ANNA NØRHOLM LUNDIN

And now everything is supposed to be normal again – just like that?!

Mixed emotions and negotiations of careers and performer identities after the pandemic

Abstract
The global pandemic of Covid-19 has had massive effects on many levels. For many sectors, the restrictions are gone but normalcy is not fully restored. The performing arts, for example, have been especially vulnerable to sharp restrictions, with audiences staying at home. The aim of this article is to explore what it means for freelance musicians in the art/classical music genre to re-establish their careers after the pandemic. The empirical data consists of interviews with Swedish freelance musicians from 2021 and 2022. The article concludes that the pandemic and its aftermath present the freelancers with substantial practical challenges and emotional dilemmas. Some of the freelancers have been able to re-establish their careers and performer identities, while others are still struggling to get back into the loop. The pandemic has started processes of change, which are now negotiated in relation to going back to 'normal'.

Keywords: freelance musicians, post-pandemic, mixed emotions, negotiations, careers and performer identities

THE GLOBAL COVID-19 crisis has had massive effects on many levels such as health and finance. The long-term consequences are yet to be grasped, as some sectors, such as hotels, restaurants, sports and culture are struggling to fully recover.[1] For these professions, the restrictions are gone but normalcy is not entirely restored. However, the effects are not only negative, as the pandemic has brought about new habits and values such as increased work-life balance (Warran et al. 2022; Daniels et al. 2022; Vyas 2022). Some of these changes are here to stay, such as office workers refusing to return to full-time office work, as they don't want to get back on the hamster wheel (Smite et al 2023). This article examines these potentially constructive changes, negotiated as societies strive to return to normalcy in early 2022. The Swedish strategy for dealing with the pandemic, which did not involve a formal lockdown, has been widely discussed (Claesson & Hansson 2021). Instead, there was an emphasis on personal responsibility with the slogan 'stay home, stay safe', although

1 Restriktionerna är borta – men krisen är inte över (svensktnaringsliv.se), 2023-03-27.

https://doi.org/10.37062/sf.61.25548
Sociologisk Forskning, årgång 61, nr 2, s. 193–214.

recommendations and restrictions were still in place. Some sectors struggled to manage severe and changing restrictions due to the peaks and troughs of the virus. For instance, the performing arts sector had to cope with various restrictions, including reduced audience numbers (5-50), increased distance from the audience and between those on stage (2 metres), and vaccination certificates, among others.[2] These limitations, combined with declining audience figures, led to the cancellation of most cultural events between March 2020 and February 2022. Consequently, this has resulted in acute financial and social problems in this sector, leaving lingering questions about the recovery in 2022-2023 (Kulturanalys 2022a-b, 2023).

It has long been known that performing artists deal with the great contrast between a much loved and fulfilling profession and its harsh conditions (Kingsbury 1988), but what is unique with the pandemic crisis is its prolonged and erratic character. In addition, while going back to normal in early 2022, professionals are dealing with new practical challenges and emotional dilemmas, as the pandemic is still not entirely over, especially in vulnerable sectors. There is a growing body of research about how creative workers and performing artists, most of whom are freelancers, have been affected by the pandemic. Studies point to its negative effects, such as increased social inequality and polarization in society at large, but also to the positive effects, such as changed values and habits, particularly regarding work-life balance and autonomy (Comunian & England 2020; Jungkuntz 2021; Mikelj et al. 2021; Askvik et al. 2021; Warran et al. 2022; Daniels et al. 2022; Fiske et al 2022). Some creative workers have been able stay active throughout the pandemic, albeit in adapted forms (Fürst 2022; Brzozowska & Galuszka 2023). Others, however, have encountered great difficulty in maintaining their livelihood and sense of well-being (Pulignano et al. 2021; Brooks & Patel 2022; Mangset et al. 2022; Jones 2022). Artists performing live have been especially vulnerable, as they depend on physical meetings with a paying audience (Kulturanalys 2022a-b). This article focuses on freelance musicians in the classical/art music genre, who suffer from long-term effects from being cut off from the venues where their careers and performer identities are maintained (Nørholm Lundin 2022a-b).

Even when the Swedish authorities declared that restrictions should be reversed in February 2022, the situation remained dire for many performing artists (Kulturanalys 2022a-b, 2023). This article suggests that the pandemic aftermath continues to present freelance musicians with substantial practical challenges and emotional dilemmas. The pandemic has created a situation akin being cast back in time, requiring them to slowly rebuild their careers (Nørholm Lundin 2022b). However, the pandemic has also prompted freelancers to reconsider their habits and values, resulting in a greater emphasis in achieving better work-life balance and autonomy. Studies examining the long-term effects of the pandemic primarily concentrate on embracing changes such as hybrid working, yet there is a noticeable absence of research on the more challenging transitions back to the pre-pandemic norms. As suggested by the title of this article, there is a potential difficulty in simply revering to normalcy as if nothing had

2 Reports and web-sources, see reference list.

happened. The aim of this article is to explore what it means for freelance musicians to re-establish their careers after the pandemic. The research questions are as follows: What practical challenges and emotional dilemmas are the freelancers dealing with after the pandemic? How are post-pandemic careers and performer identities negotiated, in light of their experiences from the pandemic? The empirical data consist of interviews with thirteen professional freelancers in the classical/art music genre, each interviewed in both 2021 and 2022.

This article builds on previous studies concerning the complex conditions of creative worker (e.g., Butler & Stoyanova Russel 2018; Alacovska 2018, 2019). Theoretically, the article departs from Bourdieu's theory about social fields and practices (Bourdieu 1983, 1990, 1995, 1999) and adopts a relational understanding of practical challenges, emotional dilemmas, and negotiations of the 'new normal'. This theoretical approach holds that ambiguous conditions and ambivalent emotions are two sides of the same coin (Muel-Dreyfus 1985; Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips 2011; Scheer, 2012; Heaney, 2020) and are at the heart of reproduction and change of social order (Holt 2008). The pandemic and its aftermath offer unique possibilities for understanding negotiations of field-specific social practices at the intersection of the micro- and macro-crises (Flisbäck 2014; Threadgold 2018). As suggested by Swidler's concept of unsettled times, a crisis like the pandemic can lead to more profound changes in beliefs and orientations (Swidler, 1986; Quinn et al, 2022). The broader relevance of the article lies in understanding the strategies and resources of dedicated professionals who have been pushed to their limits. Additionally, it contributes to the problematization of a general trend in working life towards flexible employment and 'flexploitation' (Morgan et al. 2013). The case of freelance musicians highlights certain aspects of power, particularly in shaping interpretations of the pandemic experience and defining the parameters of the 'new normal'.

Ambiguous conditions and ambivalent emotions in post-pandemic freelance careers

The working conditions of freelancers in the creative fields and performing arts have been described as precarious, as they need to carefully balance artistic and economic risks (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2010; Lindström 2016; Kleppe 2017; Van Assche & Laermans 2022; Fürst 2022). Additionally, they must navigate complex and informal employment relationships (Alacovska 2018, 2019; Musgrave 2023), as well as lack of stability and control (Lund 2019; Nørholm Lundin 2022a-b).

These freelancers must utilize extensive emotional labour/management to cope with the precarious working conditions (Addison 2017; Butler & Stoyanova Russel 2018). As freelancers, they embody the entrepreneurial spirit (self's), of always being active and in charge of their careers and use of time (Scharff 2016; Warran et al. 2022), thus depending on themselves to collect and signal field-specific milestones of reputation (Nørholm Lundin 2020; Everts et al. 2022) and maintain their motivational drive/occupational faith (Lindström 2017; Addison 2017; Butler & Stoyanova Russel 2018;

Alacovska 2019; Banks 2019; Ye 2020). Freelance work entails a high degree of personal investment and a complicated version of freedom (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2009). As a result, freelancers often appear adept at managing complexity, albeit at the cost of self-exploitation, as indicated by their strategies (Butler & Stoyanova Russel 2018).

Due to the pandemic, the precarious conditions faced by creative workers have been exacerbated (Comunian & England 2020; Nørholm Lundin 2022a-b; Warran et al. 2022). However, the effects of the pandemic vary across different fields; for instance artists performing live have encountered greater difficulties, while authors and pop or rock musicians have been able to write, record, or stream from home (Fürst 2022; Brzozowska & Galuszka 2023). The disparity in employment conditions between permanent and freelance employees has widened, affecting freelancers significantly (Nørholm Lundin 2022b). Alberti et al (2018) suggest that precarity should be viewed as a process of precarization, wherein professionals struggle against a gradual loss of control over their careers. This article builds on these perspectives to understand what it means to re-establish freelance careers after the extreme events of the pandemic.

Studies suggest that the pandemic has prompted changes in values, with a widespread and increased tendency to prioritize safety and security in employment terms (Warran et al. 2022; Daniels et al. 2022; Hylland 2022). However, responses to the pandemic have been varied and complex; for example, freelance musicians have become more aware of the risks to their careers but are also daring to take more risks by challenging strict norms and rules (Nørholm Lundin 2022a-b). The long-term effects of the pandemic are yet to be revealed, and this article contributes to the understanding of how such changes are negotiated in relation to returning to normalcy.

Bourdieu's theory of social fields and social practices

This article builds on Bourdieu's theory in order to understand the socially embedded or relational dynamic of the freelancers' practical challenges, emotional dilemmas, and negotiations on careers and performer identities after the pandemic. Social fields or rooms are inherently relational, wherein the conditions of work and life vary in relation to unequal and hierarchical positions within the field (Bourdieu 1983, 1990, 1995, 1999). These conditions encompass diverse practical and emotional investments and tasks required at different positions, each holding varying amounts of resources and economic, social and symbolic or performance capitals (Everts et al. 2022; Brzozowska & Galuszka 2023). Studies indicate that social capitals, such as networks and connections, alongside symbolic capitals, such as reputation and recognition of skills, are particularly significant in non-mainstream professions (Alacovska 2018; Nørholm Lundin 2019).

The relational structure of a social field is reproduced by field-specific social practices, which regulate everyday activities and significant rituals such as individual practice, auditions, rehearsals, and concerts (Bourdieu 1990, 1995, 1999; Nørholm Lundin 2020, 2022a). These social practices are guided by the members' 'feel' for the game at hand, which comprises mutual beliefs (illusio) and fundamental agreements

(doxa). This 'feel' enables the members to participate in the game and believe in its significance. Threadgold (2018) suggests that this 'belief' should be understood as a shared sense of purpose within a field, which becomes one's own invested purpose. This concept is related to the reversed economy of the arts, where specific artistic values operate within a symbolic economy whose logic is an inversion of the logic of the larger societal economy (Bourdieu 1983, 1988).[3] Furthermore, the practical 'feel' that the members of the field share, is made possible by the members' embodied social history, known as habitus. The habitus shapes what is perceived as necessary and achievable within a particular position, for 'people like us' (Dumais 2017). The concept of cleft habitus is utilized to address potential 'clashes' between habitus and field. Social mobility or crises can contribute to such clashes, where individuals' habitus are out of alignment with the expectations of the field in which they operate (Muel-Dreyfus 1985; Flisbäck 2014; Threadgold 2018).

There is significant potential in exploring emotions through a Bourdieusian lens (1983, 1990, 1995, 1999). With his relational approach, the investments and work associated with various positions are as much emotional as they are practical. Furthermore, embodied or quasi-bodily emotions play a crucial role in understanding individuals' self-regulation in accordance with the rules of the game. Members of a field are socialized into self-regulation in accordance with dominant norms, seemingly of their own free will and righteous (symbolic violence) (Nørholm Lundin 2020; Bourdieu 1999). Several scholars highlight the relationship between emotions and social structure, such as understanding ambivalent emotions as "complex relational experiences within a wider web of interdependent social relationships" (Hillcoat Nallétamby & Phillips 2011, p. 202). This suggests that emotions can be seen as moments within broader socio-spatial relationships in social space (Holt 2008). Other researchers have suggested that emotions can be understood as embodied habits, which mediate between structure and agency (Scheer, 2012; Heaney, 2020). In this article, Bourdieu's theory is used to comprehend the socially embedded and relational dynamic of the increased ambiguous conditions and ambivalent emotions after the pandemic. Additionally, his theory serves as a foundation for understanding what is at stake as freelancers negotiate their embodied 'feel' for the game after the crisis.

Methods and materials

This study adopts a Bourdieu-oriented methodological approach, wherein the researcher reconstructs the object of research to understand and explain it (what is at stake) (Bourdieu 2004; Bourdieu et al. 1999). At the beginning of the research process, a stakeholder organisation for professional musicians was contacted to obtain feedback on the project idea and to identify suitable interviewees. The author provided information to potential interviewees to ensure the ethical demands of informed consent were

3 If the logic in the artistic field is that it is more important to be able to express oneself artistically than to earn a lot of money, then the logic in society at large is the opposite.

carefully met (Coe et al. 2017).[4] Thirteen freelance musicians in the classical/art music genre with different instruments, ages, working years, and professional orientations (institutions/free cultural sector, combinations with other jobs/studies), participated in the study. The majority of the interviewees were women (11 out of 13), which may have influenced the results. However, the dataset is too small to be able to generalize in relation to gender, which was not the purpose of the study. For confidentiality reasons, the interviewees were given fictitious names, their instruments were presented in groups, and their ages were approximated (see Table 1).

Two semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with each interviewee: the first during the pandemic (January-March, 2021) and the second immediately after the lifting of restrictions (March-April, 2022). This article primarily focuses on the second round of interviews, although insights from the initial interviews are utilized to better comprehend the post-pandemic experiences. The first round of interviews explored the interviewees' career and life histories, backgrounds, entry into the profession, professional trajectories, experiences and strategies during the pandemic, and future plans. The second round of interviews aimed to follow up on developments since the first interview, with questions concerning the state of the freelancers' careers and musician identities, their experiences, strategies, and plans, as well as their views on the short- and long-term effects/changes on the sector. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, transcribed, and analysed thematically (Coe et al. 2017). The analysis was developed through an iterative process, oscillating between the empirical data and theory. Throughout the coding and thematic analysis process, expressions of post-pandemic practical challenges and emotional dilemmas were identified and connected to considerations of what has been lost and gained concerning pre-pandemic careers and future aspirations. The analysis was theoretically guided by perspectives on the relational character of emotions and conditions.

In Table 1, the interviewees are presented along with various background variables, pre-pandemic career orientations, and the current state of their careers. These interviewees represent common variations in freelance careers in art music, including those working in 'institutions' such as symphony orchestras, opera choirs, and large ensembles, as well as those working in the 'free cultural sector', such as private theatres, officially funded projects, churches, and small ensembles. The context of the article is the aftermath of the pandemic in early 2022.[5] During the pandemic, performing artists were able to apply for official crisis funds, which were considered beneficial but insufficient. By the beginning of 2022, only a small proportion of cultural events were re-established.

4 The study does not disclose sensitive personal data. All data are handled in compliance with the requirements for safe storage (GDPR) and research ethics guidelines provided by the Swedish Council of Research and the Swedish Board of Ethical Review.

5 See web-resources and reports, list of references.

Table 1: Interviewees' background variables, pre-pandemic career orientations, and the current state of their careers.

Name (gender)	**Instrument-group**	**Age**	**Working years**	**Pre-pandemic career orientations**	**Post-pandemic state of careers (+/-)**
Björn (M)	Strings	45+	20–25	Freelancer, free cultural sector	+ Re-establishing projects and collaborations (Group 1: more fortunate)
Camilla (F)	Wind	50+	20–25	Freelancer, institutions	+/- Re-establishing gigs, a bit slow (Group 1: more fortunate)
Malin (F)	Wind	35+	5–10	Freelancer, institutions + teaching the instrument	- Few gigs (Group 2: less fortunate)
Hanna (F)	Wind	40+	15–20	Freelancer, institutions + other job	+ Long-term contract and other job (Group 1: more fortunate)
Isa (F)	Wind	30+	5–10	Freelancer, free cultural sector + studies	- Few gigs and studies/ other job (Group 2: less fortunate)
Agnes (F)	Wind	40+	15–20	Freelancer, free cultural sector + other job	- Few gigs and other job, re-orientation music career (Group 2: less fortunate)
Felicia (F)	Strings	30+	5–10	Freelancer, institutions	+ Long-term contract (Group 1: more fortunate)
Ulrik (M)	Wind	45+	20–25	Freelancer, institutions	+/- Re-establishing gigs, but slow (Group 2: less fortunate)
Sara (F)	Strings	30+	5–10	Freelancer + permanent position, institutions	+ Permanent contract and other gigs (Group 1: more fortunate)
Fredrika (F)	Singing	40+	10–15	Freelancer, free cultural sector	+ Re-establishing own ensembles and broad collaborations (Group 1: more fortunate)
Dora (F)	Strings	55+	30–35	Freelancer, institutions	+/- Gigs, but a bit slow (Group 2: less fortunate)
Louise (F)	Singing	35+	10–15	Freelancer, institutions	+ Long-term contract, but temporary (Group 1: more fortunate)
Maja (F)	Strings	40+	5–10	Freelancer, institutions	-Few gigs, re-orientation music career (Group 2: less fortunate)

Results and analysis

This article argues that, for freelancers in the art music genre, the pandemic persists in both tangible and intangible ways, as they grapple with significant practical challenges and emotional dilemmas in its aftermath. This chapter explores the mixed emotions of freelancers, their negotiations regarding careers and performer identities, and the increased ambiguity of their conditions.

Dealing with mixed emotions after the pandemic

This section explores the mixed emotions experienced of freelancers, including feelings of dealing with risk and relief, fatigue and doubt, as well as the demands or expectations of returning to business as usual.

Dealing with risk and relief

The freelancers can be divided into two groups, with some more fortunate than others in their ability to maintain and rebuild their careers during and after the pandemic. They express a wide range of emotions regarding the possibility of resuming work again in early 2022. The more fortunate freelancers (Group 1: Sara, Hanna, Louise, Felicia, Camilla, Björn, Fredrika) express strong and ambivalent emotions of relief and risk that they are grappling with. Singer Fredrika expresses her joy at being able to perform again: "It was so much fun, everyone in the group had so much energy because many hadn't had a job for very long, and then everyone was so grateful for being able to work, it was like this sparkle". The energy and sparkle that Fredrika describes can be understood as aspects of an embodied sense of calling, which is socialized into musicians (Nørholm Lundin, 2020). However, this sparkle has a potential downside, as it is related to an increased sense of risk as well not being able to take careers and performer identities for granted.

Some of the freelancers ponder whether work has become even more important due to not being able to take their careers for granted during and after the pandemic: "And then one can ask oneself, would I have felt like that, without the pandemic?" (Ulrik). However, the freelancers are also ambivalent about working again, for various reasons. The highs and lows of being able to work are somehow heightened, along with an increased sense of strain and risk:

> It felt very nice and fun to receive applauses. But still, it feels harder to work now, kind of like mentally hard. One doesn't really have the routines, and then there is all concern about the spread of the virus which lingers in the mind, like some kind of latent uncertainty. (Ulrik)

Other risks that are mentioned include a general sense that "the mat has been pulled from under one's feet and can be pulled away again" (Louise). The temporal nature of freelance careers appears to have intensified as a result of the pandemic, accompanied by tougher competition, declining audience figures, reduced political and public sup-

port, and financial losses. For Felicia, her mixed emotions regarding temporal contracts also contribute to a sense of being 'split' in time and place, as she feels simultaneously grateful for the current contract and anxious about future ones:

> Yes, it was incredibly nice – a relief! Really! And somehow this feeling that this was actually what one wanted to do, because somehow, when you are on your own and kind of not knowing why you keep going. It is very nice at the same time as I also [am worried], about the autumn, because it feels like it [the post-pandemic situation] hasn't really stabilized yet for the freelancers, so I am still very worried about what it will look like. It feels somehow like one is leaving music college again and trying to get a foothold and start that process all over again. (Felicia)

The increased sense of risk in the pandemic's aftermath contributes to mixed emotions. The desire for careers in music to succeed, even more than before the pandemic, may be a response to this. Apart from holding on to this ambition, another strategy is about creating some distance by 'claiming' autonomy. For instance, Louise is grappling with mixed emotions concerning consecutive one-year contracts at an opera choir, which do not provide the same rights and benefits as the permanent contracts. These emotions have become more pronounced in light of the pandemic, stemming from feelings of isolation and heightened competition. Louise appears to attempt to distance herself from this situation by embracing a broader performer identity and involving herself in other projects and activities on the side: "This is not all that defines me, my life will not end if I can't do this".

Dealing with fatigue and doubt

The less fortunate freelancers (Group 2: Maja, Malin, Isa, Dora, Ulrik, Agnes) have encountered greater difficulties in maintaining and rebuilding their careers during and after the pandemic. While the more fortunate freelancers experience mixed emotions of risk and relief, the less fortunate freelancers rather experience increased emotions of fatigue and doubt. They have doubts about how to find how to find the resources to restart their careers and what goals to pursue. Some freelancers feel compelled to invest significant time and energy into restarting their careers, despite having limited resources, after being highly flexible throughout the pandemic:

> I'm mentally tired somehow, which I have been thinking about lately, if this has to do with the pandemic. That one should come up with 2,000 different strategies all the time, like 'Oh! Now he got sick, but then we will have to call her, and that concert will happen, and then it will not happen, and now there was an extra'. All of that, maybe one is a bit tired after being so super-flexible all the time. (Maja)

There are several references to how freelancers have been "ripping their insides out to make things happen" (Sara). The disruptive nature of the pandemic waves and fluctuating restrictions became increasingly draining for the freelancers. For Malin,

the lockdown in late 2021 to early 2022 had a particularly negative impact for the rest of 2022: "There was no way I could recover from that". It was a major setback, both practically and emotionally: "That one! That was the worst" (Malin). In addition to the fatigue and sense of being fed up that the freelancers express, there is a sense of increased doubt about what to aim for:

> I am no longer sure it will get better. Maybe it's better to not be a permanent employee. I don't know. Well, there are a lot of nights and weekends there as well, and that's where there are jobs right now, in X symphony orchestra, and that would mean a lot of commuting. Also, it seemed that even those who were fully booked during the pandemic, who had a lot to do, who were still active, with a buzz, that it was them who were somehow most tired and most tempted to change careers completely, because they realised that it's not worth it. (Malin)

The less fortunate freelancers express doubt about how to find the resources to reinvest in their careers. Additionally, there is a sense of frustration with what feels like impossible conditions: "I don't know how anyone can expect [the freelancers] to do more" (Sara). This fatigue and doubt can complicate the process of restarting careers but has also initiated processes of change. As indicated in the title of this article, the expectations placed on the freelancers to move on as if nothing had happened – to be always ready for calls and gigs – feel absurd after being so exposed and left to fend for oneself during the pandemic:

> No one was making any plans for the spring, so it became this vacuum. But then, all of a sudden, was everything gone now? It should be like normal, that was the next thing, the next adjustment. Then one should be prepared somehow […] and then one just says 'pop!' and then everything is gone, kind of. Now everything is as usual. Well, but it isn't, no. (Dora)

Going back to 'business as usual'?

As Dora and others have pointed out, the demands placed on them to suddenly return to normalcy feel absurd: "Then one just says 'pop!' and then everything is gone, kind of. Now everything is as usual. Well, but it isn't, no" (Dora). This feeling of absurdity is compounded by the length of time it takes for the sector to resume productions and the changed perspectives, as freelancers feel somewhat burnt out from being left to fend for themselves. Additionally, the freelancers express that there is an increased gap in how the pandemic was experienced by freelancers and permanent employees, respectively – a disparity in perceived realities. From a Bourdieusian perspective (1995, 1999), this can be understood as part of the widening distance between positions in the field of art music. For Maja, returning to gigs is complicated and frustrating, as the permanent employees appear to wield power over interpretations of what the pandemic was like. This can be seen as a reinforcement of the prevailing norms, that freelancers are expected to be flexible, easy to work with, and socially subordinate:

> One notices that people working at an institution thought it was so 'hard' during the pandemic. They had nothing to do, and one notices that they don't get it, I mean… okay, you were bored but you had a full salary, but they just don't get it [laughs] – that argh! 'Oh, it was so boring and hard' (Maja).

After the upheaval of the pandemic, some of the expectations on freelancers to always be ready for calls and gigs are being negotiated. As pointed out above, one aspect of this is the expectation on freelancers to return to normalcy, as if nothing had happened. Another aspect relates to negotiations about what was discovered during the pandemic and what is possible to maintain in its aftermath. This applies to both groups of more or less fortunate freelancers, as the pandemic has profoundly changed them in terms of values and habits:

> I don't feel completely positive about things going back to how they used to be. That wasn't entirely healthy, but finding a balance where other things are as important, so that what I like the most is going to work out well, is my goal. I felt like I owned my time during these years, because there was nothing else. I think I experienced, for the first time, how hard it can be to be a freelancer and not own one's own time, so it was actually kind of nice. Now I don't own it [my time] in the same way; now I have to answer when someone is calling. Maybe something else was planned, but one just [accepts it]. (Björn).

Hence, discovering something else during the pandemic makes it more complicated to return to 'business as usual'. However, the processes of reflection and changed habits that started during the pandemic may also contribute to increased autonomy. For example, Maja reflects on how the pandemic has changed her because she had time to reflect: "I have had time to reflect and know what it can feel like, so that when I am jumping on the hamster wheel again, then I feel this is not what I want". At the same time, this causes some confusion and stress as the rules of the game – to always be ready for calls and gigs – are being challenged: "My problem is that I don't want anything anymore [laughs]. I am saying no to things for the first time in my life" says Maja. As expressed by Maja, challenging the embodied rules causes her mixed emotions of confusion, joy, and relief. Several freelancers have been forming new strategies during and after the pandemic, which has helped them focus on their own goals and to distance themselves from the external criteria of success: "to play the instrument the way that I do, because nobody else plays it like that, and to try to do that well" explains Maja, and "to protect this [focus on own goals, self-esteem] from what people are going to think and what places one gets to work at" adds Isa. The pandemic has affected the freelancers in fundamental ways, both good and bad.

Negotiating post-pandemic careers and performer identities

The pandemic and its aftermath have led to increased practical challenges and emotional dilemmas, as presented in the previous sections. The long-term effects of the pandemic are also evident in negotiations of who qualifies as a real musician in terms of quantity and quality of their performances and gigs. This negotiation is related to how careers in art music are built, where it is important to stay visible and in touch with networks to be considered for gigs (Alacovska, 2018, 2019). In the reversed economy of art music (Bourdieu 1983, 1988), the definition of who is a real or professional musician becomes blurred and complex. The definition is, at least in part, formal, as it requires a certain career path with music college as a prerequisite (Nørholm Lundin 2020). However, it is also informal, based on who is able to work with sufficient quantity and quality. In comparison with other professions, the definition of who is a professional is not determined solely by full-time employment or a permanent position.

All of the freelancers have strong credentials, such as music college and success in securing prestigious contracts or the like. However, it is striking to observe how quickly careers in music can fluctuate, for better or worse, based on audition outcomes and the like (Nørholm Lundin 2022a-b). Who is perceived as a genuine musician in the aftermath of the pandemic appears to be a sensitive issue, impacting not only careers but also performer identities. Freelancers carefully consider the composition of their gigs, particularly in relation to other bread-and-butter jobs or careers. This is crucial, not least to preserve one's reputation, as there is a looming risk of being labelled as "someone who has quit" (Hanna) or as someone who is simply "not good enough" (Malin).

As pointed out above, the extent to which the freelancers have been able to maintain and re-establish their careers and performer identities post-pandemic varies considerably. Obtaining a long-term contract "acts as a stamp of approval" (Felicia), not only in relation to the external criteria of who is bookable, but also to the freelancer's own internal criteria of being on the right path. However, not getting such a contract leads to doubts about professional goals. Some of the less fortunate freelancers feel that the pandemic has reshaped the landscape, resulting in 'other' people suddenly are getting the gigs. They believe it is challenging to influence this in their favor and that the process of gig allocation is even a mystery, which is related to the informal and complex employment structures (see Alacovska 2018).

During the pandemic, some freelancers began to question their performer identities: "am I a singer if I don't sing?" asks Louise, while Hanna adds "am I still a musician if I don't play as much, or not as well?". In the pandemic's aftermath, some freelancers are talking about how to restore their musician identity. For some, this simply involves getting used to working again. Others, like Malin, are still struggling and reflecting on the quantity and quality of their gigs and performances. Malin even talks about gigs as directly linked to identity, depending on the quantity and quality of gigs:

> Now I feel it is unclear if I am still am a musician or a teacher. I have a few small gigs, but I haven't got any bookings at an institution; this is kind of all I have in front of me. I have this musical in the summer where I can regain my identity, and this solo thing I did, which was really an 'identity-amplifier' too, so this is kind of okay. (Malin)

The negotiations about who is a professional are at the heart of reproduction in the field of art music (Bourdieu 1995, 1999). The freelancers embody a 'feel' for the game, which is self-regulating and revolves around embodied standards of what a 'real' musician is, based on the quantity and quality of gigs. As exemplified by Malin in the quote above, the gig at the musical serves to restore her identity. The musical holds the status of a simpler but acceptable gig, while the solo, although less paid, serves as an "identity-amplifier" (Malin). How a career progresses can either positively or negatively reinforce the performer identity. For example, Felicia's long-term contract, which she obtained after the pandemic, enables her to at least partially restore her performer identity. However, as the contract is temporary, she seems to be also distancing herself from the external criteria of success to maintain her motivational drive. This can be understood as a way of negotiating performer identities due to an increased sense of risk in the pandemic's aftermath:

> Yes, I would have wanted a permanent position – kind of. Now that I have this contract, I should feel that now I am kind of a musician for real. It's also about the pandemic somehow, because I haven't worked, so it's like 'what is a musician?' and 'am I a musician?', when I'm not working. It really feels like the identity is more related to work than my person and personality somehow, which is a bit odd because that is not how I think objectively about musicians, which is more about musicians as people who create music and it doesn't matter if one is a professional then. But, purely emotionally, I connect it rather strongly to whether one has a position, kind of, if one puts it sharply. (Felicia)

There are several expressions in the interviews about distancing oneself from the external criteria of success as a strategy to navigate through the pandemic and its aftermath, which contributes to increased autonomy. The freelancers' embodied 'feel' for the game of art music contributes to their self-regulation and, therefore, to the reproduction of social structure (Bourdieu 1990, 1999). However, these social practices are also under negotiation due to the extreme events of the pandemic (Flisbäck 2014; Threadgold 2018). For example, some taboos related to to combining freelancing with other jobs have been challenged due to the "increased respect for anyone who is just trying to survive" (Camilla). Also, openly defining as a performer, regardless of one's career trajectory, seems to be a way to reclaim "power over definitions" (Fredrika). Additionally, some of the freelancers have lost faith in traditional career paths, such as working at the prestigious institutions (Nørholm Lundin 2022b). On the contrary, flexible career paths, working in the free cultural sector, and perhaps combining freelancing with

other jobs, have gained increased legitimacy. Therefore, the pandemic has turned things at least partially upside down.

Ambiguous conditions after the pandemic

The mixed emotions and negotiations of careers and performer identities presented in the previous sections can, at least in part, be explained by the extreme events of the pandemic, during which gigs and performances were cancelled or severely limited for an extended period. Additionally, they can also be explained by how the freelancers' embodied 'feel' for the game is challenged due to the pandemic. The following sections will explore the increased practical challenges, particularly in terms of control over investments in time and other resources.

As mentioned above, the freelancers can be divided into two groups, which vary in terms of the ability to either sustain their careers throughout the pandemic or re-establish them afterwards. Some of the more fortunate freelancers[6] have secured contracts or other collaborations that endured throughout the pandemic, ensuring uninterrupted career progress. Others have managed to restart their careers post-pandemic with long-term contracts or other ongoing collaborations. As a group, they are significantly ahead in terms of controlling of investments in time and other resources. Among the less fortunate group of freelancers[7], some have been facing situations with very few bookings, outdated networks and spots on substitute lists. Others are struggling with a general slowness of post-pandemic careers, which is a source of concern.[8] Being without gigs creates a catch-22 situation where it's challenging to secure new bookings because "there are no natural social venues, outside of the gigs" (Camilla). As a group, the less fortunate freelancers are way behind the others in terms of restarting their careers post-pandemic. The analysis indicates that the disparity in conditions has widened between the more and less fortunate freelancers (Bourdieu 1995; Alberti et al. 2018). Access to resources such as long-term contracts or active networks of collaborators acts in a self-reinforcing or self-sorting way, either positively or negatively. The following sections will explore practical challenges in relation to managing investments in time and other resources, such as networks and reputation.

Way ahead or way behind – managing time as a resource

As mentioned above, the more fortunate freelancers have been able to work more or less uninterrupted during the pandemic, positioning them way ahead in terms of fully recovering after the pandemic. However, freelancers who have been less fortunate during and after the pandemic are only just beginning to restart their careers in early 2022. All of the freelancers emphasize the importance of time as a resource and in-

6 Group 1: Sara, Hanna, Louise, Felicia, Camilla, Björn, Fredrika.

7 Group 2: Maja, Malin, Isa, Dora, Ulrik and Agnes.

8 Agnes chose to reorient her career before the pandemic and now has an ordinary job and will try and build some smaller music projects, but hasn't really started yet.

vestment that is crucial to control. Freelancer Fredrika, for example, expressed sadness at seeing "what has been built over a long time, shredded into pieces". Additionally, the pandemic has evoked a sense of being "cast back in time and place, to be back at music college, when careers were being built" (Felicia).

The more fortunate freelancers have managed to navigate the pandemic or relaunch their careers thanks to personal savings and crisis funds, extensive networks of collaborators, and successful auditions. Meanwhile, the less fortunate freelancers are struggling to find enough time to reinvest, hindered by family responsibilities, financial constraint, and other factors. Maja explains the requirements she faces in establishing herself at the institutions in terms of time and harsh conditions: "It will take at least one 'dog year' where you have to say yes to these Kamikaze-gigs; that's how you get a higher ranking [on substitute-lists]. One has to do a lot of impossible gigs [with poor conditions] and then you are kind of in and get on the list". For freelancers looking to restart their careers beyond their time in music college or after graduation, the process appears to be more complicated. Unlike those who are newly graduated musicians, who can rely on assistance from teachers or extensive networks of fellow graduates, these individuals face additional challenges. Freelance careers, which require constant maintenance, have been significantly impacted by the prolonged and unpredictable nature of the pandemic. This has led to processes of precarization, characterized by heightened risks and demands (see Alberti et al., 2018)."

Either one is in or one is out – managing networks and reputation as resources

It is crucial for freelancers to have access to the social venues where careers can be maintained. Maja explains that the severity of this situation: "Either one is in, or one is out, and then one is really out". For the more fortunate freelancers (group 1), the social and symbolic capital that comes with maintaining or re-establishing their careers acts in a positive self-reinforcing way. They have benefited from long-term contracts at institutions or active involvement in ensembles and projects within the free cultural sector. Sara holds a unique position, having secured an attractive part-time permanent position in a symphony orchestra, which she combines with gigs at other prestigious orchestras. Her successful career and permanent contract have opened up many doors for her. Louise and Camilla hold semi-permanent positions, which are privileged but ambiguous as they cannot be taken for granted. With long careers behind them, Louise, Camilla, and Hanna possess symbolic and social capital that opens up doors to gigs. Felicia's capitals are somewhat less extensive as she is at an earlier stage of her career. During the pandemic, she invested in her individual practice to improve her skills. Additionally, she has succeeded at auditions, enabling her to establish herself and strengthen her symbolic and social capitals: "It acts as a stamp of approval" Felicia explains.

However, for the less fortunate freelancers (group 2), the inability to work for an extended period has made it more challenging to re-establish themselves. They have not been able to maintain or fully re-establish their careers, contributing to negative self-reinforcing or self-sorting processes. Their post-pandemic careers are either expe-

rienced as highly problematic, with few bookings and outdated networks or spots on substitute lists, or as progressing too slowly, with shrinking opportunities. They are attempting to re-establish themselves but have doubts about their goals. The analysis suggests that the vulnerability of group 2, in particular, is associated with the duration of their careers. However, the temporary nature of freelance careers also implies that luck plays a significant role.

In addition, the pandemic seems to have led to negotiations about which types of reputation and networks to invest in. Some freelancers are oriented towards traditional institutions[9], relying on being contacted for gigs or auditions. However, this approach has proven to entail increased risks, as it puts all one's eggs in one basket. On the other hand, other freelancers are more oriented towards careers in the free cultural sector, enabling them to stay at least partially active and in charge of small-scale projects and groups of collaborators during the pandemic. These freelancers have been fortunate enough to maintain or re-establish their careers in somewhat different ways compared to the traditionally oriented freelancers. For example, freelancer Fredrika has managed to sustain her career through her own small-scale projects and ensembles, stating "We are already adapted to small-scale settings". Björn has experienced hardships due to cancelled gigs, but has utilized the pandemic limbo to plan, prepare, and restart broad collaborations after the pandemic. The analysis suggests that the pandemic has initiated a process of change regarding which types of careers are considered prestigious and sustainable.

Conclusions and discussion

Media, official reports, and previous studies point to long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on working life, such as changed attitudes in relation to work and life (Warran et al. 2022; Daniels et al. 2022). The increased diversity in working conditions has both practical and emotional dimensions (Comunian & England 2020; Nørholm Lundin 2022a-b). From a Bourdieusian perspective, these dimensions can be understood as two sides of the game, and its reproduction and change (Bourdieu, 1995, 1999; Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips 2011). The pandemic can be understood as unsettled times, where new negotiations and changes can occur at the intersection of the micro and macro levels of the crisis (Swidler 1986; Quinn et al. 2022; Flisbäck 2014; Threadgold 2018).

Previous studies indicate that the pandemic has initiated processes of change. However, what does the return to normal mean after the pandemic? The research questions of this study focus on the practical challenges and emotional dilemmas that freelance musicians experience post-pandemic, as well as their negotiations of post-pandemic careers and performer identities. The study's results and analysis revolve around how freelancers manage and negotiate their experiences of what has been lost and gained due to the pandemic. The freelancers' experiences from the pandemic, which include increased vulnerability but also the adoption of new values and habits in terms of work-

9 See Table 1

life balance, are leading to more in-depth negotiations of the post-pandemic 'rules of the game', such as the expectation for freelancers to be always ready for gigs and calls.

The analysis shows that the mixed emotions expressed by the freelancers are not entirely new, but they have been amplified by the pandemic and the fact that the mat has been pulled from under one's feet and can be pulled away again. The freelancers can be divided into two groups, which have been more or less fortunate in being able to maintain and rebuild their careers and performer identities. Even the more fortunate freelancers are expressing increased tension between emotions of relief and risk, in relation to being able to work. The less fortunate freelancers rather express an increase in fatigue and doubts, in relation to finding the resources to rebuild their careers. The demands on the freelancers, to just go back to business as usual, is perceived as somewhat absurd, as an aspect of unrighteous subordination.

The study concludes that these mixed emotions can be understood as sources of either reproduction or change, as participation in the game requires some obedience under its rules – to be smooth and flexible, ready for gigs. These conclusions contribute to problematizing idealized flexible work, which tends to lead to flexploitation (Morgan et al. 2013). Additionally, this study exemplifies a process of precarization (Alberti et al. 2018), where increased fatigue and doubt complicate the rebuilding of post-pandemic careers. On the more positive side, the study indicates that the pandemic has initiated processes of change and increased autonomy, by creating distance and challenging strict norms.

In regards to the freelancers' negotiations of post-pandemic careers and performer identities, these revolve around external and internal criteria of success, and who can be considered a real musician. The saying 'one is never better than one's last gig' seems very true for the freelancers, as the quantity and quality of their gigs are carefully considered. Needless to say, the pandemic has challenged the freelancers' embodied 'feel' for the game, which revolves around constant activity and progress. However, even though this challenge has been amplified by the pandemic, there is an opposite tendency to step outside of external criteria of success, to be a musician – as one who expresses oneself through music – regardless.

It is argued that the mixed emotions and ongoing negotiations of careers and performer identities are related to the extreme events of the pandemic, where individuals were unable to perform for an extended period or to a very limited extent. Additionally, the ambivalent emotions and negotiations are exacerbated by the ambiguous conditions. These practical challenges involve maintaining reputation and networks outside of gigs, leading to a catch-22 situation – where one is either in or out, and when one is out, one is truly out.

The study contributes to previous research on the increased diversity and inequality in working life, focusing on disparities between freelancers and permanent employees, as well as among freelancers themselves. The pandemic underscores the importance of controlling investments in time and other resources. Time losses, including what has been built and the time needed for rebuilding it, have resulted in some freelancers being significantly ahead while others lag behind. Maintaining one's reputation and

networks is crucial for securing gigs, which is hindered if one is out of the loop. This study concludes that the temporary nature of freelance careers explains why some freelancers have been less fortunate than others, rather than solely attributing this difference to disparities in their pre-pandemic situations.

In addition, the study presents new insights into post-pandemic transitions, which are negotiated in relation to the freelancers' embodied sense of the 'rules of the game' – what it means to be a true musician. The pandemic has brought about increased strain for some, yet it has also opened a window for increased autonomy and sustainability, provided freelancers are able to maintain some of these gains as they return to normalcy. The empirical data document a unique period, spanning from the midst of the pandemic and just after. While the analysis can highlight certain trends, the aim is not to generalize for all freelancers. Furthermore, the empirical data are limited, with a majority consisting of women. Future studies would benefit from gathering a larger empirical sample, which would shed light on potential gender differences.

In summary, the study emphasizes the complex and evolving nature of freelancers' experiences and negotiations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for career adaptation and sustainability. The implications of the study suggest the need for concerted efforts across multiple fronts to address the challenges and make the most of the opportunities presented by the evolving landscape of freelance work in the post-pandemic era.

References

Addison, M. (2017) Overcoming Arlie Hochschild's concepts of 'real' and 'false' self by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. *Emotion, Space and Society* 23:9—15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2017.01.003

Alacovska, A. (2018) Informal creative labour practices. A relational work perspective. *Human Relations* 71 (12):1563—1589. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718754991

Alacovska, A. (2019) Keep hoping, keep going. Towards a hopeful sociology of creative work. *The Sociological Review* 67 (5):1118—1136. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118779014

Alberti G.; Bessa, I.; Hardy, K.; Trappmann, V.; Umney, C. (2018) In, against and beyond precarity: work in insecure times. *Work, Employment & Society* 32 (3):447—457. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018762088

Banks, M. (2019) Precarity, biography, and event: work and time in the cultural industries. *Sociological Research Online* 24 (4):541—556. https://doi.org/10.1177/136078041984452

Bourdieu, P. (1983) The field of cultural production, or: the economic world reversed. *Poetics* 12:311—356. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(83)90012-8

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *Logic of Practice.* London: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1995) *Praktiskt förnuft.* [Logic of practice]. Göteborg: Daidalos.

Bourdieu, P. (1999) *Manliga dominansen*. [Masculine domination]. Göteborg: Daidalos.

Bourdieu P. (2004) *Science of science*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. et. al. (1999) *Weight of the world*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Butler, N. & Stoyanova Russel, D. (2018) No funny business: precarious work and emotional labour in stand-up comedy. *Human Relations* 71 (12):1666—1686. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718758880
Brooks, S. K.; Patel, S. S. (2022) Challenges and opportunities experienced by performing artists during COVID-19 lockdown: scoping review. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 1:100297. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100297
Brzozowska, B. & Galuszka, P. (2023) Building performance capital during hard lockdown: insights form the ENS 2021 virtual-only showcase festival. *Poetics* 96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101758
Claeson, M. & Hansson, S. (2021) COVID-19 and the Swedish enigma. *Lancet* 397 (10271):259—261. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)32750-1
Coe, R., Waring, M., Hedges, L. V., Arthur, J. (2017) *Research methods & methodologies in education*. London: Sage.
Comunian, R. & England, L. (2020) Creative and cultural work without filters: Covid-19 and exposed precarity in the creative economy. *Cultural Trends* 29 (2):112—118. https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2020.1770577
Daniels, E., Bardi, A., Fischer, R., Benish-Weisman, M., Lee, J. A. (2022) Changes in personal values in pandemic times. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 13 (2):572—582. https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506211024026
Everts R., Berkers P., Hitters E. (2022) Milestones in music: reputations in the career building of musicians in the changing Dutch music industry. *Poetics* 92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101647
Fiske, A., Galasso, I., Eichinger, J., McLennan, S., Radhuber, I., Zimmermann, B., & Prainsack, B. (2022) The second pandemic: examining structural inequality through reverberations of COVID-19 in Europe. *Social Science & Medicine* 292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114634
Flisbäck, M. (2002) Konstnärligt arbete – entreprenörer eller prekariat? [Artistic work – entrepreneur or precariat?]. Bengtsson, M. & Berglund, T. (eds.). *Arbetslivet.* [Working life]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
Flisbäck, M. (2014) Making play or playing the game? In the question of a "cleft habitus" at the doorway to the art field. *Qualitative Sociology Review* X(4). https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.10.4.03
Fürst, H. (2022) Splendid isolation: managing time and making culture among novelists during the pandemic. *Poetics* 101733. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101733
Hesmondhalgh D., Baker S. (2010) 'A very complicated version of freedom': conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries. *Poetics* 38 (1):4—20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2009.10.001
Hillcoat-Nallétamby, S. & Phillips, J. E. (2011) Sociological ambivalence revisited. *Sociology* 45 (2):202—217. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038510394018
Holt, L. (2008) Embodied social capital and geographic perspectives: performing the habitus. *Progress in Human Geography* 32 (2):227—246. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132507087648

Hylland, O. M (2022) Tales of temporary disruption: digital adaptations in the first 100 days of the cultural Covid lockdown. *Poetics* 90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2021.101602

Jones, S. (2022) Cracking up: the pandemic effect on visual artists' livelihoods. *Cultural Trends* 33 (1):1—18. https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2022.2120382

Kingsbury, H. (1988) *Music, talent & performance. A conservatory cultural system*. Temple University Press.

Kleppe, B. (2017) Theatres as risk societies: performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk. *Poetics* 64:53—62. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2017.08.002

Lindström, S. (2016) Artists and multiple job holding: breadwinning work as mediating between bohemian and entrepreneurial identities and behavior. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 6 (3):43—58. https://doi.org/10.19154/njwls.v6i3.5527

Lindström, S. (2017) "It usually works out, but you never know". Emotion work as a strategy for coping in the insecure artistic career. *Culture Unbound* 9 (3):345—364.

Lund, A. (2019) 'I feel sorry for them and I should do something, but I don't'. Spatial imaginaries and resistance to feminist change in the dramatic arts. *Emotion, Space and Society* 30: 27—33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2018.12.003

Morgan, G.; Wood, J.; Nelligan, P. (2013) Beyond the vocational fragments: creative work, precarious labour and the idea of 'flexploitation'. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 24 (3):397—415. https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304613500601

Muel-Dreyfus, F. (1985) Utbildning, yrkesförväntningar och grusade förhoppningar. [Education, professional expectations and chattered hopes]. Broady, D. (eds.). *Kultur och utbildning – om Pierre Bourdieus sociologi* [Culture and education – about the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu]. UHÄ FoU Skriftserie.

Musgrave, G. (2023) Musicians, their relationships, and their wellbeing: creative labour, relational work. *Poetics* 96:101762. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2023.101762

Nørholm Lundin, A. (2019) "Practice and all is coming" – trosföreställningar och socialiserande ritualer i yogans sociala praktik [beliefs and socializing rituals in the social practice of yoga]. *Praktiske Grunde. Nordisk tidskrift for kultur- og samfundsvidenskab* [Practical Reasons. Nordic journal for culture- and social science] 1-2:179—206. http://praktiskegrunde.dk/pg(2019-1+2).html

Nørholm Lundin, A. (2020) Att bli och att vara framgångsrik musiker: socialisation och sortering genom livet [To become and to be a successful musician: socialization and sorting through life]. *Educare* 1:82—108. https://doi.org/10.24834/educare.2020.1.5

Nørholm Lundin, A. (2022a) "Where is your fixed point?" Dealing with ambiguous freelance musician careers. *Cultural Trends* 32 (3):231—246. https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2022.2075715

Nørholm Lundin, A. (2022b) A life without a plan? Freelance musicians in pandemic limbo. *Emotion, Space and Society* 45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2022.100924

Pulignano, V., Domecka, M., Muszyński, K., Vermeerbergen, L., Riemann, M-L. (2021) *Creative labour in the era of Covid-19: the case of freelancers*. ETUI Research Paper - Working Paper 2021.02. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3832553

Scharff, C. (2016) The psychic life of neoliberalism: mapping the contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity. *Theory, Culture & Society* 33 (6):107—122. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276415590164

Smite, D., Moe, N. B., Hildrum, J., Huerta, J. G., & Mendez, D. (2023) Work-from-home is here to stay: call for flexibility in post-pandemic work policies. *The Journal of Systems & Software* 195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2022.111552

Threadgold, S. (2018) Creativity, precarity and illusio: DIY cultures and choosing poverty. *Cultural Sociology* 12 (2):156—173. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975517722475

Van Assche, A., Laermans, R. (2022) Living up to a bohemian work ethic. Balancing autonomy and risk in the symbolic economy of the performing arts. *Poetics* 93:101683. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101683

Vyas, L. (2022) "New normal" at work in a post-COVID world: work-life balance and labor markets. *Policy & Society* 41 (1):155–167. https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puab011

Warran, K., May, T., Fancourt, D., Burton, A. (2022) Understanding changes to perceived socioeconomic and psychosocial adversities during COVID-19 for UK freelance cultural workers. *Cultural Trends* 32 (5):449—473. https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2022.2082270

Web-sources and official reports

Musik Centrum Väst (2020) *Var tredje musiker lämnar yrket.* [One in three musicians leaves the profession] Report, Microsoft Word - PM_200827_Var tredje musiker på väg att lämna yrket.docx (mcv.se), 2023-05-08

Stockholm City (2022) *Nystartsrapporten. I skuggan av pandemin* [Starting over. In the shadow of the pandemic]. Report. https://start.stockholm/globalassets/start/om-stockholms-stad/utredningar-statistik-och-fakta/utredningar-och-rapporter/kultur-och-stadsutveckling/nystartsrapporten-tillganglighetsanpassad.pdf, 2023-05-08

Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (2021) *Ett år med pandemin* [One year with the pandemic]. Report, Ny rapport: Ett år med pandemin - Kulturanalys, 2023-05-08

Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (2022) *Kulturarbetsmarknaden efter pandemin* [Labour market for cultural workers after the pandemic]. Report, Kulturarbetsmarknaden efter pandemin - Kulturanalys, 2023-05-08.

Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (2023) *Kultursektorns återhämtning och förändring efter covid-19-pandemin*. *Nordisk kulturfakta 2023:03.* [The recovery and transformation of the cultural sector after the COVID-19 pandemic. Nordic Culture Facts 2023:03]. Report, Kultursektorns återhämtning och förändring i de nordiska länderna efter covid-19-pandemin (norden.org), 2024-02-27.

Swedish Government (2021) *Från kris till kraft. Återstart för kulturen* [Restarting the arts and culture in Sweden]. SOU 2021:88. Stockholm: Fritzes offentliga publikationer.

Author presentation

Anna Nørholm Lundin is a associate professor in pedagogy and is a lecturer at the Department of Education at Stockholm University. While her early research had a sociology of science approach, her current research deals partly with career and life paths in the cultural professions and partly with learning and identity formation in networks and social movements.

Anna Nørholm Lundin
anna.norholm.lundin@edu.se
Department of education, Stockholm University
106 91 Stockholm