Judgement fields and practising processes: On the development of knowledge within a praxis

Sven Åberg

Abstract

This article attempts to summarize and develop some of the concepts discussed in my earlier work, especially with consideration of the relationship between language and practical action, in a succinct form. The point of departure is research around the development of praxes, conducted at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm in collaboration with the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. The musician's practice is a fruitful example since the actual performance is so clearly non-verbal. In a series of images, the concept of judgement fields and its connection to examples within practice are presented. Departing from a discussion of collective praxis and the tension fields that define part of the praxis concept, this discussion is led towards the individual practitioner's relationship to practical action, in the moment. In a reworking of the philosopher Henri Bergson's thoughts on the performer in the flow of moments, an image is created of the connection between practical action and the different language levels used in rehearsal, teaching, and other activities connected to a praxis. The model is expected to be useful in the handling of experience transferring within higher education, as well as a contribution to philosophical discussion around the relationship between language and practical action, especially connected to artistic research.

Keywords: artistic research; experience transfer; higher education; judgement field; music; music education; pedagogy; practical knowledge; praxis; skills research

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to summarize and develop some of the concepts around language and praxis that are discussed in my earlier work (see Åberg 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013). By presenting key ideas, together with a series of graphic images, I hope to create an accessible and succinct basis for further discussions focused on the relationship between language and action. I have tried to draw general conclusions from concrete examples of practices—of others, as well as my own. At the general level there is a degree of abstraction. This abstraction generates the potential for discussion, at a distance from the living examples of skilled practitioner's actions that comprise one of the main fascinations of skills research. While the tradition upon which this type of research is based usually emphasizes verbal enquiry into the reasons for practical actions, what follows is perhaps surprisingly theoretical, yet hopefully not too daunting. What I have tried to do is clarify the form of knowledge development which takes place in the practice of an art form, or of a craft, but also within intellectual professions that require practise. Mathematicians also practise. When I use the word praxis, I refer to this whole spectrum of human practices. The aim is to contribute to a shared vocabulary to handle the questions connected with artistry, skill and judgement in a way that is generalizable.

Apart from music being my own background, in this context, musicianship is among those especially interesting fields where the practice itself is nonverbal. There is a boundary between what you can say about music and the actual playing. That boundary is interesting. At the same time, my intention, using musical practice as an example, is to highlight relationships between reflection and practice that are transferable to other art forms, professions, and practices. If I tried to specify analogies to knowledge formation in other fields this text would quickly grow to an untenable length. Thus, I have chosen to concentrate on the practice of music, especially in the context of higher education music programmes and have made only a few references to other fields. The reader can hopefully find his or her own connections to different areas of expertise.

Background

The question of what knowledge within a praxis consists of, is age-old. Different kinds of knowledge are discussed in depth as early as in ancient Greece where Aristoteles famously distinguishes between Episteme (context-independent knowledge), Techné (craftmanship), Phronesis (practical wisdom), Sophia

(intellectual wisdom) and Nous (insight) (Aristoteles,1993, pp. 157–181). The ability to act with judgement, within changing circumstances, is mostly connected to phronesis.

Later, the endeavours of the encyclopedists in the 18th century can be seen as a standpoint in their attempts to codify practical knowledge. Writers like Denis Diderot treat the subject in polemical writings (Diderot, 1883). In modern times Henri Bergson investigated the relationship between learned habits and intentional action (Bergson, 1912) while Ludwig Wittgenstein saw language itself as praxis-based (Wittgenstein, 2001). This has been developed within skills research by, for example, Kjell S Johannessen (Johannessen, 1999) and Allan Janik (Janik, 1996, 2005). An important concept has been Michael Polanyi's *tacit knowledge* (Polanyi, 1986), where the practical implications have been explored, among others, by Göranzon (2009) and Hammarén (1999). The views on development of expertise put forward by the brothers Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986), as well as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) are also a background. The article is also connected to the tradition of research around the development of professions conducted at the Center for Practical Knowledge at Södertörn University College, which largely has stemmed from phenomenological viewpoints (Alsterdal et al., 2009).

Since the main example of this article focuses music, it is also relevant for research into higher music pedagogy (cf. Holgersson, 2011), as well as connecting to the pedagogical tradition of action research (Rönnerman, 2004), which has certain similarities to the practical methods of skills research.

Finally, I think that a skills research's perspective on praxis and the development of practices can contribute to the development of knowledge theory around artistic research (Biggs et al., 2010) and the development of methods appropriate for the field. The relationship between language and artistic action (Sandell, 2013), is connected to many of the questions that have occupied researchers within skills research/practical knowledge.

The aim here is not to enter into closer dialogue with, or across, the above-mentioned discourses, nor the sociological views of praxis at group level (cf. Bourdieu, 2010), nor the discussion around the professions and their relationship with management and markets (cf. Freidson, 2001). The expectation is rather to ground future dialogues with any and all of these different fields by delineating a point of view and clarifying a perspective in the discussion around skills development and transfer. My proposal is that refining the concepts around the processes which are actually occurring in the development and transfer of praxes has the potential of leading to practical consequences in teaching and performance. Hopefully, the concepts I present below may be useful in that sense.

Practical methods for the handling of tacit knowledge

One of the most persistent discussions within skills research revolves around the concept of tacit knowledge, which can be described as the knowledge lying implicit in faculties that have been developed by personal practise. These faculties are not always immediately accessible in words, and as such require specific considerations regarding methods to handle and develop them, especially when it comes to advanced levels of skill.

One of the forms currently in use is action research, where a skilled practitioner creates a kind of philosophical distance to his/her own practice. The action research spiral consists of four stages:

- Plan
- Act
- Observe
- Reflect

The reflection then gives rise to new plans to be continued in a learning spiral (Mertler, 2017, p.16). This form is often used within pedagogical practices. By bringing the carefully observed outcomes of professional actions into a reflective space, with the already acquired professional knowledge as context, the implicit presumptions of the personal and collective praxis can be questioned and analyzed. This leads, ideally, to the development of the practitioner's skills and judgement.

So, what is the reflective space within action research? One strain of skills research has focused on the reflective process and developed methods designed to facilitate reflection within professions. An example of a reflective spiral is the dialogue seminar form. It also consists of four stages (Göranzon & Hammarén, 2006):

1. *Reading.* The practitioners are given an impulse material relating to professional judgement.
2. *Writing.* The practitioners write a short text relating the impulse material to their own experience.
3. *Dialogu*e. A structured dialogue takes place departing from the practitioners' texts.
4. *Minutes.* Central themes of the discussions are collected into an *idea protocol* which serves as a guidance to selecting the next impulse text.

This form largely has evolved from the needs of specialized engineering companies, but in many ways refers to arts practices and arts education, as well as experiences from other professions. By emphasizing the individual written reflection and structured group process, it brings the professionals different practical interpretations of central concepts of the praxis into the light. The materials resulting from dialogue seminar processes, across an array of professions, have been used as a basis for development of general theory about the nature and practical handling of praxes (for an overview see Ratkic, 2006).

Points of departure

A reasoning of this kind is not necessarily on a "higher plane" than the content of knowledge itself. The understanding this kind of analysis might give is not deeper than the knowledge contained in the practice. But it may bring concepts into view in ways that can be helpful.

The symbolic figures I present in this article need to be viewed and treated with caution, as mind-images designed to be relevant in or to argumentation. They may give an impression of mathematical exactness, but should not be seen as scale diagrams, but rather as a way to aid in the visualization of knowledge-theoretical reasoning.

Key concepts used in the following sections of this article

Praxis: By praxis is meant a delimited knowledge area consisting of both theoretical and practical elements. A praxis can be both collective (e.g. the collective knowledge and experience that certified physicians are expected to have) and individual (the individual physician's personal experience and expertise). A praxis is not static, but changes over time. To work within a praxis requires practise.

Judgement fields: Judgment fields comprise the innate oppositions within a praxis, which the practitioner needs to manage. For simplicity, it can be helpful to think of them as pairs of opposites. The tension between contradictory aspects of the practice can be seen as the energy that makes it possible to talk about an area of knowledge and can be termed a judgement field. The judicious handling of such tension fields is a trait of the skilled practitioner's practice.

Habits: In this context, habits include the practised mental and motorical patterns that make possible quick and appropriate reactions within a praxis. A habit may also consist of a readiness to quickly discern relevant details in a situation or in a sensory impression.

Experienced moments: The time period which psychologically constitutes a moment in the time-flow (Stern, 2004) is considered an experienced moment. This is the time required to make meaningful groupings of stimuli. A word is an instant, but a sentence is a moment. A typical experienced moment is 3–4 seconds.

Music as a praxis field

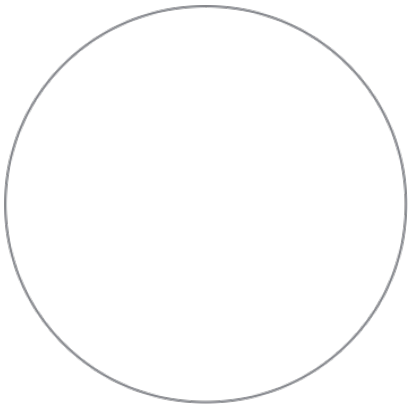

Figure 1.

The circle above symbolizes a field of knowledge consisting of both knowledge which can be expressed as instructions and the knowing you gain through practise. In short, a praxis. The following discussion will be focused on the aspect of the knowledge field that can be seen as tacit knowledge. This kind of knowledge is characterized by personal practise, which connects it to personality in a way that factual knowledge is not. The transfer of facts, manuals and instructions are, of course, of great importance within a praxis, but the conceptualization here is primarily concerned with the kind of knowledge that is based upon personal experience (for discussions around the relationship between rules, instructions and practice see, among others, Göranzon, 2009; Johannessen, 2003; Nordenstam, 2005; Wittgenstein, 2001; Åberg, 2010).

For example, the circle in Figure 1 may symbolize the special aspect of human knowledge that is the subject of higher musical education. Apart from demarcating the boundary to other knowledge areas, the circle also delimits within the musical field. Conservatories only teach certain music forms. Neither hip-hop nor Balinese gamelan music is usually included.

Within a praxis field there are different traditions and views:

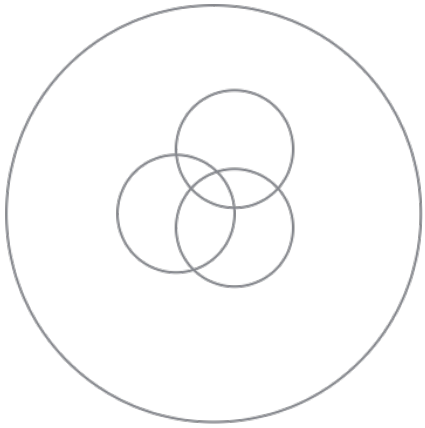

Figure 2.

Various musical forms use distinct approaches to music making. Different instruments have their specific traditions stemming in part from the different kinds of challenges connected with the practical handling of them. Higher musical education encompasses a wide spectrum of more or less collective practices, overlapping in different ways. The smaller circles in Figure 2 can symbolize for example jazz, classical music, and world music. Or, within the classical department, strings, woodwinds and piano. The content of the circles is not static, but dependent on changing traditions and social factors. At the same time there is a high degree of stability in what is considered as basic knowing in a musical craft. A comparison may be made with healthcare, where different competences, specialties and traditions coexist and cooperate—not without tensions, yet still within a common frame of knowledge. If you look closer at the different traditions, they depend on the standpoints individual musicians have taken.

The concept of *field* as in knowledge field or professional field is commonly used as a metaphor, but it also has specific meanings, for example in sociology. Pierre Bourdieu uses the term as signifying the power structures and hierarchies in a social group. He also uses the term *habitus* for the ingrained personal habits and actions connected to belonging to a field. The habitus, a product of history, produces

individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each person in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their constancy over time more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). The focus here is not so much the social hierarchies within a profession, or the delineation of professionals towards other groups, but the capacities of judgement that unite a practice.

A symphony orchestra is a good example. Although there are quite strict hierarchies within the group, both of a social kind and practically in performance, there is also a shared body of experience, tradition and knowledge that makes the group function as a collective, in the practice of a specific orchestra, discernible from other orchestras. This is the orchestras' praxis field. This orchestra praxis field then divides into the different instrument groups where there are quite different practical challenges, resulting in specific ways of relating to music making and practising. In Bourdieu's terms this would be discernible in, for example, a French horn players' "habitus", since the possibility of filling that role is a result of the years of training and socializing in the French horn community. What the notion of habitus lacks are the constant testing and judgement processes that make a skilled practice something more than a sociological position. This is an important aspect of the concept *praxis field*.

If we return to the general praxis field, what kind of knowledge is it that the field contains? Partly, it may be expressed in the form of instructions. What signs in musical notation mean, how instruments work mechanically, music history, traditional rules of counterpoint, all this and much more is possible for the knowledge-seeker to read about. But that is not the reason why one turns towards a higher musical education, with its focus on one-to-one teaching and master-apprentice relationships. A large part of the tuition concerns that which cannot be expressed as instructions but consists of a deepened ability to make musical judgements. The process of getting muscles and vocal cords to perform what is needed contains both the question of how to achieve the purely motorical skills, and what the artistic goal to strive for might be. These questions are intimately intertwined, and both are deeply personal. Development does not involve finding a definite answer, but rather developing one's knowledge around how to handle different aspects of these questions, both in the practising which takes such a large part of a musician's time, and in the performance situation.

Judgement fields

If becoming a skilled practitioner within a praxis field implies the handling of questions of judgement, what are the specific traits of judgmental deliberations? Having good judgement implies success in balancing different aspects of a situation. If we take a closer look at that which requires judgement, there are, apart from the instrumental or genre-specific decisions, some tension fields that can be seen as basic and collective. To make these tension fields explicit it may be useful to see them as opposites.

One example of a general musical tension field is the tension between individuality and a musical style or genre. We may let this specific tension field be symbolized by a line through the praxis field.

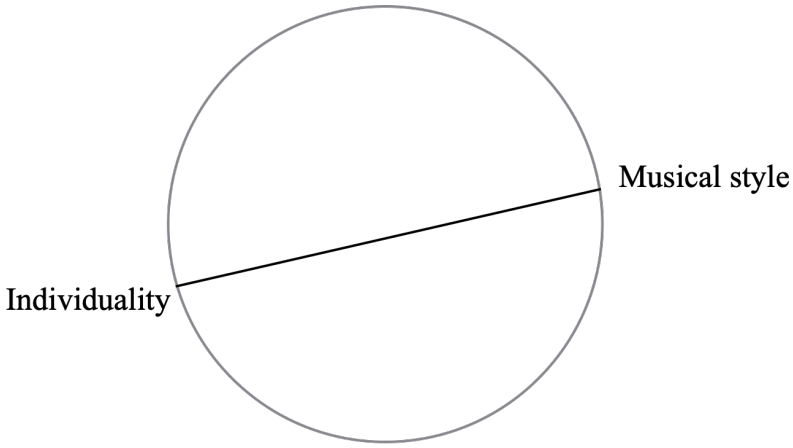

Figure 3.

A strong motivation for a musician may be to learn to play in a special style of music. A style is a condensation of what a tradition of musicians have done and liked, a praxis with delimitations towards other styles. When you learn a music style, through practise, you limit yourself to the actions that are common within that style, as well as to the emotional world and way of perceiving that are connected to the style. Important traits of the style can be expressed in the form of a notation, instruction, or a collection of examples of central expressions of the style. Some parts of the style can be expressed as a rule; it is possible to imagine a computer program that constructs recognizable examples of a musical style. This is quite uninteresting from the musician's point of view; when taken to its limit the concept of style loses its meaning. A style is something more than a collection of rules.

Another strong motivation for a musician is to develop individuality, one's own personal voice, to explore how you can make the music a unique creation in

the moment. For this there are no rules. But it is very hard to make music without any association to something you heard in the past, or using no motoric patterns practised beforehand. If you imagine musical sounds which really have no connections to a musical style, the result would be very close to random. This too is relatively uninteresting from the musician's point of view.

A written score constitutes a concrete instruction for actions within the style. The musician's degree of freedom towards the score differs between different styles and periods. How that freedom is handled is a constantly recurring theme. A good notation provides a resistance, is something that may be interpreted. The process of interpretation is a form of movement within the field, where the degree of individuality towards the style is constantly tried. This can be done in an infinite number of ways, and the development of judicious handling of this tension field forms a large part of the training in higher-level musical education. So how does this development take place? Let us look a little closer at the properties of this tension field:

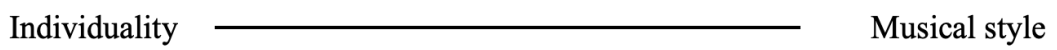

Figure 4.

I have earlier called these types of tensions within a practice 'paradoxical fields' (Åberg 2008, 2010), to emphasize that the poles, themselves, are not possible points of departure, but that actions within a praxis fall at some point between them. In this context, the term judgement fields clarifies the idea that the skill of handling a praxis is connected to a development of judgement within the tensions of the praxis. A particular performance is an example of striking a balance, in which individual traits blend with the specifics of the musical style.

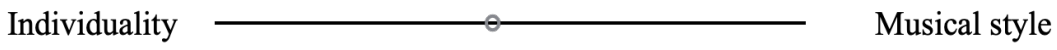

Figure 5.

This balancing happens whether it is intentional or not. It is, of course, fully legitimate to take different positions within the field. The same musician can occupy different positions at different occasions.

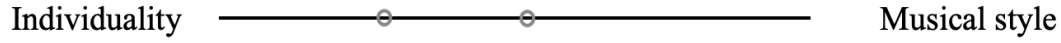

Figure 6.

An experienced performer has access to many different examples of how they can be individual in their approach to the style agreement.

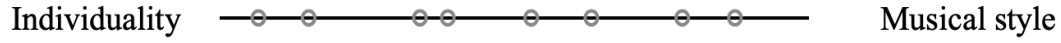

Figure 7.

The multitude of examples makes the field rich and upholds the tension. The examples can be both your own and others' earlier actions. There are often iconic examples of practitioners that have related in a sufficiently specific way to the style so that they constitute examples that all practitioners are expected to know. A jazz saxophone player doesn't have to like or want to play like John Coltrane, but he or she not knowing about him would arouse deep suspicion.

A knowledge area can be divided into many different sub-groups, ranging from different styles of craft to different approaches within a scientific subject. If you look even closer, you see specific practitioners which in their practice assert an integrity in a specific practice-style. There are healthcare traditions, programming styles, literary styles, specific ways to blow glass. Behind these, there is a thought model, that can be more or less reflected upon by the practitioner.

The pursuing of a practice in the natural sciences also involves building thought models. The creative process in these cases have considerable similarities to artistic processes, where an independent attitude to the scientific tradition is an important feature. The formed thought model is then tried against the outer world by experimental method. In the cases when experiments fail, the model may still be a relevant example of scientific practice, a necessity for the successful examples to take form.

In artistic circumstances there is also a trial process, but rather of a thought model's internal coherence, where the level of individuality towards the chosen modes of expression is an important part of the evaluation. Artistic expressions can be seen as constantly tried against the spectators' and practitioners' inner

apprehensions of reality. The ability and desire to "give reality a twist" is an important link between the areas.

The examples of actions within the style do not necessarily constitute models for imitation, but rather possibilities that can be related to in an analogical fashion; you can see similarities and differences between different standpoints and choose to what degree you let yourself be influenced by them. Analogical thinking is a central part in the development of the capacity of judgement. If you only have access to one example, you are forced to follow it as if it was a rule, while the person who has seen and created many different examples has a far greater possibility to move within the judgement field. In effect, the capacity of movement within the field and the preparedness for many different types of actions towards the style is an important part of the skill of a practitioner. Practising, at an advanced level, is to a large extent about maintaining this movement.

One who learns a musical style also learns a way of perceiving, which allows immediate reaction to what a fellow musician is doing, a quick interpretation of a score and the conversion of the impulses into appropriate actions in the specific situation at hand. As in many other professions, you practise yourself into a professional praxis which carries with it a particular way to think and feel, a particular world view, and a limitation of the number of possible actions. This is actually the core of the style, more so than that which can be expressed as style rules. A grasp of these limitations is a requirement for being a practitioner in a particular style, but they are also constantly tested, stretched, and reformed. Our aim, as practitioners, is to keep this process alive.

Complementary judgement fields

Another, related, judgement field is the relationship between distance and sensitivity in actual performance. This theme was introduced already in the 18th century by Denis Diderot in 'Paradoxe sur le comedien' (Diderot, 1883), where he poses the question of whether it is the emotional or the distanced actor that has the greatest effect on the audience.

To perform technically difficult music requires a form of emotional coldness. There is a kind of distance in the moment of waiting in a pause on stage. At the same time sensitivity to emotional impulses play a major part in the active listening on your fellow musicians and yourself. Particularly when the task is to repeat the same music many times, to go through the same flow of emotional charges, the question becomes urgent. How much of it can be planned? How can

the creative presence you want to share with the audience be upheld? This is also something that does not have a given answer but is continually tried in practice.

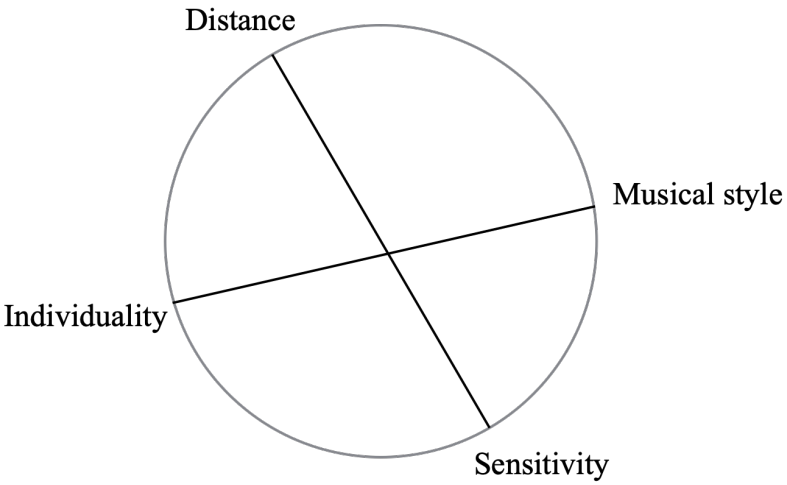

Figure 8.

A comparison may be a psychotherapist's ability to simultaneously be both empathic and professionally distant. The narrative the client develops during the session is in focus, but at the same time there is a watching of the therapist's own reactions, a scrutinizing of the impulses the therapist contributes as a dialogue partner. In intensive moments of the therapy this ability can be put severely to the test (see Stern, 2004).

A teacher may have a meticulously prepared plan for a lesson that may then be changed on the basis of their student's reactions. A way of handling this type of tension fields, in the training of music pedagogues, can be to change between having a prepared plan for the lesson and deliberately acting from the intention to intercept the student at the stage he or she is at (Åberg, 2010 p. 118).

The relationship between simplicity and complexity can be seen as a further basic judgement field. Playing music is complex, it is fingering, breathing, musical content, notation, style considerations, fellow musicians, the acoustics of the hall, among other things. Through all this there is a quest for simplicity, a flow that makes it possible to experience the music as lucid. But if too simple the result is without resistance, it is something you can just glide through. It becomes difficult to keep attention on the processes where you need to be present. So, you need to create new complexity, by embellishing, changing, sharpening the harmonies, finding new details in a well-known piece to strike a new nerve in the concert situation. Often musical development takes place in the oscillation between these

poles, in the activities of practitioners of a style trying to find new forms of resistance in music that seems just too familiar.

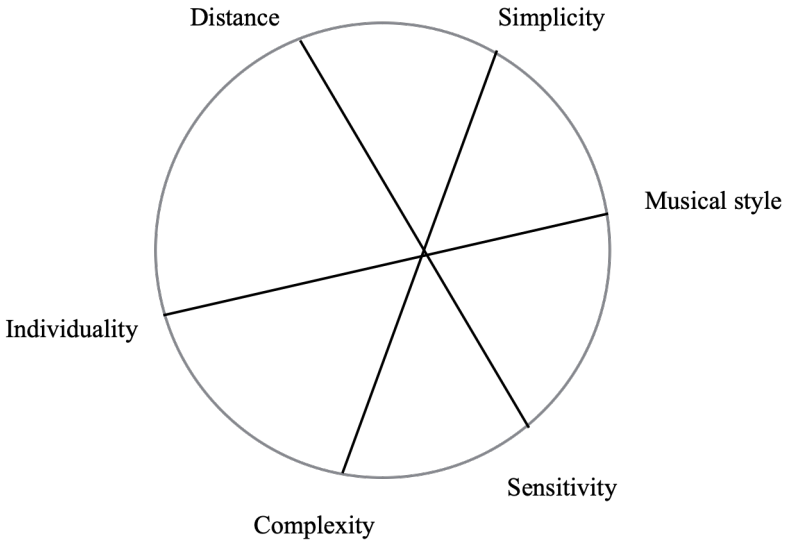

Figure 9.
Note. The lines do not imply specific positions

These tension fields can be seen as traversing the praxis field as a whole and being related to every performance. In a particular performance, the musician takes a position, makes a specific action. Right in that moment the praxis field collapses into a specific point somewhere in the field. But only for an instant. In the daily work of a musician, there is no interest in the field degrading into unambiguousness, to an ultimate performance that is a "solution". On the contrary, the musician's aspiration is to uphold the tension and densify the field. In this way it may be possible to find another novel way to navigate within it, which can also make the next performance specific, a unique point in the praxis field.

Genre-specific judgement fields

Apart from these kinds of basic tensions affecting musical praxis as a whole, there are of course also a large number of genre-specific judgement fields, judgements made within a genre and/or instrumental tradition. These concern, for example, the modes of expression of specific repertoires, instrumental/technical questions like choosing reeds for a clarinet, considerations on instrumentation in ensembles, ways of relating to one another while playing in a particular style, etc. Some of these

overlap. That is to say, different choices are often made within the same judgement field in different genres.

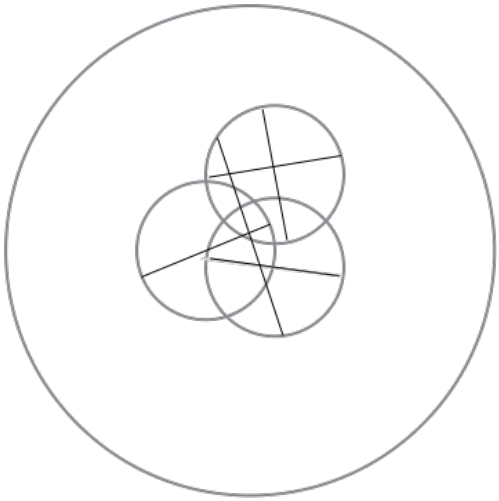

Figure 10.

A reason to use jury processes in the evaluation of applicants to arts education is that all these factors interact in the question of what constitutes artistic quality. Another is that the practitioners within a genre do not necessarily agree on which aspect is most significant, most likely to evolve, or even where in the respective judgement fields it is most appropriate to reside. The collective values of the praxis show in the instances of joint evaluation. There are elaborate forms to minimize capriciousness in these kinds of evaluations. For example, in a jury of five, the highest and the lowest value may be omitted in the calculation of points. Only the three other values are summed. This minimizes the individual jury member's potential to manipulate the final result. The jury are representatives of a praxis, where the norm is to strive for fairness and uphold a meritocracy in evaluations, with well-balanced collective judgements, based on each jury member's activities within the field.

Overlapping praxis fields

In many cases, several praxis fields interoperate. In higher music education the question of musical and performance quality is combined with questions of the best ways to teach and help students develop. The musical and pedagogical praxes overlap in several intricate ways. There are specific judgement fields connected to

music pedagogy. For example, we all want to encourage our students to become as versatile as possible so they are well prepared to handle many different types of situations and can work in many different kinds of engagements. In that manner they will be well prepared for their future professional life.

At the same time, we want the students to become as good as possible at something, find a specialty that will distinguish them from their peers and give them a profile of their own. If someone is really good at something special, that can be enough to have as a base for a professional life.

Even if it's not possible to be 100 percent specialist, nor 100 percent generalist, there is nevertheless an ever-present tension field to be considered. From the student's point of view this becomes a musical and artistic question, but from the teacher's point of view it is a question of pedagogy. A pedagogical balancing, within the judgement field, is made up of considerations of how time can be spent in the most relevant way. How the teacher relates to that question is also reflected at a more structural level, in course plans and schedules.

To reach well-balanced decisions the teacher needs to be able to imagine several different examples of possible ways of proceeding, and have the time to reflect on their appropriateness, with all relevant factors considered together. There can be many possibilities for a particular student. The time that student spends on practicing in a particular way cannot be retrieved. This balancing is different with each student. That the situation-based judgement can take place is an important part in maintaining educational quality.

Personal praxis

If we now return to the general praxis field, we can look closer at the conditions for a single practitioner in the field. In this case the inner circle in Figure 11 symbolizes the praxis of a particular musician.

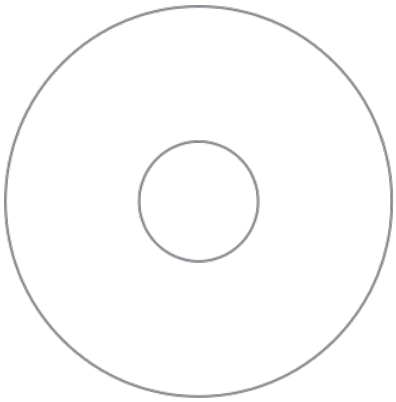

Figure 11.

After many years of practise, the practitioner has developed a readiness for relevant actions within one genre, or several. In great part, this readiness is constituted by ingrained habits, motorical and mental, which make it possible for the practitioner to react in a fruitful way in the situations connected to the practice.

Practising aims at developing new praxis-specific ways of action, but at the same time implies a sifting process, where the number of possible actions becomes more delimited over time. A skilled practitioner can act with precision based on immediate access to practised action patterns, at the same time possessing the ability to quickly interpret the praxis-related situations he or she faces. During practise less fruitful patterns are sifted out. This sifting is further refined in practise for specific situations, like the practising of a specific piece or during a rehearsal period. We can let the sifting process be symbolized by Figure 12 (with the figure above turned sideways), where a large number of possible actions are condensed to a readiness to act in a focused manner.

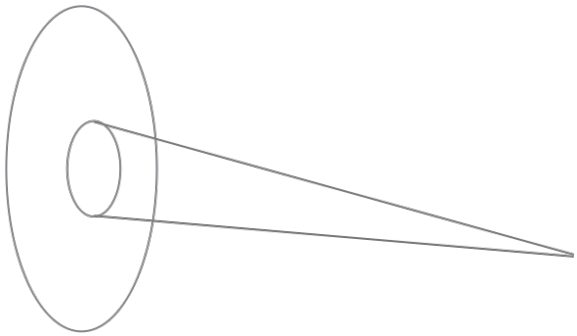

Figure 12.

A praxis is expressed in a situation, for example in a concert. This situation is, to some extent, incalculable. The practitioner puts him/herself in the situation, interprets the situation to the best of his/her ability, and engages with the course of events from the possibilities available as practiced action patterns. The interpretation and action takes place within the frame of what, psychologically, is seen as an experienced moment, a time frame of typically 3–4 seconds (see Stern, 2004), where the practitioner makes efforts to assimilate as much as possible of the characteristics of the situation, while at the same time striving to take an active part in the flow of moments, or refrain from acting, in a way which skillfully balances the different dimensions. The actual decisions might be made in fractions of a second, often subliminally, out of the apprehension of the totality of the experienced moment and situation at hand. The passing experienced moments are symbolized in Figure 13 by the plane on the right side. The angle pointing into this 'plane of passing time' (cf. Henri Bergson's *durée)* symbolizes the practitioner's capacity for discretion, in the moment of practice.

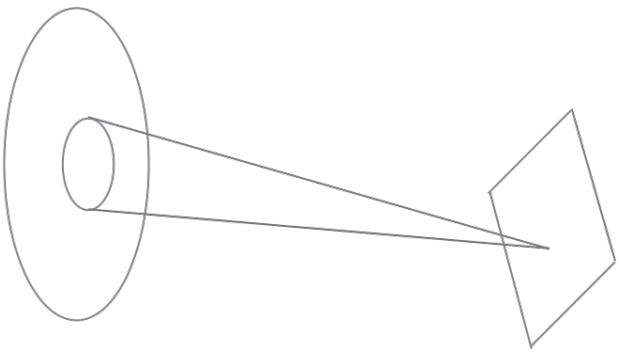

Figure 13.

The point of the angle should be seen as moveable, as if constantly trying to find the most appropriate way to handle the flow of living moments that pass. The degree of presence in this process is an important result of the practising, and a strongly motivating force in the practise process. The image of the focused habit trying to actively engage in the duration of a moment is taken from Henri Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* (Bergson, 1912). For Bergson, this is an image of the relationship between human memory, in general, and spontaneous action. In my view, the image is even more relevant to the relationship between the performers' reflection and the performance situation. The memory created by training into a praxis makes it possible to reflect and act within the thought-style of the praxis.

As performers we want to be close to the flow of moments. The most fascinating, unexpected, and life-giving situations reside there. It is the reason to practise. For a stage artist there is a strong attraction in the experience of sharing awareness in the moment with the audience. Is this intensive experience of time actually transferable through a recording?

In many other professions, where the practice does not happen in a public form, on stage, there is still an enticement in being in "sharp mode"— using your skill in situations that aren't predictable, where unexpected things may happen, where you need to use your developed capacity of judgement to deal with something that you cannot fully grasp. The performative, in these cases, becomes more hidden, embedded in our everyday activities.

The moments requiring true skill may appear at the most unexpected times. It is not always easy to describe the motives for actions made in sensitive situations. But the situations within a practice which can be seen as performative are a great part of the practitioner's professional identity. Identifying them, as such, together with the form of uncertainty that surrounds them, is an important basis for continuous development of judgement-capacity within a praxis. The practitioner who doesn't regularly train in situations of that kind will quickly lose their practised skill.

Activities that are less obviously performance-related than the musician's can also be in "sharp mode". When a physician gives a diagnosis, it is a performative moment in this sense (Josefson, 1998). When a caregiver apprehends the state of a demented old woman it is a performative moment (Victor Tillberg, 2007). When a process technician verifies that all the parameters in the process work as they should, it is a performative moment, since it concerns a judgement-based apprehension of all parts of a situation, being able to identify the signs that indicate deviation, and act accordingly (Perby, 1995).

Even if what characterizes a skilled practitioner most is to want and be able to stay in the right side of the figure, the exercising of a praxis involves a movement

between the right side and the left. The painter takes a few steps back to see the totality, to come back to the actual painting with a new approach. There is a dynamic between reflection and action which is part of the life of the process. But the point on the right side can also lose its sharpness, its movement can subside and stiffen into a mechanical performance of something that was once spontaneous and situation-based. Modes of action and interpretation, once successful, can suddenly be found wanting.

When this happens the practitioner needs to retreat, to move towards the left side of the figure, to find time for reflection over what really happened and bring in new thoughts and points of departure, which in due time can be converted to new, relevant habits. In that very moment the practitioner is not capable. Not being capable can be perceived as intimidating for someone who has built a personal professional role that entails being a skilled specialist. A strong emphasis on the actual operation is often a tell-tale sign of an accomplished practitioner, and the reluctance to leave that position needs to be respected.

Nonetheless, long-term successful practicing is characterized by a dynamic tension between the spontaneous handling of situations and the reflection that questions well-practised habits. In each reflection process the tensions within the praxis are re-formed in a new manner and lead to new habits, which can be tested against the tasks the practitioner faces. Perhaps the movement between performance and reflection is the most basic form of tension within a field, related to praxis.

The language levels of practice

A praxis that is not verbal, like the musician's, gives good opportunities to look closer into the role of language in the investigation of tension fields. The basic musical experience is not verbal, and even if a song text might be in words, verbal processing has very little place in performance. Verbal thoughts interfere with the musical presence. They activate different, and in the moment irrelevant, parts of the brain. Language is present to a higher degree in the reflection process, which not least is shown by the rich, expressive, and situation-specific language used within the master-apprentice relationship, which is so characteristic of higher arts education.

However, the role of this language is not to lock the practitioner into rigid descriptions of artistic events, but rather to strengthen the dynamic process consisting of the movement between reflection, the creation of habits, performance, and back again. In that process it is possible to discern different types of communication modes.

Example: A musical example is not verbal. But the concrete action transmits much information. A shared experiencing of a musical situation implies a form of communication that can be very apparent to the persons involved. It can be conveyed directly by a corresponding musical action, a glance, or a gesture. But since it's not verbal, its interpreting needs, at least partly, to be put into words.

Situation-specific language: In the teaching or rehearsal room, a situation-specific language is often used. This language refers to a shared experience of something that has just occurred. The interpretation of what just happened is vital to the communication. Metaphors and symbolic images can take a large role here. This language may be on the brink of unintelligibility to an outsider who did not share or otherwise cannot refer to the experience. Special verbal agreements are often created in the context of the example. The purpose is to give impulses that change the action and the practising.

Praxis-connected language: In a praxis, there is often a specialist language—one that makes it possible to discuss aspects of performance in a far more precise way than with ordinary language. The everyday language that musicians use is full of references to different musical phenomena of which you are expected to be familiar. But there is a stronger emphasis on information on this level. A well-developed professional language is a strong indication of an experienced practitioner. Different forms of experiences can also be expressed as narratives of special situations that are relevant as examples. These narratives are not always understandable to an outsider but rather refer to the shared experiences within the profession.

General language: Finally, there is the general way of using language. This kind of language can be understood without any experience of the practice, but of course may address matters of great importance for the practitioner. With increasing distance, what can be said about the praxis becomes more general, but also more theoretical. The theoretical has potential transferability; a theoretical argument can be applied to many different situations, for example within other fields, and makes it possible to get an overview of patterns and contexts.

This article is an example of general language used for theoretical purposes. Even if it is based on a particular praxis, the aim is to inquire into the general nature of judgmental deliberations and the role of examples and language in a praxis. It's meant to be understood without any specific musical experience.

The different kinds of language use can be connected to the reflection process in the following way:

General language	Praxis-connected language	Situation-specific language	Examples
Common concepts	Specialist language, narratives	Metaphors, images	Actions

Abstract Concrete

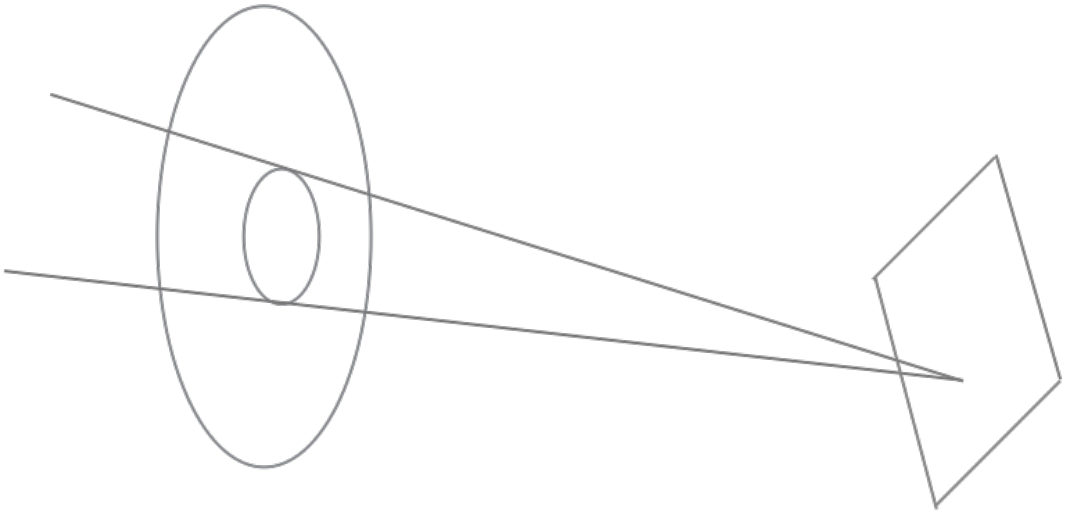

Figure 14.

Moving to the left in this figure, the language gradually becomes more general. An example speaks only for itself. The more the reflection process moves in the general direction, the more it becomes possible to make analogies to other examples, practices and knowledge areas.

For the musician, it is obvious that the actual performance is not verbal. A lot of practising happens very close to the point to the right in Figure 14, where experience does not become fully verbalized before it is taken back into a new attempt to perform. Musicians spend many hours in this non-verbal state of mind. In many other fields, this type of dynamic is not quite so clear. If we return to text-writing, as a praxis, it is of course about language, by definition. But the

performative part of writing, to a certain extent, withdraws from verbal description. The words I am writing, right now, follow spontaneously from the place where I find myself in the action of writing. If, in this moment, I tried to describe the background and motives that led me to this context, it would be deeply inhibiting on my writing process.

I must act, write, take the thought further, creating a material form from the words that arise in this particular moment. Later, I can step back, change, correct, look over the totality, think about this text's relationship to other texts. This corresponds to the movement between performance and reflection even if the practice is, in this case, writing. To express oneself within a verbal praxis can be seen as a special case of praxis-use in general.

Concluding remarks: Judgement fields, praxis, and artistic research

A praxis is not static. Languages change. To see knowledge development as a result of an individual performers' actions in a praxis rather than as an anonymous volume of knowledge can be one of the strongest contributions of artistic research to society's knowledge environment, as a whole. However, in that case, the relationship between artistic action, verbal reflection and possible theoretical structures needs to be clarified at a knowledge-theoretical level.

There has been a tendency to see artistic research as something that, above all, should take place in the right part of Figure 14, close to the performer's experience in the moment of performance, or the practicing and rehearsal process preceding the performance. This ambition is often met with a great deal of resistance by many practitioners. The reason for this is the experience that such verbalizing locks and hinders the attention to changing situations that is such a large part of the abilities of a skilled practitioner. The practicing process rather strives to make the practitioner more flexible, to strengthen the cone's ability to move (as visualized in Figure 14) and make it possible to act spontaneously, yet appropriately, without disturbance from verbal reasoning, and with full attention on the constantly changing musical flow.

In contrast to the flow of performance, the musician's reflection often takes place at a substantial distance from the actual performance, to the left in Figure 14. Problems and obstacles in the practice can be identified, verbalized, and examined. But the relevance of the reasoning is constantly tested in the light of performance. There exists an ever-present questioning of what manner of discussion is relevant for the practitioners' ongoing practising processes. Is there something in the reasoning that really leads to a different action when you place yourself in the right

part of Figure 14? Does it help the musician with his or her concert, say next Saturday? Or does it have the potential to make them a better player, by next year? The practitioners' judgement of this is a crucial part of professional skill.

There are very many factors, almost impossible to overview, that affect a musical action sounding one way or the other. There is every reason to analyze them. The examination can take place non-verbally in the practising process, but it can also be aided by language and the concepts connected to a particular way of making music. Examining the meanings and frames of interpretation in the different levels of language musicians use is a valid point of departure for a research process that aims to deepen the awareness of the nature of the tension fields in musical practice, and thereby finding new ways to handle them. Working in that manner is in line with Wittgenstein's view of philosophy as primarily a way to obviate misunderstandings and clarify what meanings we attach to different concepts (Wittgenstein, 2001, remark 124). I hope this text, now about to end, speaks to this potential.

There is also an array of less praxis-bound factors that affect the practice—everything from instruments, materials, ergonomics, connections to other art forms, technology, psychology etc. The left side of Figure 14 opens to everything that may be of help in the process. The language transmitting these forms of knowledge does not have any direct connection to the practitioner's experiences, but rather to insights into other knowledge areas. When those kinds of connections happen, they can occasionally have great, even radical, consequences, opening up totally different viewpoints. To take new influences into a praxis and examine the effects by creating new and specific examples of practice helps to maintain the tensions of the praxis field, creating and upkeeping richer fields of examples. Constructive artistic questions may be drawn both from the happenings in the performance moment, to the right in Figure 14, or by external impulses that can serve as creative resistance, to the left side of that same figure. They may then be *cultivated* in words; their significance in the context can be examined. This can, in and of itself, allow for an image of an artistic research process—one that highlights the movement between the right and left side of Figure 14.

But the trial or test of the investigation takes place in the right side of Figure 14, in the musician's unique personal ability to act spontaneously, creatively, adapting to the situation in real time. The more or less coherent concepts created by reflection and practise are tried against the outer world which inexorably weeds out the less fruitful approaches. If that form of evaluation is central for knowledge-building in the performing arts, it follows that it is also present in other forms of praxes. Taking a closer look at what the evaluation processes look like in different praxis fields can create good opportunities for analogies, exchange and

development. The volume of possibilities quickly becomes too large to survey. It is only the individual practitioner who can decide what may contribute to his or her personal praxis. But there is also a responsibility to actually *do* the evaluation, to contribute new examples of performance to the collective practice where you have conquered a position. To densify the field of examples which jointly constitute a style, genre, tradition, praxis.

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