

## Working in Music: The Violinist<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** Higher education institutions in the UK are judged partly through the proportion of new graduates gaining salaried posts, but this approach fits conservatoires poorly as portfolio careers are prevalent in music. Using an approach that reflects musicians' work more closely, this paper investigates the careers of 123 violinists who graduated from a conservatoire, considers trends and gender differences, and compares the violinists with 785 peers who specialise in other instruments. Career is modelled using two 'objective' dimensions (time, income) and two 'subjective' dimensions (identity, vision/aspiration). The approach could be used in other contexts, and in fields beyond music.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected mainly through telephone interviews, but also through matched face-to-face interviews or questionnaires where graduates requested this. Like their peers, the violinists successfully build careers in music. The violinists' portfolio careers generally include more performing, and they derive more of their income accordingly, but this difference is less pronounced among recent graduates. Male violinists perform more than female violinists, and derive more of their income accordingly, and this difference is more pronounced among recent graduates. Issues include the match between the conservatoire's curriculum and the world of work in music, whether students take initiative to bridge any gap, and whether the conservatoire could influence the equality of access within the music profession.

**KEY WORDS:** Career, conservatoire, gender, performance, violin

### Introduction

The nine conservatoires in the UK provide a higher education that is vocational for aspiring musicians from the UK and overseas. There are four conservatoires in London, and others in Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds and Manchester. In 2002 a total of 3560 undergraduate and 1414 postgraduate students were registered at the nine conservatoires, and studying for undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, or postgraduate diplomas (FBC 2003). Students enter conservatoires from the age of 18 as specialists in an instrument (including voice) or composition. All the conservatoires offer programmes in western classical music, and eight conservatoires strongly emphasise western classical music within their programmes.

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Entry to the conservatoires is highly competitive, and mainly by audition. Unlike conservatoires in countries including Australia and Sweden, the UK conservatoires do not have special programmes for students who aspire to become teachers. UK conservatoire programmes often include introductory courses in instrumental teaching, but students who wish to achieve 'qualified teacher status', so that they can teach class music in maintained<sup>2</sup> schools must take a further qualification at another institution.

Conservatoire students' programmes are typically based around individual tuition on an instrument or in composition, and are costly to provide. Several of the UK conservatoires receive a higher rate of funding per student from the government (premium funding) and must meet targets in respect of the proportion of alumni who make their careers in music performance (HEFCE, 1998, 2000a). Yet these targets were drafted, of necessity, without knowledge of the shape of conservatoire alumni's careers, and hence without access to benchmarks of what it might be reasonable for a conservatoire to achieve in this respect.

Little has been known, until recently, about the careers of cross-sectional groups of conservatoire alumni. The many biographies and autobiographies of distinguished musicians who studied at UK conservatoires or with conservatoire tutors (e.g. Cleveland-Peck, 1985; du Pré & du Pré, 1997; Kennedy, 1981), and the plethora of anecdotal views about the characteristics and consequences of a conservatoire education (e.g. Pyke, 2002; Woodrow, 2001), form no substitute for such research. The performance indicators relating to graduate careers that are used by the higher education sector in the UK (e.g. HEFCE, 2000b, 2001) are based on full-time permanent salaried posts with a single employer, and this approach does not reflect the realities that many of the most distinguished performers and composers worldwide have never held - and may never have sought - such posts, and also that many musicians working in the UK and beyond have 'portfolio careers' consisting of a range of work of varying duration, at least some of which they have built themselves (Mallon, 1998; Youth Music, 2002).

The investigation reported in this paper draws on an approach to researching the musicians' careers that was developed recently by a UK conservatoire in order to record and evaluate the careers of its alumni, establish the extent to which it meets its targets relating to premium funding (see above), and provide information that it can use to monitor, and where appropriate improve, the quality of education that it provides (Mills, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) (Mills, 2006). This approach moves beyond the notion of career as a sequential list of salaried full-time posts held, and models career in terms of two dimensions of 'objective career':

- the proportion of working time spent on different activities
- the proportion of income derived from these different activities and two dimensions of 'subjective career' (Cochran, 1991; Stebbins, 1970):
- the professional identity of the musician
- the vision, or aspiration, of the musician.

Through dimension 4, in particular, it also reflects the notion of 'career' as a conceptual space in which individuals may make sense of their past and present, and plan their future (Collin & Young, 2000; Young & Valach, 1996).

The approach gathers data mainly through semi-structured telephone interviews (88%),

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<sup>2</sup> The schools that are provided nationally for all children. In the UK, the term 'public schools' denotes independent fee-paying secondary schools, particularly long-established schools for boys such as Eton, Harrow and Winchester.

but also through matched face-to-face interviews (5%) and written questionnaire (7%), where graduates say that they would prefer this. There is no noticeable difference in the instruments played by the graduates who opted to provide data through the three different methods. Neither is there any difference in their gender. Data from all three methods is coded, and cross-checked, identically.

- The approach collects data on the four dimensions for three periods:
- the 5-year period up to an interview (or the completion of a questionnaire)
- the 5-year period that began with graduation from the conservatoire
- any intervening period.

This organisation of data allows quasi-longitudinal analysis of how individuals fared from period a) to period c), historical analysis of how alumni from different years fared during the first five years of their post-conservatoire career, and cross-sectional analysis of how alumni from different years fared over the last five years.

This paper is based on new analysis of a dataset relating to the responses of 908 alumni of the conservatoire, which was drawn upon for an earlier paper that focused on the careers of pianists {Mills, 2006 #404}. Alumni who specialised in piano (n=221) are the most numerous group in this dataset followed by the violinists (n=123) who form the focus of the present paper. While researchers including Davies (1978), Faulkner (1973) and Kemp (1996) have considered some socio-psychological aspects of the life of string players, including violinists, who work in orchestras, the overall career of violinists working in a wider range of contexts remains under-researched. The earlier study reported a vicious circle whereby female conservatoire students:

decide while still at college, and taking instrumental lessons mainly from role models who are male, not to aspire to become conservatoire teachers

perform less than men at the beginning of their career, and then reduce their performing as their careers develop, so that they are less likely than men to acquire the experience needed for appointment to a conservatoire as an instrumental tutor.

### The present study

We ask:

How have the 123 violinists spent their working time over the last five years? How have they derived their income? Do the answers to these questions depend on when they graduated?

How did the 123 violinists spend their working time during the first five years after graduation? How did they derive their income? Are there trends?

Did the 123 violinists' use of working time over the last five years, or during the first five years after graduation, differ from that of their peers, and are there trends?

Did the 123 violinists' division of income over the last five years, or during the first five years after graduation, differ from that of their peers, and are there trends?

Are there gender effects in any of the above?

### Method

Participants were selected as a structured sample from the conservatoire's alumni database. The structuring aimed to ensure a balance of instruments that was similar to the time when a graduate had been an undergraduate. The 908 alumni - including 123 violinists - were interviewed, or filled out questionnaires, between October 2001 and December 2004, having completed their studies between 1936 and 2002.

The study focuses on the first two of the four dimensions of career - the proportion of working time spent on different activities and the division of income between them - and on periods a) and c). For both of these periods, alumni talked descriptively about their work, and then assisted the interviewer in assigning approximate percentages of time and income to each of the activities undertaken. These percentages were later coded under the following nine headings: performing, teaching music, composing, examining music, music study, music research, music administration, other music, not music. Alumni also answered other questions, including one relating to any barriers that they felt had obstructed their career.

Descriptive statistics relating to 91 variables that arose overall were calculated. When considering trends, the sample was divided into four 'decades' consisting of roughly equal groups of alumni who graduated up to 1970, 1971-80, 1981-90, or 1991-2002 respectively. While the first 'decade' spans a period of 35 years (1936-70), only 12 of its 191 alumni graduated before 1960. Qualitative data were also collected as interview notes and written comments on questionnaires. Researchers 'zoomed in' (Mills, 1999) on particularly pertinent data in the 908 qualitative reports available through reading the reports of a structured sub-sample of 43 violinists (22 males, 21 females) for references to the contexts (e.g. orchestral) in which alumni were working, and equal opportunity issues including gender. The structuring aimed to make the sample representative in terms of gender, and the decade of study.

### Results

Tables 1 to 10 summarise the percentages of alumni's working time spent on, and income derived from, different activities during the most recent five years, and the first five years, of their careers. Only three activities - performing, teaching and 'not music' - occupied more than 5% of the working time of the violinists, or their peers, during either period. For simplicity the other six activities - composing, examining music, music study, music research, music administration, and other music, were omitted from the table, and are not reported upon in this paper.

Over the last five years, the violinists spent more time performing, and less time teaching, than their peers. They also derived proportionately more income from performing (see Table 1).

This pattern is shared also by graduates of each of the first three decades (see Tables 2 to 4, below).

**Table 1: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1936 and 2002): percentage of working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music.**

	All violinists (n=123)	Non-violinists (n=785)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	51.28 (40.47)	39.63 (37.67)
Performing income	52.54 (42.13)	38.81 (39.01)
Teaching time	26.15 (33.37)	34.2 (35.43)
Teaching income	28.89 (36.36)	35.77(37.37)
Not music time	13.64 (32.22)	12.59 (30.5)
Not music income	12.57 (32.22)	13.69 (31.82)

**Table 2: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1936 and 1970): percentage working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=21)	Non-violinists (n=170)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	43.81(42.8)	30.61 (35.31)
Performing income	47.33(44.46)	26.99 (35.3)
Teaching time	24.76 (32.27)	42.06 (37.42)
Teaching income	24.1 (32.85)	42.44 (39.51)
Not music time	25 (41.71)	13.19 (30.26)
Not music income	23.57 (39.97)	17.78 (33.9)

**Table 3: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1971 and 1980): percentage working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=22)	Non-violinists (n=184)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	74 (36.82)	38.19 (38.16)
Performing income	74.9 (38.30)	38.75 (40.19)
Teaching time	19.4 (32.98)	32.17 (35.33)
Teaching income	22.36 (35.76)	34.32 (38.27)
Not music time	0	14.34 (32.24)
Not music income	0	15.20 (33.64)

**Table 4: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1981 and 1990): percentage working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=48)	Non-violinists (n=209)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	47.96 (39.60)	41.02 (37.44)
Performing income	50.90 (41.52)	41.54 (39.28)
Teaching time	31.54 (36.83)	35.76 (36)
Teaching income	34.44 (39.07)	36.65 (37.4)
Not music time	13.23 (31.87)	12.26 (30.98)
Not music income	11.46 (31.35)	11.23 (30.3)

However, the violinists who graduated between 1991 and 2002 performed less, and taught less, than their peers.

**Table 5: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1991 and 2002): percentage working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=32)	Non-violinists (n=222)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	45.53 (38.9)	46.41 (38.01)
Performing income	43.06 (40.4)	45.31 (38.71)
Teaching time	23.61 (28.88)	28.37 (32.29)
Teaching income	28.2 (35.11)	31.08 (34.26)
Not music time	16.17 (34.62)	10.99 (28.8)
Not music income	15.64 (34.1)	11.66 (29.8)

During the first five years after leaving college, the violinists spent more time performing, and less time teaching, than their peers. They derived correspondingly more income from performing, and less from teaching (see Table 6, below).

**Table 6: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1936 and 2002): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=123)	Non-violinists (n=785)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	64.24 (39.35)	49.15 (38.54)
Performing income	63.86 (41.12)	48.07 (39.87)
Teaching time	22.28 (32.16)	33.39 (35.34)
Teaching income	24.67 (36.11)	36.82 (37.91)
Not music time	5.39 (17.6)	7.25 (22.89)
Not music income	5.61(19.69)	7.47 (23.96)

**Table 7: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1936 and 1970): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=21)	Non-violinists (n=170)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	72.62 (42.27)	43.36 (40.1)
Performing income	70.90 (44.99)	43.26 (41.83)
Teaching time	27.38 (42.27)	45.82 (40)
Teaching income	29.1 (44.99)	48.87 (41.99)
Not music time	0	3.56 (16.75)
Not music income	0	2.60 (15.12)

**Table 8: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1971 and 1980): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=22)	Non-violinists (n=184)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	78.95 (36.43)	50.11 (39.57)
Performing income	80.91(37.02)	49.88 (40.95)
Teaching time	16.95 (34.49)	31.11 (35.76)
Teaching income	19.09 (37.02)	34.45 (38.41)
Not music time	0	7.36 (23.32)
Not music income	0	8.25 (25.62)

**Table 9: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1981 and 1990): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=48)	Non-violinists (n=209)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	59.12 (40.8)	53.44 (39.35)
Performing income	60 (41.4)	51.92 (40.31)
Teaching time	18.63 (26.58)	31.94 (34.87)
Teaching income	21.17 (31.77)	34.71 (37.16)
Not music time	8.08 (20.69)	5.66 (20.81)
Not music income	9.26 (25.75)	6.15 (22.46)

This pattern is found also among graduates of each of the first three decades (see Tables 7 to 9). An interpretation of this is that the difference in the ways that violinists and their peers use their working time is most striking soon after graduation. The violinists who graduated between 1991 and 2002 performed and taught more than their peers (see Table 10, below). An interpretation of this is that the difference in the ways that violinists and their peers use their working time has diminished in recent years.

**Table 10: Violinists and non-violinists (alumni between 1991 and 2002): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	All violinists (n=32)	Non-violinists (n=222)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	56.3 (34.81)	48.78 (35.23)
Performing income	53.17 (37.98)	46.63 (36.71)
Teaching time	28.08 (30.78)	27.11 (29.01)
Teaching income	30.73 (35.58)	31.54 (32.89)
Not music time	8.59 (22.55)	11.5 (27.49)
Not music income	7.81 (21.48)	11.82 (28.37)

Over the last five years, male violinists performed more, taught less, and undertook less ‘not music’ than female violinists. They derived correspondingly more income from performing, and less from teaching (see Table 11, below).

**Table 11: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1936 and 2002): percentage of working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=50)	Female violinists (n=73)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	64.62(38.8)	42.14 (39.27)
Performing income	66.22 (39.7)	43.18 (41.42)
Teaching time	17 (27.58)	32.42 (35.65)
Teaching income	17.06 (28.06)	36.99 (39.25)
Not music time	6.8 (23.34)	18.32 (36.53)
Not music income	8.76 (25.05)	15.17 (35.09)

This pattern is found among graduates of each decade (see Tables 12 to 14, below), and particularly among violinists who graduated between 1991 and 2002 (see Table 15, below).

**Table 12: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1936 and 1970): percentage of working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=14)	Female violinists (n=7)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	51.07 (44.08)	29.29 (39.1)
Performing income	49.93 (45.95)	42.14 (44.33)
Teaching time	22.86 (29.4)	28.57 (39.66)
Teaching income	21.5 (30.48)	29.29 (39.2)
Not music time	16.43 (34.11)	42.14 (52.59)

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Not music income	21.07 (36.59)	28.57 (48.8)
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**Table 13: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1971 and 1980): percentage of working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=8)	Female violinists (n=14)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	89.38 (18.21)	65.21 (42.23)
Performing income	95.63 (7.29)	63.07 (43.89)
Teaching time	1.25 (3.54)	29.79 (37.83)
Teaching income	1.88 (3.72)	34.07 (40.65)
Not music time	0	0
Not music income	0	0

During the first five years after leaving college, male violinists performed more, taught less, and earned more from performing than female violinists (see Table 16, next page)

**Table 14: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1981 and 1990): percentage of working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=13)	Female violinists (n=35)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	58.38 (39.2)	44.09 (39.6)
Performing income	63 (37.48)	46.4 (42.55)
Teaching time	25.92 (35.05)	33.63 (37.71)
Teaching income	25.15 (33.36)	37.89 (40.9)
Not music time	7.69 (27.74)	15.29 (33.41)
Not music income	7.69 (27.74)	12.86 (32.86)

**Table 15: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1991 and 2002): percentage of working time in most recent five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=15)	Female violinists (n=17)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	69.47 (37.27)	24.41 (26.55)
Performing income	68.53 (39.38)	20.59 (25.72)
Teaching time	12.2 (22.95)	33.68 (30.42)
Teaching income	14 (26.64)	40.74 (37.56)
Not music time	0.67 (2.58)	29.85 (43.5)
Not music income	2.87 (7.68)	26.91 (43.75)

**Table 16: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1936 and 2002): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=50)	Female violinists (n=73)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	75.95 (34.49)	56.21 (40.66)
Performing income	74.52 (37.03)	56.45 (42.42)
Teaching time	14.55 (25.95)	27.58 (34.99)
Teaching income	18.28 (32.10)	29.1 (38.24)
Not music time	3.6 (14.81)	6.61(19.29)
Not music income	3.1 (13.59)	7.36 (22.94)

Similarly, this pattern is particularly striking among violinists who graduated between 1991 and 2002 (see Tables 17 to 20, below). An interpretation of this is that the extent to which male violinists perform more than female violinists, at the beginning of their careers and as their careers develop, has increased in recent years.

**Table 17: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1936 and 1970): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=14)	Female violinists (n=7)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	81.07 (35.47)	55.71 (52.23)
Performing income	78.5 (40.84)	55.71 (52.24)
Teaching time	18.93 (35.47)	44.29 (52.24)
Teaching income	21.5 (40.84)	44.29 (52.24)
Not music time	0	0
Not music income	0	0

**Table 18: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1971 and 1980): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=8)	Female violinists (n=14)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	86.25 (31.60)	74.79 (39.43)
Performing income	87.50 (31.51)	77.14 (40.46)
Teaching time	12.50 (31.51)	19.50 (36.99)
Teaching income	12.50 (31.51)	22.86 (40.46)
Not music time	0	0
Not music income	0	0

**Table 19: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1981 and 1990): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=13)	Female violinists (n=35)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	64.67 (39.75)	57.06 (41.56)
Performing income	63.08 (41.27)	58.82 (42.01)
Teaching time	15.33 (18.1)	19.86 (29.24)
Teaching income	22.69 (31.77)	20.59 (32.23)
Not music time	6.15 (22.19)	8.8 (20.39)
Not music income	6.15 (22.19)	10.44 (27.20)

Some female violinists volunteered during interviews that they felt disadvantaged as performers through their sex. In 1969 an alumna (1964<sup>3</sup>) had formed a group within her trade union to fight sexism, as women in her orchestra were not permitted to make recordings or to tour. She felt that some, less overt, forms of sexism remained, and said that her aspiration (dimension 4) was ‘to continue playing and to fight against sexism.’ Another woman (1990) stated that men are sometimes paid more than women to undertake the same freelance performance work.

More usually, women spoke of family responsibilities not mixing with performing, particularly in orchestras. One alumna (1972) resigned her orchestral post on becoming engaged to be married. Another alumna (1983) had decided, when a student, not to audition for orchestras, as she wanted to have children. A third alumna (1986) had resigned her orchestral post on becoming a mother, and accepts freelance work with several orchestras, so that she only needs to perform at weekends. A fourth alumna (1977) resigned an orchestral post on becoming pregnant with her second child.

**Table 20: Male and female violinists (alumni between 1991 and 2002): percentage of working time in first five years spent on, and income derived from performing, teaching, outside music**

	Male violinists (n=15)	Female violinists (n=17)
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Performing time	75.47 (30.6)	39.38 (29.66)
Performing income	73.8 (32.58)	34.97 (33.38)
Teaching time	10.87 (19.34)	43.26 (31.38)
Teaching income	14.53 (25.16)	45.03 (37.88)
Not music time	6.67 (17.59)	10.29 (26.6)
Not music income	5 (14.01)	10.29 (26.6)

None of the men mentioned family responsibilities in their interviews. However, two did feel disadvantaged by inequality of opportunity. An alumnus (1999) who had played in an orchestra for new graduates for a year, but then found performance work hard to come by, observed: “In TV and pop groups all the work is for women. It is hard to get a job

<sup>3</sup> Bracketed dates are graduation dates.

when you are a man." An alumnus (1954) with a distinguished orchestral career said that he had nevertheless been disadvantaged through not being a freemason.

Some women had chosen to balance the dual responsibilities of mother and orchestral violinist: "It is not an easy schedule to combine with a family - though mine have got used to it (1979)." One mother (1986) was a longstanding co-leader.

Moreover, not all women wanted to play in orchestras. An alumna (1999) spoke of deliberately reducing her proportion of performance to 50%, because she found orchestral work boring, and of opening an academy in her region of Ireland, as she found teaching more fulfilling: "Every child has something new to teach you." Conversely some women, and some men, had moved into orchestral work after several years of a more varied existence. And there were men and women who had sought orchestral posts on leaving college, but had auditioned for some years before obtaining one.

## Conclusions

This study has shown that, while violinists continue to build careers in music, their lead in obtaining more performance work than their peers has been eroded in recent years. This erosion is particularly at the expense of female violinists.

How has this happened? Sex discrimination against individuals in the field of employment has been illegal in the UK since 1975. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether women now generally find it harder than men to obtain performance work that they seek, or whether they are deciding that they wish to pursue other avenues. If it is the former, and individual women are failing to obtain work in favour of individual men who are no more competent, then this is an issue for the trade unions and the courts. If it is the latter, then conservatoires need to ensure, through their curriculum, that women and men have equal access to careers in performance when they graduate. This may mean taking deliberate action to ensure that any gender stereotyping of career roles in music is countered. Either way, the curriculum followed by string players needs to prepare students for today's working world.

When writing on the development of expertise in any field, Bransford (2000) distinguishes between 'answer-filled experts' whose approach is totally specialised, and 'accomplished novices' who hone their expertise by continually seeking new opportunities to learn. Similarly, Engeström (2001) distinguishes between restrictive and expansive learning. While Bransford and Engeström both take pains not to portray 'accomplished novices' or expansive learning, respectively, as good, and 'answer-filled experts' and restrictive learners, respectively, as bad, earlier research (Mills, 2004b) has shown that successful western classical performers aim to be expansive learners as they master new repertoire, and keep their existing repertoire alive. Conservatoire students have a reputation as 'answered-filled experts' and restrictive learners, who eschew learning opportunities that are not obviously beamed towards a concert platform (see Pike, 2002; Woodrow 2001). Of course, this is not wholly true. There are students who are 'accomplished novices' and expansive learners. Yvette is just one such student:

*Yvette, an undergraduate violinist, already has a degree in language, gained in France. She discovered an electric violin, untouched for several years, in the conservatoire's instrumental collection, borrowed it, and has begun to include jazz improvisations in some of her recital programmes. She volunteered for placements in secondary schools, working alongside class teachers, and one led to an opportunity to accompany the school's educational visit to*

*Prague. It led also to an opportunity to work, with a conservatoire piano student, in another school on a weeklong programme of educational activities including class teaching and community workshops, and that culminated in a public recital.*

As a classical violinist, Yvette is as competent as her peers, but she also has other skills, and an open approach to learning. The conservatoire has not stood in Yvette's way as she has expanded the range, scope and relationship of her learning. As Yvette starts to contribute to the Working in Music research, a few years after she graduates, we will be able to assess how successful, in her terms, her undergraduate learning has been.

Ironically, by doing this, students may also prepare themselves more effectively for the traditional concert platform. A study of the careers of alumni who have returned to the conservatoire as instrumental teachers, alongside a distinguished career in performance (Mills, 2004b), found them continually honing their expertise by seeking new opportunities to learn, and with a career record of pushing out the frontiers of music and contemporary music making.

The challenges for the conservatoire include that of making these findings more readily available to its staff and students.

Further research has already begun. It includes analyses of Working in Music data that focus on other instruments and experiment with other methodologies. It includes also a four year project - Learning to Perform: Instrumentalists and Instrumental Teachers - funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme of ESRC, that aims to model students' learning over the five years from their entry to the college, until the end of their first year as a graduate.

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