultural practices. While these interrogations seemed to be at odds with the traditions instilled in them by the institution, as I stated earlier, I did note some evidence of apparent ongoing development in the conservatoire community. I observed a nod

to the current needs of musicians within some individual students' accounts, specifically in the form of some course offerings and repertoire selections that existed separate to or as optional additions to traditional practice. Yet while these offerings could be perceived as progression, this kind of development often seemed to be observed by students in relation to how it was at odds with what values they were being taught implicitly. One notable instance was Deanna's experience with repertoire selection. While her institution offered coursework in modern music, her choice to study a modern composition was poorly received by faculty leaders because it wasn't part of the instrument's accepted canon.

From what I observed, explicit curriculum in the conservatoires seemed to attempt to consider current aspects of the profession and some attempts at this seemed to be more successful than others. An example of this was utilising one-to-one tuition in a novel way, specifically for music technology students. The institution paired students and music industry tutors in a similar manner to performance students, implementing the 200-year-old master-apprentice-like dyad in different context, specific to the current industry. Meanwhile, implicit curriculum in the conservatoires still seemed to prioritise the students whose experiences and background more closely align with centuries-old customs and values. According to descriptions and explanations by students, there seemed to be many noteworthy and often well-received attempts to incorporate into conservatoire learning some of the more recent developments in the profession (for example, the course offerings at CON). However, it also seemed apparent that there continue to be strong links back to that model which relies on the curricular framework of previous generations. This connects to my previous observation that some students seemed to think institution-level attempts to incorporate the contemporary needs of musicians are often disingenuous. This not only caused contention regarding explicit educational objectives but also seemed to be evident in students' development of perspectives and values of their own.

Can the conservatoire generate new knowledge while reproducing the old?

As I've stated repeatedly by now, the conservatoire has leaned on the Paris Conservatoire model for over two hundred years, and what students described was deeply ingrained practices that promote specific norms associated with that history. The explicit and implicit transmission of certain knowledge as a priority has created a wider effect, which suggested that other knowledge is less valuable. From this perspective, the conservatoire then exists to satisfy tradition and students felt pressure to ascribe to that set of norms and values. While my purpose for conducting this research was not specifically as a curricular inquiry, in some

respects the data could be looked at with curriculum in mind. To do so requires an acknowledgement of an implicit curriculum which is interwoven within the explicit curriculum, the policies of the institutions and how those policies affect the student experience.

While I argued that culture is a living, dynamic process dependent upon a community of members, it does emerge that the conservatoire is a culture with established practices and behaviours (albeit with friction between the organisation and many of its members). I found evidence that the conservatoire had rules and expectations that are, and for roughly 200 years have been, purposefully reproduced. From a Bourdieusian perspective, conservatoire cultures are one of reproduction, further signalling this resistance to change. On an institutional-level, there seemed to be a reluctance to modify processes and ways of approaching expectations with modern pressures of the profession, while acknowledging that the needs of current musicians have, in fact, changed over time. The tensions felt by those students within the institutions suggested that there may be more than one process of cultural production occurring.

On one side, the institutions I researched appeared to reproduce accepted norms as the conservatoire has always done while sometimes making small adjustments to meet the needs and experiences of its members (keeping with CON as an example, they have implemented many innovative courses yet it does still adhere strongly to the set conservatoire framework). Meanwhile, students seemed to feel the pressure of the profession to meet a different set of expectations than they were trained for within the conservatoire (Sasha, John). Throughout my interviews with students at all three institutions, I got the sense that individually, they encountered a lot of new knowledge and that knowledge generation was happening, however, much of this seemed to happen as extra-curricular. Greta illustrated current career building practices with after rehearsal drinks and also, I observed what seemed to be new knowledge generation which was tethered to custom. For example, CON, which has radically transformed the customary conservatoire offering pointed their focus on new and emerging careers in ways that other institutions had not, and also maintained the one-to-one arrangement central to the Paris Conservatoire structure as a selling point for students.

The ways that the conservatoires have dealt with the emergence of digital technologies and cultures also showed the institution's general resistance to change. While I observed some technological advances in each of the settings, they often appeared to serve to reproduce the

norms of the conservatoire, grounded in pre-digital and internet practices. In a couple of examples of how the institution has moved online, CON utilised digital notice boards and I noted that QMC and MCC use digital newsletters to circulate auditions and performance opportunities. The use of digital systems to reserve practice rooms and advertise auditions were examples of using digitisation as a means of reinforcing certain pre-existing values. However, institutions have also integrated technology in other ways (for example, digital notice boards in physical spaces advertising music shops and concerts, on-line streaming of classroom sessions, and smart tech in spaces). Since I did not have access to formal learning-teaching, I do not look at how technology affects these spaces but informally, the use of digital technologies seemed to serve, at least in some ways, as a way of maintaining cultural practices rather than creating opportunities for new behaviours and values to develop.

By looking at my findings, I came to question whether these conservatoires do, in fact, nourish knowledge generation within the curriculum. It appeared that much of the institution's reliance on custom, and indeed tradition, came from an attitude of 'it's always been done this way', without much consideration for why or whether these behaviours continue to be effective. Certainly, while some institutions like CON spent a great deal of energy working on innovative curricular approaches to higher music education, there still lingers old ideas about how established traditions will translate (the idea that 6-8 hours of practice each day on top of coursework is needed, for example). The implementation of digital technologies that reinforce pre-digital cultural practices helped to maintain the hierarchy of the organisation, potentially at the cost of advancing the community.

A lot of the tensions felt by students seemed to come from the clashing of values and behaviours they experience due to the different values within in the explicit and implicit curriculum. Students noted instances where they were told of or given resources that suggested that the conservatoires comprehended current students' needs but often there seemed to be an underlying sense that established practices and behaviours were still more important. Informed by these findings, I suggested that a major source of tension felt by students came from this clash between explicit and implicit curriculum. Samantha's experience with illness and the continued sense of need to practice suggested to me that these conservatoires have made some, sometimes seemingly superficial, changes to the approach to education while primarily reinforcing existing cultural practices.

Tensions extending outside the conservatoire

The tensions felt by conservatoire students extended beyond the confines of the conservatoire as an educational setting. I noted instances where students illustrated seemingly significant differences in the behaviours and values they experience as conservatoire students and what they are experiencing in professional performance community and society. These differences seemed to create challenges that affected how students developed perceptions about conservatoire practices. For instance, at MCC and QMC there seemed to be a continued focus on traditional career paths (namely, major orchestra and soloist careers) despite literature which gives a general sense that professional performers are more likely to have a portfolio career which includes income from multiple types and sources of work (Scharff, 2015; Bennett and Bridgstock, 2014; Musician's Union, 2012; Bennett, 2008). David and Greta discussed their perceptions of the performance profession and portfolio careers. Students' use of terms like 'real work' or 'normal' to describe things outside of the conservatoire suggested a feeling of not fitting in with what is expected of them in society. In my analysis, I suggested that these tensions which extend outside the conservatoire affect the way students develop perceptions of the conservatoire, the professional community and their sense of self.

Through the lens of her own experiences, course leader Florence explained her own take on the clash between the classical music performance community and society, suggesting that the media portrays classical music as elitist and unnecessary, while the conservatoire as an institution demands significant dedication from students to join that community. The underlying understanding was, then that messages about the profession and professional community coming from the conservatoire and from those from the media were often in conflict. The implicit suggestion seemed to be that the amount of work and dedication required from students was disproportionate to how society values classical music performers. An extension of the idea that classical music performance, as a vocation, is perceived differently outside of the conservatoire is the perception that the work is less 'real' or 'normal' than other paths. I felt this was significant considering how readily students talked about the pressure to practice long hours on top of their coursework, the expectation to engage with the profession early in their studies, and the implicit suggestion that students shouldn't take a break from those expectations.

I also noted instances of tension where the practices within the conservatoires did not appear to match what students experienced as performers outside of the institution (For example,

Deanna). While CON seemed to be primarily focused on new and current professions within music performance, both MCC and QMC conveyed a conservatoire with significant focus on customs and traditions that elicited a career that is becoming increasingly difficult to cultivate, the major orchestra musician and soloist. I observed several instances of marketing and advertisements which showcased soloists and large symphony orchestras while students also suggested that these careers were their primary focus (Sasha, John). Seemingly acknowledging the difficulty in obtaining a full-time position in an orchestra, John had given himself a rough timeline of how long he was willing to focus on that outcome before he would decide to take an administrative job, instead. While it has become increasingly difficult to find permanent, full-time performance work the conservatoire seemed reluctant to address the changing landscape toward portfolio careers, continuing to prioritise a small set of career outcomes.

I found tensions in my data where students experience a difference in how society looks at the conservatoire and how the conservatoire portrays itself. Students talked about the expectation to show how dedicated they are to classical music and also suggested that other education and careers are more accepted through the use of words like ‘real’ and ‘normal’ to describe those paths. Similarly, the professional landscape has been moving away from single-income and toward portfolio careers but my observations suggested that the conservatoire is reluctant to change and address this shift at an institution-level. The conservatoires largely continue to pursue established norms and behaviours, maintaining cultural practices which serve a social climate often different from the one students’ experience today. These practices have, then, created tensions which extend outside of the conservatoire and influence the student experience.

How my journey through the research process affected my understanding of the conservatoire

Throughout the process of building the research proposal, conducting fieldwork, and analysing the resulting data my own perceptions of the conservatoire developed, deepened, and changed. Going into the data collection and fieldwork, I had my own interpretation of what likely constituted the music student experience, having once been in a similar position myself. However, as I developed my initial approach and the research questions I was interested in exploring, the manner in which I constructed meaning and social connections began to evolve and new insights came into focus.

Reading recent conservatoire literature, I saw what felt like a distinct opportunity to give conservatoire students a voice in the education research landscape. I knew I wanted to investigate student feelings about the conservatoire. Specifically, I wanted to look at the time spend outside formal learning-teaching transactions because that aspect of the student experience seemed to be absent from much of recent literature. This meant that I needed to be able to define the scope of what I was looking for. By approaching students' experiences from this perspective, my understanding of the conservatoire setting was greatly enriched. This process also helped me to develop how I interpret the conservatoire as a construct in the context of its historical roots. As the research process unfolded, some of the implicit norms and values started to emerge.

I was drawn to explore students' experiences through the lens of culture because, in many ways, the conservatoire experience is still not well understood. Highlighting this point, for instance, the most widely-cited ethnographic conservatoire research is over 30 years old (Kingsbury, 1988). To shine a light on the cultural practices of the conservatoire, then, required me to have a confident understanding of what 'culture' is. This presented a challenge because there are so many definitions and theoretical ideas about culture. Developing an interpretation of culture as the norms and practices of a community, I set out to collect data that would shine a light on outside-the-classroom experiences. However, very quickly I began to realise that no matter what questions I asked students during an interview, aspects of their studies always bled into their answers. Students often evoked the influence of their tutor when describing their perceptions and values. Therefore, it became apparent that that there isn't a clear distinction between perceptions of 'in class' and 'out of class', which I had expected to find and I had to adjust my approach to the research to reflect this.

As a former music student, this research journey expanded my idea of how we can look at the conservatoire experience, encompassing a greater range of perspectives. Students' differing perspectives on the customs and practices of the conservatoire were accented by their variation in background experiences. I developed a way of understanding the traditions of the conservatoire and how a student's past seemed to affect whether they buy into (or contest) the value of those traditions. Throughout my fieldwork, I discovered aspects of the conservatoire as an institution which I had not previously considered. The most notable of these were the reluctant to allow me access to formal teaching-learning transactions nor to allow me to directly approach students as a way of recruiting participation (both of which I noted, to some degree, at each setting). Limiting access in this way restricted my ability to

comment on the student experience in these situations, as well as my ability to understand the broader student experience more fully.

Despite these institutional limitations, I was able to develop insights into the way students perceive their experiences, which included the effects of formal learning-teaching transactions. The way students talked about their experiences suggested to me that personal development was taking place throughout their time in the conservatoire. In certain circumstances, they seemed to utilise critical thinking skills and knowledge generation in order to meet what they saw as the demands of the profession. While I noted earlier that there often seemed to be a reliance on the tutor for direction, the interviews I conducted suggested to me that many students had a strong sense of criticality toward the institution and their time as students.

In Chickering and Reisser's (1993) revisit of the Seven Vectors of Student Development, they outline aspects of student experience which significantly affect an individual's personal development. One vector, the clarity of institutional objective and consistency of policy and practice, seemed to be a major influence that was present as students discussed their experiences which elicited an explicit versus implicit curriculum. Throughout my fieldwork observations, I encountered examples where explicit and implicit priorities created disparities that students had to navigate. Developing a sense of curriculum, even without access to the formal learning-teaching transactions, generated insight about how the institution seemed to affect the development of values and priorities in students, adding nuance to the cultural practices of the conservatoire.

Having access to pedagogical spaces, specifically private one-to-one tuition, would have allowed me an additional observational perspective to explore that aspect of the student experience, following the evolution of the research project. Since I was only given access to observe students in informal environments, I was limited in my ability to talk to tutors, generally, about the student-tutor relationship and the culture of the conservatoire. This meant that I was also limited in my ability to observe these aspects of student life that they were bringing up during interviews, important aspects of the student experience. However, I believe that this research inquiry is a useful one even without the access to these formal learning-teaching environments. While the primary focus of the research evolved from a narrow perception of what in-class and out-of-class looked like it evolved to respond to what students were telling me. By this, I mean that the research responds to the ways that

students reflected on and spoke about their experiences of conservatoire culture. Access to pedagogical spaces would have enriched the data in ways that I had not initially thought, however the resulting thesis is a robust analysis of the student experience through the eyes of students. Through responding to the limitations and unexpected findings that appeared throughout the research journey, I have developed a greater insight into the conservatoire as an institution. I have developed greater flexibility and reflexivity with which I will be able to approach other areas of specialised training which hold their own set of customs and histories.

Implications for the conservatoire

More research into the conservatoire has begun to emerge over the last few years, with a focus on exploring the one-to-one pedagogy of the institution as well as investigating the learning-teaching practices of the institution (for examples see Bennett & Bridgstock (2014); Collens (2015); Burwell, Carey & Bennett (2017)). This research agenda has built a platform well-suited for exploring the ways in which students understand and perceive aspects of the formal learning-teaching transaction and how they experience the behaviours and beliefs that come with it. However, my study has revealed that students seem to perceive the student-tutor dyad as extending beyond this formal interaction, influencing how culture is created in each institution and how they perceive the customs and practices they encounter. By visiting three separate institutions and talking to students at those institutions, I have sought to create a rich account of how the conservatoire is experienced in the UK. However, I can only account for my observations of a small section of the UK conservatoire context. Therefore, this thesis should not be construed as a generalisation of the student experience of conservatoire culture, but rather, used as a resource, part of wider critical reflections of policy and practice. I believe that new knowledge uncovered in this thesis should be of interest to administrators and institutional policy makers in order to “improve institutional and teaching behaviors” (Silver & Silver, 1997). The experience of conservatoire students, as with other non-mainstream or specialist HE students, should be meaningfully considered by decision makers when evaluating institutional practices and policy.

Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Seven Vectors of Student Development looks at how a student undergoes change throughout HE and identifies six major environmental influences that affect development in students. Of the six influences, I looked at the notions of *institutional objectives*, *student-faculty relationships*, and *friendships and student communities* to generally orient myself toward aspects of conservatoire life. Looking at the institutional

objectives and relationships students form, from the perspective of the student, have broadened my own understanding of higher music education. This thesis should provide a useful resource for reflections on the distinctiveness of how higher music education students experience culture in their setting.

In chapter 5, I illustrated some of the institutional objectives, such as how the settings promote the culture of practising or engender a collaborative learning environment through policies and practices. The student's institution is, of course, positioned to be a significant influence on their experience as it oversees the curriculum and policy implementation. Looking back at my fieldwork, CON is the institution that appeared to distance itself the most from the norms of the conservatoire, when compared to the other two settings. Students at CON also seemed to generate accounts that echoed some different perspectives than those of the other two institutions. The suggestion, then, the institution's concerted efforts to foster practices that promote collaboration and formulate policies that may not be common to the conservatoire may make a difference in the personal development of students. I suggest these findings are evidence of the potential value of policies that fall outside of the accepted customs of the Paris Conservatoire model.

Student-faculty relationships are primarily showcased in chapter 7, but evidence of the influence of the student-tutor relationship can be seen in chapters 5 and 6, as well. This dyad can be characterised by a power dynamic that allows the tutor to transmit values and beliefs to their student, who is dependent on their tutor to teach them how to be the musician they want to become. The importance of the tutor in the conservatoire setting seems to be distinctive to this setting, as many students talked about this individual, with whom they have significant one-to-one contact time, as god-like, someone to idolise. For example, John (MCC) and Cara (QMC) both made comments about their tutor as someone from whom they have taken guidance from unquestioningly, despite also realising that there was no singular correct point of view and acknowledging the importance of independence in learning. This could be problematic from an institutional perspective, affecting how students receive information, creating tensions. My findings could be used as a resource to facilitate future exploration of implicit curriculum within conservatoire settings.

In chapter 6, I examined how the individual connects to the conservatoire community by looking at how they built their perceptions of self and place within the conservatoire. Participants reported using friendship groups in several ways: as a way of clearing their mind

of the conservatoire as Emmett suggested, or engaging with aspects of music performance on their own terms, as Mary described. In the competitive environment of their conservatoire, it appears that the way students navigate the conservatoire can be a complex balance of peer support and competition. My findings suggest that friendship groups can be a source of both, however, students seemed to learn how to engage with their peers in such a way as to help them manage the pressures or stresses of the conservatoire. By looking deeply at the practices and norms of conservatoire cultures and the major influences that affect students' experiences, we can begin to have a more holistic understanding of what it is to be a music student in the present age and the changing social context of the conservatoire. Building our understanding of higher music education and students' experiences would allow for more meaningful, considered institutional policy and fostering practices that positively affect personal development of students.

Reflecting on my contribution to knowledge

This thesis addressed the conservatoire context from the student perspective. I approached the research wanting to uncover more of students' experiences outside of the formal learning-teaching environment, addressing informal conservatoire cultures and cultural influences as described by participants. The resulting data that emerged suggested that the conservatoire students encountered explicit and implicit curricula which is often at odds. Some of the centuries-old practices are reflected in the practices of the contemporary institution, and I observed some perceptions and beliefs among participants that echo the classical music community of generations-past. Often, it seemed these practices did not translate to the realities of the current profession. There was evidence of tensions throughout students' experiences which seemed to affect their perceptions of the conservatoire as well as the professional community. These findings can benefit our understanding of personal student development in this specialist education setting and how conservatoire policy and practice is approached. This research extends our understanding of the conservatoire and will benefit the conservatoire research community as a resource for further developing an understanding of students' experiences in higher education.

The purpose of conducting this research was to unpack the ways in which students experience this area of HE and shine a light on the distinctive qualities of the institution. Despite the perceived decline in interest in classical music and seemingly bleak job prospects for these musicians, applications to conservatoires continue to rise (UCAS, 2018), suggesting that these institutions continue to be an important part of the HE landscape. I endeavoured to

explore the role of the conservatoire in a changing world, how students navigate centuries-old customs and practices in current society. This research forms part of the groundwork for the creation of policies that enrich that student experience. The dedication and work that goes into studying music performance at this level is worthy of policies that acknowledge the students' commitment.

Concluding thoughts

After development of this research, exploring conservatoire culture and theorising about the student experience I am left with the question, how does the conservatoire assure students of its continued relevance? While student applications are trending positively, it seems that for some students there is a division between how they experience the conservatoire and the profession. From the information I gathered and my observations and interviews with students, I noted the conservatoire largely seemed to continue to implicitly reproduce the learning values of the historical conservatoire. I saw what appeared to be a culture with established cultural practices and beliefs, resistant to moving away from the Paris Conservatoire model, thus continuing to prioritise an environment of individual competition. Certain customs, such as repertoire canon, seemed to have led to the perennial spotlighting of a small part of the music performance community. As such, this model provided a space to learn and master performance technique important to this largely Euro-centric canon of repertoire which was perceived as highest-value by the guardians of conservatoire tradition. More generally, the conservatoire seemed to provide an education on how to conform to the expectations of these gatekeepers, who often still adhere to the many out-of-date interpretations of the profession and music community. However, I believe that within the conservatoire framework exists the tools and potential to foster a student experience that reflect the ways in which the world is changing.

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Appendix 1 – Research diary excerpts

16 February 2017

First day of observations, took primarily descriptive observations as the conservatoire is on reading week and not many students are around during the next couple of days. I need to ask if I can have my digital flyer posted again so that it is at the top of the list of opportunities when students are back on Monday. It was not very easy to find my flyer online – it was not clear where one should navigate to in order to find such a listing. That said, one response in my reddit request in r/classicalmusic said that conservatoires usually have a mailing list that lists opportunities outside of the conservatoire and that this would be where they'd likely put my flyer. While this is not a mailing list it is similar in content so perhaps students interested know to navigate to that part of their intranet.

Posted a flyer … in the window of a smallish retro hip café, at [trendy downtown bar and music venue] (noticeboard visible before you walk into the bathrooms, has all kinds of gigs, etc. on the board, and [another trendy downtown bar with live music] where I left the flyer with a bartender who said they would see if they can get it put up but that they usually only post things for their own booked gigs. He seemed pleased that it wasn't any bigger than it was.

20 February 2017

Ran into [my main contact] in the hallway and all seemed very pleasant. I said I would email later to see if he would be free for a catch up. I need to email tonight and see if it would be possible to repost my interview flyer

Scheduled first interview for tomorrow (21/2) in a cafe

Another possible interviewee from Reddit from [local subreddit], responded via PM and comment reply

The use of Reddit as a means of recruiting participants may be connected to how much time students (and people - alumni are responding on reddit, too) spend time online and how they conduct their day/interact with people the community. The conservatoires either don't have their own subreddit or they aren't active - which is why I opted to post on the [local subreddit]

(and will post in other cities). R/classicalmusic hasn't proven terribly useful, the post has been a dead end where the other has continued to gather comments over the last couple of days.

The masterclass notes will be taken in the fieldwork notebook because I shouldn't have my iPad out during the session.

16 May 17

Got a response from [a participant] agreeing to an interview, so I asked when would be feasible to schedule it. They also gave me the names of several people who might be willing to do an interview so I sent emails off to them. Already got one response saying no because of rehearsals.

I am trying to be very clear about my thought process when approaching people who might be available to interview. It seems like a possibility to me that by approaching people sat alone I am getting more PG's – this was sort of alluded to in [a previous] interview. By approaching people within the [café] I am also narrowing my potential sample quite a bit – although this is the only leisure space where I can be reasonably certain that students are students.

Also, by being here at various times in the afternoon I am potentially eliminating a portion of the student body that either comes to the [café] in the morning or evening – but this is a practicality consideration since I am funding this entirely myself.

Got another interview, albeit a short one/ The fact that [the participant] didn't have much time for me is data because he was on his way to a rehearsal.

Appendix 2 – Early interpretations of emerging themes

Excerpt from Fieldwork Report dated 29 September 2017

A few themes have become apparent to me across all the interviews, so far. The theme of "separate worlds" that emerged early on (referring to the feeling of separation by musicians from their friends who have 'real jobs', and that they as artists exist in another realm) has grown to include several seemingly distinct spheres:

1. Musician versus Non-Musician sphere

This sphere seems to be a commonly referenced perception wherein the musician's friends and family are part of 'the real world' and hold jobs which adhere to a regular schedule or include shift work outside of the performing arts professions. Occasionally these students refer to their chosen profession as that of a freelancer but never refer to themselves as being like other freelance professions.

2. Conservatoire versus University education

Notably, some postgraduate participants spoke highly of their time studying at a university, that it allowed them to develop as a person and an opportunity to 'grow up' with more guidance than is usual at a conservatoire. With one participant, there was a sentiment of dislike for undergraduates at the conservatoire because they worked hard to get themselves to the conservatoire and felt the undergraduates relied more on their parents and therefore didn't appreciate being there. It was mentioned by many that the conservatoire was their dream, that they chose their program for its prestige, and on occasion specifically for their tutor. Through the interviews, it was made clear that the conservatoire is a more prestigious option for those specifically desiring to enter the performance profession although those that went to a university before coming to the conservatoire spoke highly of their time at university, specifically in their ability to widen their life experience, meet different people, and develop skills that benefitted them at the conservatoire such as time management.

Another participant voiced a concern for classmates who base their entire identity on being a musician and being at a conservatoire (and therefore have no other interests or hobbies). She said she was concerned for their ability to manage life after they graduate and is 'honestly scared for them'. The [student government representative], an alumnus and university graduate felt that people who go to university often are able to handle the pressures of "real life" after graduation because of their varied experiences and ability to

handle different kinds of situations which you get more of at a university (insomuch as you have project management, studying, learning to write effective essays, meeting and managing friendships with different kinds of people who may not appreciate or care about music).

3. Instrument versus Instrument

One interesting theme drawn from the initial look at the interviews has been the feelings of instrumentalists toward other instrumentalists. In subsequent interviews, it was generally felt by participants that vocalists spend the least amount of time practicing because of the nature of singing and taking care of their voice, their lungs, their diaphragm, etc. so they don't tend to feel guilty about the amount of time they spend outside the practice room because they're not allowed to practice any more than they do. After the vocalists, woodwinds and brass are expected to practice more time throughout the day even though they use their lungs and diaphragm, etc. as well (a reality that is, unsurprisingly, not welcome), and string players generally feel a constant sense of expectation as far as time spent practicing is concerned. Additionally, pianists seemed to fit into this in a "they can only practice if there's a piano available" periphery.

4. Individual versus Individual

This sphere is pervasive across all participants regardless of their role, instrument, or gender. The performing arts professions are a necessarily competitive career path by their very nature. One participant commented that fear is what keeps him going every day, fear that someone else is practicing, that someone else is booking a gig, being more successful. One commented that even sat around the table at lunch with her friends the competition isn't gone because people chat about gigs they've booked or competitions they're going for and you judge yourself against them and always feel like they're doing better.

On a slightly bigger scale, one participant mentioned that she has a strong dislike for the artificial competition that the industry creates (such as concerto competitions and master classes) which exist largely just as bragging opportunities considering that often the prize money isn't 'a lot' of money. Her argument was that creating 'extra' competition makes it that much harder to maintain a healthy mental outlook about your profession.

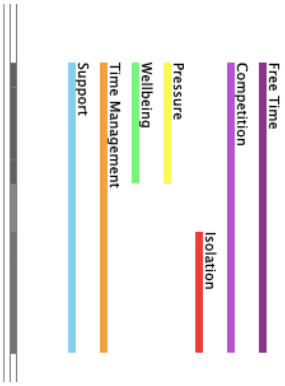
Despite knowing on a mental level that they need to limit their time practicing and worrying about competition most students seem to act differently. Almost as a "wink" to the

administration or tutors that yes, they should balance their life but that they know what is really meant by that – to practice until you absolutely can't practice anymore.

Appendix 3 – Interview codes

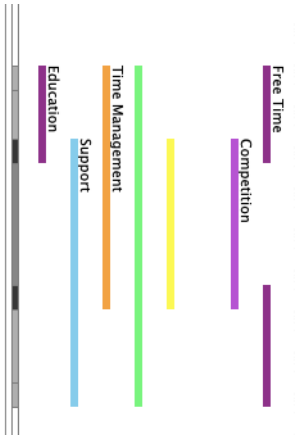
The following are two excerpts from an interview taken from NVivo and are examples of the themes which presented throughout the research analysis

***D**: In some of the research that others have done, not much is done on free time but some have noted that at different institutions it can get really clique-y*
K: Oh definitely. Oh no that happens here, no definitely. I think that's why I prioritise going and seeing people who are not from here. So they might be, one of my friends is at [redacted] and she also finds the same thing with [redacted] players, that its just really intense and so we both serve that purpose for each other, that its still someone who gets music so you can have a rant to them and they'll understand but they're not in your studio so they're not so close to it. And we both actually, what I really enjoy about hanging out with her is that I'll go and do something that's musical but not my specialism. It keeps you interested and feels like you're doing proper music rather than being so blinkered and just doing your own thing. It can feel like you're learning in a vacuum because you've not got anything else to compare it to so she's a [redacted] player so we'll go see a symphony orchestra play or we'll go see some chamber music and for her I'll be like, "oh, this is a great opera and you should come and see it" and she'll come with me and she'll get to see that side of things because she quite wants to play in an orchestra band so its quite good for her to be able to see it.



Excerpt 1

***D**: Is this something you had to come about yourself or is it something that people, teachers said you need to be thinking about, that balance*
K: Not really. I think my singing teacher is really good because she's really good at saying "what are you up to this weekend?" And with some people she knows she has to kick up the arse to do work, she's not worried about me from that point of view but she is really good at saying that but actually, here it can become quite obsessive and that's what I don't think is healthy. Because [redacted] will sit around a table chirping about how much work they've got on or that they've this gig coming up which then makes you feel terrible because you don't have those gigs or you don't have anything coming up so you panic and think 'well I need to go and find something like that' so the time you would have had relaxing or learning some music that would be useful long term, you go and panic you've not got any gigs which is ridiculous because they're just saying that because they're concerned that they've not got enough going on. That's their insecurity that they're putting onto you. But *every time,* I pick up on it. Every time. And so actually the more I get out of the building and see normal people, people who are not in this clique, the better. Or I hang out with people who are in this clique but who are similar to me in mindset, that we can just forget the others and everything else they've got going on and just chat about whatever. Go see a movie, a drink, or go for a walk. Yeah going to the cinema, I don't get enough time to do that and I love going to the cinema.



Excerpt 2