



MALMÖ
ACADEMY
OF MUSIC



**Reflective part, 8 hp, of the degree project, 30 hp,
for the achievement of the degree Master in Music, Piano.**

"A Renaissance Man"

**An Inquiry into a Musician's Unorthodox Career Choices and Navigating
between Contrasting Fields**

Author: Iveri Kekenadze Gustafsson

Submitted in Spring 2024

Supervisor: Francisca Skoogh

**Performance programmes in Music
Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University**



Abstract

Modern-day opportunities allow musicians to divert from normalised, widespread perceptions of their artistic needs and pursue diverse career paths. This thesis uses autoethnographic methods to explore a classical pianist's navigation between contrasting fields, such as international relations, higher education management, and music and performance.

Artistic citizenship and discourse theory have been used as the theoretical framework of this inquiry. The objective is to draw a holistic picture through a musician's self-reflection on professional decisions. Various projects and artistic and academic activities are analysed, and the findings are thematically categorised.

The inquiry asks: How do I navigate between diverse academic and professional paths? To what extent and in what way is my identity as a classical pianist shaped based on the unorthodox nature of my career choices? The paper outlines short- and long-term challenges, such as time limitations and ambiguity in relation to belonging and identity, as well as opportunities: wider network, unique experiences and diverse connections.

Keywords

Pianist, Artistic Citizenship, Career Choices, Identity.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Introduction and Purpose	4
Research Questions	5
Background and Previous Research	5
Theoretical Framework and Methodology of the Inquiry	7
Artistic Citizenship.....	7
Discourse Analysis.....	8
Methodological tools	9
Results and Discussion	10
Addressing Artistic Citizenship through Projects	10
Political Artistic Citizenship	10
Social Artistic Citizenship.....	12
Artistic Citizenship in Higher Education	14
Creating Discourse Through Diverse Communication Strategies	15
Piano Duo Tour.....	18
Communication through Social Media	19
Challenge Along the Way	20
Reflections and Conclusion	21
References	23

Introduction and Purpose

Many students enrolled on the performing arts educational programmes are diversifying their approaches to working life. Not everyone will have a concert soloist career or play with the world's most renowned orchestras; only a minority of those studying music degrees will do so. Without initial clear intention, I have embarked on the road in my academic and professional path that could be described as a deviation from the usual, normalised choices. In this thesis, I inquire about my navigation between contrasting academic degrees and my efforts to find the so-called "perfect balance".

Receiving a quality education and gaining professionalism requires time-consuming work and dedication to the field. In my case, I combined European Studies and Piano Performance degrees at Lund University as a continuation of BA degrees in International Relations and Performance Studies from Tbilisi State University and Tbilisi State Conservatoire (TSC), respectively, while working full-time as an international relations coordinator and then the head of the international office at TSC, as well as the research assistant on Horizon Europe project at Lund University. Two full-time studies have brought both challenges and opportunities.

This inquiry aims to explore my unorthodox career practices through auto-ethnographic methods. The objective of this thesis is to better understand the motivations that I, as a classical pianist, have when it comes to my professional decisions and explore how I communicate these choices with the general public.

"Are you still a pianist?" "Do you still play piano seriously?" "Why don't you choose already?" I have been asked these questions, which I have found sarcastic, ironic, funny and even irritating, even if the one asking did not intend to offend me. I remember the deputy head of my music school in Georgia asking me whether I was going to take entrance exams at the Conservatoire because I was already studying international relations at another university. *"Why would I not take the exams?"* was my initial reaction and immediate answer: it was very natural for me to do both. However, the path of "doing it all" is not as simple as my answer to the deputy headmaster.

At times, I see that I am "*the politics guy*" in my music community. At the same time, I am "the artist" and "pianist" for the international relations community. I wonder whether we need just one label to make it simple for others. Can a person have more than one label or no label at all?

Research Questions

To address the aim of the thesis, I will answer the following **questions**:

- How do I navigate between diverse academic and professional paths?
- To what extent and in what way is my identity as a classical pianist shaped based on the unorthodox nature of my career choices?

Those research questions are answered using autoethnography as a methodology and mixed-methodological tools. Besides analysing documentation and material from previous and ongoing projects and activities, I will use data collected through self-reflection notes and participant observation. I will self-reflect on the data from social media activity and observation of daily routine. The analysis is thematically categorised based on the theoretical framework of the inquiry.

Background and Previous Research

Receiving quality education has been the guiding principle of my upbringing. Even though classical music and piano performance were my focus throughout my childhood, with a constant and often overwhelming schedule filled with concerts, festivals and competitions, general education always had its place, *inter alia*, due to many family members in the educational sector. This resulted in pursuing degrees in arts – piano performance and social and political sciences – international relations.

Several extensive studies have been conducted to investigate career choices among musicians. Anglo-American academic research is undoubtedly a frontrunner in topic-related research. In her doctoral thesis, "*Becoming a Musician: A Longitudinal Study Investigating the Career Transitions of Undergraduate Music Students*," Karen Burland

investigates the career choices of music-specialised students. She explored thirty-two bachelor-level students transitioning from education to adult working life. She concluded that the characteristics of those who decided to pursue a music career differed deeply from those who chose other paths. It was dependent on several factors, including "motivation, musical identity, learning styles and coping strategies." Burland's research on a group of students was conducted mainly via interviews and addressed several characteristics, including self-efficacy, social environment and performance expectations (Burland, 2005, p. ii).

Eric E. Branscome's inquiry titled: "*Music career opportunities and career compatibility: Interviews with university music faculty members and professional musicians*" gives an extensive and comprehensive insight into the music career choices and opportunities based on the life-long experiences depicted in the interviews. Branscome's findings suggest that "the skills, interests, work values, and personal characteristics that may determine a person's suitability" to certain music careers; assumptions towards music careers may vary. Branscome writes that interviewees emphasised the role of tenacity, which "is essential to contend with intense competition, extended periods of unemployment, and other common struggles of professional musicians." Does one choose diverse professional paths in addition to a music career in order to avoid such circumstances? Branscome does not address this question, noting some interview participants' answers regarding "rewarding aspects of music careers"; they believed that the reward was being able to support themselves by doing the work they loved rather than having fame or wealth (Branscome, 2010, p. 2).

College Music Symposium has published two articles that I found particularly interesting for this inquiry, one of them referring to the future of professional career in music and the other about the "*Changing Face of Music as Career*". Both of them address the current and prospective change processes affecting the future of music careers (Millar, 2009, p. 54). The Association of European Conservatoires (AEC) has been working to address the issue by promoting the Fast45 project. Fast45 aimed "to imagine and promote a future in

which the arts and arts education play an integral role in a world radically reshaped by the 4th industrial revolution, globalisation and climate change."¹

The research on related topics has been published in scholarly journals, such as the *Journal of Research in Music Education* and the *International Journal of Music Education*, an official peer-reviewed journal of the International Society of Music Education (ISME) published by SAGE publications.²

In the following chapter, I will discuss the theoretical perspectives of this inquiry and the methodological tools I used to address the thesis questions. I will then analyse findings, discuss my observations and reflect on them.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology of the Inquiry

Artistic Citizenship

In August 2022, The Glomus Camp was held in Aarhus, Denmark, where artists from different countries and different performing arts specialities were gathered under the general theme of Artistic citizenship.³ By then, several higher music education institutions, including Sibelius Academy and Royal Danish Academy of Music in Aarhus/Aalborg, have already started introducing courses to strengthen students' sense of civic responsibilities and develop their links to local communities.⁴ The questions of this inquiry are analysed in the frame of Artistic Citizenship, a concept that Elliott et al. thoroughly present in their book *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis*. "Artistry involves civic, social, humanistic, emancipatory responsibilities, obligations to engage in art making that advances social "goods." The authors detach art from being elitist and departing from the 18th and 19th centuries perception of artistry as something "otherworldly" or "god-like" (Elliott et al., 2016, p. 8). I share the perspective that art cannot

¹ See: Association of European Conservatoires: <https://aec-music.eu/>;
Fast45: <https://www.fast45.eu/>

² See: International Journal of Music Education: <https://www.isme.org/ijme>

³ See: Glomus Network: <https://www.glomus.net/>

⁴ See: Artistic Citizenship at the Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus/Aalborg: https://issuu.com/musikkons/docs/a4folder_kunstneriskmedborgerskab_uk_finalweb

be only valued for its complexity or beauty; it should be celebrated for its power of social change.

Elliot et al. also acknowledge that artistic citizenship may be perceived as an "oxymoron". However, it can only be so if one sees the concepts of artist and citizen through the lens of artists being deprived of social status and political purpose and simply being "free spirits whose vision and work must not be contaminated by considerations "extrinsic" to the formal or expressive qualities deemed resident in the artwork itself" (Elliott et al., 2016, p. 6). Accordingly, the concept of citizenship is a construct that has been conceptualised and reconceptualised several times in the Western world. The authors do not give one single definition of artistic citizenship. Instead, they present several case studies in which artists make their voices heard through different activities and showcase their role in social change, impacting various processes. Artistic citizenship gives artists a purpose to address the cause they deem essential, political, socio-economic, or humanistic (Elliott et al., 2016, p. 8).

My perception of artistic citizenship is an emphasis on the artists' role in society, artists as those who make change, not only ones who participate but also those who lead.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a theoretical framework of this inquiry. Generally, discourse analysis can be used as a theory and method in the research. Discourse mainly refers to the ways of communication and "*the use of language*" (Chilton, 2004, p. 16). Fillingham refers to discourse as "anything written or said or communicated using signs" (2007, p. 100), while Jørgensen and Philip give the preliminary definition of discourse "as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (2002, p. 2).

The importance of understanding the discourse comes from the context. Understanding the broader context is crucial; Jørgensen and Philip's publication "*Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*" presents fundamental premises for their three approaches. First is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory, which builds on the idea that "No discourse is a closed entity: it is, rather, constantly being transformed through contact

with other discourses" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 7). Another approach is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on Norman Fairclough's work, which sees discourse as one of the many aspects of social practice that has a role in constructing a social world. The third approach is Discursive psychology, which also focuses on language use and communication. Hence, all three approaches presented by Jørgensen and Philip share the premises of social constructivism that authors see as a "broader category" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 7).

To answer the questions of this inquiry, my guiding context is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory, which Jørgensen and Philip described with the keyword "discursive struggle". They continue:

Different discourses - each representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world - constantly struggle to achieve hegemony, that is, to fix language meanings in their own way. Hegemony, then, can provisionally be understood as the dominance of one particular perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 6).

Methodological tools

This thesis uses autoethnography as its primary methodological strategy. Several autoethnographic instruments have been used to address the thesis questions. "Autoethnography refers to research, writing, stories, and methods that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Ellis & Adams, 2020, p. 360). For autoethnography, personal experience is "an important source of knowledge in and of itself and a source of insight into cultural experience." According to Ellis and Adams, Autoethnography allows researchers to self-observe, assess, and reflect on personal experiences and display them in the relevant context (2020, p. 360).

Ellis and Adams, in their chapter "*Practicing Autoethnography and Living the Autoethnographic Life*", published within *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, explain the use of autoethnography by implying that "we write concrete stories about our lives because we think that the stories of a particular life can provide a useful way of knowing about the general human experience" (2020, p. 361). Authors note that there

has been a significant increase in autoethnographic practice, and since 2010, "*autoethnography has flourished even more.*" One can use autoethnography "from positioning oneself in the text as the researcher to being a participant to being a focus of research" (Ellis & Adams, 2020, p. 360).

To answer the inquiry questions, I am showcasing the self-reflection of projects I organised/administered or participated in throughout my studies at Malmö Academy of Music. Those projects are used as a compilation of case studies connected to each other in the framework of artistic citizenship, the concept I explained above. Ellis and Adams state:

Researchers may write about their own experiences along a continuum, starting from their life stories or how they became interested in the phenomenon being examined, to studying their experience as part of a culture, to being researchers who examine a particular culture. (Ellis & Adams, 2020, p. 368)

Besides studying the material from several projects and activities, I used self-reflection notes and participatory observation as methodological tools.

Results and Discussion

Addressing Artistic Citizenship through Projects

Political Artistic Citizenship

In the first part of the analysis, I discuss three cases that I categorise under the artistic citizenship context. I categorised the first case as *political* artistic citizenship and addressed Russia's war in Ukraine. The second case is about *social* artistic citizenship. In this second case, I discuss two projects; one of them is the concert organised by the "*Georgia's Friends in Sweden*" society, where I have performed Georgian women composers' works, and the other project is the performance of Julius Eastman's "*Evil*

Nigger" at the Helsingborg Concert House.⁵ The third case addresses artistic citizenship in higher education, and accordingly, the "Freedom in Music Education" project is discussed.⁶

Russia's full-scale invasion has radically changed the worldview of many, including mine. Even though I personally experienced the devastating consequences of Russia's war in Georgia back in 2008, Ukraine's cause was something more significant. Like many others, I, too, decided to do something to contribute to ease the trauma for Ukrainians. In addition to frequent communication with colleagues across Ukraine as an International relations coordinator from Tbilisi State Conservatoire, in collaboration with Kharkiv National University of Arts, we organised a conference together with Ukrainian and Georgian musicologists that would be under the title: *"Ukraine and Georgia: common present, common past – together back to Europe."*⁷ The event was broadcast live online through the social media channels of both conservatoires. In her article "The Role of the Arts in a Time of Crisis", Mary Schmidt Campbell outlines diverse perspectives from different countries on the role and advocacy for arts in challenging times (Schmidt Campbell & Martin, 2006, p. 23). The need for an artistic response to the crisis echoes my observation of artistic citizenship in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, together with Swedish and Georgian activists and local community members, we organised an event for Ukrainian refugees in the Skåne region of Sweden. With contributions from organisers *"Meeting Central Ukraine,"*⁸ the event titled: *"Meet Ukraine in Skåne"* consisted of simultaneous activities in one place, including fika with Ukrainian

⁵ See: Georgia's Friends in Sweden Society: <https://georgiensvanner.se/>;
Helsingborg Concert House: Season Programme 2021-2022.

https://issuu.com/konserthuset/docs/hso_generalprogram_21_22_final_issue

⁶ See: Freedom in Music Education project: <https://www.mhm.lu.se/artikel/interpreting-freedom-music-education>

⁷ See: Tbilisi State Conservatoire. "Ukraine and Georgia: Common Past, Common Future - Together Back to Europe," *Conference*, July 2022.

https://www.facebook.com/events/5960923650589329?accontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D%7D

⁸ More about Meeting Central Ukraine: <https://lund.se/nyheter/nyheter/2023-03-01-a-piece-of-ukrainian-home-in-lund----an-interview-with-stefaniia-akchurina>

refugees, a classical music concert with Ukrainian music in the repertoire, a workshop with musicians and interviews for digital fundraising, and an open-air jam session.⁹

Collaboration between Ukrainian, Swedish and Georgian institutions has also been my focus during the 2022-2023 academic year; I presented my research on the Europeanisation of Higher Music Education in Georgia to several conferences, including a conference organised by the Kharkiv University of Arts in May 2023. Considering that "artistic actions and interactions are fundamental to the creation of our individual and collective human identities" (Elliot et al., 2016, p. 5), my interest was developed through a sense of responsibility and appreciation towards Ukrainians.

While implementing those projects, I observed that my political and social sciences and music interests were coming together. I was incredibly proud when the international coordinator from Kharkiv University of Arts thanked me personally from the stage at the Association of European Conservatoires' International Relations Coordinators Annual Meeting in Monopoli, Italy, in September 2022.¹⁰ To address the first question of the inquiry: how do I navigate between contrasting fields? One of the practical answers could be finding common areas of interest.

Social Artistic Citizenship

Moving forward, the second case refers to what I call *social* artistic citizenship. The #MeToo movement, alongside *Black Lives Matter*, has boosted a focus on identity questions, including in the fields of culture and arts. Julius Eastman's "Evil Nigger", a highly controversial work written for four pianos, was selected as part of the 2022-23 Season of the Helsingborg Concert House. I performed the piece alongside Francisca

⁹ See: "Meet Ukraine in Skåne" Project Poster. Organised by Ani Kurdgelashvili, Iveri Kekenadze Gustafsson and "Meeting Central Ukraine". 2022.
<https://www.facebook.com/iverikekenadze98/posts/pfbid02W7LEG4EebKQMouRmsDyrSS48sfrMfZAhEiX1FKQBHJPNawLPdezC5DXbTvXcvgpul>

¹⁰ See: Association of European Conservatoires. International Relations Coordinators Meetings 2022.
<https://aec-music.eu/event/annual-meeting-for-international-relations-coordinators-2022/> Accessed 17 December 2023.

Skoogh, Fredrik Burstedt and Ronja Persson.¹¹ Julius Eastman is an American composer who was vocal about his queer identity as gay and a black man with financial difficulties. His life was not ideal, and unfortunately, his music has not been valued either (Huizenga, 2021).

The reviews that followed the concert were balanced. On the one hand, it was understood that the programme was focusing on alienation: two homosexual composers from different eras with different lifestyles and opportunities. Dagens Nyheter magazine titled their article in the following way: "*Musik från skilda tider gestaltar utanförskap*" (translation: *Music from different times portrays exclusion. 2022*). Others emphasised the controversy around the work. Helsingborgs Dagblad newspaper headlined the piece: "*Pianist och psykolog avslutar säsongen med kontroversiellt verk*" (translation: *Pianist and Psychologist conclude the season with controversial work. 2022*). What does Julius Eastman's music bring to the classical music field? There should also be room for experimentation and discovery of the new or revival of those who have not been appropriately valued. The *great* artists, composers and musicians became great during their lifetime not just because of their talent and hard work, two intertwined elements crucial for success, but also because of their surroundings and circumstances, including the socio-political environment.

While people such as Julius Eastman are usually deprived of the opportunities one needs to succeed, I believe that artistic responsibility lies in lifting up those who are not easily noticed; therefore, I was glad to contribute to the project. While sometimes thinking that I could never say something new, something special or valuable in the field, Julius Eastman's music opened up another chapter in my identity formation as a classical pianist. Randy Martin, in his introduction to *Artistic Citizenship* writes that "suspicion of artists as marginal outsiders does associate art with a minority status that has allowed it

¹¹ Helsingborg Concert House: Season Programme 2021-2022.
https://issuu.com/konserthuset/docs/hso_generalprogram_21_22_final_issue Accessed 17 December 2023.

to serve as a voice of marginal cultures" (Schmidt Campbell & Martin, 2006, p. 11), which bridges my reflection on performing Julius Eastman's work.

In this section, I would like to discuss the symbolism of the curation of the concert programme. *Georgia's Friends in Sweden* invited me to perform a concert in Stockholm on 8 March 2023.¹² During this concert, I performed the music works of two modern Georgian composers: Eka Chabashvili and Maia Virsaladze. Chabashvili's "*Panorama*" and "*Millennium*" by Virsaladze were composed in the late 1990s, reflecting on the change of the millennium.¹³ Symbolically, March 8 is International Women's Day, which has also encouraged me to focus on musical works by women composers at the concert. There is a long way to go before the concept of a *woman composer* becomes a *composer* and not something significant that needs to be articulated.

I believe that Artistic citizenship concerns nurturing the yet unknown or undervalued that deserves to be celebrated and brought to the broader audience outside the typical classical concert-goers. To answer the second question of this inquiry: To what extent and in what way is my identity as a classical pianist shaped based on the unorthodox nature of my career choices? My identity has been shaped by making change and lifting up those who are underrated and underrepresented, hence drawing parallels between my artistic actions and artistic citizenship as the theoretical framework of this inquiry.

Artistic Citizenship in Higher Education

The third case I am categorising in the discourse of artistic citizenship is the project I have organised as a collaboration between Malmö Academy of Music and Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire titled: "*Freedom in Music Education*" (MHM, 2022). The project was run as a six online panel discussion on various topics concerning music education and performance, modern-day career building and opportunities for young musicians to develop. The discussions featuring artists, higher education professionals, heads of

¹² See: Georgia's Friends in Sweden Society: <https://georgiensvanner.se/>;

¹³ Scores for Eka Chabashvili's *Panorama* can be accessed here: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/51444005/panorama-eka-chabashvili>;
Scores for Maka Virsaladze's *Millennium* can be accessed here: <http://pianocontest.ge/uploads/files/Millennium.pdf>

higher music education institutions and musicologists were live-streamed on the official social media channels of the Tbilisi State Conservatoire; a particular article was also dedicated to the project on the website of the Malmö Academy of Music. "*Freedom in Music Education*" project was implemented between February and April 2022; the following titles of the meetings: "*Freedom in the classrooms: Is There a Golden Ratio?*", "*High Educational Institutions – reflections on social issues*", "*East-West divide, Building Bridges or Deepening the Gap*", "*(Lack of) Independent thinking in decision making*", "*Freedom of Expression: Taste and Self-Management*", "*Dichotomy of understanding: Freedom as a tool or freedom as an aim*" has been thought-awakening for many, especially at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire, the institution that has not been focusing on the well-being as part of the study environment.¹⁴

Knowing one's purpose in one's professional life takes trying out different approaches, and I believe artistic citizenship is one excellent way to explore and understand this purpose. Returning to my previous point about combining different interests and finding common themes, I am glad that I managed to include my areas of interest in the "*Freedom in Music Education*" project. Silverman and Elliot present their observations on the connections between arts education and artistic citizenship in their article "*Arts Education as/for Artistic Citizenship*" (2016, p. 81). The authors' understanding of artistic citizenship as an essential part of education has encouraged me to include this section in my thesis.

Creating Discourse Through Diverse Communication Strategies

In this part of the analysis, I am focusing on discourse and communication to comprehensively address my research questions. I am reflecting on (1) the experiences from the International Relation Coordinators' Meetings organised by the Association of European Conservatoires, (2) the events followed by the cancellation of the Rector's elections at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire, (3) my experiences as part of the Piano Duo

¹⁴ Recordings of the sessions can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7yYxbAG87xHuroDRzzlvjA>

concerts in Georgia and small turné in Sweden, as well as (4) the overview of my social media activities.¹⁵

Since 2022, I have been part of the "Artists as Makers in Society" (ARTEMIS) project coordinated by the Association of European Conservatoires and financed by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. I have been involved in the project as a member of the International Relations Coordinators (IRC) working group responsible for coordinating international relations coordinator's annual meetings, which usually occur in September each year in different European cities.¹⁶ As part of the team, we organised the IRC meetings in Monopoli, Italy, 2022 and Leuven, Belgium, in 2023. The next edition of the IRC network meetings will take place in Dublin, Ireland, in September 2024.

My experience both as a student member of the team representing Malmö Academy of Music as well as an international relations coordinator from Tbilisi State Conservatoire created a unique perspective for me to act both for students' interests, mainly because I have been the board member of the European Performing Arts Students Association (EPASA) since April 2023, as well as to have deeper insight because of my extensive experience as higher education administrator managing Erasmus+ and other EU-funded projects throughout years. At the same time, there is a challenge: how do I not lose my identity as a classical pianist when all the circumstances around me drive me to simply accept my position as an international coordinator supporting future generations of artists? How can I be both an administrator and an artist? Yet again, back to the research question: how to navigate between the two? This echoes the concept of "*discursive struggle*" as a reflection of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory.

I tried to find the answer to the questions above during events that followed the cancelled

¹⁵ See: Association of European Conservatoires. IRC Meeting Wrap-up. 28 September, 2023. <https://aec-music.eu/news-article/irc-meeting-wrap-up/> Accessed 17 December, 2023.;

Civil Georgia, "Tbilisi State Conservatoire Rector Leaves Her Post," *Civil.ge*, October 23, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/565066>;

Musik i Syd. Legato catalogue. Piano Duo. <https://legatokatalogen.se/fyrhandigt-piano-med-iveri-kekenadze-gustafsson-och-albert-dahllof/> Accessed 17 December, 2023.

¹⁶ See: Association of European Conservatoires. AEC – Empowering Artists as Makers in Society (2022-2025) – Creative Europe Network. Accessed 17 December, 2023.

<https://aec-music.eu/project/empowering-artists-as-makers-in-society/>

Rector's elections at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire.¹⁷ My intention is to showcase how the circumstances encouraged me to use various platforms both as a pianist and, at the same time, then responsible person for internationalisation at Tbilisi State Conservatoire.¹⁸

While already in Georgia, on 25th September 2023, the election was cancelled by the Ministry of the Culture, Youth and Sports of Georgia, followed by protest meetings in front of the Conservatoire and great media attention.¹⁹ As part of the administration team at TSC, I have had several TV appearances to talk about the institution's Europeanisation and internationalisation efforts to boost public awareness around international engagement.²⁰ At the same time, because I already personally knew presenters on Georgia's one of the major TV channels due to many appearances as an administration representative, I got to invite my duo partner, Anastasija Raspopova and perform and advertise our upcoming concert from *Mtavari Channel Georgia*.²¹ This case portrays how one can benefit from diverse engagements; however, bringing "*discursive struggle*" into action, I wondered whether I was on a television programme because I was a good pianist

¹⁷ I visited Georgia during the Autumn of 2023 to organise the Erasmus+ activity with colleagues from Sibelius Academy, University of Arts Helsinki. The goal was to hold a collaborative concert between Sibelius Academy's students and the TSC student orchestra, the project led by the Finnish violinist and conductor Tero Latvala and then head of the strings department at Sibelius Academy, Päivi Arjas. At the same time, I had planned to play the concert together with my piano duo partner, Anastasija Raspopova, on 2 October 2023 at the historical museum of Tbilisi State Conservatoire, playing on the grand piano once owned by none other than Sergey Rachmaninoff. Then, the rector's first term was expiring during the same months, and the elections of the new rector had been set for 10 October 2023.

¹⁸ For more, see: Iveri Kekenadze Gustafsson. Georgia's Culture Minister Against Culture: Unfit?. *European Studies Review*. December 2023.

https://europeanstudiesreview.files.wordpress.com/2023/12/esr-19-december-2023.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1NNw2_MiuxQIIAcsX8_5T4iptSWIK2vpltb5ZY1z7zG1BgTNBKM6BHtGw

¹⁹ For more, see: Civil Georgia. Artists Protest at Tbilisi State Conservatoire. *Civil.ge* 27 September, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/561134> Accessed 17 December, 2023.

²⁰ See: TV Formula. International Collaboration between TSC and Sibelius Academy. TV Interview. September 29, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/TbilisiConservatoire/videos/637562215127954/>; Mtavari Channel. Internationalisation at Tbilisi State Conservatoire. TV Interview. September 29, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/TvMtavari/videos/676189834574976/>;

TV Formula. Internationalisation at Tbilisi State Conservatoire. TV Interview. 1 October, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/iverikekenadze98/posts/pfbid0vJuGyCdRGiP6aJcDjJC8c1FvFNUYHs45WpBdsMgSocBhWJ2uA9SG3JtcPsJKVGfI>

²¹ See: Iveri Kekenadze Gustafsson and Anastasija Raspopova. Ravel - Rapsodie espagnole. Music Video Recording. Mtavari Channel Georgia. <https://www.facebook.com/shenidilamtavaritv/videos/691927862601724/>

or due to my communication skills and wide network; I doubted which group I belonged to.

Piano Duo Tour

During the Autumn of 2023, I had the opportunity to play four-hand piano repertoires. Since 2018, I have been performing with Anastasija Raspopova when we first met as part of the Erasmus+ international mobility programme in Helsinki, Finland. With the initiative of *Musik i Syd*, a well-established organisation in classical music in Sweden, two diploma students were asked to create a piano duo and feature *Musik i Syd's Legato* catalogue that publishes classical music concert proposals for interested organisations and venues. Together with Albert Dahllöf, we assembled a French music repertoire, performing Saint Saens, Debussy, Ravel and Poulenc in the southern Swedish towns.²²

During the project, I made some notes and observations. I divided that observation into three categories. First comes *experimenting*, which refers to my behaviour of trying to be a standard freelancing pianist. This idea would allow me not to think about what application I needed to fill in or which email I needed to send. Instead, my attention would fully be dedicated to music and piano duo projects. My observation was that I was not fully introducing my background during conversations, which in my mind left me with a feeling of hiding something and detachment from reality.

The second observation was that I was intentionally *expressing* my identity as a person involved in academic work, international projects and administration. In other words, I was not presenting myself as a pianist and, instead, approaching piano performance as my secondary profession. In this phase, I brought forward my academic work and international projects, but I did not emphasise my music education. This type of

²² Musik i Syd. Legato catalogue. Piano Duo. Accessed 17 December 2023.

<https://legatokatalogen.se/fyrhandigt-piano-med-iveri-kekenadze-gustafsson-och-albert-dahllof/>;

See recording: Albert Dahllöf and Iveri Kekenadze Gustafsson performing Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) - Carnival of the Animals, transcribed for piano four-hands by Lucien Garban. Recording. 21 October, 2023. <https://youtu.be/8gPdz3JouCw>

Albert Dahllöf and Iveri Kekenadze Gustafsson performing Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921): Danse macabre, op. 40 transcription for piano, four-hands by Ernest Guiraud Recording. 21 October, 2023. <https://youtu.be/QEcYtlyV8hQ>

communication might have been falsely liberating; it could have freed me from being responsible for playing with the highest desired quality and professionalism. Suppose the piano performance is something additional to what I really do. In that case, I would not need to worry about the quality of my performance. However, this assumption is greatly simplistic. Instead of "liberation", it made me feel deprived of my profession and education as if somebody stole part of my identity as a classical pianist.

I found the third observation most challenging: that is to achieve a fine *balance*. One can never assume that being active in different fields will produce the same results in all of them; there are times when one needs to prioritise one over the other, but this does not mean that the performer is not able to reach the depth of maturity and the expected outcome may it be in the desired quantity or not. The Swedish tour of Piano Duo music has been a good experience for me to try out different ideas on my identity as a classical pianist.

Testing the discourse as a theory of this inquiry in the context of the *use of language* and sets of communication made me better understand and reflect on my actions.

Communication through Social Media

My communication style and methods vary depending on the platforms I am using. I chose Facebook to make an observation in the context of this inquiry. I reflected on the content of my Facebook posts during the period of one semester, from 23 August 2023 to 23 December 2023, and divided them into three categories: music, higher education/politics-related, and personal. It appears that music-related posts amount to 36%, while higher education/politics-related posts were 44%, and the rest were personal.²³ These close results show the pursuit of the balance that I have explained above. I note that the results might differ depending on the time period, for example, whether I had a break from my studies. However, it generally shows the trends of balancing communication via those

²³ Data from the following social media account: <https://www.facebook.com/iverikekenadze98/>.

platforms. Indeed, the numbers are not the main concern but rather the content in which those in contrasting fields are portrayed.

To address my initial question of the inquiry, I believe that one's identity is formed not only via inner feelings but also via expressions and the use of language through communication. As I put it, the navigation between contrasting fields is not only about what I do but also how I communicate my actions and decisions.

Challenge Along the Way

One cannot overlook the main challenge - time limitations. What is the best way to manage 24 hours a day to achieve desired results while not risking burnout? Not surprisingly, the key is efficient practice and alertness.

As part of the Performing Human Being²⁴ course taught at the Malmö Academy of Music, we had to read two articles: one of them was *"Becoming a Performing Artist"*, taken from the second part named *"Fearless Performance"* in the book by Gerald Klickstein, *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness* (2009, pp. 38-41). Klickstein describes musicians' ways of dealing with errors during the on-stage performance, assessing what happens in such circumstances and suggesting several methods to minimise or even avoid and overcome challenges caused by the on-stage pressure during a performance. Another article was clarinettist Christine Carter's two blogs under the same name, *"Why the Progress You Make in the Practice Room Seems to Disappear Overnight"*, published on Noa Kageyama's website *Bulletproof Musician* (2020). In a highly anticipated and viral blog, Carter discusses mainly two types of practising. She emphasises the advantages of the so-called *"interleaved"* practice model based on her research and other scholarly works.

Both articles mention the normalised stereotypes that all musicians have experienced: questions regarding the length of hours we spend with the instrument and how long we practise at a certain period. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers regarding the

²⁴ More about Performance Centre and Performing Human Being course at Malmö Academy of Music: <https://www.mhm.lu.se/en/collaboration/performance-centre>

duration of our practice because efficiency and productivity differ from musician to musician. One cannot expect to set a standardised number of hours for achieving a particular goal. Inspired by Christine Carter's article, I dedicated two consecutive weeks to an "*interleaved*" practice schedule that contributed to having a more structural approach to daily practice and a pre-designed timetable. It is impossible to determine the long-term results of my "*interleaved*" practice as part of this paper, as one needs to internalise and get used to the model, which is not manageable in two weeks. I believe that our profession as *performing human beings* always allows us to experiment, explore and explain musicianship in unique ways, and that is the beauty of the art to which we dedicate ourselves.

My observation of dealing with time limitations has led me to conclude that while an everyday schedule organises specific goals and objectives, material deliverables, and deadlines, it is still medium- and long-term planning that must be appropriately addressed and managed. I need to address all considerations further and create a deliberate, more structural, and planned approach to navigation between the contrasting fields. While many musicians are at the crossroads when it comes to graduation, my path has always been at the crossroads of varying disciplines and opportunities. Operative and efficient time management is an integral part of success in every field, and one needs to dedicate time to develop the right and practical strategies, especially in accelerated tempi of contemporary life.

Reflections and Conclusion

To conclude this inquiry, I will provide a summary of my initial goals and findings. The aim of the paper was to explore my unorthodox career choices and reflect on them through auto-ethnographic methods. I observed my navigation between contrasting fields, such as classical music - piano performance and being involved in higher education administration and research in the field of European studies. The objective was to answer the following questions:

- How do I navigate between diverse academic and professional paths?
- To what extent and in what way is my identity as a classical pianist shaped based on the unorthodox nature of my career choices?

I have used the concept of artistic citizenship to address the first question of the inquiry. "Artistry involves civic, social, humanistic, emancipatory responsibilities, obligations to engage in art making that advances social "goods" (Elliot et al., 2016, p. 8). My understanding is that artistic citizenship encourages musicians to reach the wider public. Considering social responsibility and inclusion in projects such as "*Freedom in Music Education*", concerts featuring women and minority-identity composers, emphasising the Ukrainian cause and being a musician as a maker and a contributor to society equips me with a sense of meaning and purpose.

This inquiry also explored the discourse in which I, as a classical pianist, observe my behaviour, choices and self-expression. I reflected on my participation in the International Relations Coordinators Meetings organised by the European Association of Conservatoires, my Piano Duo tour in southern Sweden, drew conclusions from communication strategies based on the data from social media activity and reflected and contemplated the events followed by the cancellation of Rector's elections at Tbilisi State Conservatoire. I also investigated my time management efficiency, as I see it as an integral part of a healthy and productive working life.

Through the compilation of case studies categorised in the theoretical framework of the inquiry, I addressed the strengths and weaknesses of having two or more distinct professions, discussed challenges and opportunities that come with it and made sure to use autoethnographic methods not just to storytelling but rather display them in the relevant context (Ellis & Adams, 2020, p. 360).

This inquiry certainly is not a guide but rather an example to twenty-first-century Renaissance persons like me, those who try to defy expectations and experiment in their professional paths. Living in a democratic society where one can fully express oneself,

there is plenty of space for making choices that could be considered risky and deviation from *normality*.

There are multiple ways of doing things, various careers and choices to make; however, my work ethic leads me to say that no matter what one decides to do for life, one should always strive for excellence, high quality and professionalism.

References

- Association of European Conservatoires. Empowering Artists as Makers in Society (2022-2025). Creative Europe Network. Project Description. Retrieved 17 December 2023. <https://aec-music.eu/project/empowering-artists-as-makers-in-society/>
- Association of European Conservatoires. (2023) IRC Meeting Wrap-up. <https://aec-music.eu/news-article/irc-meeting-wrap-up/> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Association of European Conservatoires. (2022) International Relations Coordinators Meetings 2022. <https://aec-music.eu/event/annual-meeting-for-international-relations-coordinators-2022/> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Bradley, D. (2018). Artistic Citizenship: Escaping the Violence of the Normative (?) Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education. Vol 17 (2): 71–91. doi:10.22176/act17.2.71
- Branscome, E. E. (2010). Music career opportunities and career compatibility: Interviews with university music faculty members and professional musicians. PhD thesis. University of North Texas ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Burland, K. (2005). Becoming a musician: a longitudinal study investigating the career transitions of undergraduate music students. PhD thesis, University of Sheffield. <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/15097/>
- Carter, C. (2020). Why the Progress You Make in the Practice Room Seems to Disappear Overnight. Bulletproof Musician. <https://bulletproofmusician.com/why-the-progress-you-make-in-the-practice-room-seems-to-disappear-overnight-part-2/> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Chilton, P. (2004) *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. Taylor & Francis. 2004: 3-16. ISBN: 0-203-56121-X Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Civil Georgia, "Tbilisi State Conservatoire Rector Leaves Her Post," *Civil.ge*, October 23, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/565066> Retrieved 17 December, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. (2023). Explainer | Culture Ministry Saps Autonomy of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. *Civil.ge*. <https://civil.ge/archives/562699> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Dagens Nyheter. (2022). Musik från skilda tider gestaltar utanförskap. <https://www.dn.se/kultur/musik-fran-skilda-tider-gestaltar-utanforskap/> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Dickinson, P. (2021). The 2008 Russo-Georgian War: Putin's green light. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-2008-russo-georgian-war-putin-green-light/> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Ellis, C. & Adams, T. E. (2020). Practicing Autoethnography and Living the Autoethnographic Life. in Patricia Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, Oxford Handbooks. Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.21>, Retrieved 16 December 2023.
- Elliott, D. J. (2012). Another Perspective: Music Education as/for Artistic Citizenship. *Music Educators Journal*, 99(1), pp. 21-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432112452999>
- Elliott, D. J., Silverman, M. & Bowman, W. (2016) *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis*. Oxford Academic, p. 8. Retrieved 5 December 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199393749.001.0001>
- Fillingham, L. A. (2007). Foucault for Beginners. For Beginners. ISBN: 9781934389126.
- Helsingborg Concert House: Season Programme 2021-2022.

https://issuu.com/konserthuset/docs/hso_generalprogram_21_22_final_issue Retrieved 17 December 2023.

- Hemmerlin, L. (2023). Making connections and exploring musical dialects in Tbilisi, Georgia. Sibelius Academy. <https://blogit.uniarts.fi/en/post/making-connections-and-exploring-musical-dialects-in-tbilisi-georgia/>
- Huizenga, T. (2021). *Julius Eastman, A Misunderstood Composer, Returns To The Light*. NPR Music. <https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2021/06/21/1007150496/julius-eastman-a-misunderstood-composer-returns-to-the-light> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Jørgensen, M. & Phillips, L. G. (2002). "In the Field of Discourse Analysis." In *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 1-23. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. pp. 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>
- Kekenadze Gustafsson, I. (2023). Georgia's Culture Minister Against Culture: Unfit?. *European Studies Review*. <https://europeanstudiesreview.com/>
- Kharkiv I. P. Kotlyarevski National University of Arts. (2023). IV International Scientific Conference Art and Science in the Modern Globalised Space. Programme. [Conference 2023 PROGRAM.pdf](#)
- Klickstein, G. (2009). Becoming a Performing Artist. *American String Teacher*, 59(4), pp. 38-41. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/000313130905900406>.
- Lindqvist, S. (2022). Pianist och psykolog avslutar säsongen med kontroversiellt verk. *Helsingborgs Dagblad*. Retrieved 17 December, 2023. <https://www.hd.se/2022-05-13/pianist-och-psykolog-avslutar-sasongen-med-kontroversiellt-verk>
- Malmö Academy of Music. *Interpreting Freedom in Music Education*. (2022). <https://www.mhm.lu.se/artikel/interpreting-freedom-music-education> Retrieved 17 December 2023.
- Millar, M. W. (2009). "The Future of Music Careers." *College Music Symposium* 49/50. pp. 54–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41225230>.
- Musik i Syd. Legato catalogue. Piano Duo. Retrieved 17 December 2023. <https://legatokatalogen.se/fyrhandigt-piano-med-iveri-kekenadze-gustafsson-och-albert-dahllof/>
- Schmidt Campbell, M. & Martin, R. eds. (2006). *Artistic Citizenship, A Public Voice for the Arts*. Routledge. Taylor & Francis. New York. pp. 1-20. https://www.academia.edu/5669591/Artistic_citizenship
- Talbott, C. J. (2013). "The Changing Face of Music as Career." *College Music Symposium* 53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26564926>.
- Tbilisi State Conservatoire. (2022). "Ukraine and Georgia: Common Past, Common Future - Together Back to Europe" *Conference*. https://www.facebook.com/events/5960923650589329?accontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D%7D
- Woodford, P. (2014). The Eclipse of the Public: A Response to David Elliott's 'Music Education as/for Artistic Citizenship'. *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 22(1). pp. 22–37. <https://doi.org/10.2979/philmusieducrevi.22.1.22>.