Five Stories from Post-Professional Musicians

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ABSTRACT

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Many professional musicians change careers, and yet there is little research on this topic. The experiences of post-professional musicians are largely unknown, their stories untold and uncelebrated. Informed by phenomenology, this dissertation explores the experiences of professional musicians who leave successful careers as performing artists. It looks at the challenges, beauty and complexity of their musical life stories. Out of this phenomenological inquiry, the mystery of composing a new life story emerges. Guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, this inquiry centers on story-crafting as a means of allowing meaning to reveal itself, while affirming the role of the inquirer in the story crafting process. Central to this study are the ways in which encounters with its insights occur and are held in a state of wonder.

The semi-structured phenomenological interview serves as the primary source of data collection. A digital journal functions as a secondary source. The role of the researcher is accounted for through movement within the hermeneutic circle. It is here that the effect of both the inquirer's fore-sights / fore-conceptions, ranging from personal biases to knowledge of the literature, and presence (*Dasein* – being there) are addressed. Data exploration (analysis) and reflection (synthesis) are approached through nuanced readings for apparent insights in which the essence of the phenomenon might reveal itself. Study findings are rendered through five musical

life stories. In addition, a general narrative forms a composite description of all five stories, and a general description relays the structure of the composite experience.

Findings reveal that all five participants experienced successful careers as professional musicians, while simultaneously maintaining interests in other endeavors. Considerations that moved them toward a decision to leave their music careers varied: from health or physiological challenges to the desire to increase earning potential or from a growing sense of fatigue relative to the effort required to remain competitive to a sense of having accomplished everything anyone in a music career could reasonably expect to accomplish. Another consideration for some of them centered on a sense of restlessness and no longer feeling sufficiently challenged. Once established in a new career, all became once again successful, as evidenced by fast career trajectory and increased earning potential. All participants have made a new post-performance life defined largely by music-listening and inter-arts engagement. For the most part, they no longer play their primary instrument. With one exception, when they do make music, it is on their secondary instrument, and it is non-performative, meditative, participatory or for leisure. They have lived their dreams of becoming and being a professional musician and find themselves now living out the realization of a new dream.

Summary reflections consider the costs of building, maintaining and leaving a music career and the benefits of setting clear intentions in the context of leisure music making. Recommendations center on questions for music educators and topics for related future study. They imagine a more dynamic role of composing a musical life story throughout a music educative experience.

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DEDICATION

To Diane,
the first profound voice in my musical life story.
May your memory be eternal.

To Maria Teresa,
my greatest teacher.
May your memory be eternal.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is inspired by the phenomenon of post-professional musicians. Career change is increasingly common (Nalis, Kubicek, & Korunka, 2021, pp. 1-3), and while career change of any sort can be of interest, given the rapid pace of technological advancement that renders certain skill sets obsolete while demanding new ones, the attention of this dissertation is on career change of professional musicians. The quality of investment in a music career is notable, even singular (Frenette & Dowd, 2020, pp. 3-5). Manifesting a competitive edge as a professional musician requires intensive training that commonly begins more than a decade prior to post-secondary study (Bennet, 2012, pp. 64-65). In many cases, it begins in pre-school. By early adolescence, pre-professional musicians have very often already identified early career steps and embarked upon them. Formation of this kind demands discipline and consistency in applied lessons, personal practice and a variety of unfolding musical experiences. The further one progresses, the deeper invested in time, resources and network they become, and the more refined their expertise grows. Leaving for an altogether new endeavor is then an important shift and achievement itself (Nalis et al., 2021, pp. 8-9).

Inclusive of post-professional musicians' self-authored lives, musical and otherwise, this dissertation enters the phenomenon of post-professional musicians' experiences. Post-professional musicians are individuals who previously sustained a career as a performing concert musician and who now have a different career. The journey of a post-professional musician into, through and out of; now on the other side of a life as a professional musician, renders a compelling arch of a musical life story. The composing of such a story offers unique insights into

the phenomenon at hand, especially as relates to the ways in which a musical life is parsed across a variety of contexts and identities. Self-authorship accompanies this process. First articulated by psychologist Robert Kegan (1994), self-authorship is "an internal identity […] that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states of mind" (p. 185). Kegan describes a complex capacity for knowing in which these elements are distinguished as parts in relation to a new whole – that of a "complex system for organizing experience" (1994, p. 185). This new whole achieves personal authority by authoring its own parts (Kegan, 1994, p. 185). In practical terms, self-authorship researcher Baxter Magolda (2008) characterizes self-authorship as "a developmental capacity that helps meet the challenges of adult life" and building on Kegan's (1994) concept of achieving personal authority defines it more specifically as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (p. 269).

This internal, psychological state of self-authorship is facilitated by the very act of life story telling. Psychologist and educator Jerome Bruner puts it this way: "we seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of narrative" (2004, p. 692). The defining of "beliefs, values, identity, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 56) relative to one's life story creates a reciprocity. Again, Bruner: "[…] the mimesis between life so-called and narrative is a two-way affair: that is to say just as art imitates life in Aristotle's sense, so, in Oscar Wilde's, life imitates art" (2004, p. 692). This two-way imitation itself invites interpretation. Cultural anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson champions a multiplicity of life story interpretations (2004, p. 214). For Bateson, this freedom in telling and making sense of discontinuities offers the individual the ability to bridge superficial changes, stay the course, maintain commitments and cultivate capacity for translation (2004, p. 215). The research of this

dissertation embraces multiplicity, both in its tracing of participant stories and a variety of facets within those stories.

Narrative

From the age of five, my educative and musical experiences manifested unconventionally. For me, K-12 learning was experience-, project-based and fostered a sense of openness to a diversity of endeavors and a freedom to follow creative career paths. Many of the interests I possessed at age 18 remain with me today. In addition to music, visual art, architecture, literature, philosophy, psychology and business continue to hold my attention in amateur ways and are sources of joy. Unclear to me as a college freshman majoring in Piano Performance was the extent to which my decision to follow a path in Music would impact the span of my life story. I wanted only to keep near the passion in which I had most heavily invested. I simultaneously experienced a lack of clarity and guidance in relation to other career path possibilities. I knew I wanted to keep music and music-making close and in the forefront of my identity. The possibility of pursuing other interests in the future seemed promising.

After completing a Bachelor of Music, the next part of my education included a Master of Music in Piano Pedagogy and Performance. Thereafter, I felt like a professional musician, and I began acting like one too, giving recitals, gigging and teaching. My aim was not to become a concert pianist, but my love of music – making it, sharing it, living it – kept me on its path.

This part of my self-authored story is not unique to me: many music professionals share it. Possibly unique to my story is the way in which I currently parse my career in Music, distinguishing between my work/identity as a music educator and my activity/identity as a musician. These lived identities are, in part, responses to economic realities and matters of

personal preference, but they also have integrity as sources of wisdom. As a music educator, I am formally associated with the field of music insofar as I make a living as both a college adjunct faculty member and independent teaching artist. As a musician, however, I have consciously repositioned what music-making means to me, how it defines or claims me… how I identify with it. I no longer perform or gig for remuneration. I play music that interests me in contexts that are meaningful to me. I have repositioned music from a strictly professional space to a flourishing space, in the Aristotelian sense of the contemplative life and happiness (340 BCE/2009, pp. 192-198). As a result, my activity/identity as a musician lands in a third space, touching my professional and non-professional lives. Professionally, it supports my teaching-artist and college faculty member work/identity. Non-professionally, it enriches my personal life, my social life, my flourishing life – spaces in which I am free of professional obligation, expectation and scrutiny. I have established this balance by setting clear intentions. I believe my arrangement is uncommon, as the de facto practice I have observed within our profession engages teaching and administrative responsibilities at the expense of personal music making. It is likely the case that the lack of clear intention regarding a defined personal musical life in relation to one's larger music education profession is itself responsible for this de facto practice.

My musical life story includes an ongoing development of my work/identity as a music educator and my activity/identity as a musician. The story of many other professional musicians is one of total career change. What I share with those who changed careers completely is a change in my relationship to my instrument and a change to my identity as a professional musician. A shift in performer status accounts for these shared changes, as I moved into, through and out of identification as a performer without having myself sustained a performing career.

Background

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) conducts annual surveys of arts graduates, collecting data on the nature of their careers. Project researchers make the data available in annual reports. Drawing on reports of three recent years, Frenette et al. (2020) identified 52,315 arts alumni, including musicians, in their 30s and found that more than one quarter (14,267, nearly 27 percent) who sustained careers in the arts had left (p. 7). They found the primary reasons for the career change to be large amounts of student debt and a disconnect between skills acquired during undergraduate school and those required in arts careers (Frenette et al., 2020, p. 27). Frenette et al. (2020) issued a call for more research to explore "how artists experience the dilemma to 'stay' or 'leave' and how this dilemma informs and is shaped by one's identity" (p. 27). The research I have conducted for this dissertation, exploring the phenomenon of post-professional musicians' experiences, includes an answer to this call and an elucidation of this dilemma.

Problem Statement

The experiences of post-professional musicians are largely unknown, their stories untold and uncelebrated (Frenette et al., 2020). The fact that their stories are largely unknown suggests a lack of interest within the field of music education, regarding experiences of professional musicians who deviate from the traditional path. A simply lack of interest at best; at worst, a quiet taboo. The reasons for this lack of curiosity and possible taboo are worth examination. Post-professional musicians are individuals who devoted large amounts of time and resources to invest themselves in a career they no longer inhabit (Bennet, 2012). Further, as two- and three-career lives become increasingly common, the musical lives composed by musicians who grow

into, through and out of a professional life become more intricate (Bateson, 2004, Bennet, 2012, Frenette et al., 2020). Therefore, more research is needed to investigate this elusive phenomenon. The research taken up in this dissertation aims to illuminate the phenomenon of post-professional musicians' experiences.

Purpose Statement

Informed by phenomenology, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore the experiences of post-professional musicians – to know and tell their stories. Study participants are five post-professional musicians who each left successful careers as performers. All are instrumentalists who share the following experiences:

1. Obtained both an undergraduate and graduate degree in music – at least one of which included a major in performance
2. Performed as a professional musician for at least three years
3. Changed careers by going back to school for a degree in another field or by securing the necessary licensure, certification or training in another field
4. Worked in their new career for at least one year

Research Question

What are the experiences of post-professional musicians?

Research Methodology Overview

I explore this research question through phenomenological inquiry. Lived experience is central to phenomenology and stems from German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) understanding of *lebenswelt* – life-world. He describes life-world as "[…] the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced

and experienceable – our everyday life-world (*lebenswelt*)" (1936/1970, p. 49). Phenomenology is then well-suited to my study of post-professional musicians' lived experiences.

Researcher Role

The study of others' lived experiences is suited to **hermeneutic phenomenology** in particular, primarily because the inquirer's relationship to the data is taken into account and itself a feature of the inquiry. German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) developed the modern understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology. Its primary features include *Dasein*, fore-sight / fore-conception and the hermeneutic circle.

Dasein, literally being-there (*Da-sein)*, relates to the temporal study of human existence. Rather than offering a definition, Heidegger (1927/1962) describes it as "an expression of its Being (*als reiner Seinsausdruck*)" (p. 33). The presence itself of the investigator shapes the process of exploring a phenomenon. Within this reality exists the inquirer's preconceived knowledge, identified by Heidegger as fore-sight / fore-conception. He characterizes it as "grounded in *something we have in advance*" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 191). The inquirer acknowledges and engages their fore-sight / fore-conception by way of the hermeneutic circle. Heidegger (1927/1962) describes the hermeneutic circle as "the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself" (p. 195). Hermeneutics philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) emphasizes the interpretive process within the hermeneutic circle: "[...] interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection is the movement of understanding and interpretation" (1960/1975, p. 236). The hermeneutic phenomenologist then works within the tension of existing knowledge, shaped by the literature and all manner of internal inclinations, and unknown, covered insights. These insights present themselves through the process of interpretation as revision, realized by the

hermeneutic circle. This process is repeatedly engaged, as the inquirer visits and re-visits the relationship of their shifting knowledge to the phenomenon.

The role of story and story-crafting is a critical component of the present study. Contemporary phenomenologists Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe (2017) highlight the closeness of the hermeneutic phenomenologist's relationship to the data and its interpretation. Consequently, they champion the notion that the inquirer's crafting of stories from the data (e.g., interview transcripts) is a productive way of communicating the essence of a phenomenon: "[...] the story's role is to gift insights into human experience from which we can all learn" (Crowther et al., 2017, p. 833). Philosopher and phenomenologist Max van Manen stresses stories' capacity for revealing a phenomenon. They are able to show a range of possible human experiences we would otherwise not experience, expanding "our normal existential landscape by creating *possible worlds*" (van Manen, 1990, p. 70). Essential to any phenomenological inquiry and at any stage of the process is the inquirer's state of wonder. van Manen elaborates:

> Phenomenological research begins with wonder at what gives itself and how something gives itself. It can only be pursued while surrendering to a state of wonder. A phenomenological question explores what is given in moments of prereflective, prepredicative experience – experiences as we live through them. Phenomenology aims to grasp the exclusively singular aspects (identity/essence/otherness) of a phenomenon or event. (2016, p. 27)

The inquiry of this dissertation aims to invite a state of wonder and affirm the role of story in revealing a phenomenon.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Informed by phenomenology, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore the experiences of post-professional musicians – to know and tell their stories. The aim of my literature review is three-fold. First, it surveys literature that gives insight into critical social experiences of post-professional musicians. These experiences relate to the music conservatory, along with the nature of the music it conserves, and the role of talent. They additionally relate to career change and the impact of lifelong learning. Second, keeping in mind the variety of musical experiences shared by post-professional musicians, this review touches on formative and strong experiences with music, presentational and participatory music making and leisure music. The final part of this survey means to illuminate the process of storying one's life across chapters of change and moments of pivot, including the development of the self into, through and out of a professional music career. To this end, knowledge of self-authorship, life-story and narrative are key.

The Music Conservatory and Talent

Interested in the conservatory as a cultural system, Henry Kingsbury conducted an ethnographic study of a well-known American conservatory of music he identifies by the pseudonym Eastern Metropolitan Conservatory of Music (EMCM). This study is "of a cultural idiom, produced by and in a […] configuration of social production" that includes the exalted composer, the highly trained performer who adheres to the composer's hallowed texts, the anonymous audience, musicologists, music critics and the formalized one-to-one teacher-student

relationship (Kingsbury, 1988, pp. 17-18). Having highlighted the professional nature of the conservatory, Kingsbury (1988) compares it to a seminary – a sacred site – and characterizes its training as "an inculcation of devotion" more than career preparation (p. 19). Calling attention to the fact that only a small number of conservatory graduates succeed in careers as full-time performers, he identifies the primary orientation of conservatory faculty and administrators as "directly to the maintenance of the institution of the conservatory itself" (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 57). Even though the fact that career-success will be enjoyed by relatively few graduates is obvious to faculty and administrators, all students experience training characterized by both professionalism and devotion.

Talent, Kingsbury (1988) found, plays a large role in conservatory life, and while it is "widely understood as a form of potential, as is illustrated by the fact that it is frequently contrasted conceptually with an actual skill," he treats it as "a cultural representation" (p. 62). Understanding it as "a cultural symbol," Kingsbury (1988) suggests that talent is something attributed to someone by others (p. 79). In this light, talent reveals an arbitrary reality, lending itself to debate: possessed by whom and in what amounts? "Musical 'talent' is not God's truth, but neither is it hocus-pocus" (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 79). For the professional musician, both managing and leveraging this cultural symbol of talent is a continual preoccupation. Strategies for doing so center on maintaining consistent, peak performance and include concerns that range from public reviews to personal branding.

Observations of a master teacher revealed a musicality-technique binary. An accurate representation of many conservatory teachers, the teacher Kingsbury (1988) observed understood musicality as expressivity and feeling, technique as the configuration of physical movements and musicality's opposite and the mediation of these two opposing forces as the primary obligation

of the performer (p. 98). Above all, he expected performers to simultaneously respect the score and play with feeling (Kingsbury, 1988, p. 95). Rather than a creative process, these prescribed ways of engaging with music appear to be imitations of creativity and an acting out of a literal understanding of *conservatory* as a place for conservation of musical work.

Public performances functioned as pinnacle student experiences, especially solo recitals given in partial fulfillment of music degrees, and Kingsbury (1988) found students' preparation for these formal events to be stress- and anxiety-inducing, often fraught with tension and fear (pp. 126-129). Kingsbury (1988) characterizes the solo music recital as a ritual, in the sense that it formally separates the soloist from the audience, creating an "emotionally charged or sacralized social distance" and necessitates "individual accountability" whereby the performer is expected to exhibit performance propriety and technical prowess, "all while giving evidence of a genuinely intimate interpretation of musical texts, which themselves can to a great extent be viewed as 'sacred'" (pp. 115-116). To the student-performer, these events are high-stakes, and the process of preparing for them is very often unenjoyable – a sharp contrast to the nature of recreational music making. Reflecting on the larger context of his study, Kingsbury (1988) offers the following:

> Characterizing music in terms of a cultural system provides a corrective for the idea that music is an objective and phenomenal reality of the natural world. Such a characterization focuses on the fact that the nature of a musical system is neither closed nor formal, nor governed solely by its own internal laws or rules, but rather is modified, maintained, and reproduced in the varied contexts of an ongoing flow of symbolic action. (p. 182)

Within this cultural system, the aspiring professional musician finds the conservatory to be the first of many such varied contexts of symbolic action they will come to experience in their careers.

Bruno Nettl (1995) offers four perspectives of music conservatories: religious system, music school society, venue for meeting of all musics and spaces of repertoire interpretation (p. 5). Versed in Kingsbury's work, Nettl contextualizes his notions of ritual and the sacred by similarly advancing the religious system metaphor. A quasi-religious system, Nettl (1995) observes, is an obvious perspective, when we imagine the canonized Western classical composers as the pantheon, their carefully preserved notated music as sacred texts, musicians who perform and teach their music a kind of priesthood, the students who study the same music as followers and devotees, concerts as a sort of ritual and the music itself as the deity (p. 15). He writes:

> Here are intriguing concepts such as genius, discipline, efficiency, the hierarchical pyramid of musics and composers, the musician as stranger and outsider, the wonders of complexity, the stimulus of innovation, and music as a great thing with metaphorical extensions. But we are also forced to suggest dictatorship conformity, a rigid class structure, overspecialization, and a love of mere bigness are all explicitly or by implication extolled. (Nettl, 1995, p. 42)

From a music school-society perspective, Nettl (1995) identifies three classes – student, teacher, administrator – and underscores the role class structure plays "in determining who plays with whom and what roles each class may occupy" (p. 50). He elaborates: "…it is important also that all three classes may be active in public performance, play the same repertory, and live together with sometimes rigid, sometimes imprecise boundaries" (Nettl, 1995, p. 50). From these three groups, Nettl (1995) makes comparisons to industry or corporations, noting the transactional nature of the interactions between and across these groups, particularly as they relate to the public, "real world" (pp. 50-52).

Taking the perspective of the School of Music as a venue for the meeting of all musics, Nettl (1995) offers a metaphor of concentric circles, with Western classical music – "*central repertory*" he calls it – at the center (p. 84). Moving from the center outward, Nettl (1995)

identifies the following: 1. *New Music,* characterized by its niche existence whereby the "composers, performers, and listeners […] are the same people;" 2. *Jazz,* when performed at the school of music, most often big-band jazz, rendered within a Western classical ethos; 3. *Ethnic Music,* "[…] directed to a particular audience comprised of members of an ethnic or racial group or of a social or political movement […];" 4. *Exotic Music,* non-Western music usually performed by student groups; 5. *Early Music,* usually understood as medieval, Renaissance, and early Baroque, often performed on period instruments and even in period attire; and 6. *Untouchable Music,* rock and country, rarely found in schools of music (pp. 92-96). While schools of music boast a meeting of all musics, the reality, Nettl suggests, is "more mosaic than melting pot" (1995, p. 111). This mosaic metaphor underscores the reality that the conservatory draws clear lines between musical traditions, effectively prioritizing Western classical repertoire.

This kind of mosaic that makes Western classical repertoire most visible, along with the conservatory's emphasis on training for performance, has been the status quo for many decades (Shehan Campbell, Myers, & Sarath, 2014, pp. 14-15). Success in conservatory often correlates with success in a performance career. In both setting, talent plays a role. Talent as a concept can skew the pedagogy of music as well as create pressures on the identity of the young, but there are studies that attempt to discern its presence and development. From an ethnomusicological perspective, Kingsbury (1988) and Nettl (1995) illuminate the function of talent within the conservatory. Winner and Drake (2013) approach talent from a psychological perspective and examine its presence in childhood. They define it as "an innate ability or proclivity to learn in a particular domain" and "argue that individual differences in innate ability exist" (Winner & Drake, 2013, p. 334). Additionally, and with specific domains like visual art or music in mind, they offer four defining characteristics of precocious child learners. These characteristics include

comparatively more rapid learning, intrinsic motivation for skill acquisition (a characteristic Winner and Drake call "rage to master"), self-teaching that leads to discovery, and conceiving of solutions in altogether novel ways (Winner and Drake, 2013, p. 336).

To explore these characteristics, Winner and Drake (2013) studied and compared drawings of typical children with those of precocious children. Based on study findings, they claim that innate ability precedes hard work and that ensuing hard work becomes a kind of "rage to master" (Winner and Drake, 2013, p. 361). On this relationship between talent and hard work, Winner and Drake (2013) consider four combinations within a given domain: children who have no exceptional talent and do not work, those who have no exceptional talent but who work hard, children who have exceptional talent but fall away from hard work by early adolescence, and those who both have exceptional talent and work hard into adulthood (p. 362). Winner and Drake (2013) conclude that among precocious children, intensive practice alone does not account for exceptional skill development and achievement; rather, it functions as an expression of innate ability that is itself manifest through intense interest (p. 362).

Music as Musical Work

A demonstration of Music as musical work, Lydia Goehr (1994) makes an historical case for what she identifies as the *work-concept.* Her acquaintance with the roughly six-hundred-year canon of notated Western music affords Goehr the ability to survey this rich history and make philosophical observations. Her observation is that not until the end of the 18th century was music conceived as musical work – not until after the death of J.S. Bach did the *work-concept* emerge (Goehr, 1994, pp. 4-8).

To understand the *work-concept* ascendency, Goehr (1994) examines the concept from two perspectives: analytic and historic. The former reveals an understanding of musical work as an object, while the latter reveals an understanding of musical work as a concept (Goehr, 1994, p. 93). Rather than a *closed concept,* Goehr (1994) treats the work concept as an *open concept,* describing open concept as "unbounded" with the possibility of being "expanded and modified" (p. 93). Further, she claims that the work-concept is related to "the *ideals* of musical practice" (p. 7), identifying ideals as "what we strive for within our practices" (p. 98); *regulative* in the sense that it "determines the normative content of subsidiary concepts as it does the concept of ideals" (p. 103); *projective* to the degree that we project a musical work into "'object' existence" (p. 106); and *emergent* insofar as it is "a contingent, retroactively discovered [...] process" (Goehr, 1994, p. 108). These aspects of the work-concept did not characterize the functions of musicians prior to 1800, as Goehr explains: "It was only later when the production of music began to be conceived along work-based principles that early opera, cantatas, symphonies, and sonatas acquired their status as different kinds of musical work" (1994, p. 115).

Within jazz, avant-garde music, the music of John Cage, specifically *4'33,"* and the early music movement: Goehr examines the work-concept, the *Werktreue* ideal. She notes that "no form of musical production is excluded *a priori* from being packaged in terms of works," even so-called experimental works, and that "the contemporary use of the work-concept does not confine us to 'concert' music produced since 1800," primarily because the romantic aesthetic continues to dominate (Goehr, 1994, pp. 244-245). For anyone attempting to challenge the regulative force of the work-concept, Goehr writes of the difficulties faced: they "find themselves paradoxically situated in a practice that is regulated by the very concept they want to

challenge […] a regulative concept's alteration or demise is no less complicated a process than its emergence" (1994, p. 260). She further unfolds this idea:

> Cage's 'real' and 'random' sounds have not stayed real or random. The 'real' sounds of 'his' 'work' have been made subject to all the traditional, temporal, presentational, organizational constraints associated with any concert hall performance. Cage has not always, as other artists have more often done, challenged the work-concept by taking music outside the institution onto the streets. He has tried to bring the 'outside' world back into the institution, but apparently to no avail. (1994, p. 265)

Examples of genuine challenges to the work-concept Goehr suggests include musicians' making music outside the concert halls, breaking performer-audience distinctions – by inviting audience musical participation, resisting score and recording production in the interest of experiencing music in the moment, engaging with a performance as "an end in itself" when "no temporal limits" are imposed (1994, p. 268). Among her closing thoughts, Goehr offers the following: "Without a doubt, the most important fact is that being true to music or a particular type of music does not necessarily mean being true to a work" (1994, 284-285).

Goehr's (1994) work-concept shows the nature of musical objects preserved and revered by the conservatory and by Western classical performance tradition. Her examples of possible challenges to the work-concept echo aspects of participatory or leisure music making that this review subsequently addresses. For the professional musician, navigating social experiences of music conservatory and performance careers includes interacting with music (as musical objects) and leveraging talent. Moving out of a music career means navigating the social experience of changing careers.

Career Change

Interested in the nature of career change decision making, Murtagh, Lopes and Lyons (2011) conducted a qualitative study using interpretive phenomenological analysis. Their

purpose also included setting forth an "other-than-rational" career decision-making framework (Murtagh et al., 2011, p. 251). To answer their research question "How have people who have changed careers voluntarily experienced career decision making?," Murtagh et al. (2011) conducted two semi-structured interviews with eight women who had each changed careers (p. 252-253).

Data analysis revealed a variety of themes; two in particular were primary. The first of these Murtagh et al. (2011) identify as "planless actions and positive emotions" in which "actions that were initially unrelated to career were later found to have directly influenced participants' career change" (p. 254). Further, initial stages of work in a new career confirmed participants' decisions to change careers as they simultaneously experienced an array of positive emotions (Murtagh et al., 2011, p. 255). The second of the primary themes Murtagh et al. call "constructing the decision," describing the process of several to many months across which participants solidified their decisions (2011, p. 255). This process included 1. "Building certainty" – affirming to oneself the best decision has been made; 2. "perceiving continuity" – locating similarities between old and new careers; and 3. "temporal framing" – understanding the present change in context of the whole life in relation to past and future (Murtagh et al., 2011, pp. 255-256).

Murtagh et al. (2011) highlight the minimal planning and strategizing that accompanied the successful career changes of their study participants and the critical role of the emotional life during these changes (p. 257). In response, they "propose an action-affect-cognition (AAC) framework for decision making in career change" (Murtagh et al. 2011, p. 257). This framework emphasizes 1. "The idea that affect contributes to career change over and above cold cognition," suggesting that "positive affect experienced during the exploration of a new career option

predicts successful career change;" 2. "the importance of self-regulation processes in career decision making;" and 3. "the benefits of an other-than-rational approach to career decision making" (Murtagh et al. 2011, p. 259).

In an effort to understand the impact of ruptures in a career path, including resulting career changes, Nalis, Kubicek and Korunka (2021) conducted a qualitative study of 25 participants (13 men and 12 women) who had experienced a career shock of some kind. Research questions were "How do individuals respond to career shocks of different attributes?" and "How does the impact of the interplay of different attributes of career shocks and responses shape the career path over time?" (Nalis et al., 2021, p. 4). Researchers conducted one semi-structured interview per participant. Data analysis included coding of a variety of reasons for career shock and career change. Findings revealed five major career shock themes. The first of these Nalis et al. called "Response to frequency: Change muscle," describing a dynamic of resilience cultivated as a result of habitual shocks that fortified participants' ability to respond to change by modifying their career paths in ways that better suited their interests (2021, p. 6). The second was "Response to predictability/controllability: Growth mindset" – a positive growth response adopted especially by participants who faced total career change or unexpected job offers. Third was "Response to valence: Wake-up call" – a shock response and subsequent career change based on personal values. Fourth, "Response to duration: Identity work" describes a sustained period of shock that resulted in either newfound tenacity for remaining in the career or economically challenging movement into a new career. Last, "Response to career source related shocks: Setting sail" speaks to a change of geographical place or job in the wake of clear and serious acts of ethnic or gender discrimination in the workplace (Nalis et al., 2021, pp. 7-8).

Based on these themes, Nalis et al. (2021) identified a career-changer profile associated with each. 1. The *Transformer* shows a "tendency to embrace change and accept struggle;" 2. the *Editor* tends to accept unpredictable or uncontrollable situations "and develop a rather pragmatic outlook on their work lives;" 3. the *Maverick* makes bold career changes in response to values violation and shows "tendency toward strengthening career self-efficacy beliefs;" 4. the *Sustainer* demonstrates perseverance in the face of the duration of a career shock; and 5. the *Adjuster* adopts new personal views of the career, making any necessary adjustments in order to avoid changing the career (Nalis et al., 2021, pp. 8-9).

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) has been conducting annual surveys of arts graduates since 2011. The cumulative number of respondents currently totals more than 200,000. SNAAP analyses and reports on data through annual reports and various articles aimed at highlighting certain aspects of study findings. Examining reports data through the lens of career success and change, Frenette et al. (2020) wanted to know the reasons many arts graduates change careers. Among more than 52,000 arts graduates (including those from music, dance, theater, visual art and design) who worked in arts-related careers, more than 14,000 left (Frenette et al., 2020, p. 7). Frenette et al. (2020) found that there were three primary reasons for creative industry workers' career changes. These reasons were first, student debt in excess of $50,000; second, a disconnect between skills acquired during undergraduate school and those necessary in a career; and third, the nature of precarious work were the primary reasons (pp. 10-12). The challenge of paying down loans on a degree that offered traditional training for a career that was not only precarious but in fact required many entrepreneurial skills proved to be the combination of factors most responsible for career changes. Thus, the reasons would be pragmatic, rather than ideological, ethical or social.

As Frenette et al. (2020) were finding a disconnect between undergraduate education and career demands, López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020) looked directly at this problem as it relates to musicians. They conducted a qualitative multi-case study of eight successful, multi-professional classically trained musicians, interested in knowing the impact of their college/university education on career preparation and success (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020). Findings revealed a strong learner identity across all eight cases that participants attributed to their ability to bridge the gaps between skills acquired in school and those necessary in their careers (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020, p. 9). Participants described knowledge in school as having been transmitted to them in a master-apprentice setting situated broadly in an atmosphere of competition that elevated the role of the soloist (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020, pp. 8-9). Very often finding these methods and priorities incompatible with realities of their career demands, participants were able to find success nonetheless through their open, self-directed approaches to life-long learning. Recall a similar disconnect found by Frenette et al. (2020). All eight participants' adopted a learner identity characterized by curiosity, risk-taking, high ethical standards, intrinsic motivation and a pioneering spirit, leading to a richness of career success that each found surprising (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020, p. 9).

These studies describe a variety of dynamics associated with changing careers. While career change is ultimately a matter of personal choice, the experience of arriving at the moment a decision is taken varies widely. Whether the decision to change careers stems from hardship or growth, pain or adventure, it proves pivotal in the career trajectory and life story of the individual.

Lifelong Learning

The experience of bridging discontinuities in skill sets across different careers presents unique challenges to individuals who change careers. Aspects of certain skills in a former career can seed the growth of new skills in a second career. Some skills transfer intact while others are left behind altogether. An active spirit of lifelong learning is critical during each of these changes. Rineke Smilde defines lifelong learning as "a dynamic concept centrally concerned with establishing different ways of responding to change" (2009, p. 49). It is a kind of learning that "includes all knowledge, skills and attitudes which extend beyond the formal education system" (Smilde, 2009, p. 49).

Smilde (2009) conducted a biographical narrative research study of 32 professional musicians (14 women and 18 men) who held careers as soloists or music pedagogues/educators or who had portfolio careers. The purpose of her study was to explore the nature of lifelong learning in participants' formative, educational and career experiences. Findings revealed that participants effectively navigated the global/local reciprocal relationship inherent to postmodern society. That is to say, they successfully translated trends and ideas at the global level to the local, while simultaneously contributing to broad conversations at the global level through their actions at the local. Findings additionally revealed that participants demonstrated personal agency in the building and maintaining of their careers and cultivated reflexivity (taking account of one's own responses) to an ever-changing world (Smilde, 2009, pp. 232-234). Additionally, and pre-figuring findings of Frenette et al. (2020) and López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020) this literature review previously described, Smilde (2009) found discontinuity across educational institutions and career realities, especially as relates to entrepreneurial endeavors (pp. 237-238).

In response, she suggests that in curricular and educational content and practice institutions adopt the very attributes of lifelong learning manifest by her participants (Smilde, 2009, pp. 237-238).

Post-professional musicians share the music conservatory experience. From it, they carry cultivation of their talent and specific bodies of Western classical repertoire into their careers. They share the experience of career change too, and draw upon their history of music study in a spirit of lifelong learning. The next portion of this literature review looks at work on the variety of musical experiences post-professional musicians share, from pre- to post-professional life.

Formative and Strong Experiences in Music

Lori Custodero studies the formation of the musical autobiographical self during childhood and its influence on adulthood across the lifespan. Her ongoing study explores music autobiographies as written by music education graduate students. A diverse group of more than 200 participants form a purposeful sample. Reflecting on major stages of development, from early childhood through young adulthood, participants "are asked to discuss any meaningful musical relationships and encouraged to include the impact of musical works, places and events in both formal and informal settings" (Custodero, in press, p. 30).

Custodero (in press) analyzes participants' musical autobiographies through a kaleidoscopic design that invites several perspectives. She shows that music is remembered in early childhood as "relationship-based activity where dyadic and group affiliations were developed and nurtured" (p. 53) and in middle childhood as "critical to the formation of musical identities" (p. 86), including "'Ah ha!' moments when finding kin, that is, people with shared musical passion and values," (p. 121) figured prominently (Custodero, in press). Across the lifespan and through four extended autobiographies, Custodero (in press) explores the nature of

disruption and renewal in musical lives. She demonstrates that disruption and renewal within professional aspirations were "caused or repaired by a change in teacher, instrument, or institution" and that disruption within personal life could be either healed or intensified by music (Custodero, in press, p. 122). Across a variety of disruptive or renewing experiences, Custodero (in press) highlights autobiographers' agency, opportunity for meaning-making, shifts in purpose and moments of clarity. She suggests that by studying these stories and their themes, individuals who enter young and budding musical lives may do so with increased thoughtfulness and sense of purpose.

Acclaimed for his music experience research, Alf Gabrielsson conducted a mixed methods study on the topic of strong experiences with music that spanned more than 20 years. Gabrielsson (2011) gathered approximately 1,350 accounts from more than 965 study participants who responded to the prompt "Describe in your own words the strongest (most intense, most profound) experience with music you have ever had. Try to revive it in your mind and describe your experience and reactions in as much detail as you can" (p. 8). Participants recorded their responses and subsequently completed a questionnaire, reacting to statements relating to strong experiences with music. Some of the participants were professional and amateur musicians, many of whom shared accounts of strong experiences with music while making music. This subgroup comprised 19% of the total number of accounts.

Although the task of putting into words the essence of a transcendent musical experience can be difficult, study findings revealed rich variety nonetheless. Participants described moments of transcendence, using language such as "magical, supernatural, mysterious, spiritual," including in the context of playing/singing with other musicians: they described an overwhelming feeling of effortlessness and unity (Gabreilsson, 2011, pp. 160-62). They also

described situations in which they were so overwhelmed by the music that they lost momentary control of their performance (p. 240), moments that "felt almost unreal, […] as if one was being played by somebody else" (p. 243) and moments so fantastic – "epitome of joy" – that though they are infrequent, make the effort of reaching them worth it (Gabreilsson, 2011, p. 250).

Presentational and Participatory Music-Making

Throughout his ethnographic work on the social nature of music, Thomas Turino (2008) explores reasons for the centrality of music and dance to human existence. He underscores the value of social experiences making music and dancing, suggesting that they can "make us whole" (2008, p. 1). Turino's exposition of presentational and participatory music making bears resemblance to the contrast between professional and non-professional music making and to the contrast between performative and recreational music.

Turino (2008) defines *Presentational performance* as "situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing" (p. 26). The Western classical music tradition is a primary example. Indeed, the artist-audience distinction is a relatively recent phenomenon in human history; the recital/concert format emerged in Western Europe during the eighteenth century. Presentational music – an art object, is characterized by goal-oriented rehearsal, musical detail, variety, and innovation, dramatic contrast and shifts, extensive variation and transparent textures and timbres (Turino, 2008, pp. 53-58). The career of a professional musician is largely defined by presentational performance.

Participatory performance, Turino defines as "a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing

different roles" (2008, p. 26). Since a participatory music event aims to involve everyone, there are typically "a variety of roles demanding different degrees of specialization, so that people can join in at a level that offers the right balance of challenge and acquired skills" (Turino, 2008, pp. 30-31). Participatory music is guided by a set of values that include 1. the amount and strength of participation, rather than judgment of the musical quality; 2. an emphasis on an open invitation to would-be participants, instead of on individual performer's ability for extensive variation or virtuosity; and 3. the social kinship built through the very act of participatory music making, rather than "producing art that can somehow be abstracted from those social relations" (Turino, 2008, pp. 33-35). Certain sounds and practices characterize participatory music. These include 1. musical forms that are *open form,* conducive to repetition and to entrances and exits of various participants; 2. synchrony and body language, essential to the success of the music making and dancing; and 3. a musical *cloaking function,* achieved through "densely overlapping textures, wide tunings, consistently loud volume, and buzzy timbres," for the purpose of encouraging participation (Turino, 2008, pp. 37-46).

To the Western classical concert musician, experiences of participatory music making as described here by Turino (2008) are largely unfamiliar in the context of a professional career. In the context of non-professional musical activity however, they are not entirely unfamiliar, as many classical concert musicians take up a variety of leisure musical endeavors off-stage.

Leisure Music

Scholars who study leisure trace its modern understanding to the ancient world. Aristotle articulated the nature of a reciprocal relationship between an artistic endeavor (including music making) and pleasure or happiness (340 BCE/2009, p. 190). He advanced the idea that

"engagement in music – by which he referred to an active and embodied experience of melody, drama, poetry and dance – as leisure was an important element of the life of Athenian citizens" (Hallam, Creech, & Varvarigou, 2017, p. 33). Contemporary notions of human flourishing find their roots in Aristotelian thought (340 BCE/2009, pp. 192-198). In this light, Aristotle considered music "to fulfill four functions including amusement, making the best use of free time, a moral function (*ethos)*, and purgation, cleansing the soul" (Hallam et al., 2017, p. 33). The idea that music promotes well-being is furthered by Hallam, Creech and Varvarigou (2017), as they identify three ways in which leisure music is engaged: by listening to music, attending live musical events and actively making music (pp. 37-49). While leisure music is available to anyone, from amateurs to professionals, Mantie and Smith (2017) highlight the reality that among formally trained musicians it is "oddly, often the most conspicuous *and* the most overlooked" (p. 3). This paradox suggests a possible categorical inflexibility in the conceptualization and practice of music making among formally trained musicians. While listening to recorded or live music constitutes a leisure music activity accompanied by various benefits, making music recreationally carries a comparatively wider variety of benefits (Hallam et al., 2017, pp. 42-48). These associated benefits are primarily emotional; they impact the formation of personal identity and support social cohesion (Hallam et al., 2017, pp. 49-50). The emotional benefits subsequently impact markers of health and psychological well-being (Hallam et al., 2017, p. 49).

This literature review has so far considered social experiences familiar to professional musicians, including the music conservatory and career change. It has additionally followed several forms of musical experience also common to professional musicians, from formative to recreational. As post-professional musicians have navigated critical moments of pivot and

seasons of change, the third and final portion of this chapter looks at self-authorship and the composing of a life-story.

Self-Authorship

The ongoing landmark study of self-authorship is conducted by Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001, 2008). After 21 years, her longitudinal study that began with 101 participants at the age of 18 came to 30 participants at the age of 39 (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 272). Reaching beyond academic audiences, Baxter Magolda's (2009) work extends to popular audiences through her book *Authoring Your Life* in which she makes self-authorship practical and accessible.

While self-authorship has come to occupy space in the popular imagination with a variety of associations, it has roots in the field of psychology. Robert Kegan (1994) first defined it as "an internal identity […] that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states of mind" (p. 185). He describes a complex capacity for knowing in which these elements are distinguished as parts in relation to a new whole – that of a "complex system for organizing experience" (Kegan, 1994, p. 185). This new whole achieves personal authority by authoring its own parts (Kegan, 1994, p. 185). In practical terms, Baxter Magolda (2008) characterizes self-authorship as "a developmental capacity that helps meet the challenges of adult life" and building on Kegan's (1994) concept of achieving personal authority, defines it more specifically as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (p. 269).

Annual interviews of 60-90 minutes each served as Baxter Magolda's (2008) form of data collection. To "develop successively evolving interpretations and further develop patterns," she made a habit of rereading previous years' interview transcripts of each participant after every

new interview (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 273). From her findings, Baxter Magolda (2008) developed a nuanced theory of self-authorship, comprised of three elements "in increasing complexity" for building a self-authored system: 1. Trusting the internal voice: "distinction between reality and one's reaction to it," taking ownership of the ways in which one makes "meaning of external events" and the ability to "move around – rather than try to change – obstacles;" 2. building an internal foundation: conscious creation of "a philosophy or framework to guide reactions to reality" and integration of all "dimensions of one's development into" a single "cohesive entity;" 3. securing internal commitments: from "understanding to living" them, a "crossing over" into "inner wisdom" and a "sense of freedom" and trust in the ability to control things within one's control rather than fear of things outside one's control (p. 279-281). While each element of this meaning-making structure is distinct, "all three are based on the same underlying organizing principle – internally determining one's beliefs, identity and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 281).

There are two common misconceptions of self-authorship: self-authorship is a "linear process;" self-authorship "constrains relationships" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 281-282). In contrast, Baxter Magolda (2008) underscores the "cyclical nature of the evolution of self-authorship" as a complex and nuanced process (p. 281). Additionally, she highlights the ways in which relationships are strengthened, taking on a new sense of authenticity by virtue of "honoring one's internal commitments" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 282).

The evolution of self-authorship, that is the route an individual takes in arriving to the place in which building a self-authored system is possible, is a three-part journey. Baxter Magolda (2008) maps these increasingly evolved parts as 1. following external formulas: "reliance on external authority as the source of knowledge," 2. crossroads: "tension between

external expectations and […] internal thoughts and feelings," and 3. self-authorship: "the ability to internally define one's beliefs, values, identity, and social relations" (pp. 48-56). Baxter Magolda's (2008) findings revealed that participants who follow external formulas define their beliefs externally, form self-knowledge externally and affirm their identities externally, "through dependent relationships with similar others" (p. 50). Findings further revealed that navigating the crossroads of struggle between external expectations and internal impulses is a long and difficult process. They reveal that active self-authorship signals a "shift from knowledge to wisdom, […] the integration of what one knows with one's core sense of self" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 55). Additionally, they reveal flexibility as a characteristic of self-authorship: "the capacity to continually refine one's sense of self, beliefs, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 56). Baxter Magolda's construction of a nuanced theory of self-authorship marks an important development. Application of this theoretical framework to various research projects is helpful in self-authorship's role within qualitative research. However, it is useful to simultaneously maintain the fundamental essence of self-authorship, initially defined and understood as an internal psychological state.

Taking up Baxter Magolda's (2008) theory of self-authorship as the theoretical framework for their study, Bennet and Hennekam (2018) examined creative industries workers' career decision-making. They wanted to know: "Might the phases of self-authorship framework contribute to contemporary understandings of career-decision making among creative workers?" (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, p. 1457). Ranging from landscape architects to new media and urban developers, from designers to performing and visual artists, 693 participants offered in-depth responses to a 58-question survey of both closed and open-ended questions (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, pp. 1458-1459). Questions covered "engagement, motivation, and identity, the

characteristics of work, distribution of time, formal and informal learning, and demographic information" (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, p. 1459). Data analysis relied of the use of software and inductive coding and subsequently applied the theoretical framework of self-authorship to deductively code for three particularly salient survey questions (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, p. 1460).

Functioning within Baxter Magolda's (2008) three phases of self-authorship, findings revealed unique realities for individuals in arts careers. During phase one of pre-self-authorship, half of participants reported active discouragement from "external formulas" (parents, advisors) in relation to their arts career aspirations (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, p. 1460). In many cases, discouragement of this kind along with additional crossroads experiences that are often amplified within arts careers such as "relationship changes, geographically disbursed work, under- or unemployment, burnout or ill health" resulted in participants' not pursuing self-authorship (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, pp. 1462-1465). For those who followed through to the third phase of self-authorship, they reported a fluidity of identity "consisting of multiple selves, each of which might be self-authored to a different degree and prioritized according to need and opportunity" (Bennet & Hennekam, 2018, p. 1467). Further, Bennet and Hennekam found that "multiple concurrent selves can simultaneously be at different phases of self-authorship" (2018, p. 1460). Surpassing expectations, Bennet and Hennekam (2018) found their inquiry to yield insights not only into self-authorship of creative industry worker but also more broadly into self-authorship itself (pp. 1466-1467).

Life Story

As Narrative

Jerome Bruner advances the idea of life as narrative in his essay of the same title in which he explores a kind of thought very different from reason, logic and inductive argument (2004, p. 691). The kind of thought he explores is story. He extends to it "the analysis of stories we tell about our lives: our "autobiographies" (Bruner, 2004, p. 691). His philosophical approach is constructivist. Constructivism invites experience to serve as foundation for the building of mental models of all kinds. In Bruner's words, constructivism "…takes as its central premise that 'world making' is the principal function of mind" (2004, p. 691). He sets forth the following thesis:

> We seem to have no other way of describing "lived time" save in the form of narrative. Which is not to say that there are not other temporal forms that can be imposed on the experience of time, but none of them succeeds in capturing the sense of *lived* time: not clock or calendrical time forms, not serial or cyclical orders, not any of these. (Bruner, 2004, p. 692)

Following this elevation of narrative in relation to its capacity for expressing experience as lived through time, Bruner furthers his argument by offering a second thesis. His second thesis underscores the inseparability of life as lived and life as told, while additionally calling attention to the human propensity for forming judgements through a process of reason relative to both the living and telling of a life:

> […] the mimesis between life so-called and narrative is a two-way affair: that is to say just as art imitates life in Artistotle's sense, so, in Oscar Wilde's, life imitates art. "Life" in this sense is the same kind of construction of the human imagination as "a narrative" is. It is constructed by human beings through active ratiocination, by the same kind of ratiocination through which we construct narratives. (2004, p. 692)

Elaborating on this second thesis, Bruner (2004) describes the telling of a life story as a cognitive, narrative achievement, rather than a certain or unmistakable recitation (p. 692).

Regarding obvious problems in the telling of life narratives, Bruner (2004) acknowledges its reflexive nature in which the story's main actor and the narrator are the same and the narrator's tendency to relay story features in terms of intention when a variety of other determinants may have actually been involved (p. 693). He also highlights the fact that cultural conventions, including "canonical life narratives (heroes, Marthas, tricksters, etc.)" influence an individual's forming the telling of life stories (Bruner, 2004, p. 694). The crux of his argument is the following:

> Eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life. In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. (Bruner, 2004, p. 694)

In other words, the very ways of telling and conceptualizing themselves "become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future" (Bruner, 2004, p. 708). Emphasizing the two-way relationship of the life led and the life told, Bruner writes, "a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (2004, p. 708).

Psychologists Giampiero Arciero and Guido Bondolfi (2009) approach the formation of personal identity through narrative: "identity is constructed in the very act of narration" (p. 66). This formation begins during the pre-school years, as the preschooler is assisted by their parent in developing the tools for articulating small or large life events, and by age five, the child is able to independently narrate such events while "a new sense of the permanence of Self over time," along with a sense of responsibility, emerges (Arciero & Bondolfi, 2009, pp. 66-70). A person then develops the mechanism for transforming "a purely temporal succession of events into the cohesive whole which constitutes their life story. In this way, the person's identity, understood as

the character of the story, is moulded contemporaneously with the plot" (Arciero & Bondolfi, 2009, p. 73).

Composed

Cultural anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson, known to popular audiences for a variety of works, including *Composing A Life* (2001), conducted an ethnographic study to examine the ways in which career, family life, friendship and personal ambition integrate, clash and are negotiated. Participants were five women who gave voice to these complexities during several semi-structured interviews. The major theme revealed in study findings is an approach to the telling of life stories that conceives of life itself as interpretive art (Bateson, 2001, p. 3).

Writing for an academic audience on the subject of composing a life, Bateson elaborates on this theme. She asserts that individuals make creative decisions through the very ways they regard their life stories, and finds the unforeseen, unplanned and untimely events of life to be a given (Bateson, 2004). We most often respond to these events by telling our life story in ways that emphasize continuity, and we make sense of the discontinuity by striving for balance and overall harmony (Bateson, 2004, p. 207-209). Bateson (2004) makes the claim that "there are advantages of choosing a particular interpretation at a particular time, and [an] even greater advantage of using multiple interpretations" (p. 213).

The telling of a life story with an emphasis on continuity involves gathering disparate events and themes under one unifying idea, identifying a common thread. Practically, it can mean transferring skills across a variety of situations. It is telling "a story that interprets change as continuity" (Bateson, 2004, p. 212). To illustrate, Bateson (2004) offer the following quote by a person who told his life story with this kind of emphasis on continuity, distilling it into a single simile: "My life is like surfing, with one wave coming after another." (p. 212). As an artist

synthesizes materials, colors and textures, so too does one craft a piece of art from their very lives – a piece "that is not only workable, but finally pleasing and true, even beautiful" (Bateson, 2004, p. 209). Extending the metaphor to music, Bateson (2004) identifies the music of a life story: its variations unfold over a span of time, like contrasting movements of a symphony, chapters of a life story share common themes (p. 210).

Noting society's preference for continuous versions of stories, Bateson (2004) underscores the challenges of telling a discontinuous story that includes all manner of bumps and changes as well as interpreting its experiences (p. 211). Two canonical narratives often create expectations for the ways in which we tell our stories: "an episode in childhood … prefigures all that is to come" or "lives that have a lot of zig-zags in them get reconstrued into before-and-after narratives with one major discontinuity" (Bateson, 2004, p. 212). The former creates the feeling of growing into your destiny while in fact being a cultural creation and the latter that of a new start (Bateson, 2004, p. 214). Further, "there is a great temptation to edit out the discontinuities" in an effort to make our histories more cohesive than they actually were (Bateson, 2004, p. 214).

These challenges aside, Bateson champions a multiplicity of life-story interpretations. Adjusting and adapting to change is often best facilitated by identifying "some analogy between your old situation and your new situation" (Bateson, 2004, p. 214). In turn, such analogies give way to transfer of learning and skill (Bateson, 2004, p. 214). Bridging superficial changes, staying the course, maintaining commitments, cultivating capacity for translation and interpreting the discontinuities of a life story may take a variety of forms (Bateson, 2004, p. 215).

Life and Narrative Relationship

In his work on the relationship between life and narrative, Mark Freeman (2017) examines how it is that we can "distinguish stories that are 'true to life' from those that are not,

that falsify and distort it" (p. 18). Narrative is certainly not absent in so-called real life, especially if real life is understood to include the mental and spiritual, "*human* time, with its movements forward and backward, its spirals and returns" (Freeman, 2017, p. 23). Leaning into a full understanding of the life and narrative relationship includes resisting linear or teleologic narratives. Freeman (2017) maintains that "there is no univocal way" of articulating the nature of life (p. 18) and "no univocal way" of expressing narrative either, because messy lives cannot be captured in tidy tales (Freeman, 2017, p. 23). There is then "no univocal way of speaking about the relationship between" life and narrative (Freeman, 2017, p. 23).

Freeman (2017) suggests three types of narratives to understand the relationship between life and narrative. The first of these he calls the "*particularized* narrative, comprised of small stories as well as big stories, rooted in the particulars of life" (Freeman, 2017, p. 26). The second he identifies as "*generalized* narrative, rooted in basic, culturally constituted conceptions of time and personhood, canonical storylines, and so on" (Freeman, 2017, pp. 26-27). And the third he names "*lived* narrative, tied to those foundational aspects of temporal being that, arguably, exist 'before' any and all stories might be told" (Freeman, 2017, p. 27). In Freeman's view, "this real world we inhabit is in fact a *storied* world" (2017, p. 24). Recall Bruner's suggestion that narrative is cognitively constructed (2004, p. 692). Freeman (2017) modifies this idea by proposing that "'life itself' is a narrative achievement, the stories we actually tell serving to extend and refine the storied movement of this very life" (p. 27).

Summary

In this chapter I have presented literature in support of three basic objectives. Topics of the conservatory and career change give insight into critical social experiences of post-

professional musicians, including the role of talent and life-long learning. Interest in the diversity of musical experiences of post-professional musicians led to literature on formative and strong experiences with music, presentational and participatory music making and leisure music. To better understand the ways post-professional musicians story their lives across discontinuities, a look at work on self-authorship, life-story and narrative was useful.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Informed by phenomenology, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore the experiences of post-professional musicians – to know and tell their stories. In this chapter, I present research methods design and rationale and my role as the researcher. I discuss the selection of participants and instrumentation, along with research procedures. In addition, I explain my approach to data analysis and highlight issues of trustworthiness, ethics and limitations as relate to the study.

Research Question

What are the experiences of post-professional musicians?

Design and Rationale

Phenomenology

To explore this research question, phenomenology as both philosophy and practice serves as the method for my study. The elusive nature of the phenomenon of post-professional musicians' experiences lends itself to phenomenological inquiry. Because I have examined the lived experiences of my study participants, the centrality of *experience* to phenomenological inquiry undergirds my approach.

> The difference between phenomenology and most other forms of research is that phenomenology studies the world as we ordinarily *experience* it or become conscious of it – before we think, conceptualize, abstract, or theorize it. It is the experience that is the ultimate bearer of meaning, not some theory, linguistic formulation, or abstractive construction. (van Manen, 2016, p. 65)

Phenomenological understanding of lived experience finds in roots in German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) description of *lebenswelt* – life-world. He describes it as "[…] the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable – our everyday life-world (*lebenswelt*)" (Husserl, 1936/1970, p. 49). Experience in these terms forms the heart of the phenomenon I have explored. Participants communicated with me the wonder of their lived experiences.

An early pioneer of phenomenology as research methodology, Herbert Spiegelberg (1975) describes phenomenology as "a philosophic movement whose primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions" (p. 3). Throughout his contemporary text on phenomenology, Max van Manen (2016) details the dual nature of phenomenology as both philosophy and practice, philosophy and method. This understanding of phenomenology is predicated on Spiegelberg's (1975) notion of doing phenomenology which he based on analytic philosophy. Phenomenology's founding, commonly attributed to Husserl, predates Husserl's life. As Spiegelberg puts it: "Phenomenology was not founded: it grew, and its fountainhead was Edmund Husserl (1975, p. 3)." Profoundly challenged and expanded by Husserl's pupil, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), phenomenology's growth took many forms throughout its twentieth and twenty-first century formation. Its current approach is distinctive in that "it not only develops conversational and argumentative understandings, it also and even primarily aims to 'show' how meaning reveals itself" (van Manen, p. 48).

Researcher Role

Contemporary phenomenological research methods are based in one of two main branches of phenomenology, transcendental and hermeneutic. **Transcendental phenomenology** stems from the work of Husserl. Its hallmarks include 1. Bracketing/*epoché*: the suspension of judgment, prejudices, expectations or assumptions and the setting aside of any particular theoretical lens or framework (Husserl, 1913/2004, pp. 110-111); 2. Horizon: boundary or limit of our mental vision or perception of a present experience that cannot be bracketed; 3. Intentionality: the orientation of "our thinking, feeling, and acting" to or with "the things in the world" (van Manen, 2016, p. 62); 4. Noema: eidetic (relating to clear mental images) of the intentional object; 5. Noesis: "the experience of acts of consciousness" (van Manen, p. 94); and 6. Phenomenological reduction: the leading back, regarding the phenomenon in relation to self and experience, always in tandem with the bracketing/*epoché* (van Manen, p. 27). Transcendental phenomenology in practice lends itself to lived experience of the phenomenologist, of the inquirer.

Hermeneutic phenomenology comes from the work of Heidegger and is suited in practice to the phenomenologist's (inquirer's) study of others' lived experiences. Its hallmarks include 1. *Dasein*; 2. Fore-sight / fore-conception; and 3. the Hermeneutic circle. Because my study is of others' lived experiences, hermeneutic phenomenology proved to be appropriate, even ideal. On *Dasein*, literally being-there (*Da-sein),* Heidegger (1927/1962) writes of its expression rather than its definition:

> And because we cannot define Dasein's essence by citing a "what" of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter (*eines sachhaltigen Was*), and because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own, we have chosen to designate this entity as "Dasein", a term which is purely an expression of its Being (*als reiner Seinsausdruck*).

Being in this sense pertains to the temporal study of human existence. Fore-sight / fore-conception speaks to the inevitability or fact of interpretation as "grounded in *something we have in advance*" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 191). Such interpretation operates in *Dasein* and "is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 191-192). Preconceived knowledge of a phenomenon is then an expected accompaniment to every phenomenological inquiry. In response, and critical to the integrity of the inquiry, is the phenomenologist's process of understanding. This process is expressed by the hermeneutic circle:

> This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself. […] In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last, and constant is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 195)

Hermeneutics philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), grounded in Heideggerian thinking, elaborates on this hermeneutic circle process of interpretation as revision:

> The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-project is capable of projecting before itself a new project of meaning, that rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is, that interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection is the movement of understanding and interpretation. (1960/1975, p. 236)

The hermeneutic phenomenologist consequently lives within the tension of existing knowledge and unknown, hidden insights that emerge through the process of interpretation as revision. Existing knowledge is shaped and influenced by the inquirer's emersion in the literature. In response to this emersion and to various internal orientations, personal biases and acquired funds of knowledge that further shape and influence the inquirer, consistent mindful regulation of the

inquirer's relation to them and the phenomenon is visited and re-visited within the hermeneutic circle. In practical terms, my role as the researcher included documenting this process of continually renewed and modified understanding of the phenomenon in the form of journaling (Gadamer, 1960/1975 p. 269). The interaction of the researcher with participant experiences as expressed in the data is itself a focus of hermeneutic phenomenology.

With this focus in mind, and highlighting the position of the researcher's "understanding in the interpretive process" as inherent to hermeneutic phenomenology, phenomenologists Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe (2017) advance the idea that the act of crafting stories from interview transcripts is not only acceptable but desirable (p. 827). They maintain that a well-crafted hermeneutic phenomenological story communicates the meaning of a phenomenon and reveals singular aspects of identity and essence:

> Whether or not a story is verbatim or crafted, or whether a story from a participant is "what they meant to say or how they meant to say it," the story's role is to gift insights into human experience from which we can all learn. (p. 833)

Writing on the power of stories and the images they bring forth, van Manen (1997) emphasizes this role story plays in gifting insights and meaning:

> When the phenomenologist strives for vividness, it is not for the sake of vividness in itself but for the precise aim of evoking particular images that call forth and bring into presence relevant aspects of the experience in which we are interested, so that we can reflect on the meanings that inhere in them. (p. 355)

Reflection on the meanings that inhere within stories offers the phenomenologist or reader the possibility to gain or experience insights into the phenomenon the stories reveal. Here again is van Manen on the capacity of story to reveal a phenomenon:

1. story provides us with *possible human experiences*;
2. story enables us to experience life situations, feelings, emotions and events *that we would not normally experience*;
3. story allows us to broaden the horizons of our normal existential landscape by creating *possible worlds*;

4. story tends to appeal to us and involve us *in a personal way*;
5. story is an artistic device that lets us turn back to *life as lived*, whether fictional or real;
6. story evokes the quality of vividness in *detailing unique and particular aspects of a life* that could be my life or your life;
7. and yet, great novels or stories *transcend the particularity of their plots* and protagonists, etc. [...] (1990, p. 70)

Story in these terms guided my exploration of post-professional musicians' experiences – a phenomenon I aimed to illuminate through my participants' musical life stories.

Data Collection

Exploratory Study

During the summer of 2018, I conducted an exploratory study that examined the music activity of the college avocational/leisure learner, guided by the overarching research question: How does a college music department strategically engage the avocational/leisure learner? My interest in this topic stemmed from my understanding of a problem in higher music education: the majority of music degree programs are vocational, centered on Western classical music training for performance-oriented careers (Shehan Campbell, et al., 2014). I wanted to know how college department music course offerings for non-music majors might meaningfully engage non-music majors in non-vocational musical activity that reaches beyond the Western classical tradition. I was further interested in whether a robust non-music major scene could satisfy students who wished to maintain their musical chops during college without majoring in Music.

My study explored the following research questions: What does it mean to be a college avocational/leisure music learner? Are non-music major's expressed reasons, interests and desires for engaging in college-sanctioned and -organized musical activity addressed by the college music department? Have non-music majors experienced a difference in the music

department's conceptualization of courses for the avocational learner versus courses for the aspiring professional (contrasting philosophies)? Findings closely paralleled study findings within the literature on college student avocational music making (Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011; Mantie, 2013; Mantie & Dorfman, 2014).

While the topic of this exploratory study is different from that of this dissertation and only tangentially related, the reason I include its summary here is that it forms a critical component of my thinking as relates to post-professional musicians. I see it within the scope of my interest in meaningfully made musical lives. I see it on a spectrum of musical lives from the most avocational to the most professional to the post-professional. The span of these various musical lives across differences of skill, talent and performativity invites inquiry into heightened and specific ways in which music is taken up or lain aside in the interest of human flourishing and the engaged formation of self. Further reflection on this spectrum and variety of musical lives led me ultimately to the topic of this dissertation on which I conducted the following pilot study.

Pilot Study

During the winter of 2020, I conducted a single participant pilot study. My aim was to pilot sample both interview questions and digital journal entry prompts derived from my research question: What are the experiences of post-professional musicians? My aim was also to test the waters of phenomenological interviewing. My prior research projects included qualitative interviews, but this pilot study was my first to attempt phenomenological interviewing.

The pilot study participant, Paige (pseudonym), was a post-professional dancer who had changed careers. Data collection included one semi-structed phenomenological interview. In addition, it included participant reaction to sample digital journal entry prompts that later entered

my form of secondary data collection. As a post-professional dancer, Paige did not meet participant criteria for the study of this dissertation but rather offered valuable responses of parallel experiences that made this pilot study a success.

Pilot study findings revealed rich story-form descriptions of lived experience. These descriptions centered particularly on phenomenologically experienced moments of pivot from a life and career in dance to one in an altogether new field. At the moment of pivot, Paige had only a vague sense of the nature of her new future career. Rather than identifying a primary motivation of pivot as the allure of a specific new career path, Paige identified the pattern of continual challenge and even pain throughout her career as a dancer as the primary motivator of her pivot. Citing detailed snap-shot accounts along the way, Paige expressed a sense of catharsis in revealing the sweep of her journey into, through and out of the life and career as a dancer. She also responded highly favorably to the sample digital journal entry prompts, noting that they effectively elicited responses from states or modes of being not limited to the cognitive.

In response to pilot study findings, I further refined the interview protocol and digital journal entry prompts, opening the way to deeper confidence in my approach to phenomenological interviewing. My hunch that stories like Paige's went largely unknown and untold grew. I also learned of my interview protocol's capacity for eliciting tender and emotional responses. Sincere sensitivity and humility on my part as the inquirer would be essential.

Participant Criteria and Recruitment

Recruitment initially targeted participants within brief driving distance from my home, in order to prioritize in-person interviews. I contacted colleagues and friends, requesting referrals to individuals who might consider study participation. Purposeful sampling (Merriam 1998) of this

kind proved successful. In order to include two long-distance participants, I opened recruitment to participants with whom I could meet virtually.

Study participants were five post-professional musicians who each left successful careers as performers. All were instrumentalists who shared the following experiences:

1. Obtained both an undergraduate and graduate degree in music – at least one of which included a major in performance
2. Performed as a professional musician for at least three years
3. Changed careers by going back to school for a degree in another field or by securing the necessary licensure, certification or training in another field
4. Worked in their new career for at least one year

Table 1

Participant Pseudonyms and Biographical Details

Participant pseudonym	"Jade"	"Grant"	"Claire"	"Reid"	"Bree"
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Approximate Age	around 40	around 40	around 60	around 40	around 30
Native country	United States	Mexico	United States	United States	South Korea
Instrument(s)	Harpsichord, fortepiano, piano and organ	Violin	French Horn	Trumpet and natural horn	Violin
Education in music	Bachelors, Masters, Doctoral	Bachelors, Doctoral	Bachelors, Masters	Bachelors, Masters	Bachelors, Masters
Education outside of music		Masters			Doctoral
Approximate age at time of career change	mid-30s	mid-30s	early 40s	early 30s	mid-20s

New profession	Higher education research and technology firm Accounts Manager	Finance technology start-up Head of Business Development and Sales	Business Owner and Retail Stock Investor	Museum Educator	Dentist

Instrumentation

The **semi-structured phenomenological interview** served as my primary form of data collection. Each interview resulted in no fewer than one follow up interview per participant, allowing me to both clarify various points of the initial interview and interview to saturation. Time between interviews ranged from a few weeks to a few months. I conducted the majority of the interviews virtually using video conference technology, and all interviews I audio recorded and transcribed. A **digital journal** served as my secondary form of data collection. Participants responded to digital journal entry prompts following each interview. My reactions to these responses factored into follow up interview questions.

The phenomenological interview (Bevan, 2014) is different from qualitative forms of the interview, in the sense that it aims to engage participants' accounts of prereflective experiences. *Prereflective* or *prepredicative* experience refers to "experience before it has been thematized and named" (van Manen, 2016, p. 57). Rather than "opinions, personal views, perceptions, perspectives, or interpretations," the phenomenological interview aims to gather "experiential narrative material, stories, or anecdotes that may serve as a resource for phenomenological reflection and thus develop a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" (van Manen, 2016, p. 314). I designed interview questions to elicit stories and anecdotes. I crafted journal entry prompts to also be phenomenological in nature, by inviting participants to consider specific poems, songs, films, works of visual art or architecture that had uniquely accompanied

and expressed critical moments across their musical life stories. These prompts further elicited insight into participants' lived experiences. Participants' responses, although limited, proved to be dense and illuminating.

Table 2

Research Design and Chronology

Winter 2019	Topic Identification
Winter/Spring 2019	Literature Review
Spring 2019	Advanced Proposal
Autumn 2019	IRB Approval
Winter 2020	Pilot Study
Spring/Summer 2020	Interviews
Summer 2020	Interview Transcriptions
Summer 2021	Data Analysis
Autumn 2021	Data Synthesis and Discussion

Exploration (Data Analysis) and Reflection (Synthesis)

Procedures

Manual transcription of interviews demands many hours and easily becomes tedious. However, it affords the researcher additional time with the data at a granular level. Many of the interviews I conducted were virtual and automatically transcribed by the virtual conferencing platform I used. These auto-transcriptions required heavy editing. In order to have time with the

data at a granular level, I chose not to outsource the transcribing or editing. My initial interactions with the data began here in the transcribing and editing processes.

I made duplicate copies of each interview transcript, preserving a "clean copy" while working on the other. Along with journal entry responses, I organized all of them by participant. My next step was distilling the lived experience descriptions of each participant into five continuous life stories (Crowther et al., 2017). The content of each story centered on lived experiences as they occurred, rather than on participant perspectives, opinions or beliefs (van Manen, 2016). Throughout this process, I began journaling modifications of my understanding of the phenomenon, taking particular note of divergences in the data from my own hunches, effectively reckoning with my own fore-sight/fore-conception while entering and re-entering the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1960/1975).

Readings for Apparent Insights: Toward Description and Poetic Rendering

My exploration (analysis) of and reflection (synthesis) on the data (interview transcripts and journal entries) took the following three approaches. 1. Wholistic reading approach asks, "How can the eidetic, originary, or phenomenological meaning or main significance of the text as a whole be captured?" 2. Selective reading approach asks, "What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?" 3. Detailed reading approach asks, "What may this sentence or sentence cluster be seen to reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?" (van Manen, 2016, p. 320). As I engaged with the data, my aim was to render them in a highly descriptive way, as multi-dimensional art: "Literature, poetry, anecdotal portrayals, philosophic fragments, and images all play a part in the oneiric pathic power of the words" (van Manen, 2016, p. 146). Rather than approaching my writing as an act of reporting, I approached it as "interpretive description of the primordial

meaning structures of lived experience," in the spirit of literary craft (van Manen, 2016, p. 61). Crafting stories meant leaning into the capacity of stories to gift a "powerful 'felt' knowing" (Crowther et al., 2017).

Five continuous **musical life stories** form the heart of study findings. In addition to these stories, I crafted both a **general narrative** and **general description**. The general narrative forms a composite description of all five stories. The general description relays the structure of the composite experience. Each of these presentations of study findings stems from my wholistic reading approach in which my aim was to distill the sum of the data into its primary phenomenological meaning. While the selective and detailed reading approaches were also active, they became most relevant in my subsequent discussion of study findings.

Of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

My role as inquirer itself impacted study findings, as I facilitated participants' exploration of their own lived experiences. My entering their processes of exploration meant being a co-explorer (Gadamer, 1960/1975). The sum of this journey of inquiry included regular adjustments to my understanding of the phenomenon of post-professional musicians' experiences (Heidegger, 1927/1962). As the substrates of hermeneutic phenomenology guide my reading and telling of the data, I offer descriptions of the nature of my affect as inquirer, after my presentation of study findings. They include my *Dasein,* fore-sight / fore-conception and my movement within the hermeneutic circle.

Issues of Trustworthiness

My efforts to address issues of trustworthiness are tempered by the reality that phenomenological inquiry is seldomly verifiable and offers insights that are difficult to replicate

or translate, due to its non-empirically positioned place outside both traditional quantitative and qualitative research methods. Hermeneutic phenomenology offers the possibility of replicating the data collection procedures but not findings, since no two temporal lived experiences of a phenomenon are alike. I have in any case taken thoughtful stock of this inquiry's trustworthiness, throughout the research and writing process. I diversified forms of data collection to include interviews, follow-up interviews and journal entry prompts. Rich descriptions provide context and detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

This dissertation study meets institutional review board (IRB) expectations. It involved only minimal risk to participants, similar to an intellectual activity they might perform in their daily lives, such as reading a book, discussing the contents of the book with another person or personally relating to the ideas presented in the book. Participants each gave informed consent for study participation, knowing that the recalling and relaying of various life stories might be accompanied by a certain degree of emotional discomfort. All data is securely stored under password protection, and I refer to each participant by pseudonym. I had no prior connection to any of the study participants and there were no conflicts of interest between us.

Limitations of the Study

Aimed at exploring lived experience, phenomenological inquiry by nature avoids authoritative or strictly rational claims. A variety of limitations are inherent to the present study. This study is limited to only instrumentalist musicians who held professional careers as performers. A study that includes singers or other musicians who occupied non-performing

careers exceeds the capacity of this study. This study is limited to five participants due to the density of each participant's contributions: study data yielded by more the five participants is beyond the scope of this study, primarily due to the fact that I am the only investigator. Finally, this study is limited to snap-shots in time of participant experience.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS: MUSICAL LIFE STORIES

Introduction

Informed by phenomenology, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore the experiences of post-professional musicians – to know and tell their stories. In this chapter, I present study findings as five musical life stories. Each story contributes to exploration of the phenomenon: post-professional musicians' experiences.

Musical Life Stories

I begin with harpsichordist Jade, followed by violinist Grant, French hornist Claire, trumpeter Reid and finally, violinist Bree. I render their experiences across four epochs of life: becoming a professional musician, being a professional musician, pivoting from professional to post-professional musician and being a post-professional musician.

Jade

Becoming a Professional Musician

Jade has been playing and studying the piano for nine years when her mega church in the southern United States builds a new pipe organ. The trouble is, the church has no competent organist. Church leaders ask Jade to learn. She agrees, and at age 13 becomes the organist for her thousands-of-members church.

Jade has only recently turned 16 when she enters the undergraduate music program designed to prepare her for a career in music. She's been studying music at the piano since age

four and a half. The notoriety of her applied piano professor forms the basis of her college choice. After just one year, Jade experiences the first in a series of events that contributes to the formative years of her career: Her college's world-renowned early music scholar and artist-in-resident unexpectedly and on short notice invites her into an early music chamber ensemble rehearsal.

> He explains, "Our continuo player's not here. This is how the figures work. Here's the bass line: 5/3 means this; 6/3 means this. Can you just kind of go?" I'm like, "OK cool," and start playing. He's like, "Oh my gosh. Nobody sits down and can just do this." *Jade – 2020*

At his urging and delighted by the immediacy and facility that characterized her first experience as a novice continuo player, Jade begins taking harpsichord lessons. On her partial-degree fulfillment junior recital, she makes the bold move to perform a Bach partita on the harpsichord:

> It gives me a new experience and makes the recital more interesting than it would otherwise be. This is a big deal, because I'm a piano major. I'm glad I have a very liberal piano teacher who doesn't mind me doing the Partita on the harpsichord! *Jade – 2020*

The recital marks a success and showcases Jade's abilities as a harpsichordist. In response, her faculty immediately move her playing continuo for the department's upcoming performance of Marriage of Figaro from piano to fortepiano. The beginning of a new profound relationship to the harpsichord and fortepiano is born. Jade decides to laterally move into the area of early music as a harpsichordist and fortepianist.

Near the end of her undergraduate years, Jade asks her piano professor, "how am I supposed to plan my career?" Her professor responds, "You really can't. You just have to hope you're in the right place at the right time, that you get a big opportunity and that you're prepared when the opportunity comes." Unsure of the most useful way to appropriate this advice, Jade abandons attempts at strategic career planning and thinks, *Something will come along*.

A promising early music performer by the end of her bachelor's degree, Jade continues early music studies at highly-regarded schools of music in the Midwest and Northeast. It is during these years she discovers differences from her peers:

> Practice rooms are down to a minimum for some reason, and one of the doctoral students says to me, "Take my room, as much time as you want. I know your recital is in a week." I'm like, "Oh no, I'm fine. I only need like an hour a day." One of my friends who is standing there tells me later, "You caused him to go into a very deep depression, because he was like 'what am I doing?!'" I didn't know people sat for nine hours a day. I had no clue. People start telling me later that it's coming easily to me, and because of that situation, I believe them. I always think, *I practice, I work really hard, intensely and focused*, but it just isn't taking as much time. *Jade – 2020*

Earning both a Masters and Doctorate in performance, Jade is poised to launch her music career.

Being a Professional Musician

After graduate school, Jade encounters a fork in the road. One direction leads toward a life as a performer and the potential for the professoriate. The other direction leads toward teaching. The former requires gigging, especially for the first few years. The latter promises a salary and benefits. It is at this juncture that Jade gets clarity on her career desires. A solo career is not something she wants, partly evidenced by the fact that she has not had the desire to compete or ever competed in the sorts of national and international competitions typically necessary to launch a solo career. She resists being pigeonholed into a singular life and identity as a performer, given the breadth of her skills as a musician. Playing collaboratively, teaching music across a variety of musical disciplines, singing, vocal coaching and conducting all feature strongly in her musical imagination and arsenal.

Jade is presented with the opportunity to study fortepiano with a world-renowned fortepianist in northern Europe. While studying, she would build the life of a professional keyboardist playing for opera houses and taking up a variety of small performance engagements. Such a life would be the envy of many of her peers. Jade turns it down. She opts instead for a life

in the United States that is less gig-based, that allows for a fuller expression of her varied musical strengths and that includes a full-time salaried position.

To begin the realization of this kind of life, Jade accepts a position as music director of a prestigious all-girls Episcopal boarding school in the Mid Atlantic. With the experience of turning down an alternate version of her life in Europe fresh in her mind, Jade arrives on campus for her new job in a town of only twelve-hundred people and thinks, *Oh my God, what have I done?* Eight months later, after serving the minimum required school year term, she finds herself quite literally packing her bags during the school's graduation ceremony in order to leave town as soon as possible. While the eight-month teaching stint proves invaluable, offering Jade opportunities to exercise and develop a variety of her skills, from playing for three services per week and conducting the choir, to teaching AP music theory, applied voice, piano and harpsichord, it lacks high-level engagement as a performer. Critically, it establishes a pattern for the kind of salaried, teaching-based work available to Jade, as she continues to flesh-out the picture of her ideal career. That picture becomes a reality when she wins a position as harpsichordist for a widely acclaimed five-member early music women's ensemble, featured by Chamber Music America as *an ensemble that changed the face of chamber music*.

Similar to the boarding school, Jades finds a new teaching job in the Northeast, in order to be better positioned for the demanding travel schedule part and parcel to chamber ensemble life. Now with a full line up of tours and performances in place, Jade strikes her ideal life as a musician: concertizing, teaching and collaborating: multimodal musical engagements are now all fully active. Her ensemble specializes in all of the three soprano early music literature.

> We play everywhere: all the prestigious halls; almost every state, all the big concert halls. Life on tour: plane, rental car to drive to the hall, sound check at the hall, eat something, concert that night or the next day, plane, same thing again. Over and over and over for a two-week block or whatever it is. Traveling with four other women: this part probably

> isn't the most fun. If we're going on a two-week stretch, we're performing every couple of days, or maybe three, depending on if we're going cross country. *Jade – 2020*

For personal reasons, the first concert at a renowned concert hall in the Midwest that her mother attends is a highlight:

> It isn't just a straight concert. There's almost a storyline to it: we go piece to piece to piece. It's only an hour and fifteen minutes. There's always a theme to the program. It's very different. Sometimes we use a costume. There's a lot of humor in it. It isn't really shtick-y, but there is enough of that that it kind of brings early music alive for a more normal audience. I am very proud of this one. *Jade – 2020*

Two international tours define a concert musician high life:

> Oh the tours in Mexico! The tours in Mexico are big highlights. These are two of the best times of my life. They are wonderful. We go to places tourists don't usually go. We play in a lot of halls and meet the warmest people who love early music. The food is beautiful. This whole experience is the epitome of being a concert musician; out every night, in the gardens. It's wonderful. *Jade – 2020*

She and her ensemble win a competition that includes a performance in one of the most famous halls located in a large northeastern city:

> It's really exciting and really neat, and it's so fun to be up there with my four female colleagues. It's a really great experience. My boyfriend at the time comes. He's a lawyer, so it feels like two very different worlds colliding: it's the first time he's seeing me perform, seeing what I do. There's something about it: *Oh! I'm in the city, and now I'm performing here. He's come, a bunch of my friends have come, and this is really amazingly exciting. Jade – 2020*

More profound is a performance near the end of her career in an equally prestigious venue. Two pianos, orchestra and chorus, Jade features as one of the pianists for a performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana*:

> My parents come, and my husband's parents come, and I think it's probably more exciting, because by now, I'm really a true professional. I have a whole career that is going, and being at this performance center feels somehow cooler. *Jade – 2020*

Jade concertizes as harpsichordist with her five-member early music women's ensemble for seven years. She balances her concertizing with a church job and teaching engagements,

including a four-year stint as a vocal coach at an Ivy League's school of music, located in the Northeast. The result of this combination of jobs is that she is exceptionally busy, as every weekend includes two concerts.

During this same span of years, Jade spends a portion of her summers participating in an internationally acclaimed early music festival held in a coastal town on the west coast of the United States. Near the end of her most active years as a professional musician, Jade even accepts a one-year appointment as organist for a popular mega church in the Southeast. The church flies her down every weekend. The prestige of the position is a major draw:

> It's probably a vanity job. It's a ton of fun. The music director is one of my close friends from undergrad, and he's married to one of my close friends from childhood. These personal connections are part of the fun. And it pays well. But part of it is also a vanity thing. It's absolutely insane. *Jade- 2020*

Jade is at the height of her career, and the human relationships she experiences in conjunction are deeply meaningful.

Pivoting from Professional to Post-Professional Musician

During a ten-year period, accompanying her successful, gratifying career, Jade experiences a growing sense of restlessness. She notices a pattern in her enjoyment working with her ensemble's artists' management company, taking careful note of the things they could do better. She often steps up to play liaison and administrative roles and emerges as a managerial leader within her ensemble. An interest in business administration begins to grow, and hints of dissatisfaction in her music career begin to manifest.

> I'm on stage at Lincoln Center, playing harpsichord continuo for a Bach Cantata. I'm dead-center, in front of the conductor as the continuo player, the orchestra in a semi-circle around me, the choir behind me. The conductor makes a fumble which I save, but it is quite nerve-racking, and I think, *Oh my God, what's happening right now? I'm going to play the downbeat, because I think that's what he's thinking. Ohhh, this is not fun. I just don't enjoy this*. The conductor is one I've worked with for years and love. He says to me, after the concert – because I always feel like everything is my fault – "Oh, what

> happened in that moment? You completely saved me! That was a conductor kind of completely losing it." *Jade – 2020*

Now taking seriously the hints of dissatisfaction with her career in music, Jade enters a period of searching and exploration. Life-changing experiences she's relished as a concert musician she experiences as "things that make it hard to leave."

> At this point, it just feels like it's too late. I'm down at my parents' house, out on the back patio, having a drink with them. They have a neighbor next door, Pam. She's in her late sixties. She worked for a major airline for her career, and at age 40, the airline went under. She had to start her career over. She hadn't gone to college, and she ended up being extremely successful as an account manager for a liquor company and went around, traveling the world, doing wines and all this amazing stuff and just loved her life. She's sitting there, and I'm talking to my parents, "Do I do this? Do I switch? Oh my God, am I crazy? I have this great career, what if I fail? And what if it's just too late?" Pam looks at me and says, "If I could say to you now: you do not understand how much time you have." It gives me chills. It's the point at which I think, *OK, I'm going to do this. If Pam's sitting here, and she switched careers at age 40, and she's telling me I don't understand how many years I have, like I'm so early-on… I'm going to go ahead and do it. Jade – 2020*

While Jade will eventually watch three close friends who also have successful, meaningful careers in music follow suit and leave their careers, during this encounter with Pam, she's facing the prospect of leaving her music career all alone, without any similar instances in her immediate circle. Pam's sharing of her experience proves helpful and encouraging to Jade. Another equally helpful example comes to Jade by way her spouse's colleague, a tenure-track literature professor at a liberal arts college, Brad. He tells Jade, "I'm going to be that guy. I'm going to be that guy who leaves his tenure-track job and goes and does finance." Her courage mounting, Jade experiences a kind of simmer that approaches a boiling point. That boiling point comes when a close friend confronts her.

> I'm thinking about being bored, wanting to make a lot more money, even though I'm doing very well. I'm at the summer early music festival, and my very good friend who is a singer there hears me complaining all summer, and finally, he turns to me and says, "You've got to shut up. I have a friend who's an accountant, who hates his career and his life, and he's seeing a career consultant. I'm going to give you this consultant's number,

> and you're going to call him. You're going to figure out what the hell you're doing, and you're going to stop talking about this." I'm like, "OK, OK" We're on a hike. We hike all the time, because that's one of the big things you do in this town, because you've got the valley and the hills. The festival organizers rent many of the homes in the town for the musicians, and that's where we stay. They're these little bungalows. I share a house with a soprano each year. The town is really cool. It's right on the ocean, gorgeous. It is *magical*. Amazing. The town that has no street lights, so you walk around with flashlights. This little bungalow is the house I'm in for the last three or four years that I play the festival. It's like "our house." It has this kitchen table that's right on the window out to the front garden, and that's where we sit after rehearsal when we're exhausted. We eat or just kind of sit and look over music scores. This spot is exactly where I'm sitting when I make the call. After the hike, I sit at the table with my pen and paper, I make the first call with the career consultant. *Jade – 2020*

A short-term professional relationship with the career consultant begins.

> I'm working with him but have my feelers out. A friend of mine is a very good soprano, and her day job – to support her singing habit – is doing all of the back-office work at a commodities brokerage. We meet for a drink one night. She's like, "come up to my office." I walk in, and it's this mini trading floor. I'm like, "Meg! Oh my God! This is my dream! I didn't know this is where you worked! Can you get me in? Can you get me an interview? What do these people do? Will they talk to me?" She's like, "You are crazy. You don't want to work here with these people. Everyone's screaming and yelling. They're mean and nuts." I'm like, "No, no, no. I really do. This is what I want to do." I'm working with the career consultant at the same time, and she gets me the interview. I tell my career consultant, "Oh my God, these people are going to talk to me! What do I do? How do I prepare?" *Jade – 2020*

She prepares and interviews for the job.

Jade immediately lands the job at the commodities brokerage. She spends the first six weeks training on the trading floor during the days and studying for the required Series 3 license exam in the evenings. She passes the exam. Now fully licensed to hedge and trade commodities, Jade works as a commodities broker for about six months. The experience is illuminating, but she has her eye on other possibilities. She considers the path toward consultancy with a big box consultant firm and whether or not to accept two separate job offers from an asset/hedge fund management company, while ruling out the prospect of returning to school for an MBA. She

accepts and settles into her first of three positions with a higher education research and technology firm.

Unsure of the best way to share the news of having left her music career, Jade keeps the details of her new life quiet for a full year. After her first year in a new career, Jade post the news on social media, *Great first year! I'm so glad I left.*

> People are like, "Oh my God!" I assume musicians will think I'm nuts, because they all love being musicians. You would not believe how many people write to me, people who I think love their careers, and say, "Oh my God, I wish I had the confidence… or I wish that I felt that I could do this." And I feel very sad to hear it, because I'd thought everybody was just happy doing their music thing. I guess it just is a big risk to try to get out. *Jade – 2020*

Until now, only family, close friends and immediate colleagues knew of her career change. Making the news public is a reminder of the notably larger public profile she formally had.

Being a Post-Professional Musician

Life in corporate America is good to Jade. She enjoys a fast career trajectory, amassing a variety of skills along the way. Her first position at the higher education research and technology firm is forward facing, performative and travel-heavy. She meets on campuses with various college and university administrators and executives to speak about the research offerings of her firm. Her second position is internal and includes an 18-member team. She runs all of operations and strategy for the 140-member research division, builds up the division's infrastructure, oversees a ten's-of-millions-dollar budget and new employee training. Her third position as an account manager and strategic advisor is once again client-facing. A typical day includes four to six calls with a college or university administrator or executive, like the president, chief of staff, VP of advancement or VP of student affairs. During these calls and in an effort to address specific client needs, Jade connects her clients to the relevant research produced by her firm.

> I work very closely with the chief strategy officer of a large midwestern university, about 40,000 students, who's the president's right-hand person. I meet with her every two weeks, she and her strategy team. We are overseeing a number of projects across the institution. I'm bringing everything my firm has to bear on what they're trying to accomplish on campus. A lot of it is employer partnerships and online learning and what is the future of that going to be. Some of it is student success and retention. How are they making sure they are retaining as many students as they can? The president and cabinet recently came to our offices to do two days of intensive work with us to prepare for a grant that we're doing. Some clients might have just one membership with us, and I talk to them every three months, and that's that. Some of them really do have these big very strategic partnerships. Those are the ones I love, and I'm really working with them on just about a daily basis. *Jade – 2020*

Internal meetings occupy another portion of her day, along with both client and fellow-manager follow-up work. She is also required to keep current with her firm's research and pass regularly administered tests on its content.

Now in a new career, Jade experiences a new relationship to music and the arts. She finds joy in attending ballets and frequenting art museums. Listening to music often means listening to popular rather than classical music with the exception of shared listening experiences with her husband in the evenings as canonic works of Johannes Brahms top their playlist. She continues however to experience a similar relationship to classical concert attendance:

> I don't go to many concerts. I find them sort of allergic. But I was allergic before I left music, so that's not something that's changed. I haven't sat through one concert that I wasn't performing all the way in the last like 20 years. It's always been an issue for me, even on stage: "Oh, I don't like this. I don't like that. I'm bored. Let's go eat." *Jade – 2020*

Only very rarely does she find and attend a concert that appeals to her.

> My husband and I are going to a concert, because we want to hear something live. The first thing on the program is the Shostakovich violin concerto which I have no reason to hear, and he's like, "Oh no, I can't deal… let's just… we'll go to dinner, have a drink, and then we'll go in at intermission and hear the second half of the concert and hear what we want to hear." We get there a little bit before intermission, and all the ushers are very concerned that we could go in and hear the last movement of the Shostakovich: "Oh my gosh, you missed it!" We're like, "No, no it's OK. No rush. We just came late." Yes, OK, fine. We get to the next usher of the next level where the seat is: "Oh my goodness, here we can get you in!" Literally, four ushers later, they're trying to put us next to the

> presidential box seat, like "Oh, we've got these extra seats. You don't want to miss it." And we were literally saying, "No, we're not going in!" Finally, the applause comes, and we think, *OK, time to go in*. We stand by the door but don't hear anything. Nothing happens. Nobody comes out for the intermission. We say to the usher, "Didn't they applaud? Isn't the concerto over?" She says, "The violinist is giving an encore." And without even thinking, the words fly out of my mouth: "O for God's sake!" The usher looks at me with these big eyes, and I think, *Oh dear, yeah, well, OK. Jade – 2020*

For the most part, Jade no longer plays her instruments, harpsichord, fortepiano piano and organ. After four years of not playing, she entertains the idea of playing again:

> *It might be nice to play a church service. Maybe I'll look and see if someone needs a sub now and then.* Someone needs a sub every other week for a couple of months, and I do that for a couple months, and that scratches the itch, probably for another half-decade. *Jade – 2020*

A carry-over from her years of work as a vocal coach, her piano repertoire consists primarily of songs. She finds playing Debussy or Schubert songs absent a singer to be unsatisfying and otherwise has no current repertoire of solo literature. She no longer values harpsichords, and keeps only the piano in her home. Although she rarely plays her piano, keeping it near is meaningful to her.

> It's my baby. I have a very emotional connection to it, because it's been with me for so many years, since I was a small child. I built my career all from this piano. It's this piano that's special to me. It wouldn't necessarily be another instrument. *Jade – 2020*

This piano is a distinct reminder of her former career. It holds treasured memories.

Grant

Becoming a Professional Musician

Grant begins his music studies as a violinist in early childhood. Until the age of 10, he has the good fortune of studying with an exceptionally wonderful teacher in a large populous city of Mexico. His teacher maintains high expectations for practicing and assigns a high-volume steady flow of work. Grant hears very often that he is talented, and his teacher is diligent in

cultivating his talent. When his family moves to a town near an international city located in the UK, Grant is 10 years old.

> In England, I don't have the same experience. I have good teachers, but they aren't as diligent in many of the technical ways that this previous teacher is. I go back four years later; I'm 14 years old. I play for my old teacher in Mexico. He's encouraging, but he says… he uses the Spanish word *descuidado* which means to not be well cared for: *he hasn't been well taken care of.* I take from this a combination of things: I can have talent and still not develop as well as I might, because I also need to be nurtured and taken care of. It's a moment, an experience that I don't feel like I have disappointed him, because he's very encouraging, and he does not feel like I suddenly would never have a career, but it is enough to make me think twice. *Grant – 2020*

One year later, at age 15, Grant finds himself listening to a recording of Partita in d minor by J.S. Bach for solo violin, played by a renowned Russian-American 20th century violinist.

> I've never listened to it before. It can be between 13 and 15 minutes long, an enormously complicated piece and very profoundly moving. I listen through to the whole thing in one sitting, and when I get to the end, I think, *now I know: this is what I want to do.* It's very clear, clear enough that I actually call a friend of mine, and I say, "I've just listened to this piece, and now I know what I want to do." It sort of crystallizes in my mind at this moment. It has consequences in terms of what I do next and how I approach my applications and the latter parts of high school. It's a significant moment. *Grant – 2020*

Taken together, this experience and that of the visit to his previous teacher in Mexico prompt Grant to apply more diligence in the technical realm of his development. He discovers the limitless nature of technique.

As Grant nears the end of high school with his sights set on music conservatory, he searches for a teacher in the international city accessible to him by train. His idea is to take a gap year between high school and conservatory to study violin more intently. In need of a teacher who can challenge him more than those in his town, he locates a well-regarded teacher in the city who agrees to hear him play.

> He says, "You should come to the school where I teach." And I say, "Well, the trouble is, I've got a whole year between now and when I go to college. I'd have to audition and then I'm still left with an empty year." He says, "No, it's okay. You can start next week. I'll arrange it." Literally the next day they send me the application papers. I fill them out and

> I go to school the next week. It's a huge vote of confidence in my abilities. He makes room in his program. They make room at the school for me to join the cohort. *Grant – 2020*

The vote of confidence is accompanied by an experience that highlights Grant's feeling of having moved from being a big fish in a small pond to being in a pond full of many fish.

> It's my first performance at my new music school, and it's taking place two or three weeks into my first semester. This moment puts a certain amount of pressure on me, because it's the first time I'm performing in front of a new group of people. It's a group of people who are at a higher level, and so it's really an additional layer of strain. The long and short of it is: I do not play as well as I hoped. It's really the first time I have this experience. Most of the time I'm well prepared and have time to think about it. I have ups and downs, but I haven't really gotten to the point where I care about a performance and do really, really poorly. So it's a very meaningful moment in recognizing that there's just a lot more to it than one's talent, enjoyment and ability. It's a very significant turning point in my own concept of professionalism, which is that it's complicated, and there's a lot to factor in. *Grant – 2020*

Grants experiences a traditional Western classical conservatory program. He spends long hours practicing, many hours in applied lessons and time engaged in a variety of student performances. One of the most challenging aspects turns out to be logistical: Grant's violin teacher schedules lessons for 7:30 AM. In order to be punctual and have adequate time to practice beforehand, Grant rises at 5:00 AM.

Grant continues his undergraduate studies at one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the UK. Becoming a professional musician thereafter is a gradual process of building and comes to include teaching as a way of balancing a performing career.

> It's almost as though the early years are mostly climbing. I'm sort of a professional, but I haven't gotten anywhere, is what it feels like. It's sort of *working towards* a certain professional level. I find that I enjoy teaching a lot. I do more of it, and the more of it that I do, the more formalized I want that aspect of my career to be. *Grant – 2020*

In order to formalize the teaching aspect of his emerging career, Grant continues his studies and earns a Ph.D. in musicology from an Ivy League university in the United States.

Being a Professional Musician

After several years of working toward a performing career, Grant wins a position playing with an established and highly regarded chamber music ensemble based in a large US northeastern city. Chamber music is his passion. Now feeling like a true professional, he begins balancing a performing career as a chamber violinist with a teaching career.

> We generally do something like two concerts over a weekend, and there's a rehearsal to prepare for those two concerts. The rehearsal is on a Tuesday or Wednesday. We fly out on Friday and do a concert Friday night and then travel Saturday to the next concert Saturday night and come back Sunday. A typical week is a range of private students who come to the apartment generally after school, and I teach them: I have a cohort of pretty advanced students. Essentially, anything that isn't teaching is practicing and preparing for concerts. *Grant – 2020*

Touring on the weekends is gratifying, and Grant becomes good friends with the cellist in the group. The two enjoy traveling and experiencing new places together. They also share a sense of humor.

> When a chamber group is tuning, one of the very difficult things is to tune the lowest string of the cello and the lowest string of the viola: they're an octave apart. When I play viola, I lean over to him, and we play our C strings. They sound completely like abominable together. We both nod knowingly and just leave them. This is our routine in rehearsals to play this joke. It's very funny. *Grant – 2020*

Grant's chamber ensemble is managed by an agent who handles their bookings and itineraries. Most of the time, plans unfold without a hitch.

> We're playing a piece of chamber music by Rosinni, a divertimento. It's a small piece for five instruments. The manager of the group, about a minute before we walk onto the stage, says, "Oh, I forgot to tell you: you have to introduce the piece and tell the audience what it's about." This is literally just as I'm walking onto the stage. So I have to come up with something. The performance goes very well. *Grant – 2020*

In addition to the regular concert season, Grant's ensemble plays every year for a summer festival. Every now and then, Grant is hired to play in an orchestra, including one occasion playing in a world-famous hall located in a large northeastern city.

> I'm asked to join an orchestra that plays every year, usually in January, for a not-for-profit. It's a gala that raises money, but essentially the orchestra is made up mostly of

> members of the opera orchestra on the one hand, the philharmonic on the other and then a handful of freelancers as well. I'm chosen among those freelancers. They contact me and say, "would you like to play?" I haven't played at this hall before, and so I say yes. I play, but I have a sort of… it's almost like an arc of an experience during the performance. One of which is just absolutely wonderful to be on the stage with particularly some of the people who are there who are just such extraordinary musicians that it's like, how could you not want to be here? It's just wonderful. We're playing Mahler's Third Symphony which calls for an unusually large number of French horns. They're actually 10 of them. It's just this amazing moment of like *how could anyone want to be anywhere else?* These are the two best horn sections like in this hemisphere on the same stage… just amazing. But then the other part of it, oddly enough, is the Mahler 3 is a very long piece and it's actually very, very difficult as well and quite nerve racking and very exposed for a lot of the violins and there are moments later on in the performance I just think, *I have no idea why anyone enjoys doing this. This is a nightmare. I'm constantly worried about mistakes that I might make, I'm not making any but this is really nerve wracking. Why would anyone want to do this? Grant – 2020*

A couple of recording engagements also present themselves. On one occasion, he takes on a solo recording project.

> There's a 17th century German violinist who lived in England and wrote enormously difficult violin music. A friend and mentor says to me, "If you're interested in old music, you should look at this guy." It turns out there is one piece that is known about and another twelve that are in manuscript form and not fully identified as being his. I actually undertake the project of finding these pieces, transcribing and playing them. Oddly enough, what I want to do is record them. I approach two record labels, who both say, "you can record them, but you will lose all editorial control. We'll record you and you can just hand over the cuts to us, and we'll edit and sell them, but you don't have any say once the notes are recorded. You don't have any kind of control over it." I don't really want to do this. I'm actually asking among friends what I should do, and one of them is an audio engineer. He says, "It's not that hard. You should just record it yourself and then send the master to a different record label." I learn how to engineer my own album. I rent microphones. I record and edit the entire album and then find somebody to transfer it to the appropriate format. I pay an engineer to do this part. Then I shop the master to another label who ends up taking it and selling it. During this whole process, I'm just thinking, *I'm going to do something other people haven't done*. *Grant – 2020*

Although he is acting entrepreneurially, rather than conceiving of this project in entrepreneurial terms, he approaches it as a way of standing out among other professional violinists.

Concurrent with his life as a professional musician, Grant maintains a life as an academic. He is in a tenure track position at one of the top 30 research institutions located in a

large New England city. He teaches a massive range of courses, from 17th century violin music to research methods to 20th century Latin American music.

> I'm very productive as an academic. I make sure I publish absurd numbers of conference papers, and I work extraordinarily hard to make sure that I really pursue it with all my energy. I'm getting up at 6:00 in the morning to start writing, taking a break to go teach, practicing in the afternoon and then resuming writing until 11:00 o'clock at night. *Grant – 2020*

Together, maintaining a competitive presence both on stage and in the academy is a massive endeavor.

Pivoting from Professional to Post-Professional Musician

Grant plays and tours with his chamber ensemble for seven years, all while balancing life as a teacher and for the last few years, as an academic too. Fond as he is of functioning as both practitioner and theorist, Grant knows of no other musician maintaining both performing and academic careers. The demands on his time become very challenging. He's fortunate to find even one and a half to two hours per day to rehearse in preparation for upcoming concerts and recordings.

> I am very lucky to evolve a way of practicing that means I don't have to do that much of it. I have very clear ideas about how to practice in such a way that I continue to get better. *Grant – 2020*

Sustaining simultaneous performing and academic careers appears increasingly untenable, particularly because both careers are highly competitive. Most violinists are aiming to be exclusively successful violinists. The majority of tenure-track academics are mainly vying for tenure.

> I know that I do not want to gradually decline as a violinist. I never want to go through a gradual period where I don't practice all that much and try and wing it. I know I never want to do that. I always want to be consistent in how I play and how I perform. *Grant – 2020*

At the same time, another consideration becomes clear, as an academic career offers many benefits. Redirecting all of his efforts into an academic career at the expense of his performing career will mean saying goodbye forever to the performing career.

> I know that I have to find a decision. It's a pretty important realization: I know that it has to be a clear division between playing and not playing. I know that I have to pick a stopping point and make a clean break. I sort of know the academic career will win out. *Grant – 2020*

During the last 18 months of his professional musician and academic careers, these considerations weigh increasingly heavily on his mind. Consolidating his energy into his academic career looks increasingly viable and likely. He spends months thinking, *the right time will reveal itself. I don't have to decide today. At some point it will become clear.* To his surprise, during the summer before what comes to be his last academic year in his music career, doubts regarding even the academic side of his career begin to manifest, albeit more gradually. While at a party, he happens to meet a mutual friend who's changed careers from academia to business. Grant engages him in conversation, curious to know more about his experience and interested to learn the feasibility of a move that he had previously regarded as implausible, given the nature of his already very established career in music.

When a dream job becomes available, Grant decides to pursue it – a tenure track position at the same Ivy League school at which his spouse is on faculty. It is here that the topic of his Ph.D. dissertation on the music theorist Adolf Bernhard Marx becomes acutely relevant.

> Funnily enough, I'm doing a conference there, and I present at the conference. There's a dinner afterwards, and this is one of those moments… it's so crazy: the person opposite me at dinner is on the search committee for the job. We spend two and a half hours over dinner where he asks me what I'm teaching. I demonstrate what I think is a massive range of teaching. After two and a half hours of talking about 17th century violin music, Dvorák, Latin American music in the 20th century and American music – this whole range of different things – at the end of dinner, he says, "you know, we have a job going here." I say, "yes, I know." He says, "I think you would be so perfect for it, but it's too bad we don't need an A. B. Marx guy." I walk back to my car, thinking, *do I want to do*

> *this every year for the rest of my life until I get a better job? Is this really what I want to do? I'm not sure. I could keep doing this, but I'm not sure I really want to. Grant – 2020*

As this experience reminds Grant of the niche area he occupies in academia, among numerous other individuals in similarly niche areas, he begins to doubt the strength of his commitment to academia over the long-haul.

Just more than two months later, Grant finds himself sharing the stage with two distinguished fixtures in the violin world – one of a famous string quartet and the other the concert master of a world-class orchestra located in a large New England city. The occasion is a concert with a highly respected early music chamber group active in the mountainous part of western New England. Grant occasionally plays with this group, but this time is the first that he's featured as an equal alongside violinists he holds in high esteem.

> We do the entire evening. There are other instruments as well: three violas and three cellos, but we do the whole evening. It's all the Bach Brandenburg concertos and we're the only three violins. I get to the green room afterwards, I'm putting my violin away after the final concert of the series and I realize, *I don't have anything on my calendar immediately, and now is as good a time as any. I've been on this stage, but I don't feel like I don't belong here. I don't feel dwarfed by people who are actual giants. I feel like I'm holding my own and that I have a comparable sound. Grant – 2020*

The experience crystalizes for Grant the reality that he's done and is doing almost everything a professional violinist could want to do. He's played in many of the country's finest performance venues, including an iconic hall located in a large northeastern city, he's produced and been featured on various recordings and now he's shared a stage and held his own with two giants of the violin world. Taken together, he's struck with nearly a sense of arrival, of having arrived. Walking off the stage this evening, Grant is walking off the stage of his professional violinist career. The event feels even more symbolic during the drive home.

> As a violinist, I could never wear a ring on my left hand, because it gets in the way when I play. I'd always worn my wedding ring on my right hand. On the way home from the concert, I switch the ring to my left hand. It's never left my left hand since then. It's a

> really meaningful switch for me. It's very concrete to me, the feeling of the ring on a different hand, and that hand on the steering wheel, driving home through the dark. It's cold. It really feels like a chapter closing. *Grant – 2020*

For now, the academic career does indeed win out. While the performing side of his music career has ended, he continues to be generally associated with the music profession by virtue of his position as an Assistant Professor.

The impulse to leave music altogether, including academia, begins to manifest. Grant discusses the possibility with his spouse during a drive into the city to meet friends for dinner.

> Although I know I want to make the move, I'm not sure I will succeed. I'm thinking aloud and ask rhetorically, "what if I'm just too old, and it's just too late?" The conversation moves on. About 45 minutes later we're the first of our group of friends to arrive at a restaurant on the northwestern side of the city. The hostess shows us to a rectangular table in an alcove with leather benches, booth-style, on three sides. On the wall is a large chalkboard, and on it is written a quotation from one of Rilke's Book of Hours: "You are not too old, and it is not too late…" The last lines go on to say something like, "to dive into your unfolding depths, where life quietly gives up its secret." I am, and remain, pretty dumbfounded that the words so literally answer my earlier question, but the effect on me is that it is much harder to feel discouraged afterward. *Grant – 2020*

Just before the spring semester begins and around the time of his final concert, Grant determines to indeed make the move out of academia and by extension, out of his music career entirely. He has his eye on a possible business career. In short order, he sets a clear strategy in motion.

> I decide to pursue the non-academic route more energetically and deliberately. I use my tuition remission at my university to enroll in a Master of Science and Finance, so that I can address some of the gaps in my resume. I have a lot of arts and languages experience, but there's nothing in there that says I can do anything quantitative which I know is going to be necessary in the business world. *Grant – 2020*

The decision to enroll in a Master of Science and Finance degree marks his first actionable response to the decision to look for work outside of academia. The second action he takes is engaging a career consultant. The consultant is especially helpful in orienting Grant to the networking process critical in the business world. Although Grant experiences uncertainly

regarding whether his move into a new career will be successful, he is clear about the fact that his success will be directly correlated to the amount and quality of his effort.

Grant is faced with an immediate and short-term dilemma: he has not yet shared with his students and colleagues his plans to leave academia. He intends to continue teaching while finishing his Master of Science and Finance degree. The irony is that the courses he takes for his degree are offered in the same building that houses his department, including his office.

> The accounting class takes place in a classroom that is right next to the entrance where we come in, including my students, if they're entering the building from that side. I have my office hour, and then I spend about an hour to get dinner and prepare for my evening class. I take all of my books and go downstairs. I have to get there early to occupy a really specific seat which is in the back and behind a pillar, so that no one can see me if they look into the window. If someone sees me in another classroom, they will ask what I'm studying, and if I say "I'm studying accounting," they will ask me why I'm studying accounting. There's this whole cascade of questions that I'm trying to head off by not being seen at all. I don't feel there's a good way of explaining my presence in this classroom any other way. "I'm learning skills to apply outside of what I do." That's the only possible answer. It's the major incentive for staying hidden. *Grant – 2020*

As Grant nears the end of his business degree and academic career – both of which end the same semester – he prepares thoroughly for a job interview with a global health care research and technology firm. His career consultant proves helpful during the preparation process. Grant lands the job. Among other things, his position is meant to communicate the firm's research to corporate clients and offer strategic guidance. Just five days after his last day in academia, he hits the ground running.

Being a Post-Professional Musician

Grant works for the firm and very often travels to hospitals, interacting with a spectrum of hospital personal, from nurses to CEOs. He facilitates discussions among small groups of senior hospital executives on the topic of their operations relative to their goals. Grant becomes accustomed to the logistics of life as a business person, adopting a new approach to time

management that includes offering and accepting numerous weekly calendar invitations, forming new rhythms of flight travel for day-trips and even dressing the part by acquiring a new wardrobe of suits.

After approximately two and a half years, Grant changes jobs and takes a position for the next four and a half years as head of business development and sales with a start-up of 25 members.

> I join at an early enough stage that I do a little bit of almost everything. It really helps to avoid pigeonholing into any given particular role. In my case, it means I do some traditional kind of enterprise sales where the company sells a big software installation to a bank. At one end, there's sales to hedge funds, where it's a group of 12 people. There's the academic relationships that we built, and then in between all of these things, there's writing a daily newsletter that goes out to all of the subscribers, about 4,000 people, which is like a little market report that I do. For a while, I wake up at 5:30 every morning to read the newspaper and then correct the statistical mistakes that they made. I manage the social media feed at one point where my job is to come up with these really tortured finance puns. It's really challenging. It's actually kind of fun, but it's these sorts of things where my role is not really a role: it's essentially if you're in a startup, you sort of don't have a role. Your involvement in the startup is its own definition. *Grant – 2020*

A typical week includes meetings with his management team, daily check-ins with his direct-reports, weekly meetings on the topic of sales goals and sales pipeline, meetings with company engineers to discuss their progress on certain projects and various meetings with current and potential customers. Customer meetings can take a variety of interesting forms. One prominent customer is the US government.

> It's a surreal meeting that I have with a senior member of the Air Force. The military has access to co-working spaces. We have this meeting in this extremely hip-looking, trendy co-working space where the seats are designed to be funky and really difficult to sit in. Here's this guy in like full uniform with his call sign embroidered on his shirt. It's just exactly like Top Gun. It's absolutely hysterical. And here he is flailing and struggling in this really odd-shaped seat. *Grant – 2020*

Just before joining the start-up, Grant receives an invitation to play with the same orchestra he had played several years earlier when the program featured Mahler's third symphony.

> I haven't touched my violin in two years. It literally has not come out of the case in two years. I'm asked to play, and I think, *well, it would be really nice. That's something that I would like to do. It'd be nice to play there one more time. Why should I not do this?* It's about a month before. I resolve to at least try it out and see how it feels to play the instrument. It's obviously something I anticipate being a milestone, that I would get it out and either have completely forgotten how to do anything or I would notice how far I had fallen off where I used to be. I get the instrument out. I tune it, and I start playing. My wife comes by very quietly, as I'm playing and stands in the doorway. I stop and I look at her. She says, "You sound exactly the same." I'm amazed to find that I sound exactly the same, like it's just exactly the same. What I do notice is that I do not have the stamina: my fingers are not strong enough to keep going for several hours. I know it would take me a while to build up the sort of finger stamina to do that. *Grant – 2020*

The amount of practice necessary to regain the stamina necessary to play on stage again can't be accommodated in Grant's current schedule. He declines the invitation.

His music listening patterns remain similar to those during his life as a professional musician. He enjoys music of the Western classical canon and very occasionally, a little jazz. 18th and 19th century piano music and music for string orchestra feature regularly. Listening to music, Grant is highly selective regarding the quality of the recorded performances.

> I get a lot of enjoyment out of listening to wonderful players. I love string music in general. There are a few pieces that I do gravitate towards of a string orchestra that I absolutely love. I go through phases where I will go through like a month or two of listening to violin music. And then, it'll be several months of the piano and orchestra type music and then I'll go back to violin at some stage, but I tend to kind of tune in and out of violin music. *Grant – 2020*

Grant no longer plays his violin. Aside from the day he played for a few minutes to discover that he sounded the same as before, the only other time he takes out his violin is the day he compares instruments, assessing their value.

> I have *a* violin. I'm in the middle of selling two others because given that I don't really play anymore at all, it seems weird to have three instruments. To have three instruments that you don't play is excessive. Having one that you don't play is probably okay. The one I've kept is one that I have a lot of emotional attachment to, because it was one that I played as a teenager. It's formative as an instrument for me. It also belonged to my uncle whom I borrowed it from at that time, and he left it to me in his will. There's the one that I used as a professional which I just feel it's sad for an instrument not to be used. It's at the moment with the maker, and he's sort of preparing it to bring it into playing shape

> again. There's a chance that I will actually loan it to an institution to loan to students to play. The other one is a sort of in between instrument that I also inherited, but I don't have any special attachment to it. It's also significantly more valuable than the one that I'm keeping which has, in violin terms, almost no financial value at all, but a lot of sentimental value and it sounds great: it covers the things that matter. *Grant – 2020*

Grant has always loved the physical beauty of the violin. He decides to keep the violin that holds memories of his early student years and that is associated with a meaningful human relationship. That it also sounds great is a plus.

Claire

Becoming a Professional Musician

Claire begins her music studies at the piano at age five, and after a few months, asks her parents for a better teacher. She quickly progresses in her studies.

> I'm just a natural performer. I have no fear. I have almost photographic memory and start memorizing pieces from the first times I look at them. I'm talented, but I work very hard. I'm a natural practice-r and very directed as a kid. I know I'm going to be a professional musician. I'm my teacher's favorite student. She's very encouraging, up until I mention that I want to do it professionally, and then she's very discouraging. *Claire – 2020*

Unfazed by her teacher's doubt regarding a music career, Claire continues her studies into high school and adds the French horn.

> I go to a summer music program just to get away from my parents, using the French horn as an excuse. There's a French horn professor from Germany, and unexpectedly I'm very inspired by him. One night, I'm walking outside the music building, and I hear this French horn sound coming out of the studio he's playing in. I'm just like *this is what I'm going to do*. It's my inspiration for playing the horn. I plan to work with him. I set a goal of getting through my studies in the United States and then going to Germany to study with him. *Claire – 2020*

With an eye now on a professional career as a French horn player, Claire enters a highly regarded conservatory in a large northeastern city. She finds no school of horn playing in this city that is to her liking, but getting a degree and making plans to study afterward in Europe

seems like a good idea. After two years of study, she auditions for another even more prestigious conservatory in the same city. She has no plans to transfer, but rather takes the audition at the direction of a French horn faculty and philharmonic member with whom she would like to have a few lessons.

> I've heard he's a decent teacher, so I want to try him out. I call him up and he says, "I don't have any time to listen to you. I'm just too busy, but if you're willing to pay $60, just show up at the audition and play, and I'll tell you if I'll take you for summer lessons or not." I just really go to the audition so he can hear me, and the next thing I know, I'm accepted for a double major: horn and piano. It's a big surprise. I unexpectedly get in which is kind of funny, because it's a very competitive atmosphere around me, and I really couldn't care less. *Claire – 2020*

Claire completes her degree and stays for a Master's degree. One summer, she wins an orchestral seat in a prestigious music festival held in Italy.

During these conservatory years, she experiences clashes with professors and colleagues who belong to a school of horn playing she finds unappealing. She finds an ally and confidant in her music theory professor. He acts as a mentor and shares many long conversations with her, making these years more bearable than they might otherwise be. Among her peers, Claire gains the reputation of a wild one.

> I have some fun. My best friend is a cellist. For safety, she and I sing Queen of the Night between the train and the place we live. We keep going up by half step until we're at this unbelievably high pitch, screeching it. We figure no one will ever be crazy enough to mug us. *Claire – 2020*

Claire keeps clear in mind her goal of studying in Europe after conservatory. To fund the move, she spends a few hours per week working. She ushers for two of the top concert venues in town, gaining regular exposure to the high-caliber performances of canonical orchestral repertoire. She also spends two afternoons per week working for a small artists' management company, doing administrative work and working closely with the manager of a famous American composer and conductor. Upon graduation and with her sights still set on Germany, she relocates to France to

study with a world-famous French horn player and teacher. He's the toughest but greatest teacher she ever has. She grows enormously as a musician and player, and her student jobs pay off: she's saved enough to live for one and a half years.

Being a Professional Musician

Poised to pivot into professional musician life, Claire makes her way to a large city in the northeastern part of Germany, home to a world-renowned orchestra. She's acquainted with a few members of the orchestra and strategically takes several lessons with one of its French horn players as a means of networking, still regarding her teacher in France as her true and primary teacher. She's offered a three-month position playing with a small local orchestra. One of their French horn players is allegedly out with a bad case of "Strauss-a-titis" – a common tongue-in-cheek ailment among German orchestral players. Amused, Claire accepts. Near the end of three months, she tells her teacher from the world-renowned orchestra that unless another opportunity presents itself, she may need to return to the United States.

> He asks, "What are you doing on Thursday at 10?" I say, "I'm not doing anything on Thursday at 10." He pushes this third horn part at me and says, "We need you to double on Symphony Domestica." I think, *Shit, I'd better go practice this part!* I don't have much time: it's Tuesday and I have two days to go, and the session's being recorded. I practice and sleep. The next thing I know, I'm on the stage of this world-renowned orchestra. *Claire – 2020*

The experience turns out to be Claire's break: she's asked to stay on as a regular substitute French horn player. For the next eight years, she plays with one of the finest most iconic orchestras in the world and experiences a vast repertoire under the world's most revered conductors. A performance of Verdi's Requiem is representative of many transcendent experiences she has during these years.

> When we play, we double the horn section: no one has to play that loud, so it won't get edgy, but everybody's playing really loud. I mean it's so loud: you're playing at the top of your lungs, but you can't even hear yourself. You're just enveloped in this body of

> sound. It's really amazing. I don't know if most people have them, but it's one of these moments in my life where while it's happening, I'm living through something that's fleeting, but I'll never ever forget it. It makes everything worth it: all the years of every stress, every asshole, all the money I put into it, all the traveling I've had to do, all the practicing – it all falls away, because that's what brings me into this moment. *Claire – 2020*

Life with the philharmonic is very good, and Claire is well-paid. Maintaining top-level performance becomes an ongoing priority, and she is routinely reminded of as much.

> I'm really under the gun. I'm playing fifth horn out of eight in some Scriabin symphony, and the whole fuckin' thing starts with me playing a high G-sharp all by myself. It just happens to be the fifth horn part. It's scary. *Claire – 2020*

Orchestral members regularly gather at the cantina backstage for a beer after concerts. Claire spends the majority of her time at the philharmonic, performing, rehearsing with the orchestra, practicing, using the recording studios, attending concerts and teaching a few students. She becomes affectionately known to the doormen as "house mouse." When the weather allows, Claire's mode of transportation is her bicycle, horn strapped in the back basket. The only woman of the horn section and among concert-goers, she becomes a recognizable figure around town. She enjoys the associated perks: being advanced to the front of a queue or offered compliments of hospitality become regular occurrences. Claire begins to get connected to additional playing opportunities.

> I'm a freelancer. The philharmonic is my main thing, and everything else radiates out from it, because it's a great orchestra and obviously there's a lot of respect that goes with it: we're rock stars, basically. I'm first call for radio recordings because I have a really good high range, a very accurate high range. I start doing big band recordings. *Claire – 2020*

Claire finds the recording work to be a lot of fun and encounters a variety of personalities that make it especially interesting. Occasional playing with small local orchestras turns out to be uniquely gratifying too.

> I play in this real crumby local orchestra in town. I love playing with them, because I'm first horn, and I get to go through all the repertoire. They are really grateful to have someone like me, and I like playing with them. They are really, really nice to me. *Claire – 2020*

Being a first-rate brass player in a male-dominated space comes with certain challenges.

> I'm first horn, playing this live radio show with a bunch of my contemporaries – a lot of whom really hate me. They are all German and male. They resent me, because they all thought they were working their way up slowly to something, and then I breeze in and get what they think they deserve to get. So I have this whole thing to contend with too, a lot. I put on red lipstick. Horn players don't like to play with greasy lips. A lot of them like that secure mouthpiece feeling and stuff. So I wear this super red lipstick, and they are all like, *Oh my God, is she going to make it?* I play perfectly, and they are like, *you've got to take your hat off to her*. I'm like, *fuck you. Claire – 2020*

Collegiate banter is as entertaining to the players as the music is to the radio show listeners.

Between concert seasons and during the first few summers, Claire spends her time back in the US in the same city she had attended conservatory. She interviews with the CEO, Frank, of a young asset management company.

> He's a very upper-crust British guy, and he says to me at the end of my interview, "What salary do you command, per hour?" I say, "20 dollars." At this time people are making like eight dollars an hour or something, and he's like, "Oh my God! 20 dollars an hour? That's outrageous!" I say, "It was worth asking you, wasn't it? You might have said yes!" I'm not the usual interviewee. I just don't care. So he hires me at 14 dollars an hour and then gives me a raise to 16 the week after. He says, "You *are* worth it, Claire." *Claire – 2020*

During her first summer working in finance, she's one of only seven employees. Eleven years later, the firm employs close to 200. Pleased with her work, Frank eventually offers to pay Claire's tuition, should she decide to attend school for an MBA. Once her work at his firm comes to an end, he again expresses his appreciation.

> When I leave, I ask him if he wouldn't like to give me a golden parachute. He says, "You want a golden parachute?" And I say, "Yeah, Frank, you've got the greatest ideas!" And he actually gives me around $13,000. He's really nice. *Claire – 2020*

Both the financial industry work experience and golden parachute prove useful in the coming months.

Pivoting from Professional to Post-Professional Musician

During the final years of Claire's eleven-year sojourn in northeastern Germany, a confluence of considerations begins moving her toward a post-professional musician life. She begins to feel restless in German society and desires the familiarity of her native country.

> I certainly have a lot of social types of security: health care is very good. I have a lot of friends, very good German friends who are great people. I like German people a lot as individuals, but as a society, it's just a very gruff, kind of unfriendly atmosphere. I could stay, but I feel like I want to leave. I'm American, and I just want to be back in the States. *Claire – 2020*

A desire for a more permanent orchestral position emerges too, but the available options are unappealing.

> I can easily get a job working full-time in an orchestra somewhere in former East Germany or a little town in West Germany. Some of my friends are in these orchestras in these little towns, and they're trapped, living in these backwater towns. Once you get into them, it's kind of hard to get out and into a higher job. I really don't want to be in some town, population 9,000 with the most close-minded people and just feeling suffocated. *Claire – 2020*

Persistent symptoms of ulcerative colitis become challenging to manage.

> I have a lot of challenges, being on stage and feeling sick. At some concerts, my colleagues kind of make a path… that if I feel sick, I can go off stage and come back on. It's a terrible thing to do to your colleagues and to the conductor. I just don't feel it's right. It's too much stress on me, and I don't feel like it's fair to my colleagues. I mean, if a first horn player walks off stage, the second horn player is like a deer in the headlights: *Oh my God, what if she doesn't get back in time for the solo? Am I going to have to play it? Claire – 2020*

Sensing the need for some kind of change, Claire enters a brief difficult period. The artist manager with whom she had worked during her conservatory years happens to now be living in a northern German city working in a high-profile marketing role for the largest and best-known classical music record label.

> I get in touch with him just to say "hi." He says to me, "This is really weird that you're getting in touch with me. I'm retiring next week. Do you want my job?" I'm just so taken aback, so shocked that he's offering, that I actually say no. I mean, I'm so scared. I later realize I should have said yes, obviously. It's at a real low point. *Claire – 2020*

Approaching a decision that will alter the course of her life, Claire considers the nature of her years in Germany.

> I feel like I have performed on a musical level that is super satisfying. I feel really good about it. I feel really satisfied. I've been treated really well and had really nice colleagues. I've played with a truly great orchestra. Most people don't ever get to play on this level. It's very glamorous. I know I'm never going to have an opportunity to play on the level I have been playing for the last several years, and I just decide to leave, to go out on the top. *Claire – 2020*

Going out on the top, Claire returns to the US and enters a period of searching. Where to live and what to do?

> I'm not a person who's afraid to leave things behind. I have to forge forward in life, but it feels scary. I don't know what I'll be doing next. Music is what I've done my whole life. I go visit seven cities, from a Sunday to a Saturday: do exactly the same things in each of the cities. I know I want to be in a city of under a million people, because I'm tired of these humungous cities. I have savings. I decide to relax a little bit and go around. Everywhere I go… if I'm on a bus, I ask myself, *would I like to be a bus driver?* If I'm in a shop, I ask myself, *would I like to run this shop? Claire – 2020*

Claire considers the possibility of going into the music recording business, but opts instead to take an internship with another financial management company, drawing on her previous experience working for Frank.

> They are just awful. They hire me to work with very wealthy people, because I have no fear of wealthy people and their money. When the market starts falling, they want me to start plugging stocks and mutual funds to people, and all these people who had 30 thousand, 50 thousand, their life's savings… this company doesn't care. They just drain them of it and move on to new victims. I'm not about to become part of that. I realize the corporate world and being an employee in a corporate setting is just not for me. I just don't have the psychological makeup. I haven't been brought up like this. *Claire – 2020*

Having visited several US cities and given a career in corporate America a shot, Claire decides to settle on the west coast in a large coastal city where she has no prior affiliations, contacts or

friends. She happens upon an opportunity to play as a substitute for a concert with the world-renowned orchestra in the same city and experiences an obvious discrepancy between her level of playing and that of her colleagues. Impressed by her performance, orchestra leaders immediately offer her regular work as a substitute. She declines, still firm on her decision to leave her music career. Her search for a new and sustainable second career continues. She becomes friendly with the owners of a mid-century furniture store that she frequents. She stops in one day for a visit.

> I'm chatting with this woman. Her husband has MS and ulcerative colitis. I ask how he's doing, and she says, "I have to close up on the weekends, and I wonder how much business I'm losing. Can I pay you to manage the store on the weekends?" I say, "You can't pay me. I don't want money, but I'll do it for you, just as your friend." I go into the store, and I have some jewelry I had gotten in the flea market, and she says, "Wow, you really have an eye for this. What I'll do, since I'm not paying you: you can have these two cases. They're your cases, and whatever you sell, no commission: it's yours." *Claire – 2020*

Claire begins shopping flea markets and selling items out of her designated cases. A friend suggests that she begin photographing her items and uploading them to a popular online marketplace. She does, and the results are surprising. I put this stuff online, and my first one, I make $8,000. I'm like, *fuck a job. Claire – 2020*

Being a Post-Professional Musician

An entrepreneurial career is born: Claire is full throttle ahead with her online store and begins working long hours.

> I throw myself into it. When I'm not sleeping, I'm working. I work my butt off. I list an average of 31 items a day. I have to photograph, make descriptions and clean the items. I have an eye for the unusual and for the attractive things color-wise or form-wise. They aren't necessarily the most expensive things. Some of them are fairly expensive, but overall, they are just very kind of unique and well-chosen things. I buy silver from the 1980s that people remember they had wanted to buy but hadn't and regretted it then find it online and are like *oh, I can still have that!* I buy stuff that is almost vintage but very fresh in people's memories that they had missed out on. I get it for a song and then sell it. I don't put too much money into my business, and I make really great profits. People

> send me emails and tell me just overall as a store online that I have the most beautiful collection of things. *Claire – 2020*

Over time, Claire branches out and begins to collect and sell antique Native American items, especially totem poles. A particularly valuable find is an Alaskan Inuit diorama.

> I'm at a guy's house and there's this forlorn looking box. I open it up, and it's a diorama inside with all ivory Eskimo stuff. It's kind of strewn all over the box. I think it's broken, actually, but I buy it. I have no clue. I have it on the floor under a chair for years with envelopes on top of it. A friend of mine who's a big dealer from the northeast is over at my apartment. I show it to him, and it turns out it's something really rare. These dioramas are not really rare, but this particular one is a shaman with a group of singers and drummers around him. It turns out that they all peg together. It's not broken at all. I hadn't realized. Eskimo craftmanship is extraordinary. I take the whole thing to an auction house in the northeast, and I get around $22,300. *Claire – 2020*

During the same span of years that Claire owns and operates an online store, she becomes a savvy retail investor in the stock market. When she's not working on her online store, she's managing her investments.

> I put my butt in my chair. I'm like, *I've got a modicum of my youth left, and this is my chance to get myself a financial cushion. I better frickin' do it*. I invest into stocks just like a pig: I really go into the stock market, but I'm very careful about what I buy. Nobody goes for the stock market without taking some losses, but I do very well. I wake up basically at 7:30 every day, get my coffee and read news on the stocks I own, while also keeping an eye out for new opportunities. *Claire – 2020*

Claire is fond of a particular west coast-based technology company. She's used their products exclusively since the company's inception.

> I think there's something really special about the way they treat customers. They really make their designs with care, and they're interested in artistic people. They don't always make new devices every year but keep improving and perfecting the ones they have. I think they do a lot of things right. I have other investments, but they're my primary investment. I just keep adding to my position and ignoring all the advice about balancing your portfolio, because that's bullshit of course. I do really well and make a few million dollars. *Claire – 2020*

Over the years, the online business winds down and the investments ramp up. Claire increasingly focuses her attention on her investments. One result is her ability to purchase a beautiful home.

With a handful of exceptions, Claire generally no longer attends concerts. When she does, the experience of attending with the general public feels new, as she's accustomed to either being on stage or attending concerts at the invitation of colleagues who bring her in through the backstage.

> I want to get away from the music I've been playing for years. I'm a little bit tired of it. Been there, done that. I want to strike out and experience something different and not another Beethoven ninth faster/slower, different conductor/different group of musicians. I used to play it on New Year's. That's the tradition in Germany to play Beethoven's ninth on New Year's. Sometimes I would play it three times in one day. *Claire – 2020*

She tries concert attendance in another genre.

> I like rock and roll a lot. I go to a lot of rock concerts. Not a lot, but a fair amount. My mother is very shocked, because she thinks I would be going to the symphony and to the opera or something. *Claire – 2020*

Listening to music at home also steers clear of the orchestral repertoire already so familiar to Claire.

> I like piano music. I like chamber music. Kind of the things that I myself don't do too much of. I'm cleaning out boxes and decide to trash all of these recordings I'm recorded on. I'm like, *let the past go. It's not what you're doing now, and you don't have to listen to yourself playing the friggin' Mozart concerto. Claire – 2020*

Claire's instrument is handmade by an exclusive maker who's in demand among top-performing solo and orchestral French horn players.

> I barely look at it. I kind of am cut off from it. I'm not using it. It's just kind of sitting there. If I'm not going to get to a point where I'm not going to play it again, it just seems wrong. It just seems like I should let somebody else have it. I want the price for it, the value that it's worth, and then I'll pass it on to someone who can really enjoy it. It's a really good instrument that I have. It's a pretty special instrument. *Claire – 2020*

While Claire no longer plays her French horn, she occasionally plays the piano and has her eye on the guitar.

> I bought a Danish piano a few years ago. It has that real easy action. I shouldn't be so picky: I can barely play chopsticks anymore. I probably am not going to play again. I

> might pick up the guitar. I'm thinking about learning to play folk music. Getting a really nice guitar at some point. *Claire – 2020*

As Claire considers the possibility of selling both her primary and secondary instruments, she does so in a spirit of both unburdening and exploration.

> The French have this phrase *se débarrasser de:* unburden yourself, get rid of. It means "get rid of" in English. But it really means "to unburden." It's a good term. I get tired of stuff. I want something new. *Claire – 2020*

Reid

Becoming a Professional Musician

Jazz and jazz musicians give Reid his entrance into music. By the start of high school, he's playing trumpet as an aspiring jazz musician.

> One of my musical mentors encourages me over the summer between my freshman and sophomore years of high school to practice my ass off. "There're going to be all these guys at school that'll just put the horn down all summer long. If you could practice even two hours a day, you'll come back three months later, and you'll be playing circles around everybody else." As a young competitive adolescent, it's pretty exciting just to think about being better than other people. *Reid – 2020*

Reid is increasingly surrounded by jazz musicians and finds their mentorship particularly nurturing.

> There are other musicians who mentor me, but the jazz musicians are the ones that I feel the most kinship with. It has something to do with their general lack of formality: I'm immediately invited to call everybody by their first name, regardless of how famous they are. I feel embraced and welcomed into this community, into this culture. They're all very kind to me and generous with what little they have, and what they have is incredible musical knowledge and skill. *Reid – 2020*

In addition to caring for his musical formation, Reid's mentors provide him a front-row seat watching the life of a professional jazz musician. He witnesses firsthand the long hours of rehearsals, gigging and accompanying traveling time part and parcel to the jazz musician life. He

sees modest lifestyles that accompany modest pay. During these formative years, many of his mentors encourage Reid to take up a career outside of music.

> *If you can do anything else, you should*. This theme is drilled home multiple times from people I genuinely admire who are being honest. At the same time, there's nothing else I can envision myself doing. *Reid – 2020*

At age 15, Reid gets a taste of what is means to gig as a freelance trumpet player. His buddy gets him the gig. The first rehearsal is on the south side of the large coastal west coast city Reid calls home.

> It's a salsa band run by a Colombian guy and made up of Central Americans. Most of them work contracting gigs during the day. They are very large, very nice but terrifying. These are guys that work construction all day. They're capable of snapping my skinny little musician neck with their thumb. They play congas at night and on the weekends. I drive out to this thing with a buddy of mine, Clay. We're both super young. They say, "Show up at 11:00 PM." We don't start playing until 1:00 AM. Everything's in Spanish. I have no idea what's going on. From the first moment the band starts playing, it's like the loudest thing I've ever experienced, because we're inside the smallest cinderblock room in this rehearsal studio that exists. They have a full PA for the vocals, Timbales, conga, a bass with a full amp and consumption all inside of this cinderblock room which hasn't been acoustically treated. I'm wearing earplugs, and it doesn't matter: the sound just goes through your bones and destroys your hearing. As soon as the band starts playing, Clay looks over at me with this crazed look on his face like, *what do you think now? Reid – 2020*

Similar to this one and over the next several years, Reid has a diversity of musical experiences characterized by novelty and wonder. He forms an idea of a professional musical career based in jazz and decides to study music formally in conservatory.

Age 17, Reid enters an historic music conservatory in a large northeastern city to study jazz music as a trumpet player. For the first time, he's exposed in meaningful ways to Western classical music.

> We're just all hanging out, the way music students do. We're nerds. We're geeking out about music. Somebody finds out I've never heard Rite of Spring before, so it's like, "let's go have a listening party." There's nowhere to sit. I'm lying on the floor. I listen to Rite of Spring for the first time and it's unlike anything I've ever heard before. I get up

> and have to walk around the park for like an hour thinking, *whoa, what was that? Reid – 2020*

Reid takes a strong intellectual and aesthetic interest in his music history and music theory coursework, as if discovering a new world of music. His inspiration is further fueled by various professors who take a playful approach to music study. He falls in love with orchestral music. He becomes enamored of opera. Partway into his first year of conservatory, he pivots from career preparation as a jazz musician to that of a classical one. After two years, he transfers from conservatory to university, with a two-year gap in between for religious mission work.

Now at a large private university in the mountainous West, Reid's applied trumpet instructor is a former orchestral musician. Reid thrives under his guidance, especially because he has an eye on a professional career himself. Like most aspiring classical trumpet players, Reid and his classmates are required to learn the piccolo trumpet, in addition to their main instrument. Reid resists the compulsion to learn it on the grounds that it sounds strident and generally unappealing. He and his teacher discuss the matter.

> I tell him, "I have no interest in learning to play this thing." I give him my litany of aesthetic objections to it, beginning basically with the fact that I'm hearing everybody play Baroque music on it, and it sounds wrong to me. It never seems to make any sense. He says, "Ah, OK, hang on just a second." He goes to his CD collection and pulls up a record of an historically-informed performance group. He puts it on. It's the same piece he wants me to learn but being played on an historic instrument. All of the sudden, all the lights go off in my head, and it makes sense, because now the trumpet is no longer this demeaning clown toy that sounds annoying, but it has the same noble and expressive character that you might find in Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain* or Louis Armstrong standing in bubbles up to his ankles wearing a tiger suit but playing fabulously rhythmic music. It's like all of the sudden now the instrument is something I feel I can respect, and the aesthetics all make sense. My teacher is like, "Look, I don't know anything about these instruments, and I can't teach you how to play them, but you should know that this is where all of this comes from, and there are people out there who do this." In the back of my mind, I'm thinking, *This is something I want to do. I love this sound. I love this repertoire with this sound. Reid – 2020*

Only a few years into playing classical trumpet, this encounter inspires Reid to learn and play the natural trumpet, also known by the names Baroque trumpet and valve-less trumpet. He finishes his degree and gets his chance in graduate school. Graduate studies take him back to the large northeastern city in which he had studied at conservatory. This time, he's at an even more world-renowned music conservatory. He's studying as a classical trumpet player and also regularly playing jazz. While in school, he's entering and competing in numerous competitions, both classical and jazz, in order to begin advancing his career. Critically, he's considering ways in which functioning as a natural trumpet player might feature in his future career too. There are very few natural trumpet players on the music scene. The lack of models offers the potential for trail-blazing. First, acquiring a high-quality instrument is essential.

> I'm fortunate enough that I'm working in this orchestra in Switzerland, and there's a really great maker in Switzerland. I arrange to be paid in cash, go up to the shop and tell them, "Look, I'm a good trumpet player, and I know nothing about this, but I really want to do it." They are very kind, hospitable and friendly and let me hang out in a room at their shop one day and figure out how to play the thing and pick out an instrument to take home. I get back to conservatory, and now I have this instrument that very few people are playing, and since I'm a good trumpet player, I learn to play it quickly. I learn to play it accurately, and it opens up a lot of doors, musically. I get heavily involved in the early music world in the city. *Reid – 2020*

Reid is engaged in a variety of musical experiences and performances as a graduate student. He's fortunate to be part of a large-scale student performance, rare in a student setting, as demands on forces and skill are exceptionally high.

> I'm in a performance of Wagner's *Lohengrin*. Putting an opera together is a lot of work. There're lots of rehearsal. There's a moment in the third act where you've got 15 trumpet players spread out in different places backstage around the hall, playing this music that's meant to represent a bunch of different armies coming together. It's pretty exciting. It's called the *Morgenröte* or *Heil! Heinrich!* is another name people call it, because that's the Aria that comes right after it. Fifteen trumpet players, huge ass orchestra and all of a sudden, I realize, *wow, this is actually pretty cool,* in the sense of the music being used to tell the story, how music is being used to shape the emotional impact of the story. *Reid – 2020*

Momentum into a music career picks up, as Reid nears the end of graduate studies: his network is expanding, and his various local performances are being met with positive reviews.

Being a Professional Musician

Reid determines to occupy a career as a concert musician that affords him the widest variety of performance opportunities possible. His love of playing, playing in ensemble and orchestral settings and his both facility in and affinity for classical and jazz motivate his decision. A comparable life as a soloist seems narrow, by contrast. To launch his career, he remains in the same large northeastern city in which he's been a student. Upon graduation, he gets strategic about locating performance opportunities.

> There's never any doubt in my mind that when I'm out networking and doing things that I'm actively promoting a particular brand. The brand being myself. I realize that it's really important for people to see me as somebody who has stuff going on. The financial implications of what you have going on are irrelevant. For people to see you as someone who has stuff going on, who has projects, who has irons in the fire is really important. It's a big part of my entrepreneurial attitude that I adopt. I make stuff happen, even if the financial repercussions are not anything significant or at all. The fact of the matter is, nobody knows about that. They just know I have something going on. It helps my brand. *Reid – 2020*

Establishing a presence in his city takes effort and a bit of time. As Reid learns to take initiative, he simultaneously cultivates a trusting disposition. The words of a trumpet player and one of his musical mentor's enter regularly into his mind.

> He always says, "It's going to be a bit of a walk of faith." He means it in a very non-religious sense. You're waiting and hoping for the phone call, for the contract, for the gig, for that tour to be put together. You're hoping to fill in that one date you've got open. This kind of honesty resonates with me. *Reid – 2020*

The wisdom of his mentor feels particularly salient on the heels of Reid's first holiday season as a full-time professional.

> I'm not sure how I'm going to make the 900 bucks to pay my rent this month. I only have 600 of it, because it's January. January is always terrible. There's no work. The big holiday season is just ended. Out of the blue, I get a royalty check in the mail for some

> dumb thing I had been involved with, some record at some point many years ago. It's like *Bam! Now I can pay my rent. Reid – 2020*

Learning the value of professional relationships becomes key.

> You can only develop so much of your own stuff in these fields to really make a living. You're dependent on your relationships and people liking you and liking to have you around, viewing you as a dependable colleague. *Reid – 2020*

After just a few months, Reid becomes more financially secure and finds himself immersed in a career that brings him much joy. He plays with numerous chamber groups, orchestras and ensembles. He records with many and tours with even more of them. Tours take him to a variety of national and international destinations. He plays in many of the finest halls, including a world-renowned hall located in his city. His breadth of expertise as a natural trumpet player, classical trumpet player and jazz trumpet player make a cornucopia of musical engagements available to him. A highlight is playing every year for five years with a prestigious chorus in a highly publicized and broadcasted performance of Handel's *Messiah.*

> For whatever reason, the first five rows every year: it's the exact same people. They're wealthy benefactors. There's always this very older distinguished looking gentleman sitting front row very close to me. He has some tinted glasses. He's moved to tears every single year by this music. Here're these people sitting very close to the front, year after year visibly moved by this music that they absolutely love. I'm involved in creating something special for somebody else. *Reid – 2020*

Reid finds meaning in playing for audiences, regardless of the genre, including dozens of performances of hit musical theater shows.

> There's a video camera on the conductor. Seeing the audience reaction of a show: I look in their faces and see all sorts of emotional reactions. These are the people that are sitting right behind the conductor. They're the only ones I can really see, typically. It's really gratifying to see people be genuinely moved by music, even if it's music that for me is rather perfunctory; music that I don't particularly care about, other than the fact that it's a nice little paycheck and a nice way to spend an evening. I'm playing music that is deeply meaningful to these people who are here. *Reid – 2020*

Rather than making a distinction between professional work and gigs, Reid discerns a difference between the kinds of performance opportunities he accepts. From playing on a world-renowned stage to providing music for a religious gathering to jamming in a jazz club to joining forces with a pop star, he finds gratifying multi-genre music-making almost everywhere he turns. The first time Reid plays in an indoor stadium is with an American singer-songwriter pop star who's enjoyed a multi-decade career and who himself got his start as a workaday musician.

> Working with him is always a bit of a pleasure, because he's known to treat the musicians in his orchestra fairly well even though being a superstar, you never see him. You just work with his music director, and he shows up to grace the stage with his presence. Spent the day rehearsing the show. Music's not hard. Music director's there: a really great highly skilled commercial musician, arranger, composer guy. I'm thinking, *This is going to be a gig like any other. No big deal.* I'm the youngest guy in the band. I'm playing second trumpet. I'm used to playing jazz shows and classical music. I'm not used to stadium-sized crowds. The start of the show, the first time any of us in the orchestra see the singer is when he steps up onto this platform that's behind a curtain. We can see him, but the audience can't. They're going to shine a spotlight on this little part in the curtain that he's going to step out, and everybody's going to go nuts. Typical showbiz thing. He steps up there, and he looks at all of us and gives us this very encouraging sort of excited look like, *Hey, are y'all ready? Strap yourselves in. Here we go. I'm fucking awesome.* The curtains part. He steps out, and all of a sudden, the audience just completely erupts: 20,000 people screaming their heads off because of this heartthrob. It's the most deafening thing I've ever heard. It's so deafening, I can't play the opening. I'm in such a state of shock that I miss the first four or five measures of the entr'acte. It doesn't matter, because you can't hear anything anyways, because the screaming's so loud. I collect myself, laughing, feeling somewhat crazed about the whole thing. Man, it's so much fun. *Reid – 2020*

During most summers, Reid participates in music festivals, including a prestigious festival in Switzerland in which he cultivates a modicum of a collegial relationship with a world-famous conductor. Similarly meaningful is a festival that puts on an opera. It is here that Reid nurtures his love of opera that began in graduate school.

Touring takes Reid to global destinations across five continents, including one occasion of circumnavigating the globe. He experiences a kind of ease, relying on itinerary instructions provided by tour organizers. On a few occasions, he organizes ensemble tours himself.

Navigating unfamiliar backstage labyrinths is an ongoing source of both frustration and comedy. In as many cities as possible, he seizes every opportunity he can to experience a slice of life as a local. A tour that culminates in a major populous Mexican city is especially enjoyable for Reid.

> It's a great place. Food that I absolutely adore. I get up to my room, drop my bags on the floor and immediately go out, so that I can get some street tacos. I'm hanging out on the street and talking to some people and eating great tacos. *Reid – 2020*

He had visited as a boy, but now he's fluent in Spanish and better versed in the culture.

Pivoting from Professional to Post-Professional Musician

Near the end of more than a decade sustaining a career as a professional musician, Reid begins experiencing physiological symptoms related to his playing. At first, they don't compromise his ability to play. After a few months however, playing becomes increasingly difficult. The joy of playing becomes gradually replaced with frustration.

> I soldier through. It's a really hard thing to deal with, recognizing that I've got this situation going on over which I don't have control, and it's now affecting my brand as a musician. I hate not being able to execute and bring music to the level that I'm accustomed to. *Reid – 2020*

Reid formulates a response to this emerging challenge. First, he establishes a contingency plan and enters a kind of holding pattern meant to buy time, in the event that treatment for and recovery from his disorder might be an option. Until now, Reid has kept the applied teaching component of his career to a minimum, throwing himself instead fully into life as a concert musician. His contingency plan includes accepting adjunct faculty positions at two colleges located nearly a four-hour drive outside the city. He makes the drive once per week, establishing a new two-day circuit that effectively replaces performance work he might have otherwise taken.

The second part of his response is securing an official diagnosis. Reid has known musicians with focal dystonia. He's familiar with the symptoms: lack of voluntary control over repeatedly-used fine musculature, in this case, the embrasure. He strongly suspects his

developing disorder might be focal dystonia. The nature of the slow onset and the lack of certainty are presenting mounting challenges. When he sees a neurologist, now more than a year and half after his first experience of symptoms, a focal dystonia diagnosis comes as a relief.

> It's refreshing to see the neurologist, to have him do all of these bizarre tests to identify what's going on with dystonia. These tests are not at all related to me playing the trumpet but have to do with the muscles. He's looking at the nervous system. *Reid – 2020*

There's no cure for focal dystonia. Uncertain of the length of time remaining to him as a performer, Reid plays an audition for an orchestra based in the mountainous western part of New England.

> I'm sitting with the music director. He wants to hear me play some orchestral excerpts. I manage to get through Patrushka's ballerina dance. I play it fine, for the circumstances, but I have this feeling that it's probably the last time I'll ever play it, because the difficulty of controlling the muscles is so great. In fact, it might be the stress of the situation that enables me to play it at all. *Reid – 2020*

Exhaustion sets in.

> I'm just tired of fighting. I'm tired of fighting this thing that I don't have control over. I'm tired of the frustration of every single time I pick up the trumpet having it be a struggle. I'm tired of the insecurity, having to work through that struggle, having to work extra hard just to make the struggle non-evident to an external listener. *Reid – 2020*

After a lifetime of dedication to music as a trumpet player, Reid ends his career.

> I've had enough. I realize I was already done. There's no John Williams theme in the background as I'm finishing my trumpet playing career. It's like T.S. Eliot, "This is the way the world ends: not with a bang, but with a whimper." *Reid – 2020*

Reid and his spouse decide to move to the Southwest, near his in-laws, since he no longer has strong reasons to remain in the Northeast. His growing family can be near grandparents, and he can be closer to family on the west coast.

> I leave in a tiny overpacked car for a long-ass drive towards an uncertain future. As I begin crossing the bridge, the sounds of the final trio from Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* enter my mind ("Hab' mir's gelobt"). In that final trio, the elegant and aging Marschallin lovingly releases the object of her affection (Octavian) to a younger suitor (Sophie). At this moment, I'm the Marschallin. *Reid – 2020*

The transition marks the beginning of a many-months long period of searching.

> I feel like I've lost everything I've ever aspired to. As a result, I feel like I don't have any direction. Culturally, I'm in this place that I don't understand or fully appreciate or have much background with, coupled with the fact that I don't know what to do with myself. The first six months are really dark. Really, really dark. I don't do much. I sit in a chair and watch TV all day. I realize I have so much time on my hands all of a sudden, because practicing and warming up eats up a lot of time. To not have that, and to also be dealing with the depression of loss associated with it… I honestly don't know what to do. *Reid – 2020*

Reid considers the possibility of doctoral studies. In the meantime, and to help in the support of his family, he takes a job as an auto insurance adjuster. He struggles with the lack of intellectual challenge in the position. The prospect of a change into a career that builds upon his music career seems positive to Reid. He considers previous yet less-developed aspects of his music career: jazz, composition and music education. Ruling out the prospects of doctoral work in jazz or composition, Reid arranges to take up doctoral studies in music education at a large research university in the Southwest with one of the top leading music education programs in the country. He enters for different reasons than his colleagues. Most music education doctoral students aim to become K-12 administrators or professors of music education, mentoring the next generation of K-12 music teachers. Due to his diverse background, Reid's interest in music education is broad.

> I look at it as an opportunity to engage in music in a wide variety of ways. I can talk about historical musicology. I can talk about composition. I can help kids write their own songs. I have a lot of experience with big arts organizations. Moving into the role of an education director at one of these large legacy arts organizations makes a certain logical sense. I'm used to working with teaching artists, mentoring teaching artists, training teaching artists. *Reid – 2020*

Progressing through his doctoral program, Reid becomes increasingly restless, frustrated by the lack of breadth he perceives in the field. Even work in the kinds of legacy arts organizations and higher education seem ill-suited to him.

> I have this certain continually evolving sense of frustration with my place in music education and what I can offer, given my background, given the things I'm passionate about. As I start thinking more critically about the affordances and limitations of the kinds of arts education programs offered by these large cultural institutions, I begin to feel less satisfied with what that kind of work might entail. I'm kind of thinking about going into college teaching. I start looking at the job postings for these kinds of things, and it's like, this just isn't me. *Reid – 2020*

Uncertain of the best way forward and of a new career ideally suited to him, Reid is open to other possibilities. He gets wind of a museum educator position at a local museum. The museum specializes in historic, indigenous and multi-cultural musical instruments, representing more than 275 countries and regions. It boasts a collection of 16,000 instruments from all over the world.

> I end up taking the job. Working in museums is an interesting thing, because it's a sort of a field unto itself. Given my background and diversity of musical interests, working at the museum feels very appealing, because I know I'll be developing curricula for local schools to engage with music on a global level. *Reid – 2020*

Being a Post-Professional Musician

Reid plunges into life as a museum educator, learns the intricacies of museum culture and finds his work as a museum educator to be in keeping with the typical ethos of museum education. In the spirit of a musicologist, he researches and writes curricular content on the musical cultures of more than 100 counties. He delivers this content to his team of museum volunteer docents and like a teacher educator, coaches the docents on effective approaches they might adopt during their interactions with the public. The process of preparing materials for the docents involves distilling vast amounts of literature and resources in various formats into concise, interactive documents that invite the docents' own educative response in relation to visitor experience. A further aspect of docent mentorship includes Reid's offering guidance for the audience-appropriate adaptation of curricular content: critical stages of childhood development and certain pedagogical practices come into play, as Reid's education department hosts the visits of hundreds of school children on a daily basis.

Regular opportunities to work directly in the education of children present themselves to Reid. His department hosts a variety of classes open to the public, including one that is successful enough to inspire a co-authored article he and his colleague write and have published in a widely-read museum journal.

> This class is designed for kids ages 6 to 10, and it's a class that highlights a different country every month. We learn something about it, something about its culture. We play some music that's either directly from that country or deeply inspired by the music-making that happens in that country. The kids explore the museum space that's focused on that particular country. Then the kids, build a musical instrument craft that's modeled on an instrument from that country. *Reid – 2020*

Among its priorities, the museum communicates strong interest in STEM fields, creating engaging inter-disciplinary experiences for its guests. Reid takes up a number of projects aimed at addressing this inter-disciplinary space. He learns to solder, erects a soldering station in his office and builds component parts of musical instruments. These musical instrument building blocks are available hands-on in an otherwise no-touch space, allowing visitors occasion to explore the physics and construction of musical instruments. The project is met with enthusiasm to the degree that Reid secures a grant from a large research university in his state to collaborate with one of their emeritus physics professors on the expansion of the project.

Comfortable on stage, Reid hosts programs in the museum's auditorium from time to time. One day, the topic is music and medicine.

> It's a bit of a dog and pony show. There's a bit of schtick, because I need to keep it light and entertaining. I need to get people laughing: it helps keep them engaged and wanting to learn more about the topic. Even in the theater environment, there're always ways to make it participatory. It makes me feel very much like a performer. The only difference from my past is that I don't have a trumpet in my hand. *Reid – 2020*

Nearing the end of Reid's second year, it is the diverse programing, community engagement and ample opportunity for learning that contribute to the measure of joy Reid finds in his position. More profoundly, the sense of continuity from his previous career into his new career is assuring.

Leaning into a new career, Reid cultivates a new musical life. He makes music on a daily basis. Reid's been learning to play organ and jazz piano. He finds the organ to be the best analogue of the diverse musical genres and engagement he experienced as a professional musician. Expressing his knowledge and musicianship as a jazz musician at the piano comes easily to Reid. His museum colleagues are surprised when he shares it publicly.

> We're instructed to stand in a line, like we're at a wedding, and welcome guests who are coming into the building for a volunteer recognition event. I'm standing here feeling kind of ridiculous. We have a great Steinway grand piano in the atrium lobby, just sitting there. I think, *This is stupid. I'm just going to play some lounge piano as people are walking in. Reid – 2020*

Subsequent repeated requests for jazz piano gigs come in. Reid declines most of them. He's no longer interested in performing. The occasional jazz piano gigs he accepts, he does without pay, emphasizing his distance from a performing life. Acclimating to a new musical life engaged through organ and jazz piano takes time.

> I continue to struggle with and regret the fact that there's a certain part of my musical voice that's been silenced. I may never get it back. That's the trumpet part of my musical voice. It's hard to explain how deeply ingrained that sense of musical voice is. It's hard for me to listen to certain groups play, because it reminds me of how that voice has been silenced. Now I have to rely on the other aspects of my musicianship. *Reid – 2020*

Other aspects of his musicianship include transcribing music, analyzing music and expanding the aural palette.

> My musical mind is more finely attuned than it ever was before, in terms of how I hear and think about music. I listen to music now with the goal of helping someone else engage with it and understand what's going on in it. *Reid – 2020*

Additional ways in which Reid finds a sense of continuity with his previous life as a performer include supporting certain current performers who attempt innovative musical projects. Regularly facilitating musical projects with friends and family, even under his own roof, offers a certain amount of joy too.

> I put up a microphone in the middle of the room and let my kids sing into it and make up songs while I accompany. It's awesome. They write really great pop tunes. Even the lyrics they're making up on the spot are meaningful and a nice window into what their little musical brains are like. *Reid – 2020*

During downtime, solo improvisations offer release, and although keyboards feature now outside of his career, they're the main gig of his new leisure musical life.

> I improvise four-part counterpoint and jazz piano just about every day, each for 15 or 20 minutes. It's a meditation. "I play keyboards." That's a Simpsons quote. The pool salesman says, "Listen. Question lady. This isn't my real gig. I play keyboards." *Reid – 2020*

Reid no longer has a relationship with the trumpet.

> The trumpet and I are now amicably divorced. I still have some of her stuff lying around in storage. We know each other very well but recognize that our lives have moved on. We had some great times. It's all in the past. *Reid – 2020*

He finds that the piece *The Artist is Present* by twentieth-century performance artist Marina Abramović perfectly illustrates his feelings regarding his former relationship to the trumpet. For nearly three months and eight hours per day, Abramović sits at a table in the gallery of a museum located in New York City. Museum visitors have the possibility of sitting across from her, meeting her eyes and holding her gaze. One day, Abramović's long-time former lover and fellow performance artist, Ulay, makes an unexpected appearance. Marina lifts her gaze to meet his. The intensity of the moment is almost too much to bear. Tears well up in the eyes of both. After a few moments, reaching across the table, they clasp hands. A final squeeze of the fingers and Ulay rises to leave.

Bree

Becoming a Professional Musician

Bree experiences her first major musical life decision at age ten. She's been playing and studying piano for several years by this point when she considers the prospect of redirecting her

musical efforts. The impetus is a sudden burst of inspiration and falling in love with the sound of the violin while hearing a famous violinist on television.

> His music just mesmerizes me. I can't get it out of my head. My mom says I have to choose, that I'm not going to have enough time to pursue both piano and violin. I'm sitting at the piano, just sitting there trying to decide. *Bree – 2020*

She decides to go all-in on violin, leaving behind several years of investment in piano playing. Her mother makes violin study with high-caliber teachers a priority but is careful to avoid pushing Bree in any particular direction, including toward a professional career. As the college years approach, consensus among music teachers and mentors is that Bree has something special: her sound is different, her ability to move the listener is unique. The prospect of getting on a professional track grows stronger. Another musical life-altering decision has to be taken: to pursue or not the life of a professional musician.

Bree approaches the decision pragmatically. She takes advanced placement courses during high school with her eye on a bachelor's degree in the sciences at an Ivy League university as preparation for medical school. She is simultaneously practicing, rehearsing and performing as a violinist with her eye on one of the highest regarded music conservatories in the United States. Her first choice is conservatory, but she's unsure of the effect if any her relative late start to violin study will have on her application. University is her back-up plan. The one that comes through will reveal the path she is to take.

Bree's decision is complicated when both options pan out: she's admitted to university and conservatory. Because conservatory is her first choice, she decides to embark on the path of a professional musician. She finds conservatory life to be less intense and competitive than the stereotypes she's encountered, and although she's not a competitive person, she likes to win. She likes collaborations even more and seizes every opportunity she can to join forces with other

musicians and dancers. She finds inter-arts collaborative projects exhilarating, particularly as they are encouraged and supported by the conservatory.

> A composer-in-residence faculty member composes a piece for a concert and we rehearse. It's a traditional quartet, but we have mics on, and there are different sound effects, because he plays keyboard and various special effects. It's very modern, not really notes: you just slide. The dancers collaborate. They have choreographers, and it's on the spot: they create on the spot while listening to the music. It's cool to see. *Bree – 2020*

Her conservatory sponsors four students' participation in a summer festival held in Brazil. Bree wins a spot and finds much joy in collaborating with Brazilian musicians, serving as concert master and trying her hand at teaching. As graduation approaches, Bree makes arrangements to stay for a Master's degree.

Being a Professional Musician

While Bree's preparation for a music career is characterized by a variety of collaborations, her primary orientation as a young professional is soloistic. She concentrates on solo violin and concerto literature. She's selected to feature as the soloist, ending the final concert of a prestigious music festival in Switzerland. Her piece is the technically demanding virtuosic Valse-Scherzo by Tchaikovsky, boasting a staggering number of octaves, 6ths and 3rds.

> An hour before the concert, one of the sponsors who has a three-million-dollar Guarneri del Gesù violin with him is showing it to one of the artists he knows. I say something to him, and we started talking. He's joking and asks, "Do you want to play it for the concert?" I'm like, "Yeah, I do!" He's like, "What?" Everyone in the room gasps. They're like, "What did you just say? Are you crazy?" I'm like, "Yeah, I'll do it!" It's crazy, because I've never touched this violin, and I really want to play it. The only other time I've played on a violin like this one required signing a 50-page document, and there were so many rules. But this time it's in the moment: he's the owner of the violin, he just lets me play it – no papers! *What if I drop it or break it?* It feels good, because he trusts me to play it. I think he's also curious whether I'm going to play well, because it's a different instrument. You're supposed to play it for at least a couple of months, before you go on stage, but I feel like I can do it. So I go for it. Usually, I get little butterflies before I go on stage, but this time I'm a little less nervous because I have an excuse: *This is a new instrument!* I'm really excited to play on it because it sounds way better than the one I have. Half of me is thinking, *OK, I don't know what's going to happen*. And the

> other half is thinking, *I'm really excited to see what this instrument is going to sound like, because it's exquisite, it's one of a kind and I get to play on it. Also, it's something I made happen. If I hadn't talked to my sponsor, I wouldn't get this opportunity.* I want the Valse-Scherzo to sound playful, easy and fun. Switching to a new instrument right before going on stage distracts me from worrying over notes and lets me be freer and have fun with the music. It's a good feeling, a liberating experience. I sometimes forget to just enjoy the piece rather than nitpicking every little detail. *Bree – 2020*

Having recently been chosen to solo with a famous orchestra in a large New England city, Bree is contacted by one of the orchestra's representatives and invited to solo again during an outdoor summer concert elsewhere in New England. For this concert, she would be the only soloist. She accepts and plays for her largest audience ever: an estimated 25,000-30,000 people are in attendance.

> It's an exhilarating experience, playing for so many people. I perform *Meditation* from the opera *Thais* by Massenet. This time I have orchestra and chorus in the back. It's really cool. I love the chorus. It feels more like the opera. And after that it's *Carmen Fantasy* by Sarasate – themes from the opera *Carmen* by Bizet. It's a biggie. It's hard. And then it's the encore, Caprice 1 by Paganini. It's my first outdoor concert, and everyone's setting up their chairs, with all of the food and wine. I'm surprised by how loud it is: people are talking, and it's outdoors. Although they're speaking very softly with themselves, 30,000 people – it adds up. It's not enough to bother me, but it's not an enclosed space / symphony hall where you can hear a cricket because it's so quiet. The backstage is just like a little off to the side in the back, on the grass. Toward the end, it starts drizzling a little bit. The violin is borrowed. I'm getting worried. It's like very heavy mist, but I'm starting to get wet. It's all I can think about, but somehow, I still play. I'm like, *Oh my gosh, do I need to stop in the middle of the concerto?* It's toward the end of the fourth movement of *Carmen Fantasy*, and there's one more movement! So misty, but it's towards the end, and I get off stage right after. *Bree – 2020*

As a soloist, Bree goes on tour throughout Europe, featuring as guest performer on a variety of programs organized independently and in conjunction with certain music festivals. Concerts in the evenings, she avails herself of tourist opportunities during the days. In addition to solo repertoire, chamber music is almost as enticing to Bree, and she occasionally accepts opportunities in this arena too. One that is particularly meaningful results in her second of two glowing reviews in one of the most widely read newspapers.

> It's pretty cool. We interpret the music the way we want it to sound. The rehearsals are more intense, because we know there's a lot of publicity, and we are the final group to perform as the finale of the entire chamber music festival which is a week-long event. *Bree – 2020*

Gigging comprises another portion of Bree's musical life. She experiences it as separate from her professional solo career life. She plays for an array of weddings and corporate parties. One such party is held at the penthouse of a top bank executive overlooking a major park of a large city in the Northeast. Residents and guests enjoy direct private elevator access.

> I walk obviously into the lobby, and the doorman is like, "You have to go through the servant door." I'm like, "Excuse me, I'm the musician. I'm going to go in through the front." The organizer happens to walk in right then. She takes me through the regular entrance, the elevator where the guests come. I'm the only musician, so I'm like, *if I don't go in, they don't have music! Bree – 2020*

Gigs that afford Bree the chance to play music of other genres she finds to be fun. Following the lead of a close mentor, she locates a gig playing with an ensemble for an internationally famous pop star. They perform for a major fashion show and cable television show. Another internationally famous pop star and his band are also on the program.

> It's so different, but it's so much fun obviously, getting to see pop stars. We hung out with them backstage. We have rehearsals for several days. It's long, but the music is so easy. It's something like *Twinkle, Twinkle* for us. So we have to be there and play over and over again. The first time we just play by ourselves, and then the pop star comes and then we rehearse with her. For one of them, she doesn't sound good, so she's like, "Oh, I feel sick." She stops the rehearsal and then brings her doctor to come see her… makes it all dramatic… Yep, but we still need to be there, because we aren't paid hourly. So we're just sitting there doing nothing while she makes this dramatic show. It's fun. We decide that we're all going to memorize our parts, so that we can be standing up on the stage or sitting on the stage: we don't want any music stands. There are two shows: one for celebrities and one for invited guest, and then they combine those two to play as a live show. *Bree – 2020*

During these years as a professional musician, Bree experiences periodic and sometimes frequent injuries from playing. Most often, tendonitis, and occasionally, symptoms of carpal tunnel. She manages the discomfort through relaxation techniques and twice-per-week visits to a

physical therapist but feels limited by her body, as the desire to play many hours per day is often stifled by the need to rest. She participates in a highly regarded music festival held in the Rocky Mountains and finds that, taken together, the demands of orchestral, chamber and solo playing are too much. Prioritizing solo repertoire becomes necessary. Near the end of her music career, she finds that even the demands of solo work become difficult.

> I start cancelling concerts. Everyone knows each other, so once you get a reputation for cancelling concerts, I think, *It's not good for me. People are not going to hire me, because I'll be known as undependable, which is true.* Bree – 2020

The situation begins to feel untenable.

A concurrent experience across these years as a professional musician is a growing curiosity in dentistry, as Bree gets a front-row seat observing the life of a dental professional in-the-making. She is roommates with a family member who is a dental student. The work and life of a dentist peaks her intellectual interest. She remembers her back-up plan in high school and begins considering the possibility of becoming a medical professional after all.

Pivoting from Professional to Post-Professional Musician

As Bree weighs her long-held interests in the sciences and medicine against her current life as a professional musician, she begins to take stock. Continuing as a solo violinist could mean additional physiological challenges, and changing careers could mean circling back to another life-passion fostered in high school but currently left unattended. The consideration of her instrument factors into her thinking too: the instrument she plays is on loan, and the term of the loan is coming to an end. Securing the use of another instrument will be difficult. Also factoring into her thinking is the relative ease with which she could move into a terminal medical degree: because she had taken numerous advanced placement science courses in high school, she's now well-positioned to take pre-requisite courses.

Bree decides to make the change, ending her career as a professional musician. She withdraws from a prestigious international violin competition, relinquishes the violin loan and relocates to a different state to enroll in dental school prerequisite courses.

> I don't know anybody. I'm just there taking my own classes. I just go to class, don't really do anything, just study. It's kind of weird. I always get good grades: I get a 4.0. It's fun, exciting. Luckily, it's not too hard. *Bree – 2020*

Bree gets top marks on the Dental Admissions Test and is accepted into her first dental school choice, one of the highest ranked in the country, where she embarks on a four-year DDS degree.

> The first year, it's the same curriculum as medical school, and the second year we are more geared toward dentistry: everything in the head and neck. The third year, it's more head and neck classes but we start our clinic. We're seeing patients our last two years, and that's our main focus. We're on rotation a lot. Although we're training to be a general dentist, we rotate through specialty clinics on different floors of the building: we do pediatric, root canal specialization and implant specialization. We get exposed to different specialties. We do rotations at hospitals in the fourth year, and I do a teaching assistant for the second-year students. *Bree – 2020*

During her third year of dental school, Bree is chosen to participate in an outreach program hosted by her university that takes pop-up dental clinics to Nepal. She gains critical dental procedure experience in a variety of areas, including surgery and pediatric.

> I have one day of oral surgery rotation, like 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, with maybe half an hour lunch break. I'm not kidding, we're standing all the time, but it's so much fun. I do at least 40 extractions, and most of them are wisdom teeth which we don't really get to do in school, because they're the hardest. For pediatric, because they're really small, like six or eight years old, and have teeth that need to be taken out, because they're so severely decayed, their head is on my lap. I have to numb them upside down, which is really difficult to get used to. They're also moving: one boy even pinches me, and I get three bruises on my arm. It's amazing experience though. *Bree – 2020*

The trip energizes her growing passion for dentistry and bolsters her confidence as an emerging professional.

Being a Post-Professional Musician

Once sufficiently credentialed, Bree begins practicing, seeing patients in the clinical setting. A typical day of dentistry practice stands in sharp contrast to a typical day of violin practice.

> The patient is waiting in the waiting area, and I call them up. I bring them in, and I update their medical history every visit and take their blood pressure. Often times, actually, a lot of people have high blood pressure, so we can't do anything. If I'm doing a filling, let's say, I have to give them anesthesia, and I can't give them anesthesia, if their blood pressure is high. In that case we refer them to their primary care doctor, if they have one. We have hygienists, so I don't really do the cleanings, but I still need to check the patient, as the general dentist. I do extractions, fillings, crowns, dentures, partial dentures, veneers (which is cosmetic) and whitening. For cleanings, I do do cleanings, if there's no hygienist available, and for deep-cleaning, if you need to be numbed to get it cleaned, then I need to do it – hygienists can't do it. We set up the next appointment and say "see you in six months for a follow up and regular cleaning." *Bree – 2020*

On several occasions, she watches patients with dental anxiety manifest clear signs of ease and relaxation, once they learn that she is a former professional violinist. They are reassured, knowing that the same fingers that once played the violin are now gently working in the interest of their dental health.

Bree's relationship to music is very different now. She enjoys listening to music but very seldomly plays her violin. She's invited to play in a talent show organized by her colleagues.

> They want to see me play, and I'm like, "You can just look me up. I have online videos." I'm thinking, *I used to play in these grand halls. This venue is too small. The other people, they're amateurs.* But they all just want to hear me play live, so I decide to play *Meditation* from *Thais* by Massenet. *Bree – 2020*

Once past her reluctance and after securing the use of a high-quality instrument plus the collaboration of a pianist, Bree is glad to have made the choice to perform in an amateur setting.

> It is *so* much fun for me! So awesome. The auditorium is full. It's really cool. My friends are there. I realize something, playing in this environment: it really doesn't matter what the caliber of the other musicians is. It really doesn't matter, because they are sharing what they value which is music. Although they may be amateur, technically they're not perfect, but they're singing their hearts out, they're playing on the piano. They're so into it. It's something they cherish, and they want to share it. It's beautiful, and I really shouldn't be judge-y. I really learn not to judge them at a professional level, just because

> I'm used to it. This is the public, the regular non-trained people, and music should be shared. And I have the talent… it's a talent show – I should share it. I shouldn't say "no" just because I feel like I'm too good for it. No one's too good for anything. *Bree – 2020*

As a post-professional musician, Bree finds a creative way of sharing herself in support of friends and family at the funeral of her high school English teacher.

> She's one of my closest faculty, teacher in my hometown, but I can't go. I make a bunch of my online videos public so that they can play them during the ceremony. That's what they do. People enjoy it. For me it's special, because, although I can't be there, I can still share my music online. It's like I'm sort of there. *Bree – 2020*

Bree occasionally finds inspiration to play.

> I don't make music, except for maybe like when it's a rainy day. Then I just play. I have a very good bow, but my violin is worth only a couple hundred dollars. It's something I used before I got serious. It's definitely an old friend, like an old best friend that you wish you talked to more, that you know you should, however, you just… you don't reach out first. But you keep them in the back of your mind, you're like, *I wonder how they're doing*. And now, it's very relaxing. It doesn't matter if I mess up a note. Since I'm more relaxed, I feel like maybe I get to enjoy it more, and I sound better in some parts. I enjoy it more. There's no pressure. I guess it's a way to escape. *Bree – 2020*

Bree's long-held dream to be a musician yields to the emergence of a new dream.

> People ask me if I regret anything or regret switching, and I don't. I feel like I did achieve my dreams of touring and being a soloist. I consider that very lucky, because not a lot of people get to do it. I feel like I've done everything I wanted – what I envisioned as my dream as a child. Now I'm just on a different path, on a different dream, a second dream. *Bree – 2020*

This sense of gratitude and feeling of on regrets facilitates the tranquility that characterizes Bree's living into a new, second dream.

Summary

Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree reveal experiences that offer entry into the phenomenon of post-professional musicians. Their stories span the arch of a musical life that begins in formative years, travels through peak performance and lands in a realm sharply

contrasted by altogether new enterprises. Each had a range of emotional reactions to the shifts in life trajectory. The richness of their lived experiences showcase a phenomenon of the musical life well-composed. In the next chapter, I give a general narrative and description of their experiences, followed by a discussion of all five musical life compositions, offering phenomenological insights into the rhythms, melodies and harmonies of their component parts.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION ACROSS STORIES

Introduction

Informed by phenomenology, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore the experiences of post-professional musicians – to know and tell their stories. In this chapter, I present a discussion of study insights in relation to the literature. I move throughout all five musical life stories, beginning with formative experiences, then to professional life, the so-called pivot and finally the new post-professional musical life. Across these phases of life emerges an arch of meaningfully engaged and carefully constructed musical life.

To begin, I present study findings as a general narrative, offering a composite description of all five participants. Subsequently, I show study findings in the form of a general description, relaying the structure of the composite experience. Following the general narrative and description, I show the connection of my exploration (data analysis) to hermeneutic phenomenology, making explicit the philosophical substrates that guide my reading and telling of the data.

General Narrative

All participants shared meaningful musical experiences as children that included either a single moment or a set of events that resulted in their determination to enter a path toward a music career. As adolescents or in conservatory, all experienced the guidance of a music teacher or musical mentor who offered words of advice. While the nature of these words ranged from

positive to negative, realistic to vague, they impacted participants' music career trajectories. In tandem was a dawning realization or affirmation that each was talented.

While building towards a music career was a reality for all participants, so was either a moment of "break" or a brief period of "breaking in." The result of the break led to further success as concert musicians. A compound effect ensued, leading to positive reviews and upward networking mobility. Life as a professional musician included performances in participants' home-cities, on tour and at summer festivals. All found moments of peak enjoyment and had transcendent musical experiences.

Successful as they were in their music careers, participants simultaneously maintained interests in other things. Beneath the surface or lying dormant was a passion for another endeavor. These interests surfaced when participants began considering a pivot out of a music career. The possibility for the pivot was motivated by a set of growing considerations or concerns that became themselves or led to a moment in which the decision to leave was taken. These sets of considerations varied, from health or physiological challenges to the desire to increase earning potential or from a growing sense of fatigue relative to the effort required to remain competitive to a sense of having accomplished everything anyone in a music career could reasonably expect to accomplish. Another consideration for some of them centered on a sense of restlessness and no longer feeling sufficiently challenged.

Movement toward a decision to leave a music career included identification of or with another individual who presented the embodiment of an alternative life narrative. Leaving a music career included a notable and tangible action that facilitated the pivot. This action came either before or during a period of searching and exploration. Once established in the new career,

all became once again successful, as evidenced by fast career trajectory and increased earning potential.

All participants have made a new post-performance life defined largely by music-listening and inter-arts engagement. For the most part, they no longer play their primary instrument. Three have even sold their performance instrument. With one exception, when they do make music, it is on their secondary instrument, and it is non-performative, meditative, participatory or for leisure. They have lived their dreams of becoming and being a professional musician and find themselves now living out the realization of a new dream.

General Description

The path toward a career as a professional musician includes much uncertainty and recurring feelings of self-doubt or anxiety regarding the possibility of success. Aspiring professional musicians receive mixed signals from mentors and family members, hearing their talent and career aspirations sometimes affirmed and other times challenged. Their musical life stories are characterized by critical moments felt in ways that range from transcendent to numb, ecstasy to dazed. No matter the context or nature, these moments prove life-altering and feature prominently in the determination of future plans and career potentials.

Feelings running the gamut of exhilaration to exhaustion accompany life on tour, as the enjoyment of novelty parallels the stress or fatigue of travel. Pressure associated with maintaining peak performance includes unique physiological demands necessary for playing and a constant nagging awareness that there are hundreds of other musicians eager to occupy a professional musician’s space, should their competence ever wane. As a result, a kind of internal

conflict regarding an interest in other things can manifest, as the simultaneous pursuit of other interests seems difficult, if not impossible, if one is to reasonably maintain a competitive career.

The idea to change careers gains momentum. It begins small and grows to take a life of its own. Reckoning with it by taking the decision in the affirmative is a process of complex internal negotiation, wading into conflicting emotions and a search for autobiographical clarity. The first actional response to the decision comes as a relief and marks a shift from a state of uncertainty and doubt to one of either focused searching or preparation.

Career success the second time, although as sweet or sweeter as the first, feels altogether differently. One dream in the past, another now in the present and on the horizon. A new musical life can only feel differently too: the relationship to the instrument is profoundly changed. The musical voice is re-directed. Musical engagement is emerging in unfamiliar ways. These post-professional musicians knew a sense of having gone out on top with no regrets and with gratitude for a rich and varied music career.

Of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

My role as inquirer itself impacted study findings, as I facilitated participants' exploration of their own lived experiences. My entering their processes of exploration meant being a co-explorer, by virtue of my "being there" with preconceptions of my own (Heidegger, 1927/1962). The sum of this journey of inquiry included regular adjustments to my understanding of the phenomenon of post-professional musicians' experiences. For example, as participant stories came into focus, I began to see both my own story and pre-existing knowledge of the literature in new ways. Allowing the substrates of hermeneutic phenomenology to guide

my reading and telling of the data, I offer the following descriptions of the nature of my affect as inquirer.

Dasein

The affect my *Dasein,* my being there, had on participants manifest primarily in their expressions of gratitude for my presence. Each identified our string of interviews as the first occasion for articulating their musical life story in a wholistic, continuous way. Most of them also noted a resulting sense of catharsis. While once understood from the outside as professional musicians and now as non-musicians, this formal opportunity for sharing their stories in service of research opened space to be understood as post-professional musicians. They communicated with me freely, in a spirit of openness and curiosity. In turn, the process of inquiry affected my *Dasein* by galvanizing my own sense of wonder during the progression of data collection. The result was a compounding effect, as I saw an ever-clearer, more nuanced picture of the phenomenon come into focus, while grappling with and appreciating its oddness, eccentricity and peculiarity.

Fore-Sight / Fore-Conception

As relates to the literature, my original funds of knowledge were small. By small, I mean the following. As is customary in phenomenological inquiry, I had reviewed literature in an extended way prior to data collection, identifying a variety of topics potentially relevant to my inquiry without fully committing to any one of them. It was important that I held these literatures loosely, in order to remain open to the yet unknown directions my inquiry would take. My personal preconceived knowledge was likewise little articulated, but I maintained hunches that I revisited during my exploration (data collection) and reflection (analysis) of the phenomenon. The means for my revisiting literature topics and personal hunches was the hermeneutic circle

which I subsequently discuss. Additionally, I initially imagined recruiting study participants who had previously occupied portfolio music careers in which an emphasis on teaching and gigging rather than concertizing would have been the reality.

My hunches included the following. 1. Participants would have had unenjoyable or negative experiences in conservatory. 2. Participants would have identified numerous specific transferrable skills. 3. Participants would have established a new musical life that included participatory music-making. 4. Participants would have repositioned music-making into a recreational / leisure space. 5. Participants would have established a new relationship with their instruments, playing repertoire or in genres that had previously been unfamiliar. 6. Participants would have grappled with difficult questions of personal identity. 7. Participants would express a measure of sadness over their decision to leave music.

Hermeneutic Circle

These hunches demonstrate that my survey of the literature, various internal orientations, personal biases and acquired funds of knowledge existed in tension with the phenomenon I intended to explore. The hermeneutic circle mediated this tension (Gadamer, 1960/1975, p. 236). Consistent mindful regulation of my existing knowledge and impulses relative to the phenomenon both demanded repeated visitation and was enabled within the hermeneutic circle. In practical terms, my role as the inquirer included documenting this process of continually renewed and modified understanding of the phenomenon in the form of journaling (Gadamer, 1960/1975, p. 269). This process proved particularly relevant in the face of hunches I had that turned out to be irrelevant or non-applicable and facilitated subtle re-orientations throughout the course of data collection. It also proved essential in my adjustments within the literature review. Because my participants formed careers as performers, I discarded literature on music teacher

preparation. Since they emphasized learning, rather than specificity of transferrable skills, I discarded literature on transferrable skills and focused instead on life-long learning. The intentionality and sense of agency they brought to bear on their life stories led me to discard literature on personal identity in favor of literature on self-authorship.

Formative Experiences

Encountering New Music

For Grant, Claire and Bree, an experience listening to music as an adolescent featured so strongly that it resulted in their immediate determination to devote themselves to music. Among Gabrielsson's (2011) findings were accounts of the same phenomenon (p. 19). Custodero's participants likewise described similar moments of epiphany during middle childhood (in press, p. 86). For Jade, a strong experience with music in a kind of figured-bass baptism by fire opened the realm of early music that immediately became her new focus. Similarly for Reid, a strong experience listening to music as a teenager gave him a glimpse into the Western classical tradition that also resulted in immediate redirection of his musical attention. Experiences of these kind during the teenage years agree with Gabrielsson's (2011) findings that they produce a lingering influence into adulthood on one's emerging musical life (p. 57).

At the time of these strong encounters with music, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree had each already acquired several to many years of music study. They had a musical vocabulary to comprehend the music they heard. Their early strong experiences with music resulted in profound affirmations of devotion or in re-direction of focus. Consequently, the degree to which requisite music study generates the possibility itself for strong experiences with music is worth consideration. Custodero found that the early formation of musical self could be attributed to

"the intersections of dispositions, opportunities, and environmental support systems" (in press, p. 86). The ways in which the impact may have been different (or none at all) absent intersections of these kinds raises a potentially related question of talent.

Discovering Talent

It is possible that the determination of a teenager to embark on a career path in music is predicated on their self-understanding of talent. Indeed, Winner and Drake (2013) found a correlation between exceptionally hard work ("rage to master") and innate ability among adolescents who carried their talent into adulthood. As they mature, teenagers like these have a growing sense of their abilities and may be in early stages of matching those developing abilities against more advanced and refined displays of talent they observe in society.

In addition to being innate ability developed through dedicated work, talent can be appropriately understood in Kingsbury's (1988) terms as a "cultural symbol" – something attributed to someone by others (pp. 76-79). The identification of that symbol by the adolescent musician, as displayed and maneuvered among seasoned musicians, may feature in early understanding of their own talent. Further, in what ways the symbol of talent shone brightly enough in the immediate circles of Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree to elicit affirmations of talent by teachers, mentors and family members may indicate additional impact on their subsequent comprehension and cultivation of talent. Cumulatively then, the suggestion here is that the effect/affect of talent on the decision to devote oneself to music is strong. It may even be unsurprising, given the devotion to hard work ("rage to master") Winner and Drake (2013) found among children with intense interest in a specific domain.

Navigating the Conservatory

Critically, devotion characterizes many musicians' formative years. Gabrielsson (2011) identified it in adolescents who had a strong experience with music followed by the intention to devote themselves to it. Kingsbury (1988) and Nettl (1995) found it to be part and parcel of conservatory culture. As aspiring professional musicians, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree benefited from a traditional conservatory education with its emphasis on presentational performance, subsequently discussed in more detail (Turino, 2008). It could be the case that the expectation for devotion found in the conservatory felt familiar to them, as they had already devoted themselves to music.

Interpreting his findings, Kingsbury (1988) compares the conservatory to the seminary – a theme picked up by Nettl (1995) – characterizing conservatory culture in religious terms. To the uninitiated, conservatory culture can be alienating. For Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree, it galvanized their devotion, furthered their understanding of talent and showed them a relationship between their talent and being a professional. As Grant highlighted, it offered repeated occasions for learning that talent is in itself insufficient, that a regular work ethic is also necessary. The degree to which all five participants were beneficiaries of the conservatory model may have also been affected by the unusual arrangement four of them had entering it. While Jade entered at an unusually early age (16), Grant entered without a formal audition, Claire transferred by the result of an unexpected offer, and Bree turned down an Ivy League acceptance in favor of conservatory. These strokes of good fortune likely impacted their success in conservatory, as entrance itself into this competitive, performative domain may have been accompanied by a sense of winning.

Following External Formulas

During their formative years, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree followed external formulas as identified by Baxter Magolda (2008), demonstrated by their reliance on guidance from parents, mentors and teachers. Among individuals in similarly formative years, Baxter Magolda (2008) likewise found them to externally define beliefs, form self-knowledge and affirm identities "through dependent relationships with similar others" (p. 50). For Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree, this kind of external reliance produced mixed messages and signals. As teens, Claire and Reid had teachers and musical mentors who discouraged them from pursuing music. In college, Jade was told by her teacher that there's no way to plan her career. Similarly, among half of their study participants, Bennet and Hennekam (2018) found active discouragement from parents and advisors in relation to their arts career aspirations (p. 1460). Challenges associated with navigating external forces of both trusted adults and conservatory culture, along with words of advice, praises of talent and prior affirmations of devotion to music paint a complex picture. This picture may pre-figure the kind of complex world Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree would one day inhabit as professional musicians. Afterall, regulating internal responses to performance reviews, maintaining a competitive edge (displays of talent) and continually re-evaluating ones devotion to the career come with the territory of the professional musician.

Professional Life

Launching the Career

In their early days as emerging professionals, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree found clarity on the nature of the career they each determined to launch. A picture of the ideal career came into focus. For Jade, it looked like salaried teaching appointments during the week and

performing on the weekends. In Grant's case, it was maintaining a presence in both academia and on stage as a performer. Claire saw it as one primary orchestral appointment from which additional performance opportunities would emanate. For Reid, it was inter-genre, collaborative and diverse, and in Bree's case, it looked like concentration as a soloist. Reaching this point with a clear view of their ideal careers marked the end of a multi-year period of prioritizing, re-prioritizing, focusing, re-focusing and so forth. In Baxter Magolda's (2008) terms, it marked the end of a crossroads period – a requisite phase on the path toward self-authorship in which the individual experiences tension between demands from the outside and their own internal inclinations and impulses. The fact that all five participants successfully navigated this difficult period is itself noteworthy, as Bennet and Hennekam (2018) found that just more than half of their creative industry study participants did the same.

Of further interest is the extent to which getting clarity on the nature of the ideal music career and thereby coming through the other side of the crossroads period toward self-authorship impacts the launch of the career. It was only after visions of their careers had crystalized that Jade, Grant, Claire and Bree each experienced a kind of so-called break and that Reid saw the building of an onramp to his career. It is possible that the act itself of imagining with specificity the nature of their careers served to position them for moments of break. In this vein, Freeman (2017) makes the connection between the stories we tell and the storied movement of life itself. Additionally, the ways in which all five participants positioned themselves for the prospect of a break included a certain amount of risk. For example, Claire relocated to Germany without guarantee of full-time work. Recall the good fortune and success each had entering and being in conservatory. It is worth considering ways in which their prior risk-taking and successes might have established precedent for the risk and success they experienced in their career launches. It is

then possible that they may have knowingly or unknowingly identified a common thread, choosing a life-story interpretation that emphasized the continuous (Bateson, 2004).

Being a Performer

Having devoted their lives to music and worked consistently toward a professional musician reality, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree came to occupy a unique space in society – even among other musicians – as they reached a singular level of mastery and competence made possible through a distinct combination of factors. These factors included their efforts, good fortune in the quality of teachers and education they received and being well-positioned for moments in which important opportunities could present themselves. Equally unique sets of challenges and benefits accompanied their positions. The nature of the challenges will be salient to a subsequent discussion. As for the benefits, these are both social/relational and musical.

For all five participants, regular performance of canonical Western classical works meant functioning within the presentational performance setting, described by Turino (2008) as one in which there is a clear distinction between those who make music and those who do not. The dynamics of this setting, in addition to being enjoyable for the listeners, offer certain pleasures to the performers too. For Jade, these pleasures often centered on the presence of friends or family in attendance. Grant enjoyed the friendship and shared sense of humor with the cellist in his ensemble. As the only woman in the brass section, Claire was often amused by the rapport she and her male colleagues shared on stage and equally by the constitution and tastes of her audiences. Reid found that he thrived in a diversity of performance venues, sharing camaraderie with similarly diverse sets of colleagues while noticing the impact his playing had on listeners. As a soloist, Bree discovered she both had the ability to affect and enjoyed affecting audiences through her playing. Of interest then are the ways in which the presentation of musical work,

work-concept – "*ideals* of musical practice," *projective* of "object existence" (Goehr, 1994, p. 106) – function to conserve the work (similar to the function of a museum in the conservation of visual art), while simultaneously affording rich and varied possibilities for human interaction on stage and between those on stage and those in the audience. Indeed, Gabrielsson (2011) found many such meaningful experiences among his study participants.

In addition to the vibrant and meaningful social/relational aspects of performing, all five participants had transcendent experiences. Their accounts of these experiences parallel those among Gabrielsson's (2011) study findings in which participants described transcendent experiences while performing. These descriptions ranged from an overwhelming sense of comprehending the sum of the music in a profound way to being one with the other performers or the music itself; from feelings of transport to sudden clarity in grasping, in the abstract, the relation of the parts to the whole. Near the end of her career and during a performance on the piano, Jade experienced a deep sense of total oneness with the instrument. That the majority of her concertizing was from the harpsichord or fortepiano highlights the unexpected nature of this experience as does the effect it had on certain family members who also felt and commented on the depth of the experience. In Grant's account of being on stage with many of the world's finest musicians, he's overcome by both the majesty of the music and the experience of total unity with the other performers. His account suggests a keen sense of presence, living fully within the wonder of the moment. A similarly profound experience of time is apparent in Claire's account in which the past collapses into the present. This sense of having journeyed full circle crystalizes in a moment, along with a kind of instant reckoning, during what feels like an engulfment in waves of sound. Reid is sent into a momentary state of shock and paralysis by the eruption of the crowd in a pop-concert. While the notated music alone was not responsible for his transcendent

experience, its contrast to the thunderous music of the crowd made intense feelings of awe and joy possible. Bree's account of playing on a coveted and unfamiliar instrument is liberating, suggesting that novelty can facilitate transcendent experience. Additionally, the implication may be that trust has a multiplying effect: Bree's being entrusted as temporary steward of an instrument compounded trust in herself as a performer.

Being Entrepreneurial

As documented in studies conducted by Smilde (2009), López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2019) and Frenette et al. (2020), the careers of many musicians are largely or primarily entrepreneurial. Reid and Bree understood and leveraged their entrepreneurial potential throughout their careers. Jade, Grant and Claire, while not understanding themselves as entrepreneurs, occasionally and in certain ways engaged in entrepreneurial activity. Most of Smilde's (2009) study participants described a reluctance to market and promote themselves, "feeling too modest or embarrassed," even though they knew the necessity of doing so (p. 170). In contrast, Reid naturally took to continually refining and selling his brand, and Bree likewise readily adopted self-promoting techniques she had learned at conservatory, strategically building a core audience. López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2019) found a spirit of learning among their study participants to be essential in entrepreneurial endeavors. Grant's taking up of a solo recording project that encompassed nearly the entirety of the production process demanded a similar spirit of learning.

Among findings of Frenette et al. (2020) are participant descriptions of regular networking – a skill they developed ad hoc and without prior assistance in conservatory. While Jade, Grant, Claire and sometimes Reid were able to rely largely on their artist management agencies or orchestra to handle concert bookings, they and Bree took upon themselves a

proactive approach to networking for all manner of additional performance opportunities outside of their primary appointments. Among these opportunities, Bree made a clear distinction between concert work and gigging. While prioritizing concerts, of note here is the nature of the gigs she accepted: they were often non-Western classical or in venues she found appealing. Claire and Reid made no distinction between professional work and gigs, appreciating instead the variety. It could be that the nature of work available to brass players calls for this lack of distinction. Jade and Grant avoided gigging in the traditional sense and prioritized concerts. Their additional teaching appointments could account for this prioritization. Smilde (2009) and Frenette et al. (2020) found professional musicians' learning and cultivating of entrepreneurial skills to occur after, rather than during, conservatory. Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree similarly learned and developed their networking skills once in their careers. Bree is the slight exception, as she found limited entrepreneurial mentorship from a conservatory administrator.

Pivot

Large amounts of student debt and a disconnect between undergraduate education and the demands of an arts career were the primary reasons found by Frenette et al. (2020) for individuals with careers in the arts to change careers. The reasons for Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree were very different. They did not cite student debt, and their conservatory educations successfully translated to their real-world music careers. More generally, while Nalis, Kubicek and Korunka (2021) found various career shocks to be the cause of many career changes, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree cited no single shock event as the cause of their change. For each, a discovery of restlessness revealed unique sets of reasons that led to a decision to leave.

Discovery of Restlessness

From the time she was young and as evidenced by her agility between keyboard instruments and across traditional classical and early music, Jade had been adaptable. Prone to quickly tire of the familiar, she maintained openness to novelty. In addition, musical skills came easily to her. While discovering her restlessness in her career, she remembered the words of a musical mentor who said that *the music students for whom things come most easily are the ones most likely to leave the music profession.* Even during doctoral studies Jade doubted whether she was in the right program and considered strongly the possibility to getting an MBA instead. While happy with her income as a musician, she identified a desire to increase her earning potential. The negative experience on stage when she saved the conductor from fumbling might have been par for the course for a satisfied music professional, but for the one who was restless, it was a straw that broke the camel's back. Jade was among a handful of leading harpsichordists who each kept an eye on the others, continually monitoring and comparing each other's successes against their own. It is possible that this dynamic also had an effect on Jade's growing sense of disquiet.

A similar dynamic affected Grant's restlessness, as the demands to maintain his position as a top violinist were ongoing and often great. The strength of his commitment to his craft is apparent in his insistence that he remain musically and technically fit or not perform at all. The transcendent experience he had on stage playing Mahler's 3rd symphony unfolded in a larger arch of an experience that included an opposite experience in which he was overcome with a sense of doubt regarding his desire to remain a professional violinist. The contribution of these conflicting experiences is likely to have factored into his movement toward a decision to leave the field. It is also likely that the fulfilling nature of his last concert – a mark of high achievement – impacted

the clarity and swiftness toward his decision to leave. Also toward this decision, a deep sense of accomplishment seems to have been important.

Claire likewise knew a keen sense of accomplishment, accompanied by sincere gratitude for the privilege of having built the career she did. Like Grant, she too would rather leave the profession than slowly wane as a player. These sentiments were likely at the bottom of her growing feelings of restlessness, as she had effectively exhausted upward career mobility and felt a need to address health concerns in the context of a more relaxed lifestyle in her home country. Movement toward a decision to leave was slow, possibly because the nature of life on the other of it was uncertain.

Reid's movement toward a decision was slow too, as his growing restlessness largely accompanied and mirrored the slow onset of focal dystonia. While he took care to construct a kind of career off-ramp, shifting his attention to teaching, its destination was unclear. It is possible that thoughtful weighing of alternative career options is itself a contributor to a sense of restlessness, the status quo no longer intact.

Weighing alternative career options was simple for Bree. Her preparation for a pre-medical track in high school offered formation in another domain that could be directly revisited. Doing so meant attending to another long-held passion. In could be the case that the nimble nature of Bree's movement toward a decision to leave music was largely attributed to the clarity of her vision of life on the other side of it.

Of interest here is the fact that participants' restlessness drove them toward total career change rather than lateral career moves. Adjustments to their careers within the field of music as relates to genres, repertoire, audiences, instruments or expansion of their careers into the arts

more generally might have presented viable options. The fact that these options were discarded in favor of total career change may speak to the potency of their restlessness.

Decision to Leave

Each participant makes an actionable move, marking the decision to end their careers. Jade places a call to the career consultant while at an early music festival. Grant enrolls in a Master of Science and Finance degree for which courses are conducted in the same building as his music program. Claire leaves Germany and returns to the United States. Reid drives from the Northeast to the Southwest. Bree relocates to the Southeast. It is worth noting the intensity of these actions and their life-altering impacts. Bruner (2004) highlights the ways in which an individual may "segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life," toward becoming the very autobiographical narratives we "tell about" our lives (p. 694). Jade reflects on her decision:

> I really had a very fun time. There was nothing traumatic to push me out. Music was my job. It was a great job, a fun job, a cool job.

Grant's thinking about a poem was helpful in reflection on his decision:

> The way in which individuals negotiate their freedom within a society of others who are also negotiating their freedom is ultimately accomplished by having rules on the one hand and a constant dialogue with those rules on the other. The Goethe poem *Nature and Art* is a starting-point for this idea. The last few lines are:
>
> > Whoever wishes to achieve great things, must gather themselves in;
> > It is in constraint that mastery first shows itself,
> > And only the rules can set us free.

Reid expressed thoughts on his decision by responding to a poem by Heraclitus:

> You could not step twice into the same rivers;
> for other waters are ever flowing into you.
> There is nothing permanent except change.
> A man's character is his fate.
>
> > Dear Heraclitus,
> > I've pissed in the headwaters
> > The river is mine

Bree summed up her reflection in a short poem of keywords:

> Childhood dreams
> Seemingly endless possibilities
> Disappointment turned reality
> Happiness again
> Tired sometimes
> Excitement grows
> New dreams manifest

For all five participants, a sense of no regrets accompanied this closing of a life chapter.

Active Self-Authoring

There is a distinction between self-authorship and the theory of self-authorship that researchers like Baxter Magolda (2008) subsequently developed. Self-authorship is first an internal psychological state. The present discussion of self-authorship, as it relates to study participants' internal journeys of storying their musical lives, is in this light. Relatedly, self-authorship differs importantly from self-determination in the sense that self-authorship develops in contexts of varied and nuanced human relationships. Self-determination, by contrast includes the capacity for function as solo agent, without regard for socio-cultural realities. Nonetheless, self-authorship exists in tension with our being in the world (Heidegger, 1927/1962), in which ongoing negotiation between all manner of internal orientations and external relationships is dynamic and evolving.

Through their capacity to "coordinate, integrate" and act upon their values, convictions, "ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties and intrapersonal states of mind," Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree demonstrated self-authorship (Kegan, 1994, p. 185). Like participants in Baxter Magolda's (2008) study who engaged in self-authorship, they thoughtfully navigated crossroads of struggle between external expectations and internal impulses. Baxter Magolda (2008) found features of self-authorship to include movement from knowledge to wisdom and a

meaningful sense of flexibility (pp. 55-56). Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree demonstrated these features and more as their carefully considered and thoughtfully executed movement out of a music career highlighted what seems to have become an intuitive sense of self, ever evolving.

Post-Professional Musician Life

Launching the New Career

If preparation for their careers in music began in childhood, the new careers that Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree launched took off in comparatively short order. Unlike Murtagh et al. (2011), who found very little planning to accompany successful career changes, Jade, Grant and Bree strategized carefully. Jade secured a trading license and Grant and Bree obtained another degree. Like the participants in the study conducted by Murtagh et al. (2011), Claire and Reid planned very little, supporting the "action-affect-cognition (AAC) framework for decision making in career change" as proposed by Murtagh et al. (p. 257). Claire and Reid explored a variety of possible avenues before entering a second career. During this launching period or at the start of a new job, all participants experienced a geographical change. It is possible to read a kind of performativity in both the immediate actions that followed their decisions to leave music and those that served to launch their new careers. Traits associated with being a performer might include adaptability, comfort with travel, social acuity, preparedness and discipline. Noteworthy are the possible ways in which drawing upon their experience and identity as performers enabled an intuitive bridging across careers and chapters of life. The stories they were writing allowed for major discontinuities to function dynamically within a narrative that had until this point been mostly tidy and continuous (Bateson, 2004).

Lifelong Learning

If their ease as performers and comfort living with discontinuities contributed to launching their new careers, a spirit of learning also proved to be critical, leading to success in the new careers. As is the case across domains of work and career changes, a variety of skills transfer. Laker and Powell (2011) distinguish between hard skills and soft skills, defining them as technical skills and intra- / interpersonal skills respectively. While professional musicians' instrumental playing skills (hard skills) do not transfer, certain social, collaborative, networking, administrative (soft skills), productivity and clerical skills transfer, as found and documented by Kim (2018). And while Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree are able to identify their own sets of transferrable skills, of interest to this discussion is less the specifics of skills they transferred and more the capacity that facilitated their transfer. If we are to understand, according to Smilde (2009), professional musicians' unique capacity for maintaining lifelong learning, the fact that Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree were able to thrive in their new careers seems reasonable, even likely. The sense of curiosity, flexibility and openness to new experiences that characterizes life-long learners parallels the growth mindset described by Nalis, Kubicek and Korunka (2021). They found participants with a growth mindset to respond positively to large or unexpected career changes (Nalis et al., 2021).

Establishing a New Musical Life

Once performing music was no longer their profession, Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree effectively re-positioned music in their personal lives. The adjustment was sometimes awkward, captured by Claire in her description of learning how to attend a concert, after years of having been either on stage or invited in through the backstage. Their movement away from Western classical concert attendance to very little or no attendance, sometimes in favor of rock/pop concerts may indicate a need for a reprieve. Where concert going may have declined,

engagement with other art forms increased, including interests in ballet, visual art and architecture. Music listening at home also occupies an important place in each participant's life. It offers each participant a variety of emotional and psychological benefits in support of overall well-being, echoing the dynamics expressed by Hallam et al. (2017). Reid even describes a more finely attuned musical mind as a consequence.

Relating Differently to the Instrument

All five participants re-defined themselves as musicians: they no longer regard themselves as performers. It could be the case that this clear change in identity as musicians accounts for their having either put aside altogether or greatly reduced the playing of their primary instrument. Jade, Grant, Claire, and Reid no longer play their primary instruments. Jade no longer has her harpsichord and Grant is selling his violin; Claire her French Horn. Reid's trumpet is in storage, and Bree no longer has the high-quality violin that had been on loan to her. Grant and Bree have violins that carry sentimental value, and Jade, Claire and Reid have secondary instruments that are meaningful to them: Jade has her childhood grand piano, Claire has her piano and Reid has a piano and an organ.

No longer performers engaged in presentational performance (Turino, 2008), all five participants, by extension, no longer engage with pieces of music as musical objects, *work-concept* (Goehr, 1994). In this regard, and to the extent that they do make music, their music making practices resemble those prior to 1800 (Goehr, 1994). These practices now directly challenge the work-concept ideal, as they functions outside of concert halls, maintain no performer-audience distinction, function spontaneously and so forth (Goehr, 1994). For Reid, music making with friends and family at home is participatory, as everyone present is engaged, regardless of skill level (Turino, 2008). He, Jade, Claire and Bree have further re-positioned

music making in a space of leisure. In this space, making music is an act of personal expression, meditation, catharsis, unwinding and so forth, as described by Mantie and Smith (2017). Because it no longer bears the weight or expectations associated with playing professionally, it holds the Aristotelean capacity for creating experiences that are uniquely flourishing. Aristotle expressed the potential for happiness and well-being held by these kinds of acts of re-creation (340 BCE/2009). When they are freed of professional standards, transactional-ism or social obligation, they invite rich domains of personal and communal enjoyment (Hallam et al., 2017).

A Musical Life Composed

Through the act itself of transforming a temporal succession of episodes into a cohesive and meaningful musical life story, as described by Arciero and Bondolfi (2009), Jade, Grant, Claire, Reid and Bree deepen their ongoing formation and knowledge of self. They render the kinds of particularized and lived narratives outlined by Freeman (2017) into their uniquely varied musical life stories – stories from a world that is itself storied (Freeman, 2017). For each of them, a music career began as a dream, became a likely prospect and then a reality. Now, it is a past achievement, replaced by a new dream. Possibly not yet fully realized is purposefully re-positioned music making, conceived and understood within the arch of a whole musical life.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a discussion of study findings in relation to the literature. My general narrative of findings offered a composite description of all five participants, and my general description relayed the structure of the composite experience. I also showed the connection of my exploration (data analysis) to hermeneutic phenomenology. The effect/affect of talent on the decision to devote themselves to music seemed to be strong for all five participants.

The presentation of musical work itself revealed rich and varied possibilities for human interaction on stage and between those on stage and those in the audience. It additionally allowed all five participants to have transcendent experiences. For each, a discovery of restlessness revealed unique sets of reasons that ultimately led to a decision to leave their music career. A sense of no regrets and of having fulfilled a dream accompanied the closing of their professional musician life chapter. Their new emerging musical lives mark an historical return to music making that breaks the "expert"/"amateur" barrier, toward an Aristotelian ideal of flourishing. Across all participants' phases of musical life story, I aimed to illuminate the various modalities of life change, including those touching the economic, physiological and even spiritual dimensions. Based on the discussion in this chapter, I offer in the final one a summary, along with implications and recommendations for further study.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

I wish now to step outside the exploration of my participants' stories as presented and discussed in the previous chapters, zoom out and reflect. What are we to make of this phenomenon as illuminated by my five participants' stories? Their stories are certainly unusual, even exceptional. I consider the characteristics that make each story remarkable, reflect on the costs of inhabiting and leaving a successful music career, and imagine the unexplored potential within post-professional musical lives. Finally, I offer questions for music educators and topics of related future study.

Stories' Remarkable Characteristics

Becoming a professional musician with a successful career as a performer is itself an unusual accomplishment. Even the combination of requisite experiences can be atypical: beginning study early enough in life with high-caliber instructors and having the means to sustain formal training through graduate school, receiving the support and nurture of family and friends along the way. Becoming a successful musician after having begun playing one's primary instrument in mid-childhood (Bree) or early adolescence (Claire) is striking. Similarly, expanding one's capacity to include instruments that will feature predominantly in the career during college or graduate school (Jade and Reid) is impressive. Entertaining the possibility of, or maintaining another career interest during, a successful music career is remarkable, given the single-mindedness necessary in the preparation and sustaining of a music career. This dynamic is

more pronounced in Grant's case, as he already had a presence both on stage and in the academy. While career change or changes within a career are not unusual, career change from a successful music career to a starkly contrasted domain is unusual, although more common for individuals with a disability or injury. To make a momentous change of this kind without an immediate example of someone who has done the same is notable. Landing once again on one's feet, finding success a second time in a new career is also remarkable.

Costs of Sustaining and Leaving a Successful Music Career

It is possible that a better understanding of the inherent costs associated with successful music careers make the stories of my five participants more relatable than they might otherwise be. While it seems that my participants have generally been very lucky, their luck and/or success came with certain costs. We saw that Jade suffered from a regular sense of boredom, even on stage, and that keeping tabs on the handful of other harpsichordists who posed competition was tiring. Grant showed us the great challenge of being both a professional violinist and tenure track academic, while suffering from ongoing low-level performance anxiety. Claire illuminated the struggle of conducting a music career abroad, particularly as it became complicated near the end by physical suffering. Reid revealed the realities of a self-branded professional musician who continually pursues and modifies bookings that are in keeping with one's aesthetics, vision and priorities while suffering from the onset of a disability. We glimpsed in Bree's story the complexities of carving out a path as a soloist and maintaining the loan of a high-quality instrument while suffering from persistent symptoms of an injury that demanded continual attention.

I can imagine a kind of anguish associated with living out a dream, being praised for it, while simultaneously feeling a profound sense of restlessness; or the ongoing intense challenge of maintaining ones space in a highly competitive domain while regularly managing a certain degree of performance anxiety. I can imagine the anguish of working tirelessly to reconcile a growing disparity between ones will to perform and the body's physical insistence to the contrary. I wish to underscore the heaviness of these and similar challenges that factored into my participants' processes toward a decision to leave their music careers. These challenges, these experiences of pain, are known to many professional musicians. Facing them requires courage and adaptation, among other virtues and skills. I wish to additionally underscore the enormity of the kind of spiritual dilemma they faced, as they approached and grappled with this life-altering decision. It seems to me that the inner strength my participants cultivated in response to the pain and challenges they experienced during their careers manifest itself in the courage and adaptation they demonstrated in their pivot out of music. I venture to suggest that their pivots out of their careers demanded more courage, vulnerability and inspiration than remaining in them would have.

Success Humanized

I propose that the adventurer, savant, maverick or star-quality aspects of my participants and the remarkable characteristics of their stories are humanized by an understanding of the costs and sometimes suffering that comes with the territory of maintaining a successful music career. Thoughtful reflection on the discomfort, even pain, attached to the process of pivoting out of their music careers further humanizes the experiences of my participants – individuals who might otherwise appear extraordinary or unusually privileged. They spent their first year off

stage in ways that might variously be characterized as hidden. Jade waited a full year before going public with the news that she had left, Grant hid himself in the back of his finance and accounting classroom, Claire and Reid found themselves spending a lot of time at home with a lack of immediate direction, and Bree kept to herself as she studied for her next degree. It is not difficult to imagine the loneliness, feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty and risk that likely accompanied them during these months of pivot. There was after all no guarantee at the time of a successful second career. It is also easy to imagine the challenges associated with profound shifts in their human relationships. Musician colleagues – many of whom had become friends – were no longer regularly present in their lives. Numerous professional relationships effectively ended, after which participants experienced a lag in time before building professional relationships in a new career. Relationships with audiences profoundly changed, as participants' public performer presence disappeared.

Intentional Music Making

Circling back to my own narrative, reflecting on it in light of my participants' stories, a few insights come to the surface. I find the difference in our current relationship to our instruments particularly interesting and wonder what this difference reveals. I share my participants' concern of deteriorating as a player, but it seems to be insufficient to keep me from playing. Perhaps the major difference here is our levels of achievement. While I became and may still be regarded as an advanced pianist, an experience in the realm of the most proficient and sophisticated pianists is one that is unfamiliar to me. For musicians who have known and lived within a similar realm, an all-or-nothing mentality relative to their instrument may be unsurprising. It is also possible, however, that while my participants set clear intentions for their

second careers, decidedly ending any activity as performers, that they may have yet to fully reflect on and set new intentions regarding the extent of personal music making they may like to sustain during their next chapter of life. Reid is the exception here. I wonder how Jade's new musical life might look if she were to build a solo repertoire or find recreational music maker-collaborators. I wonder how Grant's and Bree's new musical lives might look if they were still in possession of their performing instruments or if they were to recreationally take up a less technically-demanding string instrument. I wonder how Claire's new musical life might look if it were to intersect more meaningfully with her other flourishing endeavors.

For Music Educators

A handful of questions come to mind, as I reflect on the implications of this study, in light of the arch of a musical life into, through out of and now on the other side of a professional music career. In what ways might we, as music educators, facilitate among our students a variety of musical experiences that invite dynamic and diverse forms of expression and exploration upon which they can draw in the composing of their own musical life stories? In what ways are we able to encourage self-authored musical lives at all and critical stages of musical development? We might locate relevant examples of this dynamic within the formation of dancers and athletes. What approaches might we take to foster a love of music making that moves seamlessly between professional and recreational settings? In other words, we might consider ways in which our methods build too high of walls between these settings.

Recognizing the high cost of applied music instruction, what alliances could we make with organizations dedicated to serving marginalized groups of low economic status in order to expand access to applied music instruction? In what ways might we imagine and manifest

comprehensive teaching that benefits a variety of learners equally, without giving preference to the most talented? Are we able to identify specific practices within our own work as music educators that inhibit music education reform efforts aimed at opening closed forms, expanding the traditionally accepted canon of repertoire and inviting yet unimagined forms of musics, instrumentation and representation? By extension, in what ways might resistance to reform efforts of these kind contribute to the nature of the professional performing career as we have known it and further, to the disquiet or unhappiness of the musicians who inhabit such careers?

Future Study

Topics for future research might include post-professional musician populations who sustained portfolio or non-performing careers. Additionally, those who found it necessary to end their careers due strictly to an injury. Also, a similar inquiry might explore the experiences of post-professional singers or jazz musicians. A research project that examines the musical lives of professional, post-professional or non-performing teaching musicians might be of interest too. Whether or how musicians of this kind set clear intentions regarding their music making and in what ways those intentions create a separation between professional and recreational music activity could be worth knowing. Beyond our own field, this inquiry likely finds resonance within other professions too. The complexity of human choosing amidst an ongoing, active navigation between the relationship of life and narrative is widely relatable.

Summary

I have reflected here on the remarkable characteristics of my participants' stories, considered the costs of being in and getting out of a successful music career and contemplated

the humanity of each story. I have also imagined the impact setting clear intentions might have on my participants' post-professional musical lives, posed questions for us as music educators and offered ideas for future study. In these ways themselves I have communicated the impact of this study on my own musical life and thinking. Finally, however, I wish to offer two specific ways the research of this dissertation has impacted me.

As musicians and music educators, we are proficient in the art of crafting bios. We have written them for concert programs, institution and personal websites, conference flyers, and the like. Composing a life story is familiar to us. Indeed, as people live increasingly more of their lives online, curation of one's persona or brand is now commonplace. In many ways, storying our lives is becoming less of a choice and more of an expectation. In this light, I wonder what process we have in place for deciding which aspects or details of our stories we will include and tell. This process invites self-authorship. It seems to me that my study participants have engaged it with depth and attention that is unusual, even in a world in which many people are curating their life stories. These thoughts bring me to the first way this dissertation research has impacted me: I have found new clarity on my own musical life story, indeed on even my greater life story. I have come into close contact with palpable cognitive, psychological and emotional benefits that accompany storying my own life. As a consequence, I am grateful for the many occasions across my life as a musician and music educator that have invited storying. As a further consequence and valuing the role of narrative toward a fuller pedagogy of music, I aim to extend similar invitations of storying within the musical spaces I move.

The second way this dissertation research has impacted me touches my work directly. I hinted at it in my questions for music educators. My work centers on applied piano instruction. Over the years, the majority of my students have come from socio-economically successful

families. My study participants enjoyed, as I did, the privilege of regular applied lessons during their upbringing. In my case, these lessons came with significant sacrifice on the part of my parents' and, once I was able to start working as a teenager, on my part too. My participants' and my stories highlight the impact access to this kind of instruction has on music career potential. I wonder in what ways professional music careers might look differently were they to be formed by individuals with difficult socio-economic statuses who, being otherwise unable, find early access to applied music instruction. I am interested in ways in which I might personally join or create efforts that make this vision a reality.

My purpose in this phenomenological inquiry has been to explore the experiences of post-professional musicians – to know and tell their stories. To this end, my aim has been to inhabit and hold this phenomenon in ways that embrace both its wonder and oddness. Expressed in five stories from post-professional musicians, this phenomenon reveals meaning that may inspire additional engagement with a variety of yet unexplored spaces.

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