

Learning cultures in higher music education and innovative practices

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CEMPE

Centre of Excellence in
Music Performance Education

The plan for today

- What are learning cultures in HME?
- What are central characteristics of these learning cultures?
- How can initiatives of experimentation and rethinking in HME practice and research shed light on the learning and development of students in HME?
- What general questions can be drawn from these discussions?

Learning cultures

Learning cultures are cultural practices in which and through which students learn, a 'way of life' in our institutions.

They are structured by:

- people (students, staff, administration, leadership)
- organisations (academies, departments, orchestras, student committees)
- places (studios, rehearsal rooms, library)
- and time (schedules, attendance requirements)

Learning cultures in Higher Music Education

- Learning cultures of instrumental tuition (master-apprentice model)
- Learning cultures of chamber music and ensemble playing
- Learning cultures of professional work, placement or practicums
- Learning cultures of academic scholarship and research
- Learning cultures of social networking
- Learning cultures of musical hierarchies
- Learning cultures of vocational position-taking

Focus of today

- Learning cultures of instrumental tuition (master-apprentice model)
- Learning cultures of chamber music and ensemble playing
- Learning cultures of professional work, placement or practicums
- Learning cultures of academic and artistic research

Instrument tuition in HME (Western classical music)

Sætre, J. H., Holm, H. & Carlsen, M.
(2025). Difference in instrumental tuition
in Higher Music Education: Towards an
analytical framework. *British Journal of
Music Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051725000051>.



Research on one-to-one tuition in the master-apprentice tradition

One-to-one tuition and the individual attention it provides is highly valued by students (Gaunt, 2009)

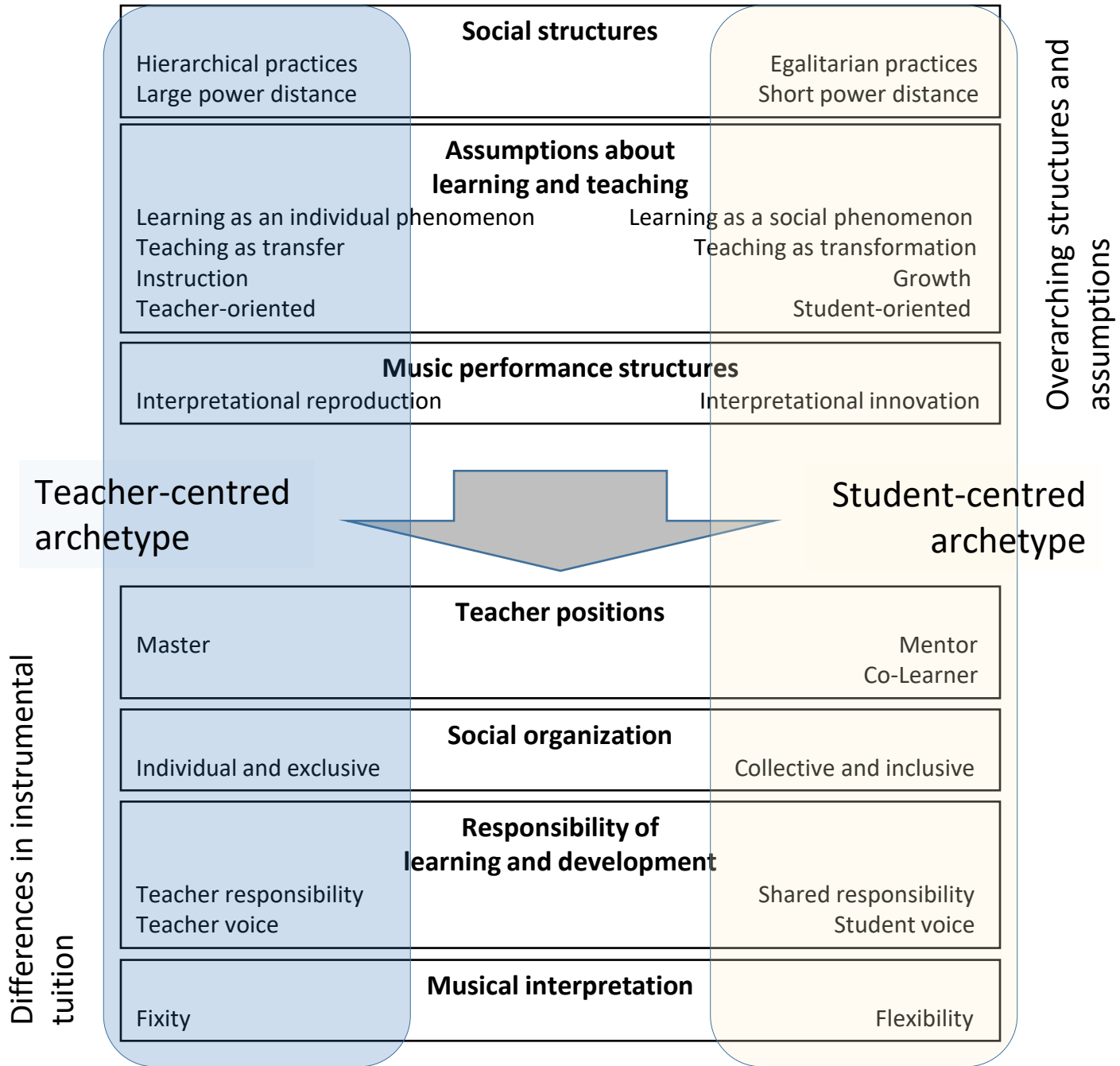
Challenging power issues (Bull 2019, 2021; Burwell, 2019), career coupling (Wagner, 2015)

Students becoming dependent on their teacher (Gaunt, 2009)

Many practitioners and scholars explore alternatives, not the least different forms of collaborative learning and teaching

The forms of pedagogy differ, e.g. transformative and transfer pedagogies (Carey and colleagues, 2013)

The field of classical music operates as a police state (Leech-Wilkinson, 2016)





Source gallica.br

Chamber music and ensemble playing

Zhukov, K. & Sætre, J. H. (2021). 'Play with me': Student perspectives on collaborative chamber music instruction. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 44(1), 205-218.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1321103X20974804>.

Sætre, J. H. & Zhukov, K. (2022). Let's play together: Teacher perspectives on collaborative chamber music instruction. *Music Education Research*, 23(5), 553-567.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2021.1979499>

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Teaching-through-playing

- Four chamber music groups in Australia and Norway
- 14 students and six staff members
- Interviews
- Participatory learning environment
- Accelerated chamber music learning
- Problematic power relations
- Alternative version of apprenticeship



Teaching-through-playing

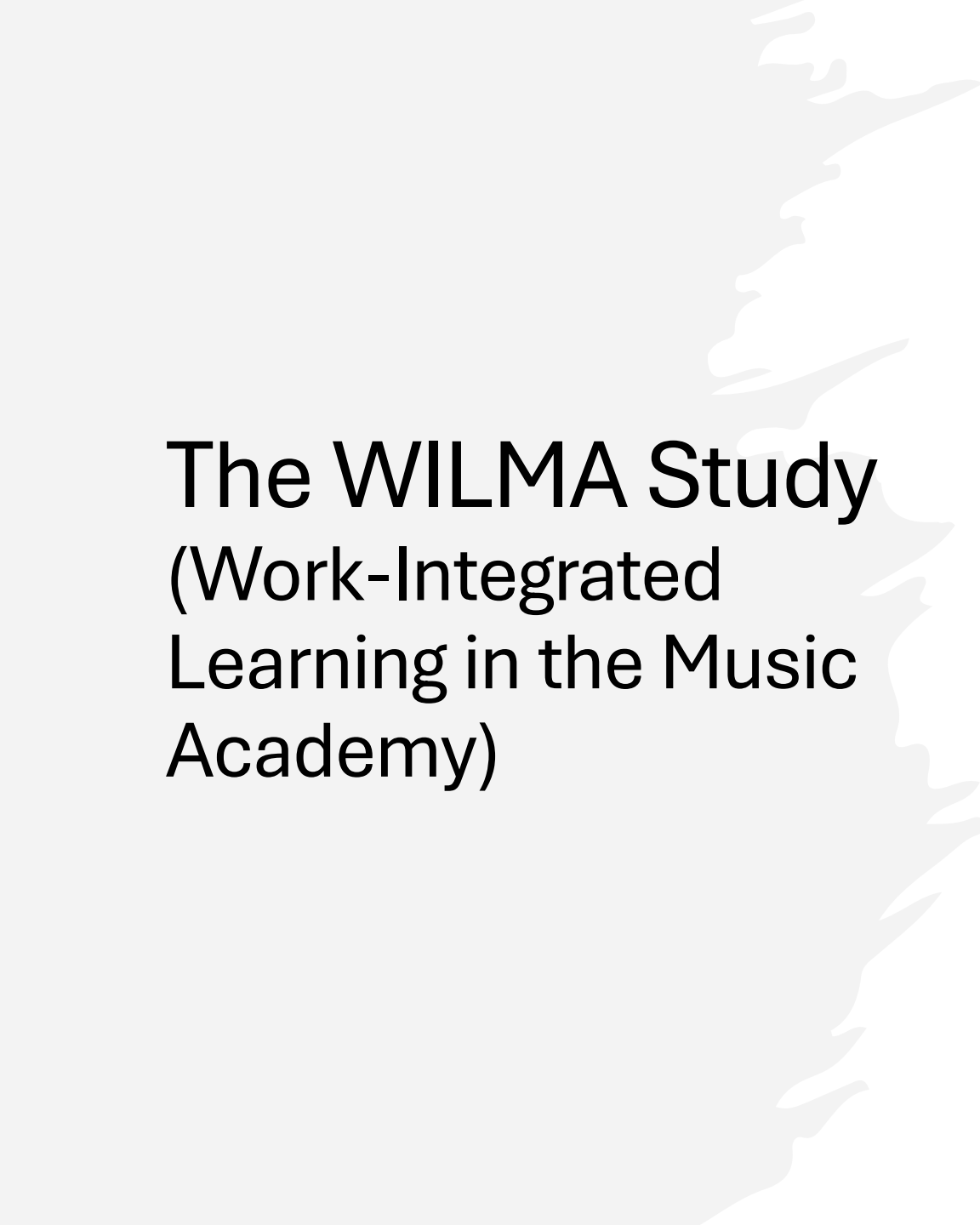
The master-apprentice model is reimagined into a master-apprentice relationship of guided participation (in line with Rogoff [1995]), where the guidance comes from feedback from social partners (expert and peers) and from the hands-on involvement in and observation of the action culture of chamber music performance demonstrated as a professional, cultural practice. (Sætre & Zhukov, 2021, p. 564)



Professional work and placement

Phillips, K., Habron-James, J., & Sætre, J. H. (2023). Work-based placements in European higher music education institutions. *International Journal of Music Education*, 42(4), 597-612.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614231190399>.





The WILMA Study (Work-Integrated Learning in the Music Academy)

- How are practicums implemented in European Conservatoires (overview; categorisation and distribution)?
- What are the political drivers (e.g. utility of education towards ‘real work’ skills and employment) and educational drivers (e.g. personal, musical and intellectual development) that underpin practicums?
- What pedagogy is involved in practicums within the curriculum (e.g. preparation, support, assessment and learning outcomes)?

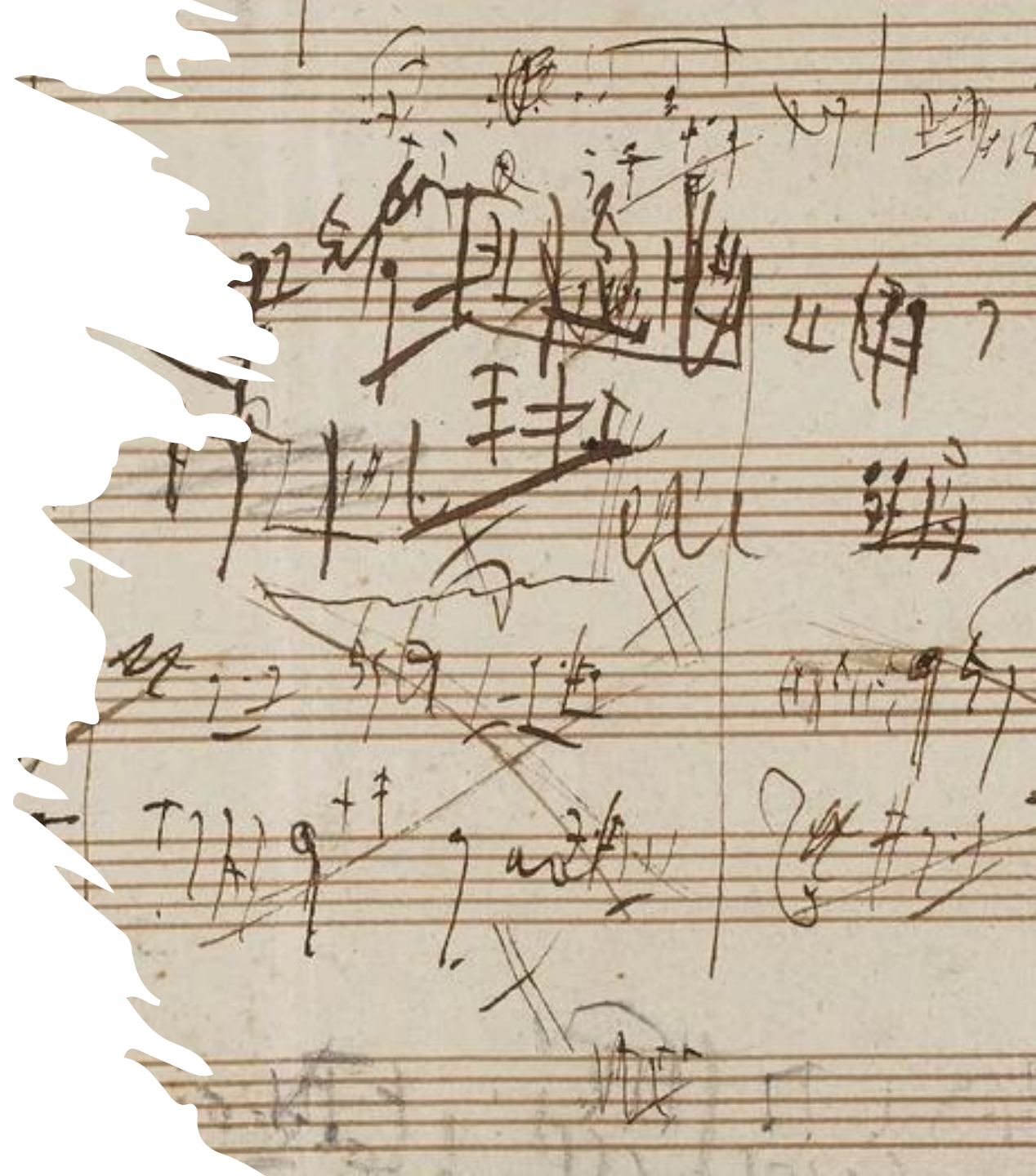


Work placements

- Vary significantly in structure and implementation
- Are either well-integrated / or less formal / or entirely absent
- Include a wide range of activities
- Some are for a limited few
- Are widely valued by both students and staff
- Informal marketplace

Learning cultures of academic research

Sætre, J. H., Gies, S., Bordin, A. B., Brinck, L., Hahn, K., Storheim, S., van Els, S. & Stabell, E. M. (2019). The music performance student as researching artist? A report from the AEC & CEMPE Learning and Teaching Working Group. In S. Gies and J. H. Sætre (eds.), *Becoming musicians: Student involvement and teacher collaboration in higher music education*. *NMH publications, Vol 2019(7)*, 17-29. Oslo: Norwegian Academy of music. <https://nmh.brage.unit.no/nmh-xmlui/handle/11250/2642235>.



Conservatoires and universities

Where the conservatory model was established for the purpose of training career musicians in the mastery of their craft, schools of music were established within existing universities to place emphasis on the academic study of music theory, music history, and musicology in their own right (McCormick, 2025)



AEC SMS Project WG 5

Learning and Teaching

The music performance student as a researching artist, which means a student able to ask questions and autonomously use his or her knowledge and skill to seek answers. Capturing the *active* student working in and with *the arts* in an *inquiry-based* manner.

- The active role of students
- The idea of a researching attitude
- The necessity of combining creativity and research abilities
- The idea of research as deeply rooted in artistic work



Axes to consider

- Tradition – innovation
- Student-oriented – teacher-oriented approaches
- Individual – collective processes
- Craft-based – academic knowledge bases
- On-campus – off-campus training

Closing questions

- Which learning cultures are prominent in our institutions (e.g. performance specialism, social networking, musical hierarchies, professional placement, academic or artistic research)?
- Which learning cultures should be more emphasised, compared to what is dominant now?
- Do you have examples of initiatives that challenge, expand or rethink the learning cultures in your institution?
- What are the strengths and limitations of a teacher-oriented learning culture?
- What are the strengths and limitations of a student-oriented learning culture?
- Do you have examples of student-teacher collaboration and teacher collaboration (on educational matters) in your institution? What were the outcomes of these collaborations?





THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION