



In the wings of British orchestras: A multi-episode interview study among symphony players

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An orchestral career has often been looked upon with awe by the public. A contract position with a well-known orchestra is highly regarded, and often the target of competitive auditions. Yet, orchestral life-style is easily misconceived by outsiders. Only a few researchers have been able to penetrate group barriers and gain the confidence of orchestra members, and none of these have reported emotions and cognitions pertinent to occupational development, career aspirations, vocational motivations and performance experiences. In this study, 54 British symphony orchestra musicians from 14 performance organizations were interviewed 8 times over a 10-month period at four major concert halls across north-west England. The interviews each followed mood-induction procedures consisting of abbreviated progressive muscle relaxation training, guided affective imagery and music exposure applied via the Somatron[®] Acoustic Massage[™] Power Recliner. The descriptive narratives were examined using qualitative approaches including content analysis. On the one hand, the musicians viewed membership of a symphony orchestra as representing the final surrender of the ambition to join the ranks of celebrated world-class soloists. On the other hand, they viewed their orchestral career as the essential means by which they could socialize with like-minded people, and experience camaraderie, teamwork, solidarity and friendship. Contrary to what has been previously reported in the literature, the current study provides a view of symphony orchestra players' motivations and commitments to the music profession as based on a lifelong passion for music and music performance.

The symphony orchestra is arguably the most significant artistic organization in Western cultures today. Initially established in the mid-nineteenth century, symphony orchestras have provided steady employment for thousands of musicians for over 170 years. In addition, they have brought international recognition and civic pride to many cities, have rejuvenated dilapidated downtowns and have churned billions in capital funds through local economies. For most of their existence, orchestras have been rewarded for their valuable artistic and community services with generous support from audiences and wealthy patrons (Scholz, 2001). The professional symphony orchestra might properly be considered to be a team, with members performing skilled and

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specialized roles, in a tightly coordinated manner. It is perhaps the only team in modern-day economic climates that continues to provide lifelong employment; the careers of musicians in first-rate symphony orchestras have been reported to be more enduring and pleasant than most other professional careers (Smith, 1988).

Yet, compared with other occupational groups and professional organizations, little is known about symphony players. The overall consensus is that they are hard working, ambitious, self-absorbed, introspective and introverted creative individuals. Accordingly, Kemp (1996) demonstrated that they exhibit high levels of motivation and persistence, depth of emotionality (being in contact with one's creativity), a heightened degree of emotionality (utilization of a wider range of feelings), self-confidence, inventiveness, individuality, enthusiasm and independence. Kemp summarizes two decades of research indicating that in comparison to the general public, symphony players are emotionally open (imaginative and intuitive), less bound by conventional beliefs and restraints, prefer complexity (ambiguity and a multidimensional outlook) and are characteristically exhibitionistic (able to transmit emotions at will and to thrill others). Further, orchestra musicians must be able to dare the risk of success or failure, and possess the courage to tolerate lack of appreciation on the part of judges. Finally, they are regarded as possessing a high degree of work satisfaction, and their passion for vocation is enhanced by the sensory pleasure in exercise of superior skills and capacities (Kivimaki & Jokinen, 1994).

The general public often view symphony players as individuals with strong inner-driven working careers who are self-selected, and enjoying what many audiences romanticize as a glamorous life with opportunities for self-expression and self-actualization (Sternbach, 1995). Ironically, even the musicians themselves who embark on a performance career expect to live out a rich and creative life. However, such promises almost always fall short, and these myths are never fulfilled as imagined. Foremost, musicians are trained for solo playing, and hence, orchestral work is often perceived as a disappointment (Sternbach, 1993b). Orchestra musicians often view themselves as artists who are paid only for what others want to buy, subsequently leading a high percentage to regard their playing as more of a 'job' than the fulfilment of their 'passion' (Atik, 1992). They convey sentiments which reflect the 'classic dilemma' of creative individuals; that is, either seek public rewards that legitimize their work or pursue their own artistic growth (Smith & Murphy, 1984). In fact, an orchestral contract may be considered to be the ultimate trade off for debased artistic standards; a rank-and-file position can represent a subordination of virtuoso assertiveness and the repression of individual personality in the service of collective musical achievement. Second, it often comes as a shock to the musicians themselves that achievement of their career goal is at the expense of their own personal health. That is, players quickly learn that there is a connection between music performance and physical/psychological well-being. While most people (including naïve and amateur musicians) view music making as having many benefits including relaxation and the development of leisure-time activity, music performance expertise on the professional level involves autonomic and proprioceptive systems, which require an exceptionally high (almost superhuman) degree of training and skill, as well as the blending of emotion-intelligence, response-control, and empathy-command (Dunsby, 2002). Furthermore, concerting makes painstaking demands on mental/cognitive abilities (involving attention, concentration and memory) as well as on emotional requirements. It is unfortunate that players entering an orchestral career have not always been prepared for the costs of their chosen occupation.

Orchestral life-style

Symphony players have a favoured status in the eyes of many people, especially since they are involved in the creative arts, and are paid for doing something that has preoccupied their life from early childhood, which they presumably enjoy. Indeed, the careers of symphony orchestra players begin with musical training in the early years of their life, which eventually leads to a highly disciplined acquisition of instrumental skill throughout the teenage years. Thereafter, the focal point of their formal training occurs in a tertiary educational environment known as the music college. However, the curriculum of music academies is not calculated to give a rounded education, but rather to create polished musicians. This means that while music colleges do prime students for a performance career by developing aural competencies and highly refined motor expertise, they provide minimal opportunity to advance general knowledge and other interests. Therefore, one could assume that although the conservatory culture successfully serves to initiate musicians into their professional guild and vocation, at the same time, it functions to alienate them from other more accepted social and occupational structures, preventing these student musicians-to-be from being anything else but a performing musician (albeit that many settle for a life of studio teaching rather than for a career involving the concert stage).

The above situation raises questions about the eventual contentment of symphony players towards their well-chosen (or perhaps by default, their only possible) profession. In an early study on the subject, Westby (1960) claimed that musicians' strong commitments to the values of art and their chosen profession were often undermined by unhappy experiences centring on unmet demands for material, status rewards and instability of occupational position. Based on 70 single-session interviews carried out over one winter season, Westby concluded that the gap between orchestral musicians' social position as dependent craftspeople versus their idealized self-image as gifted and highly skilled artists, led to problems of reconciliation between social and aesthetic expectations and the realities of occupational life. More than 20 years later, Smith and Murphy (1984) surveyed six American Symphony Orchestra League (ASOL) symphony orchestras, focusing on their perceived criteria of career success. The study highlighted several *raison d'être* for musicians to be in an orchestra:

- Orchestral contracts are prestigious and provide a setting for playing that has the potential of rewarding a player in musical ways (related to musical values, the continued development of instrument skills and knowledge of the repertoire).
- Orchestral positions can allow the development of a private life around musical activities (such as developing a second career in music teaching, or becoming an occasional chamber-group player, soloist, or even recording artist).
- Orchestra work offers musicians some prospect of a secure stable career, in a job market that is otherwise fraught with risks, and performing with some orchestras can even be lucrative.

Smith and Murphy note that success in one respect was often reported to compete with success in another. For example, success at the top of the profession was often dwarfed by being deprived of the rewards of its practice. So much was the embitterment of this occurrence that many players reported having given up prestige and potential income associated with a 'first-class' orchestra by accepting positions with a subordinate organization because the latter provided more interesting musical work. Smith and Murphy reckoned that 'if we are to believe the musicians themselves, [the orchestra] is a

setting in which the successful development of a career is too often a matter of sorting through and accommodating to various contradictions and trade-offs among these rewards' (p. 150). This, they claim, is what makes symphony players so interesting both as a phenomenon and as a field of study – the way in which the potential rewards along with the various musical frustrations are mixed into a setting referred to as orchestral life-style.

Another study which examined orchestral life-style was carried out by Steptoe (1989) who surveyed two British organizations: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and London Philharmonic Orchestra. In his questionnaire study, Steptoe asked 65 players to list features of their job that contributed to either pleasure or stress. Among the sources of occupational pleasure were variety of the job, travelling, performing to audiences, social life in the musical world and social status as an artist. Among the sources of occupational stress were monotony of rehearsals, uncertainty about schedule, irregular hours, travelling, separation from family, competition and back-stabbing among colleagues and poor financial reward. Yet, most other investigations (e.g. Parasurman & Nachman, 1987; Parasurman & Purohit, 2000; Steptoe, 2001; Sternbach, 1993a, 1993b, 1995) have focused primarily on the stressful components of orchestral life-styles. Collectively, the six documented sources of stress, include: (1) work environment nuisances, abuses and hazards (such as air quality and ventilation, humidity, seating comfort, readability of score, toxic asbestos dividers used for sound isolation and hearing losses); (2) working conditions (such as audition procedures, time pressure, work load and labour-management conflicts concerning tenure, salaries and benefits); (3) social tensions and interpersonal factors (such as conflicts within the orchestra or with conductors and feelings of being undervalued); (4) music performance anxieties and stage fright; (5) problems of artistic integrity (such as unhappiness about how the music is played, and being subordinate to the will of a [guest] conductor); and (6) concerns about the technical difficulty of the music (a consequence of the ongoing decline of skills that may occur with age). All the studies report that in addition to worries about job security (i.e. uncertainty about the financial viability of making music), these six stressors represent a major factor in the development of job dissatisfaction. Finally, in an exploration highlighting the correlates of organizational and professional commitment among symphony orchestra players, Parasurman and Nachman (1987) confirmed that love of music or the music profession are not sufficient in themselves to promote the desire for continued membership with an orchestra; the findings illustrated a negative relationship between occupational stress and professional commitment, as well as a positive relationship between burnout and resignation.

At this point one might ponder the following: in comparison to other vocational settings are symphony orchestras (and by implication orchestral life-style) overly harsh on members? Or, is it the nature of orchestra players to express a more pessimistic portraiture of the profession than reflected by the reality of the situation (i.e. do the players perceive a greater number of objections and negative consequences to orchestra membership than they do incentives)? Or, are orchestra players simply highly compliant in offering responses that seem to meet researcher expectations (i.e. do orchestra musicians act on the demand characteristics of orchestra surveys and interviews which inherently probe for stress-related information)? One might, then, also venture to speculate on the reliability (and perhaps honesty) of responses given by orchestra players. Contending with such possibilities, Westby (1960) penetrated orchestral barriers and conducted what might be viewed as the first insider research study with

orchestra players. Westby reported that he spent 6 weeks of his total 12-week study just getting to know the players. Accordingly, this time was necessary in order to gain the players' full confidence, and lay the groundwork for the development of trust. 'Symphony musicians are an occupational group exhibiting considerable anxiety over their jobs on a number of dimensions . . . [and hence] gaining the confidence of the musicians in the interview situation was therefore crucial for the elicitation of unthreatened responses' (p. 223). Yet, even with such an extended period of acquaintance, one can still question the validity of responses recorded by Westby. Clearly, the musicians of Westby's era (1960s) were very different from performers 40 years beforehand, just as they were different from today's musicians 40 years afterwards - especially regarding self-disclosure. For example, great performers of the past (such as Horowitz, Arrau, Michelangeli, Lipatti and Bachauer) were seen as strong, invincible, fearless and charming heroes whose eccentricities were not only accepted and emphasized, but often invented as a publicity device. The masters of yesteryear could not have admitted to hand pains, physical injuries, music performance anxieties and stage fright or mental breakdowns - as is often the case today. At best, they could announce early retirement and go to a sanatorium, or leave for the country.

By contrast, players nowadays seem to know how much help they can get in return for 'opening up'. As a result, today's public have witnessed the likes of Gary Graffman and Leon Fleisher who exposed their painful career-wrecking hand injuries and outlined the treatments they underwent, or Andre Watts who revealed his paralysing performance anxiety and described the interventions he employed to conquer it. But, while it may have become acceptable for musicians to appear more 'human', and this means that they are presented to the public as slightly more imperfect in the process of achieving the extraordinary, the effects of a 'new representation' of the musician-artist may not be so positive by nature - and Westby's players (in the 1960s) might have been highly aware of this fact. For example, Imreh and Crawford (2002) point out that it may never be possible for musicians to really feel free or relaxed enough to talk about themselves without fear of losing the confidence of the interviewer and subsequently the readers of printed interviews - a confidence that is reflected in annual subscriptions, concert ticket sales and revenues from compact disc (CD) recordings. Hence, while the literature seems to confirm that musicians have become more comfortable with self-disclosure than in the past, there may still be taboos that such frankness could subsequently damage their image or influence how their performances are judged by the public, orchestral management and arts councils. Finally, Westby's study unfortunately also falls short by the simple fact that formal contact with each player was limited to a single-session interview, without further opportunity for engagement, supplementary clarification, linkage between topics under discussion or expansion of significant themes that may have surfaced.

The current study, then, was specifically designed as a multiple-episode semi-structured interview study, the aim of which was to explore musicians' emotions and thoughts pertinent to occupational development, career aspirations, vocational motivations and performance experiences. Most specifically, the study utilized interviews following mood-induction procedures consisting of abbreviated progressive muscle relaxation training, guided affective imagery and music exposure. Mood induction has been demonstrated to affect social behaviours, cognition and psychological processes including autobiographical memory, selective attention and priming responses (Hernandez, Vander Wal, & Spring, 2003). Hence, it was surmised that such a methodology would smooth the process of securing the players' confidence

and trust in a more timely fashion (in comparison to the 6 weeks required by Westby, 1960). Further, it has been shown (Pignatiello, Camp, Elder, & Raser, 1989) that by enhancing mood induction procedures with background music exposure, specific demand characteristics and psychophysiological responses are reduced. Hence, it was surmised that such a methodology would aid in drawing out unthreatened responses within the interview situation.

Method

From the outset, the current study acquired scientific/clinical backings from the British Association Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM), Association of Medical Advisors to British Orchestras (AMABO) and the International Society for the Study of Tension in Performance (ISSTIP). It is possible that these endorsements promoted an air of credibility, which eased the study's entrance into the rehearsal halls of all participating orchestras. This backing might also have played a part in motivating some orchestral members to volunteer as participants in the study.

Participants

Participants in the study were 54 professional symphony orchestra musicians; there were 44 contract players from the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Halle Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the English Northern Philharmonia (Opera North in Leeds), and another 10 were freelance players from the Manchester Camarata, the Manchester Mozart Orchestra, the Northern Chamber Orchestra, the Philharmonic Concert Orchestra and the Performing Arts Symphony Orchestra. Most of the participants (92%) were recruited via letters distributed in rehearsal halls. The majority (68.5%) were string players, with all other orchestral instrument types being represented by a minimum of three players. On average, the players were 35.5 years old (range = 22-55, $SD = 9.18$), with slightly more men (57%) than women (43%). Most of the participants (89%) had completed their formal music training at the undergraduate level. It should be pointed out that the current study was carried out within the context of a larger research programme, which included a postal questionnaire survey ($N = 256$; Brodsky, 2004) and a therapeutic intervention ($N = 54$; Brodsky, 2000; Brodsky & Sloboda, 1997; Brodsky, Sloboda, & Waterman, 1994). Accordingly, one could question if the current sample was biased towards those who felt themselves to be under pressure, volunteered to receive therapy and perhaps tend to over-emphasize problematic dimensions of symphony orchestra life-style. However, GHQ-28 scores (General Health Questionnaire [28-item scaled research version]; Goldberg, 1981) indicated that more than 95% of the participants met the criterion on being in good physical and mental health. In addition, analyses of pre-test clinical data indicated no significant differences of trait anxiety scores (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, Form Y) between the current sample ($M = 46.4$, $SD = 10.3$) and other British orchestra musicians ($M = 43.5$, $SD = 10.5$). While most literature reviews about musical personalities (for example see, Kemp, 1996) illustrate that trait anxiety scores of performing musicians tend to be roughly 20% higher than scores of non-musician working adults (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983: $M = 34.8$, $SD = 9.1$), a meta-analytic review and critique appearing in *Medical Problems of Performing Artists* openly debated the fact that these levels are still far below what

could be considered as pathological (Brotsky, 1996). Prior to the onset of the study, each musician signed a letter of informed consent to participate in the study. The form included paragraphs related to confidentiality, record keeping, scientific communication including journal publication, possible consequences of participation and right to withdrawal.

Design and procedure

The study followed a 3-stage plan. The first stage involved clarification of the themes to be investigated, leading to the development of an interview guide outlining the formal structure and questions to be incorporated within the study. This was followed by devising a workable template allowing for a multi-episode interview study staggered over a ten-month period at sites in three major cities across north-west England. In the second stage, a sequence of eight scheduled research interviews was implemented; these were part of a packaged intervention for orchestra players who volunteered for individual counselling with a goal to increase confidence in adaptive skills, targeting the alleviation of occupational stress and music performance anxiety. While the interviews were based on a preconceived thematic outline and interview time plan, the interview guide allowed for an openness to changes in the sequence of questions in order to follow-up or clarify the meanings of the answers given and the stories told. Transcription from the oral mode of communication to written texts ensued via word-for-word verbatim note taking in real time; rephrasing and condensation of statements were not employed and the emotional tone of the conversation (including pauses, hesitations, repetitions, etc.) was registered. Then, transferral to electronic document files occurred. It is acknowledged that audiotape recordings of the sessions would have been a more reliable method. However, the participating orchestras were wary of taping interviews, and it was deemed appropriate to avoid this.

In the third stage, the transcripts were evaluated for natural meaning units and categorical clusters, integrating these by creating metaphors and counting frequencies. That is, the interviewer sought to describe and understand the meanings and central themes of orchestral life-style by exploring the essential character of an issue or set of answers, and then assess the frequency by which each character was mentioned. According to the analytic procedures outlined by Kvale (1996), the five strategic approaches used were: meaning categorization (i.e. codification), meaning condensation (i.e. compression into brief statements), narrative structuring (i.e. temporal and social organization), meaning interpretation (i.e. speculation) and generating meanings through *ad hoc* methods (such as seeing plausibility, clustering, making metaphors, counting, making contrasts or comparisons, partitioning variables, noting relations between variables and making conceptual/theoretical coherence). While the analyses were not subjected to external rating and hence no further information about the reliability of the categorical clusters is available, in an effort to assess face validity, four interviews were randomly selected, and both raw transcripts and related textual analyses were evaluated by a blind judge. The results of this evaluation show that the meaning units and categorical clusters (as listed in the textual analyses) did in fact represent the raw transcriptions and hence were not unduly distorted by researcher preconceptions and biases.

It was clear that the interviews had to be conducted on-site (as rehearsal and performance requirements on symphony orchestra players place excessive limitations on their ability to schedule extra musical activities), but that this close proximity, if not

handled appropriately, could compromise feelings of confidence and trust towards the interviewer. Hence, while orchestra management was responsible for access to building and parking facilities, as well as for space allocation (i.e. the booking of a private room within the practice/concert hall), at the same time, they were kept at a distance (and openly agreed to remain aloof) from the roster of participants in the study as well as to its content, process and progress. In this fashion, the study was able to keep to its pledge of total separation between interviewer-researcher and orchestra management. Further, the orchestra members' committee, the elected representative body acting on behalf of the members, supported the study as they perceived it would benefit those who volunteered to participate, but maintained the right to control (and thus veto) specific methodological procedures conceived to place the players in 'harm's way'. For example, the specific wording of the consent to participate form was approved, but tape-recording of the sessions was denied as the committee considered storing vocal imprints and outright testimonials to place the members more at risk than real-time verbatim note-taking. The committee representatives felt that depending on what was revealed in the sessions, such 'hard evidence' could easily lead to a breach of anonymity and incriminate the players.

The 4-site 8-session interview study was carried out without a glitch. The orchestras were assigned a 'research season' according to their timetable involving touring schedules.

Private rooms (usually a dressing room reserved for a guest conductor) were allocated for a 10-week period; the week before and following the 8-week package were required for mantling and dismantling the field laboratory. Orchestra players, who had volunteered for the study in advance, were contacted by phone and scheduled for individual meetings, which took place prior to, in between or after rehearsals and performances. Cancellations were received via a beeper service, and were then rescheduled by phone. Upon the completion of the 10-week research season, the study was moved to the next site for a further 10-week season at an orchestra hall in another city. In sum, 54 participants received eight 1-hour per week individual interview sessions over a 10-week period on-site in their own concert hall building in one of four cities in north-west England – a total of 432 hours of formal contact.

The research interview was viewed as a conversation whereby the researcher listened to what the players conveyed about their world. Hearing the musicians express their opinions in their own words, the interviewer gained knowledge about their views on their work situation, family life, dreams and hopes. In each session, the conversations followed mood-induction procedures consisting of various elements, including: abbreviated progressive relaxation training (originally devised in 1938 by Jacobson as progressive muscle relaxation exercises but subsequently modified and drastically abbreviated by Bernstein & Carlson, 1993); guided affective imagery; and music exposure.

Apparatus

In all cases, the mood induction and interview were carried out while the participants were seated in the Somatron[®]. A push-button controller reclines the Somatron to any desired position; at full extension, the chair reclines to the Trendelenberg position. This position elevates the legs higher than the heart; a position that enhances the relaxation response by altering circulation, pulse rate and rhythmicity of breathing. The recliner is supplied with six full-range (40 to 20,000 Hz) speakers embedded in the upholstery of

the chair's seat and back sections that convert music into stimulation, which is both perceived by the ears and felt by the entire body. The recliner reproduces music from industry-standard commercially available audiotapes and/or CDs at a comfortable level of 55 to 65 dbA (measured approximately 1 metre from the recliner). Further details about the Somatron have been presented by Brodsky and Sloboda (1997) and Brodsky (2000). The recliner and a 6-piece stereo system were transported to each of the four orchestra sites; there were no differences between the sites with the exception of odd furnishings supplied by the hosting orchestras.

Results

The results below are presented as running texts in paragraph form representing what was expressed collectively by the players as a group in their own words. The criterion employed for choosing the items listed below was the repeated testimonial of a specific thematic concept by a minimum of three players (4%) each having membership with a different orchestra, while the highest level of consensus for any particular item was 20 players (37%) representing five members from each of the four orchestras.

The multiple-episode interview study opened by asking each player to evaluate the personal meaning music had had in his or her life prior to and during the developmental process of becoming a musician. To this end, each player engaged in an autobiographical sketch. This method was first introduced by Sloboda (1989, 1991a, 1991b), whereby significant emotional responses to music experiences were decoded through recall. Then, the musicians were asked to examine the 'gains', 'risks' and 'costs' related to music performance as a career (detached from stage performance), and to weigh up their actual experience of stage performance (detached from musical performance as a profession).

In regard to music performance as a career path, 22 musicians (41%) expressed that the balance between the gains, risks and costs is not always optimal, and that it might be best to 'play it safe' when the odds seem to be more in favour of risks and/or costs. This general feeling concerned the types of orchestras and positions (placement in the orchestra) that one auditions for, as well as the level of repertoire that one performs in front of the panel of adjudicators. However, there were figures of speech used – such as the higher the risk, the greater the gain – which illustrated a repeated theme: 'one has nothing to gain if one does not take risks'. Although the issues for examination were carefully presented to each musician in exactly the same listed order (i.e. gains, risks and costs), 13 players (roughly 25%) began their appraisal with the risks or costs, and only later in the discussion discovered that there was actually some gain for them in the music profession. Further, 10 players (18.5%) could not distinguish between potential risks and the actual costs, while 6 players (11%) saw very little (or nothing at all) to be gained by being in the music profession. This perhaps reflects how some musicians view their professional life; a feeling of being 'locked into' an art form that serves as an occupation that offers little potential advantage, benefit or profit. Nevertheless, orchestral life-style is clearly the only way of life the musicians in the current sample knew. Finally, it is interesting to note that 15 players (28%) had difficulty in differentiating between the aspects of a music performance career and the actual concert stage performances themselves. In addition, it can be seen that some themes were viewed as either a potential risk and/or as a cost of the profession/stage. That is, what was viewed as a 'potential risk' could easily have become a 'bona fide cost' depending on certain realities.

A content analysis of the appraisals pointed to nine incentives (i.e. gains) to be- and stay-in the profession, nine objections (i.e. problems that were seen as potential risk) towards the choice of the profession and 11 consequences (i.e. costs) to becoming and staying a member of the profession. The following paragraph illustrates the incentives of the music-performance career:

As a symphony player, you can socialize with like-minded people (music performers, conductors and composers) with whom there is an element of teamwork, camaraderie, friendship and solidarity. You are paid to be involved with your life's passion and employed to do something you love, and therefore you experience great emotional satisfaction and enjoyment (a high) during and after the performance. This sense of performance is perceived as spiritually uplifting. You are self-invested in musical expression on an instrument for an artistic enterprise which allows you to give pleasure to others and enhance their lives through music. The occupation is not a conventional nine-to-five job behind a desk, but a profession of dynamic unpredictability with varied schedules that involves different personnel and repertoire on a daily basis. The job is never dull, affording the discovery of something new with each day, indicating the room for improvement through self-initiative and personal freedom. You experience a sense of achievement, well-being, self-worth, self-value, challenge, and mastery. You experience a self-actualization in which you approach levels that previously you only dreamed about. Finally, you engage in a profession of prestige where you are in the spotlight, and for which there is considerable financial reward and world travel.

The following paragraph illustrates the objections towards the music-performance career:

You might become physically drained, and possibly overcome by mental instability associated with higher levels of stress and tension, or physical disability involving a hearing loss. There is every possibility that you might not have the security of career longevity inasmuch as the incidence of early retirement due to disability or deterioration of skills is very high - you are dependent on both health and talent. You might not acquire financial or occupational stability as budget cuts to Arts Councils by municipalities are an ever-present threat. You might never really reach your artistic potential because of the competitive nature of the profession. You might not even get started, or fail to do your job (such as sitting-up for a principal player at a moment's notice), and hence find yourself unemployed at any time as a result of your skills. Thus, you are putting yourself on the line with each performance - a feeling of having to justify yourself each time you reappear. Because of the personal involvement in the task, you might cross the line to over-involvement, which leads to frustration, apathy and emotional nullification - possibly becoming a hardened prostitute who has lost pleasure in passion and only endures it while not enjoying it. You might be forced to play repertoire you dislike and take directives from incompetent conductors, or become over-specialized in one area and that through monothematic interests, you might become narrow-minded. Finally, you might entertain real risks to life in general including family break-ups, financial ruin and bodily harm.

The following paragraph illustrates the consequences of a music-performance career:

You experience a total disruption of, and inability to live, a normal life-style including aberrations of wake-sleep cycles, which affect relationships and basic family structures contributing to marriage break-ups and extra-marital liaisons. So much of your time is spent with the orchestra away from home that you lose some proportion of structure and reality. You may fall prey to touring mode behaviour, which allows for incidental indiscretions - which not only influence the group's dynamics while on the road, but find a potentially damaging time to become public knowledge. As a result, all social life including intimate

relationships become incestuous bonds with other orchestra musicians themselves. You cannot leave your job behind as it is also your main lifelong preoccupation, and therefore you sacrifice family life as well as leisure time for performing and practising. Should you choose otherwise you experience guilt feelings, technical difficulties and eventual public embarrassment. You receive poor remuneration for the hours you put in. Unlike most other professions, your socio-economic status is not contingent on your acquired skills, training or education. The occupational hazards are more severe than in most other professions, and might be comprised both physical and emotional deterioration including a series of irrational fears. In the long term, your contribution to the organization is rather insignificant. You are simply another cog in the orchestra wheel, whereby you stop thinking about contributing because the total control of what you and the organization do (administrative, financial and artistic) has been taken care of by management who offer you limited (if any) promotion or organizational involvement. You are directly responsible for the expenses regarding instrument maintenance and repair, as well as facing the loss or theft of personal property (instrument) at every venue. You constantly work under guest conductors who are below standard and although transient in the orchestra context, leave behind a permanent memory to the public as regards the artistic state and quality of the orchestra. You become disappointed in the reality of the profession as it is not what you expected, and thus become frustrated, embittered, cynical and aggressive. Eventually, you prostitute your real feelings for those you feel others want to see. Unfortunately, you can only learn about the music-performance profession through experience, by which time it's too late to effectively come to terms with new demands, which require you to change old habits and previously learned skills or techniques. You are eventually duped into feeling that you are privileged. That is, you come to believe that only those equal to you can understand or judge your quality. This feeling supports the already present feelings of being alienated from the so-called 'uneducated' and 'unappreciative' body of critics and the public at large.

In addition, the content analysis of the appraisals pointed to six incentives (i.e. gains) for performing on stage, six objections (i.e. problems that were seen as potential risk) towards participating in stage performances, and six consequences (i.e. costs) of performing on stage. The following paragraph illustrates the incentives for performing on stage:

You feel emotionally satisfied, a job well done, signifying technical mastery and non-verbal expression, which influences your personal equilibrium and the mental stability of your colleagues. Your efforts are rewarded by the audience having enjoyed it. You have responded well to a conductor and fulfilled the composer's wishes [completed the requisites of the text] through team efforts of people with whom you share the same goals, each pulling their own weight together to lift the orchestra up beyond its potential. You sense a spiritual uplift, excitement, post-performance high, liberation, buzz and adrenaline - which all contribute to a feeling of occasion as well as relief when it's over. You realize that 'you *can* perform!' A sense of achievement, of challenge, mastery and ego trip: 'I can do this and others can't!' You feel physical and sensory pleasures from the sound making - both auditory/vibrational sensations and cognitive/physical skills. Most of all, you feel the enjoyment of stage as an exhibitionist platform as well as a protective barrier - on the stage you are safe as no one can touch you there.

The following paragraph illustrates the objections towards participating in stage performances:

You might become involved with an occupational hazard such as repetitive strain injury, stress or tension disorder, or an orthopaedic problem resulting from poor seating conditions over long periods of time. Because you might think that a poor performance will suggest to others that you lack skills, you might behave in a self-rejecting, self-recriminating and a

demoralizing way. You might be distracted, which could cause you to make a mistake (such as a wrong entrance), 'drop a domino' (i.e. a domino effect whereby others continue the mistake you have put in motion) or botch up a more adventurous fingering. You might not live up to your own or others' expectations and perceive that you are not pulling your own weight. These could have repercussions on whether or not you retain your self-esteem or even your job. You might become involved in so many performances that you could lose the feeling of a 'main event'; that is, you may develop the feeling that all performances are simply 'another job'. You might become so preoccupied with self that you lose sight of the whole picture, or perhaps offend other colleagues through a more personal interpretation. You might cause yourself bodily harm by travelling to/from a performance in a state of fatigue.

The following paragraph illustrates the consequences of performing on stage:

While on stage, you are on edge throughout the evening's performance, every night feeling high levels of tension and stress, and this causes an overall feeling of being tired or feeling drained of feeling anything at all. Further, night after night, nervous feelings and sensations can cause damage to your general physical health. You feel severe emotional disappointment from bad reviews, which allow no room for any adequate performance levels, and pay the price through self-reprimand and embarrassment, which is dealt with through substance abuse (alcohol) and/or depressive states. You lose the proportions of reality by being on the stage, after which it is emotionally difficult to come back to 'mortal' life and deal with the every day insignificant aspects of family. Because of the daytime hours of rehearsals and night-time hours of performance, you are never available during commercial or social hours. While returning home after performances in the early hours of the morning, you are an easy target for muggings and other street violence.

Two interview sessions focused on specific idiosyncratic phenomenon of musicians, including 'inner-dialogue' or 'self-talk'. These events relate to a demeanour that is detrimental to music performance (Salmon & Meyer, 1992; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many players will not own up to this behaviour, and actually interact to questions about self-talk with a child-like embarrassment. It is interesting to note that in the current sample, 18 players (33%) confessed to be caught up with inner-dialogue. Accordingly, they claimed that during their public rehearsals and nightly stage performances, they perceive an 'inner voice' conveying the following messages:

'If you don't get this right the rest of your life will be a disaster'
'You're going to really cock it up this time'
'You're only as good as you are when you play at your worst'

The musicians related to the fact that the actual voices appear to be more than demoralizing - they are down right destructive! Ironically, it seems that these aural impressions are hauntings of the player's own voice, or a familiar voice of a 'caring individual' such as a parent or previous music teacher. The session transcripts demonstrate that of the specific subgroup who engaged in self-talk, the majority ($N = 14$ or 77%) reported that the voicings were critical, forceful, derogatory, rebuking, pressured, brief, extreme, authoritative, punitive and abusive, while only a few ($N = 4$ or 22%) heard pep talks and coaching directives that assist in attaining greater focus of attention. Salmon and Meyer (1992) claim that through awareness of inner-dialogue musicians may be able to attend to that part of their make-up that significantly negotiates feelings of confidence as a performer, and that confidence has much to do with belief systems.

In the final two interview sessions, the players evaluated their perceived competence as a professional orchestral player. The evaluation accounted for four dynamic proficiencies: motor abilities (skills related to playing a musical instrument), hearing abilities (skills related to score reading with an instrument in hand, as well as regarding the inner-hearing of the score from music notation without the use of an instrument), inter-musical abilities (skills related to being able to synchronize with other players in a group effort to reproduce a music composition) and intra-musical abilities (skills related to the personal interpretation and expression of an emotion or affect during the re-production of a music composition). Each player rated his or her overall range of confidence in aptitude as a symphony orchestra player on a 10-point scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
lacking	under-developed	limited	okay	reasonable	good	natural-born	very good	extra-sensitive	practically perfect

The transcripts reveal that 23 players (43%) rated their skills as in the limited-good (3 to 6) range, 25 players (46%) rated their skills as in the reasonable-extra sensitive (5 to 9) range, four players (7%) rated their skills as in the lacking-under developed (1 to 2) range and two players (4%) rated their skills as in the practically perfect (10) range. What is surprising, however, is that several players in the sample viewed their competencies as very average, stating: ‘. . .can make a good sound’, ‘. . .can play loudly and quietly’, ‘. . .can blend well with the orchestra’ or ‘. . .can become emotionally involved in a piece’. One player stated:

‘I can basically play the violin, I am technically adequate, and my sound is quite good. My sight-reading is average but my concentration in rehearsals is not always well. I am pretty aware of the environment. I see myself as a sensitive player who is more receptive in responses than other players, and have good relationships within the orchestra. I am able to cope pretty well, and have greater potential’.

Arguably, these statements are not what one would expect from world-class musicians, but rather from testimonials of advanced-beginner music students. These sessions, then, offered the players an opportunity to talk about differences between self-assessment and self-criticism. As self-criticism among musicians often includes self-condemnation, which may be an anticipatory manoeuvre to receiving criticism by others or a defensive ploy to exhibit seemingly high sensitivity in detecting even the more subtle errors, the interviews may have served as an opportunity to discover that even perfectionist qualities do not necessarily have to turn to self-purgatory behaviours.

Discussion

The current study aimed to explore the emotions and cognitions related to occupational development, career aspirations, vocational motivations and performance experiences among professional members of the classical music industry. More specifically, the study

focused on how British symphony players perceive membership in a contract orchestra and performing on stage. Both of these were appraised individually as separate entities examining categorical outcomes such as incentives (what can be gained), objections (what are potential risks) and consequences (what are the costs). Initially, there were some musicians who appeared bewildered by such a request to begin with; they had never before thought to evaluate both positive and negative sides of stage performance isolated from the more global vocational aspects of the orchestral career. This sort of evaluation given in the form of a retrospective biographical sketch and cognitive appraisal can require a fair amount of self-disclosure, and such open exposure can subsequently lead to both insightful discourse (on intra- and inter-personal levels) and to emotional discomfort or anguish. Hence, the interview study was not only presented within the framework of an intervention package supported by performing arts medicine/counselling organizations, but was implemented by a certified-registered music psychotherapist. It should, however, be pointed out that the participants clearly understood from the outset that the interviews were not to be considered a bona fide therapy, nor would there be further individual contact (i.e. counselling) after the eight sessions had been completed. This was printed on the consent to participate form signed by all of the musicians. The study, then, was most likely conceived by the participants to be more of an educational in-service training programme for orchestra players (as opposed to an individual therapeutic intervention), but with an air of anonymity (which would not usually be considered vital in enrichment learning).

The Somatron[®] and the music-based mood-induction seem to have been conducive in their calming effects, as well as in contributing towards the peaceful atmosphere in which the interviews were carried out. No musicians refused to sit in the chair throughout the study, and none refused to power-recline the chair down to a more relaxing position (from upright seating to a 70° reclining position). No objections were voiced about the music exposure (neither regarding the auditory/vibratory components of the listening experience nor about the interviewer-selected pieces). Further, there appeared to be an environment of genuine self-disclosure and intimate sharing from the very first session - unlike Westby (1960) who spent 6 weeks getting acquainted in order to develop the proper atmosphere and mood. This ambiance surfaced with each new sample of musicians entering the study in all four sites over the ten-month research period.

The analysis of session transcripts indicated that 28% of the musicians in the sample were not able to conceptualize their profession as separate from their stage performances, and that 11% were not able to conceive incentives at all. Nevertheless, the majority (72%) of the sample were able to perceive and list incentives for both the career path and performance mode. Akin to most other studies, the current investigation also documented a host of consequences or costs. Undoubtedly, the main cost that surfaced by fulfilling one's aspiration to become and maintain symphony orchestra membership was 'disruption of a normal life-style.' Unfortunately, this is the price that seems to have to be paid by members of the profession. Orchestral life-style entails a somewhat parallel reality to what other mortals experience, and the way of life within a contract orchestra is an all-encompassing structure leaving no room for a partial involvement. From the players' point of view, their socio-economic status as a professional performing musician does little to assist in cementing familial relationships, and the salaries offered them do not fully meet their dependents' needs. Many musicians stated that both their presence and contributions to the family seemed to be less than what was required to make a significant impact; the orchestral income was simply

viewed as a peripheral addition. Subsequently, child care and house maintenance were supplied by another (e.g. the partner) who worked at a 'real job,' and long-term commitments were usually based on extra-musical earnings. These ongoing tensions (realities) have long-term effects, which frequently result in separation and divorce.

When taking into account the consequences of an orchestral career as revealed by the musicians in the current study, in addition to the major stress factors prevalent in an orchestral environment as demonstrated previously by Parasurman and Nachman (1987), Parasurman and Purohit (2000), Steptoe (2001) and Sternbach (1993a, 1993b, 1995), it might appear that the symphony orchestra is most certainly not an attractive vocation, professional organization or career path. The obvious question, then, is, Why do musicians want to be a professional musician in a symphony orchestra? The results of the study indicate that the chief incentives for an orchestral career are: socializing with like minded people, camaraderie, teamwork, solidarity and friendship. That is, musicians obviously feel that the symphony orchestra is the place where they can do what they do best, and with others who do it just as well. In fact, these feelings and motivations seem to be so dominant that most musicians categorically accept all of consequences of the vocation as if they were a form of 'communal dues'. Nobody likes it very much, but everyone must pay.

The current study demonstrates that orchestra musicians seem to have a great need to express feelings about the music-performance profession, and to explore differences between the performance medium (the music itself), the performing vocation (the orchestra as an occupational setting), the performer and the concert performance. Within this context, many players expressed feelings about how the potential rewards and frustrations of the career have an effect on the delights and passionate stirrings that were once attributed to music itself. The transcripts indicate an attitude pointing to the occupational setting itself as the cause for the once revered romance with music that has become replaced by the hardened realities of a vocation involving musical harlotry. One interesting observation of the interviewing situation was that when speaking about the profession, the musicians often entered into a dialogue as if they were in the presence of an industrial ombudsman (rather than research interviewer). For example, an issue that was brought up by several players had to do with the way in which orchestra musicians are appraised: orchestra members are not valued for the professional activities or services which represent 90% of their accumulative accomplishments within the work environment, but rather they are judged exclusively on the 10% which involves highly stylized performances on the concert platform. This was considered unfair treatment.

The study highlights musicians' perceptions about concerting; among them, an ever-present feeling of having to justify themselves - night after night. They stated that unlike sportsmen whose value level is estimated based on the percentage of hits (while ignoring the number of missed trials), symphony orchestra players are expected to be note-perfect and are judged by estimating the number of errors in their performances. That is, though on any given night a player might decode 20,000 to 200,000 graphic symbols on his/her instrument, it is always the one wrong note or entrance that is embedded in the memories of adjudicators and audiences. Therefore, concerting is both risky and costly for performers. The question, then, is, Why do musicians want to perform on stage to begin with? The only answer is that the concert platform provides an arena for the exhibition of technical mastery, and this public display of expertise influences each and every musician's psychological equilibrium. They do it because they can, and for most musicians, there is no alternative.

Other findings of the study are indicative of how membership in a symphony orchestra is capable of inciting feelings of animosity, resentment, and even bitterness among musicians. On the one hand, the symphony orchestra is perhaps the only available employment, but yet by accepting an orchestral position, musicians will have had finally surrendered to the progressive disenchantment of their once-upon-a-time dream to join the ranks of celebrated world-class soloists. The effects of such disappointment can impinge on self-belief systems, and, as seen in the transcripts, many musicians tend to self-report confidence in their own performance skills as 'lacking' or on a 'moderate' level. Such beliefs seem to be strengthened by recurrent thoughts experienced as if a voice from within. It should be pointed out that the candidness and willingness to convey information and sentiments about 'inner dialogue' or 'self-talk' exemplifies the open self-disclosure that was characteristic of the current study.

In retrospect, it appears that the multi-episode interview offered breadth to the study, which is not always available in empirical designs employing questionnaire surveys or single-session interviews. The current study targeted the symphony orchestra profession as both a microcosm of society at large (involving the social dynamics of subgrouping, competition, stereotypes and prejudices), and as an industrial organization (with concerns of motivation, collaboration, team-functioning, communication, and job satisfaction). The wealth of material that surfaced, 432 transcripts reflecting eight 1-hour sessions for each of the 54 participant musicians in the sample, paints a portrait of symphony orchestra players that has not been reported previously. Clearly, orchestra musicians are a professional group with specific occupational development lines that are set into motion in childhood, with career aspirations that are reinforced during their teenage years, taking on vocational motivations carved throughout advanced training and subsequently mixed into the milieu referred to as the conservatory culture at the music college. The expectations that result from this vocational developmental sequence, in addition to a multitude of performance experiences that begin in the early years, pave the way in which musicians perceive the incentives, objections and consequences of an orchestral career.

The current study, then, provides a rather different and contrary view of symphony orchestra players' motivations and commitments to the music performance profession. Parasurman and Nachman (1987) previously reported that love for music and the music profession are not sufficient in themselves to promote the desire for continued membership with an orchestra. In the current study, such a stance was refuted. For the majority of musicians in the current sample, love for music and the music profession are *the* reasons why playing with a British symphony orchestra is cherished and gratifying. Accordingly, when all is said and done, all that remains is the music, the performer and his or her stage performance experience.

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