

SIBELIUS ACADEMY

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**The experience of the students and teachers in
Sibelius Academy's "Creative Musicianship Skills" course in 2001**

Abstract

The aim of the present study was to examine the experiences of students and teachers who had participated in the Sibelius Academy's "Creative Musicianship Skills" course in 2001. Students were asked to describe what effect their experiences during the course had had on their interaction skills, expression, creative thinking and freedom when playing an instrument. The course began in November 2001 and ended in October 2002. It consisted of interaction skills training, group work skills, stimulating creativity through various exercises, improvisational play, transferring of play into music and experiencing the creative process through group work. The researcher was one of the members of the course.

The data consists of a questionnaire and interviews with 8 students; three of whom were experienced instrumental teachers and five of whom were music students. The questionnaire was filled in at the beginning of the course and the interviews took place after the course ended. Research was conducted using a hermeneutic approach to understanding the students' perspectives of their experiences. The researcher also describes her own experiences of having previously been a student on a similar course and, in the process of being a researcher, uses her own experiences and observations during the course to understand those of the students.

The participants interviewed had mainly gathered positive experiences from the "Creative Musicianship Skills" course. According to them, their creativity as musicians and teachers increased; they acquired new skills which they could apply to their work as teachers and performers, and their ability to work in a group was enhanced because of new interaction skills. In their experience, a feeling of mutual acceptance engendered in the group improved group dynamics, and the supportive community made the work easier. During the course the participants gained a feeling of security and acceptance within the group, and they became free to experience and try new things without fear. Several of the participants felt that the subsequent increase in creativity and freedom of expression positively changed their musicianship, teaching ability and professional values: they felt they could use their newly learned skills in their teaching, playing, and in their lives in general. The creative use of work procedures was generally experienced as inspirational and challenging; the participants began to analyze their own, as well as their teacher's, studies and playing and they also embarked on examining their own teaching from a more critical perspective.

The data shows that during the course much of the criticism that arose was directed towards current methods of educating classical musicians. In the view of the participants, music institutions should offer interaction skills as part of the basic training of musicians in the future. Professional and amateur music groups have a key role when it comes to developing good social skills and creating functioning communities with a healthy sense of belonging. To summarize, today's musician is expected to be an accomplished performer, composer, trainer and teacher as well as an innovator. These roles must be practiced in

different contexts. The study argues that creativity and social skills are just as important for the musician as technical and artistic skills in today's working contexts.

Key words

Interaction, improvisation, creativity, musicianship, interview, education

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