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Circumvention

On judgement as practical action

Abstract

The article is based on material from a series of Dialogue Seminars conducted with teachers at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Descriptions of processes within the master/apprentice relationships serve as an empirical base for further reflections on the nature of practical knowledge and how practical and artistic judgement can be developed.

Problems of performance cannot always be attacked head-on by discussing them directly, so a linguistic circumvention of the problem often takes place. The creation of a language agreement where metaphors and figures acquire a situation-bound meaning is an example of this kind of circumvention.

This situational language agreement is created within a field of tension between teacher and student. The teachers' judgmental process of how and when to use language within this tension-field is seen as a general example of a practitioners internal balancing in the actual moment of performance.

The article argues that personal judgement involves an ability to balance several incompatible extremes of approach. To gain an overview of the forces affecting a practitioner it may be helpful to see the practitioner as handling an array of mutually exclusive poles. The image of "paradoxical fields" is offered as an expression of the practitioner's movement between these poles. Examples of paradoxical fields include planning/spontaneity in a musical performance, breadth/depth in a students' development and the tension between lyrics and music of a song.

Keywords: practical knowledge, judgement, music, metaphor, paradoxical fields, skills research, Dialogue Seminar, music education, research in the arts.

Introduction

A recurring theme within the Scandinavian tradition of research on professional skills is judgement. Judgement in this context means the ability to skillfully handle situation-bound problems where the outcome cannot be predicted with certainty. Examples from arts education, in this case music, may possibly contribute to the discussion.

One reason for courses in higher musical education to take place within a master/apprentice relationship is that the practice the student aims to master also involves a capacity of judgement. Using an instrumental praxis, a composers' specific language, a genre, or a historic musical style in a creative way does not only require an awareness of the traits of the style, but also an ability to spontaneously use them with the judgement developed in the training. Since this ability defies expression in general terms, but rather resides as a trait of personality, the intertwining of personalities within the master/apprentice relationship offers a possibility to enhance individual artistic ability.

How does this creation of judgement occur? What happens between a teacher and student in private lessons is difficult for an outsider to grasp; it may involve long processes extending over several years, where a situation that may appear commonplace to an observer can have deep significance for the parties involved.

One way of addressing the question is to use the verbal descriptions teachers and students can give of what happens in the teaching studio. Since 2004 seven series of Dialogue Seminars have been conducted at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, mainly with groups of experienced teachers. The Dialogue Seminar form aims to help practitioners narrate, share and reflect upon their personal experience. The participants' texts and the minutes from the seminars can then be used to develop the personal and collective praxis. More information on the Dialogue Seminar as a praxis development tool can be found in Göranson et al 2006 and Ratkic 2006. The view of practical knowledge lying behind can be found in i.e. Åberg 2008/2010a, Göranson 2009, Nordenstam 2009, Janik 2005, 2003 and Josefson 1998. Important impulses to this knowledge-theoretical approach have come from Schön 1983, Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986, Polanyi 1962, 1966, Ricoeur 1991, Bergson 1988, Fleck 1997, Wittgenstein 2001, 1975, and Aristoteles 2000.

This article expands some of the themes emerging from seminars conducted with two groups of teachers at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, one consisting of classical voice training teachers, the other of teachers from the classical, jazz and folk music departments. The colleagues cited are Margaretha Elmerstad, Inger Hülphers, Eva Larsson-Myrsten, Joakim Milder, Anna Lindal, Inga-Lill Sundin, Kerstin Viberg and Kerstin Wahlström-Olsson. My own practice as a musician and senior lecturer of lute and chamber music at the Royal College functions as frame for interpretation of the materials.

Working around

There is a process of circumvention that is a part of a music teacher's everyday life. As a teacher you cannot always achieve your purpose by tackling problems with language that refers directly to the problem in hand. Indeed, a direct approach may often be a significant obstacle in reaching the desired goal.

A student can be stuck in a particular condition. Attempts to alter this condition will sometimes work directly. But the condition will often return later on, and one may find that the more you discuss the problem the more you consolidate it.

The teachers in the dialogue seminar are keenly aware that "don't do won't work". If the teacher says "don't tense your jaw" there is a real risk that the problem will get worse, not better. Instead, you find different ways of "working around" the problem.

There is a mental condition, often in connection with a muscular tension, that is related to the problem. Development often involves breaking free from the condition by doing something

other than focusing on the problem. “Breaking free from a condition” is not foremost a question of analysing what a condition consists of. It is about recognising the existence of another condition, either through a change in attitude or through a technical change finding a new path. But the change must begin from the actual condition the student is in. The teacher’s empathy with this forms the basis of what is often a fairly simple instruction or action which sometimes can, in a very tangible way, make the student find something new.

A recent example: the student lacked a certain “lustre” in his singing and my thought was that it needed more head voice. As we know, this can be a lengthy process which may be tackled in many ways, but we were close to the end of the lesson so there was no time to go into this in any detail. I simply asked the student to put his hands very lightly on his head and sing the same phrase again. When an instruction like this works straight away, the student is almost a little afraid – “Wow! What on earth is this? Is it magic or what?”

We tried to work out what had happened. Was it lifting the ribcage that produced the effect? Well, maybe that was part of it – or was it the hands touching the top of the head that set the process in motion? As soon as I hear that lack of “high seat” I spontaneously want to put my hands on my head, which I have trained myself not to do... I wanted more head voice, so my hands wanted to move to the head. Instead I asked the student to put his fingertips on the crown of his head... subconsciously, I rationalized my own ingrained behaviour and asked the student to do it instead.

Without knowledge and a trained ear I don’t know if this would have worked. I think this is an interesting question: if someone had given this instruction unintentionally – what would then have happened??? No, it would not have worked. I therefore dare to say that spontaneity without purpose has no value. (Elmerstad in Åberg 2010b p 27)

What the teacher does takes place in a whole, a context. The action itself may appear simple, but the same action performed by another person through following a model would not have the same effect. The input the teacher gives into the situation, whether in form of a gesture or verbal comment, is based on a judgement of the situation as a whole. The student quickly perceives if this form of judgement is lacking, if the teachers actions or comments are not based in personal experience. There are different images of possible actions residing within the teachers experience, but they are used as examples, not as models to be followed.

Experiencing that the teacher is exercising this kind of situational judgement is in itself a transfer of the ability. It’s a collective experience by teacher and student that neither feel the need, or possibility, to verbalize.

Margaretha Elmerstad: If an uninitiated person demonstrated the same thing, would it work? I don’t think so. What is it that makes it work? It is a question of training your sensitivity, where it is easiest for you to breathe and things like that. At first they feel nothing, but over time they learn this sensibility. Something – energy or whatever it might be – must be opening up some channels. There is a touch of magic about it because it can’t be explained. You are quite cautious about using these means. I would prefer not explain to a student what it is. (Elmerstad in Åberg 2010b p 28)

The teacher makes something happen. It is then possible for the student, and the teacher, to step back and give some thought to what actually happened, clarifying the experience and fixing it in their memories. But the physical experience is the starting-point – the way something actually sounded, the feeling that the student’s action generates in the teacher’s body, and the impulses which come from that.

Sven Åberg: Are there any special conditions that have to be met before you use this?

Margaretha Elmerstad: First, you take a few small steps forward and see what the reaction is.

Sven Åberg: What happens if it doesn't work?

Margaretha Elmerstad: Then you explain in some other way. We had a group lesson recently, where we discussed this. About half the people felt it was a liberating movement, while the other half did not. I know people who have progressed from not feeling to feeling. It is a kind of knowledge. (Åberg 2010b p 28-29)

As a teacher, I do not want to attach too much weight to the words themselves. They are a means of dealing with the development of an artistic ability, but are more a working tool than an end goal. A certain amount of “air” must be allowed around the words you use, to prevent them from becoming rigid in oft-repeated phrases.

Metaphors

To handle the apparent paradox that some goals cannot be reached by direct means, many teachers develop a refined way of using metaphors and figures of speech. They address a problem, not with instructions, but by trying to change the mindset connected to a situation in which the problem arises. This use of metaphor is always connected with the specific situation in which teacher and student find themselves, and most teachers are reluctant to refer to them outside the teaching studio.

Nonetheless, a teacher can collect metaphorical images that address the same fields of tension in different ways.

The dressage rider who, apparently without effort, proudly, with a smile and in a top hat makes the horse perform quite remarkable feats. The singer is both horse and rider.

The *raggare*, the Swedish greaser, cruises slowly through the town streets in his souped-up American car, acutely aware of what he has under the hood. The singer is both car and driver. (Hülphers in Åberg 2010b p 41)

Determining if, and when, these images are to be used depends on the nature of the relationship between teacher and student. One of the singing teachers describes how she builds a metaphorical language on the basis of her conception of the student's personality.

To reach a student with a metaphor I must be convinced that we mean the same thing. And how do I know that? This is where dialogue comes in. “Do you understand what I mean when I say ... ?”

To teach a singing student a soft attack I sometimes refer to clutch control in a car, and use the expression “find the holding point”, but only with people who can drive a car. They understand what I mean at once, while a person who has never driven a car will just look very confused. In my teaching I often use images from everyday (?) events. To find the flow, for example: “surf the air” or “go skating”.

The difficulty for a song teacher is that the student's tensions, which are so clearly heard, are very often not visible. As a teacher I must then create a state or condition that can really help dissipate this tension. If you know the student fairly well you can use his/her everyday life and interests as a basis on which to build a metaphorical language that will work.

Yet there are, I have noticed, students whose best response by far is to explanations that are straight to the point, such as “lower your larynx”, “widen your pharynx” and so on. Flowery language is too muddled for them. You have to proceed with caution, pussyfoot forward here. Perhaps these are students for whom the concrete is the most important and readily-accessible path forward? Or it may be that these students are not very imaginative, and may therefore not be so successful as musicians ...

For me it would be extremely difficult to teach if I could not use metaphors.

They help when you want to tackle a particular problem. But I must be sure that the student has the same, or similar, associations as I do if the image is to be easy to understand. And metaphors must be used with discernment. An image that suits one person may be completely incomprehensible to another. (Wahlström-Olsson in Åberg 2010b p 44)

An agreement comes into being between teacher and student that determines which words are possible to use, and how they are to be used. The teacher's expertise includes the ability to be acutely aware of the way this agreement actually looks. This is not a question of phrasing something in a way that can be generally understood, it is a question of saying something that is really understood by a particular person. In teaching, language is not limited by having to be generally understood.

If the teacher investigates the student's personality in the teaching, the student does the same thing. Some students are skilled at understanding what this particular teacher has to offer. The language is created in an interaction, with the student's part in the interaction being as important as the teacher's.

A successful metaphor implies that we share some aspects of experience that go beyond the words' literal meaning. The judgement involved in using language in a creative and situation-specific manner is conveyed through the students' experience of being understood in a more than literal way. The situation-based language-agreement created is not a directly transmittable experience for any of the parties, but resides as a memory in the student of how language can be used. The memory of the situation will be a guide for future interactions. Eventually some of the actual images the teacher uses might be tried in a new context by the student. Even if these specific images would fail, the aim remains to use language in this heightened sense.

Relating to the sensory impression of how the student just played, as well as to a notion of what takes place in the student's inner world, requires a sense of judgement in which the student's grasp of reality is carefully balanced against the teacher's. A successful linguistic image shows that the balancing is happening. This can be a very powerful experience.

Judgement in this sense involves being in motion. The exploration of which words are possible to use occurs in the field of tension between the two personalities. If such a tension field does not exist, it needs to be found, or created by taking a slightly exaggerated standpoint that gives rise to a counter-movement. One role of the teacher is to challenge, to rock the student out of ingrained habits and reaction patterns, to see new aspects of a piece of music with which the student has spent many hours. In what directions may it still be possible to explore? The teacher may give an alternative image, setting the focus on other aspects than the foremost in the students' mind, thereby creating a tension both between the personalities and within the music itself.

If such a tension can be found both parties' senses will be sharpened towards the details of the music and performance, as well as to the other person's reaction. Something static has been set in motion. This heightened sense of the traits of a specific situational flow is something that both the teacher and musician strive towards. Words are used not so much to explain or define, but to create a state of mind where there are several possible modes of action directly available, and the final choices of how to act are made out of an intensive awareness of the circumstances surrounding the action.

There is an internal balancing happening where several possible modes of dealing with the situation are present. The quality of the balancing depends on the nature and number of the possible action patterns available within easy reach at a given moment. Too many possibilities will become overwhelming, while the capacity to have more than one adequate way to react to a situation is the basis of handling the situation with judgement.

Memories of earlier situations give guidance. The impact of earlier memories can be more or less apparent. Some situations can be carefully thought through, scrutinizing the choices

possible in the light of earlier experience. At other times it's necessary to act immediately, out of the memories of earlier experience internalized as spontaneously available action patterns. Many of the questions a practitioner meets require an immediate answer, in words or actions.

The answers may form into habits, automated responses to familiar stimuli. Acquiring good habits is indeed an important part of mastering a practice. But to act with judgement involves looking closely also at the acquired habits, keeping the habitual responses to a minimum so that our interpretation of the situation at hand may influence our way of interacting with it.

We adopt a position somewhere between the automated response and letting us be overwhelmed by the details of the situation we're dealing with. Our memories of earlier situations are not regulative but can be seen as a backdrop of analogies giving the current situation a specific colour, guiding attention towards its meaningful traits .

There is an element of insecurity connected with having several possible ways of reaction available, with the moment of not-knowing while apprehending the situation. Handling this kind of insecurity is something that can be trained. Enduring a certain insecurity allows us to interact with a larger array of possible responses.

The teacher has a resource of possible things to say, but the decision of when, how, and if to say something is left to an improvisatory impulse arising from the situation-bound interaction, and a global view of the meaning of the situation. In this context words are not used primarily as a way of defining something, but as a means to keep different facets of the situation's meaning alive so that the internal balancing in both the student and teacher may continue and possibly end up in a different type of musical action.

Planning and spontaneity

This use of action-oriented language is an example of the practitioners internal balancing in the actual moment of performance. There are certain tensions connected to the practice which cannot be resolved in a theoretical way but require momentary solutions. An example is the relationship between planning and spontaneity in a musical performance.

A piece of music that is planned down to the last detail preempts the function of the musician; you might as well write computer software that produces a predetermined result. The task of the musician is to contribute creativity to the moment.

But even in completely free improvisation the musician relates in some way to what happened the second before; a style is created as the music is performed. Some sounds appear more natural than others in the context of what has been played. Spontaneity that is not related to anything is chance. If the sounds are not related in any way a random number generator may as well produce them. The musician's task is to create a form from the chaos of possibilities.

Neither a pure 'music of the moment' or a performance planned to every last detail can be achieved, nor would either possibility be particularly interesting as an objective. As a musician you operate somewhere between these two extremes. A piece of music can be notated with a greater or lesser degree of precision, and the way this is done suggests something about an attitude and an approach. The improviser can choose to start from a form that is more or less set.

From the musician's viewpoint a piece of music (whether it is in written notation or not) is a deliberately-chosen limitation that places a frame around what the sounds will be. This frame can, in playing, be used as a resistance in finding a new path of action. You want to do something that has a strong form, yet at the same time it should seem as if the form is created at

the moment of playing. In the tension between these two desired outcomes something happens that cannot be fully predicted. A unique action takes place at a specific point in time, with a certain degree of control. The musician balances the form or style with the spontaneous impulses arising from moment to moment, testing how the spontaneous impulse may influence the playing without losing track of the overall form. The result is a series of unique actions, a specific version of the piece.

What is special about this situation is the complete absence of any desire to resolve the paradox. The paradox between planning and spontaneity cannot be dissolved; it is present whenever music is played. It can, however, be explored. One can try moving towards the extremes or creating different kinds of restrictions which lead to new ways to act. By moving within the paradoxical field we find different ways in which we can handle it. The more differentiation you can find within the possibilities for action, the more specific the charge in the action you actually perform. The experience of tension is the practical exercising of judgment, the state of mind where the appropriateness of an impulse to a particular set of circumstances is tried.

In my playing I take a certain path, the music unfolds in a particular manner. The musical action releases the tension of the paradox, but only for a moment. Something actually happened. Although I might be satisfied, the same path will not produce the same result again. If I play the same piece a second time I have to find a new way, if for no other reason because of the small variations that always come from the body and the fingers. Playing the piece again requires a new kind of movement in the tension field of planning and spontaneity.

This kind of duality in practice is of course not limited to musicians. Already in 1773 Denis Diderot wrote of the relationship of an actors' distanced planning to the immediate emotional expression in *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* (Diderot 1963). Even if an inspired handling of these kind of tension fields is an essential part of the skills of a performing artist, similar tensions can be found whenever the appliance of a skill involves situation-bound performance. Examining the performer's movement between opposing forces and how this affects the performance can be seen as a knowledge-theoretical approach to practical knowledge.

The handling of judgement skills in higher arts educations can contribute a certain type of examples to this discussion. One example is a singing teacher's description of a teacher training course:

The word-pair: "planning/spontaneity" expresses opposites, but they are only of value in interaction with each other. Separated from each other, they lack meaning. Planning without spontaneity becomes wooden and unimaginative, while spontaneous ways of working will fall flat in the absence of line and a coherent idea. Being constantly spontaneous in your meeting with a student will generate uncertainty in the student, who will never develop any frameworks in her work. She will ask herself: where are we going? The quest for technique requires a direction. The same applies to the performance of music. In the absence of knowledge of the idiom (framework), the contours of the spontaneous musical performance will be vague. The spontaneous will be spontaneous only when set against what is bound. Planning, on the other hand, sometimes means that you do not catch the golden opportunities when they come along.

I usually give my methodology students assignments in which they alternate lessons that are planned and conducted according to the plan with lessons that are planned but the plan is not carried through. At other times the assignment is about improvisation departing from the practising student's mood of the day. The purpose is to train you to meet the student at the exact place where he or she is. Only a person with a solid knowledge bank and personal experience – plus a pinch of "wildness" – can dare to improvise and be spontaneous. Wildness in the sense of having the courage not to comply with the convention. (Elmerstad in Åberg 2010b p 117-118)

Another may be a pianist teaching how to play samba:

“When I’m teaching a student to play a samba, for example, I provide not one but several comp figures the student is expected to follow. Three has proved to be a good number. Once the student has learned the accompaniments he can move between the different figures and gradually arrive at something that is not any of them but rather a fusion that forms the student’s own comp. That is usually when it begins to sound like a samba.” (Lars Örbäck in Åberg 2010b p 112)

Music and lyrics

If the relation between planning and spontaneity can be seen as a general tension surrounding practice or performance, there are others that are more or less specific to a particular profession. One example is the relationship between the words of the lyrics and the wordless musical expression which singers, and musicians playing with singers, have to handle.

The images inherent in the music and lyrics respectively are not always so easy to combine in an interpretation. These two modes of experience, which actually activate different faculties of the brain, can easily become opposites.

The semantic meaning of words “disturb” by speaking straight to the intellect, instead of the listener experiencing the purely musical aspects. A song with Russian lyrics is experienced more as music, precisely because the listener does not understand the words. (Åberg 2010b p 110)

The way a composer handles lyrics is different in different styles and époques. A classical singer can be faced with performing pieces as different as an aria by Handel, a Wolf song, Strauss’ *Vier letzte Lieder* and a piece by Luciano Berio, and also perform in a madrigal quartet and even be able to sing a folk song with convincing delivery. Further, each song has its own riddle to solve in what is specific to that particular song. To find a way to present the piece which allows music and lyrics to become a single whole requires the performer to work round the question in different ways.

Kerstin Viberg: You can keep on with a text for such a long time that it becomes part of you. A text you do not understand can be understood if you approach it “from behind”, through a feeling for the musical composition. It is better to take the path through the music to arrive at a more profound interpretation.

Margaretha Elmerstad: Of course, that does not mean that you do not need to understand the literal sense of the language. (Åberg 2010b p 110)

The lyrics can provide rhetorical impulses that may be more or less close to the musical composition. Sometimes it may be liberating to go in the other direction and ‘let the music work’, enjoying the language more as sound than as words. You can then use the experience of working in a purely musical manner back to cast new light upon the rhetorical reading of the lyrics.

The processing of the relationship between music and lyrics does not take place at a conscious level alone.

Kerstin Viberg: If you are working on a contemporary piece, the subtext often does not emerge immediately. You grow into, or sink down into, the piece. You do not start by making an analysis. (Åberg 2010b p 111)

By placing yourself again and again in the situation of handling the tension between music and lyrics, you gradually find a way of dealing with it that works for that particular piece. But the

path is not the same each time. Rather, you establish expectations about what is to happen in this piece, an agreement between musicians and singers about a framework whose limits you then test in playing the piece. It is in the testing of the strength of this agreement that something can happen.

The singer's task is to give the poetic work of art and the musical work of art an interpretation that becomes a third work of art; not only doing justice to the given [...] but also creating an additional dimension. (Sundin in Åberg 2010b p 111)

Music and text are two forces influencing the musician to various degrees, both examined thoroughly in rehearsal. The rehearsal process implies a movement between these two poles, making it possible to make clearer, more specific and hopefully artistically stronger judgements in the moment of performance.

Clarity – truth

Another field present in the teaching room is the balance between clarity and truth. Saying something in the clearest way possible brings with it a limitation to what you convey. By peeling away exceptions and contradictions you can express something relatively clearly and concisely. If you are aware of the total 'environment', then you have a richer picture, a truer picture, but one which cannot be expressed as clearly.

Experience must be translated into language, and in this interpretation you concentrate on a segment of the whole. This segment becomes an example of a way of thinking. Different students need different types of examples. There is a choice in the degree of concreteness in the language used. With time the different approaches and examples the teacher uses may form into a more coherent picture for the student.

Examples are crucial. The difference between an example and an instruction is that the example allows for judgement concerning the relevance of the example to a personal practice. If the student interprets my example as an instruction, I have to take a step back, be less clear, until I can see that the student makes an active evaluation of the examples I can put forth. With time, the student may gain a richer and truer picture of the actions connected to a musical style, one that is based in his or her own judgement rather than following my examples as templates.

Simplicity/complexity

A powerful musical experience is simple, direct, in the moment, in the apprehension of a whole. Playing music is complex. It requires a sophisticated motory function, the ability to handle questions of style, tone colours, rhythm, intonation, emotive charges, aesthetic approaches, and stage awareness. A person who wants to produce the simplest of melodies has a boundless number of possibilities at his disposal. The task of the musician is often to find in the complex a simplicity that is rooted in him and that can be conveyed.

Eva Larsson-Myrsten: If we are speaking about classical music, the simplicity has a lot to do with finding the way through all the notes and finding fixed points for the larger flows. It sounds and feels simpler.

Kerstin Wahlström-Olsson: I would like to say, finding the way past the notes. To something that reflects a simpler reality. (Åberg 2010b p 107-108)

The way towards the "simpler reality" goes through what is complex and detailed. To find the way may be anything but simple, but once you have found it the earlier resistance can melt away.

One can at the same time become fascinated by the complex and strive for the simple, and that may even be how many musical developments take shape. Complexity alone is incomprehensible and simplicity alone is banal. When something feels 'too simple' you have to invent complexity, look closer into the details and the possibility of choice. Musicians who shy away from complexity will deprive themselves of the opportunities that open up through association with the complex.

Breadth /depth

The students the teacher meets have varied previous knowledge and profiles of talent. Musicality is a multifaceted phenomenon; a person who is superb in some aspects can be remarkably weak in others, something that, not least, teachers of ear training can confirm. It isn't always easy to find out what a student actually knows.

Inger Hülphers describes an Indian Sikh, a sitar player she had as an ear-training student in the sixties. She thought that he sang a little off key and had no feeling for tension and resolution. He also had difficulties with rhythm, and it was quite hard work to have him as a student. But then he held a concert. The concert was at a high level, in terms of both pitch and rhythm, and Inger blushed with embarrassment at the thought of the elementary exercises she had given him. (Åberg 2010b p 133)

A student can be fantastic at playing a certain type of piece, have an aptitude for a particular music style. This may be the result of a personal disposition, but also be because the student has been exposed to and become familiar with this particular style of music. The question is: how much work should the teacher do to widen the student's repertoire, and to what extent should the student study more deeply the area he/she is best at?

To succeed in a job market it may be helpful to have some breadth, to be able to accept a number of different types of musical assignments. Having access to several frames of reference may also improve the student's artistry. At the same time, it is the music which the student is closest to, that is the easiest to find a personal depth in, and which may become a profile for the student, making it easier for her to hold her own in the competitive world.

An observation made during the seminars was that it is not always the prodigies who become the most successful musicians.

Anna Lindal: Sometimes you can imagine that it is not entirely certain that this person, who is extremely gifted and goes through this college as if on air, will be able to establish himself in the musical world. The slow process of maturity can produce something that is much stronger, that has had to overcome more instances of resistance. (Åberg 2010b p 126-127)

A person who has had to struggle with his own abilities, wrestle with his self-doubt and really fight to find a way to be a musician, may have a far more stable base to stand on than a person who has always been lionized.

Some students have a strong intuitive ability and can go a long way without feeling any need for a more reflective attitude. But when they meet resistance, their fall is all the harder because they have not developed the ability to deal with resistance.

Anna takes up the subject of the way prodigies often fall flat at their first mistake; their positive intuitive abilities are inadequate and all their selfconfidence drains away. (Åberg 2010b p 127)

The ability to see what something is about, master it and then move on is a particular kind of talent. People who are 'too quick' in that sense run the risk of missing experiences that less gifted people have to confront.

Joakim Milder: There are many different aspects to the way musicality is defined. Many people find the basic elements very easy but have real difficulty in expressing anything. I can imagine a situation where someone actually has real difficulties on both the motory and theoretical levels and may still be profoundly musical. This is perhaps even clearer for improvisers, where it is about formulating a language of one's own.

Many of the very greatest and most respected names took a long time to mature, which also meant that they never stopped being in motion. Many people who are very gifted and are also deeply musical will fall victim to precisely this phenomenon because they are haunted by a kind of tedium at a very early stage. There is no natural resistance to overcome. Even if you don't actually give up the pursuit of music, something will very clearly stagnate. You never become a stronger and more defined musician than you were at the age of seventeen. The students who have the least trouble at this level are the hardest for me to work with as a pedagogue. Resistance is hard to fabricate. (Åberg 2010b p 127)

Resistance invites movement. Struggling with something means you are in motion, attacking from different directions, examining, trying different paths. If you fail to find resistance in what you are doing, you have to find new hunting grounds, new 'kicks', which will in their turn, soon be exhausted. The ability to find fresh resistance in wellknown material is a special kind of gift. To develop it you have to harness the anomalies, the ambiguities, the things you do not understand.

A person who can experience the resistance across its full span may, in one sense, be more gifted than a person who quickly finds a solution. If the most rewarding resistance is to work within a more limited repertory or having a wider array of styles at your disposal is in the end an individual decision, where any standpoint you take will imply some gains and some losses. No individual solution will ever be "right", but looking closely at the range of possibilities at hand will give the student a larger set of potential ways to handle the situation. Assisting in such judgmental decisions is one of the conservatory teachers' most important tasks.

Conclusions

The image of a paradoxical field between opposites may be of use to identify factors of relevance

to a practice without falling into a static prescription of a certain way of handling them. The fields of tension we have examined thus far have some common features:

A paradoxical field extends between extremes, which are, in themselves, inadequate points of departure.

The meaningful actions take place somewhere between the extremities of the field of tension.

Experiencing the charge of the field, looking closely at the complexities involved in practically handling both parameters at the same time, will help finding a richer array of possible actions. Savouring the tensions connected to a situation leads to a heightened awareness to its individual traits. This enhances the possibility of a more specific response to a particular situation.

The image of a field between opposing forces where the practitioner moves may be of help to identify valid aspects which need to be taken into account without locking the practitioner into a specific set of solutions. The goal is not to resolve the tension-field, but to explore it and see what type of action it can bring forth.

The exploration takes place in movement, in a flow of time, in connection with the apprehension of the individual situations' meaning. At a certain point in time the practitioner acts, resolving the insecurity of the paradox into a concrete action. This does not mean that the explorative movement ceases, a new performance requires a new balance.

The reflective movement described here does not necessarily mean going outside the collective thought-style of a profession. The action resulting might not be a novelty, but appropriate. You don't have to play out of style to give a living performance.

But there is also the possibility of giving prominence to an aspect the collective tradition has overlooked, by using the tension of for example text and music in a radically different manner. Much of the practising done by professionals to keep their practical skills alive involve following such impulses and seeing how far they will hold.

One way of introducing new energy into a practice that might have been internalised into more or less repetitive habits is to reactivate the use of analogies. By using another practice as a form of mirror, it may be possible to see new ways of acting in familiar situations and balance in another manner between the different forces at play, inject new energy into the field of tensions. The use of analogies as a departure point for dialogue has been a central feature of the methods used within the Scandinavian tradition of skills research.

The use of language with the aim of developing judgement is different in character from the search for knowledge in the form of definitions, even if such, of course, also have their place in the teaching studio. Being a skilled practitioner in any field includes the ability to act with judgement as the circumstances change. This can be seen as a basic trait of practical knowledge, present in both intellectual and more physical professions. Conceptualizing the role of indirect language, metaphors and analogies in the development of personal judgement may be useful for the artistic practices, as well as for any other practice involving judgmental decisions.

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