

Becoming a musical performer:  
Conceptions of the classical musician  
promoted at university

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# Critiques on traditional teaching/learning approaches in higher music education

Bennett, D. (2008)

Bennett, D. (2009)

Bennett, D. (2013)

Donald, E. (2012)

Perkins, R. (2013)

Simones, L.L. (2017)

# Approaches to learning and portfolio careers

- Exploration and experimentation  
(Bennett, 2008; Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010)
- Risk-taking  
(Perkins 2013; Teague & Dylan Smith, 2015)
- Challenging conventions  
(Minors et al., 2017; Triantafyllaki et al., 2012)
- Mobilising knowledge  
(Bennett, 2013; Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010)
- Taking ownership of one's learning  
(Perkins, 2012)
- Enjoyment and personal fulfilment  
(Bennett, 2013)

# Musical creativity

Hill, J. (2012)

Rink, J., Gaunt, H., & Williamon, A. (2017)

Perkins, R. (2013)

# Perception of university music programmes

Carruthers, G. (2012)

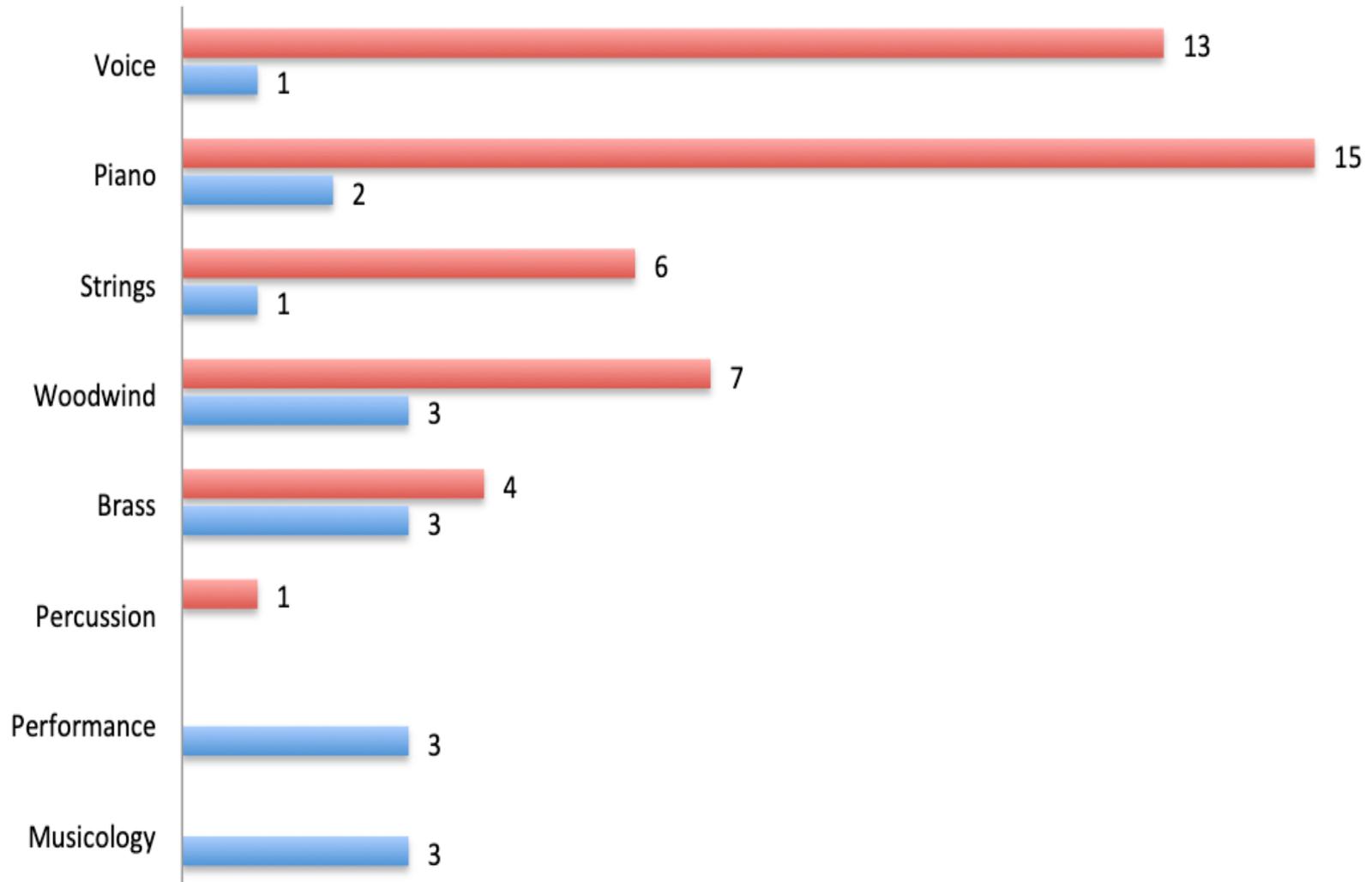
Papageorgi, I., Haddon, E., Creech, A., Morton, F., de Bezenac, C., Himonides, E., Potter, J., Duffy, C., Whyton, T., & Welch, G. (2010a)

Papageorgi, I., Haddon, E., Creech, A., Morton, F., De Bezenac, C., Himonides, E., Potter, J., Duffy, C., Whyton, T., & Welch, G. (2010b)

*Making sense of classical musical performance  
at university: An ethnographically-informed  
case study of a community of practice*

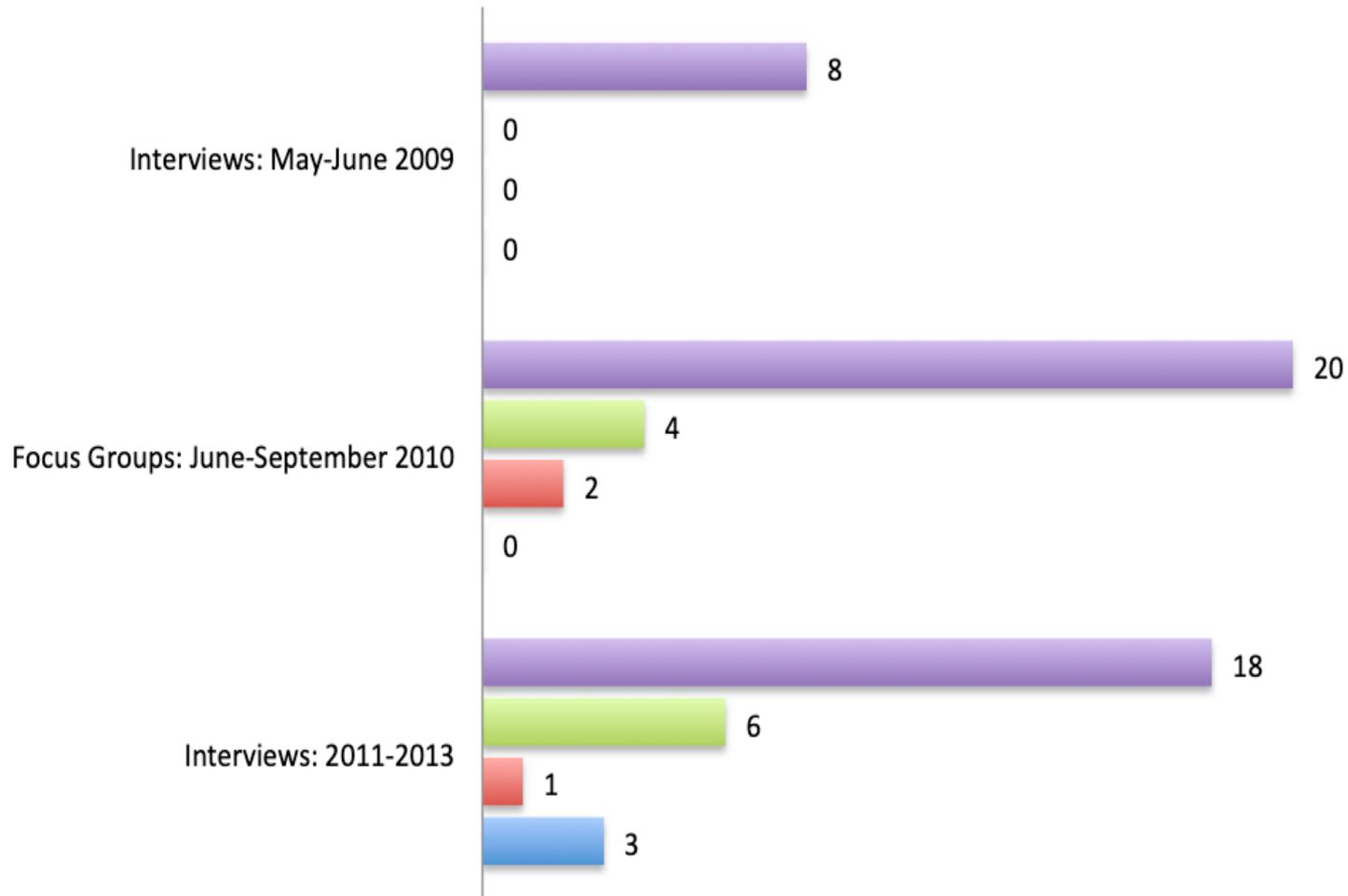
# Participants' specialisms

■ Students (46) ■ Tutors (16)



# Participation in interviews and focus groups

■ Students (46)   ■ Instrumental/vocal tutors (10)   ■ Performance tutors (3)   ■ Academic tutors (3)



# Beliefs informing the performance community's practices

1. Performing classical music is about 'getting it right';
2. Learning performance is a worthwhile endeavour only when advanced technical standards are achieved;
3. Academic knowledge is of no practical use to a performer.

1. Performing classical music is about 'getting it right'

## Feedback based on a literal reading of the music score

The performance tutor likes you to have photocopies of the score and to give them to everyone. Everyone spends all their time looking at the music score and going 'Oh you didn't do this', 'Are they playing it all legato?', 'Is it the correct dynamics?', 'cause what they expect is there in front of them and then they're just matching what happens to the score.

(Lana, 3rd year student)

## Feedback based on a literal reading of the music score

Most of the time, the examiners were looking at the music score rather than looking at me as a performer. It was like they were trying to catch me out straight away. Like, 'Right, I'm going to look at this music score and as soon as she gets something wrong, I'm going to circle it.'

(Caroline, 3rd year student)

## Feedback based on a single interpretative approach

Ili played a Rachmaninov prelude and then Max, the performance tutor, was saying all these things about not playing Russian music *right* and got very critical and a bit personal. Ili didn't really say much and went and sat down. And then Max said to another student: 'You go and play it and show her *how it's done*'.

(Kay, 3rd year student)

2. Learning performance is a worthwhile endeavour only when advanced technical standards are pursued and achieved

# Prioritising the development of solo technical skills

My one-to-one lessons have been nearly all technique.

(Maddie, 2nd year student)

General musicianship is really not what I'm here to teach, so I'm really focused on the technical aspect, the finer points of technique.

(Niamh, vocal tutor)

## Understandings of feedback

He focused more on the musicality, rather than technique, 'cause obviously he can't, with all different instruments.

(Kale, 3rd year student)

For me to give feedback to a brass player isn't going to be valuable because I don't know anything about playing a brass instrument. I can give maybe a bit of feedback on musical faults, but actually, if it doesn't sound good I can't say why.

(Maddie, 2nd year student)

3. Academic knowledge is of no practical use to a performer

# Relationship between performance and academic studies

The relationship between academic knowledge and performance is detached. For me as a performer, music should be played and felt, rather than be spoken about too much. It's about the experience rather than academic knowledge.

(Michal, 3rd year student)

## Academic knowledge vs. practical knowledge

In class you hear the way some students talk about certain things: you can tell it's not supported by performing experience, but it's purely books. I can tell who's a performer and who's not.

(Michal, 3rd year student)

The non-performance students see everything as black and white, but we obviously had different views of what's being said in class, purely because of our performance experience.

(Josie, 3rd year student)

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# How can we bring about a positive change?

- Music as performance
- Performer as creative agent

(Cook, N.,2013)