

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

Tom Barone

Arizona State University, U.S.A

Liora Bresler

University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign, U.S.A.

<http://ijea.asu.edu>

ISBN 1529-8094

---

Volume 7 Number 4

June 17, 2006

## Apprenticeship at the Academy of Music

Klaus Nielsen

Aarhus University (Denmark)

Citation: Nielsen, Klaus. (2006, June 17). Apprenticeship at the Academy of Music. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 7(4). Retrieved [date] from <http://ijea.asu.edu/v7n4/>.

### Abstract

Inspired by studies of apprenticeship and theories of situated learning, this study argues that learning should be understood in relation to ongoing social practice. Using interview material and participant observation studying piano students' learning at the Academy of Music in Aarhus, it describes how transparency and access to the music culture at the Academy are important for the piano students' learning processes. In particular, two ways of learning are described: learning by imitation and learning by performance. In both these ways the learning process involves and is organised around becoming a member of the musical culture and developing an identity as a musician.

### Introduction

It is your whole life and no matter what you do . . . if you take a break and don't play for a year, then it is also part of becoming a better musician because it is not something you can force. It is not something you can read in a book: then you do so and so. It is a question of your personal development, so that involves everything. It involves the way you live. Whatever you do and all the things that have nothing to do with music or art for that matter. But it involves everything which has to do with life, with people.

This quotation, by a piano student, nicely describes what is so interesting about learning and apprenticeship: learning has to do with the whole person and personal development, and is not just something that goes on inside one's head. Studying how to become a pianist at The Academy of Music in Aarhus offers excellent opportunities to understand how one may become a skilful and knowledgeable individual in a community of practice. Crucial to the learning process is the

piano student's participation in the musical culture at the Academy, where the musical performance is both transparent and accessible. Learning processes such as learning by imitation and learning by performance must be understood in relationship to the musical context at the Academy, and in light of the piano student's efforts to become a member of the musical community of practice.

### **Apprenticeship and Learning**

It is the purpose of this article to show how becoming a member of the community of concert pianists plays an important role when we approach issues of learning within the field of music. From a phenomenological perspective to learning, which emphasizes students' experiences of and in significant learning situations, it is argued that achieving an identity as a musician is influenced by what is found relevant to learn within the community of practice. This perspective on learning is found to be dominant in apprenticeship. Consequently, the results presented and introduced below in this article challenge a traditional cognitive approach to learning, which is central in most educational theory.

In educational theory, a cognitive approach to learning is dominant. In this approach learning is a question of processing information, and the relationship to the surrounding world becomes a question of placing, processing, storing and retrieving information. Learning, in other words, is a question of understanding how information is transformed and transferred from the external, concrete world to the internal and cognitive. In short, learning is a question of *internalising* information from the external world to the internal. In this connection, the crux of the matter is how efficiency is achieved regarding transforming, internalising, and retrieving certain pieces of information in the inner mental structures. The goal of the learning processes is to obtain as much information (knowledge) and thereby create new conceptual structures which correspond as precisely as possible to the external world (Lindsay and Norman, 1977, p. 499; Packer, 1985). One consequence of this way of understanding learning is that it becomes a technical and impersonal matter. Personal, bodily and social issues are often separated from the discussion of learning, or at most, these issues become an appendix to the discussion (Nielsen & Kvale, 1997).

Instead of the cognitive approach, my inspirational frame of reference is apprenticeship. Apprenticeship represents a broader perspective to learning where the focus is on how the apprentice learns not only from the master's performances, but also from the other apprentices, journeymen and so on (see Nielsen & Kvale, 1997). I focus on how the students participate in practice as the locus for understanding learning. By doing so, a clearer picture develops of which resources students find for learning in an environment, and how the students combine and use these resources in their pursuits to become skilled practitioners.

In general, the study of apprenticeship offers a way of understanding how people learn without being formally taught. In this sense, to investigate apprenticeship learning is also to reflect on a traditional way of understanding what learning is about. Learning in apprenticeship also introduces another perspective on learning, which emphasizes the learner's participation in a

community of practice, moving away from a perspective in which learning is more or less inseparably connected to teaching. This approach to apprenticeship learning is to move the issue of learning from a cognitive frame of reference to a situated one.

The move toward an apprenticeship perspective on learning is to understand learning as part of a process of becoming a member of a community of practice: that is, learning as socially situated (Lave and Wenger, 1991)<sup>1</sup>. To claim that learning is socially situated is to assert that learning is an aspect of one's activity in the world, not a separate thing. Learning is not something one does beforehand in order to apply it afterwards, over there. Learning is understood as people's participation in an ongoing social practice, and is a process of constructing an identity - becoming a somebody in the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1992). The acquisition of an identity as a craftsman is intertwined with the acquisition of the skills or knowledge of the craft. To be a member of a social practice is to have a particular knowledge of something. In this perspective, apprenticeship is learning in its everyday practice, and not something that exclusively takes place at certain times and in certain locations. However, this does not mean that teaching is without importance. In this article I claim that the piano students both learn from being a part of the community of practice and from their main teacher at the Academy of Music.

Apprenticeship is translated differently in Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon countries. In Anglo-Saxon countries, focus is placed on how apprentices learn from being a part of a community of practice. However, in Scandinavia apprenticeship can be translated as 'master learning' (mesterlære) and focus is placed on how the apprentice learns from working with the master. In this article I try to synthesize the two meanings by concentrating on how the piano students learn from the transparent music culture at the Academy of Music and, furthermore, how they learn from their main teachers at the Academy. From my analysis of the piano students, I argue that students do not only learn piano techniques and music interpretation from their main teachers, they learn a relationship to music in general.

The Academy of Music in Aarhus is an educational institute under the Ministry of Culture aiming at promoting classical music in Denmark. There are about 240 students and 35 teachers at the Academy. In general, the education takes five years. The students have lessons with a main teacher all through their education. In addition, they have lessons in minor subjects such as accompaniment, rehearsal and chamber music. They also have lessons in ear training and theoretical classes on musical topics. The compositions of lessons depend on whether the students choose to follow the music teacher class or the diploma class.

The reason for my choice of study is to be found in the fact that over a long period of time, I indirectly followed the career of a student pianist who gave me piano lessons. I had heard her play at several concerts, and through her, knew of several problems in relation to being a piano student. Secondly, I am an amateur pianist myself with a certain practical knowledge of playing

---

<sup>1</sup> Lave and Wenger (1991) make a distinction between learning in apprenticeship and learning as socially situated. In this article I will maintain apprenticeship as a socially situated mode of learning (for an elaboration see: Nielsen and Kvale, 1997).

the piano. I have taken lessons for about ten years and therefore have a good knowledge of the terminology and music theory; I also know what it is like being “stuck” when you want to play, etc.

The empirical foundation for this article rests on observations from a year at the Academy of Music where lessons, concerts, exams and master classes were observed and 16 semi-structured interviews were carried out with piano students and teachers about the process of becoming a pianist (Kvale, 1996). 14 student interviews (7 female students and 7 male students) were done with an average length of about ninety minutes, and two interviews were with teachers at the Academy of Music (one female and one male teacher). The selection of interviewees happened primarily in connection with processes of research. Two teachers volunteered when I contacted the Academy by mail. Eleven students were asked in connection with observing their lessons and four students were contacted by letter later in the research process. Of the students I asked in connection with my observations, all but one student accepted to be interviewed. I chose students who were at the beginning, the middle and at the end of their studies in order to obtain a variety of different experiences. The primary criteria for choosing students were where they were in their education. As mentioned the education takes five years and three students at their first year were chosen, three students at their second were chosen etc. It was only possible to find two fifth years students who were interested in participating in the interviews. The interviews were designed as semi-structured interviews centred around particular themes, but with the option of exploring specific themes in greater depth (Kvale, 1996).

Research questions were formulated to guide the interview. The research questions were centered on the following themes:

- Learning and aspects of knowledge,
- Learning in a social context,
- Learning and identity,
- Teaching and learning,
- Learning and practising,
- Learning by performing,
- Learning and evaluation,
- Learning and the pianist student’s future career.

As the study progressed the notion of transparency, imitation and matters of identity became increasingly important. Tapes were transcribed as verbatim as possible and approved by the interviewees. Analysis of the transcribed interviews followed a modified pattern outlined by Giorgi (1985). The quotes used in this article are the ones which best illustrate the points of research interest and all names mentioned are pseudonyms.

### **The Transparency of the Musical Performance**

What struck me at the Academy of Music was the transparency of the profession. Transparency refers to the notion that professional performances are visible to the learners during their

education. The term "transparency" denotes ways in which using artefacts (e.g. playing the piano), and understanding their significance in relation to practice become still more apparent when used, or when students see how these artefacts are used (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 103). The profession of playing classical music, is part of the education right from the beginning. In other words, only by using or observing piano music played in practice is it possible to constitute transparency. At the Academy of Music there is a musical culture where the piano student is able to perceive how musical skills and knowledge are used. This lack of division between learning and applying makes the goal of the education obvious, and this transparency opens up possibilities for students to share ideas about how to use their skills<sup>2</sup>.

From the interviews it was gleaned that one of the ways in which the musical performance is made transparent is through lessons with the teacher. Every student has a main teacher, who teaches him or her one lesson every week<sup>3</sup>. All students interviewed placed great emphasis on the relationship to their main teacher, and called them the most important classes they had at the Academy. Furthermore, most students found that the term 'apprenticeship' was well chosen to denote the kind of relationship they had with their primary teacher. In most of the interviews, the importance of having a primary teacher who was him or herself a concert pianist was stressed. One of the interviewee characterizes her primary teacher with the words: "He was inspiring. He played himself, and he was a pianist himself, and musician and gave concerts . . . He had great ability and he was demanding." The teacher described is important to the piano student primarily because he is a performing musician, and not only because of his abilities as a teacher in the traditional sense. One of the piano students describes the three teachers she has had during her time as a student. She emphasizes their abilities as pianists and their personalities as important for the learning process. Her teachers' abilities to make the musical performance visible, and that the teachers function as a model are important aspects of her learning process. In a situated perspective, teaching can be understood as a mediating strategy necessary to allow the student to focus on the qualified musical performance in the environment. In this sense, Teaching is primarily understood in relationship to performances within the musical profession.

In addition to the lessons, another way of being confronted with musical performance is by attending concerts. As I will mention later when discussing learning by performance, there are both student concerts and more formal concerts in which professional musicians perform. When asked what one learns from attending concerts, a piano student replied:

You learn the music. You hear different interpretations and in the same way as with the lessons and master classes, it is enriching and it is inspiring, and it is educational because you get new ideas and new approaches. You also see

---

<sup>2</sup> A study of meat cutters in Chicago showed that if the learning environment lacked transparency for apprentices to observe journeymen perform their skills, learning was prevented rather than facilitated. Marshall concluded that the opportunities for apprentices to observe and to be observed by skilled journeymen was a significant part of the learning process (Marshall, 1972, p. 42-46).

<sup>3</sup> Another type of lesson is when the piano student works on accompaniment, repetition and chamber music, often with other teachers.

or listen, of course. You will make sure to sit where you can see the hands: what exactly is he or she doing? How exactly is that method of playing?

By attending concerts the students experience different interpretations of the musical performance and become inspired to try out different interpretations in their own playing. The opportunity for the piano students to experience differences between teachers, between pianists, and between students at different levels becomes an important resource for learning.

A third way in which musical performance becomes transparent is in master classes. In a master class, an international musician gives lessons while others observe. The interviewees stressed that through the master class one can learn a great deal (e.g. when one is on stage and the international pianist comments on one's performance). However, the student will also learn from seeing other piano students mistakes or successes and learn from this. The students have the chance to compare themselves with other piano students, being either reassured or motivated to work harder.

Why is it so important for the piano students to observe the teachers at the Academy who are performing pianists? The importance of the transparency at the Academy of Music leads to several different answers. One answer would be that the skilled pianists through their performances embody a kind of knowledge, which the students cannot encounter in other settings than in concerts. Additionally, the performing pianist embodies a set of very concrete goals for which the students can strive. In other words, the performing pianists are important role models who set benchmarks for what it is important to learn. Furthermore, the transparency of the musical culture at the Academy of Music, and the multiple perspectives it creates, provide the piano students the opportunity to set their construct their own schedule based upon their own readiness to take from the different perspectives what is important for them at the moment. It makes it possible for the learner to learn in the order that suits him or her, and at his or her necessary speed. Access to performance creates a way for the students of evaluating themselves in the process of becoming pianists.

My interviews with the piano students made it obvious that the environment at the Academy of Music is a transparent environment where the musical performance becomes visible at different levels - in lessons with teachers, at concerts, and in master classes, just to mention the most important. The transparency of the musical performance creates a de-centred learning process for the piano student with many different opportunities to learn, depending on the activity of learner. Below I will go into greater details about the two ways of learning that were described as particularly important in the interviews: learning by imitation and learning by performance<sup>4</sup>. Both are examples of how to learn by participating in a musical culture.

---

<sup>4</sup> There are certain aspects of the piano student's everyday life I for reasons of space leave out of this article, even though these activities are important for the learning process (for an elaboration see: Nielsen, 1999). These are playing together with other musicians, practising and teaching - the piano students themselves work as teachers, which constitute another important way of learning.

## Imitation

The role of imitation has been an object of controversy (Diller, 1975; Jespersen, 1992; Polanyi, 1958). There has been a tendency to understand imitation as a *mechanical* activity with an idea of 'taking over' knowledge unproblematic from one person to another (Nielsen, 1999). However, imitation has played a major role in developing a social empirical model of learning (i.e., Social learning theory). In this connection, imitation describes that the learner is not simply taking over one element of action, but also more complex social behaviour and emotional reactions we learn by experiencing the consequences of other people's actions (punishments or rewards). Especially studies of how children imitate aggressive behaviour by experiencing the consequences to a role model has been of key interest, and a point of departure for this kind of research (Bandura, 1963, p. 47-100). Also, other perspectives have recognised that imitation plays an important role in learning processes. In Schön's (1987) analyses of how people think in practice, the concept of imitation plays a central role. Imitation happens on several different levels and is part of a dialogue between the reflective practitioner and his student. Imitation is the basis for the reflective practitioner to create a design, where he can coach the student's performance. The student reconstructs particular aspects of particular performances. He selects and integrates in his own performances things which are valuable to him (p. 108).

Recent research has shown that humans from birth have considerable capacities for imitation. Infants less than 72 hours old show mouth opening and tongue protrusion (Meltzoff and Moore, 1983). In other words, we have a fundamental attunement to the bodies of others, and a sense of agency and intentionality that are both basic to the capacity of imitating. From birth onward imitation is our primary kinetic mode of making sense of ourselves and of the world. It is finely tuned from the beginning; it is not an unperfected, undeveloped, or crude stratum that takes proper adult form later in life. Moreover, endowed from the beginning with a kinetic reference point, it is not surprising that thinking in movements is our original mode of thinking (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

These different perspectives lead to a more nuanced comprehension of imitation as a fundamental way of learning, and when acknowledged in apprenticeship it obtains epistemological significance. In this context, learning by imitation is a way of integrating other students', teachers' or pianists' ways of playing as experienced in the musical culture. Imitation is rooted in the capacity of one's bodily presence to be attentive to another, and to pattern movement along the lines of the other, imitating the way the other performs something, but also selecting the occasions on which one will or will not perform according to the methods of another. In other words, imitation should be understood as an active and selective process, in which the piano student uses whatever he or she needs in the process of becoming a pianist. This is highlighted in one of the interviews in which the interviewee describes imitation as a very powerful and central tool for learning:

For much of the lesson what stuff [the teacher] passed on to me, he did by playing it, so I could see what he did, so I could hear it, instead of [him]

telling me in words. I find that very important - I use that in my own lessons a lot. To show how to play it. I feel that it is a more direct way of learning because the pupil picks up a lot more unconsciously this way, by listening and watching. Sometimes you can see it, when I'm teaching and I show something, when I have shown an inexpedient move of my hands to the pupil [laughs] you can see the pupil perform exactly the same move, unconsciously copying it.

In the interviews, piano students distinguished between a passive type of imitation process and a more active imitation process, in which the student needs a certain readiness to imitate. Several of the students stress that the imitative process is most of all a selective process, where the student imitates what he or she can use. However, the interviewees also give examples of how the teacher's way of playing can be impossible for the student to imitate, because it simply does not work for him or her to copy the teacher's style.

Hand in hand with imitation as a way of learning, the interviewees emphasize the importance of confidence between teacher and student as an important basis for imitative learning. Imitation is based on the student's confidence in the teacher, and the notion that they share the same basic idea about how music should be played, and what it means to be a musician. Imitation is not only a matter of mimicking some technical skills; it is a matter of acquiring a certain kind of being in a social musical setting. The students do not only imitate skills in a narrow sense of the word. They also imitate a way of living with music. Or to put it in another way, the students imitate the relationship the skilled pianists have with the music.

The interviews provide examples of this: One of the interviewees studied in Paris for about a year, where she had lessons with a Polish pianist. Before she went abroad, she had difficulties uniting the technical side of her musical performance with the expressive or musical side. During her stay in Paris, the Polish pianist stressed the importance of being close to the keys, how to practice in a correct and concentrated way, and probably most importantly, how to live as a musician. He advised her to go to museums, and concerts, to read books, and so on - in short, to live life.

This advice helped the interviewee to succeed in uniting the technical and expressive sides of her performance. She gives a beautiful description of her experience:

It meant a great deal that I came to a teacher who had just what I was looking for, and where the technique and the way of playing was just right for me. And it was as though these things were united on a higher level for the first time, and I was suddenly able to express what I wanted without any hindrance. And it was the feeling of being home. Absolutely. It was a feeling of confidence and a feeling of being right.

The interviewee goes on to describe how the Polish teacher helped her regain the intuition she lost when she concentrated on the technical side of her musical performance. Through the Polish

teacher, the piano student not only found the right distance to the piano, in a sense she also found the right distance *from* the music. She realized that being a musician is not only a matter of studiously practicing the technical skills at the piano, but it is a matter of living as a musician with the music. For the interviewee the Polish teacher became a model, an example of how to live as a musician.

One could argue that what I have shown as imitation so far is rather one-sided, because imitation has an 'unconscious' side to it, where people are not aware that they are adopting attitudes, habits and behaviour from others. The question is whether changing participation which expresses itself as embodiment is more in line with what has been termed 'identification' (or modelling), which includes a more pervasive process by which a person tries to be the same kind of person as another, rather than taking over some aspects of his behaviour (Hill, 1990, p. 140).

One of the students made an observation which points in that direction when he said:

I was talking to somebody yesterday about looking at students in the corridors. You can almost pinpoint who the teacher is, you can see it when you know the student. The same goes for their way of playing, you can hear it - that it is somebody's pupil, they have certain characteristics, a little trivial thing but Otfried's<sup>5</sup> pupils all sit very still on the piano bench in comparison to Victor's pupils, they move around much more, this is one way of seeing it, but there are a lot of other ways as well.

There are different hints in the interviews of how students of different teachers not only take over the teacher's way of playing, but also his or her way of teaching, talking, walking etc. To be a member of a community of practice, the students embody certain features from the behaviour of significant persons in this community - mostly their teachers or older students. There are, however, other students that are sceptical of the students' observations<sup>6</sup>.

I have shown different examples of imitation: as a conscious strategy of learning skills; as a way of learning a relation to the music; and, as a non-conscious way of taking over particular habits which have little to do with playing music, but have more to do with acting as a pianist. As shown from the examples, imitation is a complex phenomenon, that is highly related to matters of identity as a performing pianist. However, imitation as a way of learning must be viewed from the perspective of where the piano student is in the process of becoming a pianist, and not as a universal tool that any master or teacher can use to transmit certain bodily skills. The Polish teacher provided the interviewee with an example of how to relate to the musical community of

---

<sup>5</sup> Otfried and Victor are pseudonyms for teachers at the Academy.

<sup>6</sup> From the interviews it was possible to trace ambivalence due to some of the students who, on the one hand, saw imitation as part of the learning process, while on the other hand, there was some resistance or reservations about imitation as a core mode of learning. In the students' community of practice it is seen as embarrassing to copy one's teacher. Several of the students stress that one ought not to copy one's teacher. This gives the concept of imitation another status as something that the students negotiate among themselves, and from which, in general, they distance themselves.

practice, a relationship that the Polish teacher himself embodied. He embodied the right example at the right time in relation to her career.

### **Learning by Performance**

In addition to imitation, another central way of learning is to be actively involved in the musical context, which I call 'learning by performance'. Learning by performance is a mode of learning that is marginal in modern educational theory and practice. It stresses the importance of learning *through* acting in practice, rather than learning *of* the activity in practice. In modern educational systems there have been a tendency to create a sharp division between the educational institutions where knowledge is taught, and the practical setting where knowledge is applied (Schön, 1983)<sup>7</sup>. Educational institutions are often organized after the hierarchy of professional knowledge, as it is, for example formulated by Schön, where the general principles occupy the highest level and 'concrete problem solving' the lowest (p. 24). We tend to think of 'real knowledge' as the general principles, which consist of theoretically and scientifically formulated knowledge, while skills are merely a secondary kind of knowledge connected to applying our general principles in different situations in order to solve concrete problems. In contrast, in apprenticeship learning we find that learning happens by using skills in a real-life setting. This is the learning mode, which I in this context term 'learning by performance'.

At the Academy of Music learning by performance based on the transparency of the musical performance, which gives the piano student the opportunity to participate gradually in the musical culture at the Academy. Playing concerts provides a frame in which the students in a real-life setting can try out their skills and receive feedback on how they have performed.

At the Academy of Music there are different options for playing concerts. The piano students can play at internal concerts, where other students, teachers, family members and friends are allowed to be in the audience. They may also play at student concerts that allow outside audiences. Then they also play in master classes. Finally, they are also very involved in playing concerts outside the Academy of Music, for instance, at cafes, village halls, and museums. Here the piano students often play together with other musicians, and they must organize everything themselves. It is important to emphasize the gradual development of participation in the concert activity. The musical culture at the Academy of Music offers the opportunity for the piano student to start his or her career as a pianist in a relatively safe environment. The transparent musical culture makes it easy to play concerts at a level that suits the ability of the piano student, and to evaluate whether he or she is ready to move on to the next career step. The ability to try out skills in real-life settings is important and very instructive for the piano students, as one of the interviewees described.

---

<sup>7</sup> Schön (1983) analyses how the organisation of formal and professional education is based on a technical rationality which is 'the Positivist epistemology of practice' (p. 31). Lave (1988) describes the same problem using a metaphor of a toolbox in order to clarify the cognitive premise in much educational theory: 'Knowledge is conceived as a set of tools stored in memory, carried around by individuals who take the tools...out and use them, the more often and appropriately the better, after which they are stowed away again without change at any time during the process' (p. 24).

When you play and play . . . and practice so much, you would like it to reach further than your keys. You want to get it out. You need another perspective than that it is for your own pleasure, or for some exam. It has more meaning that way.

Thus, concerts are a way of making all the hard work meaningful. To try out one's skills in a real-life setting is both a way of making sense of what one has learned, and gradually become a pianist. To sit alone on stage and to be confronted with the reaction of the audience after a concert is an immediate and straightforward evaluation. The gradual move toward playing concerts in real-life settings gives most of the piano students a sense of identity, and as one of the students says, "a feeling of 'Am I a pianist or what?' To go out and play concerts based on your own initiative - that is very reassuring." Thus, the move from the internal concerts at the Academy of Music to the self-organized concerts outside the Academy is a gradual move toward central participation in the musical context, and at the same time, a move towards creating an identity as a pianist. The students also learn indirectly from the performances.

Going through the different phases involved in performing also constitutes learning through performance. Preparing, organizing, executing and finally receiving feedback from the audience contain important learning resources. The students invest themselves in this process, and it is difficult for them to blame others than themselves if anything goes wrong. Learning by performance is to be compared with any other artistic process where people through their creative activities put themselves at stake. This is supported by the notion that the theme most often discussed in the interviews in relation to learning by performance is performance anxiety. In this sense, a big part of the process of learning takes place before and after the actual concert event in a number of other contexts than where it actually took place. Figuratively speaking, one can say that the concert is like the tip of the iceberg. All the work involved in the concert is before the actual concert. By moving underneath the water line it becomes obvious that there are more participants in this process than merely the concert pianist, and that the process is stretched out in time. The concert requires preparation, practice, as well as for the performer to know the concert from a number of previous occasions. Thus, the concert event organizes the student's activities long before the concert. So though the students play relatively few concerts in terms of time, the concert event functions as an organizer of a number of other activities in which the students are involved. By broadly looking at the activity that leads up to the concert there are a number of resources for learning in this process. That is, in the process of creating a concert the students have the opportunity to learn a number of different things. This resource is evidenced in the process in which the piano student shapes the material through a number of sequences towards the final concert. The process of learning is determined by the piece of music for the specific concert. One of the students describes the long process towards the concert as follows:

S: Naturally you first find out which pieces to put together, which ones suit each other, match the occasion, I am thinking of a concert in a church where I was to play on a piano, not a grand piano, but on a piano so I had to find

some things which were not too big. I can't play Brahms on the piano, for example, but a Mozart sonata and something...and then you focus on making that work and yes, I think it follows naturally the more you get into it, and then you also get used to the idea that you are giving a concert, and you are to communicate something. And then the actual music, that also often follows naturally if you work with it then it becomes more familiar.

I: What do you mean when you say getting used to the idea of giving a concert?

S: Well, that you get nervous if you suddenly sit in front of an audience and are on ...live. It is mostly something you have to practise, naturally. I have done, that practised before friends and so...and asked them to comment on something and so...well, it is probably mostly that when you have tried it sometimes in front of some you know and find out that it is okay then you also begin to believe that it is okay, really, and then it is okay (ha), well when you feel confident that you know you can do it, then you can also do it in front of an audience, I think.

First, she made the program to suit the piano she was to play on. Brahms' music requires a grand piano because it has a richer sound and requires pedal, whereas Mozart's music is not composed for a grand piano, so Mozart is a better selection. Then, she began rehearsing the piece and became used to the idea of her playing a concert. After having rehearsed the piece, she played it to some friends who commented on it. To the student's great surprise the piece did not sound as she had expected in the ears of her friends, and she received comments which instructed her on which places to play more forcefully, less forcefully, etc. Through these repetitions the student became used to playing concerts and became confident that she could play the entire program. The sequences upon which the process of learning consisted in connection with creating a concert are conditioned on the different contexts which the process of learning is part, as well as the actual aim of it. The student's potential concert performance changes in the course of the process by working on the music and by being confronted with others' opinions and she '*begins to believe*' that she can manage the concert. In other words, one can see an example of the concert pianist practice becoming accessible and transparent to the student as she works with the music piece. Working with the piece of music opens not only the piece, but also, the entire concert music practice becomes less mysterious and more accessible.

By investing themselves in the creative process of playing concerts, the students learn from the feedback they receive and from preparing the concert. However, this is not merely a process of learning through feedback and preparation. It involves aspects of creating an identity as well. Performing in a concert venue with an audience present could be seen as a rite of passage into being accepted in the group of performing pianists. Only on basis of how the performing pianists and the audience act according to a well-performed concert, does the students' performance have the potential to provide any meaning. Learning by performance only becomes meaningful when it

is well performed in a place which is an important symbol to the community of classical musicians. The concert venues have this symbolic connotation to the piano students. It is the place where new talents are baptized.

### **Conclusion**

In this article I have tried to evaluate learning as an active participation by a piano student in the musical community of practice. At the Academy of Music the profession is transparent through multiple levels of exposure to performance. This transparency creates opportunities for the student to be absorbed in the musical culture: learning both by imitation and by performance. This suggests a change in focus when addressing issues of learning within music. Rather than focusing only on the cognitive aspects of the learning processes, a broader perspective is needed - a perspective where the focus is on how the community of practice is organized and how this mediates the student's learning process. This does not mean that teaching is without importance. However, rather than focusing on the teacher's intentions, I have tried to clarify what the student found important in the lessons. Furthermore, I have tried to emphasize a broader perspective showing that the teachers' position in the field of concert pianists plays an important role. The teacher is not only somebody who passes on skills and experiences, but also becomes a role model for the students. To learn the skills of a performing artist, it is of great importance that the environment gives access to the students to observe different approaches to the music. It creates a rich environment where the students have the possibility to imitate different pianists, and have access to a variety of different interpretations of the music. This can be seen as an important supplement to the ordinary teaching at the Academy of Music. Tacitly, to participate in this environment gives the students possibilities to develop their personal style because they have so many potential masters from which to learn and be inspired. From the results presented above, one could ask the following:

- How does change in the communities of practice come about?
- Speaking of apprenticeship and imitation, how do we account for change and innovation?

These questions remain partly unanswered. However, one way to address change within an apprenticeship perspective is precisely by arguing that in order to develop one's own style one needs to observe and work with different masters. Only by imitating their style and after a while working with another master is it possible for the students to develop their own style. To strengthen research about learning processes within communities of practice, we need to develop concepts which give us the opportunity of highlighting issues of learning from these perspectives.

## References

- Bandura, A. (1963). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Diller, A. (1975). On tacit knowledge and apprenticeship. *Educational Philosophical Theory*, 7, 55-63.
- Giorgi, A. (1985). The phenomenological psychology of learning and the verbal learning tradition. In A. Giorgi (Ed.), *Phenomenology and psychological research* (pp. 23- 85). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Hill, W.F. (1990). *Learning: A survey of psychological interpretations*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Jespersen, E. (1992). Mesterlære i Idræt: Hvor det Mellem- og Fællesmenneskelige kommer til Udtryk. *Idrætsforskning*, 1-8.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics, and culture in everyday life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J. (1992, April). *Learning as participation in communities of practice*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindsay, P.H., & Norman, D.A. (1977). *Human information processing: An introduction to psychology*. London, UK: Academic Press Inc.
- Marshall, H.M. (1972). Structural constraints on learning: Butcher's apprentices. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 16, 35-44.
- Meltzoff, A.N., & Moore, K. (1983). Newborns imitate adult facial gestures. *Child Development*, 54, 702-709.
- Nielsen, K. (1997). Musical apprenticeship: Trajectories of participation at the academy of music. *Journal of Nordic Educational Research*, 17, 160-169.
- Nielsen, K (1999). *Musical apprenticeship: Learning at the academy of music as socially situated*. Psykologisk Institut: Psykologisk Studiefkriftserie.

Nielsen, K., & Kvale, S (1997). Current Issues of Apprenticeship. *Journal of Nordic Educational Research*, 17, 130-140.

Packer, M. (1985). Hermeneutic inquiry in the study of human conduct. *American Psychologist*, 40(10), 1081-1093.

Polanyi, M. (1958). *Personal knowledge*. London, UK: Routledge and Kegan.

Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1999). *Kinetic tactile-kinesthetic bodies: Ontological foundations of apprenticeship learning*. Unpublished manuscript.

Schön, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Schön, D.A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. London, UK: Jossey Bass.

#### **About the Author**

Klaus Nielsen has a PhD in Psychology and is an assistant professor at the Department of Psychology of the University of Aarhus in Denmark. His research interests are learning in practice, which are displayed in his dissertation “Musical Apprenticeship – Learning as the Academy of Music as Socially Situated”. He has, furthermore, edited a special issue of *Journal of Nordic Educational Research* about “Apprenticeship– Learning as social practice” together with Steinar Kvale.

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

## Editors

**Tom Barone**

Arizona State University, U.S.A

**Liora Bresler**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

## Executive Editor

**Gene V Glass**

Arizona State University, U.S.A.

## Associate Editors

**Laurel Campbell**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

**Jason Helfer**

Millikin University, U.S.A.

**Regina Murphy (2002-2004)**

St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland

**Tracie Costantino (2000-2004)**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

**Alyson Whyte (2002-2004)**

Auburn University, U.S.A.

## Editorial Board

<b>Peter F. Abbs</b>	University of Sussex, U.K.
<b>Eunice Boardman</b>	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
<b>Norman Denzin</b>	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
<b>Kieran Egan</b>	Simon Fraser University, Canada
<b>Elliot Eisner</b>	Stanford University, U.S.A.
<b>Magne Espeland</b>	Stord/Haugesund University College, Norway
<b>Gary McPherson</b>	University of New South Wales, Australia
<b>Robert Stake</b>	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
<b>Susan Stinson</b>	University of North Carolina—Greensboro , U.S.A.
<b>Christine Thompson</b>	Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.
<b>Peter Webster</b>	Northwestern University, U.S.A.