

# Rationale behind investigating positive aging among symphony orchestra musicians: A call for a new arena of empirical study

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## Abstract

Musicianship is seen as a life-long process, requiring specific adjustments to changes in age and environment, based on developmental stages each unique in structure of musical activity, motivations, and achievements. Nonetheless, studies relating to music development have focused exclusively on precocious musical beginnings and early childhood, prodigious adolescents, or academy trainees. As yet, there has been no great interest in musicians above age 50, and needless to say while very little is known about older musicians, a small number of studies published highlight underperformance and loss in support of age-linked deficits to music performance. Without a doubt, there is a serious need for attention to be placed on those who *still can* perform music – not only on those who *can no longer* perform music. Collective efforts should begin to focus on performing musicians who have maintained a professional career well into the fifth decade of their lifespan, especially as performing musicians live to an older age, extending their phase of active music-making well beyond what was once considered time to withdraw from effective professional activity. The current paper puts forth a call for music science to embrace a new arena of empirical study – *positive aging among symphony orchestra musicians*.

## Keywords

career maintenance, effects of aging, life-span musicianship, music development, seasoned musicians

## Introduction: “Longevity revolution”

Musicianship is often talked about within a context of life-span development. That is, the maturation of professional musicians is seen as a life-long process, requiring specific adjustments to changes in age and environment, whereby those involved go through a sequence of developmental stages each unique in structure of musical activity, motivations, and achievements. Such a stance clearly assumes there to be an overriding model or life cycle of musicianship consisting of critical periods in which milestones related to artistic mastery and career objectives are attained. Yet, the majority of research studies relating to life-span music development

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have focused exclusively on precocious musical beginnings in early childhood (Deliege & Sloboda, 1996; Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998), prodigious adolescents (Howe, 1998; Howe & Sloboda, 1991a; Pruett, 1991; Sloboda, 1991a, 1993a), or target factors and component-skills of musical excellence leading to musical expertise among young adults (Howe & Sloboda, 1991b; Howe, Davidson, More, & Sloboda, 1995; Sloboda, 1984, 1990, 1991b, 1993b, 1996; Sloboda & Davidson, 1996; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & More, 1996). One exception, however, which offers a broader perspective on the life-long development of music performance skill, is Manturzevska (1990), who outlines a sequence of development through age 75 (see Table 1). Accordingly, musicianship begins at age 5–6, followed by 16 years of systematic training, passing through critical periods in which public performances and artistic debuts are offered, leading to higher advanced training and attainment of professional diplomas, resulting in levels of mastery acknowledged by a *virtuoso* status, with the greatest artistic achievements occurring between the ages of 25 and 45 (coinciding with the most efficient psycho-physical competence), after which the greatest teaching achievements take place when musicians are fatigued from their own concert activity and performance career (subsequently concentrating on the achievements of their students).

Manturzevska's (1990) hypothetical model is highly welcome as it is perhaps the only developmental representation of musical activity reflecting a life-long process; the template surfaced from a long-term longitudinal research project encompassing 165 musicians aged 21–89. This data, nevertheless, was based exclusively on a sample of Polish musicians interviewed between the years 1976 and 1980, and hence there may be a cultural bias to the study. Moreover, during the past 25 years health services have significantly contributed to a "longevity revolution" resulting in older adults remaining in the workforce longer, and therefore specifically concerning music performance, players seem to be professionally active well past Manturzevska's retirement age of 50.

**Table 1.** Life-span model, developmental stages of professional musicians.

Stage	Age	Description
I	1–6	Development of sensory emotional sensitivity; Spontaneous musical expression through musical play
II	6–12	Systematic instruction of music instrument; Guided musical development of basic technical performance capacities and music knowledge
III	12–20	Formation and development of artistic personality and musical competence within a master–student relationship
IV	20–30	Advanced training and graduation from a music academy or college; Searching for employment; Joining of professional community through membership of various ensembles and musical institutions
V	30–45	Professional stabilization and expansion involving performing activity and artistic output
VI	45–55	First signs of physical and psychic fatigue surface; First inklings of inefficiency and lack of ability to learn new repertoire; Change in musical interests from individual career-orientation to more general focus on pedagogical issues
VII	55–70	Teaching phase; Increasing sense of social responsibility within the music culture
VIII	70–75	Retirement from professional activity; Taking on representative functions including adjudicator at jury-based competitions, and honorary titles within civic committees, socio-political organizations, and granting foundations

Note: Adapted from Manturzevska (1990).

Today, at least as far as modern industrialized societies are concerned, much of the illness, disability, and death associated with chronic disease is avoidable through known prevention measures. For example, the US population under 65 tripled during the 20th century, and those over 65 increased by a factor of 11 (National Institutes of Health, 2006). That is, the actual number of seniors grew from 3.1 million in 1900 to 33.2 million in 1994, and this frequency is expected to more than double by mid-century. Unlike some developing cultures, where there has been little gain and life expectancy remains very low, and compared to those who were born in the United States in the early 1900s who had a life expectancy of only about 50 years, through the vast improvements in medical science and technology during the last half-century, those born in America today can expect to live past 70 years. Published statistics from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) indicate that in 2002 the American male life expectancy was 74.5 years, while female life expectancy was 79.9 years. Further NIH projections indicate that by the year 2030 the number of older Americans will be roughly 70 million, which means a greater proportion of seniors compared to the rest of the population, and in fact 20% of the population – one in every five Americans – will be above the age of 60.

In July 2006, the National Institute on Aging (NIA, a subordinate organization of the NIH) published an updated statistical report on aging. The report noted that American workforce participation rates for older adults have been on the rise for several years (see Table 2). Clearly, people are not just living longer, but they have also extended their professional endeavors and active careers by several years, remaining in the workforce for a significantly longer period of their lifetime. More than in any other previous time, today there is an increasing number of educated and skilled older adults with life-long experience, actively contributing to all aspects of modern society. One area where this presence is specifically noticeable is the Performing Arts.

Music performance has long been identified as an occupation committed to its more seasoned members. Lederman (1999) lists several famous Grand Masters who continued to astound public audiences well into their final year of life. Among those who were legendary not only for their levels of virtuosity, but also for their career longevity as acclaimed soloists, were: Solti (80), von Karajan (85), Horowitz (86), Serkin (87), Milstein (87), Arrau (88), Stokowski (89), Toscanini (89), Rubinstein (95), Casals (96), and Horszowski (99). Yet, these master musicians were not

**Table 2.** Workforce participation rates of older adults adapted from NIA (2006).

Age	Gender	Year	Percent
62–64	Male	1995	45
		2005	53
	Female	1987	28
		2005	40
65–69	Male	1993	25
		2005	34
	Female	1985	14
		2005	24
70+	Male	1993	4
		2005	14
	Female	1987	4
		2005	7

so exceptional in career longevity. There are also hundreds of other examples of older performing musicians from jazz, pop, and folk genres. Nevertheless, these have rarely been studied or documented. While such a bias may reflect a lack of access to health care among blues/jazz/rock musicians (for more on this subject, see Brodsky, 1995),<sup>1</sup> the underlying reality may simply be due to methodological rigor such as sampling homogeneity leading to replication and comparison. Unlike musicians from other musical styles, musical performers of classical concert music genres are more alike than different; they all have common development, training, knowledge, and skill proficiency. Specifically concerning symphony orchestra musicians, a ground-breaking study by Smith (1988, 1989) interviewed 14 retired members of “one of America’s greatest symphony orchestras” between the ages of 55 and 90.<sup>2</sup> These players had had an average of 41 years of full-time musical performance ( $SD = 9.10$ , range = 23–57), of which roughly 35 years ( $SD = 8.75$ , range = 22–50) were with the orchestra under investigation. While the mean age of retirement was 66.5 years old ( $SD = 7.69$ , range = 47–78), it should be noted that 42% of the sample retired well beyond retirement age ( $M = 73$  years, range = 69–78,  $SD = 3.06$ ); although representing an extremely small number of individuals, it is interesting to note that as a group these players retained active careers 35% longer than the non-musician population represented in American workforce participation rates for older adults (see Table 2). Both Smith (1989) and Henson (1994) corroborate that from the mid-1980s it had already become accepted practice (with contractual and legal ramifications) not to remove a player before age 70 – except in situations of inability to perform as judged by a peer committee. Nonetheless, there are many individuals, even from within the music community, who disapprove of this custom and condemn union policy which protects senior symphony musicians until challenged to prove that they can still meet the performance standards of the orchestra; a degrading process that is at times fatal, causing damage not only to their own reputation, but also to that of their colleagues and indeed of their orchestra. In this context, Brandfonbrenner (2003) states outright that commonsense should prevail, and that musicians should be smart enough to “hang it up” when they no longer have the right stuff before the world knows that they have “lost it.”

Smith (1988) reported that the rate of turnover in the orchestra he studied was roughly 3–6% per year. This would indicate that the older players were not replaced often. Perhaps this lower level of substitution was because of a value placed on seasoned musicians by both orchestra management and section leaders. After all, seasoned players are viewed as having “experience of playing a vast literature of symphonic music under a variety of conductors . . . familiarity, understanding, and skill that the best young players cannot match” (p. 238). It should be pointed out that unlike many other occupations within the workforce, music performance does not fall prey to obsolescence arising from the ever-present emerging bodies of knowledge, sophisticated changes in technology, and consumer behavior patterns. For example, while the performed repertoire of the symphonic orchestras has greatly changed over the years, the musical classics have not (Botstein, 1996). What was once considered difficult modern music of the *avant-garde* requiring exceptional dexterity is looked upon today as mainstream. In addition, although significant advancements in digital processing have done much to provide increased reproductive sound quality and home-based PC-computerized music recording/editing, the performance stage arena (orchestral pit and concert platform) have remained essentially unchanged for over 175 years since the birth of the modern symphony orchestra in the mid-19th century (Knight, 2006). It seems, then, that the field of music performance, and the orchestra itself, are rather predisposed to stability and continuity. Hence, to a certain (perhaps even disproportionate) degree, both rely upon the more senior and seasoned players. Smith concluded that the orchestra setting, the seat of a classical music performance career, is a *great* place to grow old.

Ironically, the American Geriatrics Society cites that 36% of people aged 65 are afflicted by one or more of seven chronic conditions, including: arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, stroke, and cancer. Furthermore, for those individuals above 70 years, the proportion of involvement is as high as 80%. Undoubtedly, aging means that time takes a toll on the organs and systems in the body. This might affect the cardiovascular system, bones, muscles and joints, the digestive system, kidneys, bladder and urinary tract, brain and nervous system, eyes, ears, teeth, skin, nails and hair, sleep cycle, weight, and sexuality (Cavanaugh, 1997). Further, among age-related effects on cognition are insults to basic episodic memory processes, relational memory and recollection, and semantic memory; aging can also cause deficits for item-specific memory and an increase in false memories – not to mention more generalized syndromes such as Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. Therefore, the overriding question must be: how do musicians retain their high level of functional music abilities, which undoubtedly entertain a host of (almost super-human) cognitive-motor skills (Parry, 2004; Rink, 2002) that continuously interact with a multitude of music-driven affective states (Chaffin & Lemieux, 2004; Connolly & Williamon, 2004) and emotions? One explanation might be that music performers are perhaps simply more resilient to the effects of aging than the general population. Another explanation might be related to the life-long musical training that players receive. Or perhaps, music performance as a lifestyle immunizes players from the vicissitudes of aging more than members of other occupational regimens.

### **The current state of related inquiry**

The inherent effects of music on older adults have been known for some time. Abundant literature reviews focus on the general contribution of music to positive aging (Hays, Bright, & Minichiello, 2002), or target music therapy intervention for the elderly (Bright, 1972; Gibbons, 1988; Palmer, 1989; Smith & Lipe, 1991). In addition, there are special focus issues of leading journals (for example: *Psychomusicology*, 18, 2002) which examine the shortfalls of music perception among the elderly, or highlight the importance of music performance for seniors. Popular self-help books, such as Kahn (1999), are widely available and advocate healthy aging through amateur chamber music playing; these promote the joys of tuning up mature minds and bodies through participation in music-making. Throughout America one can find and participate in New Horizons Bands for senior-citizen novices (Coffman, 2002; Coffman & Adamek, 1999; Coffman & Levey, 1997). Even the National Association for Music Education (MENC) commissioned a special interest group to examine how music teachers might provide more meaningful music experiences so that all people would seek to continue music participation in later life; guidebooks have been developed (Jellison, 2000), and a national workshop on Music and lifelong learning has taken place (September 2007). Yet, none of these seem to have targeted active senior-aged professional music performers. Unfortunately, not even Smith’s (1988) study, which was precisely directed at seasoned professionals, incorporated actively performing musicians over 65.<sup>3</sup>

Needless to say, very little is known about older musicians. A literature search on aging among music performers is not only disappointing, but futile! To date, there is just one English-language publication available on the subject: Gembris (2006) collated and edited nine papers originally presented at the 2002 international conference “Musical Aptitude from a Lifespan Perspective” held at the Institute for Research on Musical Ability in Paderborn, Germany. Other than this monograph, there is a dedicated special issue of *Medical Problems of Performing Artists* (Vol. 14, 1999), in which four papers each present a clinical case vignette. Further, there are about a



dozen articles found among various medical and social science journals (see for example, Barton, 2004); for the most part, these concentrate on underperformance and loss of skill in support of age-linked deficiencies in music performance. That is, the literature illustrates the ill-effects of age on rhythmic timing (Krampe, Engbert, & Kliegl, 2001), fine motor movement (Krampe, 2002), visual difficulties (Kadrmaz, Dyer, & Bartley, 1996), hearing losses (Behar, Wong, & Kunov, 2006; Henoch & Chesky, 1999), the aging voice (Sataloff, 1992), impairment of the central and peripheral nervous system (Lederman, 1999), and arthritis or upper extremity trauma resulting in stiffness, pain, and loss of mobility (Dawson, 1999; Hoppmann & Ekman, 1999).

One might assume, then, that as yet there has been no great interest in seasoned musicians above age 50 – not even by those dedicated to the study of musical skill and development. Furthermore, this current state is not only limited to the psychological sciences, but in fact is also rampant throughout all areas of organization and management-related orchestra research (including those involving policy, economics, and sociology of the arts). Even the April 2008 Princeton University conference on orchestra research had almost completely ignored the subject. DiMaggio (2008) compiled a set of notes outlining the raised agenda toward further inquiry. Accordingly, there were four main areas of investigation required: Organization (focusing on economic and organizational conditions that influence the behavior of orchestras and the people in them), Audience and Community (focusing on orchestra audiences, actual and potential), The Music (focusing on orchestras' artistic mission and on the institutional conditions for preservation of and innovation in classical and fine-arts music, including training and careers of players and composers), and The System (focusing on the ecology of classical music, on interactions among orchestras and their environments at the national and community levels). In total the monograph covered over 55 subsections, and one that is buried within this multitude is: How do the aspirations, expectations and skills of orchestra players change over the course of their professional careers? (pp. I-D-7). Finally, as the aging process invariably involves deteriorating levels of previously acquired skill, the subject of aging is often considered much too *taboo* to discuss openly – even among musicians themselves. In short, not only is little known about seasoned players between the ages of 50 and 70 from empirical descriptions, and the agenda of relevant organizations seems to be all but ignorant of such issues, but those who might pass on helpful information remain ever silent.

Nevertheless, players in this age group seem to be ever more prevalent among the roster of orchestra members; anecdotal evidence indicates that roughly 40% of all musician performers are currently above 50 years old. It is interesting to note that the *International Musician* magazine, the official publication of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM), documents that among the more than 100,000 subscribers, 40,280 are professional musicians who have been playing for over 30 years, of which 24,910 have been registered union members for at least 30 years, and 23,850 of these players are between 40 and 55 years old.

## **A call for a new arena of empirical study**

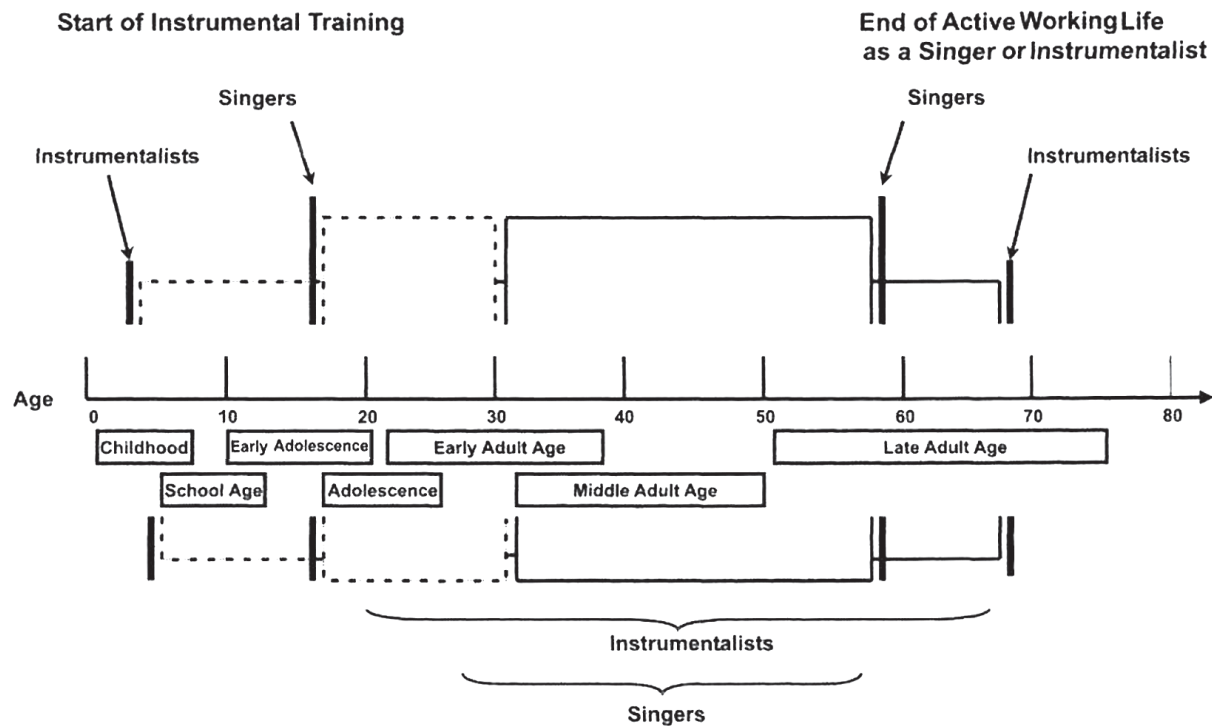
Without a doubt, there is a serious need for attention to be turned to those who *still can* perform music – not only on those who *can no longer* perform music. That is, efforts should begin to focus on performing musicians who have maintained a professional career well into the fifth decade of their lifespan. Such efforts are inevitable, not least because performing musicians now live longer, extending their phase of active music-making well beyond what was once considered time to withdraw from effective professional activity. We consequently witness just as many seasoned musicians on the concert stage as there are aspiring young talents (Brandfonbrener,

2003). Such a focus should not be seen as a movement to replace the important empirical platform exploring the degenerative effects of aging on those who have had life-long cognitive-motor training leading to musical expertise. The latter is an all-too-important area related to music neuroscience. Nonetheless, it would be an equally unjust oversight to disregard seasoned music performers who have persevered regardless of human aging processes. The following example serves as a case in point:

When the concert pianist Arthur Rubinstein, as an 80-year-old, was asked in a television interview how he managed to maintain such a high level of expertise in piano playing, he hinted at coordination of three strategies: he played fewer pieces, practiced these more often, and used a kind of impression management by playing more slowly before fast segments to make the latter appear faster.

This vignette is not found among music psychology, music perception and cognition, music development, or even music education research literature. Rather, the citation is brought forward by Baltes, Staudinger, and Lindenberger (1999) as an illustration of their SOC theory on positive aging (Selection, Optimization, and Compensation). Yet, this is rich data that our collective music science fields have overlooked. This example seems to illustrate how Rubinstein consciously acted to counteract his losses in mechanical speed and compensated for age-associated declines in plasticity associated with the biology of aging. Clearly, had he been the target of an interview study structured by a music psychologist, the discussion could have led to a growing awareness of positive aging among professional music performers, with a subsequent focus on music development within a lifespan psychology approach. At the very least, other insights that could have been gained from such a study might have served as an impetus for further investigations exploring musical expertise and deliberate practice, stage-related music performance career patterns, age-linked discrepancies between general versus domain-specific knowledge and skills, age-related music performance compensatory behavior, intactness of long-term working musical memory, etc.

More than a decade ago Ericsson and Lehmann (1996) studied expert and exceptional performance. At that time, they astutely pointed out that human behavior is enormously adaptive to environmental demands, and the most important are changes in behavior attributed to learning, cognition, brain function, and other modifications of the human body. Accordingly, the most promising approach to finding invariants and exceptions is to study cases of maximal adaptation and learning, such as among experts. Expert performers devote most of their lives to attaining the highest levels of performance in a highly constrained activity. Expert and exceptional performances have been shown to be mediated by cognitive and perceptual-motor skills, and by domain-specific physiological and anatomical adaptations. In such research endeavors, programs of investigation have most certainly demonstrated the developmental lines of exceptional performers; they start at a very young age, and the duration and intensity of their sustained training far exceeds the range of other activities pursued by individuals in the normal population. Moreover, laboratory analyses of expert music performance have repeatedly revealed maximal adaptations to domain-specific constraints. Yet, rarely have studies gone further. One exception is Spahn and Richter (2006), who explored the singing voice across the lifespan, and presented a brief sketch of developmental lines and stages (see Figure 1). They concluded that "the whole lifespan should be understood as a perspective for music education" (p. 129). Gembris (2006) reiterates that without any doubt, it is necessary to promote musical giftedness as early as possible in order to ensure optimal development, but we hardly ever pose the question as to what becomes of the gifted musician after they have finished formal training. Most certainly, then, there is a lack of research examining how music



**Figure 1.** Model of lifespan music performance career (Spahn & Richter, 2006).

development and a performance career continue in adulthood. Virtually no one (with the exception of Krampe, 2006) has attempted to grapple with the idea of maintaining musical performance skill in late adulthood or old age.

This paper aims to convey more than a review on musicianship within a context of life-span development; it unveils the fact that music science has not as yet made any effort to investigate the general pattern of the life-cycle of musicians. Such a gap is unfortunate, especially considering present human longevity based on an active life. Further, music science has not as yet considered seasoned musicians as a viable source of information. I would contend that we have all the more to gain by investigating those who have maintained expert and exceptional performances – regardless of human aging processes. Brandfonbrenner (2003) claims that aging musicians constitute a population that is especially inviting to study because of their “sensitivity to minute changes in neurophysiologic function and because of their proven occupational longevity” (p. 136). This population can exclusively serve to answer many questions, among which are:

- As symphony orchestra musicians age, do they retain greater general digital dexterity and speed (compared to non-musicians)?
- Does the hearing of symphony orchestra musicians decrease more than it does in an age-matched group of non-musicians (especially important when accounting for the additional risk of noise exposure over the years)?
- Are orchestra musicians’ memories any different (from those of matched non-musicians)?
- Do the kinds of activities orchestra musicians continue to engage in throughout the years preserve general intellectual function, or do they suffer losses to the same degree as others?



- Are musicians who continue to play in an orchestra until advanced age more emotionally upbeat and less depressed than their peers who retire at an earlier age (or compared to matched non-musicians)?
- Is the general health of symphony orchestra musicians better, perhaps in part because they are active and doing what they want? Does this help delay aging-related disability?
- How do orchestra musicians compensate for the normal 'healthy' age-related decline in physical, mental, and emotional function?
- What aspects of musicianship, if any, improve and benefit from increased life-long experience over long periods of active performance?
- While seasoned musicians perhaps retain motor and expressive performance skills, are there other aspects of orchestral life that become difficult to tolerate?
- What specific types of activities (deliberate practice and training methods) do highly motivated orchestra players employ to effectively improve and preserve their previously acquired high levels of performance into late adulthood?

To sum up, then, the current paper puts forth a call to music science to embrace a new arena of empirical study – positive aging among symphony orchestra musicians. This platform can only be seen as another stride in music scientists' research efforts to understand human musicianship and the musical mind.

### Dedication

This article is dedicated to Professor John A. Sloboda on the occasion of his retirement from academia. John helped establish several of today's professional societies (including ESCOM and SEMPRES) as well as serving as the founding editor of many associated scientific journals. He has published dozens of book volumes, as well as hundreds of scientific articles. His list of awards and honors is simply breathtaking. John was instrumental in initiating several fields of study, including those related to musical skill and development, exceptional abilities, and musical expertise. It would not be so far-fetched to view the current paper as an amplification of his personal research efforts and diligent tutelage. John was not only a research supervisor and mentor, but indeed a role model for hundreds who had personal and professional contact with him. John remains today a major source of counsel and friendship to us all.

### Notes

1. No relation of the current author!
2. The sample, presumably, were members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
3. While there were six players over 70 years of age in the orchestra he studied, he exclusively interviewed only those who had already left the orchestra and were hence retired from their professional position and affiliation.

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## **Justificación para la investigación del Envejecimiento Positivo entre Músicos de Orquesta Sinfónica: una llamada a un nuevo terreno de estudio empírico**

La musicalidad es vista como un largo proceso vital, que requiere ajustes específicos a los cambios en la edad y en el entorno, basado en las etapas de desarrollo de cada individuo en la estructura de la actividad musical, las motivaciones y los logros. No obstante, los estudios relativos al desarrollo musical se han centrado exclusivamente sobre los inicios musicales precoces y la primera infancia, los adolescentes prodigios, o los alumnos de las academias. Hasta ahora no ha habido gran interés sobre los músicos de más de 50 años, y no es necesario decir que mientras se sabe muy poco sobre los músicos mayores, un pequeño número de estudios publicados destacan el bajo rendimiento y la pérdida de soporte producidos por los déficits vinculados a la edad de los intérpretes. Sin lugar a dudas, hay una gran necesidad de dedicar atención a los intérpretes que aún pueden tocar música, no sólo a aquéllos que ya no pueden tocar música. Los esfuerzos colectivos deben comenzar a centrarse en intérpretes que han mantenido una buena carrera profesional en la quinta década de su vida útil, especialmente como intérpretes en vivo con una edad avanzada que extienden su fase de músicos activos mucho más allá de lo que se considera edad para retirarse de la actividad profesional efectiva. El presente artículo plantea una “llamada” a las Ciencias de la Música para ocuparse de un nuevo terreno de estudio empírico: el Envejecimiento Positivo entre Músicos de Orquesta Sinfónica.

## **Le ragioni dello studio dell' invecchiamento nei musicisti di un' orchestra sinfonica: invito ad un nuovo campo per lo studio empirico**

L'abilità di musicista è qui vista come un processo lungo l'intero arco della vita che richiede specifici aggiustamenti in rapporto ai cambiamenti nell'età e nell'ambiente circostante, basati su stadi di sviluppo dell'attività, delle motivazioni e dei risultati musicali, ciascuno dei quali unico nella sua struttura. Tuttavia, gli studi relativi allo sviluppo musicale si sono concentrati esclusivamente sull'avvio precoce alla musica e sulla prima infanzia, sui ragazzi prodigio o sugli studenti di conservatorio. Fino ad ora non c'è stato grande interesse nei musicisti sopra i cinquant'anni, se da una parte sappiamo così poco dei musicisti più adulti, un numero ristretto di ricerche ha evidenziato gli aspetti relativi al calo della prestazione durante l'esecuzione per spiegare deficit legati all'età. Senza dubbio è necessario concentrare l'interesse della ricerca su coloro che ancora possono eseguire musica e non solo su coloro che non possono più farla. Bisogna fare uno sforzo collettivo per iniziare a concentrarci sui musicisti attivi che hanno mantenuto una carriera professionale anche oltre i cinquant'anni, soprattutto come concertisti in età più avanzata estendendo la fase di attività ben oltre quello che una volta era considerato il momento di abbandonare la carriera professionale. Il presente lavoro incita la Sienza Musicale ad affrontare questo nuovo campo di studio empirico: l'invecchiamento nei musicisti di un'orchestra sinfonica

## **Justification d'une investigation d'un vieillissement positif parmi les musiciens d'orchestre symphonique : Un appel pour un nouveau terrain d'étude empirique**

Nous étudions la dimension temporelle du statut de musicien – en d'autres termes, l'étendue temporelle de la carrière de musicien –, nécessitant des ajustements spécifiques aux



changements d'âge et d'environnement. Cette compréhension se base sur une série d'étapes de développement chacune unique en terme de structuration de l'activité musicale, de motivations et de réalisations. Les études relatives au développement de la musique ont jusqu'à maintenant porté exclusivement sur la précocité musicale, la petite enfance, les adolescents prodigieux, et les étudiants de haut-niveau. Il n'y a pas eu de grand intérêt manifesté pour les musiciens de plus de 50 ans, et bien que très peu soit connu au sujet des musiciens âgés, un petit nombre d'études publiées mettent en évidence la sous-performance et la perte d'appui des déficits en terme de performance musicale liés à l'âge. Sans aucun doute, l'étude doit se porter en priorité sur les musiciens encore en mesure de jouer. Des efforts de recherche doivent se concentrer sur les musiciens interprètes qui ont maintenu une carrière professionnelle dans la cinquième décennie de leur vie, en particulier du fait que l'augmentation de l'espérance de vie induit une augmentation de la vie musicale active. Le présent article lance un « appel » en direction des sciences de la musique pour un nouveau terrain d'étude empirique, relatif au vieillissement positif parmi les musiciens d'orchestre symphonique.

### **Gründe für Untersuchungen zum positiven Altern bei Orchestermusikern: Aufruf für ein neues Feld empirischer Forschungen**

Musiker zu sein bedeutet einen lebenslangen Prozess, der spezifische Anpassungen an Veränderungen in Alter und Umwelt erfordert. Dieser Prozess basiert auf einzelnen Entwicklungsstadien, die jeweils strukturell einzigartig hinsichtlich musikalischer Tätigkeiten, Motivationen und Leistungen sind. Dennoch konzentrierten sich Studien zur musikalischen Entwicklung ausschließlich auf musikalische Anfänge und frühe Kindheit, hochbegabte Jugendliche oder Studierende an Musikhochschulen. Bislang bestand kein starkes Forschungsinteresse an Musikern über 50 Jahren. Obwohl nur sehr wenig über ältere Musiker bekannt ist, wie überflüssig zu sagen erscheint, betont eine kleine Anzahl an publizierten Studien vor allem schlechtere Darbietungsleistungen und Verluste im Zusammenhang mit altersbedingten Defiziten beim Musizieren. Dabei sollte wirklich denjenigen mehr Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet werden, die noch musizieren können – nicht nur jenen, die nicht mehr musizieren können. Durch kollektive Bemühungen sollte begonnen werden, aktive Musiker in den Blickpunkt zu rücken, die ihre berufliche Karriere bis in das fünfte Lebensjahrzehnt beibehielten. Durch eine höhere Lebensdauer dehnen Musiker heute die Phase des aktiven Musizierens aus auf ein Lebensalter, das früher als Rückzugsalter von effektiver beruflicher Tätigkeit angesehen wurde. Der vorliegende Aufsatz ist ein "Aufruf" an die Musikforschung, sich ein neues Feld für empirische Untersuchungen anzueignen: positives Altern bei Orchestermusikern.