

## **PROFESSIONS OF A MUSICIAN**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Many lay people underrate the occupation of musician comparing to other professions, and they stereotypically perceive musicians as irresponsible “entertainers” who, moreover, do not produce anything materialistic and do not create enough benefits for the society. On the other hand, in musicians’ circles, the occupation of musician is considered very demanding, because its performance is conditioned by a high level of talent and various psychic qualities necessary for mastering professional activities (practicing and performance). Despite many controversial opinions, scholars only marginally conduct researches concerning the occupations of musicians. Is it possible to talk about profession in connection with performing music? Isn't it just a job, vocation or occupation? The study is designed to find out the extent to which performing music could be considered a full profession.

In current research, much attention is paid to musicians, but mostly to psychological aspects of their work, such as overcoming stage fright, preparing for performance, musician’s personality traits, music abilities etc. The second large area of research on musicians is their health, especially health problems related to their occupation and lifestyle. In the context of the society, also sociology of music focuses on music issues. However, it mainly examines socio-demographic correlates of musical preferences. In our article, we will discuss the profession of musician and possible occupations that a professional musician can perform.

## 1. Music, interpretation and profession

First, we will define, who a professional musician is. We will assume that he is a person who works in the music profession. Profession is defined as “an occupation associated with a certain qualification that can change over the course of life ..., one of the permanent components of social status”<sup>1</sup>. Thus, music profession requires music education, which can be very diverse. On the one hand, it includes theoretical music education (musicology, music theory, music criticism, etc.) and, on the other hand, it includes practically oriented forms of studies (performing arts). We will focus only on the practical music aspects – performance.

Certain doubts about the professionalism in the practical realization of music arise when we subject performance to the list of 10 characteristics of the “full profession” listed by Ornstein & Levin & Gutek & Vocke<sup>2</sup>. It is clear, that music performance does not fully meets all of them.

1. A sense of public service and a lifetime commitment to chosen career – partially meets the criterion: a musician-professional may not be lifelong committed to the service of the public, although in a way (s)he serves the community.

2. A defined body of knowledge and skills that exceeds knowledge and skills of lay people – meets the characteristics: the level of music performance of the musician-professional is not reached by lay people (neither in the field of skills nor knowledge).

3. Long-lasting specialized training – meets the criterion: standard training of the musician starts at the elementary music school (8 years), continues at the conservatory (4-6 years), and (not necessarily) at the university (3 Bc. + 2 Master + 3 Doctor years).

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<sup>1</sup> Kol. autorov Všeobecný encyklopedický slovník. M-R. Praha: OTTOVO nakladatelství, s.r.o., divízia CESTY, 2002. S. 771

<sup>2</sup> Ornstein A. C., Levine D. U., Gutek G. L., Vocke, D. E. Foundations of Education. 13th edition. Boston, USA: Cengage Learning, 2017. S. 25.

4. Control over the license standards or requirements for working in the profession – partially meets the criterion: licensing standards for a musician officially do not exist and only the employer, director or manager decide on the requirements, depending on the “professionalism” of the institution, organization, ensemble...

5. Autonomy in making decisions on selected spheres of one’s work – partially meets the characteristic: autonomy depends on the sphere of the musician’s work, on whether (s)he is working in the ensemble/choir/orchestra, where (s)he has to respect conductors’ or a chair persons’ instructions or alone (if (s)he performs at various occasions, (s)he also has to respect the event organizers).

6. Acceptance of responsibilities for activities performed and decisions made – partially meets the characteristics: although the set of performance standards are not available in the music profession, each interpreter takes responsibility for his/her performance.

7. Existence of self-governing organizations of members of the profession – partially meets the characteristics: although similar associations existed in the past, there is currently no such an organization of musicians-professionals in Slovakia. However, in other countries we can find e.g. American Federation of Musicians (USA), Incorporated Society of Musicians (UK), Canadian Federation of Musicians (Canada), International Music Council (world's membership-based professional organization) etc.

8. Existence of professional associations that provide recognition for various individual achievements – partially meets the characteristics: in various countries, one can find these associations, however, in Slovakia, such an association currently does not exist.

9. Code of ethics helping to solve controversial matters in professional exercise – does not meet the characteristics: Ethics Code of musician-professional does not exist.

10. High social prestige and high economic status of professionals – partially complies with the characteristics: most

of the musicians-professionals working in the field of classical music have average or low economic status (often struggling with existential problems) and their social prestige is rarely high.

Obviously, the music profession does not fully meet all of the characteristics of the “full profession” listed in the publication by Ornstein et al. (2011). These criteria were, according to the authors, “based on the works of noted authorities during the latter half of the twentieth century”<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, we will view music performance as a profession as it meets the characteristics of the profession by other authors.

According to William J. Goode (1960), the profession has to meet several characteristics that are applicable to the music profession<sup>4</sup>:

1. The profession of musician sets its own standards of education and the objectives of training future professionals – contemporary music schools create their own curricula, follow national educational standards (in elementary and middle level; in the professional level school itself sets the standards for passing courses), follow the development of specific key competencies of future professionals.

2. A student – future musician gains more far-reaching experience in socializing with adults than a student preparing for other professions – students studying performing arts take a number of practical courses and subjects (often individual), and participate in numerous performances with professional musicians.

3. The praxis of musicians-professionals is often legally recognized under license, respectively diplomas needed to perform a profession – if a musician works in an official institution, (s)he must have completed the necessary legal education (similar laws do not exist for freelance musicians).

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<sup>3</sup> Ornstein A. C., Levine D. U., Gutek G. L., Vocke, D. E. Foundations of Education. 13th edition. Boston, USA: Cengage Learning, 2017. S. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Goode W. J. Encroachment, Charlatanism, and the Emerging Profession: Psychology, Sociology, and Medicine. *American Sociological Review*, XXV 1960. S. 78.

4. The councils and commissions that decide on the granting of the license, respectively on the admission to the music profession are formed by members of the profession – a typical example is the awarding of diplomas after the finishing the formal music education, respectively certificates after attending various interpretative courses and workshops.

5. Most of the laws and regulations on the profession of musician are formed under the influence of this profession – current legislation on the music praxis reflects the position of a musician in today's society.

6. Future profits within the music profession in terms of salary, prestige and power require talented top music students.

7. The person who performs the profession of musician is relatively not exposed to the control and evaluation of the lay people – although the professional musician often performs for the laity, the primary assessment is carried out by his superiors, music critics or colleagues (laymen do not control his performances, their evaluation is mostly based on emotions, sympathy, aesthetic category of beauty, feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and does not include professional aspects of interpretation).

8. Standards on the profession of musician and standards enforced by this profession are more strict than governmental or state control in the form of laws – e.g. Slovak legislation does not prohibit taking a sick leave at the time of a premiere, but the soloist is always trying to participate in the performance (even if (s)he has health problems).

9. The members of the music profession strongly associate with the profession and are more closely tied to it than members of other professions – the musical activities literally “absorb” the musician, the musicians live the music and they often prioritize music over themselves, their families etc.

10. It is likely that the profession of musician will become his/her permanent occupation, as its members do not wish to leave – most

members of the music profession even claim that they would choose the same occupation, if they had to choose the profession again.

From the above, we can conclude that the realization of performing arts has the potential to meet the criteria of the profession. Further, we will consider musician who performs any music profession as professional.

## 2. Musician – professional

The term professional appears in connection with musicians i.a. in classifications of occupations in different countries. For example ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, 2013) states: “Professionals perform analytical, conceptual and creative tasks through the application of theoretical knowledge and experience in the fields of the arts, media, business, design, engineering, the physical and life sciences, transport, education, health, information and communication technology, the law, social sciences and social welfare”<sup>5</sup>. Most of these occupations require formal education, often with a minimum requirement of first-level at university education. “Arts professionals communicate ideas, impressions and facts in a range of media to achieve particular effects, and interpret compositions such as a musical scores and scripts for performance”<sup>6</sup>. A special group of art professionals is created by professional musicians who “write, arrange, orchestrate, conduct and perform musical compositions”<sup>7</sup>. In Slovakia, qualification

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<sup>5</sup> 1220.0 – ANZSCO – Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, Version 1.2; Last updated March 29, 2016. URL: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1220.0Chapter612013,%20Version%201.2>.

<sup>6</sup> 1220.0 – ANZSCO – Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, Minor Group 2011 Arts Professionals. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth of Australia, 2013. – Version 1.2; Last updated March 29, 2016. URL: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/D917695A772E966CCA257B950013102F?opendocument>.

<sup>7</sup> 1220.0 – ANZSCO – Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, Unit Group 2112 Music Professionals. Australian Bureau of Statistics,

requirements for professional musicians range from higher vocational high school education to the doctor degree at the university. In addition to formal education, many competencies, such as creativity, musical abilities, emotional stability and a high level of interest in musical activities, are needed to be able to successfully carry out this profession.

A musician-professional can act in his music profession in a variety of environments: for example, playing in a bar, in a state opera, in a philharmonic, in foreign concert stages... In some cases, music teachers are included among professional musicians, but in our view we do not include teachers in this category (they do not perform actively, and often, they do not consider themselves as musicians – in their point of view, they identify themselves predominantly with the profession of a teacher). Exceptions are teachers at art universities, where active music performance is part of their work responsibilities, such as giving concerts, shows, workshops, etc. Neither we consider the musician-professional performers who sporadically appear in public (for example, on invitations on various events such as weddings, entertainment or celebrations, or at Christmas markets, festivals, etc.), but their major source of income is in non-musical activity.

It is important to keep in mind that “professionals carry out highly qualified professions on the basis of legal entitlement”<sup>8</sup>, which may be a school leaving certificate, diploma or other evidence of acquired education. There is no need to prove the qualification of a musician to perform amateur music activities, or to play on occasional events. In these cases, recommendations and reputation of a musician among lay people usually plays an important role.

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Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, Version 1.2; Last updated March 29, 2016. URL: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2818B62A8B94048FCA257B950013119B?opendocument>.

<sup>8</sup> Kol. autorov Všeobecný encyklopedický slovník. M-R. Praha: OTTOVO nakladatelství, s.r.o., divízia CESTY, 2002. S. 771.

### 3. Music as occupation

The profession of musician has many «variations». On the theoretical basis, a musician-professional can find employment as a musicologist, music critic, to certain extent theatrologist, and so on. On the practical basis, majority of professional work as instrumentalists, singers, conductors or composers. In addition to the above mentioned occupations, music is also associated with notography, the work of a music editor, and other jobs, that are complicated to classify.

In the area of performing music, the Slovak National System of Occupations (NSP) categorizes ISCO-08-2652 – Musicians, Singers and Composers. In the following text, we describe qualification requirements for some musical professions as described by the NSP<sup>9</sup>:

- doctor degree at the university: chief conductor;
- master degree: choirmaster (or higher vocational education), concert master, instrumental soloist (or lower qualification), conductor (or lower qualification), opera soloist (or lower qualification);
- higher vocational education: singer (or lower qualification level), first player, corepetitor/accompanist, disc jockey, choir member, orchestra member, church musician (regenschori, cantor);
- full secondary vocational education: a member of a music group.

A specific group of musicians' professions, in which education is the mission, consists of teaching occupations, i.e. occupations in the category of Education, training and sport. These include, for example, pedagogical staff of elementary art schools, conservatories and universities with a focus on music (including teacher colleges and pedagogical faculties) and voice pedagogues. Since most of the lower-level education teachers and voice pedagogues do not meet many of

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<sup>9</sup> Národná sústava povolaní URL: [https://www.sustavapovolani.sk/pracovna\\_oblast-31#sec-2-2](https://www.sustavapovolani.sk/pracovna_oblast-31#sec-2-2).



the criteria we have outlined above, we do not include them in the category of professional musicians.

Voice pedagogue works in a choir, in vocal ensembles, where (s)he is responsible for studying the repertoire in accordance with the artistic intention of the conductor. She is in charge of voice warm-ups, collective and individual voice education, and (s)he helps to study the repertoire. Higher professional education is required for this profession; if (s)he works at a university, (s)he needs a university master or doctor degree.

In addition to the above mentioned professions of musician, there are others in the International Standard Occupational Classification (ISCO). For example, it includes: arranger, music agent (in Slovakia cultural agent), musical director, engraver (music printing), repairer of musical instruments and maker of musical instruments (in Slovakia, Crafts and Personal Services), street musician, musician in night-club, music copyist, transcriber, tone regulator (belongs to the Crafts and Personal Services in Slovakia) etc. Moreover, specific groups of professions are more specified, such as singer (the classification distinguishes singer in choir, night-club, opera, concert singer, jazz singer, street singer, popular music singer etc.). Also, under the music category is the occupation of a teacher in secondary and post-secondary education (in Slovakia these teachers belong to the category Science, Research, Education, Sport)<sup>10</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

In terms of music, we can talk about professionalism and profession. In various occupational databases we can find the description of many occupations that are associated with music, its practical realization, or theoretical aspects. Since the work of musician

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<sup>10</sup> ISCO International Standard Classification of Occupations. International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017 URL: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco88/alpha.htm>.

who is engaged in the music performance meets the criteria of a profession, we can talk about performers as professional musicians, and we can give the music performance occupations the label professions.

## **SUMMARY**

Musicians have been the subject of many researches, especially regarding their health and abilities. In our paper, we focus on the profession of a musician from a sociological point of view. Musicians have to prepare for their jobs professionally, they have to accomplish music studies and to have certain prerequisites for their profession. Despite the indisputable difficulty of this profession, the question arises whether it is possible to talk about the profession in the context of the practical performance of music. It turns out that although music interpretation does not meet all the criteria of a profession, it can be labeled as profession. The classification of occupations describes a number of occupations in which a professional musician can work.

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