



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Poetics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/poetic

Playing with capital: Inherited and acquired assets in a jazz audition



Erik Nylander^{a,*}, Andreas Melldahl^b

^a Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University, 581 83 Linköping, Sweden

^b Department of Education, Uppsala University, Box 2136, SE-75002 Uppsala, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 30 January 2015

Keywords:

Jazz education
Selection
Music audition
Bourdieu
Uncertainty
Cultural fields of production

ABSTRACT

A common dream among the youth is to become a successful musician. By surveying young aspiring musicians trying to enter a prestigious jazz audition, this paper examines assets and dispositions involved in the formation of a music field. In the study we build on Bourdieusian sociological theory and method in order to map out a space of jazz contesters and characterize the group(s) seeking to enter. Our findings, based on a specific multiple correspondence analysis performed on 211 applicants, suggest that the space of jazz contesters is structured by three important factors: (i) the total volume of music capital, (ii) commitment to the (professional) field of practice and (iii) the familiarity acquired through previous music socialization and training. Using clustering techniques, we further distinguish four groups among the applicants – *Insiders*, *Outsiders*, *Inheritors* and *Underdogs* – and reveal the success rate of the groups. We find that the acquisition and enactment of field-specific symbolic assets is of particular importance for elite music admissions, while at the same time the sizeable number of musically affluent candidates competing for a small number of places turns the audition into an event under-scored with considerable uncertainty.

© 2014 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: erik.nylander@liu.se (E. Nylander).

1. Introduction

“If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.” – Charlie Parker¹

Jazz has moved through the genre hierarchies over the course of the 20th century, from being conceived as commercial and “low-brow” to gaining acceptance as an expression of legitimate elite culture (Levine, 1988; Hobsbawm, 1989; Leonard, 1962). Parallel to this, the image of jazz musicians has shifted from being seen as disgraceful, populist to one based on the cultural charisma of the true artist and the romantic images of having “personality” or “an unique voice” (Nylander, 2014a; Whyton, 2010). To conceptualize jazz performers as virtuoso improvisers without social constraints can be seen as a modern way to fabricate the artistic identity, as innate qualities of individuality and artistic singularity are considered key (Kris and Kurz, 1979; Sapiro, 2007). Yet, in the case of contemporary jazz music, this development can be seen as particularly paradoxical as the entry into the professional field, perhaps more so now than ever, rely on standardized educational routes through music conservatories, prep schools and clinic’s (Ake, 2012).

Entering the world of contemporary jazz, as any other mature artistic field, is at the same time considered as highly uncertain and dependent on the recognition of art-specific judgments of gatekeepers (Menger, 1999). In contrast to the strong juridical boundaries that protect established professions such as lawyers, medical doctors or university professors, the social and esthetic regulation that protects artistic fields tends to operate with a particularly weak degree of “codification” (cf. Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 227 ff.; Karpik, 2010; Melldahl, 2012). Whereas careers that aim toward professionalized spheres of the labor markets typically select students based on grades, the institutions within art and music typically deal with the question of succession through more idiosyncratic or field-specific means, such as evaluating previously produced art (e.g. portfolios) or through music auditions.

In this paper we will run a multiple correspondence analysis based on survey data from a group of young aspiring jazz musicians, in order to illuminate the structural conditions of music selection in an educational setting. Drawing on Bourdieu’s theoretical propositions (Bourdieu, 1989, 1996, 2004), as well as the relational method that has been described as “a social space approach” (cf. Roose et al., 2012; Flemmen, 2012), our overall aim is to trace the practical foundations of jazz improvisation back to their structural conditions of possibility. As the evaluation processes to jazz auditions do not follow any explicitly formalized or standardized criteria of selection, it is an intriguing area to study empirically. In this paper we ask ourselves: which social groups are compelled to invest in educational pathways aimed at advanced (and highly uncertain) artistic practices? What are the structuring principles within these preparatory stages of artistic consecration? Who is being selected?

The particular audition under scrutiny represents a highly selective test-trial for aspiring Scandinavian musicians at an intermediate level. The data employed is based on a survey of 211 applicants that competed over the 25 places available at the Eight Miles High jazz program² in 2010. In that year, the total number of contenders exceeded 470 individuals. The analysis is set-up according to a two-step procedure. First, we are interested to uncover the factors that are formative in the development of an interest in playing jazz music. To find this out, we run a specific multiple correspondence analysis on the survey data and outline the three most important factors that structure the social space of Swedish jazz contesters: (i) total volume of music capital, (ii) commitment to the (professional) field of music and (iii) the familiarity of music acquired through previous music socialization and training.

Secondly, we use cluster techniques in order to distinguish how these factors are embodied and distributed in different social groups and show their respective prospects for becoming admitted. Four kinds of musical dispositions are identified among the jazz applicants – Insiders, Outsiders, Inheritors and Underdogs. Overall, our findings show a strong correspondence between having been brought up in a middle class and upper middle class family and applying to advanced jazz music auditions. It also unravels more subtle relationships between the position contesters uphold in social space and the

¹ Quoted in Reisner’s (1977, p. 27) *Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker*.

² Eight Miles High is a pseudo-name given to the particular folk high school studied for reasons of anonymity.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1128335>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1128335>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)