Teaching Versatility to Post-Secondary Violin Students

by

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I examine arguments for teaching post-secondary violin students to be versatile musicians rather than specialists in one genre or area of music. In order to do this, I assess the professional and educational opportunities in Toronto based on interviews with nine professional violinists as well as teachers and administrators at four institutions that offer post-secondary instruction in violin performance. To supplement information gathered through interviews, violinists and violists performing with the National Ballet of Canada and the Esprit Orchestra were asked to respond to a questionnaire regarding their training and work experiences. Data collected through fieldwork is contextualized by an analysis of scholarly writing, periodicals and websites on the topic of current post-secondary music curriculum and pedagogy methods. Throughout the dissertation, I build the case that, despite strong opinions and many years of pedagogy that emphasize the contrary, versatility provides many advantages to professional violinists when compared to specialization. In order to maximize the benefits of versatility in a professional career, I draw on Benjamin Brinner’s notion of core competences (Brinner 1995) to posit the skills necessary for professional musicians to pursue successful, enduring careers in Toronto. Applying these core competences to an
analysis of violinists’ training, I explore the violin curriculum of post-secondary music schools in Toronto: The University of Toronto, the Glenn Gould School, Humber College, and York University to examine how students are being trained. In particular, I query how students are being prepared to be profession violinists with a focus on whether they are being prepared to be versatile musicians or specialists in one style. I conclude by offering recommendations as to how to better teach versatility based on the findings of the previous chapters. I explain that versatility can be nurtured in the school environment through teacher training and curricular changes that emphasize informal learning approaches, shifts in conventionally held assumptions about musical value and career success, and by encouraging exploration and improvisation as a basis of developing creativity.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................ iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .............................................................................................. v

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
Methodology .................................................................................................................. 3
Findings .......................................................................................................................... 8
Literature Review .......................................................................................................... 10
  Core Competences ..................................................................................................... 12
  Musical Flexibility ...................................................................................................... 14
  The Values of Most Post-Secondary Music Programs .............................................. 17
  Curricular changes in Post-Secondary Music Schools ........................................... 17
  Professionalism ........................................................................................................ 18
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 19

CHAPTER 1: VERSATILITY AND SPECIALIZATION CONSIDERED AND RECONSIDERED ........................................................................................................... 21

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 21

Arguments for Specialization:
1. Traditional, Specialized Classical Training is the Best Way to Train Violinists ........ 24
   Argument Reconsidered:
     Benefits of “Cross Training” for Violinists .......................................................... 26
     Benefits of Non-Classical Study for Classical Violinists ..................................... 28
     Benefits of Classical Study for Non-Classical Violinists .................................... 31
2. Versatility’s Negative Influence on Reputation ..................................................... 32
   Argument Reconsidered:
     Most musicians and Audiences Respect Versatility .......................................... 34
3. Versatility can Lead to Inauthentic Performance .................................................. 37
   Argument Reconsidered:
     Musicians Have the Capacity to Play More Than One Genre of Music Authentically ................................................................................................................... 38
4. Specialization Leads to Greater Financial Success Than Versatility .................. 40
   Argument Reconsidered:
     Specialization is Not a Realistic Way for Most Violinists to Earn a Living ....... 41

Further Arguments for Versatility:
1. Benefits of Learning Music by Ear ........................................................................ 49
2. The Versatile Musician in History: From Bach to Mark O’ Connor .................. 50
3. Versatility and Multiculturalism .......................................................................... 59
Case Studies of Versatility ......................................................................................... 62
  A. Drew Jurecka ....................................................................................................... 62
  B. Anne Lindsay ...................................................................................................... 74
C. Lenny Solomon......................................................................................................... 65
4. Versatility and Satisfaction.......................................................................................... 66
Conclusion...................................................................................................................... 72

CHAPTER 2: CORE COMPETENCES.............................................................................. 74
Core Musical Competences for All Musicians.............................................................. 74
1. Playing in All Keys.................................................................................................... 76
2. Musical Interpretation: Analytical Skills.................................................................... 77
3. Good Rhythm............................................................................................................ 78
4. Reading Skills.......................................................................................................... 79
5. Sight Reading Skills.................................................................................................. 80
6. Learning Quickly...................................................................................................... 81
7. Practice Technique................................................................................................... 82
8. Genre Literacy: Learning vocabulary and Style Sensitivity......................................... 84
   a. Form...................................................................................................................... 85
   b. Rhythm................................................................................................................ 86
   c. Harmony............................................................................................................. 86
   d. Genre Specific Terminology................................................................................ 87
9. Sound Equipment/ Plugging In................................................................................. 88
10. Arranging/ Transcription/Composition Skills.......................................................... 89

General Core Competences – “Non-Musical” Skills Musicians Need to Acquire....... 90
1. Professional Skills: Reliability and Preparedness...................................................... 91
   a. Timeliness.......................................................................................................... 91
   b. Preparedness...................................................................................................... 92
   c. Accounting Skills: Taxes, Keeping Records and a Budget.................................... 93
2. Interpersonal Skills................................................................................................... 94
3. Self-Promotion / Entrepreneurial Skills..................................................................... 97
   a. Contracts............................................................................................................. 97
   b. Selling a Product: Finding Work.......................................................................... 97
   c. Talking to Clients............................................................................................... 99
   d. Fundraising Your Career.................................................................................... 100
   e. Set Goals: Short and Long-term.......................................................................... 100
   f. Knowing One’s Place: Side-Person Versus leader............................................... 101

4. Physical Preparation/ Stamina.................................................................................. 102

Well Rounded Competence......................................................................................... 104
Conclusion...................................................................................................................... 105

CHAPTER 3: TORONTO’S EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR POST-
SECONDARY STUDY IN MUSIC PERFORMANCE:
How the Schools Approach Teaching Versatility Versus Specialization...................... 107

Introduction.................................................................................................................... 107
The Importance of Post-Secondary Music Training..................................................... 109
Toronto’s Four Post Secondary Programs ................................................................. 112

University of Toronto .............................................................................................. 113
York University ............................................................................................................ 116
The Glenn Gould School ............................................................................................ 119
Humber College ......................................................................................................... 120
How Have the Schools Addressed Versatility Versus Specialization? ...................... 123
Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 124

CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................. 128

Recommendations .................................................................................................... 128
Introduction ................................................................................................................. 128
Adjustment in Values and Goals .............................................................................. 130
Well-Rounded Musical Education ........................................................................... 133
Revolutionizing the Music School to Create Complete Musicians ......................... 135
Future Trends in Education ....................................................................................... 137
Teacher Training and Curricular Changes ............................................................... 139
Student and Teacher in Dialogue and Informal Learning ....................................... 141
Nurturing Creativity ................................................................................................. 143
Teaching Creativity through Improvisation ............................................................ 145
School Orchestra ...................................................................................................... 147
How Versatility Should Be Taught: Respecting Other Traditions ............................ 149
Teaching Versatility through Ear Training ............................................................... 151

Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 154

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................ 160
INTRODUCTION

Violin training in colleges and universities has remained fundamentally the same for the last one hundred years. Is it possible that a specialized curriculum which was designed so long ago, could be pertinent to the violinist of today, given the many changes in all other aspects of the music profession in the intervening years? For example, the economic climate of the twenty-first century and the nature and variety of work opportunities in violin performance call for versatility in terms of professional training. In addition, many world-renowned symphony orchestras are struggling to survive, or are in the process of bankruptcy proceedings. This dissertation argues that it is advantageous for violinists to learn to be resourceful and to diversify their performance skills in order to meet the demands of being a professional musician in the twenty-first century.

This contention is based on my assessment of the state of the music industry in Toronto, Ontario in 2012. My research includes interviews with professional musicians for the purpose of ascertaining the ways in which they earn a living, the types of work available to them and the skills required to work in this profession. Although this paper may be relevant to many instrumentalists, my focus is on how best to prepare violinists for the employment opportunities in Toronto.

I have been working as a freelance violinist, violin and viola teacher in Toronto since 2005. During this period I have diversified my skills in order to be able to participate in a broader range of music employment. I have found that this approach provides more opportunities in terms of quantity of jobs and professional satisfaction. In my research I compared my personal professional experience with that of colleagues and inquired whether a more versatile professional life is of interest to other classical
violinists. I also consulted books, periodicals, dissertations and websites that discuss professional music making to gain insight into the research being done in the field. Much of this published material is based on studies from larger geographical regions, within North America and Europe.

Since the focus of my study is limited to the professional music field in Toronto, I found it necessary to conduct my own field research. This consisted primarily of interviews with local string players, who demonstrate particular expertise in an area of interest to my research. In particular, I discussed freelance prospects in the greater Toronto area with classical, jazz, world and folk violinists and violists. Interviews were also conducted with teachers in post-secondary schools of music in Toronto, including several who work as professional performers.

In chapter one, I build the case that versatility is in many ways preferable to specialization despite strong opinions and many years of pedagogy that emphasize the contrary. In chapter two, I discuss the core competences (Brinner 1995) necessary for professional musicians endeavoring to pursue successful, enduring careers in the Toronto music “scene” (Straw). In chapter three, I explore the violin curriculum of post-secondary music schools in Toronto to examine how students are being trained and asking whether graduates are being prepared to be versatile musicians or specialists in one style. In chapter four, I make recommendations as to how to better teach versatility. I explain that versatility can be nurtured in the school environment through teacher training, curricular changes, informal learning approaches and by encouraging creativity and exploration.

It should be noted that the focus of this paper is primarily limited to Western music. This can partially be explained by my Western-based music education and
experience. However, I also focus on two non-classical styles of Western music: jazz and Mariachi. Though all three of these genres might be classified as “Western music,” they are incredibly diverse in the types of rhythms, forms and harmonies on which they are based. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to allow there to be more choice introduced into post-secondary violin students' training.

My intention is that insight will be gained by the comparative analysis in this dissertation and that this perspective will be useful to students, teachers and performers.

METHODOLOGY

The initial research for this dissertation concerning versatility and pedagogical approaches to violin education included the analysis of published books, periodicals, dissertations and websites. The field research was based in the Toronto area, which is the largest music market in Canada. There are also four distinctive post-secondary schools of music in Toronto: The University of Toronto, York University, Humber College, and The Glenn Gould School Professional School of the Royal Conservatory of Music. Humber College is the only dedicated jazz violin program in Canada. Since there is no evidence of specific research on the current state of employment for violinists in Toronto, I investigated and solicited experts in the violin performance and pedagogical fields to interview. Methods employed included interviews with successful performers and freelancers, a review of primary and secondary literature, as well as my personal experience as a student and then as a professional violinist and teacher.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the ethnographic sample used in this dissertation. This sample is restricted in number and in scope because it is taken from my own network of performers, teachers, and students. Nevertheless, the interviewees
represent some of the most respected and successful musicians and pedagogues in the
Toronto music scene. They are exceptional when compared to a large number of
musicians because their primary employment is within the field of music as performers
and/or music professors. As such, my research does not include the opinions of musicians
who work in different musical contexts and augment their musical careers with jobs
outside the field of music.

In preparation for chapter two, which deals with the core competences of a
versatile violinist, I conducted a survey of the similarities in course offerings at Toronto’s
four schools which offer post-secondary study in violin. The chapter gives details about
the curriculum at each school and their particular priorities with respect to training
musicians that they view as competent. After the analysis of the schools, I draw
conclusions about how the schools differ in their views towards versatility training, and
pedagogical and performance goals. In discussing the importance of post-secondary
training for violin students, I incorporate discussion of ideas from authors whom I
consider to hold pertinent and notable ideals on education. Finally, a questionnaire was
completed by thirty-one violinists and violists performing with the National Ballet of
Canada Orchestra and the Esprit Orchestra.

It should be noted that when I quote specific musicians, I am referring to the nine
one-hour interviews conducted in person, and not to responses gathered through the
questionnaire. I interviewed the following people: Barry Shiffman, Associate Dean and
Director of Chamber Music at the Glenn Gould School; Erika Raum, violin professor at
the Glenn Gould School and the University of Toronto and prominent violin soloist;
Parmela Attariwala, PhD candidate and violin teaching assistant at the University of
Toronto; Kathy Rapoport, viola professor at the University of Toronto; Jacques Israelevich, violin professor at York University and former concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony; and Drew Jurecka, violin professor in the jazz program at Humber College.

All of these teachers are also professional performers, and they were selected for interview due to their knowledge and expertise in each role. In addition, I interviewed three other performing violinists: Steven Sitarski, (former concertmaster of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and current concertmaster of the Hamilton Philharmonic); Lenny Solomon, versatile violinist and creator of Bowfire, and Anne Lindsay, folk and versatile violinist. My interviews with Drew Jurecka, Anne Lindsay, Lenny Solomon and Parmela Attariwala focused on their professional individuality, versatility, entrepreneurial skills, and their views of freelance prospects in the greater Toronto area.

The findings of my questionnaire are discussed in detail in the Core Competence chapter of this dissertation. The questionnaire was completed and returned by thirty-one of forty-four (seventy percent) violinists and violists who performed at the November 30th, 2011 Esprit Orchestra concert and/or the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra for the performances of Romeo and Juliet between November 23rd and 30th, 2011. The information compiled from my questionnaire is used to support the premise of my dissertation, and to provide a statistical and empirical basis for my conclusions about the state of education and musical work in Toronto.

The one-page questionnaire was designed to include “yes/no” and open-ended questions. The statistical percentages in this dissertation refer to the questionnaire. Respondents were required to identify their primary instrument as either the violin or
viola. I included violists in addition to violinists in the survey, due to the similarity of the instruments and also the fact that many musicians play both. Therefore, it is expected that their experiences in the Toronto music business would likely be comparable.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had attended a post-secondary music school in Toronto, and the name of the school. This question provided information about the curricula of the individual schools, and compared graduates’ evaluations of the school they had attended. The subsequent questions were intended to evaluate the role of versatility or specialization in the careers of the respondents. My questions were as follows:

- Do you play another instrument?
  - If yes, what instrument?
- Do you play it professionally?
- Do you have another career in addition to music performance?
  - If yes, what is it?
- Do you play another style of music?
  - If yes, what style?
- Do you play it professionally?
- What other kinds of employment do you have other than performing with the Esprit / National Ballet of Canada Orchestra?

Data was collected regarding the length of time the respondents had worked professionally in Toronto e.g. one to five years, five to ten years, ten to twenty years, twenty to thirty years, or over thirty years. This information was valuable when comparing opinions of musicians of similar ages and professional backgrounds.
The subsequent section of the questionnaire was dedicated to providing respondents the opportunity to share their individual perspectives and their evaluations of their schooling. They were asked to write about the aspects of the curriculum that they felt had or had not supported them in pursuit of their musical careers. The questions were as follows:

What are the three most important skills that you have acquired since graduating from school?

What are the three most useful skills that you learned in school?

Did you find your study in the following areas to be useful in your career?

Part writing?

Ear training?

Sight singing?

Keyboard Harmony?

Gregorian chant?

Renaissance Music? ¹

The final questions related to those skills that I hypothesized had not been offered in the respondents’ schooling. Respondents identified those skills that they felt should have been included in their musical higher education. This information assisted me in assessing the accuracy of my hypothesis that schools should include training in non-musical skills and versatility development. The questions were as follows:

¹ My decision to inquire into the benefits of the historical study of Gregorian Chant and Renaissance music was not intended to denigrate such study. Instead, my inquiry was intended to ascertain whether such study was relevant to the respondents’ employment opportunities. Although there are specific musical ensembles that perform early music, most ensembles do not perform music from the pre-Baroque period.
In which of the following areas would you have liked instruction?

Improvisation?

Non-Western violin playing?

Jazz theory?

Physical/mental health for performers?

Entrepreneurial Skills?

Interpersonal Skills?

Professional Skills?

Other skills?

Findings

In analyzing the data gathered from my questionnaire, I found that ten of the thirty-one (32%) respondents had not attended a Toronto school. Eighteen of the thirty-one (58%) had attended the University of Toronto, two (6%) had attended both the Glenn Gould School and the University of Toronto and one person (three percent) had attended the Royal Conservatory of Music before the creation of the Glenn Gould School. In analyzing the responses from graduates of the University of Toronto, I found that five people had been working professionally for over thirty years (16%), eight had been working for twenty to thirty years (26%), three had been working for ten to twenty years (10%), one had been working for five to ten years (3%), and one had been working for under five years (3%). Therefore, 72% of the University of Toronto graduates have been working for over twenty years, and only 28% of the graduates have been working for less than twenty years.
Most of the respondents attended the University of Toronto because they were seeking classical training. None of the respondents attended York University, which focuses on world music, or Humber College, which focuses on jazz and popular music. It should also be noted that the Glenn Gould School was only founded twenty-five years ago in 1987.

The compilation of responses indicated that the majority of respondents would have liked their musical education to include exposure to non-musical competences, such as interpersonal skills, professional skills, entrepreneurial skills, and injury prevention. In addition, most of the respondents indicated that they would like to have taken courses to help them develop versatility. This desire for versatility is an especially important point since the respondents had a limited range of skill set diversity. One respondent was equally proficient on violin and viola, three of the seven violists play violin professionally, two of the seven violists plays violin and other instruments and other styles, two of the thirty-one work as luthiers in addition to performance, one of thirty-one has a non-music related job, eight of thirty-one named teaching as a part of their livelihood. It is of interest to note that only two of the eight respondents who teach have been working for less than twenty years, indicating that younger professionals may not be gravitating towards teaching.

In conclusion, the results of the questionnaire suggest that the majority of the respondents are clearly interested in acquiring new skills in order to be able to participate at a professional level in a wider range of musical genres or styles. Furthermore, they identified the deficiencies in the curriculum of the music schools that they attended, and
expressed interest in the development of non-musical skills that would have been beneficial in the pursuit of their artistic careers.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The central principle underlying my selection of various books and articles was to address the current state of scholarship with regards to versatility and/or specialized training and employment opportunities for musicians in general, and violinists in particular, to inform my particular research on the situation in the Toronto area. This exploration provided opportunities to research and examine with a fresh perspective, the past and present attitudes towards violin education, performance, and potential careers. In the 1980s, the employment landscape for professional violinists started to change as career opportunities in the music industry began to decrease. In the 1960s, there had been a shortage of talented orchestral violinists. In fact, Sigmund Spaeth urged violinists in 1966 to audition for orchestral work in his book *Opportunities in Music Careers*. “There is a crying need for orchestral string players today and replacements will be constantly required as the older men drop out” (Spaeth 41). Although there may have been a shortage of orchestral violinists in 1966, in 2012 there are too many violinists for the orchestral jobs available. The challenge for violinists today is to determine and implement an approach that allows them to obtain stable, well paying work in music.

In my research, I found that musicologists and pedagogues have offered suggestions for the modification of the current curricula in post-secondary music schools. Some of the research discussed in this dissertation includes: an article entitled “Transforming Arts Teaching: The Role of Higher Education,” in which editors Jane L Polin and Barbara Rich relate the views of professor Robert Sirota; the 1993 book, *In the
Pits by Jon Frederickson; the 1995 book *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* by ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl; a speech entitled “Bring on the Learning Revolution,” by Sir Ken Robinson, public speaker and author of *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*; the 2009 article “What the students bring: examining the attributes of commencing conservatoire students” by Professor Gemma Carey, director Don Lebler, and research associate Rosie Burt-Perkins, an essay, “Globalizing Music Education: A Contextual Approach to Developing Students’ Intercultural Competence” by professors Warren Henry and Donna Emmanuel; an essay, “A Teacher Training Perspective,” Dean Veronika Cohen, dean of composition, conducting, theory and music education at the Jerusalem Academy; an article, “Structuring the Music Curriculum for Creative Learning” by Professor John Kratus; and the essay, *Creating Music in the Classroom* by University of Toronto professor of music education, Patricia Shand. At this time, however, most performance programs have yet to incorporate their proposals. The changes that were recommended include incorporating informal learning styles and training in musical versatility and creativity. Although literature has been published with regard to academic and performance opportunities in other countries, I found little published about Toronto or other parts of Canada.

Brian Jennings Hracs wrote about the employment opportunities for freelancing musicians in Toronto in his dissertation entitled *Working in the Creative Economy; The Spatial Dynamics of Employment Risk for Musicians in Toronto*, which was written at the University of Toronto Department of Geography in 2011. He discusses musicians in general, with a focus on their work activities. However, he did not address educational
options or how to train musicians for the work that was available. Further, with its broad scope, his work does not address the specifics of professional violin performance.

My research for this dissertation covers the analysis of primary and secondary sources on the following subjects: core competences, musical flexibility, specialization, music education, and professionalism. The following discussion summarizes some of the books and articles examined that are most relevant to my concerns with professional versatility for violinists.

Core Competences

The theory of “Core Competences,” is based upon Benjamin Brinner’s concept as expressed in his book, *Knowing Music, Making Music*. Brinner, a professor of ethnomusicology at the University of California Berkeley, defines “Core Competence” as consisting of a shared knowledge: “It is the area of overlap or intersection between different specializations, which may serve as a common basis for communication and specialization” (Brinner 77). Professor Brinner explains his concept of a “well-rounded competence,” which requires a complete education, rather than a specialized course of study. In the case of music education, a student who pursues such a “well-rounded” competence is more likely to display flexibility of musicianship. Brinner’s “flexible view of competence” is defined “as an entity that changes throughout individual lives and over the history of a community and tradition” (Brinner 32). As my experiences and those of the musicians I interviewed suggest, the skills necessary to successfully attain employment in the field of music are always evolving. Therefore, it is necessary to

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2 In this paper, primary sources are written by original authors and secondary sources are interpretations or examinations/analyses of the work done by someone else.
3 The topic of Core Competences is addressed the fifth chapter of this dissertation.
achieve a “flexible competence”. In the article entitled “Situated Cognition in Music” Lyle Davidson and Bruce Torff discuss the concept of a “flexible competence”: “It is tacitly assumed that becoming competent involves the absorption of knowledge in a flexible, transmutable manner that allows transferal of knowledge gained in one musical context to other analogous contexts” (Davidson and Torff 22). The attainment of a “flexible competence” makes it possible for a musician to have knowledge relevant to the musical life of the community in which he/she works. Brinner also identifies other types of competences termed “multiple competences”:

Musicians frequently attain considerable mastery of two or more musical competences … First, there are multiple competences that exist within one overall competence. For example, orchestral players who play several instruments or perform in significantly different roles and contexts as soloists or in chamber ensembles have done so by acquiring an additional body of specialized knowledge to add to a substantial core competence … A second type of multiple competence bridges different communities or traditions within a larger tradition. Motivations for the development of such competences include potential appeal to a broader audience ... (Brinner 82-83).

In my chapter “Versatility and Specialization Considered and Reconsidered,” I discuss some of the benefits of developing “multiple competences,” which I argue offers musicians the ability to appeal to broader audiences; to supplement income potential; and to create musical connections between diverse social groups who then may employ musicians in a variety of settings.

In Brinner’s book, he expresses the potential for greater cross-cultural
understanding through the acquisition of multiple competences:

An ethnomusicological inquiry into Western musicians' motivations for developing multiple competences that include different historical styles, repertoires, and practices is long overdue and would surely turn up other motivations that would further our understanding of attitudes toward culture, society, creativity, and taste. (Brinner 84)

In this dissertation, however, my primary concern is with the multiple musical and “non-musical” competences that allow musicians access to greater employment opportunities. The attainment of “multiple competences” offers a musician a form of musical flexibility. Indeed, after examining various viewpoints, I conclude that musical flexibility is advantageous for the development of more stable and potentially more lucrative careers for a wider range of professional violinists.

Musical Flexibility

In reviewing the literature, I found that the theme of musical flexibility or versatility has been addressed by numerous scholars including music educators. Currently, the benefits of musical diversification are gaining acceptance and more interest has developed in researching such diversification. I draw extensively from a study completed by professor Andrea Creech and nine other British professors. In their 2008 article entitled, “From Music Student to Professional: the Process of Transition,” there is a discussion of the findings of interviews with student musicians who are beginning the

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5 Andrea Creech is senior lecturer in education and faculty director of research at the Institute of Education at the University of London.
process of transition into the professional world of music. Twenty-seven undergraduate and young professional musicians were interviewed in order to compare and contrast musicians’ experiences entering the music business. The musicians’ backgrounds included four musical styles: rock, jazz, classical and Scottish fiddle. Creech et al. explored and identified potential methods by which post-secondary music institutions could better prepare and support graduates (Creech et al. 2). The consensus of those interviewed was that musical versatility is essential today.

The prominent theme of versatility seemed to encapsulate the significance attached to skill development on a number of different fronts. The capacity to be musically versatile was found to be highly valued and was a potent theme in accounts from all genres. There was a sense that there was little scope for specialism in the music world, if one were to forge a viable and rewarding career. (Creech et al.15)

The results of my own research of the Toronto music scene generated similar findings. Musicians in Toronto generally believe versatility to be a valuable approach for supporting one’s knowledge base, for broadening one’s social and professional network, and for supplementing one’s employment opportunities. The fact that Creech’s research took place in Britain establishes that the issue of musical versatility, and diversification is relevant and advantageous to musicians not only locally and nationally, but also internationally. Jeff Packman’s work on professional performers of popular music in Brazil further supports this assertion.

As described in Creech’s research, violinists who are capable of performing
various styles of music, playing different instruments, or working in other music-related capacities make themselves desirable to other sectors of the music industry. Thus, such violinists have a broader base of employment options from which to draw. Limiting oneself to only one area of the music business narrows one’s opportunities. This is because there are many qualified performers for the number of jobs available in any one specialization. In 1993, when Jon Frederickson and James F. Rooney published *In the Pits: A Sociological Study of the Free-Lance Classical Musician*, the employment opportunities for classical musicians were in a decline. To exemplify the grim state of affairs in Washington D.C., they stated:

According to 1988 figures from the American Federation of Musicians, there were only 3700 contract orchestral positions in symphony orchestras with a minimum salary of $15,000 per year in the United States. Yet each year music schools, universities, and conservatories graduate over 3,000 musicians from performance degrees! ...To that figure of 3,000 we also have to add all the people from previous years who are still looking for work. The result? A woodwind audition for a single orchestra job in one of the top twenty orchestras will attract between 150-600 applicants! (Frederickson and Rooney 5)

Musicians who have not secured tenured orchestral positions often attempt to work as freelancers, an endeavor that Frederickson and Rooney characterize as fiercely competitive. They state, “In Washington, D.C., over 1500 classical musicians compete for the work that is controlled by about 100 free-lancers. And even most of those 100 musicians cannot survive on their performing income alone” (Frederickson and Rooney 5).
Based on my research and my own professional experience, I have noted a similar decline of available musical work in Toronto. This decline remains a concern for Toronto violinists in 2012. Moreover, the current lack of available work locally exemplifies the liabilities of specialization. The results of my questionnaire and case studies indicate that Toronto’s professional classical violinists and violists would like to have acquired diversified skills in their post-secondary training. They identified deficiencies in the curriculum of their music programs, which focused on specialization with little opportunity to broaden their skill sets.

The Values of Most Post-Secondary Music Programs

In his book, *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*, ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl studies the state of an unnamed Midwestern US school of music. Nettl argues against the widely held conservatory bias favoring classical rather than non-classical musical studies. In the “Schools” chapter of my dissertation I examine the values and priorities of Toronto’s tertiary schools for violin study. I discuss the necessity that schools adjust their values and priorities in the “Recommendations” section of this paper. My outlook is based in part on Nettl’s ethnographic study of a classical school of music. By adjusting the values and attitudes schools hold towards diverse career paths such as freelancing, teaching, and playing non-classical music, students may enjoy the freedom to explore the field of music more broadly.

Curricular changes in Post-Secondary Music Schools

As a result of restricting my research geographically, I found the opinions of Toronto musicians to be most relevant regarding the state of music education. I researched the curricula of Toronto’s post-secondary schools of music: The Glenn Gould
School, Humber College, York University and the University of Toronto. I was particularly interested in the views of University of Toronto professor of music education, Patricia Shand. Her views about specialization and fostering creativity explained in persuasive terms the abundant possibilities for the future of the music education for professional musicians.

In her essay, *Creating Music in the Classroom*, Shand discusses the curriculum in Canada’s post-secondary schools and why she believes that students should be given opportunities to become creative artists. In the chapter entitled “Recommendations,” I discuss ways in which creativity and versatility can be taught in the post-secondary music school setting. In the “Core Competence” chapter, I consider other areas of study that should be included in the curricula of music schools. Based on the interviews and responses to my questionnaire, I found that many musicians would like to have learned skills associated with “professionalism” in their music school training.

**Professionalism**

There are many resources available on the topic of professionalism and the music business. I reviewed numerous guidebooks about how to succeed in the music business, and many authors offered valuable advice on the subject. The issue of artists’ poor business skills was the topic of an interview on the radio show “Here and Now Toronto” on CBC Radio broadcast on October 19th, 2012. Journalist Laura Di Battista interviewed actress Trey Anthony about her upcoming “Millionaire Artist Workshop” in Toronto. Anthony explained that she offers workshops to help artists learn how to improve their entrepreneurial skills. She began by exploring the tension many artists experience with regards to selling their artistic product. She stated that many artists believe that they
compromise their art if, and when, they sell it for a profit. She explained that many artists “give up on their art because they just lacked business sense” (Battista CBC.ca).

In the “Core Competence” chapter, I refer to many books about professionalism, including Lessons From a Street-Wise Professor by Eastman professor Raymon Ricker. In his book, Ricker uses the term “Musician’s Business Challenge” to encapsulate the many difficulties that a musician faces. He discusses some of the obstacles in achieving success in the music business: “It’s a commodity market. There is changing demand. There are price pressures, reduced resources and a highly competitive and large talent pool” (Ricker 5). Ricker offers practical advice on how to improve a musician’s business acumen, including entrepreneurial and interpersonal skills, and financial guidance. These are some of the “non-musical” skills I discuss as being core competences necessary to include in post-secondary music programs.

Conclusion

In this literature review, I identified some of the books that were most relevant to my research. I also discuss and critique various viewpoints regarding many educational and employment issues addressed in many additional books, articles, dissertations, and websites in the body of this dissertation. My dissertation is limited in scope in the following ways: it examines and evaluates curricular alternatives for diversifying classical programs for violin study; and it includes questionnaires completed by string players who perform with the National Ballet of Canada and the Esprit Orchestra.

The books and articles discussed in this chapter form the basis for my investigation into the current state of versatility training and employment opportunities.

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6 Raymon Ricker is the Senior Associate Dean for Professional Studies and Professor of Saxophone at the Eastman School of Music.
for violinists. The literature reviewed in this chapter provides past and present perspectives pertinent to the higher education of violinists. This literature offered context for my analysis of Toronto’s educational and employment opportunities.

As the multiple topics discussed in this dissertation are relevant to musicians locally, nationally, and internationally, it is to be hoped that further study will be conducted in other cities around the world, with a view to assisting musicians in their pursuit of satisfying, financially stable musical careers. In the following chapter I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of musical versatility and specialization.
Chapter One

VERSATILITY AND SPECIALIZATION CONSIDERED AND RECONSIDERED

Introduction

This chapter explores and addresses a central concern of the dissertation: a widely perceived dichotomy and conflict between musical specialization and versatility. In the 2012 Cambridge University Press Cambridge Dictionary Online, specialization is defined as a “particular area of knowledge or the process of becoming an expert in a particular area” and versatility is defined as “the ability to change easily from one activity to another or able to be used for many different purposes.” In terms of musicians, I define a specialist is someone who has focused their energy in pursuit of skill in one primary musical practice or genre. On the other hand, I consider a versatile musician to be one who has a flexible, adaptable set of skills that allow him or her to perform competently a wide range of musical genres. This simple distinction in approach to musicianship can be the source of great tension. For example, the pursuit of versatility is all too often viewed by performers and pedagogues as diminishing a musician’s ability to excel in any one genre. On the other hand, numerous professional musicians with whom I spoke note that the ability to perform multiple kinds of music is often necessary for maintaining their careers.

In order to further unpack the tensions between specialization and versatility as it applies to violinists and their careers, common arguments for both the benefits and drawbacks of specialization in musical performance will be considered. Pedagogical and musicological literature is discussed as are the opinions expressed by the various musicians and music educators with whom I spoke during field research. Using a similar manner of inquiry, the advantages and disadvantages of musical versatility for professional and aspiring professional violinists will be explored based on interviews with nine professional violinists and violists in Toronto. This chapter includes case
studies of three versatile violinists in Toronto: Drew Jurecka, Anne Lindsay and Lenny Solomon. In addition, I have drawn on my own experience as a performing violinist in order to supplement my primary and secondary sources.

At the center of the versatility/specialization debate are tensions related to the benefits and liabilities related to the performance and study of more than one genre of music or in the acquiring of other skills in music. There are also conflicting concerns about the potential gains and losses that result from devoting time and energy toward acquiring other skills such as arranging or even playing another instrument. Other key informing issues that emerge in relation to the perceived versatility/specialization binary are the oversupply of artists, the status of various types of musical employment, the rationales behind occupational choices and occupational risk diversification. As we shall see, the career choices and strategies used by the working musicians who participated in my study are guided in relation to these concerns.

This chapter makes the argument that versatility is a productive alternative to specialization for the post-secondary student of the violin who aims for a professional career in Toronto. This position is based on the following arguments:

1. One skill set learned from studying one musical style can benefit another style and even improve a musician’s performance in the style of music they first studied.
2. Versatility offers the artist more creative outlets and more ways to make a living. Additionally, it can allow the performer to reach broader audiences.
3. It creates mutual understanding and respect between different groups of people and more social networks.
4. Lastly, versatility is arguably more stimulating and satisfying than specialization.
In a 2008 article entitled “From music student to professional: the process of transition,” Andrea Creech and nine other British professors discuss the findings of their interviews with musicians transitioning from students to professionals. These subjects were largely undergraduate students and musicians in their twenties. There was general consensus among the interviewees about the importance of musical versatility. The prominent theme of versatility seemed to encapsulate the significance attached to skill development on a number of different fronts. The capacity to be musically versatile was found to be highly valued and was a potent theme in accounts from all genres. There was a sense that there was little scope for specialism in the music world, if one were to forge a viable and rewarding career. (Creech et al. 325)

Although Creech et al. found that young musicians believe diversification to be valuable in creating viable careers in music, my research suggests that classical music students continue to be trained as specialists.

Among players and pedagogues with whom I spoke, and within the post secondary music-training institutions I either visited or attended, specialization in terms of instrument and musical tradition is the favored approach. In this section, then, I explore the pedagogical and practical justifications offered by this educational method. After presenting each argument for specialization, I will analyze each argument and then offer critiques of those long-standing assumptions. These critiques will establish a basis for my argument in favor of versatility as a key career tactic for contemporary violinists in the Toronto area.

**Arguments for Specialization**
1. Traditional, Specialized Classical Training is the Best Way to Train Violinists

Among many violin teachers, the focused study of violin is based upon established Western Art Music methods and is unquestioningly embraced as the best way to learn, especially in the beginning stages. After consulting articles, essays and books written by musicologists and professors and interviewing several local professional violinists, violists, and pedagogues, I found that there is general consensus that in order to attain any level of proficiency at the violin, regardless of musical style studied, years of technical work (scales, arpeggios, repertoire) must be mastered. This consensus holds that the more time invested in a particular area of study, the greater the resultant competence and discipline. Numerous sources also suggest that through hours of practicing on one instrument, the musician develops a comfort level with that instrument. It is argued that such technical mastery allows him/her to forget about some of the technical aspects of playing and allows for attention to more sophisticated issues such as musicality. In his book *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, Ivan Galamian writes:

> A complete technique means the development of all of the elements of the violinistic skill to the highest point...It implies the ability to do justice, with unfailing reliability and control, to each and every demand of the most refined musical imagination. (Galamian 5)

The consensus among professional musicians interviewed for this dissertation is that the discipline and focus learned through years of focused study provide the musician with core competences that will serve for most professional opportunities in Toronto, most of which are based on Western harmony and technique. Moreover, the classical background serves as a foundation for other styles.
In the article “Jack of all trades, master of some ... or none? Training teachers in Integrated Arts,” South African and Australian professors discuss the merits of specialization in the arts. The following statement by Dawn Joseph, Riekie van Aswegen, and Dorette Vermeulen, professors in Australia and South Africa, is illustrative of a common justification for specialized training:

If students do not enjoy the chance of specializing in a specific art form as basis for training in the learning area Arts and Culture, then no art form benefits and students have very little skills and understandings to teach the arts at school.

(Joseph et al. 9)

Joseph et al. discuss the necessity for students and teachers to specialize in one area in order to achieve expertise. In his book, *Lessons from a Street-wise Professor: What you won’t learn at most music schools*, Ramon Ricker writes about the dangers of diversification and the necessity that a musician achieve excellence in one area.

With few exceptions most musicians who are at the absolute top of their field do essentially one thing really, really, really well. Miles Davis didn’t have to know anything about the C trumpet or playing the Petrouchka excerpts. Itzhak Perlman doesn’t have to know the chord progression of the Blues and Lang Lang doesn’t have to play ragtime…It is easy to become a ‘Jack of Nothing,’ when you stretch too far to master it all. (Ricker 32)

Though he cautions musicians about the dangers of diversification, Ricker believes that if you learn new skills methodically and hire proper teachers, musicians can learn many skills.
Argument Reconsidered

Benefits of “Cross Training” for Violinists

Despite the fact that it might seem easy to cite particular musical luminaries who focus on a particular kind of music making, to assume that they lack knowledge of or have never studied other musical genres or even other instruments is in many cases an oversimplification. Indeed, one of the key benefits of versatility as it applies to performance skills is that one skill set learned from studying a given practice can support and even strengthen those associated with another. My experience and those of my collaborators and other pedagogues suggest, further, that knowledge of more than one musical style can even improve a musician’s performance in the style of music they first studied and the style in which they primarily work.

In Creech’s article, she demonstrates how versatility is considered advantageous to musicians from four different stylistic backgrounds in music. This “justification for the importance of being versatile” is presented by four individuals in interviews:

It’s important to have a range of things, because they inform each other’ (jazz) . . .

‘Any genre of music, anything. Listen really in-depthly, analyse it ... it can be anything classical music, pop, rock, just listen to what the instruments are doing (Scottish traditional)...‘I’ve listened to everything from jazz to rock, to pop...I think it’s important to get inspiration from lots of sources. I think that makes a better musician, more rounded and more open-minded’ (classical)...‘It’s that level of obsession about his work that he’ll work in any genre...It’s a complete kind of immersion and involvement in the music’ (popular). (Creech et. al 327)
These four interviewees express how cross-genre study has helped them to become better musicians. They state that the study of multiple musical styles provides them with inspiration and makes them more well-rounded, knowledgeable musicians.

My experience studying jazz and Mariachi song forms has allowed me to better understand classical pieces in terms of the form and harmonic language. The reason playing non-classical music has helped me with classical forms is because the Mariachi and Jazz song forms are simpler and shorter and hence, easier to immediately comprehend. In both musical styles, much of the study is done orally, without written music. This necessitates that one hear and understand the form of the piece when they are improvising or playing songs learned by ear.

Ear training, then, is a clear benefit of studying a non-notated style of music. In learning to play music aurally rather than learning pieces visually, classical musicians can make great progress in their ear training. Whereas much of classical music study takes place in the study of a written score, non-classical music relies on the musician following along without written parts much of the time. Once I began to be able to follow a standard jazz tune (AABA form) without reading a chart I was also better able to understand the basic formulas for other music. Additionally, in jazz charts, chords are written out, which gives the performer a visual cue and facilitates an understanding of how chords function.

Another valuable effect of studying jazz is the clear and immediate elucidation of music theory concepts. While the analysis of classical music in music theory classes can seem dauntingly complex, abstract and difficult to apply in performance, the study of jazz theory is immediately made relevant in improvisation. For example, in the study of
classical music, form seems to be rather abstract as one can memorize a piece of music and perform without error without knowing anything about the form. However, in jazz, the ability to recognize the form of a tune is vital for improvisation. Moreover, most jazz song forms can be quickly discerned so that this knowledge can be applied in performance. Developing this ability, then, can support a violinist’s general musicianship since knowledge of the form and being able to hear and understand the composer’s language only adds to the depth of appreciation on the part of the musician. This is but one example of the benefits of musical “cross training.”

The following are some examples in how the study of one style of music can benefit another.

**Cross Training Provides Advantages in Technique Development**

**Benefits of Non-Classical Study for Classical Violinists**

Cross genre study can enhance a violinist’s performance mechanics. One example of this potential cross-genre growth opportunity is available to a classical violinist learning to play Mariachi music. The bow control necessary for a Mariachi violinist to play with strong, fast full bows can improve the classical violinist’s martelé\(^\text{7}\) stroke and overall ability to play with greater volume.

While at first, volume might not seem to be an important consideration for a classical play, the below will illustrate why it can be and how classical violinists can benefit from non-classical experience. Most classical violinists are accustomed to playing in ensembles where the ratio between horns and violins is to the violinists’ advantage. In the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, there are 26 contracted violinists and four contracted

\[^7\text{The martelé effect is produced by placing the bow on the string with pressure, and then bowing fairly quickly and forcefully to produce an intense sound. There are slight pauses in between notes in order to prepare the bow pressure before each stroke.}\]
trumpet players. In the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra, there are 18 contracted violinists and two contracted trumpet players. Depending on the repertoire, these ensembles hire extra players or may not use all of the members. However, the ratio of violinists to trumpets in both orchestras is between six and nine violins to one trumpet. In my Mariachi band, we often have three trumpets and one or two violins! It is a constant struggle to be heard as a violinist in this context. I have found that the sweet, elegant sound appropriate in classical music is of little to no use in this Mariachi playing. In order to be heard I have learned to produce volume using the weight of my arm, flattening my bow hair and by increasing bow speed and my bow’s proximity to the bridge.

Interestingly, now having completed my third series of Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty* with the National Ballet of Canada, I find that I am physically able to handle the strenuous three hour ballet without pain and with far less fatigue in my bow arm than in previous years. I believe that is because of my experience in the Mariachi band, having learned to produce a violin sound that can compete with trumpets for an hour at a time without breaks. This is not to say that the Mariachi bowing style is generally appropriate in classical settings, just as the classical tone production isn’t convincing in the Mariachi context. Yet, there are great benefits in learning to expand volume and timbre capabilities on the violin, both in terms of colour and in facilitating greater physical stamina in performance.

Another technical challenge in Mariachi music that has benefited my classical playing is the ricochet⁸, performed both up and down-bow. This is a contrast to how most classical players generally perform this technique, on the down-bow only. This up and

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⁸ Ricochet is a bow stroke where the bow is dropped on the string and bounces on the string for a minimum of two notes in the same bow direction.
down bow ricochet technique is used extensively and for prolonged passages in Mariachi music. In Classical music it tends to be used only in showpieces and generally for short periods of time. Importantly, the value of improving one’s ricochet is of greater significance than in simply attaining this one technical skill. In order to drop the bow on the string and play the exact number of notes desired in this one motion, it is required that the violinist hold and control the bow in an exacting fashion. The ability to control the bow in this stroke benefits the violinist in other types of bow strokes. Improvement of one type of bow stroke can develop overall bow control.

Another example of possible benefits to a violinist’s technique can be found in the study of jazz. Humber College jazz violin professor Drew Jurecka defines “swing” as “a syncopated rhythmic skewing of eighth notes, combined with offbeat accents. Different styles of swing are typical of different eras and styles of jazz, and are necessary to playing them convincingly.” When a violinist learns to “swing,” it helps to develop the rhythmic knowledge base on which they draw to play other styles of music. Swing requires a different placement of the important accents within a bar. Whereas in Western Classical music, the emphasis is on the first and third beats, in swing music, the emphasis is on the second and fourth beats. Additionally, in swing music, the length of eighth notes is not uniform as it is in classical music. The exact ratio of note lengths is variable based on the era of swing being performed, and the tempo of the performance. Learning how to correctly interpret “swing” broadens a musician’s ability to place the musical emphasis on different beats on the bar. Learning how different styles interpret rhythms teaches musicians that there are different ways to interpret rhythm and some of these interpretations are not notated. A greater knowledge of the complexities of rhythmic
interpretation and a better control and knowledge of rhythms that are not notated will allow the classical player to precisely produce the rhythms required of them in various situations.

**Benefits of classical study for non-classical violinists**

It is notable that upon speaking with jazz students and teachers at the University of Toronto and at Humber College, one realizes that many jazz students are assigned classical pieces as part of their private jazz lessons. The teachers and students feel that these pieces challenge them to expand their technical abilities on their instruments, and to discover new ideas for their own improvisation. Bach’s works are of particular interest to jazz teachers since they are so harmonically complex.

Non-classical violinists studying classical music learn challenging techniques, which may be beyond the technical demands of the genre of music they usually play. In learning these varied and complex techniques, they can see results that include greater control in all areas of technique including intonation, tone quality, articulations, phrasing, shifting, vibrato, postural issues, dexterity and dynamic range. Jurecka states, “In teaching students with a background in ‘fiddle playing,’ I have found that they generally are quite comfortable in the upper half of the bow but do not know how to make use of the lower half of the bow.” Fiddle tunes are generally written in G, D, A major and E and A minor because the tunes make use of open strings and many chords. As a result, the study of classical music opens up many new keys to fiddlers, providing them with increased knowledge of left hand positioning and finger patterns. Fiddle tunes are generally played in first and third position, which means that much of the potential of the violin is left untapped in terms of range and chromaticism. Learning to make fuller use of
the violin’s possibilities through the study of classical music, non-classical violinists have many more options for self-expression in their own performance styles, improvisations and compositions.

At the risk of over-generalizing, but in an effort to simplify the benefits of cross genre study, it could be said that in the study of classical music, non-classical violinists can learn technical skills in mastering their instruments and musical knowledge in how to express a composer’s musical desires. It may be the case that schools accept the concept that cross training is useful in the case of a student of non-classical music learning classical music. But classical schools are slower to accept that classical music students can benefit from cross training as well. The hierarchy of the different music styles in music schools is problematic as there is much to be gained in cross training for all students. Thus, a classical musician, in studying non-classical music can learn to be liberated from written music, to become a more creative musician, to improve their ears and rhythmic sense and to have more satisfaction in playing.

2. Versatility’s Negative Influence on Reputation

Another common argument for musical specialization is that, in creating a professional reputation, it is far more challenging to be taken seriously as a violinist who can play varied styles. Some performers also fear that having multiple musical skills devalues each of the individual skills in terms of reputation. The general attitude about such musicians is that they aren’t very good at any one style. This tendency to be branded a “Jack of all trades, master of none” is a real concern for multi-instrumentalists and multi-musical stylists. People don’t necessarily take one seriously in any particular area, when they claim to possess more than one skill. This is at times an unfair assumption but
there is truth in the fact that if you disperse your energies too broadly, there is a tendency that one doesn’t excel in any one area.⁹

In his 1989 *New York Times* article, journalist Jack Anderson addresses concerns related to versatility, such as “the legitimate concerns” of diversity negatively affecting an artists’ “artistic integrity” relegating him a “Jack of all Trades, master of none.” (Anderson 2) Over-diversification is one argument for specialization. In his book, *Jazz Cultures*, David Ake writes about the negative view held of non-classical music in classical schools in the past.

Until well into the 1970s, only a very few accredited music programs in this country offered students jazz in any form, the vast majority of schools remaining staunchly dedicated to providing instruction in the Western classical tradition. Some of the more prestigious conservatories not only omitted the genre but also actually forbade the playing of jazz in the school’s practice rooms, with transgressions possibly leading in extreme cases to students’ expulsion from the institution. (Ake 113)

Such condemnation of non-classical music is becoming less common in universities and conservatories. In fact, jazz has been widely accepted in the university music setting.

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⁹ A freelance violinist with the Canadian Opera Company, the National Ballet and Esprit Orchestra told me that one cannot play at an advanced level more than one kind of music. In fact, she finds it “absurd” that a musician might think that they could play more than one style of music. Another professional violinist had an unfavorable reaction to my playing in a Mariachi band. Although it has been over a year since this comment, it is clear in my memory. “Do you honestly have nothing better to do with your time?” was her question. This negative reaction is hardly unusual when a violinist plays what many may consider “lower class” or “lesser” music. My fieldwork and professional experience show clearly that a segment of the population lose esteem for violinists based on their diversification. In fact, such negative perceptions of certain music are held not only by professional musicians but by the public as well.

One other anecdote is from a Mariachi gig in which we performed for a Jewish event. Based on the fact that I was a non-Latina person who was, in the eyes of the guest “resorting to playing Mariachi music” she gave me her card to help me find work as Avon makeup representative in order to help me out of my position performing as a part of a Mariachi band. The above anecdotes portray a clear hierarchy of musical value, the idea that certain music is commonly seen as of lesser value than other styles.
Argument Reconsidered

Most musicians and Audiences Respect Versatility

David Ake describes the development of jazz becoming recognized in universities.

Answering calls for a more ‘relevant’ and diverse cultural landscape within the academy, college-level jazz-studies programs have appeared with increasing frequency since the 1970s. In 1972, only fifteen colleges or universities in America offered degrees in jazz studies. By September 1998, the Music Educators National Conference listed sixty-seven undergraduate and thirty graduate programs specifically devoted to jazz … In all, almost two thousand applied music faculty in North American colleges teach jazz lessons of some kind. (Ake 115)

In my discussions with professional violinists, there was only a small subset who judged versatile musicians unfavorably. All of these violinists were nearing retirement and had held orchestral jobs for decades. They were not particularly attuned to Toronto’s current musical climate. In contrast, violinists who have performed professionally for less than twenty years tend to agree that versatility is the way of the future. In their responses to my survey, they were uniform in that they wished they had learned more diversified skills in school.

In fact, versatility is now being embraced among some, usually younger, post secondary teachers including one of the most prominent violin faculty members in Canada, Mark Fewer. Fewer, who is a violin professor at McGill University, recently won a Juno for his Classical/Jazz fusion album, *Changing Seasons*, which is inspired by
John Coltrane as much as Vivaldi. He was the concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony for four years, is touring with the St. Lawrence String Quartet, and playing jazz gigs in Montreal clubs. As a professor at McGill, Fewer complements his private lessons focused on classical music with improvisation classes.

Violinists like Fewer who have been recognized for their excellence as classical performers are quickly breaking down any preconceived notions that a violinist performing more than one style of music is a weak musician. As far as the public’s reactions to classical musicians playing alternative styles, the reaction is often one of excitement at the novelty rather than one of judgment.\(^{10}\)

In a survey of over 244 recent graduates of music schools, Creech et. al, found that the musicians were overwhelmingly positive about the effects of versatility on a career.

A range of musical and organizational skills were identified as factors which ease the transition into professional music, creating the impression that an aspiring musician needs to be a ‘jack of all trades’ in order to succeed … those who were versatile musicians fared well, creating varied portfolio careers. Furthermore, musicians from all genres concurred with the notion that an ideal musician is musically broad-minded and able to engage with music from multi-genres. These qualitative findings concurred with quantitative findings reported … (Creech et al. 328-329)

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\(^{10}\) A parent of one of my students was thrilled to have heard an all female rock string quartet, the deVah Quartet, at Toronto’s 2012 “Buskerfest.” She could clearly see that the string players were well trained classically and she thought it was refreshing and fun to see young musicians playing alternative types of music. She said that the group thrilled the audience and that she hopes to bring her daughter to one of their concerts.
These examples provide a strong indication that both audiences and performers are, on the whole, becoming more open-minded with respect to versatility. Young musicians, tertiary schools of music, and audiences are becoming more interested in diversification of musical skills and offerings. Moreover, the current musical climate in many ways demands modifications to the older ways of earning a living as a violinist. With this in mind, fear of peer and public disapproval is not a reason to decrease one’s options and experiences in music.

Beyond the individual preferences for versatility discussed, most orchestras, from community to major symphonies, program pops concerts and bring in all kind of musical acts to reach a greater audience. The “classical” ensembles in Toronto run by professional classical musicians are diversifying their programming more each year. Via Salzburg, a small chamber orchestra in Toronto plays Tango concerts and The Art of Time performs with local singer/songwriters and artists from various disciplines. Canada’s classical chamber music festivals such as the Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival and Festival of the Sound in Parry Sound program jazz concerts, and even began to hire my mariachi band in 2011.11

Some programmers might say that too broad of an approach to programming can diminish audience size and financial support owing to problems with retaining and creating identity. However this concern does not seem to be held by most of the directors of artistic concerts, prominent classical artists, and festivals in Ontario today. On their website, the Gryphon Trio writes that “pushing the boundaries of chamber music, the

11 The Mariachi show in Ottawa last year was such a hit, that the band was invited back the following year. The Festival of the Sound has also contacted the band to discuss next year’s performance.
Trio has commissioned and premiered over seventy-five new works from established and emerging composers around the world, and has collaborated on special projects with clarinetist James Campbell, actor Colin Fox, choreographer David Earle, and a host of jazz luminaries at the Lula Lounge, Toronto’s leading venue for jazz and world music.” In collaborating with artists from other stylistic fields and artistic backgrounds, there is much to be gained in expanded audiences and broader financial support.

3. Versatility Can Lead to Inauthentic Performance

Another common argument against diversification is that performance in a variety of styles could lead to an obscuring of stylistic distinctions. This is exemplified in the debates over versatility in dance discussed in a 1989 New York Times article entitled “Critic's Notebook; Dance Versatility: Is It Virtue or Vice?” Although music and dance are certainly unique entities, certain comparisons can be drawn between the two art forms as they both rely on rhythmic feel and musical interpretation.

In his article, Jack Anderson, an advocate of versatility, writes about some of the concerns expressed by critics in Britain in regard to the emergent versatility of the programming of various dance companies. (Anderson 1989) One such London dance critic, Sophie Constanti, writing in The Dancing Times, a British publication, notes that the London Festival Ballet performs works by George Balanchine, Roland Petit, Maurice Bejart, Paul Taylor, Christopher Bruce and Alvin Ailey. Constanti complains:

As long as L.F.B (London Festival Ballet) continues with the eclectic mix or, rather, mess of works it seems to favor, there's no hope of any cohesion." (The dancers are burdened) "with a multiplicity of styles, none of which complement or feed each other. (www.newyorktimes.com)
Constanti criticizes the eclectic programming of the London Festival Ballet and denounces them for what she perceives as flawed performances and program choices. It is the responsibility of each performer or organization to properly program and prepare performances in respecting the audience and the art. I cannot speak to whether Constanti’s criticism is just, but it is to be expected that there will always be detractors regardless of artists’ best intentions and preparation.

Angela Kane, another critic quoted by Anderson concerning a London engagement by Dance Theater of Harlem, observes: “Harlem's blend of ballet-entrees has not only diversified the repertory, it has diluted the dancers' attention to points of style.” (qtd. In Anderson newyorktimes.com) It is a concern that without serious study in each subsequent genre, playing different types of music can cause a performer to play various styles without authenticity to that style. It is furthermore a concern that the performance of various styles could combine together, which could affect the integrity of the unique playing styles.

Each performer in their preparation for performances must address concerns such as Kane’s. The performance of different styles requires in depth study in order to retain the authenticity of a style. Despite their many differences, dance and music both require long-term stylistic and skill development among performers. Further, my evidence suggests similar thinking with reference to the perils of over versatility and the loss of authenticity.

**Argument Reconsidered**

**Musicians Have the Capacity to Play More Than One Genre of Music Authentically**
Professor of ethnomusicology, Benjamin Brinner states that musicians have the ability to attain “multiple competences” in his book *Knowing Music, Making Music*:

Musicians frequently attain considerable mastery of two or more musical competences … First, there are multiple competences that exist within one overall competence. For example, orchestral players who play several instruments or perform in significantly different roles and contexts as soloists or in chamber ensembles have done so by acquiring an additional body of specialized knowledge to add to a substantial core competence … A second type of multiple competence bridges different communities or traditions within a larger tradition. Motivations for the development of such competences include potential appeal to a broader audience … (Brinner 82-83).

There are numerous examples that indicate that people have the capacity to integrate many skills and retain a great deal of information. Some people who immerse themselves in another language will become fluent in that language. When a person learns a new language, they will at first make many errors. However, as the new language becomes second nature, they will make fewer and fewer mistakes and progress in their communicative ability in that language. This requires deep absorption and integration of the material, but many people learn second, third and fourth languages without affecting their native language. Just as learning French won’t necessarily affect one’s English in a negative way, learning jazz doesn’t have to spoil one’s classical playing. Yet it is vital to note that in order to move in and out of different genres, musicians must develop a sensitivity and heightened awareness of the nuances of each. For example, if a violinist is taught to play in tune by Western concert music standards, they then have that ability in
case they want to audition for an orchestra. But, with careful study of intonation as understood in different forms of music, they can also learn how to better control their intonation and apply appropriate variations according to specific musical situations. Rather, stylistic diversification is a matter of knowing more, not less.

I should add, further, that the belief in the importance of specialization as central to mastery is a relatively new notion—a point not lost on numerous working performers. Indeed, many violinists I interviewed discussed the fact that historically, musicians were multi-instrumentalists and multi-stylists. I place versatility and specialization in historical context in the section of this chapter entitled “The Versatile Musician in History.”

4. Specialization Leads to Greater Financial Success Than Versatility

A commonly voiced argument for Western Art Music-focused violin-specific training is that, historically and currently, the vast majority of violinists who hold the highest paid orchestral jobs generally play classical music only. In interviewing some of the more renowned violinists in Toronto, (including those who are under artist management as soloists or teach at a post-secondary institution or perform in one of the best paid orchestras in the city,) there is a clear tendency for their musical studies to have been extremely dedicated to classical music study for many years. This was also the pattern in the results of my questionnaire to violinists and violists performing with two of the higher paid orchestral jobs available in November of 2011, the National Ballet of Canada and the Esprit Orchestra. Of the 31 respondents to my questionnaire, only nine played another style of music other than classical music. 71% of the respondents studied and performed classical music only. It is evident that the training of professional classical violinists in Toronto was focused on classical violin technique alone.
Argument Reconsidered

Specialization is Not a Realistic Way for Most Violinists to Earn a Living

While there is certainly evidence to support specialized violin training for certain career paths, such preparation also renders the violinist dependent on one sector of the music business for their income. This is a problem as it is very difficult to obtain steady work as a performer in any one genre, (particularly in orchestral music as I will discuss later in the chapter.)

On the other hand, violinists who are capable of performing various styles of music, playing different instruments, or working in other music-related capacities avail themselves of the opportunity to work in other sectors of the music industry, and thus have a broader base of potential employment from which to draw. Dependence on one area of the business alone can be dangerous as there are simply too many qualified performers for the number of jobs available in any one area. When Jon Frederickson and James F. Rooney’s published In the Pits: A Sociological Study of the Free-Lance Classical Musician, the work scene for classical musicians was in a decline that had begun in the 1980s. Musicians who do not win orchestral jobs yet still want to pursue careers in performance attempt to work as free-lancers, an endeavor that they characterize as fiercely competitive. They state, “In Washington, D.C., over 1500 classical musicians compete for the work that is controlled by about 100 free-lancers. And even most of those 100 musicians cannot survive on their performing income alone” (Frederickson and Rooney 5).

Based on my research in Toronto and my own professional experience, I have noted a similar decline in available work. Such decline remains a concern among Toronto
violinists in 2012. Moreover, the current state of local work exemplifies the liabilities of specialization. 12

The financial reality for most orchestral musicians (other than Toronto Symphony members or those who hold both the opera and ballet jobs) is quite poor as well. A member of the National Ballet of Canada will make under $30,000 a year, a rate which does not require them to collect the HST tax or harmonized sale tax.

The evidence of low salaries among classical musicians is abundantly clear every time a musician is asked whether they “take HST (the goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax).” In order to be required to collect the 13% HST, a musician’s performing salary must be at least $30,000. One manager of a wedding music booking agency told me that the musicians who collect HST are few and far between. A local cellist performing in the touring Broadway production of West Side Story with me in May 2012 asked me about my dissertation topic. I told him I was writing about what work is available for violinists in Toronto today and how to prepare violin students for the work available. He retorted, “Well, that should be a short paper!” to which I responded, “but you’re working!” He and his stand partner both said “yeah, this month!”

12 Several years ago, I was hired for my first opera with the Canadian Opera Company. I was proud to have been called, and felt justified in my worthiness as the concertmaster had heard me countless times in orchestral repertoire class and knew my playing very well. I didn’t yet know about the fickleness of the Toronto classical freelance scene. However, in looking back, I was warned by several members and freelancers at the time and over the coming years. One violinist, a member of the COC said to me, “you’re a smart girl. Do something else. Don’t pursue this career unless you can’t do anything else.” I thought about what she said and then I ignored it, preferring to revel in the fact that I was such a young sub with lots of potential and promise.

When the Toronto Symphony hired me for their Florida tour, I was ecstatic. Again, I felt deserving of the position based on having played several hours of music for the concertmaster and I felt that I had truly ‘arrived’ on the Toronto classical music scene. A fellow freelancer said “enjoy it while it lasts. They used to call me and then, without warning, they stopped.”

In the 2011-2012 season, neither orchestra offered me any work. I finally understand what these musicians had been trying to tell me. No matter how well you play, the freelance orchestral scene is a political minefield. The dynamics of the hiring process remain unknown to me.
This sentiment of concern is common among the professional musicians I meet and work with, whether they hold a job in an orchestra or not. They all recognize the precariousness of their individual careers and of the ensembles that employ them. Furthermore, despite the challenges of free-lancing discussed by Frederickson and Rooney, this career approach is very much the norm for large numbers of local performers, including violinists. In some instances, this is a matter of choice, and not always based on job availability. However, in many cases, specialization (whether it be in Classical music, playing the violin only, or playing in one type of ensemble only) is not a viable option for violinists in Toronto.

As suggested in other writing about professional music making such as Packman (2001), Cottrell (2004), and Towse (1993), difficult employment conditions are not unique to violinists in Toronto. For example, in *Singers in the Market-Place*, Ruth Towse describes the economics of the classical singing profession in Britain. She concludes that there is an over-supply of singers and a market failure to provide many singers with jobs. In comparison to other careers, singers earn lower wages and have higher unemployment rates. She points out that in Germany the situation for singers’ employment is completely different than in Britain. Indeed, Towse argues that many singers are employed by the state or city and they have job security and a salary through the age of sixty-five (Towse 242).

Unfortunately, the situation in Toronto is like that of Britain. There is a great deal of uncertainty in the professional lives of musicians. A violinist subbing with the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra in the March, 2012 season told me that less than half
the members of her 2004 graduating class at the University of Toronto are working as professional musicians today.

In his article, “Diversification vs. Specialization”, Patrick Dierson writes that one of the best ways to stay economically vital in the entertainment industry is to diversify rather than specialize in one area (Dierson 24). He points out that even in robust times, all entertainment sectors have slower and busier periods and by working in different areas, people have the potential to work throughout the year. Although he writes about TV production, the same can be said for the music business. Even orchestral musicians in Toronto who are members of the National Ballet of Canada or the Canadian Opera Company, which are considered by many to be two of the top three orchestras in Toronto, have five to eight months without work from these ensembles. During the other months of the year, the musicians work in whatever capacities they can find employment. Those who have more skills or a larger network of musicians with whom they work are able to fill the empty months more profitably.

In his 2010 dissertation, *Working in the Creative Economy: The Spatial Dynamics of Employment Risk for Musicians in Toronto*, written in the University of Toronto geography department, Brian Jennings Hracs explored Toronto’s professional music scene and what it takes to making a living as a musician in Toronto. In interviewing professional musicians and drawing conclusions based on work in other fields, Hracs deduces the necessity of a flexible skill set among musicians. Hracs explains that the patterns of work have been changing since “Fordism” during which time specialization was the best method to employment. Fordism refers to the automobile maker, Henry Ford 1863-1947) whose manufacturing philosophy “aimed to achieve
higher productivity by standardizing the output, using conveyor assembly lines, and breaking the work into small deskilled tasks.” (www.businessdictionary.com)

Whereas Hracs writes that Fordism “facilitated stable long term employment, unionization was a response to employment ‘risk.’ Changing patterns of work during Post-Fordism include an increase in non-standard employment, ‘flexible employment’ ‘precarious employment’ and ‘risk’ (Hracs 3).

The consensus among geographers quoted in Hracs’ dissertation is that work is becoming more fragmented “contractually, temporally and spatially.” This is the case in most fields today including music. Hracs focuses a great deal on the shift to a flexible work force, (which occurred in the late 1990s in the North American music industry), and was in part a result of the recording industry’s “MP3 crisis” (Hracs 15).

As a result of the decrease in services and support to musicians by record companies, it is now estimated that 95% of all musicians in Canada are not affiliated with record companies and are independent. (Canadian Independent Recording Artist Association or ‘CIRAA’) (Hracs 45) As nearly all of Toronto’s musicians are considered independent, Hracs focused his research and findings on this group. He found there is little information available on the ways in which Toronto’s independent musicians make a living. He says “there is currently a dearth of information on how independent musicians cope with their precarious employment conditions and marketplace, which is marked by increasing competition” (Hracs 17). He also writes that recorded music has decreased in value, the recording work historically being some of the most lucrative work. “[There has been a] steady rise in the absolute number of musicians in Toronto and the decline of average incomes between 2001 and 2006” (Hracs 6).
The contemporary marketplace features an oversupply of musicians and ubiquitous music related products, which carry limited and uncertain value. Against this backdrop, independent musicians are required to find ways to differentiate and add value to their products. (Hracs 7)

Some of the ways musicians can differentiate themselves is by incorporating new skills and by developing their own niche or product. Entrepreneurial skills (discussed in chapter two) are essential for independent musicians who wish to market their skills successfully.

In concluding his paper and research, Hracs clearly states the necessity for musicians to be versatile in the approach to their careers. He states:

- My analysis of the employment of independent musicians suggests that they now operate as entrepreneurial agents. Self-motivating, these workers are responsible for performing a variety of creative and non-creative tasks on their own …
- independent musicians enjoy unprecedented freedom to manage and direct their musical careers. (Hracs 136)

I find this rather celebratory quote to be both problematic and incorrect. I would argue that independent musicians do not find themselves with unprecedented freedom but with unprecedented burden to create and maintain careers. In fact, I would even argue that this burden is becoming more widespread among workers in North America, beyond the realm of musicians alone. Journalist Sara Horowitz discusses the many challenges of the freelance economy in her article entitled “The Freelance Surge Is the Industrial Revolution of Our Time.” In this article published in the Atlantic Monthly (dated September 1, 2011), Horowitz writes about the drastic changes happening in the lives of workers.
Today, careers consist of piecing together various types of work, juggling multiple clients, learning to be marketing and accounting experts, and creating offices in bedrooms/coffee shops/co-working spaces. Independent workers abound. We call them freelancers, contractors, sole proprietors, consultants, temps, and the self-employed…this transition is nothing less than a revolution. We haven't seen a shift in the workforce this significant in almost 100 years when we transitioned from an agricultural to an industrial economy…

As of 2005, one-third of our workforce participated in this "freelance economy." Data show that number has only increased over the past six years. Entrepreneurial activity in 2009 was at its highest level in 14 years, online freelance job postings skyrocketed in 2010, and companies are increasingly outsourcing work.

While the economy has unwillingly pushed some people into independent work, many have chosen it because of greater flexibility that lets them skip the dreary office environment and focus on more personally fulfilling projects …

Jobs no longer provide the protections and security that workers used to expect. The basics such as health insurance, protection from unpaid wages, a retirement plan, and unemployment insurance are all out of reach for one-third of working Americans. Independent workers are forced to seek them elsewhere, and if they can't find or afford them, then they go without. Our current support system is based on a traditional employment model, where one worker must be tethered to one employer to receive those benefits. In Canada, there are some social programs in place which make this less of a concern, though not eliminating it entirely.
Given that fewer and fewer of us are working this way, it's time to build a new support system that allows for the flexible and mobile way that people are working …

This new, changing workforce needs to build economic security in profoundly new ways. For the new workforce, the “New Deal” is irrelevant. When it was passed in the 1930s, the “New Deal” provided workers with important protections and benefits but those securities were built for a traditional employer-employee relationship. The “New Deal” has not evolved to include independent workers: no unemployment during lean times; no protections from age, race, and gender discrimination; no enforcement from the Department of Labor when employers don't pay; and the list goes on. (www.atlanticmonthly.com)

Hracs argues that freelancing offers workers a more interesting and varied career, but as Horowitz describes, it also creates an unstable, stress-ridden situation for many workers. In the United States, workers’ rights are in danger, with workers’ unions losing power as they have in Wisconsin, and other states. Workers today need to develop as many skills and avenues for employment as possible. With these skills, workers would be in less precarious positions.

Further Arguments for Versatility

1. Benefits of Learning Music By Ear

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13 The New Deal as defined by the online business dictionary: “A series of economic policies introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after the Great Depression left the U.S. economy in a dismal state. The programs were implemented to provide relief to millions of Americans that were stuck in a state of poverty as a result of the Great Depression. The various programs were rolled out over five years (1933-1938) and covered a range of items including labor, bank, and relief reforms.”
http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/New-Deal.html#ixzz28xkHwu6q
Earlier in this chapter I discussed the benefits of non-classical study in terms of ear training. The study of music that is learned by ear or is improvised can heighten not only a musician’s awareness of harmony but also of sound, timbre and tone. For example, one challenge for string players learning to play jazz by ear is in attempting to emulate a sound that is based on the produced sound of the most famous musicians in the history of jazz, many of whom were horn players. In imitating these players’ styles, violinists learn to better control tone production.

The question of tone is certainly not restricted to jazz. Indeed, in classical performance it is equally important that violinists pay attention to different approaches to sound in order to focus their attention on issues such as the attacks, accents, decays and subtle articulations of the notes. Yet, as I have suggested, such control can be developed by listening to performers of other styles and of other instruments. For example, a jazz trumpet player might use vibrato as an embellishment rather than a constant, continuous element in their sound. Yet borrowing from this type of control, violinists might strive to have control over their vibrato, the ability to vary its speed and width and the control to make a conscious decision to use or not use it at all. Many classical violinists are accustomed to using vibrato at all times and have trouble stopping the movement even when a composer or conductor has asked for senza (without) vibrato. In jazz as in the period performance practice of baroque music, vibrato is truly an embellishment and it is beneficial for violinists to learn to create a warm tone without relying on vibrato. Improvising violinists who study classical music learn the languages of great composers and these new sounds offer them musical ideas for their own compositions and
improvisations. 14 I discuss the concept of learning by ear at length in the “Recommendations” section of this dissertation.

2. The Versatile Musician in History: From Bach to Mark O’ Connor

Rather than mourning the decline of orchestral work and the necessary development of further skill sets beyond instrumental proficiency, some musicians reflect that this change is a return to the multifaceted, eclectic musical careers that were standard before the economic explosion of orchestral and studio work in the second half of the twentieth century.

Barry Shiffman, besides being an administrator at the Royal Conservatory of Music, is also a freelance violinist in Toronto. He discusses some of the recurrent themes brought up by musicians who know about the music business pre-1950.

The life of a performing musician today is one that is made up of many components and I would also suggest that there’s a lot of talk today about how that’s a unique thing in today’s world. It’s not a unique thing in today’s world. It’s more reminiscent of what musicians’ lives were like at the beginning of the century into the twenties, thirties, forties before orchestras became such massive entities as they were in North America.

14 While working on my doctorate in violin at the University of Toronto, I audited Andrew Downing’s improvisation class for third year jazz students. In the class, he plays samples of various pieces of music including classical, jazz and world music, to highlight specific elements of the music. He intersperses famous jazz tunes with works of the classical repertoire and world music. One week, he discusses tone and timbre and another week, he discusses texture and orchestration in order that students think creatively about their instruments. After listening to an eclectic mix of music, the students are instructed to prepare and perform a standard jazz tune in a non-standard jazz combo. As I audited this course, I was included in this exercise and was paired as the violinist with two saxophone players. In discussing the possibilities inherent with the instrument, I showed the saxophone players how I could accompany them using chordal patterns I had studied in Bach’s Solo Sonatas and Partitas.
In the beginning part of the century, you look back and there was no such thing as a violinist. A violinist was a composer, was a violist, was a teacher, was often a something else, was a salesman, was a business man, Bach sold keyboards. So, the lives of musicians were made up of more component parts. There was an extraordinary amount of specialization (which I don’t think served music making very well) that happened in the last 75 years. Specialization got so crazy that violinists specialized as second violinists in orchestras and didn’t even rotate into the first violin section for no particular reason than that’s how it happened. Today, we are seeing the collapse of the North American orchestra model as the dominant provider of work and we’re seeing much more creative, entrepreneurial, cross-genre music making genres as what fills the musicians’ calendar.

Although Shiffman himself is a classical violinist and associate dean of the Glenn Gould School, a conservatory devoted to the specialized training of classical musicians, he is evidently a proponent of versatility training. He recognizes that specialized training may not be the most beneficial to students as the music business transitions from a period of relatively stable orchestral work opportunities to a freelance economy.

Interestingly, Jaques Israelievitch, who aside from teaching at York University, was the concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony for 20 years until 2008, discusses some of the very same ideas as Shiffman. Although he, like Shiffman, has enjoyed a successful classical career, he echoes Shiffman’s beliefs about the state of employment in music. He agrees that the employment possibilities in music are shifting away from secure orchestral work:
The funny thing is that it’s almost come full circle because my teacher, Joseph Gingold said that when he was growing up and playing in orchestras, most of these people in these orchestras that had short seasons, nobody had a 52 week season. They would have other jobs and you had to be extremely lucky to be able to support yourself totally playing music and then there was a period of flourishing for symphony orchestras. Many of them got contracts that were 52 week years. I think that started to happen when I started out in the late 60’s, early 70’s and into the 80’s and then the bottom fell out and a lot of orchestras had to revise their plan and a lot of major orchestras even have shorter seasons. When I was with the St. Louis Symphony, from 78 to 88, it was a 52 week season. Now it’s 42. When I joined the Toronto Symphony, it was 50 weeks, now it’s 42. If you play in an orchestra that is only 30 weeks, that leaves 22 weeks and it’s not like there’s so much freelance available that you can survive so people have gotten into all kinds of professions. So, we’re right back where we started in the 60’s or 70’s. It’s not great for orchestras, and students have to be prepared to do other things. It’s difficult to support yourself as a classical musician unless you can do a variety of things.

(emphasis added.)

In looking at the music business over the course of history, there is reason to believe that we are currently in a time of transition. The current trend is that opportunities for employment are more similar to opportunities available in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than in the middle and late twentieth century. It appears the period of the 1960s through the 1980s was an anomaly in the history of music in terms of the regular and well paid employment for musicians with very narrow, specialized skill sets. The multifaceted
careers of famous musicians such as Telemann, Beethoven, Paganini, and Liszt are discussed in William Weber’s edited collection, *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914: Managers, Charlatans, and Idealists*. In this book of essays, various authors write about the different ways that these musicians pieced together careers in music through part-time employment in a variety of musical settings.

In *Music for Hire, A study of Professional Musicians in Washington (1877-1900)* author Katherine K. Preston’s research is indicative of the nature of diversified work available to professional musicians over a 23 year period (1877-1900) in one American city. In studying the journals and relics of musician, John Posperi, she makes conclusions about the careers of Washington musicians in the late nineteenth century and the turn of the century. In studying his employment history, Preston notes that although he held a regular position in a theater orchestra, much of his income came from freelance work. In 1882, for example, 62% of his income was from a total of 121 part-time jobs unrelated to his regular position. The majority of these jobs were one-time affairs rather than extended engagements. Throughout his career, the ratio of his income from his regular job to his freelance varied to the point that in 1889, only eleven percent of his wages were from freelance work. (Preston 151-152)

Preston writes that live music was an important element to events at the time. The part-time work opportunities discussed are employment by institutions, the business community, private individuals, employment for concerts in theatres, special events, fairs, inaugural balls, commencements, the phonograph industry, picnic grounds, hotels, summer gardens, parks, clubs and dances. “The diversity of jobs at which John Prosperi worked during the 1880s and 1890s … illustrates the important role that music - and
musicians - played in the leisure-time activities of urban Americans who lived in the late nineteenth century” (Preston 153).

Many of the aforementioned opportunities for part-time work still exist today, though it may currently be less common practice to hire musicians than it was in the nineteenth century due to increased options for recreation (television, internet etc…). The decrease in part-time work may also be due to the decline of music education available to the public sector (cuts in public school budgets to music programs etc.)¹⁵

Shiffman and Israelievitch put the current state of professional music making into historical perspective, back to the time of Bach. In taking a historical view of music careers, it becomes evident that this period of diminishing orchestral work is in fact a transition back to a period when nearly all musicians including the most famous performers and composers were freelancers, playing different instruments and working in various sectors of the music and non-music business. Shiffman’s comments about Bach inspired me to do some research into the life and work of this multifaceted composer.

Johann Sebastian Bach held many different types of employment in music. He was a composer, organist, keyboard player, conductor, cantor, instrumental teacher, vocal teacher, organ appraiser, organ builder, harpsichord repairman and a concertmaster. During his life, Bach was more respected as an organist and organ technician than as a composer. (Schonberg 2006) Bach held posts all over Germany. He was a court musician in the chapel of Duke Johann Ernst in Weimar, organist at St Boniface's and in

¹⁵ Of the part-time work available to nineteenth-century musicians, I personally have performed for concerts in theatres (classical small, large ensemble and non-classical) special events (weddings, funerals, religious events with classical, Mariachi, Salsa, Klezmer and jazz groups), commencements (string quartet), the recording industry (string sessions for singers, bands, movies, commercials etc.) hotels (small ensembles of all types), clubs (generally classical or jazz for cocktail hour or dinner) and dances (waltzes with violin and piano duo and all previously mentioned bands.)
Mühlhausen, organist and concertmaster at the ducal court, Kapellmeister (director of music) for Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen, Cantor of the Thomasschule at Thomaskirche in Leipzig, and Director of Music in the principal churches in the town.

Aside from his duties as cantor at the Thomasschule, Bach was responsible for the music of the four principal Leipzig churches. His duties included composing and performing music for services on Sundays and church feasts, Vespers and other occasions. He was performing at these churches about six times a week (Williams 41). He was also responsible for all aspects of the town’s musical life as well as teaching the pupils of the Thomasschule (the boarding-school attached to the Thomaskirche including vocal and instrumental instruction).

Bach conducted the orchestras, leading from the violin or harpsichord. “He could probably play all the instruments in the orchestra” (Schonberg 27). In order to make extra money he played for private events such as weddings and funerals, and taught around 80 private students. He held a position as music director to the university in Leipzig and director of Collegium Musicum. Beyond playing, teaching and composing, Bach also worked as an organ appraiser, organ builder and harpsichord repairman (Schonberg 2006).

Bach was curious to hear the new compositions from around Europe. He studied French and Italian music, particularly by Vivaldi. He copied and transcribed Vivaldi’s works, appropriating his concerto form. Bach biographer Schonberg states, “He had a sheer lust to know and to assimilate all the music then available, ancient and contemporary.” (Schonberg 31)
Bach resigned from positions and demanded better treatment and pay throughout his career. As he coveted financial security, it can be inferred that he made use of his many skills in order to make the best wage. As he could fill the chair of concertmaster, composer, keyboard player, conductor and teacher, he was surely able to move from one job to the next with greater ease.

The versatile musician of today is exemplified by Multi-instrumentalist and multi-stylist, Mark O’Connor (1961-present), who is a violinist, guitarist and composer. O’Connor began his study of the violin at age twelve with a Texas fiddler and is a four-time grand champion at the National Old-time Fiddlers Contest in Weiser, Idaho. He worked as a guitarist and electric violinist before moving to Nashville and becoming Country Music Association's Musician of the Year from 1990 through 1995. During this period, he pursued the study of classical music composition and performed his own composition, “Fiddle Concerto,” with the Santa Fe Symphony. Since then, he has composed many classical fusion works including a double violin concerto that he has toured with the famous classical violin soloist, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg.

In his youth, while he was studying Texas fiddle, he was also absorbing Menuhin, Gershwin and Beethoven from his mother’s records; traveling to Nashville to appear on the Grand Ole Opry; and touring with the great jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli. By the time O'Connor was 18, his playing owed as much to jazz, blues, country and rock as to Texas fiddling. When he began his immersion in classical music 10 years later, he broadened his vocabulary still further (refining his vibrato, for instance). Today, his playing is beyond any specific categorization. He is "an artist who has crossed over so many boundaries," as John Henken
recently wrote in The Los Angeles Times, ‘that his style is purely personal’ (Gura 2010).

Mark O’Connor’s 2009 violin method is an alternative to the Suzuki method. Rather than teaching violinists to play Bach, his method teaches what he calls the “American classical approach,” teaching songs from throughout America’s history. It is based on O’Connor’s “belief that the modern classical violin student who develops a working knowledge of folk fiddling, jazz music and world music styles can enjoy a lifetime of music-making, and be more successful in the new music environment.” (www.markoconnor.com)

Although improvisation has become less common among classical musicians, some famous classical musicians have worked alongside jazz musicians and have performed jazz and improvised in their concerts. Notable musicians who have done this include André Previn, the past conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. Previn became an excellent jazz pianist and recorded two jazz albums with violinist Itzhak Perelman. Frederich Gulda, regarded as one of the best interpreters of Mozart and Beethoven also is a great jazz pianist.

There are also several musicians known as jazz performers who perform classical music with distinction. For example, pianist Keith Jarrett has recorded Bach and Chick Corea has recorded Mozart’s concerto for two pianos. Interestingly, trumpet player Wynton Marsalis has better sales records with his recordings of Mozart and Haydn than jazz.

In addition to the many players who have thrived as both jazz and classical players, jazz became a popular language from which classical composers all over the
world draw inspiration. Classical music too has influenced jazz composition and performance. There have been many classical composers who can be considered “creators” of the blending of classical music and jazz. In the U.S.S.R, Dimitri Shostakovich composed a suite for jazz orchestra in 1934. Igor Stravinsky composed many works influenced by jazz: *Ragtime* for eleven instruments (1937); *L’Histoire de Soldat*, Prélude pour ensemble de jazz (1937); and the Ebony Concerto written for Woody Herman in 1946. In Germany, Paul Hindemith wrote *Finale 1921*, a jazzy fox trot. Kurt Weill wrote *Mahogany* in 1927 and *Threepenny Opera* in 1928. Many songs from this opera have become jazz standards. In France, Claude Debussy wrote the *Golliwog’s Cake Walk* in 1908 and was highly influential on the harmonic language of jazz along with Maurice Ravel. In Ravel’s second violin sonata dating from 1923, the second movement is entitled *Blues*. Erik Satie wrote *Ragtime de Paquebot* in 1917 after discovering and performing the music of Scott Joplin. Béla Bartók composed his trio *Contrasts* for Benny Goodman in 1940. In America, George Gershwin wrote *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris* (1924), *Porgy and Bess* (1935), a jazz opera, and *Three Preludes for Piano*.16

Indeed, numerous canonic composers are notable for their versatility. Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) studied more than one discipline and many types of music. A Russian law student, he decided at the age of 23 to pursue music professionally. Five years later, he became famous for his ballet *The Firebird* composed for Serge Diaghilev. His early music was considered Russian nationalistic music and includes ballets and opera and orchestral work. He then began studying jazz and composing for smaller

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16 The Preludes for piano were later arranged for violin and piano by Heifetz and dozens of songs that have become jazz standards.
ensembles rather than large orchestras. In 1918, having left Russia and moved to Switzerland, Stravinsky wrote *L’Histoire du Soldat*, a septet for bassoon, clarinet, trumpet, percussion, trombone, double bass and violin in which he experimented with jazz language. The piece includes a miniature tango, march, waltz and chorale.

A Russian expatriate living in Switzerland, Stravinsky’s study of American jazz music is just one example of geographical cross-cultural pollination despite an ocean’s divide and the inaccessibility of different styles of music to musicians long before the Internet and digital recording age.

3. Versatility and Multiculturalism

Viola professor and president of the Curtis Institute of Music, Roberto Díaz encourages students and professionals to take full advantage of all the possible work opportunities in the environment. He says that it is to a musician’s advantage to have a career that is multidimensional. He addresses symphony orchestra musicians and encourages them to use their positions in orchestras as springboards to do many other different projects. He cites Yo Yo Ma and his multi-faceted career in this connection, particularly with his work on the Silk Road Project (www.robertodiazviola.com).

In studying a new style of music, the violinist has much to gain in terms of understanding the challenges presented to musicians in other disciplines. This is particularly true when a musician learns the music of another culture. The government and public sectors in the United States have been prioritizing diversity in programming and inclusiveness for over four decades.

Beginning with the passage of the 1965 U.S Immigration Act, an unprecedented wave of immigrants occurred in the late 1960s and crested in the early 1980s …
Cultural equity has become a resounding theme in American society and its schools and teachers across the various subject areas have been activated to modify their teaching in ways that can facilitate the … achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic and gender groups. (Banks 1993)

Toronto is one of the most multicultural cities in the world. According to the 2006 census, the population of Toronto is 2.48 million people (5.5 million in the GTA - Greater Toronto Area.) Over 140 languages and dialects are spoken and over 30 per cent of Toronto residents speak a language other than English or French at home. In 2006, eight percent of Canada’s population lived in the City of Toronto, 30 per cent of all recent immigrants and 20 per cent of all immigrants.

Half of Toronto's population (1,237,720) was born outside of Canada, up from 48 per cent in 1996. In 2006, half of all immigrants to the City of Toronto have lived in Canada for less than 15 years. In 2006 more than half of all immigrants living in the City were age 25 and over; 7 per cent were pre-school age 5 and under; 16 per cent were school age 6 to 14; and 22 per cent were youth 15 to 24 … 47 percent of Toronto's population (1,162,635 people) reported themselves as being part of a visible minority, up from 42.8 per cent (1,051,125) in 2001. The City of Toronto's visible minority population increased by 10.6 percent since 2001, and by 31.8 per cent since 1996.” (City of Toronto website 2012)

The multiculturalism of the city of Toronto strongly suggests that it would benefit a musician to be able to perform in various styles of performance.
In addition to the benefits of versatility and the various concerns related to career satisfaction and financial viability among overly specialized musicians, too much specialization can have other implications related to music making as a commercial venture. Too much specialization in terms of genre and repertoire can limit audience interest due to less varied programming. There are also ideological and political implications related to what some might perceive as an over emphasis on Western European concert music. As Toronto is home to numerous and varied immigrant communities, it is often referred to as one of the most multicultural cities in the world, and thus it becomes more important that artists offer multicultural and varied performances in order to reach a larger audience.

In an interview with National Public Radio about his work on *the Silk Road Project*, Yo Yo Ma stated: "Every time I open a newspaper, I am reminded that we live in a world where we can no longer afford not to know our neighbors … The Silk Road Project is a musical way to get to know your neighbors" (Ma 2002). Music is just one of the many ways that people can cross cultural divides. Just as learning a new language opens up a whole new segment of the population with whom one can communicate, so too music can create opportunities for friendship and understanding.

In an interview with Patricia Shehan Campbell, Steven Loza, author of *Bario Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles* says “It is essential that we understand people in a more complete, cultural way through music, the arts … In my view, experiencing people’s musical expressions may be one of the most direct avenues to intercultural understanding” (Campbell 59). Beyond cultural understanding is an even
more essential benefit of studying more than one single style of music, and that is the development of critical thinking.

**Case Studies of Versatility**

The following case studies are typical of local violinists who have capitalized in different ways on musical versatility toward building successful careers.

**Drew Jurecka**

Versatility has proven to be both lucrative and satisfying for Drew Jurecka, the violin instructor at Humber College. Jurecka holds a bachelor’s degree in classical violin from the Cleveland Institute of Music. His varied career and income streams come from his classical background in the form of orchestral violin work and his particular knowledge of pre-1960s jazz and popular music. That extensive background and knowledge has made him a non-classical violinist who is in high demand.

Jurecka’s knowledge of a plethora of styles and his ability to “simulate real versatility” has become useful in recording session work. Jurecka explains why he describes his performance of certain style as a simulation:

I may not have an in depth knowledge of every jazz style, every fiddle style across North America and Europe, Gypsy, Indian and Arabic music, but the time that I have spent delving into a wide range of styles of violin playing gives me references to draw upon when I approximate different styles. If I only had knowledge of Western classical music, the chance that I’d be able to play something that sounds Turkish would be low. When I’m called upon by a film composer to play something that sounds like Arabic music, I draw upon my experiences playing Klezmer, Gypsy and World music and the John McLaughlin
records that I’ve listened to to help me play something that can at least pass as
Arabic to the uninformed listener.

He has adapted to play Arabic music for the fusion band *Nomadica* and the television
show *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, played Gypsy music with the guitarist Jesse Cook and
for a cartoon series called *Weird Years*, and country and western music with Russell De
Carle and the Bebop Cowboys. He has played and improvised his own parts for various
albums and soundtracks including music used for the movie *Brokeback Mountain* and
countless advertisements and television series soundtracks. Recently, he has been hired to
produce Jill Barber’s new album and to arrange and orchestrate for a number of different
albums. Jurecka explains:

Knowing enough about a number of different styles gives you the key to unlock
new ones. Having spent time figuring out what makes certain styles sound unique
has given me the ability to know what to listen for and what choices to make.

Eighty percent of my income is based on my ability to play jazz. Humber College
hired me based on this specialty. Most modern music written by songwriters and
composers doesn’t fall into one specific style anyway, but draws from a lot of
different musical styles. The ability to figure out reference points and to know
how to play idiomatically makes you more useful in a variety of different
situations. In a pop session, for example, with a string section that is comprised
mainly of classical musicians the information that I’ve learned about how pop
songs are constructed can come in handy. Because I’ve produced and played lots
of pop music I’m more likely to understand what the session leader is talking
about when they talk about things like articulation, start/end points than
somebody who’s only used to dealing with classical musicians in a formal classical setting.

Over the nine years since his professional career began in Toronto, Jurecka’s network has grown and his opportunities have developed and evolved over and over again. Although the projects in which he is involved change over the years, he is able to continue an active and stimulating career as a performer as a result of his adaptability in many styles and skills.

**Anne Lindsay**

Toronto based violinist Anne Lindsay has also proven that a path of diversification can be a valid path towards financial gain and musical renown. She has established herself as one of the most versatile instrumentalists in Canada, winning numerous awards in folk music as well as jazz, and working extensively as a studio musician and side person for acts including *Blue Rodeo*.

In an interview, Lindsay said,

> Versatility and diversity are really key ... I grew up in a household where we were taught otherwise, we were taught that what we want to do is specialize ... it was an academic and medical household. One of the concerns that my father had in my training was that I was being too diverse and I was never going to succeed at one thing because of this.

Due to her reputation as a creative musician, Lindsay is recognized as being prepared for challenges in learning new styles and instruments. As such, she was offered the spot in the *Lord of the Rings* musical for which she had to learn various Nordic instruments. In her youth, Lindsay played piano, violin and was a serious voice student as well. She took
lessons at the University of Toronto and the Royal Conservatory. She also studied jazz at York University, and participated in the OTP, orchestral training program, a government funded program, grooming people to be placed in orchestras across Canada. In grade 12, she began playing folk rock gigs, playing “free improvisation” at the Music Gallery and studying Indian music. Lindsay performs classical music as well, most often in recording sessions or chamber music. In creating her own musical projects, Lindsay uses her various skill sets to critical acclaim.

**Lenny Solomon**

Violinist Lenny Solomon is another Toronto based violinist who has had a financially and personally satisfying career due to his versatility. His teacher was Albert Pratz, a past Toronto Symphony concertmaster. He completed only one year at McGill University, and decided that obtaining a degree was not important to him as a performer. He didn’t intend to become a teacher, and thus decided to leave school.

A lot of my study was self-taught, discovering the electric violin, effects on the violin, extending the range of the violin into jazz and more popular styles of music. I’ve had some achievements and awards and some successes … but I think being able to reinvent myself into a more current mode is important to maintain the ability to compete in the music world.

Over the last 40 years, Lenny has created several successful projects. In the 1970’s, he had a group called *Miles* in which is played both electric and acoustic violin with a rhythm section. He then created *Quintessence*, a string quartet and guitar ensemble that played classical crossover music for which he and other members transcribed and arranged classical music. Following this project, Lenny formed *Trio Norte*, an ensemble
with accordion, violin and guitar with a “European sound.” This led to his current and highly acclaimed project, Bowfire, a collection of violinists and fiddlers with a back up ensemble; the show is now in its tenth year. Not only has he managed all these various ensembles but he has also maintained a profile as a freelance musician in Toronto for various types of projects: playing and booking recording sessions for film, TV, “jingles,” commercials, and freelancing with classical orchestras.

**Versatility and Satisfaction**

The three non-classical violinists with whom I spoke (Jurecka, Lindsay and Solomon) have created successful, diversified careers. All three have achieved recognition and respect with audiences and the musical community. They are in demand for some of the best available work in Toronto such as studio work and enjoy more varied and creative careers than most. Versatility has been a financially viable, pragmatic approach. Unlike most of their colleagues, who freelance in only one area of the music business, they have achieved some level of financial security. Finally, they present a contrast to a situation frequently discussed among my research collaborators, specialists, generalists, free-lancers, and musicians with fixed employment: those who specialize in one genre of music, (including classical music), are often unsatisfied musically.

In a survey of 63 professional musicians in the year 2000 in a symphony orchestra in the eastern United States, lack of “artistic integrity”, “task difficulty”, and “social tension” were found to be the three most dominant stressors. (Parasuraman and Purohit 2000) These stresses resulted in three significant negative reactions: distress reflecting heavy workload; boredom resulting from too little control of their artistic product; and a loss of artistic integrity. The lack of artistic freedom and integrity of orchestral musicians
is one of the predominant reasons that many who are lucky enough to win jobs are
dissatisfied. Often orchestral musicians feel that they are unable to perform at the same
level that they attained before joining an orchestra. This is a result of the fact that section
violinists cannot hear themselves well amidst the section of other players. They also
spend less time practicing and playing solo than they did before joining the orchestra.
Frederickson and Rooney quote a section musician who expressed the reasons for their
dissatisfaction. “I wanted to quit last year … I had done so much playing. I couldn’t hear
myself, felt my playing was going downhill. It wasn’t spontaneous anymore. In the
orchestra, I have to be a cog in a machine” (Frederickson and Rooney 27). Frederickson
and Rooney express the challenges facing music school graduates:

Classical musicians upon leaving music school discover a world far different from
anything they ever imagined. They compete with thousands of musicians for a
few hundred orchestral openings. The few who don’t give up decide to go into a
field that most of them had never heard of: free-lancing. Instead of belonging to
an orchestra, they play with many orchestras. Instead of having high status, they
have a variable and confusing status. Instead of playing absolute music, they play
all kinds of music. (Frederickson and Rooney 30)

Dissatisfaction is common among both freelancing orchestral musicians and members of
symphony orchestras. This discontent was studied by Jutta Allmendinger, J.
Richard Hackman and Erin V. Lehman in their 1996 article entitled “Life and Work in
Symphony Orchestras.” In this study, they used a sample of seventy-eight orchestras in
the United States, Germany and Britain in 1990-1991. They found the musicians who win
these coveted orchestra jobs express comparatively low levels of job satisfaction. Of
thirteen occupations studied, orchestra musicians ranked seventh, just below federal
prison guards (Allmendinger et al. 1996).

In interviews and work situations, there are certain conversations that are common
among freelance string players in Toronto. Freelance musicians speculate as to why
members of the prestigious Toronto Symphony are so unhappy.

They hypothesize that it is because their job has become boring and routine. They
follow the same scheduling routine for rehearsals and see the same the same people every
day, they have no chances of promotion and have little opportunity for solo playing.
Some freelancers conclude that they would rather live a less regimented life despite the
lack of financial security. Speaking about the difficulty of working as a violinist in the
Greater Toronto Area, one violinist disclosed that she applied to law school despite being
one of the rare violinists with a leadership position in an orchestra. She believed that her
high and perhaps unreasonable goals were a result of her training and ideals learned
before and during her post-secondary music training. Violinists, studying concerti and
quartets in college often do not realize what type of playing they will be doing in the
professional realm.

This situation points out both the challenges and uncertainties facing a violinist
hoping to support him/herself playing classical music, but it also illustrates another issue
raised by Frederickson and Rooney: that of expectations and job satisfaction.

Drawing on my research into the four Toronto music schools, existing scholarly
writings, interviews with faculty, students and alumni and my own experience in
attending three schools of music, (the Cleveland Institute of Music, The Glenn Gould
School and the University of Toronto) over the last twelve years, the dissatisfaction
among freelance and orchestral string players may in part be a result of false hopes instilled in music schools. In a classical music school, students are trained to be creative artists and are taught to make their own musical decisions. Faulkner (1985), Nettl (1995), Kingsbury (1988) They are given a minimum of one hour a week of individual attention with a master teacher with the objective of becoming an expressive solo artist. They perform solo recitals, and spend most of their time in preparation for these recitals. The students are generally directed to study repertoire from the musical canon of famous concerti, sonatas, and virtuosic pieces.

Upon graduation very few students have the opportunity to play this repertoire and most who will endeavor to continue performing as a soloist or chamber musician find that they lack the necessary business skills to be able to make their performance career financially viable. As musicians in the conservatory are all expected to specialize in the same set of skills (namely solo and chamber classical performance) graduates often find that there are far more performers eager to perform than opportunities and audiences eager to pay for such classical music performances.


My sense is that a conservatory is probably more appropriately compared with a seminary than with a professional school, in that the concentrated focus of conservatory training seems more an inculcation of devotion than a preparation for a career. The sense of commitment among conservatory students seems more personal, moral and emotional than professional or economic (Kingsbury 19-21).
In classical music schools, students spend years honing their craft in a competitive environment and being indoctrinated with a narrow view of what is considered success in the classical musical field. Yet, as I have suggested, relatively few people in their careers actualize according to the following idealized hierarchy; a) a solo career as the pinnacle of success; b) a chamber music career c) the least satisfying career, the orchestral job.

Frederickson and Rooney express this dissatisfaction by stating: “Most free-lance musicians have undergone years of training to become creative and expressive artists … But instead of ending up on stage, these musicians end up in the pit. They become invisible in the pit, unlisted in the programs, and anonymous.”) (Frederickson and Rooney 2, emphasis added)

Although Frederickson and Rooney focus on freelancers, most of the available work for classical freelancers is orchestral work. Therefore, members of orchestras and classical freelancers suffer from many of the same complaints.

Parasuraman and Purohit explain that students’ unrealistic goals often contribute to their feelings of failure as graduates. Music students are taught to value “absolute music,” which is music that does not tell a story and is purely performed for the sake of the music. They have aspirations of being soloists and they study this solo repertoire throughout their musical training.

It is commonplace that violinists in symphony orchestras are frustrated because they dreamed of solo careers. Many young freelance musicians are similar in that they dreamed of concert careers with orchestras or chamber groups. They were trained within an aesthetic tradition of autonomous music which is the sole focus of the audience’s attention. Players are frustrated primarily because they were trained to interpret music,
not to make it fit in with other arts. (Parasuraman and Purohit 16). Frederickson and Rooney explain: “Numerous factors lower the prestige of free-lance work: a devalued skill, lack of membership in permanent groups, interchangeability, impersonal response, invisibility and anonymity.” (Frederickson 11)

Unlike these musicians, multi-stylist freelance violinist Jurecka says that the fact that he can work in various genres increases his enjoyment in his career. Aside from playing multiple styles, versatility in the form of taking other related musical work such as arranging, recording, production, writing, teaching and playing instruments other than the violin all contribute to his career satisfaction. Jurecka notes that, “My ideal week is one in which I do as many different things as possible.”

There seems to be a general consensus among violinists who have diversified their skills that the creative opportunities that have arisen from their varied work has offered them great satisfaction.

In her 1999 book, The Contemporary Violinist, Julie Lyonn Liebermann offers tips on how to play a number of different musical styles on the violin including: country, bluegrass, Irish, Scandinavian, French fiddle, Cape Breton, Blues, swing, bebop, Latin, rock, klezmer, tango, gypsy and flamenco and improvisation. In the introduction to her book, she writes

I celebrate the new kind of player who is developing creative contributions and fearless explorations to keep the art playfully alive. The future is at our doorstep and my vision is of the contemporary ‘violining.’ One who knows fiddle styles, can improvise in any style, greets odd meter such as 5/8 or 11/8 with expertise;

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17 Although some of the projects in which he is involved such as ‘Nomadica’, an Arabic fusion band and ‘The Red Eyed Virios’ a (Brazilian) Forró band pay very little, he tries to make himself available for their shows as he finds playing a great variety of types of genres stimulating and enjoyable.
can play rhythm violin; wails on the blues … and is equally at home with the classics. It’s a new identity that embraces diversity. As our world gets smaller, perhaps we can be among the leaders exemplifying human possibilities in the next century. (Lieberman 7)

While Jurecka’s career trajectory is not ideal or even obtainable to many aspiring professional violinists, it does suggest that music students would benefit from being educated about the large variety of musical options available to them. It is important that violin students understand that there are many ways to make a living in the arts, and that each performer must find his or her own musical niche. Moreover, despite several legitimate concerns in relation to diversification, strategically implemented training that embraces a less specialized approach can give musicians the tools they need to approach various projects and musical styles with respect and depth of musical knowledge.

Conclusion

As explained in the discussion and analysis in this chapter, versatility is more likely to result in a successful career than specialization. Diversification can help a performer appeal to broader audiences, for example through broader and even more creative programming. Similarly, versatility offers the artist more creative outlets and it can enhance both one’s general musicianship and one’s competence in his/her primary style(s). For example, one skill set learned from studying one musical style can benefit another style and even improve a musician’s performance in the style of music they first studied. Specialization can also prove to be a liability for many players since those who specialize in one type of music alone depend on one sector of the music business.

Versatile musicians have a better chance of avoiding such market related limitations.
Beyond the practical, versatility holds the promise of creating mutual understanding and respect between different groups of people and wider social networks. Finally, as noted by many of Toronto’s working violinists, versatility is more stimulating and satisfying than specialization.
Chapter Two

THE CORE COMPETENCES FOR VERSATILE MUSICIANS

Since most graduates of music schools will not secure steady employment in an orchestra, it is crucial that they acquire skills beyond those necessary for that particular career path. These skills may be understood, following the work of ethnomusicologist Benjamin Brinner (1995), as the “core competences” for professional musicians. Brinner defines core competence in general terms as follows: “It is the area of overlap or intersection between different specializations, which may serve as a common basis for communication and specialization” (Brinner 77). Using Professor Brinner’s premise, the core competences for a violinist preparing for a career in music can be divided into two categories: musical and generalized (non-musical) core competences. Based on my research, interviews, and the information gathered from my questionnaire, the curriculum currently in place in higher music education is focused on teaching strictly musical competences with little attention paid to many of the essential (non-musical) competences that I will discuss. In this chapter, I first discuss the core musical competences required of professional musicians. I then will demonstrate the importance of (non-musical) competences to professional musicians. These seemingly non-musical competences are key to the musical versatility for which I am advocating.

Core Musical Competences for All Musicians

Many of the core musical competences in this chapter are comprehensively addressed in classical music schools. One would expect that graduates of a classical music school are proficient in playing in all keys. Their interpretive and analytical skills should have been refined through weekly lessons and master classes. The post-secondary
school orchestra traditionally offers students the opportunity to hone their note reading and sight-reading skills. If a student has not learned to practice effectively before, they are likely to thoroughly develop this skill from their college or university private teacher. However, there are other musical competences that receive less attention in the music school setting. Although some teachers encourage their students to learn music quickly, many students are permitted to study repertoire for entire semesters or even years. Such extended periods of study time are a luxury, which is not experienced in the professional world.

Students tend to learn vocabulary specific to the classical styles studied. If students were taught stylistic sensitivity and genre-specific terminology, they would be better prepared to approach the music and musicians of non-classical musical genres. Jurecka believes that a greater understanding of form, rhythm, harmony and genre-specific terminology can aid musicians in crossing over to understand and possibly perform in other styles of music. Typically, students in classical schools are not introduced to sound equipment. If graduates had some background in this area, they would be prepared for the many musical performances where amplification is required. Violinists in classical schools do not develop arranging and transcribing skills through their required courses, yet these skills can make a musician more desirable in an ensemble and can offer the musician both creative and income opportunities. I advocate for the training of flexible musicianship, which is referred to by Brinner as “well-rounded competence.”

Interestingly, respondents generally did not mention the following musical competences as having been integral to their work as professional orchestral musicians.
This is most likely a result of the fact that these skills are studied intensively from a young age and as a result are generally presumed skills of a performing violinist.

1. Playing in All Keys

   Classical violin students are expected to perform three-octave scales in all keys at every classical school I have encountered. Even at Humber College, a jazz based, non-classical school, violin students are required to perform their three octave scales and arpeggios in all keys. An ability to play in all keys is a core competence for playing all genres of music. This is certainly useful for a violinist playing jazz tunes as many of the songs are in flat keys. It is common to perform jazz in flat keys because those keys are comfortable for brass players, although they are awkward for string players. The ability to play in all keys and transpose a piece into another key is useful in many situations such as in the accompaniment of vocalists. At times, it is necessary to transpose a song into an appropriate key for a vocalist’s range. Aaron L. Berkowitz expresses the necessity of acquiring transposition skills in his book *The Improvising Mind: Cognition and Creativity in the Musical Moment.*

   Transposition is an equally important tool in learning to improvise in a number of musical traditions. In jazz, ‘beyond developing the control to use vocabulary patterns instantly … artists typically pursue the goal of mastering them in all keys … Jazz and classical music both use a tonal harmonic framework, in which the concepts of keys and transposition are fundamental. (Berkowitz 42)

In jazz and Mariachi, it is necessary to memorize the key of each song and to be flexible in order to adjust the key depending on the needs of the soloist.
2. Musical Interpretation: Analytical Skills

In order to give a general overview of musical analysis, the following simplified perspective is offered. The goal of all technical study is to develop the skills by which to become a more effective interpretive artist. Accuracy of rhythm, notes, and dynamics are crucial but must not be the final culmination of a musician’s performance. It is the job of the musician to affect the audience emotionally and to express the intent of the composer.

The process of becoming a musical interpreter is extensive, as it requires an understanding of the specific harmonic language of the work, knowledge of form and analysis, and a sensitivity for the poetry of music: phrasing, lines, rhythmic timing etc. It also requires the musician to have developed not only a historical perspective in the specific composer’s music, the work in question or the style at hand but also a deep respect for the human emotional experience. Without a certain emotional depth, the musical performance will not be convincing and meaningful. The famous violin pedagogue Ivan Galamian writes:

Interpretation, as the word itself implies, contains a strong subjective element, namely, the performer’s personal conception of what the music should sound like. Since this subjective element is vitally influenced by taste, style, and fashion… interpretation has to be classified as a changeable value. (Galamian 4)

The pursuit of becoming an interpreter of music is a long journey in which a student needs the guidance of a teacher. A student also needs to interact with the best musicians possible, listen to great performances (live and recorded), and study music theory and history to be able to understand the historical context and theoretical components of the music.
3. Good Rhythm

In my private lessons, my violin professor Paul Kantor used to say, “What are the three most important elements of music?” The correct answer was “rhythm, rhythm, and rhythm.” This is because without rhythm, the music is not organized into logical, units of time.

The establishment of clear rhythmic patterns takes different forms in different styles of music. It varies as to whether the music is generally ahead or behind the beat, which are the strong or weak beats, and who is in charge of setting the rhythmic beat. In an orchestra, the conductor chooses the tempo and regulates the beat with his baton. Musicians watch the baton in order to know where the beats fall and when to play. In chamber music, it is often the musician with the fastest moving notes who determines and regulates the pulse.

In jazz, it is the job of the rhythm section. However musicians must not fully rely upon the drummer or bass player for their pulse, as the rhythmic integrity lies collectively on every individual musician in the group. David Ake, author of *Jazz Cultures*, believes that rhythm is not prioritized enough among jazz or classical educators.

… It may seem unthinkable, given the frequency with which swing appears as a ‘necessary ingredient’ in defining jazz, that rhythmic conception remains largely ignored in improvisation courses and manuals. But this situation persists, and one explanation for it may lie in the difficulty of notating the many different kinds of rhythmic ‘feels’ employed by jazz musicians … Yet this de-emphasis of rhythm goes beyond mere notational difficulties. The European musical tradition has long
downplayed rhythmic elements, both in its compositions, and the theoretical and
historical studies of those works. (Ake 117)

I have experienced playing in orchestras where one section of the orchestra has a
different, even erroneous concept of the rhythm, in particular sections of a piece. This
nearly derails the entire orchestra. Therefore, a strong inner pulse is essential regardless
of instrument or musical style performed.

Aside from practicing with a metronome, the study of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, a
method in which students learn kinesthetically, using all parts of the body to feel rhythm,
can be of great help in improving rhythmic understanding. In this course of study,
students clap, walk, swing their arms, and skip to simple and complex rhythmic patterns.
At the Cleveland Institute of Music, students are required to take four semesters of
Eurhythmics after which they can opt to continue with an additional four semesters of the
course. Unfortunately, this course is not offered at any of Toronto’s post-secondary
schools, though Drew Jurecka teaches elements of this method in his violin group class at
Humber College.

4. Reading Skills

Classical music is uniquely tied to note reading and strong reading skills become
essential as a student progresses in classical music. Beyond classical music, note-reading
skills are invaluable for communication between musicians of differing genres.

Much of the recording session work relies on the musicians having a strong
understanding of pop/jazz/swing feel. Often, there are “pushes” and swing rhythms that
cannot be notated accurately, and much is left to the musicians to base their style and
note placements on experience with non-classical charts.
5. Sight-Reading Skills

Sight-reading skills are related to, but different from, note-reading skills. Sight-reading is a skill requiring one to process written information in performance upon first sight of the score. Note reading may require greater accuracy as it is expected that musicians had time to study the score.

The fact that professional musicians have relatively little time to learn music is directly related to the necessity that students leave school with excellent sight-reading skills. The ability to sight-read music is an invaluable skill for a professional musician, particularly in classical music but in non-classical settings as well. There are many professional settings in which sight-reading skills are expected of musicians such as recording sessions and most corporate and private events. Musicians are rarely sent music ahead of time for a recording session because it is expected that the musicians are paid for the time they are in the session and not for preparation. Also, due to short production deadlines, the composers or arrangers are often still finalizing compositions, even during the actual recording session. As the music is being taped, presumably for record sale or TV/ radio, it is necessary that one can read with accuracy and musicality.

In corporate events such as wedding receptions and cocktail hours, one musician will bring music and the others will sight-read. I have had the experience of assuming that I had been hired to play background music and then finding that the event was a concert with a listening audience. I have learned to inquire in advance of an engagement whether it is concert or background music. Sometimes however, background music becomes music of the foreground when audiences gather to listen quietly. This is why it
is important to take all “gigs” seriously and to have strong sight-reading skills. At times, a musical event can transform from concert to background music or the opposite.

In his study entitled “Component Skills Involved in Sight Reading Music”, Ji In Lee finds that musicians need to hone sight-reading skills before entering college. Based on the findings of this study, sight-reading achievement can be explained by a combination of expertise, psycho-motor speed and the significance of the number of accumulated hours of sight reading practice before turning fifteen, all of which are key factors in sight reading excellence (Lee 144). According to this study, sight-reading is a skill, which is best learned early. Students should further hone their sight reading skills in post-secondary school as one can understands that improvement of this skill is highly time sensitive and it is best to have refined one’s ability before graduation.

6. Learning Quickly

Professional musicians rarely have as much time to prepare repertoire as they would like. The ability to learn music quickly allows a musician to spend fewer hours practicing repertoire. However the ability to learn music quickly is generally not fostered from a young age as pre-college age music students in Canada commonly prepare only one Royal Conservatory of Music exam per year. This type of study continues into post-secondary classical music schools as students spend months or a year preparing their solo recital. Unfortunately, most professionals do not have months to prepare for one concert and therefore students are ill prepared for the world of professional music making.18

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18 The first time I played with the Canadian Opera Company, they hired me after the first three rehearsals had already happened. I was supposed to learn the first violin part to a three-hour Shostakovich opera the night before the orchestra’s fourth – and my first – rehearsal. The quantity of music was daunting and it was important that I knew how to prepare quickly, look through the music and find the challenges.
Pre-college students require a great deal of time to learn repertoire, as each piece demands new techniques and challenges. One could argue that unlike pre-college study, college is a time to begin to accelerate the speed of study. It could even be considered unnecessary “coddling” to allow a college student a year to study one concerto alone. Perhaps by demanding more repertoire learned, memorized and performed on a regular basis, we can alleviate some of the stress that many graduates feel when faced for the first time, as professionals, with quickly approaching deadlines and many notes to learn in a short period.

In her book, *Playing (Less) Hurt*, Janet Horvath writes about the fact that orchestral musicians have very little time to prepare music.

We're preparing music in less time than ever before. The days of six rehearsals for two concerts are long past. A typical week today goes something like this: An orchestra plays that week’s music for the first time on a Monday morning. By Wednesday we are performing it, often after only four rehearsals. (Horvath 39)

Orchestral musicians are not the only professional performers whose time constraints prevent them from having sufficient time to learn music. The more quickly one can absorb and learn material, the better one will perform and the more time that will be available for other facets of their lives.

7. **Practice Technique**

One of the most difficult skills to learn is how to practice. Even those who have had weekly violin lessons for fifteen years often show up to university with weak or ineffective practice skills. There is a false sense of accomplishment in running through music quickly. In actuality, this can be detrimental to one’s playing when it happens too
early in the learning process of a piece. Teaching the art of slow, methodical practice where a student learns to diagnose their technical problems, and figure out remedies is perhaps the greatest goal of the teacher. Once a student has truly learned to practice on their own, they can learn anything.

In his book, *Principals of Violin Playing and Teaching*, Galamian divides practice objectives into “building time, interpretive time and performing time” (Galamian 100-101). “Building Time” is time spent gaining technique through scales, etudes and exercises. “Interpretive Time” is time spent in the creation of an individual interpretation in terms of phrasing and color once a piece of music has been technically mastered. The priority during this practice time is striving for musical expression. “Performing Time” is the type of practice in which the violinist puts together all of the pieces which were analyzed and studied technically and musically. Without ample “performing time” in practice, the musician is likely to suffer memory slips and mistakes in transitions between the studied sections of a work.

In order to make progress, it is essential that the musician is completely alert. It can be more harmful to a musician’s playing to practice without thinking than to not practice at all. This is because bad habits can come from poor focus in the practice room, and a bad habit is worse than no habit at all. Two respondents out of the thirty-one wrote, “practice routine/ how to practice” as one of the three most important skills learned in school. I hypothesize that the reason the number is so low is that the majority of musicians who graduate and become professional violinists learned to practice well before college as they auditioned successfully for tertiary music programs.
In his book, *The Art of Practicing the Violin*, Robert Gerle has ten basic rules for good practicing. I find that these ten rules break down Galamian’s “Building” time well, noting some of the most common mistakes such as “give equal attention to the bow arm: don’t practice only the left hand.” When reading his rules, one imagines that “building time” would be the most time consuming. His rules are:

1. Always know exactly what you need to practice - and why. 2. Organize practice time to suit circumstances. 3. Repetition is the mother of knowledge only if the perfected passage is repeated more often than the faulty one. 4. Practice fast as well as slowly. 5. Give equal attention to the bow arm; don’t practice only the left hand. 6. Separate the problems and solve them one by one. 7. Practice difficult passages in context. 8. Practice performing; don’t only practice practicing. 9. Practice also without the instrument. 10. Do not neglect the ‘easy’ sections; they tend to take revenge on you! (Gerle 13-25)

Gerle’s rules offer violin students a clear and organized method for practicing efficiently.

8. Genre Literacy

**Learning Vocabulary and Style Sensitivity**

In order to be able to cross genres with some level of ease, one must be aware of their various idiosyncrasies. As a useful starting point, listening to and otherwise exploring a wide variety of music can give the musician a basic foundation to begin approaching playing other styles. This can help develop respect for different styles of music and aid in discovering what is significant about a genre’s specific character. Beginning with critical listening and moving to more focused study, these genre specific elements will become clearer.
At Humber College, students are placed in ensembles of various types in which they have the opportunity to develop stylistically appropriate performance practices. In classical music conservatories and university programs, students learn how to distinguish and perform stylistic differences which exist even within the genre of classical music, such as differences between music of the baroque, classical, romantic, modern and contemporary periods in their performance.

If we take the example of vibrato, the difference between a romantic style vibrato and a classical vibrato is quite dramatic. If a violinist uses a wide, thick vibrato in baroque or classical music, it is considered vulgar and insensitive. This learned sensitivity and knowledge of style should go beyond the realm of stylistic differences just in classical music.

A musician who wants to cross genres with some aptitude should have a developed idea of genre specific vocabulary. This vocabulary can be categorized into form, rhythm, harmony and genre specific terminology.

a. Form

In the context of typical conservatory and most university classical music programs, students take several semesters of music history and theory where they learn about various common forms found in the classical repertoire such as the Sonata Form, Rondo Form and Theme and Variations. This background makes it possible for them to speak about and identify various sections of works such as the exposition, development, recapitulation and coda. Much as so-called classical music relies on specific song forms, so too do other genres of music. Thus, versatile musicians should have some knowledge of how, for example, a rock song or a jazz song is typically organized. This will make it
possible for them to talk to other musicians and to follow along without getting lost while improvising or playing along by ear.

b. **Rhythm:**

Good rhythm is essential to orchestral auditions and ensemble playing. As previously quoted, violin professor Paul Kantor believes rhythm is basic to good musical performance. In classical music, rhythm is, in fact, a very complex matter even if standard notation might suggest that rhythmic accuracy is mathematical and straightforward. For example, to be a competent classical musician, in addition to being able to read rhythms accurately, it is also necessary to have a working knowledge of un-notated rhythmic conventions such as the uneven beat of Strauss Waltzes or the double dotting rhythmic convention in French baroque music. In a Bach Minuet, the first beat is the most important (in 3/4).

As might be expected, the nuances of rhythm very greatly in other music practices, especially non-notated ones. In jazz, the emphasis is on the second and fourth beats (in 4/4) as opposed to the first and third as is typically assumed in Western classical music. In Baltic music, musicians play and improvise regularly in odd meters. In these and many other practices it is assumed that the musicians understand how to play with the appropriate rhythmic emphasis. Thus it is up to the individual musician to develop such knowledge and ability.

c. **Harmony**

In classical music, understanding of harmony informs the musician in the creation of musical lines and phrases. For example the use of dissonance in Bach is important and must be accentuated. When a composer writes something “surprising” or outside of
normal traditions harmonically, the knowledgeable musician knows to bring out the distinctive variations.

When playing non-classical music, knowing the normal voicing in the style one is playing is beneficial. If a violinst has a “sound” in mind, with the knowledge of chordal voicing, they can tell a guitarist what they would like to hear and have more input in the final product. In any given style, it is useful to know which chords are common, what are the “color” notes, when to use them, and what are normal chord progressions. In jazz, there are many “color” notes or extensions, 9ths, 11ths and 13ths. In rock, “Sus chords” and dominant seventh chords are common. Knowledge of appropriate scales to use in distinct styles and over specific chords is helpful in improvising.

d. Genre Specific Terminology

Knowledge of genre specific terminology makes it possible to communicate with musicians from other genres in specific terms. There are terms used to describe the form, harmony, and rhythm of the music that help create cohesion quickly in an ensemble, and increase the productivity and efficiency of rehearsals. A musician should have knowledge of the important artists and songs in any given style in which he/she is performing. In a recording session, a violinst may be asked to play music ranging from disco style to Beatles style strings and beyond. If the performer has heard such music, they will understand the reference, be able to approximate it more successfully. In discussions with multi-stylist Drew Jurecka, knowledge of a broad range of music and the ability to reference them based on potentially cryptic reference is one of the most useful and under-rated competences. Notably, developing such skill can begin with simply broadening one’s listening habits.
9. Sound Equipment/ Plugging In

One area that was never mentioned in any of my schooling was the concept of playing the violin with amplification. While one could argue that a classical school is teaching an acoustic style of music, it is nevertheless relatively common that violinists use microphones in classical as well as non-classical settings. For example, when a string quartet performs in an outdoor concert, they will often need to be amplified. Even if the sound engineers have microphones for the quartet, the musicians need to know how to perform with microphones, and what kind of microphones work best with the instruments. The quartet members may be given “pick-ups” and are expected to know how to attach them to the instruments. Jurecka states:

One of the reasons I get hired back by film and television composers is that I can not only play the music, but know enough about how to mike my instruments that I can always make sure they end up with a recorded product that they can use. I always have a Neumann KM184 (microphone) in my case, because I know how to get a good sound on my violin through that mike no matter what. You can be the best violinist in history, but if the guy who’s recording you doesn’t know what he’s doing you can still end up sounding terrible, and the worst part is that nobody ever blames the sound engineer! They say ‘man, that guy sounded terrible on the recording I heard’ and they look for another violinist.

Aside from performances as part of a band, many classical string players will find themselves performing as part of a string section (large or small) with bands. The more information the string player has, the more likely that they are to be properly amplified and that their instruments will not be damaged. There is certain language that comes up in
these settings that is useful to know such as “phantom power,” “D.I.” (direct input), and “XLR cable”. Knowledge of this language makes the musicians appear more professional which means they will be able to interact with the sound engineers more professionally and efficiently.

Strings Magazine regularly publishes articles on amplification. Common issues addressed include the technique of playing an electric violin, and what are the best tools for amplification. In Gregory Walker’s article from February 2011 entitled “Plugging In? How to Play an Electric Violin,” he discusses the various differences in the playing of an electric and acoustic violin. (allthingsstrings.com)

10. Arranging/ Transcription/Composition Skills

It can be lucrative for musicians to develop skills in arranging and transcription. Often, an ensemble is hired to play for a special occasion and the client requests a piece to be arranged for performance at the event. Other times, one is hired to write string parts for a new album or a concert for an artist. The ability to arrange music can be useful in a violinist’s own chamber ensemble. Rather than paying an arranger, the violinist who is able to transcribe, write, and arrange music may receive recognition as the arranger or composer. When their music is performed on the radio or in future live performances, they may be entitled to further payments. Goldberg explains that although formal education is not a requirement to work as an arranger or composer, “a great deal of knowledge, expertise, and musical ability are required to be successful in these careers” (Goldberg 157).

Discomfort with music notation software and lack of experience in arranging and composition deter musicians who could benefit from these skills. Modern day musicians
should consider developing skills with music notation software such as “Finale” or “Sibelius” as a required part of their education. Also mandatory should be a basic understanding of how to write for various ensembles and instruments.

In my interview with Steve Sitasrski, former concertmaster of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, he spoke about the usefulness of arranging skills in a string quartet. He noted that a quartet without an arranger could be easily replaced by another group. However, a quartet will be distinguished in part when someone arranges the music and creates something new for an event or for the concert repertoire.

**General Core Competences – “Non-Musical” Skills Musicians Need to Acquire**

In addition to a high degree of technical training, professional musicians need to acquire other skills that have little to do with musical abilities. Music schools may be performing a disservice to students if they only teach musical skills when “non-musical” competences are required for a musician to have a lengthy and satisfying career. These “non-musical” competences include professional and entrepreneurial skills, “non-musical” performance skills, interpersonal skills, and knowledge about injury prevention. Andrea Creech and her co-authors (2008) write about the non-musical core competences required of graduating music students. In accounts from musicians representing all four of the stylistic specialties included in the study: (classical, Scottish traditional, jazz and rock), the importance of personality factors was noted. “A primary theme for all but the popular musicians was the importance of skills, including musical skills, rehearsal skills and promotional/organizational skills” (Creech 323).
Professional skills such as timeliness, preparedness, and accounting skills are necessary to learn since music is not only a means of artistic expression but also a means of earning a livelihood. Interpersonal skills are essential because much of the available freelance work is based on personal relationships and professional connections. With regards to entrepreneurial skills, I will discuss the necessity of self-promotion/marketing and the use of contracts. I examine various methods for obtaining work; interacting with clients, parents and students; and setting short and long term goals. I also describe the importance of learning about the position and status of the side-person versus that of the leader, and why it is necessary to know one’s position in each musical project. Lastly, I examine the issues of physical difficulty and strain inherent in playing the violin and offer options for preparing and protecting one’s body from injury.

1. Professional Skills: Reliability and Preparedness

a. Timeliness

Reliability is an important aspect of professionalism, particularly in the freelance world. If one arrives late even once to a rehearsal or concert, they risk not being hired again. This is of particular concern in a city like Toronto where traffic and the TTC can be very unpredictable. One must allow for any eventuality when planning transit time. (A rule that I have heard is that it is necessary to leave one hour to get anywhere. Of course, there are commutes that are longer than one hour, but one should allow at least one hour even when the distance is not considerable.) One should arrive thirty to sixty minutes before a rehearsal or commences. If a musician is not on stage or in the pit when the concert or rehearsal commences, it is considered a serious and often inexcusable offense.
If one realizes that one is going to be late, one should contact the person in charge and let them know an estimated arrival time.

Bobby Borg, author of *The Musician’s Handbook*, writes, “The best musicians in the world aren’t worth a damn if they’re unreliable.” He also writes “The key to success is simply doing what you say you’re going to do” (Borg 26). In my own experience as a contractor, I have found dependability to be as important as musical skill when hiring a musician. I no longer hire certain talented musicians because they are unreliable with regards to time. Ramon Ricker writes in his book, *Lessons from a Street-wise Professor* that contractors like someone who is available, loyal, and who is always on time (Ricker 220).

b. Preparedness

Preparedness in the musical setting means taking responsibility for learning one’s individual part before the rehearsal or concert. This responsibility may entail practicing a written part, transcribing music or simply listening to the music in advance. Musicians need to make sure they have adequate details in terms of performance attire, know whether they need to bring a music stand and stand light or music. It is imperative that one has the address and directions to the “gig” ahead of time and that they double check that they have their instrument (and extra strings/ reeds), before leaving the house.

In his book, *Music Business Tactics: Lessons from Dad*, University of Toronto jazz professor Chase Sanborn writes: “As a musician, the motto ‘be prepared’ will serve you well. Hone, polish and expand your skills continually. Stay at the top of your game. Be ready for anything …” (Sanborn 28). Twenty-eight of the thirty respondents to my questionnaire would like to have learned professional skills such as preparedness while in
school. Working musicians will find this advice obvious, but a first time freelancer will likely not be given a second chance without this information.

c. Accounting Skills: Taxes, Keeping Records and a Budget

Accounting skills are not taught in music school and freelance musicians’ finances are complicated, because their income is derived from so many different employers. To make matters worse, some musicians are disorganized with their finances. The Canada Revenue Agency considers a freelance musician to be self-employed. As there is no employer to provide bookkeeping services, musicians must keep accurate records of their work and earnings themselves. I know quite a few musicians who do not file taxes, who do not save their receipts, and who unfortunately borrow money from credit cards on a regular basis. One of these musicians now owes the government hundreds of thousands of dollars in back-taxes. This musician’s situation is very sad, as he must file for bankruptcy. If he had learned accounting skills in school, he might not be in this financial situation today. In his book, *Lessons from a Street-Wise Professor: What you Won’t Learn at Most Music Schools*, Ramon Ricker explains the necessity of careful budgeting and accounting:

It goes without saying that you must keep good records … keep all receipts …

Know what you can deduct, then use a professional to prepare your return. If you find one who is familiar with musicians, you will be repaid many times over by having professional expertise and advice (Ricker 98).

One challenge facing musicians is the management of one’s finances. Budgeting skills are crucial in a field where there is so little stability. Monthly income can vary widely, sometimes leaving musicians unable to pay for rent and food during slow periods.
Musicians should establish a savings account to cover these periods of lower earning. Many musicians hire an accountant experienced with working musicians to help them with their taxes; acquire insurance against auditing; and create a financial plan. Although I did not specifically address whether accounting skills should be taught in school in my questionnaire, five of the thirty-one respondents wrote in in the blank section that learning about financial planning and taxes were among the most important skills they had to learn outside of school.

2. Interpersonal Skills

Violinists need to learn a number of important interpersonal skills if they are to have a successful career. This is of particular concern for those young musicians who lead a solitary existence while in pursuit of their craft. In his article entitled “Individual Differences in Musical Behavior,” Dr. Anthony E. Kemp of the University of Reading examines personalities and social behaviors of musicians.

It is well documented that musicians tend to be introverted … musicians are indeed self-contained people but this is a self-imposed result of their work patterns which have been instilled from the earliest stages of music tuition. The extended period of isolation spent in practice rooms require the young musicians to be comfortable in that kind of environment. In other words, music, and especially the playing of complex and demanding instruments, attracts self-sufficient and more socially aloof types; and frequent engagement in extended periods of solitary practice is likely to accentuate these traits. (Hargreaves and North 27)
In order to reach a high level of performance proficiency on an instrument, a student will spend many hours each day alone in a practice room for most of their pre-professional life. As a result of this type of focused training in youth, some musicians do not learn about social expectations and appropriate behavior. This is problematic as one of the critical factors for a freelancer’s success is the ability to relate well to others on a personal level. Consciously or unconsciously, a contractor will often choose a musician based on personality rather than talent. In Creech’s article, “From Music Student to Professional: the Process of Transition” she indicates that interpersonal skills were considered as important as musical skill based on her research and the interviews she and her colleagues conducted. In the study, the researchers identified several personality characteristics as being factors in students’ successful transition into the music business. These characteristics included high musical standards, perseverance, self-confidence, communication skills, and their enjoyment of music (Creech 324).

A musician should make an effort to have a positive attitude. If a musician is well liked, other musicians will hire or recommend him/her more often. Ostentatious displays, such as playing their solo piece backstage (unless they are performing that night), could be viewed as conceit by other violinists. Students need to learn to accept criticism from colleagues and, in turn, to phrase comments respectfully to their colleagues, otherwise they may not be recommended to participate in ensemble work. Violinists should project a balanced demeanor, one that is both modest and confident. A violinist who exudes confidence will be respected regardless of skill level. However, a violinist who seems arrogant will be disliked. Violinists should learn to appreciate other musicians for their respective skill sets rather than looking down on those with differing technical and

19 See interview with Anne Lindsay
musical proficiencies. Although it may be challenging to avoid critiquing colleagues, other musicians can sense disapproval. Socialization is of particular value to the freelance musician. It is essential that one allot time to socialize with other musicians after performances as a way of fostering professional relationships. Results of my questionnaire indicate that twenty-seven of the thirty-one respondents felt the need to have learned interpersonal skills in school. Thirteen of the thirty-one respondents listed networking and interpersonal skills as being among the top three important skills they had learned since school. Along with knowledge of professional skills and physical health, these were rated as equally important skills. In Mike Levine’s book *How to be a Working Musician: A Practical Guide to Earning Money in the Music Business*, he discusses these skills in a section entitled “Getting Along with Your Fellow Musicians.” He discusses how it can be difficult to work with musicians who “by nature, have strong egos,” but recommends that one can improve situations by being “conciliatory rather than confrontational” (Levine 59). In her book, *Making Music in Looking Glass Land*, Ellen Highstein writes that many primary contacts for work are made in the music school. She recommends making mutually supportive friendships with peers and teachers in school in order to develop sources of employment after graduation (Highstein 106).

Toronto violinist and teacher Steven Sitarski says “Be positive because it has a huge effect on people and conversely, if you’re always complaining or putting yourself down, they don’t want to work with you.” Sitarski advises young musicians to be enthusiastic, keen and reliable in order to work as freelancers. Those who have good interpersonal skills are better able to procure work and create positive work relationships.
3. Self-Promotion / Entrepreneurial Skills

a. Contracts

Every musician needs to have a contract with well-defined policies when making bookings. It should clearly state those conditions in which the musician will and will not perform outdoors. The contract should clearly indicate at which intervals rest breaks take place. Rates of payment for overtime should be noted and how payment is to be processed should be understood.

Interestingly, the only area in which all respondents were in full agreement was that they all would like to have learned entrepreneurial skills in college. This was the case for those who had been working for less than five years and those who had worked for over thirty years. In *The Musician’s Handbook*, Bobby Borg writes: “Always get the terms and conditions of all business agreements in writing and keep a signed and dated copy of them in your files. This will clarify the expectations of each party and provide protection in case there’s a dispute” (Borg 121). I recommend that, if possible, musicians should require payment in full in advance of the performance date.

b. Selling a Product: Finding Work

Unless one has a full time orchestral or teaching position, he/she is a self-supported freelancer. As a result, a basic part of the freelancer’s livelihood is actually finding work. As Mona Coxson writes in her book, *Some Straight Talk about the Music Business*, “Each area of the world differs and job opportunities vary, depending on where you live. The larger cities, of course, offer more opportunities but, here again, you’ll find more competition …” (Coxson 82). There are several approaches to finding work and it is best to try as many approaches as possible. These include but are not limited to:
Advertising: There are many ways to approach advertising and one’s budget is the most important factor in the decision of whether to pay for ads; use the free classifieds; or make posters or business cards. One can assume that the more avenues one utilizes for advertising, the better the results.

Cold Calls: At one point, I called many retirement homes I found on “Google” to see if they wanted music for special occasions or concerts. This technique is not the best way, and many won’t respond to you. However, even using this method, I have obtained some work.

Have a Website: A website should have sound samples, a biography or resume, contact Information, and should be designed in a professional manner. Chase Sanborn writes:

> An effective website is the cornerstone of self-promotion. Every musician, aspiring and established, needs a website. Visitors should be able to read your bio, view pictures, listen to clips of your music, order your recordings, download promotional material, get booking information and contact you. (Sanborn 65)

Have a Press Kit/ Electronic Media Promotional Materials: In his book, How to be a Working Musician, Mike Levine recommends having a press kit prepared which would include an eight-by-ten high resolution photo, a song list, bio, press clippings, business cards, demo tape and even a video of your performance (May, Weissman 15-17).

Electronic media promotional materials have largely replaced press kits. The same type of information that is included in a press kit should be available online.

Door to Door: I have heard of people going to banks and businesses and asking if they would like to have music for any events. Mike Levine calls this tactic “pounding the
pavement” and he writes about calling club owners to make appointments to discuss possible gigs and to give them a press kit.

Send Resume, Bio and Recordings Around: Depending on what kind of work one desires, this can be one of the best ways to procure work whether it be orchestral work, function work: corporate/ weddings, concerts or bar gigs (Coxson 82, Ricker 63-70).

Personal Contacts: Jan Goldberg writes about the importance of networking in her book, Great Jobs for Music Majors: “Networking is the process of deliberately establishing relationships to get career-related information or to alert potential employers that you are available for work” (Goldberg 61). Play for the musicians in positions of authority in the music scene. This takes different forms depending on the culture of the particular genre the musician wants to pursue. In order to get freelance work in an orchestra, one generally has to audition formally or have an informal audition with the concertmaster or section leader. If one wants to be a jazz player, he/she can attend “jam sessions” such as “The Rex Jam” and make contacts with other musicians. One can also attend and try to “sit in” on other people’s “gigs”, though that must be approached with sensitivity, tact, and delicacy to avoid being viewed as a nuisance (Ricker 158-159).

c. Talking to Clients

Communication skills are essential in working with clients who may be hiring a musician or a violin teacher. In emailing and speaking to clients, it is best to speak with confidence about one’s skills and to explain what is expected from clients in terms of payment, as well as what one needs (equipment, involvement, etc.) in order to perform the gig adequately. I have found that by raising my rates, and providing my professional credentials, I often receive more respect and better treatment from potential clients. If
necessary, have a script and a pay scale on hand in order to speak authoritatively when on the phone with a client.

When booking gigs, respond quickly to interested clients; pay other musicians well and do so directly after the performance. Do not accept work that pays below an acceptable range and do not hire others below the acceptable going rate. If one plays for a lower rate, one is personally reducing all musicians’ incomes.

d. Fundraising Your Career

Often the most successful musicians are those with strong fundraising skills. One of the most challenging aspects of a career in music is creating a practical business plan for how to be financially viable. Within the context of a music program, students should learn the skills of how to be entrepreneurs: writing contracts, grant proposals, resumes, biographies of various lengths, programs, cover letters, and how to create audio recordings and videos. However, students often do not learn these skills in school.

e. Set Goals: Short and Long-Term

It is important that a violinist establish his/her short and long term goals. The sooner a musician develops attainable, desired goals, the better. However, goals will likely change and adapt over the course of time. One should always be actively involved in the direction of his/her own career. Ramon Ricker describes how one can create a five-year plan. He explains that one should make an objective, imagine what one will be paid for their work, figure out what is one’s “comparative advantage,” what factors are out of one’s control, how to overcome these factors and plan alternative strategies in the case the primary goal does not come to fruition (Ricker 46-47).
Knowing One’s Place: Side-Person Versus Leader

Bruce MacLeod explores the roles of side-people and leaders in his book, *Club Date Musicians: Playing the New York Party Circuit*.

There were four main roles that musicians played in the business: leader, subleader, side-person, and contractor, and it appeared that there was considerable fluidity among the roles. Leaders are the employers; they are in charge of booking work and hiring musicians to fill the other roles … Side-persons are employees; band members with no supervisory responsibilities … Many side-persons will also book some of their own work, and in this case, they are temporarily in the leader’s role. (MacLeod 19) Leaders naturally have a much more positive outlook on their work than do side-persons. They are, after all, able to control the nature of their work to a large extent … The responsibilities of a leader are greater than those of a side-person, but the challenges and the rewards, both emotional and financial, are greater as well. (MacLeod 143)

When a musician is in a leadership role, it is their job to take responsibility for the clients and the musicians. If they are developing a musical project, they have the greatest investment, and should not expect the same commitment from the other musicians involved in the project. While they have the advantage of making all the decisions in terms of pay scale and who to hire, they also have the responsibility of creating a successful product. It is essential that one keep his/her role in the project clear at all times.

One should try not to create complications for the leader or try to do the leader’s job. One should do his/her own job, give opinions when the timing is right and always be
appreciative for the work. This is the best way to ensure one’s continued inclusion in a project as a side-person.

4. Physical Preparation/ Stamina

The violin is an instrument that is challenging to play for extended periods of time without causing pain and injury. This is due to the fact that it is a one-sided and unbalanced physical activity. The physical requirements of the left and right sides of the body are completely different from one another. Furthermore, orchestral violin parts tend to have many notes to play and very few periods of rest. According to Jennifer Johnson, author of *What Every Violinist Needs to Know About the Body*, forty percent of all professional musicians play in pain. “Four out of ten orchestral players go to work every day and either suffer through it or medicate themselves just to get through rehearsal” (Johnson 10). Some of the injuries common to violinists are neck and back strain, “raging pins and needles,” numbness in the arms and hands, tendonitis, carpal tunnel and thoracic outlet syndromes. Johnson explains: “… such terms only identify the primary consequence of the condition, which is that the median nerve is compressed at its thoracic outlet. This description fails to address the origin of the violinist’s problem, which is moving in ways that compress the nerve” (Johnson 11). According to Johnson, it is important that one realize that playing the violin is not the cause of injury. It is the way in which one plays the violin that causes harm.

Unfortunately, many of the members of the National Ballet of Canada and the Canadian Opera Company become injured during the performance season. Orchestral violinists often develop rotator cuff injuries, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, chronic pain, nerve impingement and other ailments. Each intermission, the women’s orchestral
dressing room is filled with musicians rolling tennis balls behind their backs to work out knots, laying on foam rollers to attempt to open up their shortened and tightened muscles and generally grumbling about their work-related physical pain.

Renowned violinist, Yehudi Menhuin had a great interest in violinists’ physical health before the topic was as commonly discussed as it is today. In his 1986 book, *Life Class: Thoughts, Exercises, Reflections of an Itinerant Violinist*, he writes:

> When one is playing the violin, they should be monitoring every part, every movement, checking on whether the shoulder is floating easily, the neck free, the finger, the elbow, the wrist, the feet, all easy, relaxed, coordinated. The breathing, the position of the eyes, the swing of the body; are they all in step, all in harmony? There should be nothing arbitrary about the movements of the violinist, nothing moving without total support from all other parts. (Menhuin 6)

Learning strengthening techniques in advance of an injury are crucial.

Courses such as *Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais* or *Body Mapping* can help musicians develop skills to avoid pain and injury. Some of the available programs for musicians and artists in Toronto include the Program in Narrative and Healthcare Humanities at Mount Sinai Hospital or the Centre for Medical Humanities or the Artist Health Centre at Toronto Western Hospital. (mountsinai.on.ca) (medicalhumanities.wordpress.com)

In the “yes/no” section of my questionnaire, twenty-nine out of thirty-one respondents circled “yes,” they would like to have learned about physical wellness in music school. In the “fill in the blank section”, eleven out of thirty-one respondents wrote that injury prevention, body awareness and physical health were among the three most important things they had learned since graduation. Several respondents’ answered that
two of the three most important things they have learned since college were related to physical health. Quoting the respondents answers in the questionnaires, a violinist wrote both “the importance of physical health” and “how physically demanding the job was;” another wrote both “yoga” and “injury prevention;” another wrote “yoga is very helpful” and “stretching is important;” and yet another wrote both “Pilates” and “the importance of physical health.” Others wrote that among the three most important things learned since school were the prevalence of repetitive strain injury, body maintenance and physical fitness.

It is clear upon reading these answers that many musicians are working very hard to learn about preventative ways to take care of their bodies. They spend a great deal of their income and time in physical therapy, massage and chiropractic appointments as well as in yoga and Pilates classes.

There are many ways to improve physical health. It is very helpful that young musicians learn as early as possible (before injury) about ways to maintain physical health as performers. The University of Toronto offers an *Alexander Technique* class as an optional credit course. I took this course and learned about the effects my poor posture was having on my back. I found that I was able to play with less pain with this knowledge.

**Well Rounded Competence**

A well-rounded competence in varying musical styles creates great musical flexibility. (Brinner 77). This type of competence is exemplified when a Mariachi band calls an Italian or Klezmer tune, and the violinist either knows the song or is able to imitate the sound based on prior experience with the genre.
This flexibility of musicianship can be an outcome of living in a place like Toronto, an international city where musicians from all over the world come together and bring their own musical and stylistic traditions. “The more freedom individual musicians have to associate, the more heterogeneous experience becomes and the less we can distinguish sharply delineated local traditions” (Brinner 113). This freedom to associate between people who can be grouped into categories based on age, education and association creates an environment for a diverse wealth of musical languages.

Much like Lieberman, the famous jazz violinist, Jean-Luc Ponty said:

Violinists now have a chance to be creative by bringing their instrument’s heritage into new forms of music. The choice is either to stick to tradition or to try out new instrumental techniques. This experimentation is a risk which I do not regret having taken as it brought me a lot of excitement and success beyond my dreams. (Lieberman 21)

In order to develop well-rounded competence, students should be recipients of a complete musical education in which non-musical and musical competences are explored. The complete musical education is discussed in the chapter entitled “Recommendations” of this dissertation.

Conclusion

There are many core musical and non-musical competences, which are necessary skills for a contemporary violinist to master as a successful professional violinist. Non-musical proficiencies include professional, interpersonal, self-promotional, entrepreneurial, arranging, and transcription skills as well as knowledge of how to
amplify one’s instrument and how to play without physical pain. Specifically musical competences include playing in all keys, form and analyses, rhythmic, reading, practice, listening skills, and the ability to learn music in a timely and effective manner with sensitivity to style. Beyond all of these necessary proficiencies is the importance of developing the capacity to demonstrate multiple competences and well-rounded competences. Such versatility provides a performer with the opportunity to display a diversified and ever expanding set of skills, and increases that violinist’s likelihood of a stable, productive, and financially successful career.
Chapter Three

Toronto’s Educational Alternatives For Post-Secondary Study in Music Performance: How the Schools Approach Teaching Versatility Versus Specialization

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to survey, compare and contrast the post-secondary educational alternatives for violin students in Toronto. My goal is to review and evaluate how schools prepare students for careers in music with attention to whether students are being well prepared for the available musical employment in Toronto. This chapter, then, considers how the core competences developed in the previous chapter with respect to working violinists are or are not addressed as students learn the skills viewed within the programs as necessary to becoming “successful” professionals. Again, these core-competences include the following “non-musical” skills: knowledge of injury prevention and sound equipment; interpersonal skills; professional skills; and entrepreneurial skills. Musical core competences include: the ability to play in all keys and to learn music quickly; stylistic sensitivity; efficient and effective practice techniques; musical interpretive skills; rhythmic skills; arranging / transcription skills; sight-reading skills; and ear-training skills. I assess whether schools prioritize the training of “multiple” and/or “well-rounded competences”.

In the Versatility chapter, I examined the benefits of versatility over specialization. I argued that developing versatility allows a violinist to work competently in various settings such as pit orchestras, symphony orchestras, recording sessions, and non-classical ensembles. Since nurturing such versatility is a long-term project, post secondary study (if not earlier) is a logical period to pursue it. Indeed, in an ideal case,

20 The definition of success as it applies to this dissertation is economic viability.
the resources of many college, university, and conservatory music programs can expose the student to a wider range of music practices and related instruction that might be otherwise available. On the other hand, if a student (or a program) remains too specialized, the risk of being prepared only for a limited sector of the music business remains. As I will illustrate, this has, in fact, historically been the case in most post-secondary music programs.

Thus, in this chapter and the chapter entitled “Recommendations,” I suggest how administrators and teachers may improve the educational offerings for aspiring professionals at their respective schools. In so doing, I also want to acknowledge that this or any process of updating curricula is always complicated because schools have their own traditions, financial burdens, and faculty expertise.

Before I offer any recommendations, however, I will address the relationship between Toronto’s post secondary music training and the current demands of musical careers. In pursuit of this goal, I first discuss the fundamental value of post-secondary training in violin. I then survey the similarities between course offerings at Toronto’s four schools for post-secondary study in violin: The University of Toronto, York University, The Glenn Gould School Professional School of the Royal Conservatory of Music, and Humber College. After providing and comparing the curriculums of the schools, I draw conclusions about how, whether, and to what degree the schools’ course offerings address teaching versatility. My analysis is based on interviews I conducted with students, faculty, administrators, and graduates. I also reviewed the departmental catalogues, admission materials, and the websites for each institution.
The Importance of Post-Secondary Music Training

Post-secondary music schools offer students many benefits beyond technical violin study with a private teacher. These benefits include: performance experience in ensembles, studio and master classes; the study of music history and theory; networking opportunities; and resume development. Prior to university study, most aspiring classical violinists study the violin privately. Although it is possible to become a professional performer through private study without enrolling in a college degree program, the majority of professional classical violinists study music at a post-secondary music school.

All thirty one respondents to my questionnaire had studied violin or viola performance at a college, university or conservatory.

In some cases, music school may be the first opportunity for studies in music theory and history. In other instances, Canadian classical violin students entering university who have taken Royal Conservatory of Music violin exams have prepared supplementary music theory exams and ear-training tests throughout their youth. If a student has pursued these exams, he/she is likely to be better prepared for his/her course work at a university. While history and theory are not essential to developing technical facility, Michael Krausz, author of The Interpretation of Music, explains that this knowledge is central to becoming a better musician with professional potential. Timothy Dowd et al., authors of Organizing the Musical Canon: the Repertoires of Major U.S. Symphony Orchestras, 1842 to 1969, explain that breadth of knowledge is only one of the many reasons that institutional training is more desirable than private study alone. In addition, music school is an opportunity to make contacts with faculty and students who

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21 The Suzuki method which teaches students to play “by ear” without reading sheet music focuses on ear-training, proper technique and posture in violin playing and musicality. In its most basic form, it does not have a theory/history component.
later will become professional colleagues. David Baskerville explains in his book *Music Business Handbook and Career Guide* that the networking potential in a school may be more important than the musical instruction.

In today’s competitive labor market, it is essential that aspiring professional violinists not only have strong musical foundations, but also impressive resumes when applying for many types of employment. Universities, orchestras, community music schools, and non-music related job applications require a resume that states the applicant’s educational background and professional work experience. Based on the requirements for teaching position and orchestral audition applications, employers consider applicants based on both the degree earned, and the prestige of the institution attended. When an orchestra holds an audition, interested applicants must first submit their resumes tell us how you know this. Based on one’s resume, he/she may be invited to audition in person, bypassing any audio recording pre-screenings, or may be refused the opportunity to send a recording for pre-screening.

Another important reason for undertaking post secondary music education rather than pursuing private study is that it can provide opportunities to study in other areas of knowledge and even make it possible for students to pursue graduate degrees in music and other fields. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, many music school graduates are unable to find work as musical performers. An alternate degree or field of training may give the graduate an advantage in securing future employment. Further, not all music students in post-secondary schools plan to be professional performers. Many aspire to become musicologists, producers, recording engineers, composers, arrangers, music theorists, or music professors/teachers. Whether a graduate of a music school pursues
music as a career, the discipline of a music degree as well as the general knowledge of history and culture support the intellectual development required in all career paths.

Whereas the benefits of music school study are well established for classical violin students, these benefits are less recognized in the realm of non-classical music. For example, outside of the relatively formalized employment market of classical music, a resume is less often required. Even so, a music degree is useful for those non-classical musicians who are interested in pursuing teaching as a career.

On the other hand, some music school graduates even allege that there are certain stigmas against formal training in jazz and popular music. Some professional jazz musicians claim that graduates of jazz programs are less musically creative than those who are self-taught. As Dizzy Gillespie and Al Fraser write in the book *To Be ... Or Not To Bop*, there are those who believe that improvisation cannot be taught at all. (Gillespie, Fraser 404) Humber jazz professor, Drew Jurecka states:

> There’s a lot of debate as to whether improvisation can be taught. You can certainly increase the brain-hand coordination necessary for improvising by teaching specific violin techniques. Certain tools can bolster a student’s ability to improvise such as ear training, music theory and technical skills. But, these skills do not necessarily mean that a student will become a good improviser based simply on classes in improvisation.

This belief is, however, not uniform and some professional jazz musicians believe that formal study is beneficial regardless of the school attended because a formal educational background can increase a graduate’s professional credibility. Before a professional musician has even heard a graduate perform, that graduate’s affiliation with a post-
secondary school may provide an impression of the graduate’s competences, general level of performance ability, and background knowledge. Furthermore, some professional jazz musicians believe that formal study is beneficial regardless of the school attended. One alumni of the University of Toronto says: “There’s a level of understanding of musicianship that most people have when they graduate … they at least know what to work on.” This musician indicates that successful musicians engage in self-study based on the training received in the formal school setting. This sentiment was reiterated in interviews with faculty members, alumni, and students at all four Toronto music schools. Self-training is necessary for an artist to develop his/her own artistic voice and vision, which will affect that artist’s career success and musical satisfaction. However, formal training plays a significant role in guiding the self-training that is ultimately required of all musicians.

**Toronto’s Four Post Secondary Programs**

Students who aspire to professional careers in music have four main options for post-secondary musical study in Toronto. These options include two universities (The University of Toronto and York University); a conservatory (The Glenn Gould School); and a college (Humber College).²²

Both York University and the University of Toronto offer undergraduate and graduate programs in classical and non-classical music. Both also offer extensive

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²² As opposed to the United States, where “college” and “university” can be used interchangeably, there is a recognized difference in Canada. The term “college” usually refers to technical, applied arts, or applied science schools that grant post-secondary certificates, diplomas, associate's degree, and bachelor's degrees. A conservatory is an institution for higher education, which is dedicated to the study of music, including instrumental and vocal performance, musical composition, music history and theory, and general musicianship. A conservatory may be part of a university or it may be an independent institution. In Ontario, as well as British Columbia and Alberta, there are also institutions that are designated university colleges. University colleges only grant undergraduate degrees. Humber College is one such institution. It is only in the last six years that the college has become accredited to offer university degrees.
academic and performance training in music at the undergraduate and graduate levels. As universities, both also offer a wide range of non-musical instruction. The University of Toronto offers a small jazz program; a substantial opera program; a classical instrumental performance program; and academic programs in music. The Glenn Gould School in contrast offers a small, specialized classical music program. The school offers a performance diploma (at the undergraduate level) and an Artist Diploma (at the graduate level), as well as an elective online bachelor’s degree. York University’s music program is comprehensive and varied, and Humber College has a large non-classical performance program. Humber College offers only undergraduate degrees in non-classical performance and no graduate programs.

In comparing the schools, I noted that all four schools offer music theory and history, private lessons, and ensembles that provide opportunities to perform various musical genres. The audition requirements are similar between the University of Toronto and the Glenn Gould School. Both schools hold concerto competitions in which students compete to perform solos with orchestra, and there is also some overlap in faculty between The Glenn Gould School and the University of Toronto. Similarly, Humber College, the University of Toronto and York University share some non-classical faculty. Due to the fact that some faculty members teach in more than one school, students can sometimes choose a school based on factors other than their choice of private teacher.

**The University of Toronto**

The University of Toronto offers music students a plethora of course offerings in musicology, ethnomusicology, music education, composition, arranging, theory, history
and performance of music. The music school of the University of Toronto offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees.

The requirements for a bachelor’s degree in violin at the University of Toronto include orchestra and chamber music, private lessons, studio class, keyboard skills, music theory, music history, and two performance recitals. Students are required to take music electives and non-music credits in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The music theory curriculum is intended to develop students’ understanding of melody, rhythm, harmony, form/analysis, and the development of aural skills. In particular, “Materials” courses trace the evolution of Western music from simple diatonic harmony through chromatic harmony to twentieth-century works displaying atonality and serialism.

Graduate students in classical performance take one required music literature course. They select two additional music literature courses: performance practice before 1800, analysis and performance of twentieth century music, or special topics in performance class. They also participate in an ensemble, study with a private teacher, and perform two recitals. Students in the jazz performance program complete a comparable comprehensive study of melody and harmony as it applies to jazz composition, arranging, twentieth century music history, and improvisation. Bachelor’s of Music students are able to earn credits in other departments, and may earn a minor, but not a double major, in another area of study. Bachelor’s of Arts students who major in music are more likely to be able to pursue a double degree, but are not able to take applied lessons for credit.

Study at the University of Toronto offers music students the possibility of non-musical academic study at a well-respected institution of higher learning. As a result of being a part of a larger university, music students have the opportunity, but usually not
the time to meet non-music students. According to interviews, music students are
generally isolated from other departments. This feeling of isolation is largely due to three
factors: the significant periods of time spent in private practice; the many required music
courses, especially for undergraduate students; and the fact that the Faculty of Music has
its own buildings dedicated to the use of music students only.

On the U of T Faculty of Music website, it is claimed:

    Few music schools can match the breadth and depth of our offerings. From jazz
trumpet to electro-acoustic composition, and from ethnomusicology to elementary
music education, we have the program to suit your interests and goals.

    (music.utoronto.ca)

Although there are diverse course offerings at the University of Toronto, there is limited
“cross-pollination” between the programs. The Faculty of Music’s jazz and classical
programs are held in separate buildings. There are jazz courses that are open to non-jazz
majors, but classical music students are not allowed to take arranging or composition
courses as these courses are reserved for jazz majors. There does exist, however, one
mixed ensemble of jazz and classical students directed by jazz professor, Andrew
Downing. This band offers jazz and classical students the rare opportunity to perform
together. University of Toronto jazz faculty members expressed their beliefs that there
should be more collaboration between the departments. One professor in the jazz
performance program questions the separation between the departments: “They put these
barriers between us, categorizing everything.” This professor suggested a more “open-
minded” culture of music courses and participation in the school setting. In fact, the lack
of collaboration between departments can be a drawback for prospective students
interested in studying both classical music and jazz. A student cannot for instance, enroll in the jazz department and study privately with a classical teacher, nor can a student enroll in both the jazz program and the concurrent music education program.

Tyler Greenleaf, development associate at the Faculty of Music explains that the University of Toronto prioritizes career guidance. He indicates that the University created the “Music Alumni Career Advice Forum” because of the serious challenges faced by music school graduates in finding employment. In this stimulating forum, an alumnus is invited to share a thirty-minute presentation about his/her non-performance centered professional career in music. Greenleaf says, “I’m interested in people who are involved in music but not as musicians. There is a lot you can do with a music degree.” He has invited alumni who are employed in areas such as marketing and real estate to discuss a “Plan B” with students in case they decide not to work as performers or are unable to financially support themselves as performers.

The University of Toronto’s performance, music theory and history courses offer students a well-rounded music education in one musical genre. Although the University course offering are vast, and the faculty is excellent, students unfortunately have limited opportunities to take advantage of the many course offerings outside of their own department.

York University

The Department of Music at York University is a part of the Faculty of Fine Arts. The fine arts program includes courses in dance, design, film, visual arts and theatre. The claim on York University’s website is that “this unique situation creates an opportunity for cross-departmental discussion and performance.” The University encourages students
to take advantage of the courses and resources available in the various departments. On its website, the department of music at York University claims to offer “an innovative, comprehensive program which integrates academic studies and studio training across a wide range of musical cultures and traditions.” (yorku.ca/finearts/music)

The fact that the music building is shared with other disciplines enriches the student experience, and provides music students contact with non-music students. York University bases its teachings on the western art music tradition. This education is supplemented with contemporary repertoire, world music, electronic, and digital applications. Courses are offered in music history and theory, performance, contemporary media and technology, musicianship, composition and arranging, ethnomusicology, and music pedagogy. Students have the option to take half-hour or hour long private lessons. Undergraduate students can choose to concentrate in any area of musical study, including performance. However, there are no performance degrees available to graduate students. Students can also choose to have no concentration and instead, can design their own program, by selecting courses from various disciplines within the music department.

When asked to compare York University to the University of Toronto, there is general consensus among students and faculty at both schools that that the University of Toronto is more oriented to classical performance.

Based on its website, York University’s mission is to teach students the necessary skills to perform and research music of various styles. It appears that York emphasizes the academic side of music in addition to performance. This curriculum is effective for students pursuing ethnomusicology or musicology. Performance students benefit from the
research component in learning to write program notes, and to study repertoire in greater historical depth. However, some performance majors may find this curriculum overly academic, and that it does not provide sufficient time to thoroughly master their instruments. The priority to produce well-rounded music students is indicated on York University’s website:

The general objective of the curriculum is to provide a broad foundation of musicianship, integrating music making of many different kinds with the development of mind and imagination.

The department gives particular emphasis to musical creativity, defined in relation to contemporary concerns and practices (exploration of sound imagery, MIDI, electronics, collective improvisation, interaction with other arts and media) and allied with pertinent research disciplines. Studies of Western music are central to a curriculum which places them in a larger context so as to foster a pluralistic perspective. Special prominence is also given to performance programs in chamber music, jazz, contemporary improvisation, and world musics, and to ethnomusicological studies.

Despite this diversity of offerings, local professional jazz musicians generally agree that Humber College and the University of Toronto are better choices for jazz students than York University because the performance students are more advanced and numerous, and the networking potential is greater. There is sentiment that York University’s lack of structure is both an asset and a detriment. Students who know what they would like to learn can earn credit pursuing their individual interests. However,
students, alumni and faculty at York University commonly express the concern that the program “spreads itself too thin”.

The varied musical offerings include: contemporary improvisation jazz workshops; percussion and world music ensembles; chamber choir and orchestra; symphony orchestra; jazz orchestra; wind symphony; and various piano/string, and wind ensembles. There are workshops and courses in popular music, and in non-Western performance traditions, such as South Indian, Chinese orchestra, Indonesian gamelan, Caribbean, West African drumming and Celtic Canadian. According to Parmela Attariwala’s research into the Canada Arts Council, York alumni receive more grants in world music than alumni from any other schools. She explains that this achievement is because of their long-standing and well-regarded world music program.

**The Glenn Gould School**

The Glenn Gould School is the professional school associated with the Royal Conservatory of Music. Jeff Embleton, the publicity manager for the Royal Conservatory says that the Glenn Gould School, which was founded in 1987, “provides an intimate training environment, with a curriculum designed to prepare gifted young musicians for all aspects of a professional career.” (www.rcmusic.ca)

Students attending this school are often pursuing careers as classical performers rather than as music scholars or professors. The school is organized to prepare students for careers in orchestras and chamber groups, and as solo classical performers. The performance diploma program is intended for students who do not hold bachelor’s degrees, and the artist diploma program is a graduate level diploma. An optional on-line bachelor’s degree can be completed from Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning.
This on-line degree is accepted at The University of Toronto for graduate school application. There are no courses in world music or jazz, but there is one required course in Career Management in which students write mock grant proposals, biographies, and resumes.

As a result of minimal course requirements, students at the Glenn Gould School have the opportunity to spend the majority of their time and energy developing their craft as performers, albeit in a limited number of musical practices. The school has a maximum total enrollment of 130 students, which provides each student with a great deal of one-to-one faculty/student attention. Each student receives one and a half hours of private lesson per week with a faculty member. Many notable guest conductors have worked with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra, such as Johannes Debus, the conductor of the Canadian Opera Company. According to interviews, the lengthy private lessons and the exceptional master class teachers are the greatest assets of the school. There are over 100 master classes held each year. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to work with some of North America and Europe’s most highly respected pedagogues and performers.

Humber College

The website for Humber College’s school of music asserts that its bachelor’s degree of Applied Music in Contemporary Music program is unlike any other four-year bachelor’s degree in North America. (creativeandperformingarts.humber.ca) The main difference between Humber and the other schools in Toronto is its stated mission to prepare graduates to be employable as professional musicians. The website states:
By combining the latest recording technologies and entrepreneurial business strategies with performance, production, songwriting, and composition in jazz, pop, R&B, Latin and world music, graduates will be well equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for success in today's music world.

Whereas the primary goal of classical schools such as the Glenn Gould School and universities such as the University of Toronto is to educate young musicians in the history and traditions of Western music, Humber College’s goal is to prepare students for today’s uncertain music employment opportunities. Humber College’s violin program is a small program catering primarily to non-classical violin performance. The students’ backgrounds vary in terms of technique, as many of them are fiddlers, rather than classical violinists. The school acknowledges that most graduates will become freelancers and will need to be versatile. One Humber College violin student said he heard about the Humber program on Jazz FM. In an interview, he stated:

I just heard good things about Humber in general in terms of the people coming out being able to get work. Most of the younger musicians I was listening to or who were mentioned on the radio had come out of Humber. Although (my peers) can jam over standards, most of them decided to form rock bands, funk bands, fusion … the improv classes and theory classes are based on jazz but there is the option to play other music.

All Humber students, whether they focus on performance, composition, or music production complete the same required courses in their first two years. These courses include: private lessons, master classes; music history, ear training; keyboard skills, improvisation, music theory lab (a music theory course in which students learn
conceptual theories by playing their own instruments), as well as liberal arts and science electives. Electives include: arranging, composition, advanced improvisation, film scoring, recording/production techniques, songwriting, music business, and creative development courses. Students also have the option to take private lessons with a faculty member who plays a different instrument with consent from their primary instrument teacher. The title of one’s degree is based on the electives selected throughout his/her study at Humber College. For example, a violin student who takes at least six music electives in music production receives a degree in music production, rather than a violin degree. The inherent flexibility of this program allows students to seamlessly transfer between sectors of the music business during their studies. Such experiences increase the likelihood that a graduate will be able to find a “niche” in which they can hope to earn a living.

One of the most notable aspects of Humber’s degree program is that the students participate in over 450 hours of work experience internships. These internships offer students the opportunity to make contacts with music industry personnel, and to apply skills learned in school to professional settings. Examples of work placements include: performing with wedding bands, working alongside music producers, teaching in music schools, working with sound engineers, and assisting music administration. In their fourth year, students complete a major recording project. This recording is part of a larger portfolio, which includes a complete press kit, a professional-quality recording, and additional promotional materials. Students arrange, compose, record and learn to market their own music for recitals and recordings. Upon completion of a bachelor’s degree at Humber, students ideally have developed individual musical identities; they have
formulated musical goals; and they have created portfolios that they can use in the pursuit of those musical goals.

**How have the schools addressed versatility?**

Two of the four schools for higher education violin study have programs that prioritize versatility over specialization. Humber College, with its varied ensembles and final recording project assignment, and York, with its program that offers students nearly unlimited options to create their own course of study. The University of Toronto prioritizes specialization over versatility since it offers students little opportunity to pursue studies or interact with departments beyond their own. The Glenn Gould School only teaches the specialized skill of classical music performance.

One young Toronto based professional violist/violinist feels very strongly that students should be urged to consider occupational options in music while in school. He believes it is the teacher’s responsibility to encourage students to realize “an internally driven goal” and to figure out “what makes (them) feel alive.” Another concern voiced by this musician is the current trend that many violinists pursue post-graduate degrees and “excessive” education without purpose. He states:

In my experience, nearly all string players graduating from undergraduate programs continue onward with further degrees and diplomas in order to delay the inevitable job search. What I would say is keep the undergraduate (degree) general. (A) master’s degree should be geared towards some financial future. Getting degrees is not useful unless (geared) towards a specific goal. You should know how you’re going to try to make a living (rather than) just getting a doctorate in Hindemith viola repertoire.
According to my research, many violinists/violists complete years of post secondary study only to discover that their skills are not unique. This is because most violin students are trained in approximately the same manner, study the same repertoire, and perform in the same types of ensembles. It would be beneficial to students if the environments of the schools were more conducive to musical and stylistic exploration. Students should be encouraged to consider various employment options and to discover their individual purposes and niches in music.

**Conclusion**

York University, the University of Toronto and Humber College each offer students varying levels of freedom to pursue their own musical interests. At the University of Toronto, there are many different degree and diploma programs, some of which are highly structured such as classical or jazz performance. In terms of the “core-competences” which are advocated in this dissertation, the University of Toronto offers the *Alexander Technique* course to teach students how to prevent physical injuries. *Introduction to Computer Applications* is available through the theory and composition department, but the *Music, Media & Technology* course is not available to music majors. *Perspectives on the Business of Music Performance* is offered through the graduate department, and the *Business of Music Performance* is available to undergraduates. Many of the core competences that I have identified as being important, both musical and non-musical, are taught in courses at the University of Toronto. There are excellent faculty members teaching much of the information that is beneficial to aspiring professional violinists. However, restrictions on course registration prevent students from receiving a broad musical education including a variety of musical styles.
At York University, the music program is relatively unstructured, encouraging students to create their own courses and decide what they want to learn. Based on the course offerings, the music department’s emphasis at York University is on stylistic versatility and music history. However, most core competences can be addressed through courses offered in other departments, such as theatre, and business. Additionally, the Career Centre at York University has a website with a link to a 54-page document entitled “Finding Your Way”. This document contains practical employment advice for aspiring artists of all mediums.

Although York University’s curricular offerings are interesting and impressive, the reputation of the students’ level of performance ability among professional and student musicians in general is not strong. It is somewhat unclear why the students’ technical level of performance is generally reputed to be lower than at the other schools. There are fine faculty members, many of whom teach at other schools in Toronto. It is also possible that the administration needs to structure and organize the program to a greater degree. Perhaps, the level of curricular freedom is overwhelming for some students who need more guidance. However, students who attend York University with the desire to become ethnomusicologists are well served by the program.

The Glenn Gould School offers few electives and requires that each student complete the same coursework. The school’s approach is aimed to nurture aspiring classical music performers and does not prioritize academic pursuits, although they do offer a course on the business of music.

While I advocate for the importance of a versatile education, I recognize that schools like the Glenn Gould School provide essential grounds for learning the
challenging craft of classical music performance. Students with professional goals that are focused on a career in classical music performance would be well served by the specialized training at this conservatory of music. It is important though, for the student to understand that by attending a specialty school, he/she is being groomed for a particular type of career. This student should be aware of the competitiveness of the classical music field as well as the financial obstacles that may arise with specialization and lack of versatility.

Humber College can be considered a vocational school which offers degrees. Its priorities are employability and versatility. There are courses in music technology, marketing, and business, but no course in injury prevention. The school offers students a comprehensive education in jazz, but does not prepare violinists for classical music employment. A violin student who chooses to attend Humber College is pursuing non-classical avenues for employment. This decision may be appropriate depending on his/her technical abilities and desired career path.

There is a debate as to what is the purpose of higher music education. Although I advocate that schools prepare graduates to be as employable as possible, I also acknowledge that there are important musical traditions for schools to nurture in their students. The importance of tradition and artistry must always remain at the forefront of the music school’s priorities. As Karl Paulnack, pianist and director of the music division wrote in his welcome address to entering freshmen at the Boston Conservatory:

You’re not here to become an entertainer, and you don’t have to sell yourself. The truth is you don’t have anything to sell; being a musician isn’t about dispensing a product, like selling used Chevies. I’m not an entertainer; I’m a lot closer to a
paramedic, a firefighter, a rescue worker. You’re here to become a sort of therapist for the human soul, a spiritual version of a chiropractor, physical therapist, someone who works with our insides to see if they get things to line up, to see if we can come into harmony with ourselves and be healthy and happy and well. (bostonconservatory.edu)

It appears that the value of a music degree above all is in the development of the musician. However, economic viability and emotional satisfaction should also be considered in making career choices. Chiropractors, paramedics, and doctors all provide an important service, but they have a place in the market which ensures their economic survival. Unlike Europe, North American society does not generally recognize the cultural arts as a public good akin to those in the medical profession and as a result, musicians must consider their economic viability as well as their cultural and artistic purpose.

Unfortunately, many graduating high school students are unprepared to make informed decisions about their future. Most schools provide little information about the viability of future career paths for incoming students. The schools do not publish accounts of where alumni are working, or statistics of graduates’ prospects and finances. Rather, only the most successful graduates are mentioned in promotional materials. It is so important that the student consider thoughtfully the central choice of specialization versus versatility in selecting the music school that he/she wants to attend. If detailed information regarding music schools’ values and curricula were readily available, parents and private violin teachers would be better able to help students make informed decisions in selecting an appropriate post-secondary music school.
CONCLUSION

December, 1862: Second annual meeting of congress

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew.” – Abraham Lincoln

Recommendations

Introduction

In this dissertation, I examined various viewpoints regarding the question of versatility for aspiring professional violinists. I argued that the cultivation of versatility is a useful alternative to long-standing teaching practices that emphasize specialization, and in many cases, overspecialization. My research suggests that such versatility represents a pragmatic approach to preparing for a career as professional musician in today’s climate, especially, but I would argue, not only Toronto. In support of this argument, the curriculum and preferences for training specialization or versatility in Toronto’s four post-secondary music schools have been analyzed and evaluated. Finally, the core competences required of a professional violinist have been examined. Building on these findings, in this chapter, I make recommendations for curricular changes that would offer violin students individualized training in versatility.

There are numerous issues and contradictions inherent in the pursuit of curricular change and its implementation. Many of them are related to concerns over the idea of specialization versus versatility. Indeed, numerous questions arise: Are we sacrificing

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23 (Lincoln showcase.netins.net/)
One month before signing the Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln sent a long message to Congress which proposed controversial measures regarding the institution of slavery. Composer Aaron Copland used excerpts from this document in the text for his evocative Lincoln Portrait.
quality by asking students to learn more skills? Is it possible to foster an atmosphere of musical versatility while preserving the rich, specialized tradition of classical study? Should we teach basic violin technique and curriculum as it has been taught for centuries and therefore honor the tradition? Is there room for change in the tradition? Can we find and employ teachers who are interested and/or able to teach both classical and non-classical techniques? How can we best teach students the skills that will most effectively help them in developing their own careers and expertise? What should the goals of a degree in music be?

In this chapter, I will endeavor to answer some of these questions and concerns. Most crucially, in recommending modifications to the current model of music education, there is a necessary adjustment of values and goals. My recommendations are made toward updating music curricula in colleges and universities with professionalization in mind. Underlying all of them, further, is the fact that in order to implement change, there needs to be appropriate teacher training.

Teachers should be trained about informal learning techniques. In this method, students and teachers work together towards educating the student according to their individual goals. In prioritizing well-rounded musical education, teachers help students in their creative development through improvisation and ear training. Once a student has reached a level of competence with his/her instrument, that student may approach many different musical styles. Versatility can be nurtured in the school environment through teacher training, curricular changes, informal learning approaches, and by encouraging creativity and exploration. Based on my research into musicological literature, an
important place to begin is by changing expectations and values that are inculcated in music schools.

**Adjustment in values and goals**

There is a consensus among Toronto’s music educators and performers that musical opportunities and employment have become significantly more competitive. In fact, as a bass player in the Toronto Symphony says, “the days of winning an audition and holding the same job for forty years are over” (for most aspiring performers.) Winning a job in a full time, top orchestra, he says, “is like winning the lottery.” It is becoming more and more difficult to find and retain employment in many sectors of the workforce. The world’s population increases exponentially and North American jobs are sent to China or other countries. More work is being performed by computers rather than humans, and the remaining human employment has become increasing competitive. Employees are generally overworked with little or no job security and there are very few secure and stable occupations anymore. While the education for the non-musical work force has for years endeavored to adapt to these changing conditions, albeit with some resistance, my study shows that music education, attitudes toward it, and related values of musical work have been even slower to change.

Thus, various curricular and attitude adjustments will be necessary in this changing employment environment in order to adapt to the evolving opportunities for professional musicians.

Yet most schools continue to instill deep-seated values in their students with regards to defining a successful musical career. Music students generally hold narrow
views about which musical occupations constitute successful careers. Careers that are well regarded include: concert soloist, chamber musician, principal position in a symphony orchestra and professor of music. Membership in a symphony orchestra as a section player is not highly esteemed but is considered an acceptable goal.

Several scholarly studies have, in fact addressed this very issue. In the article “Transforming Arts Teaching: The Role of Higher Education,” editors Jane L Polin and Barbara Rich relate the views of professor Robert Sirota:

The business model for music in particular has been revolutionized in recent years through technology, but conservative institutions still cling to old ways. While traditional practices tend to narrow the training of artists, they also affect the preparation of those who teach the arts. He spoke about the need to redefine student success, inside and outside conservatories (Polin and Rich 6).24

The values instilled in music schools affect perceptions that musicians hold about professional employment opportunities. Frederickson and Rooney write about the lack of appreciation for musicians working in pit orchestras (Frederickson and Rooney 1993). They note that, whereas Symphony Orchestral musicians receive a great deal of respect from other musicians, “pit musicians” are considered lower echelon performers, and not only by other musicians.

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24 Robert Sirota is a composition professor and the president of the Manhattan School of Music.
Frederickson and Rooney further note that such feelings of inferiority have been internalized by many pit musicians. It is my belief that this ranking system, (which begins in schools, on a conscious or unconscious level,) causes psychological harm to professional musicians. Indeed, musicians have to earn livings, and there are a limited number of positions in the top orchestras. My contention is that it is worthwhile instilling in students an appreciation for all types of musical careers, and to validate more potential areas for musical employment, rather than demanding an idealized and difficult to attain definition of success.

Unfortunately, such attitudes prevail and have a negative effect on professionals and pedagogues who pursue alternative paths. For example, based on interviews and perceived consensus among professional and student violinists in Toronto, Suzuki teachers and other music teachers for younger or beginner students often lack respect in the musical community. The tragedy is that teaching is one of the most important jobs in all areas, and should be considered as an excellent career opportunity, rather than a fall back option for performers who fail to obtain enough work in performance. This is a self-defeating attitude since teaching is a potential avenue for income; it demands particular skills; and it is the basis for providing future musicians, including those that will perform as soloists and in symphony orchestras.

There are other challenges to changing curriculum as well. Nettl (1995) shows that there has been and continues to be a great deal of discrimination against musical repertoires other than classical Western art music and argues against the widely held conservatory attitude about good versus bad music. He says that today’s musicians are exposed to so many styles of music that they are actually “multimusical.” “If ever there
were a time when the typical individual in most societies had access only to a single
music, the music of the homogeneous culture, the situation is now virtually the opposite.”
(Nettl 89) Indeed, the multicultural city of Toronto offers audiences and musicians the
opportunity to engage with various cultures and musics. Nettl addresses violin studies in
particular: “I have not heard of teachers of classical violin music, including country and
western jazz … violin playing in their lesson plans” (Nettl 89). This is in part a result of
the teacher’s specialized training as well as the fact that non-classical music has
historically been delegitimized in the formal school setting. Nettl adds that

    The various musics that are not ‘central’ have had to struggle over a period of
decades for entry into the music school. They usually gained admission via the
back door of musicology because faculty and administrators felt, on first
application, that one should not teach about them as fields of performance, but
that it might be right to teach ‘about’ them … (Nettl 85)

As I have argued, there is great potential benefit for students if performance programs
were to include of non-classical styles in their curriculum

    By adjusting our values and attitudes towards diverse career paths, we can begin
to reevaluate the realities and values inherent in music education.

**Well-rounded musical education**

    In nearly all music schools, there are requirements in music theory and history as
well as various requirements including conducting and piano skills. However, there is a
great deal of controversy among the violinists who filled out my questionnaires as to
whether these courses have been useful to them in their careers. Most say Gregorian
chant and Renaissance music are not helpful and only some have found contrapuntal part-
writing to be useful. On the other hand, nearly all respondents found their ear training and sight singing studies to be helpful in their careers.

It is not always apparent how effective the course work completed in college in preparing performers is. As orchestral musicians, many feel that their job is simply to perform the notes on the page without much value being placed on an individual’s depth of understanding of that music. However, many other accomplished violinists believe that an orchestra of mere technicians would sound less musical and would not enhance the level of performance as much as a group of musicians who are well educated in these areas of study. Erika Raum, violinist and violin teacher at the University of Toronto and the Glenn Gould School, has general insights on this topic. Raum discusses the well-rounded music education as being the preferred teaching method for post-secondary music students. In Raum’s experience, most violin students want to practice exclusively rather than participate in a more thorough musical education. She, however, believes that violin students should be trained as complete musicians. She indicates that music theory, music history, piano skills, composition, early music study, and jazz skills should not be considered “superfluous or extracurricular.”

Another advocate of complete musical training, professor Kathy Rapoport, explains how she implements this type of training into practice in her University of Toronto viola private studio. Rapoport does not have one strategy for all of her students, but strengthens specific competences based on her assessment of each student’s goals and needs. She explains that she encourages her students to take Alexander Technique courses, to learn to control nerves with psychological exercises, to write resumes and
biographies, to take Suzuki training courses, and to speak about their repertoire before their performances in studio class. In our interview, she stated:

I am preparing my students to be as resilient and resourceful as possible … With some students, you work on breadth of skills and (with) some whose main skills are highly developed; we try to back it up with skills that will help them not to fail if something should happen to them …

Raum and Rapoport both hold progressive attitudes towards music students’ exploration of diverse areas of the field of music. They express their beliefs that such diversified study is an asset to an aspiring violinist or violist. The question of how to teach such a student to be a versatile musician is of much interest among music students, pedagogues and performers today.

**Revolutionizing the Music School to Create Complete Musicians**

My belief is that now is a time for schools to re-evaluate their priorities in an attempt to best prepare students for the current work climate by promoting excellence, versatility, and personal satisfaction as a musician. Schools will continue to encourage students to be the best musicians they can be. In some cases, the pursuit and achievement of excellence leads to economic success. In addition, one of the best ways to continually find employment is to diversify by learning new skills, and staying “hip”\(^\text{25}\) to the times. Finally, in times of economic instability, there is no way to be sure that one will find or retain employment in any field. That is why it is so essential that people find enjoyment in their work. The sense of self-fulfillment in music can be encouraged in music school.

\(^\text{25}\) “hip to the times” means learning skills which are appropriate to the music which is popular today.
Rather than primarily preparing students for positions in orchestras, schools can encourage students to find their musical “niches” and what brings students joy in music.

In his speech entitled “Bring on the Learning Revolution,” Sir Ken Robinson, public speaker and author of *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, asserts that we no longer should use the industrial model, which is about conformity and linearity. Although he is speaking about primary and secondary education, his ideas are relevant in terms of post-secondary music study as well. Rather than requiring all students to learn the “canon of music”\(^{26}\), we have to let students study different music whether or not it is a requirement for orchestral auditions. Robinson explains that human development or advancement is not a mechanical but an organic process. He believes that ideally, the new revolution in education should be about customizing and personalizing education to the students’ circumstances and interests. “It’s not about scaling a new solution. It’s about creating a movement in education in which people develop their own solutions but with external support based on a personalized curriculum.”

(http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html)

While these arguments would seem to break with longstanding traditions, it is important to note that it was actually not until the nineteenth century that musicians commonly became specialists. For hundreds of years prior, musicians composed music, played more than one instrument and participated in many different musical activities. (See chapter one) By enriching a student’s education with studies in various disciples and genres of music, that change in curriculum will likely result in more fulfilled, satisfied

\(^{26}\) Canon: The standard repertoire (masterpieces, classics) which is deemed essential for musical study as defined in schools of higher musical education.
students, and is more appropriate for the times. In 1967, Gunther Schuller, the president of the New England Conservatory of Music, delivered an address on the school’s centennial birthday entitled, “The Complete Musician in the Complete Conservatory.” Much of that speech is surprisingly relevant and appropriate, even today. He speaks about the disease of apathy among orchestral musicians, the future of conservatories, and the changing landscape for artists at that time. The following quote by Schuller encompasses my view on positive goals for the contemporary music school:

   The field of music … provide(s) a range of outlets and a potential source of income beyond the wildest dreams of our forefathers. But to operate efficiently and effectively in this expanded field, the musician has to be equipped properly - he has to be the total or complete musician. (Schuller 243)

The goal of training complete musicians in tertiary schools is becoming more common among pedagogues, musicologists and students. The interest therein is apparent in reading the articles written and published by the authorities in string teaching around the world.

**Future Trends in Education**

   In the August/September 2007 issue of *Strings* magazine, Tiffany Martini addresses the process, necessity and obstacles associated with including alternative music styles in her article entitled “A Mixed Bag: Teaching Alternative Styles at the College Level” is all the rage at the pre college level. But can this pedagogical approach establish itself on college campuses?” Some of the obstacles include ill preparedness of the students and teachers and bureaucratic requirements mandated by the National Association of Schools of Music and state mandated requirements of teachers.
That issue of teacher education was discussed in the March, 2007 ASTA (American String Teachers Association) roundtable meeting and those in attendance agreed that summertime alternative-styles certification programs for teachers would be beneficial. Daryl Silberman, a teacher of alternative styles, said “Maybe there should be an ASTA collegiate program where colleges start paying in $1000 a year to help (fund) change.” In the March 2012 issue of Strings magazine, ASTA is noted to have addressed the critical shortage of qualified alternative styles music teachers (Strings 57).

There is abundant research and many projections regarding the future of education and suitable curriculum for the next generation of music students. Professor Gemma Carey, director Don Lebler, and research associate Rosie Burt-Perkins write about the shifting attitude of conservatories. In their 2009 article “What the students bring: examining the attributes of commencing conservatoire students” they state:

In the UK context, conservatoires are also beginning to respond to the need for diverse and flexible graduates. Students are typically encouraged to engage in wide-ranging external engagements, varying from paid performances at London museums and art galleries to playing jazz at weddings or functions. Similarly, opportunities are available for teaching experience, educational projects and other ‘professional skills’ such as CV preparation or arts management. Significantly, though, these experiences are most likely to be extra-curricula. In looking outwards to teaching and learning in popular music, it is possible that conservatoires specializing in classical music can learn valuable lessons in the quest to prepare students for their life-long career in music. Such a model provides a deepening of insight among students, exposing them to a breadth of
experience appropriate to a portfolio career. To achieve this is to produce students who are expansive learners thinking and working beyond a narrow focus, in addition to being more likely to be prepared for careers as musicians. (Lebler et al. 233-244)27

The idea of incorporating non-classical music study and non-musical competence training in the conservatory is gaining global momentum and acceptance. In future years, it is my hope that more schools consider supplementing their curriculums in these areas of study.

**Teacher Training and Curricular Changes**

In order to instigate changes in the music education system, the training and selection of teachers must be addressed. Teachers themselves must be trained to be versatile, and the schools need to prioritize values other than specialized skills in potential hires. One university that has incorporated changes in their recruitment and training towards a more “multimusical music education” is the University of Helsinki (Schmidt 46). Some of the changes include hiring teachers with varied musical expertise, allowing students to audition in non-classical styles of music, and working to change institutional, administrative, and educators’ attitudes towards non-classical music. This program sets an example for other schools around the world in having instituted curricular changes, and adopting a more flexible music program in terms of musical values and offerings.

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27 Professor Carey is the head of pedagogy study, and Don Lebler is the director of Australia’s Griffith University; research assistant Rosie Burt-Perkins is from the Royal College of Music.
In their essay, “Globalizing Music Education: A Contextual Approach to Developing Students’ Intercultural Competence,” professors Warren Henry and Donna Emmanuel write about internationalism, (a common theme among today’s music educators):

As professionals, we have a responsibility to continually reflect upon and adapt to issues that influence the process of teaching and learning. Given the growing diversity in our schools and the advancement of technology, which makes global issues increasingly relevant, it is imperative that curricula respond… (Schmidt 83)²⁸

Although professors and experts in music education (both in the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels) generally seem to be in agreement about the necessity of incorporating multimusical training in the curriculum, it is seldom discussed in terms of music performance programs. This lack of discussion is of concern, as music performance majors and professors are largely not addressing the problem. In the end, the music education majors will be teaching pre-college students, and it is the performance students who become future professors of performance. Those performance majors will graduate and endeavor to earn livings as performers, but will learn quickly how little work is available in any specific niche market. Music performance professors should seek guidance from the music education community in order to develop curricular changes to best benefit the current and future performance students.

²⁸ Warren Henry and Donna Emmanuel are music education professors at the University of North Texas.
It is my assertion that colleges should make adjustments to the curriculum, and in their selection/hiring processes of teachers. If, as my research suggests, many students will need to become versatile musicians upon graduation in order to be successful professionals, schools should be helping those students to prepare them for these varied types of work. Such change requires schools to hire teachers with some background in non-classical performance. Teachers should be expected to help students discover their unique abilities, and to encourage them to pursue areas of the music industry that personally interest each of them.

Some music educators and musicologists are currently writing about the benefits of an informal learning environment. Historically, tertiary schools of music have been formal learning environments, with clearly defined roles for students and teachers. Musicologists and music professors such as Lucy Green are discussing the ways in which this situation does not best serve music students, and needs to evolve and adapt to current circumstances.

Student and Teacher in Dialogue and Informal Learning

An area of great interest in the contemporary education and music education field of study is the incorporation of formal and informal learning formats. A number of educators are critical of the formal learning environment in schools. They believe that there is unnecessary and distinct dichotomy between the formalized learning that takes place in schools and the informal learning that occurs outside of institutions. In general terms, informal learning takes place outside of institutionalized study. Musicians who are self taught engage in informal learning practices. Those who study in music schools and with private teachers engage in formal learning practices. In the Musical Futures Project,
Green (2010) asserts that there is a fallacy underlying the presumptions concerning formal and informal learning inherent in the study of various types of music. It is a “misconception and a prejudice that the content of formal musical learning is synonymous with Western classical music learned from sheets of music, and that the content of informal musical learning is restricted to popular music transmitted by ear” (Green 43). The ability to learn music both by ear and by reading written music is of significant advantage to all musicians. A musician who has both skill sets is also better equipped to learn music quickly, and to play stylistically even without an extensive background in a new style.

In her essay, “A Teacher Training Perspective,” Dean Veronica Cohen, dean of composition, conducting, theory and music education at the Jerusalem Academy, explains her vision of the ideal teacher and music school environment (Cohen 226). Cohen’s interest lies in building a sequenced curriculum for creative development, a curriculum that is revised and restructured as the music climate changes. In order to support a creative atmosphere, she advocates the support of musical exploration. In her view, teachers should encourage mastery of varied skills by posing interesting musical problems and giving feedback that will serve as a framework for improvisations and compositions. I concur with Dean Cohen in her assessment of the ideal teacher and learning environment. Such environment is conducive to the nurturing of a student’s creativity. A primary goal of the tertiary music program should be to encourage such musical creativity and to help students discover their individual strengths and prepare them for a variety of future musical opportunities.
Nurturing Creativity

“For too long the main thrust of education has been concerned with the transferal of knowledge.” – Sir Ken Robinson

Sir Ken Robinson said in an interview with CNN, “There's a wealth of talent that lies in all of us. All of us, including those who work in schools, must nurture creativity systematically and not kill it unwittingly.” (Robinson 2009). He speaks generally about academic education, particularly with reference to primary and secondary schooling, but his views are relevant to the teaching of post-secondary violin and viola students as well. In fostering versatility, teachers are fostering creativity and individual expression. Some of the most satisfying professions are those that offer workers creativity and individual expression.

While Robinson discusses creativity in the general classroom, Robert W. Sherman writes about teaching creativity in the music classroom in his article for the October 1971 edition of the *Music Educators Journal*. In that article entitled “Creativity and the Condition of Knowing in Music,” Sherman describes his philosophy of the nature of creativity:

1. For creative activity to be effective, it must be an integral part of the curriculum and not an added component. The idea that students must be molded into certain patterns as apprentices shatters the framework of creativity - creativity is not the product of a student who apprentices under a formidable taskmaster.

2. Knowing about creative individuals and the creative process too often is more important in the music curriculum than is the actual process of creativity. As a
result, the creative process in music frequently occurs only outside the music building and the “established” music curriculum.

3. Creativity can’t be taught, but in the proper environment and with the proper guidance and support, it can flourish and grow. (Hamann 7)

In consideration of Sherman’s philosophy of creativity in relation to the curriculum and teaching styles, it is clear that under current conditions, creativity truly cannot be taught, as it is not being properly supported by the curriculum or most current school environments. Sherman writes that creativity must be an integral part of the curriculum. Yet what he describes is not a part of the current curriculum in classical programs in Toronto. Music programs in Toronto generally work with the conceptual approach of the apprentice and master teacher.

However, creativity as he describes it is more encouraged in non-classical programs. For example, students in jazz departments are not only encouraged to improvise, but to arrange and compose music. Classical music performance students generally do not study any of these areas of music, which require creativity by their very nature.

It can be persuasively argued that many teachers in post secondary schools of music are open to student’s ideas and are by no means, “formidable taskmasters.” However, I believe that most schools that embrace conventional (classical) teaching methods teach students about creative individuals much more than they encourage

29 Robert W. Sherman is the former head of the Department of Music Theory and Composition at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.
creativity among the students. For example, students study the history of music and composers, and learn how to analyze works of music. But generally those students do not learn to compose, arrange, or improvise, unless they are in the composition or jazz departments. The areas in which creativity can be fostered in the music department are in improvisation, composition and creative performance.

Professor John Kratus, director of music education at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio writes about the components of creativity in his article “Structuring the Music Curriculum for Creative Learning” (Kratus 43). He defines “Creative performance” as an opportunity for students to experiment with different *rubato*, (subtle rhythmic manipulation) phrasing, dynamics, and other individual musical decisions. By demanding that students begin to make their own musical decisions at an early stage, the difficulty of the transition from the apprenticeship - school situation to the professional world is minimized.

**Teaching Creativity through improvisation**

One of the ways to encourage creative musicianship is through teaching improvisation. This is because Improvisation allows students to play what they hear rather than what has already been written by someone else. In my questionnaire, all of the thirteen respondents who had performed professionally for less than twenty years wrote that they would like to have studied improvisation in school. Only three of the thirty-one respondents of all ages indicated they would not like to have learned that skill in school.
It is interesting that improvisation is taught in the jazz and not the classical department because improvisation has been an integral part of music making for all of Western classical music history. In his essay entitled *Creativity and its Origin in Music Improvisation*, professor Rafael Prieto of the University of Alicante in Spain writes:

Improvisation was not discovered by jazz musicians, it is as old as humanity itself. Since times of the ancient Greeks, (musicians have improvised)...Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Chopin were good improvisers. (Prieto 111)

The importance of improvisation in the development of creativity is addressed by University of Toronto professor of music education, Patricia Shand in her essay, *Creating Music in the Classroom*. She discusses the curriculum in Canada’s post-secondary schools and why she believes that students should be given opportunities to be creative artists. Notably, improvisation figures into her vision.

There will never be one single correct way to nurture students’ creativity, so the more fluency we have as a profession in generating a variety of approaches to fostering creativity, the better. Because of specialization within university faculties of music in Canada, it is usually only composition majors who have opportunities to develop sounds to produce compositions. More emphasis should be placed on this sort of approach in music theory courses for music education

30 Rafael Prieto is a professor at the University of Alicante in Spain.
majors. More consideration should also be given in methods courses to approaches involving sound exploration, improvising, and composing. (Shand 125-127)

The idea of fostering creativity and versatility in music schools through the use of improvisation is gaining general acceptance. This is illustrated by the work of bassist Roberto Occhipinti, who has performed in classical orchestras, theatre, opera, jazz ensembles, Latin groups, rhythm & blues and rock bands and violinist Drew Jurecka. The pair will be visiting guest master teachers at the Cleveland Institute of Music and Oberlin College in early 2013 and they will be teaching workshops to help string players learn to improvise and play in the jazz idiom. The fact that a prestigious and normally conservative program such as that as The Cleveland Institute is bringing this type of workshop to the school is a sign of the changing times.

**School Orchestra**

There is not one model for the place of the orchestra in post secondary education although it remains important in most programs. Currently, bachelors and masters students at the Cleveland Institute of Music are required to perform every semester in the school orchestra. This is also the case at the Glenn Gould School where both performance diploma (undergraduate degree level) and Artist Diploma (graduate degree level) students are required to participate in orchestra during all semesters at the school. This is not the case at the University of Toronto where undergraduate degree students are required to play in orchestra but graduate students have the option to decide whether they want to or not.
Still, the emphasis generally placed on the orchestra raises questions. In assessing the state of orchestral work available, it can be convincingly argued that orchestral skills are less useful than in the past. Perhaps orchestra should be an elective for graduate students at all schools and should not be required for all four years in undergraduate programs. In the least, if a student has specific interests that do not include orchestral playing, and if s/he intends to pursue these goals, that student should be allowed the flexibility of reduced participation in the school orchestra.

The key, however, is choice. Music schools should make curriculum requirements more flexible so as to respond more realistically to various career paths pursued by students. Certainly, a student who wishes to pursue a career as an orchestral player should be allowed to focus on the traditional studies, solos and excerpts they will need to prepare for auditions but they should be introduced to other options. On the other hand, a student who likes the idea of a varied career in which they work in many capacities which together create a career should be encouraged to study music more broadly, perhaps even venturing into different departments of the music school such as education, jazz, and ethnomusicology.

**How Versatility Should Be Taught: Respecting Other Traditions**

In order to teach and/or perform various styles without disrespecting the standard musical traditions, there are ten pieces of advice compiled by Patricia Shehan Campbell, a professor of ethnomusicology and music education at University of Washington, based on her interviews with eight famous ethnomusicologists. Her article, “Music in Cultural Context: Eight Views on World Music Education” was printed for the 1996 Music...
Educators National Conference in Virginia. I find Campbell’s advice to be well presented, thoughtful, and insightful regarding proposed changes to the curriculum:

1. Blend the old with the new: Use your previous knowledge to learn about the new style and to make conclusions about differences and similarities in the music.

2. Listen: It is essential to listen to at least “60 hours” of music of any given genre in order to be able to hear nuances, pitch inflections, expressive components and rhythmic elements.

3. Practice: No music can be learned or taught without prerequisite concentrated practice time.

4. Teach/ study comparatively: Find ways to understand the new music based on previously studied music. For example, note the use of specific modes and how they are used in more than one style of music.

5. Teach/study fewer cultures in greater depth: Rather than attempting to survey a number of styles of music, learn about one or two at a time in order to truly become comfortable with all elements of the style.

6. Learn from the experts: Study and play with an expert in the field of musical interest. Do not expect to learn everything you need to know in how to play traditional Indian violin from your classically trained conservatory teacher.

7. Study the context: Learn about the history and cultural elements of the music as “music does not exist in a vacuum.”
8. Recognize some music can or should not be learned or taught: Religious or secret music is often unavailable but in some types of music, there are strict guidelines to uphold in terms of performance practice.

9. Know that traditions change: “Musical values, preferences, and attitudes change … a missionary hymn from the 1920s is no more likely to be the contemporary musical expression of the Ba-Benzele of Zaire than Tin Pan Alley music is representative of young Americans today.”

10. Contact ethnomusicologists with questions: As they are trained in understanding the values, performance practices and functions of world musics, they are a good resource when looking to perform or teach music respectfully. (Campbell 71)

Campbell’s advice is useful, thorough, and clarifies the ways in which one should endeavor to diversify with deference and respect to other traditions. In ethnomusicologist Jeff Packman’s (2001) master’s thesis, *The Feel Factor(y): Music, Technology, and the Politics of Style in a Conservatory of Popular Music*, he writes about concerns related to the performance of styles of music which are not native to the performer. He explains that appropriation of other cultures’ musical practices is seen as necessary in learning the skills needed to compete in the music field. He concludes that it is important that musicians realize that they are appropriating the music from other cultures and that in doing so, they are lending their own set of cultural values to the music, effectively changing the music from its original form. Music students and teachers need to be aware of their own cultural/musical biases when studying music from other cultures.
Teaching Versatility through Ear Training

In an attempt to simplify the method by which to train versatility, I find ear training to be a particularly useful approach. Most respondents to my questionnaire circled “ear training” as being useful in their careers.

In the preface of the book, Developing Musicianship through Aural Skills: A Holistic Approach to Sight Singing and Ear Training, authors Kent D. Cleland and Mary Dobrea-Grindahl write:

Aural skills are an essential part of every musician’s education … having a trained musical ear includes the ability to discriminate between different types of musical sounds, to sense and understand their natural tendencies, and to effectively translate these tendencies into performance.

Ear training can have a great effect on a student’s ability to become a multi-stylist. Students need to be comfortable playing by ear. In fact, Improvising is another level of playing by ear in which the musician composes or creates his or her own musical ideas while in performance. Yet the more basic skill of playing by ear should be attained first. When I refer to playing by ear, I mean repeating back music that has been previously heard. This competence is incredibly important in non-classical music as much of the music is not written out. If a musician can play by ear and understands certain musical styles, that person can “join in” a rehearsal or performance of a band without having to read a score.
Although music-reading skills are very important, they will only be helpful in musical settings in which there is some written music available, and when other musicians in the ensemble are able to read music.\footnote{An example of a scenario in which playing by ear is necessary is the Mariachi band in which I play. This hybrid of classical musicians – violinists and trumpet players who are alumni from the University of Toronto music faculty and Latin Americans who do not read music – does have some written music (inaccurate as it may be). This is because there have been several generations of young classical violinists in the band who have written charts over the years.

At one point, I was looking for another violinist to join the Mariachi band and one of the first questions I asked classical violinists was “can you play by ear?” Most said they could not. I was incredulous at the number of fine violinists who were terrified of playing anything they had not learned from reading sheet music. I was particularly surprised since many violinists study the Suzuki method from a young age. The Suzuki method is based on the students listening to professionally produced recordings of the repertoire they are playing. It seems that some former Suzuki students lose faith that they can play by ear once they begin reading. The violinists who didn’t study the Suzuki method often have never tried to play by ear and assume they are unable to do so.}

As Bruno Nettl explains in his book *Heartland Excursions*:

To Music Building society, the concept of musical notation is enormously important. Having perhaps forgotten that they learned their first songs by hearing them, many of the denizens cannot conceive of a music culture that does not use notation … Music to Music Building society is *notated* music. (Nettl 36)

The ability to play by ear can be trained relatively easily simply by encouraging students to listen to recordings and learn songs without reading the music. In the November, 2012 issue of *Strings* magazine, Itzhak Perlman asserts the importance of listening to music one wants to play, and about playing crossover styles. Perlman instructs:

Listen. Listen to recordings. Whatever you want to do, if it’s something that’s stylistically different, and stylistically interesting, listen … There are a lot of recordings available and it’s much better to listen than if someone says, ‘Do it this way, do it that way.’ After a while, you soak it in. When you listen, all of a sudden you become either enamored by this particular artist or another particular
artist, and you start to figure out what the styles are. Listening to recordings is very important. (Perlman Strings magazine)

Knowledge of intervals and music theory is useful but one can learn to play the notes one hears with ease. In his book Jazz Cultures, David Ake writes that even in the jazz department, teachers and students depend upon written music to a significant degree. He explains that such usage is based upon the “European orientation” of most of the teachers. Ake argues that while note-reading skills are beneficial in the big band, in smaller ensembles and in situations in which there is a soloist, it is not nearly as useful as musicians’ improvisational skills and indeed, the ability to play by ear.

Jurecka develops this point in relation to learning new music. He asserts that when a musician learns by ear, they observe musical subtleties much more than simply the written notes. In our interview, he told me that:

The ability to play by ear not only improves the ability to repeat back and learn material without the use of written notation, but it also improves the student’s ability to listen to music. The student then is able pick up on stylistic and performance practice elements that give different styles their individual flavors. Once a musician is able to play by ear, many new musical and stylistic opportunities become possible. With the proper training and respect, many different types of music are far more accessible. It is my opinion that the ability to play by ear is one of the most useful skills a violinist can master. The ability to play by ear gives the violinist the possibility of attaining musical flexibility. One should keep in mind that ear training is taught in all classical and jazz music programs. I am recommending that we expand on our existent musical training into other musical styles and traditions.
Conclusion

It is not necessary that we sacrifice tradition by engaging in new studies. As Mark Twain said, “retain of the past only that which you may need in the future.” We must continually reevaluate the “new” with the “old” and judge what is most valid based on the changing times (Schuller 240). Importantly, the world of music education for violinists has significantly more potential for musical and personal development of students than has generally been incorporated into the pedagogy programs of higher educational institutions over the last century. Making changes to how violin is taught in post secondary programs, then, promises to enhance the tradition rather than destroy it.

In the body of this dissertation, I discussed the advantages of versatility over specialization, the core competences necessary for professional musicians, and the types of post-secondary music schooling available to aspiring violin students in Toronto. Based on my research into the schools in Toronto, I found that there are various approaches to the teaching of versatility among the schools. The decision to teach a more specialized course of study rather than a more versatile one is based upon the curricular and non-curricular priorities of a music school. Although I believe there is a place for conservatories that specialize in classical music alone, I do agree with professor Daniel Cavicchi that universities in general would best serve students by revising and updating their curriculum.

In his essay, “My Music, Their Music, and The Irrelevance of Music Education,” Cavicchi writes about the current problems with the institutionalization of music in the university setting. He advocates that schools should engage in debate and explore various
types of music, rather than retaining without examination the traditions of music schools which have been in place for over 150 years.

One could make the case that the establishment of music education in the United States … (in) public schools in the 1830s and culminating in the founding of the first conservatories and music schools in the 1870s, was, from the beginning, based on a rather tenuous notion of shared identity prescribed by the moral and reformist qualities of classical music rather than lived musical conditions and values. (Cavicchi 103)

Cavicchi thus believes that change is necessary in order to educate graduates who have contemporary concepts of the contemporary musical scene, and are prepared with a realistic approach for current musical careers. He concludes that teaching students to explore music rather than concerning themselves with one area of music alone offers them opportunities to find greater interest and excitement in music.

In the end, all I know is that this sort of approach, one that doesn’t dictate but encourages exploration and one that does not isolate but truly embraces the varieties of musical experience creates more student initiative and excitement than I typically see as a teacher. (Cavicchi 105)

Cavicchi and many other experts in music education express the need for change in the classical music school in terms of curriculum and openness. It appears that the advice presented by music education experts in support of versatility is not frequently applied because of the demands on music institutions. These demands include faculty interests, traditional values, finances, marketing, and political concerns. Additionally, curricular changes are challenged by concerns voiced by ethnomusicologists.
Ethnomusicologists are aware of the many concerns created by offering more diverse musical study options. One of the most controversial issues in teaching diverse musical styles is the danger of judging other types of music by Western classical standards. In order to avoid this type of problematic adjudication, teachers need to understand that priorities and elements that make up one style of music are both different from those priorities held by classical musicians, and equally valid in their own context. In basing judgment of a style of music on its own standards (not those of Western tradition), there is increased likelihood of a fair assessment within schools of higher education.

Authenticity is another central concern in regard to performance standards. Classical violin students should be sensitized to their tendencies to judge other styles of music with their learned Western classical sensibilities. In becoming aware of their possible biases, students can attempt to avoid critiques of other types of music with Western-centric taste, or they can make well-informed decisions to alter the music.

This topic is of great concern to David Ake who writes about the way that jazz is taught in colleges in his book Jazz Cultures. He believes that jazz is taught with classical priorities, “Jazz pedagogy remains decidedly classically based” (Ake, 116). He adds that, “Jazz education programs reinforce these (classical) ideals, setting norms for tone, vibrato, and pitch center” (Ake 120). Ake criticizes the fact that schools do not sufficiently focus on the teaching of rhythm. He also believes that jazz students should be encouraged to develop their individual playing styles. He expresses this idea by quoting famous jazz drummer, Max Roach. Roach’s anecdote suggests that conservatory training is not conducive to musical individuality.
In Max Roach’s first conservatory drum lesson, his orchestral percussion teacher told him “you are holding the sticks wrong.” Max Roach responded, “Man, if I change the way I hold the sticks and everything, I wouldn’t be able to pay tuition to this place” (Ake 121). This story also illustrates the possible problem with schools offering courses of non-classical study for which they are not well equipped Roach was not looking to study classical technique. Nevertheless, the teacher with whom he was expected to study was not a jazz musician. The hiring of appropriately skilled teachers is one of the concerns that schools need to address when offering their students more varied musical courses of study.

It is essential that teachers are hired who are experts in their field of music. These expert teachers should either work with current teachers to demonstrate how to teach a new style of music or, if financially possible, they should be hired to teach in the music school. In his essay, “The Ethnomusicology Ensemble,” Ricardo D. Trimillos writes about the implications of teaching “other” musical styles that are not fully understood or integrated into the teacher’s musical familiarity. He explains that there are benefits to teaching ‘other’ styles, but that the teacher must be chosen wisely. He explains that there are cases where a “native” teacher should be hired, or when a performer-ethnomusicologist is more appropriate. Each school needs to develop its own priorities in this regard, and to have a thoughtful rationale behind those hiring decisions. Trimillos states:

At the onset of a new century, it behooves the “ethnomusicological we” to have at the ready a set of clearly articulated rationales for the study group within the academy. To be effective, they should embrace the pedagogical, social, aesthetic,
and experiential. We must be able to communicate them convincingly and realize them for our students, colleagues, institutions, and communities. (Trimillos 50)

Students at the university who study music from other cultures or musical heritages other than their own should be taught to respect other types of music. One of the most obvious and easiest ways to facilitate a greater understanding of a musical style is by listening to as much music as possible in that new musical style, both live and recorded. Ethnomusicologist Anne K. Rasmussen writes about her experience teaching Middle Eastern music in the college setting in her essay entitled “Bilateral Negotiations in Bimusicality.” As a teacher of a musical culture that is not native to her, she endeavors to be as informed and respectful of the musical traditions as possible.

Whether or not one is born and bred in a musical tradition, one’s musicality is the result of a patchwork of experience. A culturally specific sense of musicality may certainly be developed through the process of being native to that culture, but musicians’ musicalities are also collections of encounters and choices; pastiches of performances they have experienced, the lessons they have taken, the people with whom they have played, the other musicians they admire, other musics that they play or enjoy, and the technical and cognitive limitations of their own musicianship. (Rasmussen 225)

In today’s musical climate, many musicians benefit from being versatile, which allows them to work competently in various professional musical settings. As post-secondary music programs continue to explore ways to introduce students to various
areas of the music business, graduates will have increased opportunities for more stable income, professional development, and musical satisfaction.

There are indications from some prominent, highly esteemed music schools that they are becoming more receptive to expanding their curriculum. This is confirmed by the fact that they are bringing in outside “experts” to offer workshops, which introduce students to new ideas about other musical opportunities that may exist for them beyond the orchestral world. A more diversified and progressive curriculum will better serve the modern needs of music students. By developing the various skills that have been discussed in this dissertation, students will be better equipped to adapt to changing work opportunities, and to support themselves financially. It is my hope that insights may be gained from this dissertation in modifying curriculum in music schools of higher education that will be more relevant and appropriate to help students flourish in today’s evolving musical environment.


Gillespie, Dizzy, Fraser, Al. *To Be ... Or Not To Bop*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2009.


