

Aspects of Communities of Practice
Among Emerging German Swiss Folk Musicians

By

Sharonne K. Specker
Diploma in Music, Camosun College, 2009
Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2014

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier (Department of Anthropology)
Supervisor

Dr. Ann Stahl (Department of Anthropology)
Member

Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the dynamics of German Swiss folk music today in relation to the emerging musicians who have been involved in a folk music post-secondary program in recent years. Approaching the field as a community of musical practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), I attend to processes of learning and transmission and to the spaces of experience in which it takes place. In participant responses, three key themes emerged. The first was the significance of the recently-established folk music postsecondary program as a site of learning and participation for emerging German Swiss musicians. The second was the importance of creativity among this demographic, and the way in which learning environments and spaces of experience (Gosselain 2016), such as universities or festivals, shape this creative potential. The third was the centrality of Swiss folk music festivals to the continuance of this music and community, and the way in which they offer spaces of experience in which to connect, learn, share, and participate. In this thesis, I draw on the theoretical concepts of legitimate peripheral participation, boundary objects, spaces of experience, and genealogy, and explore issues pertaining to informal and formal learning, intergenerationality, access and power, and peripherality.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the musicians, who are enriching the world one chord progression at a time.

I dedicate this to the teachers—of singing, English, science, literature, critical thinking, anthropology, and others—who instilled in me a love of their subjects, and of learning.

I also dedicate this thesis to the students—of music, of academia, and of life—who are exploring new knowledge and possibilities at the peripheries of the worlds they know thus far.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction and Overview

The city hummed and bustled around me as I made my way through the city centre of Zurich, modern and industrial sounds reverberating even through the relatively quiet, elegant back streets. Sirens wailed. Construction work clattered. A Vespa roared past as I approached the stately outline of Zurich's 120-year-old concert hall. Lost in thought, I made my way through this familiar scene until abruptly—stolidly blocking my path along the freshly rained-upon sidewalk—I was confronted with cowbells.

They were large cowbells, burnished and weighty and easily three feet high, and they were in the process of being unloaded into the concert hall. The biannual Stubete am See Festival, a four-day event based at Zurich's Tonhalle, was about to open for the weekend. A festival dedicated to so-called "new" Swiss Folk music, it welcomes the unusual alongside the conventional, attracting a wealth of performers in the contemporary Swiss folk music scene and positioning itself between the poles of tradition and innovation, localism and cosmopolitanism. Demanding new musical projects each time to maintain a changing program for its audience, it generates a high quota of original musical material, turning itself into a hotbed of creative activity. Among those who create for its stages are an up-and-coming generation of dynamic young musicians, trained at Switzerland's only postsecondary folk music program. These current students and recent graduates create modern and inventive opportunities from a deep well of traditional knowledge, repertoire, and instruments—as for example these particular

cowbells. The cowbells, innocuously placed at the Tonhalle's urban periphery, unwittingly spoke volumes about the intersection at which Swiss folk music finds itself today.

During my research foray into folk music in Switzerland during the summer of 2016, I encountered a complex, vibrant, and nuanced musical and social world in which layers of authenticity, knowledge, experience, and learning interacted continuously to make up the German-speaking 'Swiss folk music scene' at any given moment in time. In approaching this music world as a community of musical practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Kenny 2016), and attending to the networks and circulations within it, three key themes emerged. The first was the significance of the recently-established folk music postsecondary program as a site of learning and participation for a particular demographic of emerging German Swiss musicians. The second was the importance of creativity among this demographic, and the way in which learning environments and spaces of experience (Gosselain 2016:46)—for example, the program or the festival—shape this creative potential. The third was the centrality of Swiss folk music festivals to the continuance of this music and community, and the way in which they offer spaces of experience in which to connect, learn, share, and participate.

Through this thesis, I explore the dynamics of Swiss folk music today in relation to the emerging musicians who have been involved in the post-secondary program in recent years. Approaching the field as a community of musical practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), I will attend to its inherent processes of learning and transmission—both evident and implicit—and to the spaces of experience in which it takes place. Recognizing that music as a social phenomenon is also in a constant state of flux, my research aims to bring this particular music world to light as it exists at this point in time, reflecting current processes and experiences while acknowledging

their potential temporality. My subject matter primarily features members of the “new” Swiss folk music community, as elaborated upon below. While this label has shown itself to be controversial and inadequate (as indicated by musicians during fieldwork), it remains distinct from traditional folk music, and persists as the most convenient way to refer to this community for the time being. Over the following introductory pages, I outline my research questions and contextualize them with a discussion of folk music in Switzerland, both historically and in the present. I provide an overview of my methodology, and conclude with a summary of the chapters that follow.

Research Framing

The research questions considered in this thesis materialised gradually, a culmination of various approaches, intents, events, and experiences. My fieldwork, conducted with the intention of investigating the patterns, movements, and circulations of cultural knowledge and practices through the lens of contemporary Swiss folk music, took an unexpected turn towards a more specific topic once I began the research process in Switzerland. A perusal of Ringli and Rühl’s (2015) *Die Neue Volksmusik: Siebzehn Porträts und eine Spurensuche in der Schweiz* (“The New Folk Music: Seventeen Portraits and a Search for Clues in Switzerland”)¹—enlightening and thorough in its depiction of developments in new Swiss folk music over the last four decades—opened a small but captivating window into what would become my area of focus.

¹ I translated Ringli and Rühl (2015) from its original German, as well as the following sources: Burkhalter (2014) Jäggi (2014), Järmann (2014), Nager (2006), Oehme-Jüngling (2016, 2014, 2008, 2007), Pfändler (2013), Ringli (2007), Rühl (2011).

Ringli and Rühl (2015) conducted interviews with the most significant musical contributors to Swiss folk music's contemporary development, providing a comprehensive overview of the music and the community as it has existed up until 2015. Most of these musicians are still active in the Swiss folk music community and, critically, some have continued as key players in the post-secondary folk music program established a decade ago under the umbrella of the Jazz curriculum of the School of Music at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences. However, as this generation of musicians has cemented its place in Swiss folk music and gone on to become role models and teachers, a new generation has been emerging in its shadow. Aware of the gradual and perpetually variable nature of musical development, Ringli and Rühl (2015) noted that they omitted interviews with the latter musicians for their book, preferring to let their careers evolve and their creative individualities develop before committing them to the static pages of this topic's most definitive volume.

The paragraph discussing this was brief, but it was ultimately these musicians, under the age of 35, on whom I chose to focus my own research. Their lived experience has not been addressed in the context of Swiss folk music and communities of practice, and they have been less immediately visible and discussed, yet they are the generation that will be actively transmitting and perpetuating these musical practices in the years to come. Lave and Wenger (1991:15) refer to this dialectic as the dilemma of newcomers, of incoming participants who must be able to understand, adhere to, and engage in the existing practice while also holding a significant stake in its subsequent development. Since the educational institutionalization of folk music is a relatively new phenomenon in Switzerland (unlike in the UK or Finland; see Ringli and Rühl 2015), and therefore affords the opportunity to observe patterns of learning and

participation in a transitional group, I concentrated on current students and recent graduates of the folk music concentration at the University of Applied Sciences in Lucerne. Like Ringli and Rühl (2015), my intention is not to cement their musical identity before it has been fully established. Rather, I seek to examine the conduits, practices, and interactions inherent to their emergent participation in this community of practice. My analytical tool for effectively mapping these networks is Lave and Wenger's (1991; Wenger 1998) community of practice model, and the associated concept of legitimate peripheral participation. These central principles are supplemented by theoretical perspectives specific to each branch of my study.

Research Questions

I have three primary foci in my thesis. One is the process of learning and participation brought about by the academic institutionalization of German Swiss folk music and the way in which this environment shapes the musical practices of its graduates. Connected to this is the way in which emerging musicians engage in creative practice within the genre of new Swiss folk music, and how creativity is fostered or configured by the community of practice in which musicians learn and participate. Lastly, I explore festivals as critical sites of learning, influence, connection, participation, and self-definition for the new Swiss folk music community of practice.

My primary research question asks what kinds of musical practices are occurring among the younger generation of German Swiss folk musicians, and how are they configured by participation in segments of the new German Swiss folk music community of practice? Derived

from this question are three associated queries. The first seeks to determine the ways in which emerging musicians' activities and interactions are shaped by their involvement in a postsecondary folk music learning environment, as perceived by participants themselves. This includes investigating whether contacts and networks are emerging from the institutional setting, and identifying the aspects of academic training that participants refer to as being particularly relevant to their work.

The second seeks to determine the ways in which emerging musicians engage in creative practices. This includes attending to how creative practice is perceived and situated in relation to understandings of the new Swiss folk music genre; characterizing specific types of creative musical activities and identifying the relevant features of participants' 'spaces of experience' which configure these practices.

The third seeks to determine the ways in which festivals shape the participation of emerging new German Swiss folk musicians in the community of musical practice. This includes inquiring as to how participants perceive festivals within their musical and professional landscape, and identifying the features of festivals that bear the most significance for emerging musicians.

Swiss Folk Music: A Starting Point

The definition of folk music in Germanic Switzerland has been a subject of contention, and one that both scholars and participants in this field have grappled with for years. It has elicited a variety of opinions that have fallen largely into two camps: that of traditional folk

music aficionados who see Swiss folk music as a convention-bound custom to be safeguarded from change; and that of musicians who see folk music as a dynamic, living practice that changes with time while retaining its pedigree. However, these perspectives have in common a sense of shared heritage and a feeling of depth through time, as well as consensus that it is something that must be grounded in this collective history in order to be meaningfully carried on into the future. Since my area of study focuses on contemporary developments in German Swiss folk music, I will specifically be discussing the latter perspective in order to contextualize the work that is occurring in this field.

Ringli (2006:6) notes that tradition is habitually perceived as being an unaltered continuation of “the way it has always been” a perspective that has held true for folk music in Switzerland and has long been upheld by Switzerland’s formalized, self-ascribed guardians of Swiss heritage—organizations such as the Federal Yodel Association and similar groups. However, he also points out that, prior to the Second World War, Switzerland’s ‘folk’ music was in fact comprised of a hybrid of influences and sources layered over a vaguely Germanic base, locally adapted and incorporated into the German Swiss cultural fabric (Ringli 2006:7). The idea of Swiss folk music as a static entity is a product of the 20th century, as emphasis on national heritage and a collective identity grew stronger in reaction to Europe’s increasingly hostile political climate in the 1930s and 40s. The introduction of country-wide symbols of national character, such as the Alps, was a deliberate attempt to unify (and thereby strengthen) a country only loosely bound by a federal government while remaining otherwise fragmented into diverse languages and social practices and lacking the relative linguistic and cultural homogeneity of its neighbours (Piccardi 2010, Zimmer 1998). These social and political

movements directly corresponded to changes in what was perceived as Swiss folk music (Piccardi 2010). Acceptably 'traditional' instruments were sharply circumscribed, and a manual published by the Federal Yodel Association in 1943 went so far as to insist that "everything un-Swiss is to be mercilessly eradicated" (EJV 1943:2 in Ringli 2006:8, my translation), a discourse that continued to be perpetuated through radio and popular culture beyond the end of the Second World War.

Traditionalists still abound today. However, in recent decades there have also been increasing numbers of folk musicians who have sought to return to the dynamism of earlier musical practice. A type of common Swiss instrumental music known as 'Ländlermusik', regulated and formalized by the mid-20th century, was once characterized instead by "ingenuity, the joy of experimentation, and the introduction of innovations" (Ringli 2006:6, my translation), and it is this latter approach that drives proponents of new Swiss folk music. Existing amongst a "broader discourse around innovations and changes in the folk music scene" (Oehme-Jüngling 2016:176), these developments remain deeply grounded in and shaped by historical considerations, but with a sense of vitality and freedom to experiment within these parameters. Markus Flückiger, an influential catalyst for new Swiss folk music and a current director in the postsecondary folk program, emphasizes the importance of developing Switzerland's music "from the inside out" (Oehme-Jüngling 2016:179), while contemporary composer Fabian Müller insists that "real innovation in (Swiss) folk music can only come out of the spirit of folk music itself" (Oehme-Jüngling 2016:181). This theme of advancement through heritage recurs throughout my fieldwork.

In light of the diversity of approaches within, some scholars avoid defining Swiss folk music entirely, relying instead on a shared—but largely unarticulated—understanding. Franz Xaver Nager (2006:21), founder of Switzerland’s folk music postsecondary program, claims that Swiss folk music is “not a phenomenon per se, but rather a particular expression of an Alpine and Western cultural heritage.” Believing that technical musical aspects and adherence to a supposed genre are inadequate criteria, Järmann quotes Christian Seiler (1994:111 in Järmann 2014:103) in acknowledging the prevalence of widespread, non-specific musical traits and challenging the idea of a uniquely Swiss musical trademark, going so far as to say that, “there is no Swiss folk music...Nothing is original. Nothing consists exclusively of Swiss raw materials.” Järmann draws on Ringli’s (2006:16 in Järmann 2014:103) summary in commenting that “Swiss folk music is what is perceived as Swiss. It is a collective imagination rather than a genus that can be assigned through facts and figures.” This is how Oehme-Jüngling (2014, 2016) also chooses to identify Swiss folk music, focusing on the processes of participation and the perception of belonging rather than the musical object itself.

I take this as my guiding point of reference when discussing German Swiss folk music as a whole, and particularly the new Swiss folk music. My study will approach German Swiss folk music as a musical genre rooted in a collective heritage and shared understanding, often with an aspect of having grown up with it or internalized it in some capacity, and constructed from 150 years of both flexible and rigid musical expectations and definitions. Its nucleus (though not all its broader modification) is more or less agreed upon by members of the community of practice, forming a type of shared repertoire with variation. Considering Merriam’s (1960:27 in Oehme-Jüngling 2016:30) claim that music’s “particular organization demands the social

concurrence of people who decide what it can and cannot be,” I also follow in Winter and Keegan-Phipps’ (2013:8) footsteps in taking folk music to be a “culturally and socially constructed category,” in which the boundaries of the community of practice are, at the end of the day, socially constituted by the participants themselves (Wenger 1998:220). Participant perceptions of the genre of new Swiss folk music will be further explored in my fourth chapter, in relation to creative practices. It is worth clarifying that Swiss musicians observe a difference between “*Schweizer Volksmusik*”—Swiss folk music—and American-style “Folk music,” in the genre of Bob Dylan and others. My use of the term “folk music” in this thesis will refer to the former, what Swiss would otherwise call *Volksmusik*.

Swiss Musical Practices and Literature

In recent years, German Swiss folk music has experienced a resurgence in popularity in its home country, to a far greater degree than folk music of the French, Italian, and Romansch populations (Gutsche and Oehme-Jüngling 2014). While the classic and highly typical “Ländler” style remains common at specific social gatherings and ‘jam sessions’ (conventions known as *Stubete* in Swiss-German dialect [Jäggi 2014]), the features of Swiss folk music have provided the raw material for innovative practices, including the reinvention of well-known songs or archival collections; the use of traditional Swiss instruments in new compositions; and inspiration drawn from traditional Swiss imagery (such as the Alps, in the case of the ‘Alpentöne Festival’; see Zimmer 1998 and Oehme-Jüngling 2014) to provide a springboard for new ways of thinking about Swiss musical possibilities (Ringli 2007). The dynamic between new folk music and traditional folk music remains contested and nuanced, a dichotomy that also reflects how

Switzerland grapples nationally with ideals of both conservatism and innovation (Steinman 2012).

An extensive collaborative research project in Switzerland, titled “Broadcasting Swissness,” recently explored how a typically Swiss musical style is constructed, practiced, and conveyed, with particular attention to the social and political conditions of these musical values and the role of radio in linking them to a broader global network during the 1960s and 1970s. Some of this research is represented in the book “Die Schweiz im Klang” (“Switzerland in Sound”), which addresses issues pertaining to the “representation, construction and negotiation of (trans) national identity through acoustic media” (Gutsche and Oehme-Jüngling 2014, book title). Oehme-Jüngling (2014:20) has observed that “national myths, collective symbols and techniques of making national identity are currently being revisited and reinterpreted in the context of...(navigating) the role of modern Switzerland in the face of globalization, transnationalism and transculturalism,” and the work of Gutsche and Oehme-Jüngling (2014:6) on “the cultural significance of sound” in Switzerland offers a seminal foundation for further studies on Swiss music practices in today’s dynamic network of creative transmission and circulation.

Burkhalter (2014) has conducted research on some of these transnational networks of music and creativity, with a focus on bi-national musicians who are based in Switzerland but who draw on musical symbols and samples from other traditions, such as Ethiopian or Egyptian. His work is attentive to issues of authenticity, boundaries, and musical spaces and sharing, which in some cases may offer a useful comparison for my own study. He notes that “pop music, free improvised music and contemporary music have long played in separate scenes and

spaces (in Switzerland)—and they do so largely to this day” (Burkhalter 2014:73), bringing attention to the kinds of bounded circles and communities of practice that can, in some cases, characterize Swiss musical activities. He also remarks on the creative conservatism and pressures faced by some more experimental musicians, and examines how musicians are positioning themselves in the world—both ideologically, and in their physical location of residence—through their music and choice of influences, taking the approach of a “multi-perspective ethnography” (Burkhalter 2014:76) to examine the complexities of music creation, production, and distribution in a globalized world. Riom’s (2016) research, meanwhile, has focused on the local scene of Swiss indie rock musicians, examining how musicians are exposed to this musical style, how they become involved in it, and how they participate in it, tracing networks of engagement as well as processes of self-identification. While neither of these authors address Swiss folk music specifically, their work offers comparative examples of how musicians in Switzerland navigate distinct communities and creative contexts. In the new Swiss folk music community, also, an awareness of distinct scenes and genres colours participants’ interactions with diverse musical influences and styles.

Most recently, Oehme-Jüngling (2016) has published an extensive study of Swiss folk music as practice and Swiss folk music in public and academic discourse. Over the course of her book, she shows how musicians who identify with folk music practices are engaging in a broader social discourse, and she investigates the way in which social and structural components of the late 20th and early 21st century are manifest in new directions in folk music. She consciously moves away from folk music as an object and towards folk music as a social and communicative action, conducting an “empirical study of specific cultural practices” (Oehme-

Jüngling 2016:30). This action- or practice-oriented approach will inform my research, as I also seek to bring a sociocultural, anthropological approach to the study of musical activities through a communities of practice model.

Methodology

In the summer of 2016, with approval from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Review Board, I conducted 12 interviews with members of the Swiss folk music community. These form the basis of my study's data. I contextualize my research with anecdotes from my participant observation of the aforementioned Stubete am See Festival, in which a majority of my interview participants were involved, as well as from an end-of-term concert for the Lucerne folk music program. The six up-and-coming musicians that I interviewed were current or recent students of the Lucerne post-secondary program; all were also active performing members of the community, and most had a small ensemble of their own. However, in the interest of gaining perspective on the community of practice as a whole, I also interviewed six individuals with significant roles in the German Swiss folk music community. These included three festival directors, a long-established and well-respected Swiss folk musician, the director of a folk music resource centre, and the director of the contemporary folk music ensemble at the Lucerne postsecondary program (an eminent musician in his own right, and a direct inspiration for numerous of the emerging generation).

The participant selection process involved a combination of recommended contacts, the 'snowball' approach, and personal observation and research. My central contact in Switzerland was Dr. Karoline Oehme-Jüngling. A post-doc at the University of Basel, Dr. Oehme-Jüngling

facilitated my research stay in Switzerland, and at the start of my fieldwork period, she recommended a number of people for my interviews. Having recently written an extensive book about folk music in Switzerland from an anthropological perspective, she was an ideal candidate to provide further contacts and suggestions. Most of the young musicians were selected after I attended the year-end concert of the post-secondary program's folk ensemble, as I felt that the easiest way to establish parameters for my study was to simply interview the musicians in this ensemble who had been focusing on folk music over the past year. As the research process developed, I realized it was somewhat more complicated than originally presumed—some musicians were undergraduates with a folk music specialization, others were Masters students who had done folk music in their undergraduate degree—but the final assortment of participants still represented students who had recently studied folk music in an academic context within the previous year. The sole exception was a musician who had graduated from the program a year earlier. His name was continually recommended to me by other participants due to his musical success and popularity and, as he had been a recent student of the program himself, I felt that he could be legitimately included in the sample group. Two students were not interviewed—one because our schedules didn't align, and one who I misunderstood to be a music student without a folk music specialization (possibly because his name never arose in my prior interviews with members of the folk music community, unlike the names of the other student participants).

I approached my topic as a qualitative case study, primarily gathering my data from participant responses via semi-structured interviews—a technique shown to be particularly effective for investigating participants' perspectives on their musical activities (e.g. Bailey and

Davidson 2003, Kennedy 2009, Powell 2012, Judd and Pooley 2014, Specker 2014, Oehme-Jüngling 2016). Of the 12 interviews, 11 were conducted in Swiss German and one in High German. Previous studies of musical communities of practice have had a strong participant observation basis (Lavengood 2008, Kenny 2014), as have studies of Swiss folk music (Oehme-Jüngling 2016), but I wish to use data from participant observation simply as supporting, or complementary data. As a newcomer to the Swiss folk music community, there were many nuances and facets that were not immediately apparent to me, making interviews a more practical means of investigation. Nonetheless, observing concerts and festivals allowed me to supplement my interview material with contextual attention to what people do (cultural behaviour), make/use (cultural artifacts), and say (speech messages) (James Spradley in Oehme-Jüngling 2016).

Due to the nature of a Masters project and the limit in scale, I restricted my study to a relatively small number of participants. Given the scope of this study, I recognize that my sample size will not be a comprehensive cross-section, representative of Swiss musical patterns broadly (as in Oehme-Jüngling 2016), but instead represents a focused example from which to draw preliminary conclusions and identify areas for further research. For similar reasons of time and scale, as well as linguistic reasons and the nature of the Swiss folk music scene more generally, the participants were based in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. My fieldwork was funded by a ThinkSwiss Scholarship through the Swiss Federal Office of Science, Research, and Education, and by a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Key Themes

This thesis is organised around three main subject areas: the academic institutionalization of Swiss folk music; creative practices among emerging new Swiss folk musicians; and the role of festivals in this community of musical practices. Following a chapter in which I offer a fuller exploration of communities of practice as a conceptual framework, I explore each of these themes in turn, as described below.

Academic institutionalization

Ten years ago, Switzerland's first postsecondary program opened with the goal of providing a venue for talented young folk musicians to learn their trade at a professional calibre, comparable to the opportunities for jazz and classical musicians (Nager 2006). The program is strongly aligned with new folk music. From the time of its inception members of the folk music community—both supporters and skeptics—predicted it would be a game-changer. At the time of my fieldwork, past and current students were actively engaged in the broader folk music scene, yet the development is still recent enough that no conclusive scholarship has emerged regarding this demographic.

The post-secondary institutionalization of Swiss folk music, though coexisting alongside previous means of engaging in the community of practice, has nonetheless shaped the musical activities and trajectories of emerging musicians—in learning practices, opportunities for would-be students, and skills or knowledge gained. It raises questions about the regulation and parameters of community membership (Lave and Wenger 1991: 100), as the introduction of academic testing also introduces a new set of values regarding knowledge, as I take up in

Chapter 3. Here I address a student-based view of learning processes (see Lave and Wenger 1991: 97), in keeping with the goal of observing social systems and participatory experiences. However, drawing on the observations of Keegan-Phipps (2007), Hill (2007; 2009), and Yang and Welch (2016) in their work on the institutionalization of folk music, I also engage with the program's broader context. Global discourses regarding the worth and value of postsecondary education continue to shape Switzerland's learning systems, and the Lucerne folk music program—and its students—are poised at the intersection of local and transnational debates regarding learning, teaching, tradition, heritage, and music-making.

Creative Practices

New Swiss folk music is rooted in a distinct collective tradition, yet the music has been receptive to a wide array of influences and is continuously being recreated by its participants. The desire and ability to create new possibilities within Swiss folk music emerged as a central tenet of the student musicians' work. This initiative does not exist in a vacuum, but rather, in interplay with social and environmental stimuli and potential. One such factor is the formal learning environment, in which creativity is encouraged and made possible through a combination of mentor encouragement and individual capacity for composition. Another contribution is the external pressure of the industry, as the Swiss folk music scene aims to stay relevant and engaging for its audience. The demand for new material in turn shapes the processes of learning, participation, and creative activity among the emerging generation of Swiss musicians. In Chapter 4, I draw on the work of Ingold and Hallam (2007), Barber (2007), and Kohring (2016) to explore how creativity is shaped by spaces of experience and

communities of practice. I also investigate how participants engage in creative practices in relation to ingrained understandings of genre in German Swiss folk music, and how these characteristics of genre are identified. Arising from this, the chapter will address the articulation and distinction of various creative practices themselves, among the participants.

Festivals

Festivals remain the largest gathering point for members of the Swiss folk music community. Musicians are able to connect, socialize, and observe each others' work, while enthusiastic audience members are able to associate with the musical community, and the media is able to disseminate the festival's purpose and activities to the general public. Festivals play an important role in the career trajectories of young musicians, offering a venue to debut new works and engage in legitimate peripheral participation. They are also instrumental in perpetuating the demand for creativity, as the need for variety means that they continually request new material from an otherwise limited community of musicians.

In Chapter 5, I explore festivals as partially representative of Gosselain's (2016:46) notion of 'spaces of experience,' "conceived as a constellation of places where concrete relations between people, things, materials, and environment are constituted." In so doing, I also draw on Will Straw's (1991, 2001, 2005) notion of musical "scenes," as the festival assemblage goes beyond the immediate musical community of practice and extends to include fans and publicity materials, indicating "cultural units whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic" (Straw 2001:248). This approach offers a valuable counterpart to the community of

practice model as it lends analytical weight to the collection of individuals, circumstances, and circulations which exist peripherally to the musicians themselves, yet which form an integral part of what the musicians do and are part of. I also suggest that festivals can be understood as boundary objects and as peripheral experiences, serving multiple purposes in the new Swiss folk music community of practice.

The chapter attends to the significance of festivals in the musical—and social—practices of emerging Swiss folk musicians, as identified by participants in the new Swiss folk music community of practice. I address the ways in which festivals are identified as sites for networking, opportunities for expanding one's musical knowledge, and occasions for presenting oneself and one's work to the public.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framing

Introduction

My primary theoretical model for mapping young musicians' participation is that of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999). Taking inspiration from Born's (2011:377) identification of "the musical object as a constellation of mediations," and Miller's (2008, my emphasis) desire to "place the *work of learning and performing* music at the centre of the story," I propose that the communities of practice model provides a way of mapping experiences concretely through the movements, actions, and interactions of musicians and their work. Addressing "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world" (Lave and Wenger 1991:98), the concept allows me to look at how contacts and connections are made and maintained, how values are passed down and shared or discarded, how musical trends and patterns are circulated. It consequently also opens a space to investigate how participation in this community gives shape to related processes such as creativity and improvisational practice.

While I will be exploring various additional theoretical perspectives in the following chapters, the approaches outlined below represent some key concepts which inform the thesis and thus benefit from further contextualization.

Community of Practice Theory in Previous Literature

Thus far, the communities of practice model has been used to analyze contexts as diverse as management (Kislov 2014; Macpherson et. al 2006), archaeology (Roddick and Stahl

2016), and education (Akkerman and Bakker 2011; Beineke 2013; Chen et. al. 2010; Kenny 2014; Virkkula 2015), among other subjects. In the area most closely related to my topic, it has been employed in the service of music education studies (Ilari 2010), online musical networks (Partti 2012, Waldron 2009), musical scores as boundary objects (Winget 2007), and intergenerational social music traditions (Russell 2003). These studies provide analytical precedents for my research and examples of how the framework can be applied, as well as indicating open spaces for further exploration. To my knowledge, with the exception of Lavengood's (2008) dissertation on transnational exchanges in Cape Breton folk music and Mbaye's work (2015) on hip hop in West and Central Africa, this model has rarely been used ethnographically among active professional and community musicians, nor has it been employed to address patterns of circulation of musical knowledge in relation to wider constellations of practice or musical influence. However, a recently published book on musical communities of practice (Kenny 2016) presents three case studies from a music education perspective, providing support and precedent for my work.

A community of practice perspective, in which social life is reproduced through interactions of learning and knowledge exchanging (Roddick and Stahl 2016:9), highlights the fundamentally social way in which Swiss musical practices are being re-negotiated through mutual involvement. Key to contemporary theoretical work on communities of practice is the attention to processes—how networks and constellations come about, and how communities are bridged and connected (Roddick and Stahl 2016; Schoenbrun 2016). These processes are grounded in the actions, practices, networks, and life-worlds of individuals themselves, making ethnographic inquiry into the interactions and activities of musicians vital to my research. The

communities of practice approach tangibly brings attention to key areas of learning and participation within a musical community, and thereby shapes my research questions and process of analysis, as participants integrate into the community through engagement in legitimate peripheral participation.

Communities of Practice

Although the concept of a community of practice was already a key component of Lave and Wenger's work (1991), Wenger (1998) specifically addresses "communities of practice" in greater depth in his book of the same name. While the notion of a community of practice is quite intuitive on a broad level—representing a community of people who engage in, and share knowledge of, a particular set of practices—Wenger (1998) outlines specific criteria and aspects of such communities. In particular, he describes the three interrelated factors of mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998:72-73). By mutual engagement, Wenger (1998:73-77) refers to a sense of active investment in the practice by participants, and to the various relationships, negotiations, activities, opportunities for involvement, community maintenance, and discussions of meaning that occur among them. This does not imply harmonious relations, necessarily, but requires mutually invested relations nonetheless (Wenger 1998:77). A joint enterprise refers more or less to the desired outcome of this mutual engagement—shared goals and mutual accountability, communal expectations, and a sense that the community is 'homegrown', or produced by the members themselves. Here, too, the emphasis is on interpersonal engagement, as "(d)efining a joint enterprise is a process, not a static agreement" (Wenger 1998:82). Lastly, communities of practice are dependent on a

shared repertoire, which can refer to any type of concrete or conceptual tools, objects, materials, or knowledge associated with the practice. This repertoire—which can include stories, styles, concepts, and discourses, among other things—is mutually understood by participants, informed by the history of the community, and identified and used in practice, but it is simultaneously ambiguous and constantly open to reinterpretation or renegotiation (Wenger 1998:82-85).

Wenger (1998:125-26) observes that certain occurrences and behaviours tend to indicate that a community of practice has formed, among them sustained mutual relationships, shared ways of jointly engaging in activity, overlap in participants' identification of who is a member of the community, insider stories and lore, shared discourse, recognized styles, and “the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products.” I propose that practitioners of new Swiss folk music can be understood to belong to a community of practice according to these various criteria, as my readings and interactions with participants have indicated, and as will be further evident over the course of this study. As such, I proceed with this thesis on the premise that new Swiss folk musicians are either members of, or learning to participate in, a community of musical practice.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the integral link between communities of practice and processes of learning, and the way in which they tend to be co-dependent on, and co-productive of, one another. Using the phrase “legitimate peripheral participation,” Lave and

Wenger (1991) identify a mode of learning in which emerging members are actively participating in a given practice in a way that may be largely supplementary (peripheral), but which is recognized by existing members as a valid means of engagement (legitimate). Newcomers are thus able to gain experience and increase ability and understanding, without yet being fully central to the activity. This can take a variety of forms, and is dependent on a system of interpersonal relations, as “learning as increasing participation in a community of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world” (Lave and Wenger 1991:46). The authors discuss how newcomers to a practice learn to be experts through a wide range of both explicit and implicit processes and contexts (see also Wenger 1998:47), noting that the act of learning itself suggests membership in a community of knowledgeable practitioners (Lave and Wenger 1991:53).

Lave and Wenger developed this conceptual framework in response to perceived shortcomings of existing approaches to learning and education which they encountered during their engagement with studies of apprenticeship and situated learning. More broadly, the idea of ‘situated learning’ addresses learning as “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991:31), in contrast to the previous standard model of education in which learners are thought to be passive recipients of information delivered in a unidirectional manner by expert instructors. While subscribing to situated learning as an approach, Lave and Wenger (1991:32-33) argued that this concept could benefit from being further refined and clarified. Rather than seeing learning as something that simply takes place *within* the social surroundings, Lave and Wenger (1991:35) sought to emphasize that learning takes place actively in *relation to*, and *engagement* with, its context, usually in association with

an existing community of knowledgeable practitioners. As a result, learning is synergetic, co-constitutive, and generative, shaping the community of practitioners as much as the community is shaping the learners.

Informal and formal learning

Lave and Wenger (1991:55) observe that the concept of legitimate peripheral participation is helpful for examining learning contexts as a whole, allowing one to inquire into the “sociocultural organization of space into places of activity and the circulation of knowledgeable skill.” This sharing of knowledge and participation serves to bring both experienced and inexperienced practitioners together, providing a social platform for the continuation of the practices in question. Lave and Wenger (1991:97) tie this to the notion of a comprehensive “learning curriculum,” which they define as a broad range of “situated opportunities...for the improvisational development of new practice” by newcomers in everyday life. A learning curriculum is thus flexible and relational and can take a variety of unintentional forms. It differs from a “teaching curriculum,” which is more narrowly designed as a pedagogical system to be formally taught to learners by instructors (Lave and Wenger 1991:97). Lave and Wenger (1991) address the possible consequences of such differences in their theoretical approach. The authors note that a broadening gap between the two types of curricula can lead to tensions over the learning that is perceived to be ideally and actually occurring, as participants and practitioners in informal and formal learning contexts each develop their own sets of expectations and accepted practices (Lave and Wenger 1991:114).

Lave and Wenger (1991:112) also flag the possibility of changes to what is termed “use value” and “exchange value”—the former representing the value of skills that are acquired through participation and remain valid to the practice, and the latter representing achievements that hold symbolic rather than practical value, as for example a diploma. In contexts where “pedagogically structured content organizes learning activities” (Lave and Wenger 1991:112), formalized and standardized learning may lead to an increase in exchange value at the expense of use value, as learners are no longer as actively engaged in the practical occupations of the community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991:107) note that “didactic instruction creates unintended practices” that may instead materialize into an entirely new and autonomous set of activities and conventions, for example in the case of language that is used to *describe* a practice, in contrast to the language used *within* a practice itself. Shifts of these kinds can be observed among the new Swiss folk music community of practice, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Boundary Objects

In his discussion of communities of practice, Wenger (1998) brings up the notion of “boundary objects” as a tool for thinking about the expansion and exchange of knowledge. Wenger (1998:107) identifies boundary objects as entities—whether items, places, or other things—that bring together multiple practices, such that they “are nexus of perspectives and thus carry the potential of becoming boundary objects if those perspectives need to be coordinated.” The emphasis, then, is on coordination and collaboration between these diverse perspectives, facilitating exchange and mutual gain. In other words, they bring different ways of

thinking into contact with one another, and provide opportunities for learning and growth. Wenger (1998:104) notes that these kinds of objects can reinforce the criteria for insider and outsider status, bringing attention to the qualities that denote membership in a community of practice. In this context, certain individuals can operate as “brokers,” bridging diverse worlds or communities of practice by bringing ideas, influences, or meanings from one community into another. Wenger (1998:110) specifies that brokers “are neither in nor out,” and must be able to navigate both a position of legitimacy and a familiarity with external knowledge in order to effectively facilitate the translation, transaction, and alignment of differing perspectives.

The notion of a boundary object was initially used in a scientific and museum studies context by Star and Griesemer (1989:393), and referred to abstract or concrete objects whose character is such that they “have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation.” This basic premise, of an object that sits between and connects two different milieus, was adopted and adapted by Wenger (1998) in relation to communities of practice, and has since been especially productively engaged in the field of archaeology (e.g., Roddick and Stahl 2016). Drawing on the work of Kohring (2016) and Gosselain (2000, 2016), regarding creativity in potting practices, I argue that the concept is equally productive in the context of anthropological studies of music. It offers a means of making sense of creative activity, and of thinking about the way in which the material components of musical practice—such as instruments, notated scores, and festival performance venues—bring together diverse knowledges and influences to expand possibilities for learning and development among members of the community.

Recently, the concept of boundary objects has been employed as an analytical tool to explore the way that objects can link social processes and practices through different periods of time; to consider issues of geographical movement and spatial scale; and to draw attention to situated relations of power (Gosselain 2016; Roddick 2016; Roddick and Stahl 2016:10, 20). In notable relevance to this study, Gosselain (2016; also Roddick and Stahl 2016:10) sets forth the premise that boundary objects can be both things and places, as in the case of pottery materials and markets in the Niger River area—or, in the case of this study, of musical artifacts and of participatory spaces such as schools or festivals. In this sense, it is useful to refer to Born's (2011:377) interpretation of "the musical object as a constellation of mediations," which itself requires interactions between "a diverse range of subjects and objects—between musician and instrument, composer and score, listener and sound system," among other examples. The versatile nature of boundary objects will be explored further in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, in relation to musical materials and places of participatory learning.

Genealogy

The notion of genealogy, although only briefly stated as such in the body of my thesis, forms an underlying basis to my engagement with musical heritage, genre, and creative practice. First primarily associated with Nietzsche and expanded upon by Foucault (in the context of deconstructing existing social practices), a genealogy is fundamentally "a historical narrative that explains an aspect of human life by showing how it came into being" (Bevir 2008:263). The concept, with its focus on context and contingency, has proven useful in examining how material culture, styles, and practices get passed on, reproduced, and

transformed over time (Roddick and Stahl 2016:16; Stahl 2010:154,). As such, it has been advantageously developed in the field of archaeology, and provides a fruitful conceptual foundation for my own anthropological work. In the case of this study, it offers a framework for tracing the circulation and transmission of ideas pertaining to musical genre, heritage, and practice, as well as the way in which they are adapted by emerging musicians in negotiation with the conventions of their community of practice.

Use of a genealogical approach has enabled archaeologists to direct attention to processes of continuation and change in practices and objects of a region, as well as to the flows and circulations of those objects in a broader setting (Stahl 2010:150, 154). On a small scale, for example, this may involve observing how the introduction of new products or items leads to discontinuities on a material level yet a continuation, or reimagining, of actions in association with these materials (Stahl 2010:152). On a large scale, these insights may reveal how international policies and structures of power take shape in the lives of individuals (Stahl 2010:166). Critically, however, the notion of genealogy enables one to look beyond an unambiguous perception of stasis *or* change, allowing archaeologists to “move beyond a view of objects as sources of *either* continuity *or* discontinuity by recognizing that objects simultaneously mobilize familiarity, and therefore connection with past practice, at the same time as they present novelty and transform contexts” (Stahl 2010:153). Similarly, in the context of musical practice, a genealogical approach can enable one to examine how objects—such as instruments or scores—can have associations with past musical activities and repertoire, while existing in a modernized form and thus facilitating exploration of diverse future possibilities.

If one interprets 'objects' more expansively, to refer to ideas, concepts, or stylistic choices (as in the case of boundary objects), this approach can be usefully applied to the creative development of new Swiss folk music, as I will explore further in Chapter 4. Hill (2005:xxi) has observed the way in which a generally genealogical way of thinking can illuminate processes of heritage transmission and creativity in the case of Finnish folk musicians, noting that "(c)ontemporary folk musicians legitimize their practices by claiming to enter into the same creative process as folk musicians of the past, allowing them to innovate and experiment while maintaining historical continuity and authenticity." I suggest that the archaeological practice of analyzing operational sequences (*chaînes opératoires*) can provide an effective analytical strategy when reinterpreted in a musical and ethnographic setting, allowing one to consider how genre corresponds to identity within a community of practice, and how improvisation and variation can occur within a broader aesthetic framework. Gosselain (2000:189) looks at how pots, and their styles and techniques of manufacture, are imbued with meaning that identifies their maker's place within "an intricate set of boundaries, or social interaction networks" in southern Cameroon. He brings attention to how stylistic characteristics work to develop and maintain parameters of belonging, a sense of the 'we' as opposed to 'they' (Gosselain 2000:188-89). Within this framework, however, Gosselain (2000:190) observes that the actual process of making pots is multifaceted, composite, and flexible, such that "changes may be made at almost any stage of the *chaîne opératoire* without jeopardizing the whole system...Thus, technical behaviours offer room for manipulation, or choices."

This latent potential for improvisation is addressed by Kohring (2016) in a manner that I suggest offers a fresh conceptual approach to visualizing creative musical practice, through

providing an analogy that is compelling and illuminating in its concrete, methodical clarity. Kohring (2016), discussing the making of ostensibly one-of-a-kind pots in Copper Age Spain, argues that the pots do not, in fact, represent complete breaks with past tradition, but rather that they provide examples of accepted creative improvisation at the decorative stage of the operational sequence. At this stage, knowledgeable (and therefore authoritative) potters have the flexibility to introduce variation and possibilities for change into the typical *chaîne opératoire*, while still adhering to the criteria associated with the aesthetic genre and with belonging to their community of practice. Observing that artifacts belonging to a genre constitute a “unique combination of the characteristics of form and decoration that help define the style as a recognizable entity,” Gosden (2005:194, 195) references Gell (1998) in drawing attention to the often small and subtle nature of such variations, recognizable only to knowledgeable insiders as being a case of divergence. This will be explored further in Chapter 4, to address how stylistic developments occur and are accepted in creative practice in the context of new Swiss folk music.

Spaces of experience

Boundary objects and notions of acceptable and possible creative practice can be contextualized in Gosselain’s (2016) concepts of “space of experience” and “space known.” Put forward as a means of understanding potting practices in southwest Niger, the concepts are intended to bring attention to the kinds of “categories of spaces” that shape sociocultural activity and craftsmanship (Gosselain 2016:46). While “space known” represents second-hand knowledge that one is aware of through others, “space of experience” represents space

frequented firsthand, in which “a person’s sense of identity and belonging develops together with practical knowledge and representations” (Gosselain 2016:46). In the latter space, one may personally become acquainted with new aesthetic styles, make new connections, and broaden one’s sphere of knowledge. Emphasizing the relational character of these spaces, Gosselain (2016:49) highlights the possibility of tracing the social connections that weave through a range of ‘localities’ which the potters frequent. Examples of such localities are regional markets, which operate as “prominent features of a potter’s space of experience or taskscape and, importantly, are places where boundary objects...circulate between unrelated production sites” (Gosselain 2016:53).

Stahl (2013:55) observes that such approaches such as Gosselain’s, used in correspondence with the underlying communities of practice perspective, permit one to examine “how social fields and their differential scales...shape learning and transmission of, for example, technological style” in addition to “help(ing) us discern the rhizomatic networks that shaped creative adoption and adaption of the practices through time.” In the context of musical practices, attending to the components of musicians’ spaces of experience similarly aids in the analysis of knowledge transmission and learning. In the following chapters, I will explore the way in which certain localities and social networks form a part of new Swiss folk musicians’ spaces of experience, and how this, in turn, shapes their engagement with musical practice.

Peripherality

Another aspect of learning to be part of a community of practice, and of the existence of a community of practice as part of the broader social world, is involvement in “peripheral experiences” (Wenger 1998:117). In these cases, newcomers or non-members can be offered “various forms of casual but legitimate access to a practice without subjecting them to the demands of full membership...(it) can include observation, but it can also go beyond mere observation into actual forms of engagement” (Wenger 1998:117). In being peripheral, Wenger (1998:120) notes, the emphasis lies not in the boundedness of practice but in the possibilities for openness, for connection, for overlap and mutual participation at prescribed meeting places.

This corresponds to the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, in the sense that one learns and gains membership into a group of knowledgeable people through participating on the periphery of this community in an accepted manner. An awareness of peripherality is also integral to Gosselain’s (2016) notion of “space of experiences,” as engagement in diverse localities and social networks continually brings individuals into contact with the outer edge of their sphere of knowledge, as in the case of boundary objects. In this sense, peripherality can go both ways—looking into a community of practice, and looking out. At new Swiss folk music festivals, for example, emerging musicians are provided a context in which to develop networks, expand their musical horizons, and increase their presence both within and outside the community of practice. Meanwhile, non-members (such as the audience and the media) are able to experience aspects of the community of practice in an approved setting. This dual nature of peripheral participation will be explored further in Chapter 5, examining how festivals

offer an intermediary space in which to gain access to the community, on the one hand, and to external influences, on the other.

Relationality

As has emerged through each of these theoretical components, the process of learning and participating in a practice is innately relational. Lave and Wenger (1991:46) assert the necessity of attending to the “inherently socially negotiated character of meaning” and the ways in which it shapes processes of learning. Learning to be part of a community of practice is dependent on membership, which is negotiated through an array of social interactions and shared understandings (Lave and Wenger 1991:53, 98). These interactions bridge the social and experiential worlds of incoming and existing members of the community, creating a system of intergenerational relations (Lave and Wenger 1991:56-57). The way in which access to knowledge is thus relationally determined also prompts attention to processes of social integration and of power (Lave and Wenger 1991:103, Roddick and Stahl 2016:4).

Lave and Wenger (1991:53) observe that learning, in and of itself, “implies...a relation to social communities,” to which one gradually earns membership. As such, learning processes cannot be adequately assessed without attention to the social context, or community of practice, within and through which these processes take place. Engagement in a practice “entails participation (Wenger 1998:55-57), the action of taking part in relation to others, thereby highlighting connections as well as action” (Roddick and Stahl 2016:8). Similarly, the practices themselves can only be made sense of in relation to other contextualized practices

and examples. In the case of genealogical trends and aesthetic genres, for example, the negotiation of what is or is not acceptable in a given community of practice is only possible relationally—through interpersonal relations, but although through comparisons and distinctions between other practices or styles. The integrally interactive nature of learning and making music has been observed and described by Alfred Schütz (1951:85) in his early exploration of “this web of social relationships called musical culture,” in which connections to past and present individuals and knowledge coincide in moments of musical action. As will be touched upon in Chapters 3 and 4, perceptions of membership in the new Swiss folk music community are influenced by the familial and social circles and connections to which musicians are privy; understandings of the practice itself, meanwhile, are influenced by the comparisons and comprehension which these connections make possible.

Learning through legitimate peripheral participation is fundamentally intergenerational, as communities of practice are constantly in the process of replacing themselves (Lave and Wenger 1991:57, 114-15), necessitating exchange and transferal of knowledge and skill from longtime members to relatively new ones. This dynamic, between ‘old-timers’ and ‘newcomers,’ inheres a paradoxical set of relations in which emerging members must learn the ropes of the community of practice at the same time as they actively participate in reproducing it and determining its future. Elements of these relations surface in Chapters 3 and 4, as emerging new Swiss folk musicians mention the importance of learning from more experienced members, at the same time as valuing independent activity and creative practice.

The relational context of a practice is inseparable from the issues of access and power associated with these networks and connections (Lave and Wenger 1991:103). Roddick and

Stahl (2016:4) note that “power relations can both foster (“legitimate”) or impede participation within learning communities,” as boundaries and criteria for belonging and for exclusion (Roddick and Stahl 2016:16) shape the way in which new members are able to gain access to knowledge, and to spaces of engagement. In some cases, this may pertain to personal background, experience, or ability, which each have an effect on an individual’s capacity to participate as determined by other members of the community; in other cases, specific gatekeepers may be responsible for creating a type of bottleneck through which would-be participants must pass. Chapters 3 and 4 will make mention of some of the criteria of belonging and access that pertain to the new Swiss folk music community, and Chapter 5 will comment on the role of gatekeepers in the context of festivals as spaces of experience (Gosselain 2016).

Chapter 3: Institutionalization

Introduction

The audience, a mostly retired crowd gathered in the small recital room in the back of a local hotel, buzzed and murmured with anticipation as the year-end performance of Lucerne University's resident student folk ensemble, *Alpini Vernähmlässig*, inched closer to starting. Set in Altdorf, a small village an hour away from Lucerne in the traditional 'heartland' of Switzerland, surrounded by mountains on three sides and said to be the hometown of folk legend William Tell, one expects to hear the most traditional and conventional of sounds coming from the group of musicians on stage. Yet this group, comprised of both undergraduate and graduate-level music majors from their late teens to early thirties, moves easily between traditional repertoire and new compositions, between expected instrumentation and unexpected arrangements, without seeming to lose a sense of coherence and intention. "When I was young, I used to play folk music too," the bright-eyed elderly man seated next to me shared convivially; "I still play sometimes, in my retirement home. But this is different, what the young folks are doing—it's new. But that's a good thing. It means Swiss folk music is developing."

As the Swiss folk music scene navigates its way into the twenty-first century, established community-based ways of learning are being supplemented by an academized system of folk music instruction, existing alongside and in tandem with the local, public, and largely amateur traditional folk music community. Over the last ten years, the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences has offered a program of study that allows students to focus specifically on folk music—the only program of its kind in Switzerland—while completing an otherwise ordinary

classical or jazz music degree. The following chapter attends to the learning processes taking place within this academic context, and the ways in which such a setting shapes emerging musicians' networks, contributions, and practices. My goal is not to do a full ethnography of the university program (in the manner of Born [1995] and Hill [2009], for example), but rather, to document the experiences of the participants themselves, and the perceived relevance of the program to their career and experiences as a folk musician. I begin by contextualizing the academic folk program within Switzerland and within existing discourses of postsecondary and music education, and subsequently present the key themes that emerged in discussion with the students and one of the instructors of the program. Attending to the themes of broadening knowledge, creating networks, and establishing legitimacy (or, alternately, a lack thereof), this chapter argues that students and graduates of the folk music program build on the skills and resources gained in the postsecondary environment to navigate their burgeoning career, and to contribute to the community of practice in which they participate.

Context and Background

Institutionalization in Switzerland

Switzerland has already had experience with non-academic folk music institutionalization. The Swiss Federal Jodel Association (*Eidgenössische Jodlerverband*, or *EJV*) was founded in 1910, with the aim of securing Switzerland's cultural practices, of which yodelling and alphorn playing was considered a part (Oehme-Jüngling 2016). For many years, this organization exercised considerable control and authority over Swiss vocal practices (Plantenga 2004; Ringli and Rühl 2015), and although its hold on perceived 'authentic' musical

practices has lessened in recent years, it remains prominent and popular. The organization holds competitions and, every three years, a large national festival (the *Eidgenössische Jodlerfest*) which hosts 150,000 to 200,000 attendees. The instrumental equivalent to this organization was founded some time later as the *Verband Schweizer Volksmusik*, or *VSM*, in 1963, with a focus on dance music and other instrumental forms. However, instrumental music has been somewhat less unified and regimented overall because Swiss instrumental folk music groups are much less centralized, every region having its own local branch and membership. Smaller and more specific societies, for choral music, accordion, and so on, are also plentiful (Oehme-Jüngling 2016).

Together, organizations such as these emphasize tradition as something to be actively preserved and maintained in pristine form. Oehme-Jüngling (2016:157) observes that they are characterized by symbolic values such as “ancient-ness” (*Urchigkeit*), “joyfulness” (*Fröhlichkeit*), and “togetherness” (*Zusammengehörigkeit*)—a position that serves to tie Swiss heritage to identity, and fidelity to authenticity. This perspective complicates developments in Swiss folk music, in which emerging musicians engage at the intersection of local traditions and of global discourses or translocal influences.

The University as Institution

In many ways, the program at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences represents a departure from the kind of institutionalization outlined above. A more appropriate term than institutionalization may be “academization” (Nager 2006), the process of turning a topic into an academic discipline. The discussion around the academization of folk music is by no means

new, and has been raised in numerous contexts, from English to Finnish to Chinese folk music (Hill 2007, 2009; Keegan-Phipps 2007; Yang and Welch 2016). Positioned as it is within the university system, and the umbrella of higher education, the Lucerne folk music program is associated with a different set of discourses and priorities. It draws structurally from existing music programs in classical and jazz music, and may be assumed to place an emphasis on educational value, standardized skill, and technical competence simply through its positionality, even with its existing ties to the folk music community.

Unlike the other institutions of Swiss folk music, the values associated with the Lucerne program therefore also depart from the previous norm. As noted above, organizations such as the EJV and VSV place emphasis on the preservation and regimentation of Swiss tradition. While to claim that the Lucerne program encourages the opposite would be an oversimplification, the curriculum is nonetheless notable for its emphasis on musical openness, creative opportunity, and vibrant, personal interpretations of traditional material. It is important to note, however, that faculty members and students don't necessarily believe this to be inconsistent with values of maintaining Swiss folk music practices.

The folk music study option in Lucerne operates within the pre-existing structure of the classical and jazz music departments, in which undergraduate students have the option to specialize in the study of folk music through courses and ensembles. Graduate students may also participate in these options, either independently or through a folk music "minor" (which no longer exists at the undergraduate level). Since there are no more than a handful of folk music students each year, the options are very personalized. Markus Flückiger, director of the Alpini Vernähmlässig ensemble, summarized the situation as follows:

“The curriculum is actually just a *focus* on folk music—it’s not a ‘folk music program’ per se. If it was, we’d have to be more specific and clear about what we do. Apart from the (private instruction for the traditional instruments of) *hackbrett* and *schwyzerörgeli*² players, people do a normal classical or jazz degree...”

“We’re always between classical and jazz, so all our students are automatically a special case—that’s chaos to organize. A lot of people think we have a folk music section, but that’s not the case. In terms of physical location, we’re in the jazz department. Administratively, we’re in the classical. And nobody is clear (about it).”

Despite these complexities, for the sake of concision, I will refer henceforth to the folk music specialization option and program of study simply as the ‘program’—with the recognition that it is a unique and particular case. Placed as it is within a music department, the program’s prospective students are aware from the outset that their studies occur alongside students of classical, jazz, and other styles, and they are often versatile and broadly educated by the time they graduate. By joining the program, students are entering into a system that is already inherently expansive by virtue of its indirect participation in globalized discourses of learning, music training, and qualification.

² A *hackbrett* is a hammered dulcimer. There are various types of regionally specific hammered dulcimers in Switzerland. However, the musicians interviewed for this study (and their teachers) play a standard chromatic dulcimer—in other words, a dulcimer that features additional strings and is tuned such that one can play every note in a 12-tone scale over several octaves. A *schwyzerörgeli* is a type of small diatonic button accordion, that arrived and was subsequently developed in Switzerland shortly after the accordion’s invention in Vienna in 1829. It has a unique timbre that is considered highly characteristic of Swiss folk music (Oehme-Jüngling 2016:115)

Postsecondary education in Switzerland

The system of education and career training in Switzerland runs along various parallel streams, and the country's postsecondary institutes have undergone significant changes in recent years as they aim to further participate in the globalized education market. At the secondary school level, students have the option of pursuing an apprenticeship and taking part-time school as part of Switzerland's highly successful skills training system, or of completing a four-year matriculation (*Matura*) which allows them to attend postsecondary studies. The music degree in Lucerne, however, is the exception to this, as one does not need the *Matura* in order to attend. At the postsecondary level, Switzerland's institutions are divided into academic universities and vocational universities, the latter of which include trades programs, but also specialized programs such as art and music. In keeping with Switzerland's system of federalism, these are, for the most part, under cantonal (local) rather than national jurisdiction, aside from two federal institutes of technology in Zürich and Lausanne (Hofmann 2014, OECD Report 2003).

In 1999, Switzerland took part in signing the Bologna Declaration put forward by the European Ministers of Education. Taking place more or less concurrently with increasing discussion in the World Trade Organization around education as a global economic commodity, the Declaration aimed to "increase the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education in the world market" (Westerheijden 2003:280), as well as to promote student mobility within Europe and internationally. The practical outcome of this is that

postsecondary programs in Switzerland have now switched to the Bachelors and Masters degree system, and at a more abstract level, this has brought with it an increased awareness of global educational participation and export.

The program in Lucerne, therefore, exists within this relatively recent framework of standardized higher education that partakes in—and contributes to—a purported international knowledge network. At the same time, however, it remains under local authority, features a uniquely local art form, and traces its origins to the strong folk music community within Switzerland.

Swiss Folk Music at the Hochschule Luzern

The program's first incarnation came to fruition in the 2005-2006 school year, when the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences ran a *Nachdiplomkurs*, or "post-diploma course," for teachers in the school system. The aim of the program was to provide skills for teaching folk music as part of a curriculum. It was a popular enterprise, reaching its maximum of 15 participants by the following year (Nager 2006). Already in September of 2006, however, this course was accompanied by the option to take Switzerland's first professional training program for folk musicians. Franz Xaver Nager, founder of the initiative, made the case for the "academization" of folk music at a Swiss cultural symposium that November. He cited the success of academic jazz programs globally, and, in particular, he drew attention to the development of other folk music programs at universities throughout Europe. Drawing inspiration from organizations like Nordtrad, an alliance of 13 higher-level folk music programs in Scandinavian cities, and observing the popularity of included institutions such as the Sibelius

Academy—where approximately 80 students were studying folk music, with 60 instructors—Nager (2006) argued that a similar program had the potential to gain traction within Switzerland. He went so far as to position the initiative as a question of worldly participation, asking whether Switzerland “is able to, and wants to, deliver its own contribution to international folk music discourse” (Nager 2006:21).

In discussing the possibilities for such a program within Switzerland, Nager (2006) also made clear his ideological intentions with regards to the music, its heritage, and its accessibility. He laid out three clear principles of the program: that, as self-professed “music of the folk,” it would be open to any instrument; it would be open to participants of any musical background; and—critically—its participants would have the opportunity to benefit from interactions with students of other music disciplines at the university. Nager (2006) further elaborated on the proposed teaching model, emphasizing a desire to incorporate traditional approaches to learning and musical practice. These include tactics such as playing by ear, engaging in spontaneous musicianship, being willing to take risks, and being more tolerant of technical mistakes. He took up the critique that a professional training program would negatively change Swiss folk music and challenged it, arguing instead for a collaborative relationship with regional folk music organizations such that these organizations would act as bridges, between the rich, nurturing community resources and upper-level academic training (Nager 2006).

Given Nager’s open-minded stance, it is unsurprising that the program quickly came to be associated with new Swiss folk music. He promoted ongoing relationships with other musical influences, and believed in the dynamic vibrancy of the musical form. His view corresponded to that which has been expressed by Fabian Müller, Dani Häusler, Markus Flückiger, and other

proponents of this general approach (Oehme-Jüngling 2016; Ringli and Rühl 2015), namely that “a tradition is living so long as it develops,” but that such development must be grounded in heritage, as a tradition “can only be changed from the inside” (Nager 2006:22).

Today, Nager is no longer involved in the program, and it is under the jurisdiction of Hämi Hämmerli, head of the Jazz department. However, Nager’s ideals remain prominent. Most students collaborate with musicians from other disciplines; all manner of instrumentalists participate in the folk music workshops; and a semester-long module on traditional learning methods occurred as recently as the spring of 2016.

Key Themes

As described in Chapter 1, a key focus of my research centres on how a postsecondary environment shapes learning in relation to a community of practice, and particularly how participation in this setting might contribute to an increase in social contacts and connections beneficial to emerging musicians’ careers. Some of the topics that my questions investigated included how students came to be involved in the program, why they chose to enroll, how they perceived the program to shape their musical trajectory and practices, and whether they developed networks through this context. It emerged in interviews that students did expand their personal networks through the postsecondary program. However, the degree to which this happened was dependent on their own musical background, and whether they actively participated in the folk music community prior to attending the university. Musicians also expressed that the university program facilitated a deeper and broader musical understanding and knowledge base, exposing students to a wide range of influences and heightening their

level of musical versatility. The workshops and opportunities within the program enabled students to explore and learn new ways of engaging with their music. This was both a reason for attending, and a perceived consequence. However, despite increased networks and expanded knowledge, participation in the program did not automatically correspond with acquisition of the appropriate skill, expertise, and experience required to be fully accepted into the musical community of practice. The community operated under a different value system, in which participation, involvement, and tacit understanding accumulated to produce an integrated and competent Swiss folk musician—processes which could not be replaced by the university's relatively short-term pedagogical teaching curriculum (Lave and Wenger 1991:97). Lastly, the program was nonetheless associated with other processes of legitimation—either of the folk music genre as a whole, or of the students themselves relative to employment in the music education system.

Violinist and recent MA graduate Maria Gehrig summarizes several of these points, responding to a question about what she has gained from the program:

“It has certainly been an important part. For example, my trio (*Interfolk*) came out of a bachelor's project. And then the Alpini Vernähmlässig, that's also an important—it's like a laboratory, where one can try things out. At the start we mostly did pieces by Markus (Flückiger), from Dani (Häusler) and Hujässler, (and) the Hanny Christen collection. And then at some point it started to be that we could play our own compositions; we could bring pieces with us and arrange them and try them there. That was an important part. And we went to Vienna with the Alpini, and played a concert and were able to have an exchange with the Austrian students there. Last year at Alpentöne there was a project with (students from) Helsinki and Limerick that was absolutely fantastic. And for that, I'm really glad I did my second Masters, because otherwise I would never have come to (be involved in) that, if I hadn't been at the University. Extremely interesting things, and also very interesting people that one got to know. And I think there have also been really good musical formations that have come about, out of the students.”

Maria outlines the significance and outcomes of the program for her, particularly in relation to networks, projects, and creative processes. She points out how one of her current performing ensembles resulted from her studies, and how the postsecondary environment provides a space of experience for experimentation, exploration, and learning, as well as opportunities for new influences, exchanges, and broadening of horizons.

Broader knowledge

A consistent theme throughout participant responses was the feeling of having broadened their musical horizons and competencies through participation in the program. Situated as it is within a university music program, the program serves as a very direct portal to other musical styles, techniques, modes of thinking. This is also an intended consequence of the program, in comparison to what would otherwise be a fairly insular musical learning environment, as expressed by Markus Flückiger:

“I think the influences from the classical and jazz, that one experiences music as a whole: that, I believe, is the difference (from only learning folk music privately). When one otherwise learns folk music, one is always kind of doing the same (things). That which we previously had to break out from, the–tradition, I’ll call it–today, that’s being presented to them rather on a silver platter, at the university. Yeah, I think it’s learning what music is, and from every side being enlightened – I mean, for the longest time I didn’t know those things, because I only did folk music...”

Flückiger notes that the flexibility and personalized nature of the folk music program is partially a product of the program’s unique and somewhat vague position within the university’s administrative structure. Since students belong to the classical or jazz department,

and simply choose folk music as a focus, there is more freedom to cater to the students' musical interests—a set-up that Flückiger suggests is particularly important for an emerging folk musician:

“Something really nice is that...it's not a fixed program, it's very open. And I think for folk music that's very important—it's different from classical, which is very fixed, and you're trained to be in an orchestra, or a soloist. We're not trying to create people who (fit a certain role)—we're trying to meet people where *they* are. Each is finding their own way. And that's only possible when the program is kept open.”

Maria Gehrig cited the program's openness and flexibility as a valuable component of her learning experience within that environment:

“I did the whole 5 years up until the end of the first masters, then took a year off, and then did a second masters. What's cool about Lucerne is that it's actually very “free,” in that you can combine different subject areas, and put your own program/schedule together. (For example) I did a very normal classical performance masters, just without a minor...And then simply took folk violin lessons (alongside).”

The possibility for openness, flexibility, and individuality in the university was a factor in how Gehrig identified and operated as a musician, as it supported her choice to work in both folk and classical contexts. Meanwhile, hackbrett player Nayan Stalder mused that the musical openness of the university learning environment might, ideally, contribute to the broadening of the folk music genre as a whole:

“I don't think (the future of folk music) will be *that* different from how it has progressed so far... I think it might become a bit more open. Those with an academic background, or who are intensively engaged with other music styles—I think that will continue to open up pathways.”

This opening of pathways was thought by Flückiger to be directly correlated with the level of technical skill that graduates of the program are capable of, having undertaken intensive musical training in a postsecondary environment. He also noted, however, that there needs to be willing participants, else the development of the genre will not be sustained:

“I think (the university will further new Swiss folk music). In the last 7-8 years, a lot has happened again, with these young ones. Because technically, they play on another level, of course, than your average (traditional folk) dance musicians. There are totally new possibilities, ideas...and that will certainly go further. The question is simply how long people want to do it; if young people don't want to do it any more, that's just how it is, the university can make no difference. It simply provides a service, and if it gets used, then it gets used. More one can't do.”

Critically, the folk music program seeks to expose students to new learning environments that also include “traditional” ways of engaging with folk music—for example, learning music by ear. Flückiger noted that students in the university setting tend to learn repertoire through notated sheet music, since it is an efficient way to ensure that everyone is (literally) on the same page when playing in a group, and it is also a standardized and relatively low-intensity way to acquire new pieces that has usually been ingrained in students through years of private lessons. However, in keeping with Nager's original vision for the program, students take semester-long modules that encourage them to expand their learning and playing capabilities in relation to folk music.

Markus Flückiger

“In school, one learns from sheet music. But a lot of (traditional) folk musicians—especially schwyzerörgeli players—learn by ear. That's how I learned. It's a great skill. One notices, that people have a way better musical ear then...”

“(in Alpini Vernähmlässig we do) both—the sheet music is best for learning material in a short amount of time. But in this last year, we had a workshop (module) with Andy

Gabriel where people learned to play by ear...”

The module available in the spring of 2016, in which students learned to play folk tunes only through hearing them, was cited as a valuable learning experience for deepening students’ musical knowledge, and served to maintain ties with the Swiss musical tradition and heritage alongside exposure to an otherwise diverse array of musical influences:

“We do a workshop, and every semester it’s different. Last semester with Andy Gabriel, we learned traditional folk music pieces, without (notated) music. We would just play with each other, very free—that’s the original way to do folk music. That workshop was really ‘back to the roots’.”

The above comment by cellist and schwyzerörgeli player Kristina Brünner indicates the extent to which such modules were perceived as being integral to the learning of folk music. Alongside these options, the Alpini Vernähmlässig performance ensemble remained the cornerstone of the folk music program, and was cited repeatedly as being a significance part of students’ postsecondary learning experience. In particular, the ensemble provided a space in which students were able to engage in an array of expressly creative practices—a topic which I address in the following chapter.

The above responses indicate the extent to which the folk music program can be interpreted as a boundary object (Wenger 1998:107), or, more broadly, as a space of experience (Gosselain 2016). The program brings together a variety of different practices, which coexist in a space where each can influence and inform the other. This applies to different musical practices, in the sense of genre-specific aesthetics and conventions of classical, jazz, and folk music; it also applies to different learning practices, in that the academic

milieu and its focus on pedagogical instruction represents a departure from the situated, aural, applied learning context likely to be experienced by musicians in a local social setting.

Conceptually, if Nager's (2006) intentions are to be believed, the program can be further perceived as potentially linking the local with the global, bringing a very place-oriented musical form into contact with international discourses of folk music education and production.

However, this latter aspect of the program was not explicitly expressed by participants, remaining an abstract notion rather a practical consideration.

Networks

Another effect of participating in the program is exposure to like-minded musical collaborators. The connections made within the program often remain important, or offer opportunities. Often, this would take the shape of current and future bandmates who were fellow students in the program. This is in part encouraged by the program's requirement of a 'Bachelor concert', the equivalent of a graduation recital (but with a theme or collaborative component) at the end of one's undergraduate degree. A recital is also expected at the end of one's Masters, although the extent to which this may include folk music is variable.

The musical collaborations that result from these concerts often transfer into the professional realm. Christoph Pfändler's successful 'Metal Kappelle,' a quartet that performs metal covers and original compositions on hackbrett and other acoustic instruments at festivals and performances around Switzerland, emerged directly from one such bachelor concert, and is made up of former classmates. Maria Gehrig's all-female 'Interfolk' trio is similarly made up of former students, and Nayan, Adrian, Fränggi, and Kristina all participate in musical ensembles—

or organize their own—that feature other members of the current or former student community.

In some cases, students end up working together with faculty members. Markus Flückiger, for example, has involved both Fränggi Gehrig and Pirmin Huber (uninterviewed) in his musical projects. He emphasized, however, that this is not due to any intentional plan to foster the careers of students or promote teacher-student mentorship collaborations. Rather, they were invited to participate on the grounds of their versatility and musicianship alone, and perhaps a successful interpersonal dynamic.

When students amalgamate into, or join, musical groups and projects, in some cases this facilitates their entry into the public, performative sphere of Swiss folk music. However, that does not account for the networks in which students participate before they ever get to the program. In some cases, students were already known and were active participants within the community of practice, and this was reflected in how they perceived the university program in relation to their musical networks. Maria Gehrig, when asked if she already knew the people in the program, responded:

“Yeah...some of them I had (only) heard of, and then got to know better in the program. (But) actually I already knew almost all of them. Because the folk music scene in Switzerland is very small!”

Other students also did not necessarily associate their networks with the university directly, as Kristina Brünner and Franggi Gehrig indicated:

Kristina Brünner:

“It tends to be the same group of people...(You get involved in projects) just through playing...and always led to the next one. Not necessarily (though the university)—it goes

privately, through the people.”

Fränggi Gehrig

“Actually it doesn’t matter where (you met them)—you just have those people with whom you have contact.”

Markus Flückiger corroborated these observations, noting that participation in the music scene is dependent on the student and their individual activities and connections, before, during, and after their university studies:

“It really depends. People like Christoph Pfändler, they come into the folk music scene (though the program)... Those who were in it beforehand, are anyway already in it. Others you hear nothing from afterwards, they go do something else.”

In other cases, however, the university was acknowledged to be a significant site of network building. Adrian Würsch, a schwyzerörgeli player, peppered his interview with references to the community of student musicians that he plays with, and Nayan Stalder emphasized the significance of the university on his personal circle of connections:

Adrian Würsch

“The school—it is kind of the place to be, to make connections.”

“We do little jam sessions during the school year—we have a Whatsapp group, and we organize them that way.”

“It’s a small scene—20 people or so—one knows them all. I’d say I mostly play with people my own age.”

Nayan Stalder

“For me...I didn’t have a connection to the (new Swiss folk music) scene beforehand—it went through the university. There (at the school), there were many people who belong to that scene, who are really active. And over time, I continued to slide further into it—someone says, “oh, I need a hackbrett, can you come and play with us,” and so on.”

Hackbrett player Christoph Pfändler, a recent graduate who works both as a soloist and as part of a group, noted that his ensemble arose as part of his Bachelor's project at the university, and now continues to perform at festivals and record CDs. He described the casual process of accumulating band mates through his school network:

“The Kapelle—I founded that for my Bachelor project. We had to do a concert, that lasted about half an hour. And somehow—I knew a pianist, who I had heard at another Bachelor concert, and I thought, “Hey, I need you here, you’re super!” And then, (once) I had the piano (player), I didn’t really deliberate, I just thought, “oh, I’d like to have some cello—ah, (so-and-so) is the only cello player I know, and I like her, so she’s in.” And the bass player, I actually know her more as a schwyzerörgeli player, until suddenly I realized, “oh yeah, she plays contrabass.” So I asked her.”

Even in cases where a participant was already active in the folk music scene, the university environment still provided opportunities to strengthen connections and build lasting relationships. In some cases, this also involved students from other musical genres, who one might not otherwise meet in the folk music community, as Kristina Brünner indicates:

“You make contacts with other people who like folk music...In the ensemble, you always play together, you always see each other. It works well to make connections.”

“(Students come) from all over the place – a couple of us from Bern; Innerschwyz, Uri... Even one from Liechtenstein! He’s actually a jazz guitarist, and just asked if he could play with us – he’s not a folk music student. It happens a lot, that jazz or classical musicians join—because there’s not that many new folk music students. I can believe that it will continue to be even more so. A lot of people just dabble in it, because they like it (even if they don’t do it as their main focus) but I think that’s great. I think that’s how it should be.”

This influx of diverse musicians also seemed to correspond to a broadening of accessibility, as far as Kristina was concerned. Thus the building of networks was a reciprocal and mutually constitutive process with musicians from other genres.

It is interesting to note that the university took on particular significance as a site of network building in the eyes of relative outsiders—for example, of festival directors, who often know of young musicians based on their involvement with the university program, and who therefore perceive the university community to be a fairly close-knit and self-contained unit:

Alois Gabriel

“There’s only one university in Switzerland where one can study folk music (so musicians might get to know each other there).”

Johannes Rühl

“Previously, Swiss folk music would operate through band-leader-types, who would gather people around them (and run the band.). Now, at the university, people get to know each other there, and also have personal connections, which always helps. But that also makes it very closed—you only see those ones—the ones at the university are very visible. Others, not so much.”

In this way, participation in the university program became shorthand for serious engagement with folk music, and facilitated networks beyond the program itself, as it increased their visibility in the new Swiss folk music scene more generally. The university environment was also a site of intergenerational exchange, as emerging members learned from more experienced ones. Pertaining to dynamics of power and access, relations formed in the academic setting had the potential to carry connotations of advantageous visibility.

Legitimacy

A recognition of some form of legitimate qualification was evident throughout participant responses. Completing music training at a postsecondary institution inheres a degree of “seriousness” regarding musical ambitions, and has undeniable connotations with

professionalism. As such, the program was seen, in some cases, as an opportunity to change the ideological perceptions and discourses around folk music as a socially legitimate topic of study. Participants also gained a type of practical legitimacy through the earning of a teaching qualification, enabling them to teach music in schools or command a higher pay rate as a private instructor. However, this is not necessarily synonymous with processes of legitimation within the folk music community itself, as values of musical skill and competency are determined independently of the academic institution.

Kristina Brünner, in particular, emphasizes the role that the program may play in legitimizing folk music as a socially valid object of study:

“Not many can get their head around someone just studying folk music. Having the opportunity to look into what it’s like, I think that’s super...I think it’s really important that you can have a professional training, like in jazz or classical. For taking it seriously, I think it’s important... In Switzerland, (the university folk option) is only a recent development.”

Due to its unique position as the sole provider of academized Swiss folk music instruction, the program inevitably assumes a degree of authority and ostensibly decentralized representation of its subject matter, as a figurehead for the new and professionalized folk music scene. Given the high number of Swiss emigrants worldwide, along with the global connotations of the Bologna Declaration, and the presumption that “diasporas challenge easy boundaries of the local, regional, and national” (Appadurai 2000:4 in Biddle and Knights 2007:10), one might expect the program, and its graduates, to be participating in a far-reaching network of learning and engagements with Swiss musical heritage. Yet Swiss folk music remains something concretely grounded in place. Incidentally, among the participants that I

interviewed, almost none of the performers travel outside of Switzerland's borders—or even beyond German-speaking Switzerland—to work, study, or perform. Some expressed mild curiosity and bemusement at this fact, while one simply noted that, given Switzerland's high remuneration rates in comparison to neighbouring countries, travelling abroad for work was not financially worthwhile. Compounding this is the fact that German Switzerland is linguistically unified, and that Swiss folk music itself is particularly idiosyncratic, with little relation to music in other regions. Swiss folk music is also not sustainable at a professional level in diaspora communities, and these communities themselves are hardly in the consciousness of folk musicians within Switzerland. Consequently, while the program may be seen as legitimizing the study of Swiss folk music, graduates of the program are not contributing to a global professional musical network, and are oriented towards pursuing a music career within German Switzerland.

Often this takes the form of teaching, either in a public school or in private lessons at a local music school. Participants emphasized the extent to which a post-secondary credential granted graduates the social legitimacy to command a higher wage or better job:

Nayan Stalder

“Most (who) also do a pedagogy Master, (do so) simply out of the pure financial aspect—so that they can teach. The majority already teach, before they finish, but one is simply better paid if one has the piece of paper.”

When discussing participation in the folk music scene, speaking from his position as a both an instructor and as a long-term key figure in the community, Markus Flückiger

emphasized that having a successful career did not hinge on whether a musician had completed postsecondary studies. On the contrary; while the university might provide tools for one's development as a musician, it was ultimately how one made use of those skills that determined whether one was accepted into the Swiss folk music community:

“It's not any kind of guarantee, that, once you've done studies (you have a career)—that helps with the scene actually not so much. It's not that somebody will be engaged (e.g. hired) afterwards, because they did studies; it's not like in classical, when somebody only gets into an orchestra because they have this diploma, and have done that. With us...when someone plays well, then it's good. Otherwise they're not hired.”

As this comment suggests, discourses regarding value are varied when applied to topics such as legitimacy, education, and participation. Lave and Wenger (1991:112) have discussed the concept of 'use value' in contrast to abstract 'exchange value'—namely, value associated with how useful something is (for example, a skill), as opposed to symbolic value (for example, a diploma). These two strains are both evident in the case of the academization of Swiss folk music. Within the Swiss folk musical community itself, value is still very much associated with ability and skill—how well a musician plays, how much experience they have. Flückiger brings particular attention to this fact, noting that incongruity can arise when students join the program believing that they will automatically graduate a fully-fledged folk musician. On the other hand, the program is situated within the larger discourses of global higher education, and the value system associated with it. Within a supposed knowledge economy, the abstract 'exchange value' of a university diploma takes on higher significance, and understandings of legitimacy and qualification contribute to potential music education employment opportunities and social acceptability.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to examine perceptions relating to participation in Switzerland's only postsecondary folk music study option. My initial questions aimed to determine whether contacts and networks were emerging from attendance at the institution, as well as to distinguish the features of the program that participants identified as being beneficial and/or motivating factors in their work as musicians. Interviews with participants indicated that the university setting does indeed contribute to the building and solidification of personal and professional networks. Participants also revealed that exposure to a broad range of musical influences, resources, and opportunities was a significant factor contributing to their university attendance and to their subsequent activities as musicians. Career legitimization was cited as a further reason for attending and as a contribution of the program to Swiss folk music more generally.

Despite the fluidity of exchange between genres and musicians within the folk program, it is possible that the academic environment represents a reification of existing boundaries within the folk music community as a whole. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion exist within any community of practice, though often largely unspoken. In this case, the program would seem to formally demarcate a particular category of musician—one who approaches folk music with career goals, rather than amateur participation, and who intentionally seeks out broader musical influence. One must contend with differing systems of value, in this case, as society's perception of academically-fostered professional musical ability also does not necessarily

correspond to perceptions of ability among members of the community, further complicating boundedness.

The linguistic, stylistic, and regional identity of new Swiss folk music is both reflected in, and further shaped by, the setting of the program itself. Located as it is in Lucerne (at a university that used to be the University of Central Switzerland), it is situated in the traditional Germanic 'heartland' of Switzerland, and fosters a particularly close relationship with a village and folk music centre in Uri, one of Switzerland's founding cantons. In pragmatic terms, it gathers many of the participants of the progressive folk music scene and brings them into contact and relationship with one another. The institution becomes a concrete entity that is tied to place and landscape, and a fixed physical representation of a network of relationships and knowledge.

Chapter 4: Creative Practice

Introduction

A few months after I had returned from my fieldwork, I opened my mailbox to find a small packet adorned with a Swiss postmark. It contained a CD recently produced—following a period of intense self-generated publicity and fundraising—by a musical quartet of which a student participant of this study, Adrian Würsch, was a contributing member. One of various diverse ensembles in which Würsch plays and composes music, the band advertises itself on its social media as “a Niederwalder quartet that regularly travels through various music styles with folk music instruments, without ever forgetting the ‘homeland’ (*Heimat*)” ([facebook.com/pg/Zuckdraht/about/](https://www.facebook.com/pg/Zuckdraht/about/)). As I unwrapped the packet to find Würsch’s cheerful greeting on the inside, I was reminded of a comment he had made as we chatted during our interview at a café on Lake Lucerne. Discussing the role of creativity in academic folk music instruction, Adrian noted that “it’s that thing where, if you’re an obedient student, you’re a bad musician!...The people who want to succeed, they have to write their own stuff, because just to do covers of the teachers’ music, well...” His passing observation highlights some of the paradoxes inherent in learning to participate in a musical practice, while forging one’s own path in a manner that is essential to one’s longevity as a member of that community of practice. Processes of creative activity speak to aspects of intergenerationality in the new Swiss folk music community, and to shared and conflicting ideas, ideologies, and values regarding learning and developing one’s own voice. Musical creativity is facilitated at the institutional level, but this in and of itself requires a degree of autonomy that oversteps the bounds of formal pedagogical instruction. Creative practices among new Swiss folk musicians are deeply grounded in familiarity with the

musical genre and characteristics of Swiss folk music itself, alongside interest in, and exposure to, other musical styles and experiences. Together, this collection of influences and aesthetic conventions represents an accumulated foundation from which musicians can draw inspiration and engage in musical variation.

In this chapter, I will examine creativity and continuity in contemporary Swiss folk music, as expressed through the practices of current and recent students of the folk music program at the University of Lucerne. I suggest that musicians navigate notions of novelty and tradition through engagement with conceptions of genre; that processes of musical creativity are shaped by specific learning contexts and spaces of experience within the community of musical practice; and that musicians identify distinct modes of creative process. Taking the work of Ingold and Hallam (2007), Kohring (2016), and Barber (2007) as theoretical starting points, the chapter will attend to the possible entanglements between the creative expansion of musical possibilities and the continuation of a traditional folk music.

All the students I spoke with engage in some type of creative musical activity, and are considered on some level to belong to the new Swiss folk community of practice. They indicated some of the characteristics of the Swiss folk music genre, and discussed the ways in which they honoured, varied, and engaged with it. While Ingold and Hallam (2007) make the case for a broadly applicable understanding of the term *creativity* (see below), the participants of this study identified three distinct creative activities as being relevant to their musical processes: improvisation; composition; and arrangement. These creative practices were shown to be configured in part by the environments in which they participated as part of their involvement in the community of practice.

Context and Background

As discussed in the introductory chapter, folk music in the German regions of Switzerland has been undergoing shifts and variations over the past several decades, as new Swiss folk musicians are exploring the boundaries of what is sonically possible while still adhering to a collective understanding of traditional music. This new Swiss folk music scene is characterized by strong elements of creative practice as musicians frequently have their own ensemble, write their own original music, or arrange pieces in unorthodox ways. However, these practices remain grounded in a communally understood genre aesthetic that constitutes the Swiss folk music tradition.

Theoretical Framing of Creativity and Genre

Ingold and Hallam's (2007) work on creativity establishes the underlying framework from which I approach the topic of creativity in traditional musical practice, alongside Lave and Wenger's (1991; also Wenger 1998) perspective on communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. Ingold and Hallam's (2007) fundamental argument positions creativity as inhering in practice and situates tradition and innovation as being part of the same essential process, rather than diametrically opposed. It is an approach that I find especially relevant to my work, as it is consistent with views often expressed by new Swiss folk musicians themselves (Oehme-Jüngling 2016; Ringli and Rühl 2015). Ingold and Hallam aim to "challenge...the polarity between novelty and convention, between the innovative dynamic of the present and the traditionalism of the past" (2007:2), arguing instead that creativity is an ongoing process and

that the following of tradition is itself a creative action (2007:19). In this way, tradition is not merely a formula to be replicated, but is continually reconstituted (Ingold and Hallam 2007:9), and there can never be a severance from previously existing influences as “the past...is continually active in the present” (2007:11). The authors’ key premises of creativity as being perpetually generative, relational, temporal or ongoing, and inherent to human activity (Ingold and Hallam 2007:1) provide a lens through which to approach traditional musical practices. Inspired by their articulation of the issues pertaining to creativity, I aim to open avenues for exploring how musicians’ expressions of creative practice are representative of a continuous genealogy (Roddick and Stahl 2016; Stahl 2010) of musical and cultural idioms.

While Ingold and Hallam’s work provides the necessary ideological grounding and overarching concept, archaeological approaches to genealogies, operational sequences, and techniques of manufacture offer concrete means of identifying the ways in which these creative processes take place (Gosselain 2000; Kohring 2016). Exploring the way in which openings for creative variations can be built into an aesthetic model, Kohring’s (2016) work on Spanish Copper Age pots emphasizes that innovation is not a spontaneous occurrence, but rather, is socially and historically contingent and therefore exists on a continuum. As outlined in Chapter 2, Kohring (2016:523) argues that one-of-a-kind, “one-off” pots, which do not conform as their counterparts do and yet are never fully developed into an entirely new style, are in fact representative of latent potential. Regardless of outcome, their existence offers future possibility for variation, and they set a precedent for further improvisation and creativity of design. Important to Kohring’s (2016:517) conclusions is the notion of a shared and socially understood aesthetic within which such variations operate. She posits that potters would, over

time, have come to understand acceptable production techniques through exposure to both “discursive commentary and practical use of vessels” (Kohring 2016:519), as participation in a community of practice involves both active engagement and tacit understanding (Lave and Wenger 1991:53). Comprehension and skill in this arena led to accepted knowledge, which in turn would have imbued the potters with authority—the authority to vary the formula as they choose (Kohring 2016:519).

This experimentation within, and continuation through, a known aesthetic or genre is evident in the way that German Swiss folk musicians have spoken about their developments of the musical style. While their personal adjustments and variations may seem, at times, to break substantially with tradition and bear little resemblance to previous forms, influential musicians have been adamant about their self-professed conformity to the underlying musical aesthetic (Oehme-Jüngling 2016; Ringli and Rühl 2015), and this study’s participants have reiterated these perspectives. These variations have nonetheless increased the range of creative possibilities that other musicians can then incorporate and develop in future.

The premise of a shared aesthetic on which Kohring relies can be better understood with the addition of Barber’s (2007) discussion of genre, and, concomitantly, the processes involved in memory and listening. Sharing Ingold and Hallam’s (2007) view that improvisation cannot be divided and isolated from activities such as memorization or repetition, Barber draws on Nicholas Cook’s (1990 in Barber 2007) work on musical processes. In particular, she references the observations that genre conventions are “a bundle of attributes adding up to an overall impression” (Cook 1990 and Fowler 1982 in Barber 2007:32), rather than a set of strictly defined rules, similar to the “unique combination of...characteristics” that may coalesce to form

a recognizable style in creative potting activity (Gosden 2005:194). This provides a more workable tactic in attempting to discuss the maintenance, continuation, and revitalization of Swiss folk music practices when its performers, more often than not, are unwilling or unable to specify a set of strict criteria for defining the musical genre concretely. Rather—in a manner similar to that which Lave and Wenger (1991:51,105) identify in their discussion of communities of practice—the musicians share knowledge of the genre attributes among themselves, and when listening to other German Swiss folk music, can recognize and reconstruct it accordingly.

Cook (1990 in Barber 2007:32) notes how such genre conventions allow continuity, as they are cumulatively built up from past experiences that are reconstituted in memory, while establishing expectations for future iterations—expectations that are assumed to be understood by audience and composer alike, whether adhered to or deviated from. A genre's simultaneously historically-based yet forward-oriented nature (Barber 2007:32) allows the "one-offs" indicated by Kohring (2016) to fit into the aesthetic whole, both maintaining convention and increasing the potential for variability. Barber (2007:31-32) and Cook (1990 in Barber 2007:32) emphasize the importance of listening as an actively creative process in which past sonic experiences and understandings of genre are synthesized with, and modified by, the new auditory input. It is an observation echoed and elaborated upon by Hargreaves (2012:549), who terms this internal collection of sonic memories the "personal inner music library" (2012:547). He further ties it to creative musical practice in noting that any composition must occur in dialogue with this internal repository of knowledge, and cites Ockelford's (2012 in Hargreaves 2012:550) claim that "memory and creativity are indeed different sides of the same coin in musical improvisation." Current creative practice in Swiss folk music can thus be seen as

a culmination of generations of aesthetic musical understanding, past sonic experiences, and exposure to (and recognition of) openings for variability and future potential, in turn mediated by ongoing aesthetic sonic developments and a set of particular material conditions.

Discourses and Definitions of German Swiss Folk Music

Ingold and Hallam's (2007) work encourages attention to the contextual discourses within which creative practices are taking place. With this in mind, prior to analysis of participant responses, it is worth attending to the following question: How do influential past and present members of the new Swiss folk music scene talk about creativity and tradition, and how it is perceived within the community of practice? In other words, what is the discursive framework in which people are operating, and how are creative practices framed? In this case, I take discourse to be the Bourdieuan understanding of the concept, articulated by Høgseth (2012:69) as "a system of common rules, or ethic or moral concepts inside a cultural fellowship," that includes "norms, standards, and technical terms" as well as pertinent "(d)iscussions, dialogs, and conversations" (Høgseth 2012:70). While this is a broad area that could be the entire subject of analysis in its own right, I attend here particularly to the latter aspects in exploring how the musicians identified with new trends in Swiss folk music are articulating and discussing musical expectations within their genre. This is especially relevant in light of Marcus' (1990:42) claim that "discourses are critical responses to emergent, not yet fully articulated conditions," allowing one to view them as an integral part of the ongoing, temporal, contingent processes of creative negotiation of heritage. Ingold and Hallam (2007:20) point out that discourse not only reflects perspectives on emergent creative practice, but

configures or frames creative practice itself as a continually re-negotiated social process.

Relations of power and value, therefore, remain inseparable from practice, as can be seen in the patterns of funding and promotion that surround what might be considered desirable in new Swiss folk music output.

The definition of what constitutes folk music—and how, consequently, one can be creatively engaged with it or creating new folk music—is a topic that musicians have unilaterally acknowledged to be complex, challenging, and, oftentimes, ineffable (Ringli and Rühl 2015; Oehme-Jüngling 2016). Multi-instrumental musician Ueli Mooser, for example, has emphasized that he “cannot define folk music; it's kind of emotionally-based” (Ringli and Rühl 2015:147), while Markus Flückiger has simply stated “I hate the term (as) it is impossible to define national music—I have not yet heard a definition which suffices” (Ringli and Rühl 2015:166). In keeping with Barber’s reference to the way in which genre is established (2007:32), however, Swiss folk music has nonetheless frequently been referred to as a collection of attributes, rather than any concretely defined formation. In the interviews conducted by Ringli and Rühl (2015) of the most notable and influential first-generation members of the new Swiss folk music movement, folk music was variously characterized as a geographical phenomenon (Ueli Mooser, Fabian Müller in Ringli and Rühl 2015:148, 197), a collection of interrelated characteristics (Dani Häusler, Thomas Aeschbacher in Ringli and Rühl 2015:178, 180-81, 228-29) or simply a “feeling” informed by shared understandings of the music’s past (Dani Häusler, Fabian Müller in Ringli and Rühl 2015:177-78, 197-98). Aspects of these characteristics were subsequently also identified by participants of this study. This indicates that creative practice still operates within a particular framework and lineage, as perceived and discussed by the musicians themselves.

Ringli (2006, cited in Järman 2014:103) has said broadly that “Swiss folk music is what is perceived as Swiss. It is a collective imagination,” and this theme re-emerges frequently. Folk music and the discussions surrounding it could be seen as representative of “collective memory and its expressions,” as per Marcus (1990:42), as musicians have made reference to feelings of shared history and narratives that link performers of Swiss folk music (Ringli and Rühl 2015:177-78). Nadja Räss, a Swiss yodeller known for her experimental vocal work, reflects this when she muses on tradition as “something that is preserved in the collective memory of society” (Ringli and Rühl 2015:240) and passed down through generations. Tradition is therefore already inherently not static, if we are to take Ingold and Hallam’s (2007) view, as it is constantly in the process of being maintained, passed down, and renegotiated.

This foundational premise of collective memory in relation to Swiss folk music means that, in order for variability to occur, musicians must first have an integral understanding of the genre from ‘the inside out.’ This has been repeatedly articulated by Markus Flückiger (Oehme-Jüngling 2016:179; Ringli and Rühl 2015:167), as well as by Fabian Müller, who emphasizes that “a real innovation in folk music can only come out of the spirit of folk music itself” (Oehme-Jüngling 2016:180). This contributes to the strong sense of continuity within the new German Swiss folk music community, as any creative activity that is recognized as valid must first be grounded in heritage. It also illustrates Kohring’s (2016:519) point regarding knowledge and authority in relation to variability, as these discourses make it evident that one is not possible without the other in this context.

Key Themes

In relation to creative practices, three key themes emerged over the course of the interviews, with numerous subthemes within each. My interview questions explored the types of musical projects that participants were involved in, and subsequently what their musical influences were, how these translated into creative activity, and how social and participatory contexts and connections were perceived to affect their musical practices. Participants addressed their engagement with Swiss folk music as a genre—whether reinforcing or challenging the associated characteristics—as well as the range of musical influences from which they drew their creative inspiration. Following from this, musicians discussed various aspects of the creative process, understood to be categorized as improvisation, composition, and arrangement. Lastly, participants indicated the way in which some of their participatory environments, or spaces of experience, shaped the extent to which they engaged in creative musical action.

Negotiations of genre

Defining German Swiss folk music

Unsurprisingly, participants acknowledged that defining Swiss folk music was not easily—or even necessarily—done. Rather, responses were attentive to the nuanced nature of the musical genre. Following a discussion of the various forms folk music could take, when asked if these examples still represented folk music, Kristina Brünner responded:

“Yeah, well, that’s always the question! Always the point of strife—what is folk music, what isn’t... I think everyone defines it a bit for themselves. All musicians who do music that crosses over boundaries have to deal with that.”

She went on to address the way in which commercial considerations shape understandings of genre, noting the way in which ambiguity can make it challenging to market a musical genre to people outside the community of practice:

“To do publicity and stuff, one needs a label (e.g. categorization) though. It is maybe a bit of a niche thing. It’s not a big scene.”

Kristina noted the way in which particular regions are associated with particular components of the genre—whether through repertoire or through instrumentation—thereby tying genre to issues of locality and place.

“There’s the traditional corner... In Innerschwyz, there are certain (accepted) formations. Here in Bern too; (they use) schwyzerörgeli and upright bass...

“There’s a few (tunes) that I think everyone knows? But regionally it varies. I think where you come from plays a role. People who come from Bern learn perhaps different pieces from those who come from the Innerschwyz.”

Markus Flückiger corroborated this association with landscape, linking it to a broader regional and geographical perception as well as indescribable sonic aspects:

“I mean, apart from the schwyzerörgeli... the instruments are found elsewhere. It’s more the style of the piece—in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, there’s a certain...a kind of Alpine music, that’s associated with each other. As long as it has something to do with that... It’s very regional-specific.”

Reflecting further on the significance of traditional repertoire and styles to the maintenance of Swiss folk music, Maria Gehrig commented that these features form the bedrock on which to build the genre:

“I mean the very traditional pieces, they’re of course very basic. And so people (e.g. some young ones) want to develop it, and so on. But I have a problem with people who say it’s too boring (and needs to be totally left behind). It’s the “red thread” that runs through everything, that makes it still folk music.”

Maria’s comment suggests that folk music’s connection to tradition, and the associated sense of shared heritage, is central to how developments in folk music are perceived. In this way, the music represents literal shared repertoire (Wenger 1998:82-85) that contributes to the new Swiss folk music community of practice. Maria went on to observe, however, that disagreements over the extent to which these components are necessary has led to polarization between traditional folk musicians and musicians who take an aspect of folk music as their (comparatively superficial) starting point—with many musicians simply falling somewhere in the middle of the spectrum.

Johannes Rühl, director of the Alpentöne Festival, remarked that creative activity within the Swiss folk music community is a highly nuanced process that derives directly from engagement with these disputed characteristics—which will likely not be apparent to someone from outside the community of practice:

“It’s a bit tricky for me—the real folk musicians, they only have to change the tiniest things and it’s a big deal. I can’t hear that, because I’m not a folk musician. Yes, they are creative. Also the young ones, they are creative. Although I don’t know what they want (for the future of their genre)...But it comes back to the fact that even the smallest things are significant, innovative.”

This approach to creative change is consistent with Gell's (1998) observation, paraphrased by Gosden (2005:195), that "differences occur between motifs through making the least modification that is possible in order to establish something as different." These variations can only be comprehended when contextualized in a heritable body of work as a whole. The possibilities for variation and change are understood among those who are intimately familiar with the genre, and these insiders in turn have the authority to make such changes. Authority and knowledge are therefore linked, and dependent on the expertise that comes with participation over time.

Materiality and sound

Working from Ingold and Hallam's (2007:19) attention to "the material engagements entailed in creative practice," one can explore ways in which materiality configures the processes by which Swiss folk musicians do their work. German Swiss folk music remains strongly identified with a few key instruments; others, while not uniquely Swiss, are nonetheless also notably present. The iconic materiality of the former instruments as bearers of tradition is frequently acknowledged by musicians—the schwyzerörgeli is probably the most quintessentially Swiss, while the alphorn and regionally-specific hackbrett are not far behind. Respected musician Ueli Mooser (Ringli and Rühl 2015:148) and musicologist Markus Brülisauer have gone so far as to say that the schwyzerörgeli is, more or less, the sonic mark of Switzerland, and thereby anchor its unique sonority to place, land, and culture.

Ueli Mooser:

“We have one instrument that’s typically Swiss, that’s the schwyzerörgeli. From the sound, that distinguishes itself from all other accordions.”

Markus Brülisauer

“The schwyzerörgeli is associated with Swiss folk music, and only Swiss folk music. It (creates) simpler harmonies, as the schwyzerörgeli is diatonic. It’s a “predestined” folk music instrument—a bit like the hackbrett, too.”

The unmistakable timbre of these material forms may shape the way in which musicians maintain their sonic heritage, as the instruments’ inherent association with tradition allows for possible changes in other areas of the music, while still remaining within a recognizable aesthetic. As Kohring (2016:517) and Gosselain (2000:190) observe in the *chaîne opératoire* of pots, different stages of manufacture permit different variations, and some aspects of the pots’ creation have more room for flexibility than others; in the case of German Swiss folk music, if the timbre and materials are relatively fixed, perhaps it enables more flexibility elsewhere. Flückiger commented that, although folk music is technically accessible to all instruments, regional trends and expectations of genre inhibit the extent to which instruments are varied.

“There are actually no (instruments) that CAN’T do it—there’s many that just don’t. That would bring with it another big change. Previously there were regional specificities—in Bern, for example, you never played with a piano (in folk music)...It’s not dependent on an instrument, it just exists or it doesn’t.”

Nayan Stalder noted that in Switzerland his own instrument is so much associated with the folk tradition that his area of musical focus was essentially already chosen for him:

“(I got into folk music) through the instrument—I play a very “folksy” (*volkstümliche*) instrument. I didn’t really play folk music before, myself, but with this instrument there wasn’t really any other option—I could only do folk music.”

Christoph Pfändler has previously confirmed the hackbrett’s instrumental association with Swiss heritage and identity (Pfändler 2013:33). Cellist Kristina Brünner further commented that her instrument’s traditional role in Swiss folk music as accompaniment to the melody line shaped the way in which she learned her craft. In addition to being able to improvise and arrange accompaniments, Kristina pointed out that there are not many pieces written strictly for cello, and as such, she got accustomed to transposing or rearranging tunes originally intended for other instruments:

“One rarely finds things that are written specifically for cello, or so. Almost not at all. Lots of pieces for violin, that I’ve played; the normal part for cello is actually a secondary part or accompaniment.”

Ultimately, the cello’s timbre is perceived as fulfilling a particular role in Swiss folk music. The instruments’ sonic qualities are inextricably linked to the instruments’ materiality, which in turn are cultural signifiers. Any creative musical deviation that these musicians may wish to pursue, then, is already coloured by their listeners’ shared referential understanding of tradition and place in regards to their instruments’ material, sonic, and cultural forms.

At the intersection of Swiss folk music and other musical forms, such as the Western classical tradition, another instrumental aspect comes into play. In a setting in which students are often learning classical technique and theory and in which teachers are sometimes brought in from elsewhere to instruct, the material forms of instruments are no longer necessarily regionally specific. Nayan Stalder noted that he does not play the hackbrett that is typical of

some areas of Switzerland—indeed, those are so differently laid out and tuned that he would be unable to. Rather, he plays a chromatic hackbrett. In this standardized format, by far the most wide-spread, Nayan and his hackbrett have the potential to operate across genres and across settings. His teacher is Russian and provides classical technical training, and his gigs are varied. Similarly, Fränggi Gehrig plays a standard button accordion, rather than a regionally-specific version. The selection of general accordion repertoire is vast and diverse; he, also, was trained in classical technique and composition alongside his folk background, as his instrument facilitates it. He now writes compositions rooted in that particular type of compositional skill, potentially enabled by the intrinsic materiality of the instrument that he plays. The material versatility of such instruments suggests that they can be seen to operate as boundary objects (Wenger 1998:107). Through the possibilities and prior associations of their physical form, they enable participation across—or at least borrowing from—multiple communities of musical practice.

There may also be practical issues pertaining to instrument types, as posited by Flückiger when discussing the prevalence of creative practices among students:

“It’s very variable. Variable based on what instrument one plays—for example a violin player or pianist—there’s so much stuff they have to do, and practice, they have less time for the folk music. That’s different than a schwyzerörgeli player, for example.”

Students who played traditionally “folk” instruments were simply perceived as having more time to dedicate to the development of, and creative engagement with, folk music as a whole. Whether this view is shared by students is debatable, but it is certainly possible that

genre expectations, in relation to one's instrument, shape musicians' creative activities in some capacity.

Musical influences

As discussions around Swiss folk music practices reveal, an understanding of—and engagement with—the sonic qualities of Swiss folk music and of other musical genres is also key to musicians' creative interaction with the tradition. Attention to concepts of genre can bring to light the ways in which the “bundle of attributes” (Barber 2007:32) shapes musicians' ability to navigate new territory while maintaining characteristics that remain within the stylistic aesthetic. Maria Gehrig, for example, reflected on the sonic differences between different styles of playing the violin:

“In jazz and folk music, it's more about the articulation, and in classical it's more technical. I sometimes make (folk-like) tones in classical that one wouldn't otherwise do. And for me it sounds totally weird when someone who's classically trained plays a Schottisch (Swiss folk tune)—the (different) articulation, and so on. It's just funny!”

Consistent with Kohring's (2016) potential for variability and Barber's (2007) discussion of extending genre boundaries, however, incremental engagement with other musical forms is broadening the horizons of traditional musical practice in Switzerland. Kristina Brünner expressed the way in which her personal creative and musical journey was influenced by exposure to alternate sonic possibilities within the genre. As a child, she grew up listening to the albums made by one of Markus Flückiger and Dani Häusler's new Swiss folk groups; hearing what Flückiger and others were doing, she internalized it as sonic potential, and went on to pursue Swiss folk music with the intention of following this precedent. In this way, the

phenomenon of the variable “one-off” (Kohring 2016) directly translates into intergenerational creative sonic practices:

“A lot of the important stuff happened before the university, for the ‘opening up’ of Swiss folk music. The most important I think was (the band) Hujässler—the leaders of the group, Markus Flückiger and Dani Häusler, that was actually a long time before the start of the program and it set a lot in motion. Yeah, I think it was an important part for many (current) students. I was a big fan of Hujässler, and (another band), Pareglisch. And it was a big influence on me—I don’t know if I would have pursued it with purely traditional music.”

Musicians often referred to their sonic influence in ways reminiscent of Hargreaves’ (2012: 547) “personal inner music library,” whether in concrete or more ambiguous terms. Here the precedent of the previous generation of new Swiss folk musicians remained a significant influential factor—Markus Flückiger and musicians such as Marcel Oetiker, another experimental Swiss folk musician—as well as influences shared through personal musical networks. While all participants acknowledged the difficulty of pinning down their musical influences, some were more willing than others to name the specific musical styles and experiences that shaped their personal creative output:

Adrian Würsch

“(My biggest influences?) I would say jazz, but also rock. Also the bands of Markus Flückiger, as a teenager. Marcel Oetiker, too. Classical less, even though I study it! My parents listened more to rock and pop, and folk music, so I wasn’t really socialized in it. Also ethno (folk) music—Irish, Scandinavian.”

Nayan Stalder

“(Influences) when I compose? It’s difficult to say. To some extent from old (Swiss folk) sources. But also from other folk sources—like Balkan—I think you can hear that in my

music. It's not always intentional, but...things like uneven rhythms and so on. Also individual musicians whose music you really like—just folk musicians (that I know). And also jazz, a lot. And also, really, classical music; I studied classical theory, and learned a lot of classical music, and that surely had an influence.”

One musician, hackbrett player Christoph Pfändler, went so far as to identify the specific sonic aspects of Swiss folk music that he is seeking to address in his recent compositions:

“(My influences are) pop, rock, metal...(But) In the last year and a half I've been more involved in writing more traditional folk music. I mean, new pieces, but in a traditional style. I find that really neat. What's missing, for me, in Swiss folk music is minor tones... so that I try and include that when I'm writing folk tunes. People find that cool... I wrote my first piece (casually) at 15...now I do it more consciously, (having taken) music theory lessons and so on.”

For other musicians, this complex synthesis of sonic memories, attributes, and influences was not so easily, or necessarily, defined. Rather, they described it as an accumulation of experiences gathered over their lifetime, that emerged in the form of musical potential during the compositional process, and were reluctant to ascribe a basis to any of it. Even if they had previously mentioned a couple of influential sources, the way in which those sources ultimately came together remained ambiguous.

Kristina Brünner

“(My influences), yeah, it's difficult to say...a bit from Scandinavia...from (classical) cello music...Maybe on the accordion, some French influence. But I myself don't really like to define it, it's just whatever comes together in the moment.”

Fränggi Gehrig

“Folk music...to define that thing exactly, I find it—ach! (exasperated sigh). I have trouble with this “new folk music” notion, in that sense. It's simply influenced—folk

music that has been influenced by x and y, which one then absorbs. My music has all sorts of folk elements in it, but so does classical music...It's simply—my experience, and my background, is somehow incorporated into the pieces I write.”

Markus Flückiger suggested that drawing on this “inner library” is a natural part of being a folk musician, making references to his own experiences playing within, and learning from, the Swiss folk music community:

“Each of us has heard a lot of other music. And sometimes even done (that music). And when we compose, we are of course automatically influenced by that. But that, I find, is actually part of folk music; that's how the old musicians were, too. There was always the influence from somewhere.”

This perspective carried over to some of the younger musicians as well, as they indicated the value of creativity as being integral to new Swiss folk music. Schwyzerörgeli player Adrian Würsch noted that succeeding as a respected musician required the encouragement of creative practice even when this might be in opposition to the imitative model of music education, as evident in this chapter's opening quote. The attitude of engaging dynamically with the genre and developing one's own music and style was inspired by the creative teachers on faculty at the university, and was preferred over simply copying existing works—the latter of which was perceived as boring and uninteresting.

Flückiger agreed with this perspective, suggesting that the students who would be most likely to make a mark in the genre were those who thought outside the box:

“(Collaborating with the jazz department, etc.): to each to their own. Some yes, some no. The ones who come the furthest are the ones who are creative; the ones who don't just play what's lying there, but themselves develop something.”

Participation in the community of practice is thus combined with a sense of lasting presence and durability through time, from a career perspective.

Types of creative processes

Interviewed musicians often identified a conceptual difference between improvisation and composition as modes of creative practice. In a pragmatic, non-theoretical sense, this can be roughly interpreted as the difference between a spontaneous act of musical variation in the context of musical activity, and a deliberate and calculated process of musical organization with the end goal of a distinctive final product. Improvisation was seen by student participants as being an integral part of folk music practices (Flückiger, on the other hand, disagreed).

Kristina Brünner

“Yes, there’s a lot (of improvisation in Swiss folk music). It’s one of the things I really like about it.”

In several instances, however, improvisation in folk music was spoken of comparatively in relation to improvisation in jazz. Jazz has had a particularly fruitful relationship with traditional Swiss folk music over the years (see also Ringli and Rühl 2015). This has implications not only for the sonic qualities of the traditional music, but for the way in which it emerges in practice. It is a different kind of improvisational process than jazz, with different chords and norms, but as the two musical genres increasingly interact, elements of the latter become clearly evident in the former. Established Swiss folk musician Thomas Aeschbacher (Ringli and Rühl 2015:229) has observed, for example, that audience members will say to him “Methinks you played jazzy”

after a folk concert, blurring (while also potentiality rearticulating) distinctions between different types of sonic influences.

Flückiger suggested that it was jazz, in fact, that brought improvisatory practices to Swiss folk music, particularly among those studying at the university.

“Those who have improvisation (skills), learn it from jazz. But in the folk music... It’s more of a “feeling.” In Swiss folk music – improvisation is not at all a thing. There were always some who did, but (traditional) Ländler musicians, they can’t improvise.”

The difference between folk musicians who improvise and those who don’t may again be attributed to an openness or flexibility in the way in which Swiss folk music is perceived; as mentioned in the previous chapter, the university is known for (and therefore more likely to attract) an open-minded approach to the development of Swiss music. In that sense, it is unsurprising that students often felt improvisation to be an integral part of their work.

Numerous students referred to jazz as having a close relationship to folk music:

Nayan Stalder

“I think, between jazz and folk music, a lot happens. There are many “jazzers” who find folk music interesting, and there are also many folk musicians who also do jazz...And the folk musicians—yeah, well, just in certain aspects, further forms, harmonies, and so on, jazz is very interesting...”

“There are folk musicians who let themselves be influenced by jazz, and you hear jazz influences in their music. There’s really a complete—“*müesli*,” I would say—that it’s completely mixed, and also that there are folk musicians who are at the same time jazz musicians. And that which I sometimes find hard to define, is—that music—is whether that is still folk music, or is that jazz. Or is it just “world music,” or whatever one wants to call it.”

Kristina Brünner

“(new Swiss folk music can be influenced by) jazz, Scandinavian music, other cultures... There are some who are trained in jazz. But certainly others who just listen to a lot of jazz, and so on, and get other ideas that way.”

The above comment references both the formal and informal learning contexts in which musicians may develop their “inner library” and reservoir of musical knowledge. Nayan’s comment also brings attention to how characteristics of genre are associated with conceptions of belonging, and how deviation from these genre conventions has an influence on how one is perceived to be situated in relation to a community of musical practice. Franggi Gehrig mentioned the qualities that are nonetheless unique to folk music, identifying similarities with jazz but also acknowledging the way in which Swiss folk music is distinctive:

“The jazz department is closer to the side of folk that I grew up with...There’s much more improvisation, and so on. (Musical) influences not so much—it’s more about playing style.”

“(Folk music has) similarities to jazz... It has a certain harmonic pattern—such that, if one knows it, one can play along for quite a long time.”

Alongside his improvisatory skills, Gehrig is also become known as a composer, having recently won a prestigious award for his genre-spanning musical compositions that has previously only been awarded to contemporary classical composers. As folk music practices are also entwined with classical practices and societal concepts of musical ownership, the distinction between composition and improvisation in public perception can ultimately reinforce hierarchies of creativity in popular discourse. Musicians enrolled in the classical stream at the folk postsecondary program may subsequently proceed to study formal

composition in this context, as was the case with numerous participants. Markus observed that this mode of operating, alongside arranging, is more common among the students who “write music”:

“A few (write their own music). Certainly not all...They try, in between. It’s not for everyone... It’s more composition (than improvisation). And arranging; everyone has to arrange.”

It is possible that the sonic importance of Gehrig’s work is recognized differently by funding organizations by way of its perceived creative processes of construction—lengthy and deliberate in comparison to improvisation, for example. Nonetheless, it is also highly probable that his compositional process arises from a degree of improvisational activity.

Fränggi’s sister Maria, a violinist who was also trained in playing both classical and folk music, and who is very involved in the Swiss folk tradition, noted the prevalence of compositional practices among her peers:

“Many—not quite all—but most students came into contact with composition. I think it’s also an important part of folk music; I mean, all the members of (my trio) Interfolk write their own compositions.”

Despite writing music for her all-female folk trio, Maria Gehrig stated that she does not identify as a “composer” in the way that her brother does.

“I myself, for example, am not—I mean, my brother, he’s a composer, just won big prize from “SUISA.” He’s really good, he’s completely (involved) there...I’m not a habitual composer. I like doing it, and if I have time I’ll write a little piece for my own trio or quartet. That’s totally OK, and is also, I think, not so bad. But I’m not likely to stress over it... As a violinist, I think I’m also missing the harmonic way of thinking, the “vertical.” I mean, during my studies, I absorbed it a bit. But for years I was only interested in the first voice (melody), the harmony didn’t interest me at all!”

Maria subsequently acknowledged that she will easily improvise new melodies for her trio to play, and will arrange or spontaneously adjust the repertoire in ways that she sees fit. These creative practices are rooted in a specific genre and configured by her collection of sonic influences, understandings, and memories—as are Fränggi’s—yet have become differentiated in how they are perceived, by way of their supposed methodological processes and context, and perhaps of values pertaining to effort. This may be relative to the communities of practice in which they now participate, and whose conventions and expectations they uphold. Both musicians participate in both the folk and classical communities of practice, but in slightly different contexts. Maria commented on the way in which her training, as a first violinist, shapes the way in which she thinks about musical sounds and structure. Furthermore, Fränggi’s compositional skills were learned in a postsecondary environment which, as outlined in Chapter 3, carries with it a particular ideology and perceived social legitimacy in the eyes of non-members of the new Swiss folk music community. Meanwhile, Maria, through her legitimate peripheral participation in both an academic and informal, classical and folk context, may have learned to distinguish between “improvisatory” and “compositional” processes, and to assign differential values to each. Issues such as this reveal possible shortcomings of Ingold and Hallam’s (2007) approach, as the broad democratization of creativity tends to flatten out the nuances of how differently contextualized creative practices are actually perceived and experienced.

Arrangement is another creative process that is identified as being prevalent among new Swiss folk musicians, in particular. This refers specifically to the process of setting existing

musical pieces for different instruments, and can occur through a combination of improvisational and compositional methods. Learning to arrange is encouraged at the university, particularly since it also has practical value when musicians are hired for projects and gigs, or when they start a band. Picking up from where his last quote left off, Markus Flückiger commented on the importance of arrangement in the musical ensemble that he leads:

“In Alpini Vernähmlässig, people have to arrange. And that’s because in Swiss folk music, there’s not much literature—you have to write your own arrangements. It’s usually a (pre-existing) melody, and harmonies, e.g. a lead sheet. And you work from that. It’s not set in stone, but...”

The last section of this quote wryly references, again, the flexibility and openness that is possible in new Swiss folk music, in which musicians are able to incorporate variations and modifications while still drawing on traditional foundations and remaining within the music’s collectively understood genre. He further elaborates on how the arranging process takes place, drawing links to perceptions of both compositional and improvisatory approaches.

“(They write it for the instruments there), and that changes every year. There’s different ways. Something they really write it for each instrument; other times they bring it for a few instruments, and then they tell the others to just do something. And (the others) have to be able to do that, in an improvisatory way.”

The value placed on arranging also has ties to the large role of musical scores in the maintenance of, and experimentation with, tradition in new Swiss folk music. In an effort to keep their work fresh and vibrant, many musicians have subsequently returned to, and rediscovered, Swiss folk repertoire that had faded from view (Ringli and Rühl 2015; Oehme-Jüngling 2016). This repertoire strikes the ideal balance between heritage and flexibility, as the

pieces are archaic and traditional, yet are little known and therefore open to interpretation. One particularly influential collection is the Hanny Christen Sammlung, an extensive assortment of folk melodies gathered throughout Germanic Switzerland, and subsequently notated, by folklorist and ethnomusicologist Hanny Christen in the early 20th century (Ringli and Rühl 2015). As there are no audio recordings of this material and few who still remember the pieces, this repertoire offers the ideal vehicle for musicians to explore untapped possibilities while retaining the crucial factor of Swiss heritage and tradition. This repertoire might be considered as yet another example of a boundary object (Wenger 1998:107), in which a series of musical artifacts from the past are revived and rearticulated in present, and possibly future, practices. The folk ensemble at Lucerne University, Alpini Vernähmlässig, has drawn on this repertoire as a means of anchoring students in traditional tunes and providing an opportunity to practice arrangement. Student musicians may also choose to only ever focus on existing repertoire, in some cases, as indicated by schwyzeörgeli player Adrian Würsch:

“I think it really depends on the musicians. I know some who do really a lot of their own (music), or almost exclusively. But there are also those who play other stuff, or older stuff.”

The repertoire’s material format shapes the processes that follow: aside from the fact that the tunes’ very existence today is owed to their material solidification in written notation, they also often exist only as a single melodic line. As such, musicians are able—indeed, required—to generate their own arrangements and interpretations. As indicated by the above comments, these may be shaped by other musical exposures and influences, such as jazz, and involve a particularly robust improvisatory element. The revival of this tradition in material

form necessitates out-of-the-box thinking and a generative, consciously creative approach within the desired aesthetic.

Communities of practice, spaces of experience

The reflections of this study's participants thus far indicate the extent to which creativity is shaped within and in relation to communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999). Indeed, the premise of an existing community of practice forms the underlying context for the theoretical approach of the primary authors cited, and discussion of creative practice would be incomplete without it. Ingold and Hallam (2007:6) acknowledge the relational nature of creativity as one of their key thematic points, and the works of Kohring (2016), Gosselain (2000, 2008, 2016), Stahl (2010, 2013) and Roddick and Stahl (2016) also variably address the way in which improvisation happens in the context of existing communities of practice.

Comments gathered from previous research in new Swiss folk music (Ringli and Rühl, Oehme-Jüngling 2016), as well as my own findings, reveal the extent to which relationships, mentors, peers, and other aspects of participation in a knowledgeable community shape creative practices. In Ringli and Rühl's (2015) book of interviews, artists are quick to talk about their colleagues, influences, and the way in which they observe practices being continued among the younger generation. From the research findings of this study, it is evident that the emerging generation of new Swiss folk musicians are also engaging in expressly creative practices in part due to the environments in which they participate. The university offers learning experiences and opportunities that facilitate creative practice, particularly through composition classes, collaboration with the jazz department, and participation in the Alpini

Vernähmlassig ensemble. Meanwhile, new Swiss folk music festivals at which musicians perform usually require or expressly invite new projects or compositional material, providing a platform for musicians to debut new works and explore variations within the genre.

Gosselain's (2016) work pertaining to communities of practice and 'spaces of experience' is relevant in this context. While I will return to the concept of 'space of experience' more fully in the following chapter, it offers a useful conceptual framing with which to approach the activities of young new Swiss folk musicians, and the environments in which they participate. Settings that contribute to such 'spaces of experience'—such as universities and festivals—can be understood to be key catalysts in configuring the acceptability, possibility, and value of creative practices among the musicians interviewed.

University

As conveyed in the previous chapter, students and graduates of the folk music program at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences perceive their university training as having been influential in broadening their knowledge and understanding of music, as a whole, and of Swiss folk music specifically. Adrian Würsch indicated that the teachers' reputation as creative musicians themselves, and the manner in which they operated, shaped students' desire to follow in their footsteps:

“Yeah, the teachers do that—(they inspire creativity because) they are 'makers' themselves... From that side, yes, there is an emphasis on creativity.”

Flückiger, as one such teacher, described the way that he runs the Alpini Vernähmlässig ensemble, and the musical practices that it engenders. Although taking creative initiative is not a requirement, the learning environment is such that students are aware of the potential for experimentation:

“Through the Alpini—a lot of people wrote a piece for it, who otherwise wouldn’t have. That’s something really great. It’s like a laboratory, nothing (bad) can happen. Every Wednesday morning, they have a great band to work with... I always ask (if people want to bring a composition). It’s always open—they know they can always bring something. I started out just bringing my own stuff, but that’s not useful, then they don’t really learn anything...”

The non-judgmental nature of the learning environment and the casual openness to student repertoire, as well as regular access to a valuable musical resource (in the form of a willing band) and exposure to a variety of musical skills and influences in the university, are likely generative of a certain type of creative musical activity. In this context, it is unsurprising that students felt confident developing their own musical ideas and pursuing creative endeavours.

Despite the numerous instances of creative practice in the postsecondary program, however, Flückiger insisted that it occurs by way of opportunity rather than by expectation:

“No, one can’t say that (there is a focus on creativity). Those who have no interest, one can’t convince them—there’s no point. It’s very variable.”

“Creativity is hard to teach (to university-age students). A lot you can explain, through music theory...but to make a good piece, to find a good melody, you can’t explain that. It happens or it doesn’t. But you can (provide) the route to it, for those who have interest.”

As such, creativity is not demanded or focused on; it is simply permitted and facilitated, in a space enabling exploration of sonic potential. Within this space of experience, intergenerational transferral of knowledge is present in the context of legitimate peripheral participation, in that students can develop their creative skills in a learning environment which is partially separate from the community of practice as a whole, but which is given a public outlet at performance opportunities (and, recently, through a CD). Relative newcomers to the community of practice learn both concrete skills and conceptual approaches from long-term members, and observe acceptable means of participating and engaging with the musical genre. However, the emerging musicians are, at the same time, reinterpreting and reconceptualising these means of musical engagement as they themselves develop their own work and shape the new Swiss folk music of the future.

Festivals

Conversations with musicians and with festival directors indicated the extent to which festivals, as performative and participatory platforms, are generative of self-consciously creative musical activity among new Swiss folk musicians. In some cases, a director will commission a work from a specific artist; in other cases, directors will be open to ideas and pitches for new works, or simply to a new arrangement of musicians performing together. This has generated a significant amount of new musical material in recent years, and has provided creative opportunities for emerging young musicians. Alpentöne and Stubete am See are the two most significant festivals to feature new Swiss folk music, and both came up in comments from past and current folk music students:

Fränggi Gehrig

“(Festivals are certainly) a lot about showing one’s work, but also other things: festivals are, for many musicians, an occasion to make something new. Or (the festivals) also *want* that we do something new.”

Christoph Pfändler

“(Director Johannes) Rühl (of Alpentöne) is...very open—you can go to him with an idea, and if you sell it well, he’ll say yes, we’ll take it, even when it’s not yet in existence. And I find that cool with him—you don’t need to go to him with a finished product, you can go with an idea. That gained respect from me.”

Nayan Stalder

“(Festivals are) important for experimenting—Stubete am See especially really develops that. They always invite a composer, and it’s very desired, that stuff is done extra (especially) for the festival.”

From the perspective of festival directors, the new Swiss folk community is relatively small and therefore runs the risk of becoming monotonous for potential audience members. In an effort to remain economically viable, directors seek out novelty and public desirability, as mentioned by Florian Walser below. This in turn shapes the output of musicians within the community of practice, who rely on festivals as an important platform for maintaining networks and increasing their career visibility (see subsequent chapter).

Florian Walser (director, Stubete am See)

“(Due to the small community) it’s almost hard to fill a program when you don’t take the same groups again every year. So now, I have a rule—a group can only return (to the next festival) when they bring a new premiere...(Or) they can come to me with a proposal for a piece.”

The result has been a succession of fairly short-term groups and projects, in that musicians will usually get together for a festival, create a musical work or performance, and then disband. This is perceived as normal by young musicians, but is a factor that members of the prior generation are somewhat critical of, as it does not permit the growth and development of a compatible group of players (and the freedom and self-assurance that comes with such a long-lasting formation). Nonetheless, the consequence for the new Swiss folk music community has been an increased normalization of experimentation and creative variation.

Conclusion

Creative practices among new Swiss folk musicians are dynamic and varied, continually in motion while remaining deeply rooted in communal conceptions of heritage. A review of the commentary made by musicians in this community of practice indicates the extent to which developments in Swiss folk music are configured by a collective understanding of the attributes of tradition, which are shared and discussed and which frame the subsequent musical processes. The sonic characteristics of the music are central to the musicians' engagement with their craft, and are the key features of genre as constituted from memory and past experience, shaping the creative variation within the aesthetic. Ways of creatively engaging with Swiss folk music are usually differentiated into acts of composition, improvisation, and arrangement, in the eyes of participants, relative to the fixity of the source material and the amount of time allocated to the process. In both sonic understandings of genre and methods of creative engagement, musicians' practices are shaped by their interactions with boundary objects, in the form of instruments and material representations of musical repertoires.

Lastly, the spaces in which musicians participate co-constitute their creative practices, either through access and exposure to musical potential or through expectations associated with membership in the community of practice. The university offers an environment in which students can observe and be familiarized with creative practices, diverse musical influences, and progressive attitudes towards new Swiss folk music. Engaging in aspects of the community of practice under the guidance of long-term members, relative newcomers are able to explore and experiment with the musical genre in a safe, peripheral zone, learning to develop their own approach and eventually contribute their own work to the Swiss folk oeuvre (and potentially to other genres of music). The festivals, meanwhile, through their criteria of access and participation—as well as the opportunity to interact with diverse musical ventures—provide an impetus to undertake new musical endeavours that push the envelope of what has already been done in Swiss folk music, while still adhering to a recognized standard of genre. In this way, the festival and university localities each form spaces of experience that set expectations of engagement and that expose emergent members to aspects of the community of practice, as well as introducing new ideas that can enrich the community and the practices taking place within it.

Chapter 5: Festivals

Introduction

As I stepped out into the empty streets following a full day at the Stubete am See Festival—the cowbells now long gone from the same patch of sidewalk—the sounds of people chattering, glasses clinking, and music playing drifted out after me from the foyer of the concert hall. A day buzzing with performances both large and small closed with an organized, but relatively informal, opportunity for guests and musicians alike to let their hair down, relax with a drink, dance if one wanted, and enjoy upbeat Swiss folk music in a “spontaneous, swinging end to the first day” (official website, <http://www.stubeteamsee.ch>). The ensemble playing the dance music consisted of a revolving door of diverse musicians including, among others: a Masters student at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences; a long-time fixture of both the new and the traditional Swiss folk music scene; a respected pioneer of new Swiss folk music and now current instructor at the Lucerne University; and one of the organizers of the festival. Audience members chatted and danced, and at a long table near the bar, a number of emerging musicians (and participants of this study) gathered to socialize. Throughout it all, the festival’s official photographer and videographer hovered, documenting and representing the festival for posterity and future publicity. As a meeting point for the members of the community of musical practice, as well as for the volunteers, the gatekeepers, the audience, and, indirectly, the media, in which each are brought into relation with one another at a specific place and moment in time, festivals are a conglomerate of critical elements of the new Swiss folk music scene today. They operate as spaces of experience in which newcomers learn to participate in a

musical practice, foster connections, and gain access to new influences that subsequently shape creative activity.

In this chapter, I argue that festivals serve as critical sites of connection, participation, insight, and self-definition for emerging musicians in the new Swiss folk music community of practice. In the responses of participants, three primary themes emerged with regards to the relevance of festivals: the development and reaffirmation of networks; the broadening of musical knowledge and potential; and the enabling of visibility among the community and the public. Each category is also intimately connected with each of the others in a complex whole, but they have been separated for heuristic purposes. I draw on Lave and Wenger's (1991; Wenger 1998) work on legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice, and Wenger's (1998) concepts of boundary and periphery, as well as Gosselain's (2016) premise of 'spaces of experience.' Alongside these perspectives, I incorporate Will Straw's (1991, 2001, 2015) notion of 'scene' to supplement, and extend, the communities of practice framework which underlies my thesis.

Context and Background

Festivals in Switzerland

In recent years, consequent to the rising (or re-emerging) popularity of Swiss folk music, Switzerland has seen the establishment of numerous festivals dedicated to the genre, and to new Swiss folk music in particular. Usually taking place on alternating years throughout German-speaking Switzerland, festivals remain the largest gathering point for members of the new Swiss folk music community. Musicians are able to connect, socialize, and observe each

other's work, and, in some cases, expand their knowledge and ideas of what is musically possible. Beyond the community of musical practice itself, the festivals draw supporters and enthusiastic audience members who are given the opportunity to come into contact with this community, through listening and attending. Meanwhile, the media is able to disseminate the festivals' purpose and activities to the general public, linking the musicians to a wider sociocultural sphere in which they become visible. Festivals also play an important role in the career trajectories of young musicians, offering a venue to debut new works and engage in legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991). Of the 12 individuals I interviewed, 10 of them were performing at, or actively involved in, the Stubete am See festival that I attend at the end of the summer.

The two largest festivals to feature new Swiss folk music are Stubete am See and Alpentöne. Valuing creativity and openness—often commissioning new works or requiring original projects from its participants—these festivals nonetheless remain strongly rooted in a sense of place. The former is under the artistic direction of Florian Walser, and takes place primarily at the Zürich Tonhalle (concert hall), in an unusual pairing of classical and folk traditions. Walser makes a point of only featuring groups from within Switzerland, and the festival's location in the country's largest and most cosmopolitan city situates it squarely at the intersection of rural and urban identity. The 2016 festival occurred over a period of 4 days, from Thursday until the end of the weekend, with the majority of performances happening on Saturday and Sunday. There were multiple venues and nonstop consecutive performances, such that, at any given moment, there was music taking place in the large concert hall, in the

smaller concert hall, in the foyer, or at the “Bauschänzli” (an informal outdoor restaurant and dance floor situated on a connected island in the Limmat River nearby).

The Alpentöne festival, meanwhile, is located in the rural village of Altdorf. Under the direction of Johannes Rühl, it takes its inspiration from the alpine landscape in which it is located and invites music of various styles that is “based on sound concepts that have a connection with the Alps” (festival idea, <http://www.alpentoene.ch/>). Unlike Stubete am See, Alpentöne (literally “Alp-tones”) is not limited to music from Switzerland, and actively seeks diverse artistic performers and projects from international settings. Given the alpine origins and creative qualities of new Swiss folk music, however, members from the new Swiss folk music community of practice often assert a large presence at Alpentöne. In 2017, the festival will take place from Thursday August 17th to Sunday August 20th, and although the concerts happen consecutively at multiple venues, there is only ever one performance happening at any given time.

These are also numerous smaller festivals, that do not command the large audience and influential clout of Alpentöne and Stubete am See. Nonetheless, they offer performance and networking opportunities for musicians in the community. Fränggi Gehrig specified that, although there are many festivals taking place (and Adrian Würsch suggested that there might, in fact, be too many), Alpentöne and Stubete am See remain the most important and major ones. By exploring future possibilities, engaging a wide audience, offering a musical platform, fostering creativity, and uniting diverse generations and types of participants, festivals can potentially be seen as the nodes of an interconnected socio musical web, offering a means of maintaining and reinterpreting the communal sonic heritage of Switzerland.

Theoretical Framing

My approach to festivals remains fundamentally informed by the community of practice framework. In particular, I suggest that festivals serve as part of the informal learning curriculum for newcomers to the new Swiss folk music community of practice, and that they can be interpreted as both boundary objects and as peripheral experiences, serving to bring new ideas and relationships into the community of practice and to connect the community of practice with the rest of the world. Festivals also act to perpetuate processes of legitimization and of the ongoing negotiation of meaning. I propose that festivals, as examples of such places of activity and skill circulation, represent part of the informal learning curriculum for the new Swiss folk music community of practice. They provide contexts in which younger and less experienced members of the community of practice are permitted to participate, share, engage, and learn.

Beyond its immediate relevance to the core activities of the community of practice, a festival, in which diverse groups and interests come into contact around a node of mutual investment, can represent a boundary object and can provide a venue for individuals operating as brokers. Festival directors, for example, may actively coordinate occasions for exchange and collaboration, or may provide the platform for musicians to conduct their own brokering activities. Despite their somewhat peripheral status, festival directors may also exert power over claims to membership by granting (or denying) access to festival stages and the associated visibility and acceptance. This is mutually constituted process, however, as directors will usually feature musicians who have already acquired a degree of legitimacy within the community.

By offering a space for these kinds of connections, festivals provide peripheral experiences, in which attendees and less experienced musicians can observe or engage in a practice without the level of participation and commitment required of fully integrated members (Wenger 1998:117). There is a duality inherent in such peripherality, as it brings relative outsiders into more sustained contact with the community of practice at the same time as it brings members of the community of practice into contact with outside influences. This outer edge operates as a kind of liminal space where “perspectives meet and new possibilities arise” (Wenger 2000:233). In the case of the emerging generation of Swiss folk musicians, festivals have the potential to serve as a ‘space of experience’ (Gosselain 2016:46), in which sonic options are explored, interpersonal relationships are fostered, and tradition is dynamically maintained and renegotiated. Recalling Kohring’s (2016) discussions of experimental improvisation and Barber’s (2007) attention to conceptions of genre, these festivals thus have the potential to also serve as physical loci for the broadening of musical boundaries and definitions. Such ‘spaces of experience’ share various characteristics with boundary objects, as outlined in Chapter 2. Emphasizing their interrelatedness, Gosselain (2016:53) describes ‘spaces of experience’ as being possible sites in which boundary objects can be encountered. To clarify this distinction, a ‘space of experience’ can be broadly conceptualized as correlating to a place-based venue for social action and participation, which can contain within it multiple opportunities for, and instances of, the expansion of knowledge and bridging of communities (Gosselain 2016:54-55). A boundary object may represent the catalyst for one such specific instance of mediation, a locus for interaction and exchange between spheres of practice (Wenger 1998:129).

The interrelation of multiple parts and participants suggested by the boundary and peripherality perspective of Wenger (1998) is effectively complemented by Will Straw's concept of 'scenes' which may help to highlight the dynamism inherent in the meeting and exchange of disparate components and elements. Straw (1991:373) himself draws on Barry Shanks (1998 in Straw 1991) to juxtapose possible understandings of the concepts of 'community' and 'scene' in ways that I find applicable to this study despite their somewhat different origins. He suggests that musical communities tend to represent a fairly stable group of people whose musical practices are "rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage" (Straw 1991:373), and who draw meaning from the negotiation of this heritage in conversation with contemporary practice. Scenes, on the other hand, are positioned as being temporally and dynamically focused on present alliances and processes of differentiation, and the cross-fertilization that occurs between them (Straw 1991:373).

Will Straw's concept of scene is helpful in thinking of the aggregation of elements at a festival as a unit of analysis, allowing one to concretely conceptualize the range of factors (including audience members, media, producers, and so on) that interact with—but exist beyond—the musicians themselves. The term is flexible, dynamic, and anti-essentializing, described by Straw (2001:248) as the "default label for cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic." Scenes allow for and bring attention to the "hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities," (Straw 2001:248) and in that sense, Straw's usage of the term is most useful as a way of thinking, rather than as a static definition. It brings attention to movements, relationships, and circulations associated with the community of practice, as well as to the construction of ideas and perceptions around a particular musical

form and its social representation. Festivals represent sites and spaces in which diverse elements are temporarily brought together into a carefully balanced whole, linking diverse attributes and individuals. Duffy et. al., discussing a Swiss festival in Australia, quote Lefebvre (2004:60 in Duffy et. al. 2011:21) to describe music festivals as “the creation of a space through music ‘presupposing a unity of time and space, and alliance’.”

The notion of a ‘scene’ met with some resistance among my participants, particularly when used to refer to divisions or groupings, despite having subsequently been utilized by participants themselves. I suspect this is because the musicians interviewed tended to move freely between different stylistic areas of Swiss folk music (for example, highly traditional versus more experimental), sometimes even with the same group of people. As such, it was the perceived labelling and artificially-applied boundedness against which participants were rebelling. However, I believe that the notion of scene as Straw applies it is compatible with participants’ concerns, as it is precisely in its lack of tangible boundedness that it finds its use and meaning. Straw defines it variously over the course of his writings, and makes it clear that there are many further ways to approach it, but I will work with a few key readings of it here. Straw notes that the concept of ‘scene’ “seems able to evoke both the cozy intimacy of community and the fluid cosmopolitanism of urban life”—a description which arguably encapsulates festivals in a nutshell—and, furthermore, it “compels us to examine the role of affinities and interconnections which, as they unfold through time, mark and regularize the spatial itineraries of people, things, and ideas.” In a more recent work, Straw (2015:477) addresses a multitude of corresponding ways in which a scene can be understood: as a collectivity existing through proximity; as a space of assembly in which cultural phenomena

become linked; as workplaces in which cultural materials become transformed; as ethical worlds in which behavioural protocols are negotiated; and as spaces of traversal, preservation, and mediation of cultural practices. Each of these applications is applicable to the current topic in some way, as participant responses indicate.

Here I find benefit in both the 'communities of practice' perspective and the 'scene' perspective. Lave and Wenger (1991:122) note that "communities of practice have histories and development cycles," in which the continued replacement of experienced practitioners by relative newcomers is facilitated in such a way that the community remains paradoxically stable and continuous. In this sense, I take the notion of a community of practice to represent an emphasis on depth through time. It provides an awareness of the historical basis of a set of practices, and of the processes of generating shared understanding over generations. The notion of a scene, on the other hand, emphasizes the more spontaneous and temporary alignment of factors at a given instant in time, bringing attention to the moments of 'coming together.'

Key Themes

In response to a straightforward query about the role of festivals in the new Swiss folk music community, alongside supporting questions regarding social networks, musical collaborations, and processes of participation, the emerging musicians interviewed in this study, complemented by interviewed festival directors, identified three primary ways in which festivals contribute to their social and musical activities within their community of practice. They noted that festivals are significant in the creation, re-establishment, or solidification of

personal and musical networks; that festivals shape the expansion of musical knowledge and possibilities; and that festivals promote the visibility and sharing of musical projects and participants, operating as a display venue for both public and for each other.

Creating, re-establishing, or solidifying networks within the community

Festivals serve to bring together aspects of the new Swiss folk music community of practice that may not regularly have an outlet or an occasion to meet, and thereby significantly shape the social landscape in which emerging musicians operate. Three elements of networking arose from discussions about festivals, namely their relevance for reaffirming connections, their importance for establishing new connections, and, less obviously, the way in which these networks were themselves circumscribed by conditions of accessibility.

In a community where continuation and maintenance occur primarily through live performance and face-to-face interactions, heightened by the lack of commercial outlets and industry for recordings of the genre, festivals are particularly momentous, as noted by multiple participants. Although CDs offer a means of circulating and distributing one's music to members of the audience or the community—"almost like a business card," according to Markus Brülisauer, director of the Swiss folk music resource centre *Haus der Volksmusik*—performances remain the music's life force, an aspect of music-making that is recognized by participants as being integral to this particular artistic medium in general.

Christoph Pfändler:

"Yeah, the most important medium I think is always live performance. For all music."

In talking about cities and scenes, Straw visualizes the connections and relations between social regions of a city as a kind of urban “cartography” (2001:250). Leaving behind the city-focused nature of this idea and approaching it slightly differently, it can be interpreted as a way of mapping social networks and connections—which, in the case of festivals, often reach a high level of density at one such particular node. Straw (2001:254) observes that “scenes are, much of the time, lived as effervescence, but they also create the grooves to which practices and affinities become fixed...In (chance) encounters, and in their repetition, knowledges are reinvigorated and the peripheries of our social network renewed.” Festivals for Swiss folk musicians provide an arena for the repetition of such encounters, and operate as recurring places to reaffirm networks, connections, and understandings of belonging. For incoming members, they offer a site for legitimate peripheral participation, at which to observe the networks, flows, practices, conventions, and outputs of the community of practice in action. Violinist Maria Gehrig grew up in the Swiss folk music scene, and cites festivals as being places at which networks are reinforced:

“You know exactly – you’ll see those people twice a year, at the festival.”

Markus Flückiger, as a long-term member of the new Swiss folk music community of practice, also perceived festivals in this way, which indicates that intergenerational networking (between both peripheral and more central members) occurs in these contexts:

“Naturally (festivals play) a big (role). First of all as a meeting point—I find that important. There’s always something happening at festivals.”

Meanwhile, Nayan Stalder, hackbrett player and student, talks about recognition and about the certainty of seeing familiar faces and names. Using a word that recurred frequently in interviews, he describes the scene as “*überschaubar*”—a German term that roughly means “assessable” or “manageable,” but literally translates as being “possible to oversee all of it.”

“I would say (the scene) is “*überschaubar*.” There are always new people but...one always sees the same names. In a program you see the same names 4 or 5 times.”

The small scene and relatively repetitive nature of the associated interactions was also acknowledged as a potential challenge. The likelihood of new or stimulating developments occurring is limited when one is already intimately familiar with all the musicians. Christoph Pfändler, a young Swiss hackbrett player who participates actively in the folk community but also does a fair amount of musical crossover with other genres, notes that Stubete am See consistently attracts the same pool of around 25 people. He concedes that this can be good, but rather cyclical:

“I look through the program (at each of the groups) and go “know them, know them, know them, know them – don’t know them! but know the musicians – know them, know them, know them...””

Another young musician, Adrian Würsch, an active schwyzerörgeli player and student at the University, tentatively explored the negative consequences that such an insular existence could generate, suggesting that the scene could risk stagnation and lack of growth if it remained inwardly focused. Such observations reveal that the festivals are important for reinforcing the community of practice, but could be potentially stifling for the very same reason:

“I mean it’s super, it’s certainly important... but sometimes I have the feeling it’s... what is the word... Self-congratulatory? It’s a small scene, right...it always kind of exists for itself, this scene.”

In this way, different festivals perhaps serve different purposes. A festival that is specifically focused on new Swiss folk music offers opportunities to re-establish connections and view the work that is occurring within the community. Meanwhile, a festival that heavily includes new Swiss folk music alongside other genres and nationalities serves to broaden networks and bring in fresh influences.

Festivals also provide the possibility to establish new connections, although this seemed to be rarer and dependent upon who one knew. An aspect of visibility, discussed later in this chapter, comes into play. One might see musicians whose work felt compatible, and vice versa, and establish a rapport that way.

Fränggi Gehrig

“It’s of course a super platform, and an important one. It is also—through festivals, new constellations can arise.”

Kristina Brünner

“(One might) meet somewhere, at a festival. Or in Lucerne. Or at a *Stubete* (open jam session)—many musicians I think meet each other there, the first time.”

If one was sufficiently within the community of practice, one might be invited to a post-concert jam session, and thereby strengthen connections. However, this was reliant on existing networks. If one didn’t already have them and wasn’t invited, these jams did not have the same effect.

Nayan Stalder

“One does get to know people through the festival. (There may be) situations where one sits together and plays until the early hours of the morning. But of course you need to be invited – if you just go and watch, (networks) happens less.”

This brings up issues of accessibility and power, of inclusion versus exclusion, of being peripheral versus more central. Lave and Wenger (1991:103) acknowledge the centrality of these issues, noting that “control and selection, as well as the need for access, are inherent in communities of practice.” Even at festivals, the networks that are created and maintained go through gatekeepers—particularly the festival directors, in this case. Speaking to directors, some acknowledged the festival’s role as a gathering place for the community, albeit one that was determined in part by the directors themselves:

Alois Gabriel (now-defunct Volksmusik Festival Altdorf):

“Coming up, Stubete am See—there (at that festival) are actually all the innovative formations, really ALL the innovative groups in Switzerland. They’re there every time. And they all know each other. That’s really a meeting point.”

Supporting Wenger’s (1998:101) observation that, “in order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members,” some directors were very transparent about their role in selecting and promoting musicians at the festivals:

Johannes Rühl (Alpentöne)

“Four years ago, one couldn’t do much with the young ones, they weren’t yet ‘ripe’ (for performing). Now, one can present them as stand-alone groups at the festival—they’re good... When one is diligent, one finds them oneself—not many apply (to the festival) themselves, I’m not sure why. They’re a bit proud, they don’t want to beg. By now I know them all, because there aren’t that many. And I watch them, to see their development... In Switzerland, I know them all. I have certain criteria: I don’t want that they’ve already had a tour (that year), all over the place. They also don’t need to be

completely new—that’s also not good. Best is if they’ve played 4-5 times somewhere.”

My conversation with Rühl indicated that he was aware of his position as both a relative outsider and as a facilitator for the exchange of ideas and musical practices. His role as a broker is evident in the feedback from emerging musicians regarding their experiences at his festival, as indicated in the following section.

Opening of horizons

Participants indicated exposure to diverse musical options and influences as being a significant component of their involvement in festivals. In some cases, this sense of expanded knowledge could be traced to a very specific event. In 2015, the director of the Alpentöne festival brought together students from the Swiss postsecondary program and from postsecondary folk programs in Finland and Ireland, for a collaborative workshop and subsequent performance. Johannes Rühl, reflecting on the experience, noted the extreme benefit the process had on such a relatively insular musical group, drawing attention to the lack of engagement with musical scenes outside of Switzerland.

“One sees it best with the University—when one studies Swiss folk music, then one studies Swiss folk music, and nothing else. And it’s a problem, because (they) aren’t inspired by other cultures and styles. We did a thing at Alpentöne, with Finnish, Irish, Swiss—it was so good for them.”

The claim that young musicians are no longer inspired by other cultures may be disputed by the young musicians themselves, who often cited a wide range of influences in their music, as observed in the previous chapter. However, multiple young participants also enthusiastically mentioned this collaborative experience with the Finnish and Irish students.

They cited a positive learning experience, new repertoire and connections, and the opportunity to create and perform together:

Christoph Pfändler

“Last summer (Johannes Rühl) had the cool idea to invite Hochschul students from Helsinki, and from Limerick – that was so cool! That for 4 days we worked together—we learned these pieces from each other—no sheet music, nothing—and then afterwards we went and performed it. Then we got to know new people, and so on...”

Kristina Brünner

“Last year, was the Swiss-Irish-Finnish thing...that was really neat.”

This experience was expressly made possible due to the multifaceted and diverse musical nature of the Alpentöne festival. It was also set up by the festival director, raising questions pertaining to access and the role of gatekeepers—who may also be brokers—in structuring participation, learning, and visibility.

In other cases, the environment more generally was one of expansiveness, of learning, and of broadening one’s knowledge and understanding of possibilities. Christoph Pfändler reflected on the opportunity to meet and learn about exciting musical projects from beyond the edges of the new Swiss folk music community:

“At Alpentöne you encounter things that you otherwise wouldn’t discover, for example—or also other bands, from Austria, for example, who are young and hungry—who you otherwise wouldn’t get to know, in Switzerland.”

Adrian Würsch relayed his memory of being a young teen and completely immersing himself in the festival experience at Alpentöne after getting the opportunity to play there. The festival space/site/experience, in which Adrian was invited to participate, generated more knowledge and understanding of musical activities from beyond Switzerland, which he could in

turn bring back into the new Swiss folk music community of practice and his own activities within it:

“(Festivals are) for sure cool. Alpentöne...when I was younger, that also opened my horizons. I was able, with an early band, to go and play. I was just there for a weekend and listened to everything. That opened my eyes, widened my horizons.”

Although the above quotes refer primarily to Alpentöne, other new Swiss folk music festivals also offered a site at which to exchange ideas and information more generally, even within one’s own community of practice, as suggested by Nayan Stalder:

“I think (festivals) are very important—first of all for the exchange (*austausch*). It’s always a cross-section of the folk music in Switzerland—one always discovers music one didn’t know, musicians one didn’t know.”

His comment suggests that festivals are instrumental in the continued dynamic interpretation of the new Swiss folk music aesthetic and to the components of the community of practice. They offer an opportunity for access “to mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiations of the enterprise, and to the repertoire in use,” outlined as the three dimensions of practice by Wenger (1998:100). In their association with (and consolidation of) a diversity of styles, connections, and influences, festivals are ‘spaces of experience’ (Gosselain 2016:46) that provide an opportunity to expand emerging members’ sphere of familiarity and knowledge. The comments above also indicate the extent to which festivals themselves also operate as boundary objects, in that they bring diverse communities and domains of experience into contact with one another, facilitating the transfer and exchange of knowledge, ideas, and practices.

Visibility and Sharing

The aspect of visibility was identified as another key component of the festival experience. Will Straw (2015:477) notes that scenes can pull “together cultural phenomena in ways which heighten their visibility and facilitate their circulation to other places,” and this process seemed to be notably relevant in this context. The acts of sharing and making visible took place through two primary relations—with the public, and with each other.

Participants observed that the festival was a place where one could share what one had been working on, bringing one’s most recent projects to the attention of the community. This was indicated to be a valuable source of knowledge-sharing, and a way in which one remains active and present in the musical community.

Christoph Pfändler

“(Festivals) are actually relatively important; for example, when you’ve made a new band, you look for where you can come in (to a festival) so you can present yourself—both for the public and for other musicians—then they can say “Oh, look, so-and-so has made a band!”, and so on.”

The processes of recognition, discussed earlier in regards to networking, complement the processes of awareness-raising, and subsequent evaluation, of a musician’s creative endeavours within the new Swiss folk music community.

Fränggi Gehrig

“I think that is important, (the fact) that one can show oneself there—and that through the festivals you can (connect to) people that you otherwise wouldn’t.”

These comments indicate the significance of the festivals, not only as a means of gaining an audience, but as a means of establishing one's place within the scene. For emerging musicians, this could be particularly important as a means of initiating or introducing oneself into the community of practice.

Christoph Pfändler

"Yeah, it's cool when you can present yourself there for the first time. That you can show yourself (and your music), and then people hear you."

However, beyond internal visibility, there was also a clear aspect of sharing and communication with the wider public sphere—the audience, the media, the general public. These elements are also critical to the community's success, while not necessarily "of" the community (or practice) itself. In this way, the concept of scene can again collect disparate but interrelated elements and bring them into an assembled, but at times uneasy, aggregate.

Nayan Stalder

"In relation to the outer world, it's the point at which we give out, and are able to say, look – this is what we do."

Being large events, festivals tend to gather the attention of the media and the general public, and so play a certain role of advocacy. They are also important for musicians to secure a name for themselves, potentially contributing to future employment or gigs, as suggested by

Fränggi Gehrig:

"It's very important. It's a platform for new formations, it comes into the media—it's very important for us... In the golden age of folk music, there were lots of *Beitz* (restaurant) playing opportunities, but that's past—you can't live from that anymore. So festivals and other platforms, that's very important, that there's something you can live from."

Festivals offer the general public an opportunity to observe some of the major elements of the new Swiss folk music community of practice. In this way, festivals provide peripheral experiences for non-members to casually come into contact with members, and facilitate mutually beneficial exchange.

Conclusion

Emerging new Swiss folk musicians identified festivals as being significant occasions in their community of practice. They noted that the festival setting is an opportunity to connect with existing contacts, as well as to develop new ones, thereby bolstering their own legitimacy within the community. Festivals also contribute to the continued negotiation of musical meaning, as they help to broaden musical perspectives and add to conceptions of what is possible within the aesthetic. Lastly, festivals are sites at which relative newcomers to the community are able to garner legitimacy through presenting themselves to the rest of the community of practice, while also raising their visibility in the external sphere.

In this way, festivals are an essential part of the learning curriculum of the new Swiss folk music community of practice, providing sites at which emerging musicians can engage in legitimate peripheral participation. Responses further indicated that festivals operate as boundary objects and as peripheral experiences, providing a venue for processes of exchange, collaboration, and mutual engagements across diverse types of musical styles and participants. Within these contexts, individuals such as festival directors work as brokers to facilitate instances of sharing and expanded meaning-making.

Conclusion

Introduction

In the days following the Stubete am See festival, the whirl of sights and sounds still fresh in my mind, I packed my bags and prepared to return to Canada. On my last day in Switzerland, taking the internal passenger train from one terminal to another at the Zürich airport, a familiar refrain began to play over the loudspeakers. Since its launch a few years ago this short train ride has always been accompanied by a range of typically “Swiss” sounds—cows mooing, alphorns resounding, Swiss-German linguistic expressions, and, of course, the unmistakable tones of cowbells.

As I conclude this thesis, almost a year has passed since that day. Briefly returning recently to Switzerland, I was reminded of the primacy of such a distinct sonic marker to conceptions of identity and belonging in the context of a specific cultural heritage. Walking past cow pastures to a rural wedding location; passing a sound installation at a regional culture centre in downtown Zürich; hearing, once again, the familiar soundbites as I zoomed towards my airport terminal—the sound of cowbells surfaced in the most ordinary, and surprising, of places, a symbol of history and cultural identity carried forward into present practices.

In the new Swiss folk music community of practice, aspects of musical heritage imbue pedagogical practice, creative enterprise, and opportunities for public performance and connection, contributing to an understanding of genre that provides a foundational basis of tradition at the same time as it provides inspiration for variation and exploration. Through this thesis, I have explored the way in which an enduring musical legacy is practiced and reproduced

in a contemporary context, through the actions and experiences of an emerging generation of community participants.

Summary

In this study, I have attempted to engage with some of the complexities of learning and participation experienced by young German Swiss folk musicians. In particular, I have examined the facets pertaining to formal institutionalized learning, creative practice, and participation in public music festivals. These areas have provided latitude to explore the nature of learning and emergent membership in a community of musical practice.

In Chapter 1, I introduced new Swiss folk music as a genre—distinguishing it from its more traditional counterpart—and outlined the existing literature relevant to this area of study. In Chapter 2, I provided an overview of some of the key theoretical concepts of this thesis. This included communities of practice, legitimate peripheral participation, genealogy, and boundary objects, as well as notions pertaining to formal and informal learning, spaces of experience, peripherality, and the relationality inherent to each of these approaches.

In Chapter 3, I explored aspects of the relationship between the relatively recent folk music study option at the university of Lucerne, and the new Swiss folk music community of practice. Ethnographically, I investigated the role that the academic program was perceived to play in the development of skills, networks, and career options, from the perspective of current and recent students as well as instructors and existing members of the community of practice. Students expressed that the potential relevant outcomes of attendance at the university included expanding one's knowledge, creating networks, and establishing legitimacy. More

broadly, this allowed me to examine some of the shifts occurring in the community of practice in relation to the transition from informal to more formal, pedagogically influenced learning contexts. It also brought attention to how spaces of experience contribute to participation in, and development of, a community of practice, as well as some of the relations that members must navigate in order to be granted access to participation.

In Chapter 4, I addressed the ways in which emerging folk musicians engage in creative activity on the context of an existing community of musical practice. The chapter examined how creative practices are negotiated in relation to understandings of genre; the forms these practices take; and how they are shaped by relevant spaces of experience. Interview responses indicated the practical components of *what* musicians were composing, and *how*, as well as what they perceived their influences to be. This brought attention to the nature of variation and continuity in the context of a musical tradition, and of striving for balance between belonging and changing. The chapter showed how intergenerational relations and communal participation contribute to knowledge transfer, and indicated the further significance of participatory localities and social contexts in facilitating the potential for variation.

Chapter 5 took a specific focus on a particular type of event and locality, and its significance to the new Swiss folk music community of practice. My research attended to the experiences of emerging Swiss folk musicians relative to their participation in festivals that showcase their genre of music, supplemented by perceptions of festival directors and existing community members. Responses emphasized expansion of knowledge and of visibility inside and outside the community, as well as the making and, more importantly, maintaining of social networks. Attention to these themes permitted analysis of the ways in which a festival serves as

a space of experience and a boundary object, bringing musicians in contacts with other spheres of influence while also legitimizing their participation within their community of practice. It also highlighted issues of access relating to the role of gatekeepers in determining festival participation.

Relevance

It is my hope that this study will be relevant to the new Swiss folk music community of practice. It provides a point of departure for analyzing the future of the genre and of the musicians exploring in this scene, as it involves a portion of an emerging generation of musicians who are engaging with their heritage while navigating the contemporary state of new Swiss folk music, and of the world of music more broadly. The study participants represent a unique demographic, as these current and recent students are some of the new Swiss folk musicians who are poised between tradition and academia for the first time in Switzerland.

This research has illuminated an aspect of the Swiss folk music tradition that has, up until this point, not been addressed in a scholarly context. It can offer an opportunity for practitioners to observe, from a different angle and an outside perspective, the way in which practices are being learned, reproduced, and interpreted among relative newcomers. This may also bring attention to the kinds of spaces that are necessary in order for newcomers to adequately participate in the community of practice, as well to as the learning processes experienced by students in a formal context of folk music instruction.

At present, a comparatively small number of musicians are choosing to study folk music at the university. Given the relative newness of the postsecondary program and the festivals,

this research is an example of an unusual case study at a time of transition between aspects of informal and formal learning, and of collaboration between participants of this newly formal learning context and the prior model of learning. The case study can add to existing literature on the institutionalization of folk music, as well as on creative practice in the context of tradition and on heritage represented at festivals. To my knowledge, my study represents the first English-language scholarly work pertaining to Swiss folk music, and I aim to bring information about the developments in this genre to a wider audience outside of Switzerland.

On a broader level, the study offers an opportunity to witness how communities of practice operate at various different levels—in an institutional setting, on a personal creative level, and in a public and performative arena. These are three very simplistic categories (and each of these circumstances are co-constitutive and interconnected), but they are nonetheless distinct enough to each provide diverse viewpoints for analysis. This approach also serves to incorporate musical practice into the sociocultural study of lived experience.

At the institutional level, the research shed light on the way in which communities of practice configure instructional material, but also the way in which practices can take on a life of their own when transposed to a differently structured learning environment, resulting in disparate perceptions of participation. In regards to creativity, the study exposes how experiences and relations both within and at the edge of a community of practice accumulate to shape the way in which practices are individually carried on, internalized, and reimagined. Festivals offer a venue through which to attend to the ways in which particular spaces and organized experiences bring together members of a community of practice. Such spaces of experiences are shown to facilitate the introduction of new ideas and sharing of knowledge,

providing an opportunity for members of varying levels to participate in an aspect of the practice and for outsiders to come into contact with the community and its activities. In sum, this research provides a framework for future studies of legitimate peripheral participation in the context of musical practice, as a similar theoretical approach could be applied in variety of contexts. At this time, the study also contributes an original perspective to existing literature on musical activity, engaging a comparatively unusual and underutilized theoretical framework that could be productively employed for further analytical purposes in the field of music studies.

Limitations

This being a small-scale ethnographic case study, due to size and time constraints of Masters research, the sample size in this study is very modest. Although the six young musicians interviewed represent a proportionally large percentage of recent graduates and students of the folk program, the total number is small, and the additional interviewed contributors to the new Swiss folk music community are but a selection of relevant candidates. Thus, the study exclusively represents the experiences and practices of a group of emergent individuals in the broader context of the new Swiss folk music community, with the potential for further analysis and comparison in future.

For the same reasons of time and scale, there was not scope or space in this study to engage disparate viewpoints in any depth. A more comprehensive ethnography of the new Swiss folk music community of practice, or of the various overlapping communities of practice associated with different branches of Swiss folk music as a whole, would add valuable

perspective to an analysis of associated learning and participation. Similarly, interviews with emerging musicians in diverse branches of Swiss folk music would offer an interesting comparison, which could not be accommodated here.

In terms of the research process itself, I am on the outside of this community of practice. While the etic perspective can be advantageous in some respects, it is an aspect of my research that bears noting, as it can also carry limitations. During my research, I was working primarily in my second language, which was noticeable from my accent and from occasional struggles to communicate effectively. Although my interactions were positive in character, the slight language barrier may have influenced relations and communications. Quotes from both participants and secondary sources needed to be translated, and as is the case in all translations, there is the possibility for a loss of nuance or inflection in the process. However, nuance lost through literal transcription is a challenge that one must contend with in all ethnographic research.

The interviews were each less than two hours long, and took place only once with each participant. As such, they can be considered fairly cursory, representing an introduction to how this community of practice works and how certain members participate in it rather than a comprehensive account of all possible aspects and experiences.

Further research

Over the course of my research, a desire for possible further investigation was voiced by numerous participants themselves, in relation to the future of the academic program and its graduates, and of new Swiss folk music more generally. When asked to speculate on how new

Swiss folk music would develop, participants often indicated that it was too early to say, and that it would be interesting to return with a further study in a decade or so. In this sense, taking a long-term view, it would be valuable to examine the new Swiss folk music community of practice once these relative newcomers were well on their way to becoming old-timers, to compare experiences of formal and informal learning, creative practice, and active participation.

In the more immediate future, a worthwhile initiative of further study would be to conduct research with young, emerging musicians in other areas of Swiss folk music. Markus Brülisauer, director of a folk music resource centre, especially emphasized that new folk music represents only a small niche component under the umbrella of Swiss folk music more generally, albeit a very popular and visible one in mainstream news. He specified that participation in each style of Swiss folk music would carry with it a different set of characteristics and experiences, making a comparative study of learners in other subgenres a compelling prospect.

Any of the individual areas of focus in my thesis could be explored in more depth. The subject of folk music institutionalization alone could be its own study, or several, as could the themes pertaining to creativity and festival studies. This thesis seeks to synthesize these diverse components as interrelated aspects of learning and participation in a given community of practice, but there is scope to develop each topic independently, and to situate them more explicitly in their separate fields of study.

Finally, this small cross-section of musicians and musical practices could itself be studied further. My original intent was to incorporate audiovisual methods into my research, as solely

writing about music with no aural support or counterpart remains a counterintuitive endeavour. Timing, access, experience, and scale were some of the obstacles that led to the leaving behind of this plan, but I maintain that an audiovisual project examining the practices of this emerging group of students and musicians would be a valuable contribution to anthropological and ethnomusicological research, as well as a worthwhile resource for members of this community of practice, for whom audio and film have already been effective means of disseminating their work to the public and to each other (Oehme-Jüngling 2016).

Concluding Thoughts

In conducting this research, I was fortunate to be invited into a vibrant microcosm of musical activity that has implications for the study of situated learning and social participation on a wider scale. The study illuminates the workings of a community of musical practice and the experiences of an emerging set of participants within it, and brings to light the diversity and complexity within this context. Uniting dialectical yet co-productive aspects of heritage and creativity, conformity and independence, teaching and learning, observation and participation, transience and posterity, and tradition and modernity, this thesis shows how musical activity can be understood as an inherently social practice, contributing to the navigation of identity and the creation of meaning.

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Appendix A: Sample interview questions

For the emerging musicians

How would you define yourself as a musician?

How/where do you learn folk music? Where do incoming folk musicians learn their music?

How do you connect with other musicians? How do networks happen?

What are your current musical projects? How did you get involved in them?

How is folk music spread/disseminated/circulated? How do you share or distribute your own music?

What is your intended/actual audience?

How do you classify / describe your work?

What are your musical influences?

Is there collaboration with other musical styles? (between musicians or aesthetically)

How did you end up at the university? What is the significance of the university option for you?

What is the relation of the university program to Swiss folk music as a whole? To new Swiss folk music?

How does one maintain a career in folk music?

What is the role/significance of creativity in new Swiss folk music?

What is the role of festivals?

Is there global mobility of Swiss folk music?

Additional questions for members of the community of practice (variable)

How do you find / choose performers for the festival?

What is the goal of the university program? What is your emphasis as an instructor?

How do young / new musicians integrate into the folk music scene?