

The experience of flow in professional and semi-professional orchestral musicians

by

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**A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree**

MMus (Performance)

in the Department of Music at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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April 2018

ABSTRACT

In this investigation, the aim was to explore optimal performance experiences through the lived experience of flow amongst professional full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. The study followed an IPA approach and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Eight professional orchestral musicians took part in the study, three full-time and five part-time. The study endeavoured to identify factors that influence flow positively and negatively and to ascertain whether there are factors unique to South African context. The findings identified four superordinate themes: factors that influence flow, performance environment, impact of life experiences, and comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. The first superordinate theme, Factors that influence flow, included subordinate themes instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill. The second superordinate theme, Performance environment included the following two subordinate themes: solo-, chamber- and orchestral settings, and rehearsal- or performance settings. The third superordinate theme, Impact of life experiences, explored maturity, emotional investment as well as life experiences as subordinate themes. Lastly, the differences between the experiences of full-time- and part-time orchestral musicians regarding their view of the musical activities in which they engage, formed the fourth superordinate theme. This theme included responses about income, available time and frequency of playing, pressure and playing music for the love of it. In conclusion, it became apparent that both full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians can relate to the experience of flow and that multiple factors exist which can positively or negatively affect their flow experiences.

Keywords: Flow, full-time professional orchestral musician, interpretative phenomenological analysis, lived experiences, optimal experience, optimal musical experience, part-time professional orchestral musician, peak experience, well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my supervisor, Dr. C. R. Panebianco, for her expert supervision of this study. Her guidance, wisdom and passion for research is a true inspiration. Thank you for every bit of advice and your belief in me.

I would like to thank the eight participants of this study who agreed to share their stories with me. I learned so much from you. It was a humbling experience for which I am very grateful.

I would also like to thank my parents, in-laws and brother, Werner, for the continued support and motivation. Thank you for your patience and always understanding when I needed to put in the necessary hours.

Lastly I would like to thank my husband, Carel, for supporting me so lovingly throughout this journey. Thank you for all your patience and for always being there when I needed motivation. I would not have been able to complete this study without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Purpose statement	3
1.3. Research questions	4
1.4. Methodology	4
1.5. Chapter outline	4
1.6. Conclusion	4
Chapter 2: Literature overview	5
2.1. Introduction	5
2.2. Optimal experience: peak experience and flow experience	6
2.2.1. The peak experience	6
2.2.2. The flow experience	7
2.2.3. Dimensions of the flow experience	9
2.3. Flow amongst musicians	11
2.3.1. Flow and well-being of musicians	11
2.3.2. Flow amongst student performers	12
2.3.3. Collective flow amongst musicians	13
2.4. Conclusion	14
Chapter 3: Methodology	15
3.1. Introduction	15
3.2. Research design	15
3.3. Approach to qualitative inquiry: interpretative phenomenological analysis	16
3.4. Procedures	19
3.4.1. The participants	19
3.4.2. Data collection	19
a. Semi-structured interview	20
b. Conducting the interview	20
c. Interview schedule	21
3.4.3. Data analysis	22
Individual case analysis	23
1. Reading and re-reading	23

2.	Initial coding	23
3.	Developing emergent themes	24
4.	Searching for connections between the emergent themes of the separate cases	24
5.	Moving to the next case	25
	Cross-case analysis	25
6.	Looking for patterns across cases	25
3.4.4.	Writing up	25
3.5.	The role of the researcher	26
3.6.	Ethics	27
3.7.	Validity	27
3.8.	Conclusion	28
	Chapter 4: Results	29
4.1.	Introduction	29
4.2.	Research themes	29
4.3.	Superordinate theme 1: Factors that influence flow	32
4.3.1.	Instrument	32
4.3.2.	Repertoire	33
4.3.3.	Conductor	34
4.3.4.	Venue	35
4.3.5.	Fellow-players	36
4.3.6.	Balancing the level of challenge and skill	36
4.4.	Superordinate theme 2: Performance environment	38
4.4.1.	Solo-, chamber- and orchestral settings	38
4.4.2.	Rehearsal versus performance environment	39
4.5.	Superordinate theme 3: Impact of life experiences	39
4.5.1.	Maturity	40
4.5.2.	Emotional investment	41
4.5.3.	Life experiences	42
4.6.	Superordinate theme 4: Comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians	43
4.6.1.	Income	44
4.6.2.	Available time/Frequency of playing	45
4.6.3.	Pressure	45

4.6.4. Playing music for the love of it	46
4.7. Conclusion	47
Chapter 5: Discussion	49
5.1. Introduction	49
5.2. Factors that impact flow	49
5.3. Performance environment	53
5.4. Impact of life experiences	55
5.5. Comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians	58
5.6. Conclusion	60
Chapter 6: Conclusion	62
6.1. Introduction	62
6.2. Addressing the research questions	62
6.2.1. How do full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians Experience flow?	62
6.2.2. Which factors impact flow in orchestral musicians?	64
6.2.3. How does the experience of flow impact experience of overall well-being in orchestral musicians?	67
6.3. Answering the main research question: What are the lived experiences of flow in professional full-time and professional part-time orchestral musicians?	68
6.4. Limitations of the study	69
6.5. Recommendations for future research	69
6.6. Conclusions	70
References	71
Annexures	79
Annexure A: Letter of information	79
Annexure B: Consent form	80
Annexure C: Interview schedule	81
Annexure D: Example of an interview transcript	82

List of tables

Table 1: Superordinate, subordinate and raw data themes

29

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Flow is an optimal psychological state characterised by a synergy of intrinsic motivation, attention and concentration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When one has the necessary skills to accomplish a difficult challenge, it could result in optimal experience. This optimal experience is called flow.

To gain a more complete understanding of human behaviour and experience, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) found it necessary to observe people's actions and responses to normal, everyday situations. It is especially important to observe people in those moments when their lives reach positive peaks that result in intense feelings of pleasure and creativity. The definition of a peak experience is similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) definition of flow. According to Maslow (1964, as cited in Rana, Tanveer & North, 2009:41) a peak experience can be described as "an altered state of consciousness resembling a form of 'oceanic' feeling, in which a person experiences an ecstatic dissolution of the usual bonds of space and time".

A peak experience is a condition in which an individual is so intensely involved in the activity with which he or she is occupied, that it feels as if nothing else matters (Rana et al., 2009). Peak experiences can emerge in any situation in which there is activity, and researchers have indeed found evidence for flow during the execution of a large number of different activities, including sport, work, and playing music (Catley & Duda, 1997; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989; Jackson & Marsh, 1996; Kowal & Fortier, 1999).

The experience of flow is so pleasurable that it is self-rewarding, and at the same time it also motivates an individual to try and repeat this experience. In practice and performance, music offers musicians many reasons to become totally immersed and absorbed in the music. Although extreme positive emotions are a consequence of flow, flow cannot be achieved without motivation and effort in order to develop skills (Fritz & Avsec, 2007).

Very few studies seem to have been made on the self-reported flow experiences of musicians, and very few publications on the theme are available (Bakker, 2005; Fritz & Avsec, 2007; O'Neill, 1999). There is a surprising imbalance between the research on flow experienced by musicians compared to that experienced by athletes, especially in view of the fact that music is an activity that is commonly understood to elicit flow experiences, even among very young children engaged in music making (Sinnamon, Moran & O'Connell, 2012). Fritz and Avsec

(2007:5) investigated the experience of flow and the subjective well-being of music students. Results confirmed that several aspects of flow were positively related to subjective well-being and that “the experience of flow is more related to emotional than cognitive aspects of subjective well-being, which is not surprising, since flow is an extremely emotional experience”.

There is a paucity of research on the flow experiences of orchestral musicians, particularly in the South African context. As a professional violinist I often experience flow while playing in an orchestra. My earliest memories of experiencing flow include playing solo when I was a child. The first flow experience I can recall vividly was when I was eleven years old. I was participating in a national music competition. All the hard work and preparation for the competition resulted in a performance which was, in my opinion, close to perfect. What I experienced during those couple of minutes is difficult to describe. I remember feeling a loss of sense of time. It was as if the performance was over only a few seconds after it had started. In other words it felt as if time had passed much more quickly than it had in reality. I was totally unaware of my surroundings and the audience listening to me. It felt as if only my violin and I existed in that moment. Every note came out effortlessly and I felt elated and energised.

In the case of solo performances I recall more flow experiences from my childhood, than I do from my more recent performing experiences. I still sometimes experience flow during solo performances, but lately it occurs more often when I play in an orchestra. When I was younger I did not feel the pressure to perform to a certain standard, and I was more aware of the fact that I had a special gift and loved sharing it with those around me. I have definitely been feeling more pressure since I have become a professional player. It is always expected of me to be well prepared and to perform at a certain high standard. Another factor that causes anxiety is the fact that my income is dependent on the standard of my performance. This causes me a lot of stress. As mentioned before I currently experience flow more regularly when I play in an orchestra, rather than solo. I attribute this to the fact that I feel more comfortable and at ease whilst playing in a group, as opposed to performing solo. When one is part of an orchestra that performs together regularly and that consists of players who render performances of a very high standard, a certain measure of trust is established between the members of the orchestra. I see my fellow-players not only as colleagues, but also as very close friends. Consequently I feel very comfortable in an orchestral setting. Even when I work on contract and play with different orchestras, I still feel at ease, because of the fact that I form part of a group of competent players who all have the same goal: to make great music. I find it very interesting how different musicians come together and make music, regardless of every individual’s circumstances, personality and culture. When considering the unique challenges professional South African musicians face, one wonders how this context affects optimal

performance experiences. There is a dwindling number of full-time paid professional orchestras in South Africa at present. This places financial pressure on professional players and many musicians need to find additional work to supplement their income. Furthermore, musical instruments are expensive and require expensive insurance. It is therefore highly probable that financial insecurities might impact upon the experience of flow amongst full time orchestral musicians.

My interest in the phenomenon of flow, compounded by my own experience of flow as an orchestral player, and the dearth of qualitative research in flow amongst orchestral players, has led to several questions. Many of the musicians in the professional part-time orchestra in which I play are professional musicians, who have had to supplement their income with other work, and many have other full-time professions. Key issues that need to be investigated include whether all orchestral musicians experience flow, and if they do, how this occurs. Another question is whether players of different backgrounds and careers experience flow in the same way. Is there a difference, for example, between the experiences of flow amongst full-time orchestra members and those who play professionally but have additional professions? Another question concerns the extent and manner the differing backgrounds and circumstances of musicians influences their experience of flow.

All of these key issues need to be investigated in order to determine whether, generally speaking, full-time or part-time musicians experience flow more or less often and more or less intensely.

1.2. Purpose statement

The aim of this study is to explore optimal performance experiences through the lived experience of flow amongst professional full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. Furthermore, the study endeavours to identify factors that impact positively and negatively on flow experienced by the members of the two groups of musicians, and to ascertain whether other factors in the South African context influence the experience of flow and subsequently, well-being amongst musicians.

1.3. Research questions

Main research question:

What are the lived experiences of flow experienced by professional full-time and professional part-time orchestral musicians?

Subquestions:

- How do full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians experience flow?
- Which factors influence the experience of flow in orchestral musicians?
- How does the experience of flow impact experience of overall well-being in orchestral musicians, particularly in the South African context?

1.4. Methodology

The methodology, including the research approach, research method and ethical considerations will be discussed in depth in chapter three.

1.5. Chapter outline

Chapter one will serve as an introduction, and will include the purpose statement and the research questions. Chapter two will include a review of the literature about flow and the experience of flow amongst musicians. Chapter three will include the methodology and research design of this study. Chapter four will consist of the results and a discussion of salient themes, while chapter five will consist of a discussion of the findings. Chapter six will summarise the contents and the conclusions.

1.6. Conclusion

This study will explore flow as experienced by professional orchestral musicians by the process of gathering data by way of semi-structured interviews. These interviews will focus on questions regarding the lived experiences of musicians, in particular on the factors which impact on these experiences.

The next chapter of this dissertation is a review of the literature consulted. Therefore a broad overview of the existing literature on the experience of flow in particular, the occurrence of peak experiences and flow experienced by musicians will be provided.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In order to understand the flow experience it is necessary to determine what the meanings of experience in general are. Victor Frankl has referred to experience as values which we receive from life (Louw, 2007). These experiences are relevant, because it relates to the positive experiences which occur during flow. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988) it is necessary to observe people's actions, as well as reactions, in normal everyday conditions, in order to gain a more complete understanding of human behaviour and experience. And, in order to better understand experience it is vitally important to observe people in those moments when their lives reach a positive peak, resulting in intense feelings of pleasure and creativity, as these positive experiences further enables one to fully comprehend the concept of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988).

The extensive psychological development of the twentieth century – including theories, psychoanalysis, observation of behaviour, cognitive psychology, and contemporary atheoretical neuro-pharmacological approaches, share a common epistemology. Csikszentmihalyi, (1988) felt that descriptions of human behaviour ignored the existence of consciousness and the human phenomenon. Development in research gradually included the reflecting consciousness with all its implications.

This reflecting awareness, based on the biological evolution of the central nervous system, is called the unconscious. According to Broadbent, as well as Pope and Singer (1958; 1978, as cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), the conscious consists of three functional subsystems: attention, which takes note of available information; awareness, which interprets the information; and, memory which stores information. Csikszentmihalyi (1988) believes that experience is the content of consciousness; it is the sum of all the information that enters the mind, and the interpretation thereof. These three subsystems – attention, awareness and memory – allow the mind to serve as a buffer between genetic and cultural predispositions on the one hand, and behaviour, on the other. Consciousness makes it possible to gain control of unconscious instinctual drive, through the transformation of physiological processes to subjective experiences.

This chapter discusses current theories about flow- and peak experiences in the light of existing literature regarding flow amongst musicians, as well as literature exploring the well-being of musicians. The chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2. Optimal experience: peak experience and flow experience

Performing music can result in even more powerful experiences for the performer when comparing these experiences with simply listening to music (Woody & McPherson, 2010). These powerful experiences while performing are often a primary performance motivation (Persson, 2001), since it includes heightened emotional rewards beyond those of simply making music (Beiley & Davidson, in Woody & McPherson, 2010). These experiences, also referred to as optimal experiences, can be described as performing at one's best, which results in a profoundly satisfying feeling of having reached a goal or fulfilled a dream. Research investigating optimal experience (Csíkszentmihalyi, 1990; Maslow, 1968) has focused on theories about peak experience, peak performance and flow experience. Since the focus of the current study is the lived experiences of professional orchestral musicians, peak experience and flow experience will further be discussed.

2.2.1. The peak experience

The term "peak experience" used in psychology, is associated with psychologist Abraham Maslow, who described it as follows: "an altered state of consciousness resembling a form of 'oceanic' feeling, in which a person experiences an ecstatic dissolution of the usual bonds of space and time" (Maslow 1964, as cited in Rana et al., 2009; Gabrielsson, 2010). These peak experiences contain strong and distinctive perceptual, cognitive, physical, and emotional components which ensure intensely enjoyable experiences (Whaley, Sloboda & Gabrielsson, 2009). Peak experiences further produce a heightened sense of one's physical and "existential" state of being (Maslow, as cited in Hodges & Sebald, 2011). This definition is similar to Csíkszentmihalyi's (1990) definition of flow as this is a condition in which individuals are so immersed in the activity they are doing nothing else seems to matter (Rana et al., 2009).

A peak experience can be triggered very quickly, and may exist for just a moment. However, in other cases, peak experiences continue after the initial surge, and result in a "plateau phase" which could last minutes, days or weeks (Maslow, 1994, as cited in Collins, 2010). Peak experiences are important, because they reduce the individual's self-actualization, and increase a sense of responsibility to serve and contribute to the world (Collins, 2010).

With all these elements present the consciousness comes into harmony. The self is strengthened by the increased focus on the new experience. The organizational quality of the flow experience will cause it to be autotelic, or in itself rewarding. The goal is really just an excuse to make the experience possible (Csíkszentmihalyi, 1990).

According to Harung (2012) the following research sheds light on peak experiences of performers: Maslow (1968, 1971, 1998) studied visibly successful people and on this basis concluded that they had frequent peak experiences. These experiences were described in the

following terms: great joy, beauty, wholeness, aliveness, perfection, completion, justice, order, effortlessness, playfulness and self-sufficiency. According to Maslow (1971) the experience is intrinsically valid, perfect, complete and needs nothing else. In his opinion peak moments “can have very, very important consequences” and practically everyone does have such glimpses, but not everyone knows it (Harung, 2012:40).

Wuthnow (1978) concluded that virtually everyone appears to have peak experiences of one kind or another. He also found that those reporting several deep and lasting peak experiences tended to find their lives more meaningful, to feel more assured of themselves, to be less concerned with social status and more concerned with helping others (Harung, 2012).

A study by Panzarella (1980) as cited by Harung (2012) showed a positive correlation between peak experiences and self-actualization and differentiated self-perception. Peak experiences were described in the following terms: “Immediately I lost my tired feeling; I had the feeling of being more myself; feeling of high and floating sensations; I felt exhilaration, released, joyous; being at one with the music and not only with the music but with people, concert hall, etc”.

2.2.2. The Flow Experience

The level of skill required to accomplish certain challenges leads to the concept of “flow” that was formulated by Csikszentmihalyi. Flow is achieved when skills are in alignment with the challenges and level of difficulty of a task. By learning new skills, it is easier to assimilate the necessary balance between skills and goals that individuals set for themselves (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). This skill is known as the ability to experience flow. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975, 1990, 1996) work regarding the so-called flow experience provides important insights. The research methodology consisted of interviews, questionnaires and qualitative findings. The respondents were persons who were involved in various activities such as music, chess, rock climbing, composition and surgery. The finding was that, apart from what the various activities included, individuals experienced the same feelings when they did what they really loved (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, 2012; Delle Fave, Bassi & Massimini, 2003; Ulrich, Keller, Hoenig, Waller & Grön, 2014). Csikszentmihalyi calls this experience the flow experience. It occurs when people get carried away by an external force to move seamlessly into a flow of energy in the moments of enjoyment (Soltani, Roslan, Abdullah & Jan, 2011). This optimal experience is a subjective state which humans refer to as pleasure, satisfaction and happiness (Sinnamon et al., 2012). However, while flow could involve these aspects, these aspects do not in themselves equate to flow.

The experience of flow is self-rewarding, and therefore results in the desire to maintain it for as long as possible and to repeat the experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). In our daily activities, whether by accident or intent, we undergo experiences we have never had before.

Most of these experiences will be neutral or negative and quickly forgotten. Yet, some experiences will be positive which will generate a sense of excitement, energy and satisfaction. When the positive experience occurs, a person tends to want to repeat it. The activity which resulted in the experience will be revisited again and again and consequently the self will continue to build with the aim of the enjoyable experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). However, when we move past enjoyable experiences, we open the possibility of the incorporation to the consciousness of new opportunities to be experienced. These new experiences lead to the formation of a new understanding of the self. The enrichment of the self through new experiences, is called autotelic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Autotelic motivation functions in such a way that the target becomes the experience itself, rather than any future reward or benefit that might be a result of the experience. New ideas, artefacts and technologies are of great help and are often discovered in activities that had no practical goals. In this a paradox is found, since the new discoveries were not the aim, but rather the participation for the sake of pure pleasure (Huizinga, 1970). Optimal experience is therefore the prototype of such intrinsically motivated levels of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988).

Many successful scientists, artists, doctors, lawyers and business leaders have already mentioned the experience of flow when they are deeply involved in such activities (Soltani et al., 2001). Due to its integrity, the flow experience rises above the formless, confusing and often frustrating conditions of normal, everyday life. Because it reaffirms the order of the self and because it is enjoyable, people seek to repeat it whenever possible. The tendency to repeat the flow experience, is the emerging teleonomy of the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Teleonomy can be explained as “the doctrine that life is characterized by endowment with a project or purpose” (Stedman, 2006:1942). This repetition leads to a selective process: the activities and experiences that are enjoyed the most, have a greater chance to be stored in the memory and to be remembered.

The flow experience is not limited to only one specific activity (Bakker, 2005). One perspective indicates that it is the result of an individual’s capacity to balance the challenges of a situation and the skills of the individual to overcome those challenges (Collins, 2010). Challenges that are too big lead to anxiety, whilst challenges that are too small will result in boredom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, as cited in Collins, 2010).

According to Massimini and Inghilleri (1986), it is imperative to understand that flow involves a striving to achieve abilities in order to overcome certain challenges. The flow experience provides the quality of individual wellbeing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). The ability to experience flow may be due to individual differences that are partly innate, but that can definitely be learned, for example, through techniques of meditation or spiritual discipline aimed to develop

control over the mind.

Summing up, the flow-experience can be described as a total engagement and absolute focus in an activity, to the exclusion of external distractions, and leading to the loss of a sense of time and self-awareness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Flow experience allows the individual to achieve goals in an appropriate form through psychological momentum (Collins, 2010; Seligman, 2004). The physiological and neurological properties of the flow experience have been fairly widely studied. These qualitative studies are important for our understanding of the phenomenon.

2.2.3. The dimensions of the flow experience

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1988, 1990) theory of the flow experience distinguishes nine dimensions (Dietrich, 2004; Fritz & Avsec, 2007). These are: 1. Challenge-skill balance. 2. Action-awareness merging. 3. Clear goals. 4. Unambiguous feedback. 5. Concentration on the task. 6. Sense of control. 7. Loss of self-consciousness. 8. Time transformation. 9. Autotelic experience.

Challenge-skill balance: When a person has the necessary skills to deal with different situations the quality of experience improves significantly. This balance between challenges and skills is necessary for flow. A challenge should be represented, but only to the extent that the individual is still able to realise it.

Action-awareness merging: Ideas about action-awareness merging arise when people are asked to elaborate on what it feels like to experience flow. Typical accounts refer to an ecstatic state and the complete fusion with the activity. With regard to music, musicians often express this experience as being totally immersed in music.

Clear goals: Knowledge of objectives, performance preparation and planning, awareness, and understand the fine details in order to have a successful outcome, are all factors that set the stage for flow. In this dimension individuals claim that they know exactly what is expected of them and what they are supposed to do. This clarity of purpose keeps the performer fully connected to the task, as it occurs at every moment during the performance. In the context of music this dimension can be described as: "the musician knows what note to play next". Although the activity advances ultimately towards a higher goal, it is driven by the progressive realization of the next small goal. This leads to the next dimension that there should be reasonably fast and clear feedback.

Unambiguous feedback: When determining whether one is on track toward the goals that have been set, it is important to pay attention to feedback which can come from a range of external sources. Receiving feedback that is associated with flow enables the performer not

having to stop and reflect on how things are progressing. This dimension can be illustrated with the example of a musician hearing right away whether the note played is the one.

Concentration on the task: This dimension of flow describes concentration as being “focused on what we do” (Dietrich, 2004:757). In this dimension there are no extraneous thoughts, and the tendency to be distracted, that is often a result of involvement in any task, is absent. Focussing only on the task at hand epitomizes the flow state, and is therefore one of the most frequently mentioned traits. The performer only concentrates on the here and now.

Sense of control: In order to experience flow, an individual must experience challenge. However, challenge does not exist under conditions of absolute control. Distractions are excluded from consciousness. This feature of flow is a consequence of the above dimension. Humans appear to have a great deal of control over what they attend to, and in flow, attentional resources are used to actively amplify the task at hand until it becomes the exclusive content in the working memory buffer.

Loss of self-consciousness: It is important for an individual to free himself of his “inner-voice” in order to experience flow. This inner voice constantly asks us how we look in the eyes of others. In this state of flow the self-consciousness of a person disappears. As a result of intense concentration on the activity, a person in flow not only forgets his or her problems, but he or she loses temporary sense of the self, which often in ordinary life interrupts consciousness and causes psychological energy to be diverted from what actually needs to be done. There is no worry of failure during the experience of flow. This element is due to the heightened single-mindedness of the mind. “Without the ability to bring into focus additional information, worry of failure, along with other extraneous content, is prevented from entering consciousness” (Dietrich, 2004:757).

Time transformation: Another common feature is a disturbed sense of time. For some it feels as if time stops, for others it feels as though time moves faster, and yet for others time seems to pass slower. The clock does not serve as a good analogue of the temporal quality of experience anymore. This distortion of a sense of time is one of the hallmarks of any altered state of consciousness and comes about through the intense involvement of a flow experience.

Autotelic experience: The last element is that the activity becomes autotelic. Csikszentmihalyi, (1990) used this term to describe the intrinsically rewarding experience that flow brings to an individual. Because of the enjoyable and pleasurable qualities of flow, the individual is motivated to seek it again and return to this state. Autotelic experiences are the final result of the various dimensions of flow, they are essential in motivating an individual to engage in greater challenges. During the performance all energy is directed to the task and

these feelings of immense pleasure can only be experienced once the performance is over.

2.3. Flow amongst musicians

Flow in musical performance involves mastering a difficult piece in a fully concentrated, yet effortless involvement, and is described by musicians as their happiest moments when engaging in musical activities (Gabrielsson, 2011). Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1990, 1996) research about the flow experience sheds light on what musicians experience during a performance that requires a high level of skill. With the acquiring of new skills, it becomes easier to attain the required balance between challenges and new abilities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). No studies of flow amongst professional orchestral musicians were found. However, the existing literature regarding flow amongst musicians will be discussed. These studies mainly focus on flow and its relation to the well-being of musicians, flow amongst student performers and flow in groups, otherwise known as collective flow.

2.3.1. Flow and well-being of musicians

Lamont (2012) explored the emotions connected with music performance and found that performing music has considerable potential to generate and promote well-being. The study gathered data of thirty-five university students who gave free reports of their strongest, most intense experiences when performing music and argues that young musicians do have valuable and rewarding experiences. These experiences have the "potential to sustain long-term motivation to engage with practical music-making" (Lamont, 2012:574). Different aspects of performing, such as the ability to make music, being able to meet technical challenges with high levels of skill, and being able to connect with other performers and with an audience can result in considerable pleasure. Being involved in such musical activities has been shown to have positive effects on mood, quality of life and to be a very rewarding leisure activity (Cliff, Hancox, Morrison, Hess, Kreutz & Stewart, 2010; Davidson, 2011; Lamont, 2011; Lamont, 2012; Valentine & Evans, 2001). Croom (2015) reviewed recent research regarding correlations between musical practice and participation and the psychological well-being of musicians. The study supports arguments that music influences positive emotion, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, and claims that "music practice and participation positively contributes to one's cultivation of greater psychological well-being and a more flourishing life" (Croom, 2015:59). Ascenso, Williamon and Perkins (2017) investigated the well-being of professional musicians in the context of positive psychology and interviewed professional musicians from six activities: solo, orchestral, choral, chamber, conducting and composing. The results of the study indicated high levels of well-being. Making music enhances well-being in several contexts, including everyday use, community, clinical and

education. Furthermore, Ascenso et al., (2017) support the view that music is associated directly with moments of optimal state through energized focus, otherwise known as flow. Fritz and Avsec (2007) investigated the experience of flow and subjective well-being of music students. Data was gathered with questionnaires of eighty-four music students and confirmed that experiencing flow is more related to emotional than cognitive aspects of subjective well-being. Since flow is an extremely emotional experience, these findings are in line with previous research regarding flow. Sahoo and Sahu (2009) support this finding by arguing that happiness is synonymous with 'quality of life' or 'well-being', since "happiness is the emotion in which one experiences feelings ranging from contentment and satisfaction, to bliss and intense joy" (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009:40).

2.3.2. Flow amongst student performers

To date there is little research on flow experiences amongst the music student population. One of the earlier studies by Bakker (2005) investigated flow as experienced by music teachers and their students. The study found evidence that flow is contagious in that when the teacher experiences flow, the students do too. Sinnamon et al., (2012) explored flow among student performers. Two-hundred and five students were divided into two categories: amateur and elite musicians. The findings illustrated that flow was very common among the participants, whether elite or amateur. What has been established is that, in the case of musicians, there is the expression of emotion, presentation, communication and rapport with an audience, evocation of emotion in others, duty to a composer's wishes through communication of music to an audience, and the production of sound. Fritz and Avsec (2007) examined which musical activities provoke the experience of flow most frequently. They found that different musical activities could stimulate flow but that it was most frequently experienced by music students during performance, although anxiety may occur while performing for an audience. The study further argues that being part of a group, for example "playing in an orchestra or singing in a chorus, seems to offer even better opportunities for experiencing flow because of the responsibility dispersion" (Fritz & Avsec, 2007:11). Regarding performing, O'Niell (1999) explored the theory of flow and the development of musical performance skills and states that, in line with previous studies, high achievers spend more time practising their instruments than average achievers. For this study the experiences of three groups of young musicians were examined: high achievers from a specialist music school, moderate achievers from a specialist music school and young musicians from a non-specialist state school. The data gathered revealed a significant difference in the extent to which the young musicians in each group reported flow when engaged in musical activities. The high achievers at the music school and students at the non-specialist school reported more flow while practising than the

moderate achievers at the music school. Therefore O’Niell (1999) concludes that more experiences of flow occur among high achieving students than moderate achievers.

2.3.3. Collective flow amongst musicians

The concept of group flow is related to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) flow theory. However, while Csikszentmihalyi intended flow to represent a state of consciousness within the individual performer, group flow is a property of the whole group as a collective unit. Group flow has been neglected in studies exploring the phenomenon. The primary focus has been on the flow experiences of individuals and how they attain it through their own actions (Sawyer, 2006). Regarding flow in group settings, such as orchestral situations, the experience is referred to as collective flow. Gaggioli, Chirico, Mazzoni, Milani and Riva (2017) studied networked flow in musical bands. The study sample comprised fifteen amateur musical bands that completed questionnaires regarding a) individual flow level; b) individual second-order social presence level; c) self-reported-group performance; and d) group structure. Several correlations between flow, social presence and patterns of interpersonal coordination were found. Furthermore, the study emphasised the complex interplay between collective flow and intersubjective dynamics in music collaboration. Further research about collective flow, includes a study by Gloor, Oster and Fischbach (2013) investigating group flow among jazz musicians. The data collected suggests that group dynamics among self-organizing teams might result in flow. This argument is relevant when referring to chamber-music settings where the absence of a conductor might be impactful. Sawyer (2006) explored group creativity in the context of musical performance and collaboration and identified improvisation, collaboration and emergence as three characteristics of group creativity. Sawyer (2006:164) argues that

musical collaboration can help us to understand all collaboration. Other scholars who study group creativity can learn a lot from what we know about group creativity in musical groups. And education researchers who are interested in how children learn from participating in communities of practice could gain insights from our knowledge of how children become socialised into communities of musical practice. Musical collaboration provides us with a way of better understanding the essence of group creativity.

While experiencing flow as part of a group, everything seems to come naturally as the performers are in interactional synchrony. When experiencing group flow, each member of the group feels able to anticipate what their fellow performers will do before they do it. Furthermore, group flow can inspire musicians to play things that they might not have been

able to play on their own, or that would not have occurred to them without the inspiration of the group (Sawyer, 2006).

2.4. Conclusion

Existing theories of optimal experience including peak experience, flow experience and flow amongst musicians have been reviewed in this chapter. Theoretical assumptions of flow and the dimensions thereof were discussed in depth. A review of current literature has shown that there is a paucity of research regarding professional musicians in South Africa, particularly related to optimal performance experiences. This study will address the gap by exploring flow experiences of South African orchestral musicians and factors that might promote or inhibit this experience.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter a detailed description of the research design that was followed for the study will be provided. The chapter starts with an overview of the qualitative research design and the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach used in this study. The procedures of the research will then be discussed before the chapter concludes. It includes information on the participants and how data was collected and analysed. The chapter will conclude with the issues of ethics and validation applied in this study.

3.2. Research design

This study is qualitative and aimed at understanding how professional orchestral musicians interpret their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), what meanings they ascribe to their lived musical experiences and how these meanings have an influence in their world (Creswell, 2013). This dissertation also takes the form of a holistic study (Creswell, 2013), as it explores the interaction between social context and biography in addressing questions about the musical experiences of professional orchestral musicians. The interest in the experiences of music by orchestral musicians arose from the researcher's own musical experiences. In an orchestral setting a variety of people, with diverse backgrounds and personalities form part of a group. While the researcher reflected on her own experiences, her curiosity was aroused about the experiences of other musicians and the factors which influence their experiences.

The main focus of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research is to understand what it feels like to be human and the importance of such a feeling (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2013; Willig, 2010). Conrad (1987) states that IPA is about the exploration of a participant's view of the world and, adopting as far as possible, "an insider's perspective" of the topic that is being investigated. IPA is an approach well suited to gaining insight into the way that individuals experience specific situations with which they are faced (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

As this dissertation focuses on exploring the meaning that individual orchestral musicians personally attribute to their experiences and the factors that impact on these experiences, IPA is the ideal approach for conducting this research.

Cresswell (Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2008) emphasises that a thorough description and interpretation of the information gathered be done (Creswell, 2013), and Bressler warns

the researcher to remain aware of personal biases in order not to be influenced by own preferences (Bresler, 1995).

This study hopes to contribute in a small way to narrowing the gap in the existing research about the lived experiences of flow experienced by professional orchestral musicians.

3.3. Approach to qualitative inquiry: Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was first introduced in the mid-1990s by J. Smith and his colleagues. The fields in which this approach is most commonly applied includes counselling, psychology, social and health sciences, and anthropology (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA puts a strong emphasis on active research in which the researcher must play an active role in the research process in order to understand the participants' experiences from an "insider's perspective" (Holmes, 2011; Smith, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2008). In order to try and fully understand every participants' "insider's perspective", the researcher has to engage in in-depth conversations while participants described their experiences.

The three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge in IPA are phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2013). Firstly IPA is a phenomenological approach in the way that it calls for a detailed examination of the experiences of the participant according to each of the individuals' personal perception of a certain phenomenon (Holmes, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Willig, 2010). IPA aims to understand the world and experiences from the participant's point of view and therefore remains true to its phenomenological origins (Smith & Osborn, 2008). From a phenomenological point of view, if a person has an experience that has meaning, the person has to be conscious of what he or she experienced and should be able to reflect on what he or she saw, thought, felt, remembered or wished. Smith et al., (2013) also emphasises the fact that phenomenology requires the researcher to exclude his or her preconceptions of his or her own world in order to fully understand the insider's perspective of the world of the person being interviewed. They also advise researchers who undertake phenomenological studies to analyse data from different points of view in order to be aware of all the possible interpretations that could be given for specific phenomena. Although the researcher has had experiences to which she could refer and could relate to experiences described by participants, it was imperative for her to focus only on the views of the participants in order to truthfully and objectively reflect their experiences.

IPA does not only focus on the nature of an experience, but also on the meaning that is consequently attributed to the experience (Chapman & Smith, 2002). This acknowledges the fact that we are constantly engaging with the world on an inter-subjective level because of our

relatedness-to-the-world (Smith et al., 2013). It is important to keep this aspect in mind when IPA research is conducted, because it emphasises the understanding of people's focused involvement in the world, while they uncover the meaning of their experience (Smith et al., 2013). As optimal musical experiences can be very meaningful and emotional, the researcher found it relevant to explore such experiences undergone by orchestral musicians. It is particularly interesting that a variety of individuals form part of a group in an orchestral setting. In spite of the orchestra consisting of a diverse group of people, the factor that unites everyone is the common goal of making music. It will be interesting to give voice to the unique distinctive experiences of individual musicians and to compare their flow experiences with that of other members of the orchestra.

Hermeneutics, which refers to the interpretation of texts, is the second knowledge area associated with IPA. In this case hermeneutics also refers to the interpretation of the flow experiences of professional orchestral musicians as they explain them. The researcher has to uncover the evident meaning of the experience as well as the possible hidden meaning of specific experiences of which the participants themselves may not be aware, or that may not be clear at the first analysis of the interview transcripts. With phenomenology and hermeneutics the researcher has to be aware of personal presuppositions and biases as interpretation comes first and foremost from the personal understanding of the researcher of the subject. However, Smith et al., (2013) argues that these presuppositions must not be more important than any new conception of the phenomenon that is being studied. A researcher should allow the participants to speak for themselves regarding their experiences and should keep an open mind when analysing and interpreting the meanings that the participants attribute to their musical experiences (Smith et al., 2013).

It is important that the preconceptions of the researcher do not influence the research process. However, in interpreting and trying to make sense of the personal worlds of the participants, in this case professional orchestral musicians the own conceptions of the researcher are important. This is done by applying a two-stage interpretative activity or double hermeneutic process (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In this activity or process the participants have to interpret their own lived experiences first after which the researcher interprets the participants' lived experience from the researcher's point of view (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The type of interpretation that is required for IPA studies involves the researcher having to ask critical questions to explore hidden meanings or emotions in a particular participant's story (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Hermeneutics requires the understanding of the different parts of the phenomenon being studied, by understanding the whole. In order to understand the whole, one has to first and foremost understand the smaller parts. This process is called the hermeneutic circle and plays

a prominent role in the continual analytical process that is required for IPA studies, where the researcher has to offer various perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text (Smith et al., 2013).

Idiography is the third aspect of IPA research (Smith et al., 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Idiography focuses on particular or specific individual cases. Firstly, it focuses on the detail and in depth analysis of the particular, and then on the better understanding of how certain phenomena is understood by certain people (Willig, 2010). In this case idiography requires an in-depth analysis of the experiences of each of the professional orchestral musicians. In idiography the researcher needs to understand how their experiences are understood by each individual participant and the impact of the experiences on their lives.

In IPA research self-interpretation and –reflection is very important as it allows participants to better understand their experiences (Colaizzi, 1978; Reid et al., 2005). These activities also enable the researcher to take part in the research process as analyst and to interpret the accounts of the participants of their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them. In the IPA approach the participants are considered the experts and the researcher learns about the participants' thoughts, commitments and feelings through their stories, in their own words and which must be as detailed as possible (Reid et al., 2005). It is imperative for the IPA approach, that the researcher keeps in mind the contextual background against which the data was gathered, to enable the researcher to make accurate interpretations (Reid et al., 2005).

IPA explores connections between the talking, thinking and emotional state of participants, while acknowledging each participant as a complex physical, affective, cognitive and linguistic being. Therefore the researcher has to be aware of the fact that the participants might find it difficult at times to express exactly what they think and how they feel (Smith & Osborn, 2008). It should also be taken into consideration that some participants might not want to disclose too much about themselves.

According to Smith et al., (2013) research can only provide findings close to actual experiences, as pure experience is never fully accessible to the outsider. It can therefore be said that IPA investigates human experience through the examination of the meanings people ascribe to their experiences.

Thus IPA analysis always involves the interpretation of experiences by applying the double-hermeneutic process. Interpretations may be drawn from different theoretical views. However, to answer the main research question in this case the researcher has to develop his or her interpretations around the core of the accounts of the lived musical experiences of the participants (Reid et al., 2005).

3.4. Procedures

For this in-depth study semi-structured interviews were held with each of the eight professional orchestral musicians intentionally selected for the purpose of the study. The role of the researcher was to analyse each of the interviews carefully and individually before highlighting the similarities and differences of each case. When the researcher wrote up her findings the meaning of the musical experience of each orchestral musician became clear, as well as the factors that impacted on those experiences.

3.4.1. The participants

According to Brocki and Wearden (2006) sample sizes for IPA are usually small, because of the idiographic nature of the research. Therefore eight professional orchestral musicians were identified as participants. It is possible to gather relevant data from such a small group of participants because of the richness of the data that was gathered during each in-depth, semi-structured interview (Smith & Osborn, 2008). With IPA the expertise of the participants, regarding the phenomenon, is explored. Therefore the participants have to be purposefully selected (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2008) – in this case professional orchestral musicians with performing experience. Brocki and Wearden (2002) states that the participants who are identified for IPA research should be able to shed light on the research questions and provide rich, interesting data for the researcher to interpret.

Potential suitable participants for the study were identified by the researcher through regular interaction with professional orchestral musicians in orchestral settings. The participants selected were willing and able to grant the researcher access to their personal perspectives regarding their musical experiences. For this study the scope was narrowed by selecting participants who have experienced the optimal musical experiences as professional orchestral musicians. The researcher aimed to gather data from musicians of different genders, ages and who play different instruments.

3.4.2. Data collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews are the most common data-collection process associated with IPA (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Clarke, 2010; Reid et al., 2005; Willig, 2010). The goal of the interviews in this study was to try and understand what it was like for the chosen professional orchestral musicians to have musical experiences, in particular flow experiences (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Reid et al., 2005). The benefits of conducting one-on-one interviews are that they allow time to establish rapport with the participants, and also afford participants enough time to think before they respond to questions that form part of the in-depth, personal discussion (Reid et al., 2005). One-on-one interviews are the preferred

method for gathering data when a researcher works with a smaller group of participants (Merriam, 2009), and this method was used in this study.

a. Semi-structured interview

The interview schedule for this study focused on questions that explore flow experiences amongst professional orchestral musicians and any possible factors that might influence those experiences. It was important that the questions asked in the interviews be framed broadly and openly, in order for the researcher to gain full insight into the meanings that the participants ascribe to their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). According to Chapman and Smith (2002) the questions that are asked during semi-structured interviews must be flexible. The questions that are originally planned for the interviews should be used mainly as a guideline for topics that can be explored during the interview and the sequence in which the questions are asked, should be regarded as less important (Merriam, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). During the interviews conducted for this study, it was evident that participants reflected on their optimal musical experiences in different ways. Therefore, the sequence of the questions was different for every interview and the flow of every interview was unique. During the interviews the researcher remained alert to interesting ideas brought up by each participant. Each participant determined the flow of the interview, as each participant was afforded the opportunity of telling his or her own story, as each participant must be treated as an expert during IPA study interviews (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

b. Conducting the interview

Establishing rapport with the participant and ensuring that the participant is comfortable and treated with respect is considered the most important thing when an interview is conducted (Merriam, 2009). It was therefore important for this study to ensure that the participants felt at ease and comfortable with the interviewer. Before the interviews started light conversations on general topics were initiated by the interviewer, in order to create a comfortable atmosphere and a relaxed tone. A familiar environment was also ensured by allowing each participant to choose where he or she wanted to be interviewed. It was essential that the participants trusted the interviewer and for this purpose it was made clear to the participants what the goal of the research was, and what the structure of the interview would be (Smith et al., 2013). It was important to ensure that the interview would not be interrupted and that it was held in a quiet environment (Creswell 2013). Smith et al., (2013) puts emphasis on letting the participants know that the interview was about them and that their opinions and experiences mattered. The attention of the participants was also drawn to the fact that no answers would be “right” or “wrong” (Smith et al., 2013).

During the interviews participants were allowed to take their time thinking about the questions and were requested to answer in as much detail as possible. According to Smith et al., (2013) the interviewer should aim for an interview environment that is comfortable for the participant and that resembles the natural interactions of conversation and therefore the researcher promoted a calm and relaxed mood during the interviews.

In order to find out as much as possible about the participant's life world, it is important to ask good questions and get the relationship between the schedule and the interview right (Merriam, 2009) – something that can only be done by taking enough time when asking the questions and listening to the participants' every word. In the case of certain questions some participants required time to reflect before they could answer fully and in depth (Smith et al., 2013). Sometimes silence speaks more than words and therefore Smith et al., (2013) is of the opinion that any period of silence must not be interrupted, as it might encourage the participant to pick up a certain topic again. While paying full attention to a participant's stories and body language, the interviewer should also be aware of stages in the interview where it would be better to move away from a certain topic or to ask for more detail on others (Larkin et al., 2006).

c. Interview schedule

The goal of an interview schedule should be to enable participants to give a detailed account of their experiences through comfortable interaction. In semi-structured interviews the questions should encourage the participant to speak about his or her experiences in detail and at length (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The interviewer must be able to provide an opportunity for the participant to get comfortable by starting the interview with a straightforward question on the present (Merriam, 2009; Smith et al., 2013). According to Merriam (2009) it is a good idea to start the interview with basic descriptive questions, in order to prepare the participant for the more intense and detailed questions that will follow. Therefore, this researcher prompted interviewees by providing a general description of the concept of flow and participants were asked whether they could relate to the explanation. All the participants in this study could relate to the explanation of flow and therefore the interviews continued with their description of such experiences. These responses to flow immediately set the participants at ease, as they were regarded as experts on the topic being investigated and they could elaborate without being interrupted. During the interviews the researcher tried to avoid using over-empathetic, manipulative, leading and closed questions, in order to ensure that the data gathered from the interviews was not influenced by the view of the researcher (Smith et al., 2013).

The following steps were used to compile the interview schedule as suggested by Smith and Osborn (2008).

1. Determine the areas to be tackled during the interviews. These areas should investigate a broad range of issues;
2. Put the different topics in a logical order. Keep in mind that it would be wise to leave the sensitive topics for later in the interview;
3. Generate questions for each of the topic areas;
4. Develop possible prompts and probes to be used when necessary;
5. Draft and redraft the interview schedule until all the questions are well formulated, open and non-leading;
6. Learn the interview schedule by heart. This ensures that the researcher can focus on every aspect of the participant's responses during the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

During the interviews the participants were relaxed and seemed at ease when answering questions. Where necessary they took time to think before they responded to a certain question. Certain answers indicated to the researcher that the participant did not fully understand the question. Consequently the researcher had to rephrase certain questions. An example of an interview transcript is included in Annexure D. As the answers of the participants were rich enough for the purposes of this study, it was not necessary to conduct follow-up interviews with any of the participants and therefore eight interview transcripts are included.

3.4.3. Data analysis

In IPA it is assumed that the researcher wants to learn something about the psychological world of the participants, and this is made possible by engaging in an interpretative relationship with the transcripts (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The process of analysing the data that is necessary for a successful IPA study follows an idiographic approach by starting with specific examples and then moving on to more general claims by analysing each transcript individually (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher started her analysis by focusing on each case individually. Once each case had been analysed individually, the transcript of the next participant was analysed in a case-by-case process.

In analysing the data gathered from each participant, the researcher started off by trying to make sense of the musical experiences of the professional orchestral musicians. Firstly, their perspective and then the perspective of the analyst was considered (Reid et al., 2005). Care had to be taken not to analyse the data as facts, but as subjective opinions, as IPA is an

interpretative study (Reid et al., 2005). The researcher also had to adopt the perspective of the participant in order to offer an interpretative account of the meaning that each participant ascribed to his or her experience in a specific context (Larkin et al., 2006; Reid et al., 2005). Larkin et al., (2006) states that the account given in IPA research is constructed by both the participant and the researcher, in light of the fact that the goal of the researcher is to get as close to the participants' point of view as possible.

The first step in analysing the data was to read and reread the transcript of an interview, and to write down everything that attracted the attention of the researcher (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher attempted to summarise parts of each transcript and commented on or questioned some of the things that were said during the interview as part of the process of interpreting the account of each participant. (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Initially the entire transcript was regarded as data and no parts of it were regarded as more or less important (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher also sought the objective opinion of the research supervisor to review and confirm summaries, in order to make sure that the views of the participants were reflected and that the view of the researcher had no influence.

Chapman and Smith (2002) state that IPA involves identifying themes in the transcripts of interviews which are organised and used to find similarities and/or variations between the different accounts of each of the participants' experiences (Reid et al., 2005). The analysis followed the steps for successful data analysis suggested by Smith et al., (2013).

Individual case analysis

1) Reading and re-reading

This first step includes reading through the first transcript a few times to become familiar with the bigger picture and contents of the transcript (Smith et al., 2013).

2) Initial coding

This step includes the analyst reading through the transcript and assigning codes to any and all things to which the analyst's attention is drawn. During the initial coding this researcher focused on affective coding which includes coding for emotion, values, conflicts and judgements (Saldaña, 2013), labelling the feelings of the participants in terms of their flow experiences, and focusing on the beliefs, conflicts and struggles of each participant.

Emotion codes allow the researcher to label the participant's feelings, enabling him or her to explore the participant's personal experiences. Terms such as scary, happy, sad, confused, uncertain, etc. are typically included in these codes. When a complex phenomenon such as the flow experiences of professional orchestral musicians is being studied, one could also use

descriptive emotional codes which can be sub-coded or categorised, allowing the researcher to discern which emotions could have occurred when the participants were having specific experiences. The researcher has to be aware of the complexity of emotional states when coding emotion. Emotional states can include, for example, different levels of anger, i.e. irritation, anger, fury, and it should also be acknowledged that this emotion can be triggered by other emotions such as embarrassment, shame, frustration and depression (Saldaña, 2013).

Value codes distinguish between values a participant attaches to a thing, person or idea, attitude (how the participant thinks and feels about something or someone) and beliefs, which include attitudes, values and personal work knowledge, experiences, opinions, morals etc. Versus codes refer to personal conflicts and contradictions that are found (Saldaña, 2013).

These codes not only assist the researcher in identifying certain ways in which a participant explains things, but also helps the researcher to understand the participant's concerns. Descriptive comments, linguistic comments (exploring the specific language used and seeking deeper meaning in the metaphoric use of language) and conceptual comments (interrogative and conceptual exploration of the interview content) should be the affective comments a researcher should include. The importance of the context within the interview is emphasised as the comments draw attention to the participant's words and helps the researcher to recognise interrelationships (Smith et al., 2013).

3) Developing emergent themes

The researcher begins to notice emerging themes in the data by mapping the exploratory comments on the transcript of an interview. Each case is bracketed during the individual case analyses and therefore these emergent themes are assigned to each case individually (Chapman & Smith, 2002). The identification of these themes starts a process in which the interview is broken down into different categories which will come together again in the final write-up. The researcher captures the significance of the data as themes surface that reflect a synergistic process of description and interpretation (Smith et al., 2013).

4) Searching for connections between the emergent themes of the separate cases

Once step four is reached, the identified themes are organised into groups of emergent themes. Re-evaluation of the themes must also be done in order to identify the most interesting and important aspects of the participant's account. The connections between themes can be done by grouping similarities together under a label for the group, or selecting a certain theme that will be used as the main theme of the group with other themes (Chapman & Smith, 2002). Themes can also be identified by oppositional relationships and focusing on the differences between themes. Themes can also be grouped according to life events or life

stages, according to how often the theme emerges or by looking at the function and deeper meaning of the themes (Smith et al., 2013).

5) Moving to the next case

After the first four stages of the analysis have been completed and themes have been linked to specific transcript extracts, the researcher can move on to the next case and repeat the process. However, it is important that the analysis of the previous case is bracketed while working on a new case to ensure that the new case will be analysed in its own right (Smith et al., 2013).

Cross-case analysis: Looking for patterns across cases

Finally, the researcher can look for patterns that emerge in all the cases. This is done by asking questions about the connections between the cases, what themes help illuminate the cases and which themes are the most prevalent or strong. The goal of this final process is to highlight similarities and differences between the cases in terms of the participant's*in this case lived musical experiences (Smith et al., 2013). Similarities between the cases must be labelled, and grouped into superordinate themes with new meanings, and the differences will then be discussed as unique emerging themes, i.e. those themes that are not present in all the interviews, in this case, in all the eight interviews. When the data analysis has been completed the researcher has to be aware of the three levels of interpretations required for IPA research (Smith et al., 2013).

The first level consists of the interpretation of the more obvious experiences or meanings that a participant attributed to the experience. The use of metaphors by the participant in relating his or her story, forms the second level and finally, the level of interpretation moves to a detailed microanalysis of the text, which should shed further light on the transcript as a whole and which could strengthen the argument. A fourth level of interpretation is suggested for IPA research which involves a psychodynamic interpretation of the text. This interpretation is guided by the microanalysis of the text and from within the researcher (Smith et al., 2013).

3.4.4 Writing up

IPA research requires the findings to be written up as a narrative that provides an exhaustive description of the phenomenon being studied (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Clarke, 2010; Colaizzi, 1978). Therefore the findings of this study will be presented in the form of a narrative. Colaizzi (1978) emphasises the importance of presenting the findings as a statement that accurately reflects the fundamental structure of the phenomenon investigated. A good IPA study allows the reader to draw links between the findings presented and their own personal

experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA is a powerful research method since it provides a broad context, but also includes the superordinate and emerging themes (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008). By correlating the emergent themes from each interview transcript, superordinate themes are identified.

When the findings are written up it is important that the superordinate themes that were identified during the cross-case analysis be adequately explained, illustrated and nuanced. In order to do this excerpts of raw data can be used and comments can be given on each superordinate theme. Chapman and Smith (2002) suggests that the findings be presented with tables of themes (Smith et al., 2013) and transcript excerpts (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) to ensure the reinforcement of the narrative argument, and to support the case, to guarantee a study that is well planned and executed. While writing up the findings the researcher should take care to distinguish clearly between what the participants said and what the researcher's own interpretations of the accounts are (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). This ensures that the researcher remains true to the voices and stories of the participants. The presentation plan that was followed for this study was to present the findings of each case together with the similarities and differences between the various cases (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The discussion is presented separately later in this paper.

3.5. The role of the researcher

In IPA research the researcher adopts an interpretative role. This is one of the most important aspects of this type of study (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The researcher must at all times truthfully express whatever information is gained from the participants and therefore IPA calls for objectivity (Colaizzi, 1978). To ensure reaching the level of impartiality that is required the researcher has to acknowledge his or her own experience before attempting to interpret, understand and write about the experiences of the participants interviewed for the study (Colaizzi, 1978). When conducting an IPA study the researcher becomes actively involved in both the process of data collection and analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In a semi-structured interview it is the role of the researcher to facilitate and guide the participants, rather than to dictate specifically what should happen during the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The interview schedule could go in a different direction if the researcher takes on the role of active co-participant during the interview. It is imperative for the researcher to know when to abandon the scheduled structure in order to follow up the concerns of the participant (Smith et al., 2013).

My interest in the performance experiences of professional orchestral musicians comes from my own experience as a professional violinist. Making music together with fellow-musicians

is my passion. I frequently experience flow and therefore I am very curious about the experiences of other professional orchestral musicians, especially with regard to their flow experience.

3.6. Ethics

Before I started this research project, the research proposal was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. With regard to the ethical issues that could arise during the different stages of the research project the researcher made sure that all the participants knew what the study was about and why the interviews were conducted with them. Firstly, informed consent from all the participants were obtained before any data-collection started. The participants had also been informed what they could expect from this study (Greene & Hogan, 2011; Smith et al., 2013). The letter of information informed participants what the study was about, how it would be conducted and what the aims of this research were. The letter of information and consent form are included in Annexure A and B. The anonymity of the participants was guaranteed and as a result their identity shall remain undisclosed of they shall remain anonymous throughout the study (Greene & Hogan, 2011). They will also remain anonymous for the purpose of publication.

One of the main ethical considerations at the start of any study is how to avoid harm to any of the participants (Greene & Hogan, 2011). Harm can be physical harm, or trauma experienced by participants while they talk about sensitive issues without their privacy being respected (Creswell, 2013; Greene & Hogan, 2011). During the interviews for this study, the researcher was sensitive to any indications that certain lines of questioning cause the participants discomfort. The importance of every participant's story was emphasised during the interview with him or her, by expressly mentioning the importance, and by not asking leading questions during the interviews.

Another ethical issue that faces the researcher is to try not to side with a participant while analysing the data. In this study the researcher avoided disclosing only positive results. This is achieved by analysing both positive and negative comments and by presenting all views while the findings are written up (Creswell, 2013).

3.7. Validity

The validity of a study can be improved in various ways. For an IPA study to be reliable, it has to be correctly conducted, needs to be based on research of a high quality, research that is conducted with sensitivity to the context and the specific phenomenon that is being studied.

In addition, a researcher who uses the IPA approach has to conduct the study with commitment and rigour, which implies that the researcher must be thorough and careful in collecting the data and in analysing it (Smith et al., 2013). Other factors that are also important to ensure the validity of IPA research includes transparency and coherent research results (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2013). Reid et al., (2005) also emphasise that the interpretation of interviews should be true to each participant's story and that the ideas or biases of the researcher should not have any influence on that.

Impact and importance are also principles that contribute to the validity of research (Smith et al., 2013). This study was approached with these principles in mind, in that is the first of its kind in Southern Africa and that the study could be valuable for educators, researchers and orchestral musicians, as it sheds light on what professional orchestral musicians experience when they are participating in musical activities.

3.8. Conclusion

According to Smith et al., (2013) research requires creativity and precision while it strives to gain insight into the meaning of specific experiences for participants who have been carefully selected because of the lived experiences they shared. The interpretation of IPA research should aim not to make generalisations but rather to emphasise similarities and differences between cases and must therefore be true to each individual.

In this study validity was ensured in that the researcher followed a logical system in the collection and analysis of the data by following a step-by-step path through the chain of evidence (Smith et al., 2013). With research done by the IPA method it is imperative to keep in mind that it is not the goal of the research to make the assumption that the account given is the only valid or accurate account. This study rather aims to present the research findings systematically and transparently to ensure that the account given is credible (Smith et al., 2013). Therefore a commitment to quality is required with IPA research, during both the data-collection process and the analysis processes, and through to the publication of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the results of the analysis will be presented. The analysis revealed four superordinate and fifteen subordinate themes (see table 1). Participants were assigned numbers in order to protect their identity. Consistent with IPA, an effort has been made to offer the results in the participant's own words wherever possible.

4.2. Research themes

After the initial case-by-case analysis, connections between the participant's interviews were sought. The cross-case analysis revealed several superordinate themes. When the results from the interviews were compared, several similarities and differences came to light. By highlighting these aspects the final steps of this IPA study are reached. Table 1 includes the superordinate, subordinate, and raw data themes that emerged from the eight participants' interviews.

Table 1: Superordinate, subordinate, and raw data themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	Raw data themes
Factors that influence flow	Instrument	<p>... as hard as you try [it] just doesn't fit – that's how I felt with violin.</p> <p>Some days you just have bad days – something might be wrong with your instrument. (1)</p> <p>... noticed change of flow experience with change of instruments. (2)</p>
	Repertoire	<p>Flow might occur when I practise Bach suites or repertoire for solo cello ... (4)</p> <p>It [has] to be very good music and really good composers. (5)</p>

	<p>Conductor</p> <p>Venue</p> <p>Fellow-players</p> <p>Balancing the level of challenge and skill</p>	<p>Usually if it's Dvorak, Rachmaninoff I get more into flow than a Mozart concert. (8)</p> <p>... if you're working with a conductor who knows what he is doing, if it is a conductor that you can feel safe performing with, then I think flow would occur more naturally. (1)</p> <p>A more communicative conductor helps you to experience it. (6)</p> <p>You want to play in a place where the music is enhanced. (3)</p> <p>In a church-type, cathedral-type venue with lots of vibration you are more likely to hear the overtones and then everything sounds nicer. (5)</p> <p>... it has a very big significant effect if you are comfortable with whoever is playing with you. (1)</p> <p>You get good and bad players, but sometimes just the personality can help or ruin the situation. (8)</p> <p>In terms of the repertoire ... I experience flow more often if it's more challenging. (2)</p> <p>The most rewarding musical experiences is ... where there's asked enough of you that you have to concentrate and be technically involved. (7)</p> <p>When you're young you don't have so many things to worry about. (4)</p>
<p>Performance environment</p>	<p>Solo-, chamber- and orchestral settings</p> <p>(Individual flow versus collective flow)</p>	<p>It is great to make music together, especially in chamber groups. (4)</p> <p>I experience it more in chamber music than in orchestral music. (6)</p>

	<p>Available time/Frequency of playing</p> <p>Pressure</p> <p>Playing music for the love of it</p>	<p>orchestra to earn money, to keep my reputation. (6)</p> <p>I think it might take some of the pleasure away, because they have to get a lot done in a certain amount of time. (3)</p> <p>Some people are too busy to practise and they just lose motivation after some time – that will inhibit flow. (8)</p> <p>Playing first flute in an orchestra is very stressful. (6)</p> <p>You feel like you can't let people down and you can't let yourself down. (7)</p> <p>When I play in the orchestra I'm very aware of the level I have to perform at in order to get booked again. (8)</p> <p>I don't have to do this. I choose to do this. And I think that must be a big factor for people to experience the true state of emotional investment that we would call flow. (1)</p> <p>... it's purely for the love of music, of making music, it makes a big difference. (3)</p>
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4.3. Superordinate theme 1: Factors that influence flow

The first superordinate theme, factors that influence flow, included subordinate themes instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill as factors (subordinate themes) that are influential components in the participant's experiences of flow.

4.3.1. Instrument

The first corresponding theme, instrument, revealed the significant impact of choosing the right instrument. This corresponding theme influences the comfort and confidence of the musician and therefore affects the experience of flow. Participant 1 described his initial instrument as not being the right "fit". Participants mentioned a change in their flow experience with the change of instruments.

I didn't really experience that type of feelings when I was playing violin at all. It was only when I started playing bass that I started noticing change in the way that I perceive the music when I perform (2).

At fifteen I actually stopped playing [violin] ... but when I went back to it [music] with viola, I think I really started enjoying it more (5).

... obviously I've had moments of flow on piano, but not like happiness, euphoria, like ... uhm, but not as much as I actually have it on flute (6).

It was clear that discomfort caused by instruments affected flow. Two of the woodwind-playing participants remarked on the influence of air-conditioners and the uncomfortable effect that it had on their tuning and intonation.

... suddenly you can't get it sharper because it's cold ... so it's things like this ... you can't just focus on the music anymore (6).

... If the temperature goes up, uhm, our instruments tend to go quite sharp. So that once again can influence the intonation, which can make it more difficult. So if you're the whole time focused on trying to improve your intonation or things are bothering you about the intonation, you're busy with that, you're not really busy with making music (7).

Participant 3 further elaborated on other possible discomforts caused by an unfamiliar instrument.

... my violin fell and I had to play with somebody else's violin and it's not comfortable and you're worried all the time ... So I think factors like that might influence you (3).

When reflecting on the remarks about finding the right instrument and the importance of feeling confident with one's instrument, it becomes an undeniable factor with regard to flow. In order to experience flow one has to be comfortable to enable total focus and concentration. Therefore any discomfort with an instrument might cause a barrier between the musician and his or her experience of flow.

4.3.2. Repertoire

The second subordinate theme that emerged is repertoire. When reflecting on the interviews of this study, it is clear that musicians display stronger preferences for certain types of repertoire than for others, and it was clear that preference had a marked effect on flow.

Participants specifically mentioned the effect that musical preferences have on their experiences of flow:

... as soon as music appeals to me I ... lose myself in it more (5),

I would experience flow more if it's repertoire I'm comfortable with [and that] I enjoy ... (6).

Some of the other remarks regarding repertoire refer to technical difficulties as well as repertoire preference:

When I do solo playing it's got to be a very good piece of music to make me experience that [flow] (5).

With chamber music like Brahms and Beethoven and works like that it's really on a high level. It asks a lot of you in terms of technical ability and musical involvement (7).

Usually if it's Dvorak [or] Rachmaninoff I used to get more into that flow than maybe a Mozart concert (8).

There are different hypotheses about factors that play a role regarding preference of music. The remarks of the participants further affirm this with these descriptions of their flow experiences when playing music that appeals to them. Therefore there are good grounds to state that the choice of repertoire will have a significant impact on the flow experiences of musicians.

4.3.3. Conductor

The conductor plays a vital role in this study, hence conductor as a subordinate theme listed as the third subordinate theme. Participant 2 described it as "destructive" if a conductor is not entirely "synced" with his hand movements:

... if his downbeat isn't exactly on one - that is totally disruptive for us ... (2).

Participant 4 agrees by saying that she will not experience flow, as a result of the conductor's movements:

... [if] he just conducts weirdly that it irritates you (4).

Participant 4 also mentioned the impact that it has if "... it's hard to follow him." This was confirmed by Participant 3's reaction: "If I can't follow him I feel inadequate".

Participant 6 and 7 further describes the influence of a communicative conductor:

... [if he] acknowledges when you have a solo, like, and helps you to shape that solo, then together with him I feel I can experience a sense of flow, especially in exposed solos ... if the conductor doesn't do much, uhm, like he doesn't give input what he wants, then you also don't know what he wants and then you think the whole time, you're not sure if your interpretation is right. You're not sure if this is what he wants

and then you think of those things, rather than being in the music. So, I think a more communicative conductor helps you to experience it (6).

... a conductor plays a huge role, in terms of being at ease and making music. ...I think the perfect conductor is someone that reassures you, makes you feel safe, that's firm enough in terms of what they want, and at the same time gives you freedom to play (7).

Considering these factors it becomes clear that the conductor has a significant influence on flow experiences amongst orchestral musicians. Whether it refers to movements, personality, communication, or providing a safe playing environment, the impact of the conductor is a crucial factor.

4.3.4. Venue

The fourth corresponding theme, Venue, also seems to play a significant role in musician's experience of flow. Some of the remarks about the acoustic qualities of the venue included: "... if there [are] acoustic problems...it's disruptive" (2), "The acoustics ... because then you're stuck thinking on what's happening in the venue ..." (6), "... if it feels like it [the quality of your sound] resonates more ... the music comes out easily" (8). Participants further confirmed the impact of an appealing venue, saying:

I think also, uhm, a church-type, cathedral-type venue with lots of ... vibration, you are more likely to hear the overtones and then everything sounds nicer, so I think that definitely adds, apart from the fact that it's a church and it's dedicated because of that to sacred sounds, as suppose to an open-air venue where your sound just goes away (5).

... in terms of positive correlation, I would say if the venue is beautiful or austere ... an old but beautiful church or some almost "holy" type of place, then it usually helps a lot to experience it automatically (2).

Flow is dependent on the acoustical qualities of the venue. As musicians are aware of their sound and the way that the audience perceives the music, the venue and optimal acoustics play an important role in boosting their confidence, feeling at ease, hearing fellow players, and with how their sound is projected. When musicians do not have to be concerned about how their sound is perceived, it allows them to become fully focused and immersed in what they are doing, therefore getting closer to a flow experience.

4.3.5. Fellow-players

The influence of fellow-players emerged as the fifth factor when investigating the experience of flow amongst orchestral musicians. Participant 1 confirmed the impact of playing with familiar co-musicians by saying: "... it has a very big significant effect if you are comfortable with whoever is playing with you". Regarding fellow-players, competence also seems to be an important factor. When asked to explain what factors might inhibit the flow of the participants, the following remarks were made:

So if somebody else doesn't know the music as well, or makes a mistake where you didn't expect it ... (4).

... it's not a pleasant experience if the intonation is bad or you have fellow musicians that can't do what they have to ... (7).

The impact of good communication between players was also emphasised:

I've played with players before who don't communicate with you at all. They don't acknowledge you are playing a solo together. They don't try to make music together, but they are just hammering on on their own (6).

The reaction of Participant 8 sheds light on habits or mannerisms of fellow players that might impact flow. When players share a stand, habits such as not turning the page fast enough, not placing the music in the middle of the stand or simply sitting too close to one's neighbour can inhibit flow. Seeing that sharing a stand means sharing an intimate and personal space it can be assumed that distracting habits of fellow musicians can affect flow negatively.

... sometimes each little habit, like tapping of the foot, or sometimes if you're fighting about where the music is placed between you, or if you're uncomfortable with how far the music is from you, that can also affect it ... that can totally ruin your moment (8).

It is clear that feeling comfortable and familiar with fellow-players encourages flow, as does having confidence in their musical competence. Competence of fellow-players is key in order to accomplish a difficult challenge. Personalities also surface as a key element with regard to fellow-players, as these will either promote or inhibit communication as well as comfort between players.

4.3.6. Balancing the level of challenge and skill

The level of challenge and skill that is needed forms the final factor that influences flow. This refers to the challenge-skill-balance and therefore also influences whether the musician feels competent.

... becoming more advanced ... you have to continuously engage in more advanced and challenging music. And then ... you kind of know how much effort it continuously takes to perform at a very high level. So that means when you do pull it off ... the emotional reward is so great. And that ... contributes in a great part to that feeling of flow when you're performing something that you're really proud of and that you like doing (1).

I must say something where I've grown a lot in the last four years since having a chamber group, like a permanent chamber group, uhm, we really forget about the audience, where [in the past] I had to take beta blockers not to shake, and I'm not taking anything like that at all and just performing. It is really really amazing how you can just grow into that by practising performing actually (4).

Participant 3 affirms this statement by saying: "The music [that we perform with our orchestra] is always a challenge and interesting. If you get it right you feel good."

Participants also mentioned the impact of a challenge that is too difficult on flow and how it affects their motivation and confidence:

... sometimes I don't experience that if I don't feel that I'm technically up for the current challenge (2),

If the challenge is too difficult, sometimes I get a bit despondent (4),

If I don't feel technically up to the standard I don't experience flow so much (6).

When reflecting on these responses while describing the level of the challenge, it becomes clear that the challenge-skill balance has a significant affect on the confidence of the musicians. The participants appear to feel more confident when they feel that they have the necessary skill to accomplish a certain task. Furthermore, their remarks about concerns when a challenge is too difficult also correlate with the affect it has on their confidence levels. The influence of the challenge-skill-balance was further emphasised:

I sought to increase my skills to the level where I could learn difficult concerto's and feel comfortable with my playing and not hit a ceiling of technical ability (5).

[I will experience flow] with chamber music like Brahms and Beethoven and works like that, it's really on a high level. It asks a lot of you in terms of technical ability and musical involvement (7).

I've been practising four to eight hours a day. You know the music so well and technically you're not worrying about it so much as when I'm sight reading or playing in an orchestral setting (8).

Noting the challenge-skill balance is important as it explains why certain musical challenges promote flow experiences more than others. The difficulty of the challenge also correlates with the repertoire that musicians prefer to play, as some musical works are more difficult than others. For this reason this challenge-skill balance has greater impact when engaging in musical activities. Seeing that flow is such a rewarding experience, musicians tend to seek participation in musical activities where an equilibrium between challenge and skill is found. Remarks about becoming more advanced and working hard at increasing skills, further confirms the increase in the emotional reward when engaging in more difficult challenges.

4.4. Superordinate theme 2: Performance environment

The second superordinate theme revealed important data regarding performance environment. Concerning performance environment, musicians showed preferences towards certain settings. Therefore this superordinate theme includes solo-, chamber- and orchestral settings and rehearsal versus performance environment as subordinate themes.

4.4.1. Solo-, chamber- and orchestral settings

It became clear that musicians prefer a specific environment when engaging in musical activities. These settings encourage comfort and ease. Feeling comfortable promotes concentration and total focus and therefore it can be argued that such settings stimulate a flow experience. Some participants preferred chamber settings to larger groups because these more intimate settings induced flow better: “It is great to make music together, especially in chamber groups” (4), “I experience it more in chamber music than in orchestral music” (6), “Where I experience it most is when I do chamber music” (7).

Participant 5 further describes the impact of smaller ensemble settings on flow mentioning particularly the fact that conductor is absent and that there is more solo playing:

I think it's more likely to get these experiences with solo training or music where you don't have a conductor – where you can allow the different members to link with each other organically and naturally (5).

Solo-settings were also an emerging theme for many participants when reflecting on an environment for flow. Participant 5 mentioned that flow might occur less when participating in orchestral activities when comparing it to his flow experiences from performing as a solo-musician:

... there ha[ve] been times when I have experienced that, but significantly less than from the other perspective as a solo musician (5).

Participant 8 agrees about this impact of playing at a solo performance:

When I experienced that maximum flow experience you could relate back to a private solo recital (8).

It is an interesting finding that the participants in this study experienced flow more during chamber work, due to a more intimate, non-verbal connection with fellow players, which could relate to focus and concentration. A further possible connection could be determined by personalities and whether players feel familiar and comfortable with other members of the group.

4.4.2. Rehearsal versus performance environment

The second subordinate theme of performance environment that surfaced relates to differences regarding concerts and rehearsals/individual practice sessions. Participant 8 mentions experiencing flow during concerts: “When it’s a good performance this flow experience is at its maximum”. Four of the participants referred to rehearsals or private practice sessions when recalling flow experiences:

In chamber music I enjoy rehearsals more. It’s more soul fulfilling, because the stress is not there (4).

Participants further stated “I also experience it when I practise Bach suites on my own” (5), “I experience the sense of flow more when I practise at home” (6). Participant 7 considers the absence of pressure as a factor that promotes flow during rehearsals:

I experience it more in rehearsals – it’s the absence of pressure to perform and to be judged. You can purely just experience the music and be absolutely involved in it (7).

In summing up, it is evident that some orchestral musicians experience flow more when the risk is lower, whereas others experience it more during high risk scenarios. Thus, it seems that there are a variety of personal preferences regarding the performance environment that will enable flow.

4.5. Superordinate theme 3: Impact of life experiences

In the context of this study the impact of life experiences emerged as a superordinate theme. Within this theme maturity, emotional investment and life experiences emerged as subordinate themes that might have an impact on flow amongst musicians.

4.5.1. Maturity

During the interviews the majority of participants were of the opinion that emotional and technical maturity plays a significant role in the way that music is portrayed. A distinction between more experienced (older) participants and less experienced (younger) participants surfaced as some of the reactions to the questions differed. Some of the younger participants reflected on the difference that emotional maturity as well as playing-related maturity makes in their experiences of flow:

I would not have been able to do that three years ago or four years ago. I would have been able to, but it would have been a dreary product, you know. But then in the end ... the performance went absolutely marvellously ... So, I think [the fact that I experience more flow] definitely has to do with the fact that I'm becoming more, for lack of description, more advanced (1).

Uhm, well, I think I was technically not able [to experience flow] in high school. So only maybe in my second year of violin playing where you sort of get technically able to do these pieces. Uhm, sometimes, even then it's very difficult, because you're emotionally not mature enough and I think one needs to have the technical and emotional maturity in that sense (8).

The three older participants of this study shed light on how factors might have a different effect regarding specific phases in an individual's life. It was suggested that getting older and more mature might change the focus and the way an individual perceives music and performing.

... you do really care less [about what people think] with time ... I believe the majority of the people that are there in audiences are there to have a good time and I play for them. I don't play for the others (7).

... as a teenager you are more hormonal and inclined to romanticism more, have more intense experience, or discovery of emotions, you know, being in love and all those type of things for the first time. So there definitely was that element there ... uhm ... when I was younger that would rather lead to this (5).

I think [my flow experience has changed over time], in the sense that, [being a child] that was part of this whole group that we had to get it right as a group. For me now it's important that I know the music and that I can get it right technically. Uhm, and then to be part [of a group] ... uhm, so that it's not just me playing, but that we as a group are also achieving this (3).

Within this subordinate theme the differences between experienced players is emphasised. The less experienced or younger players seem to be focused on how their music is perceived

and conscious about how they have been growing and maturing in their playing over time. However, while the less experienced players mention that they feel competent and mature in their playing, the reactions of the more experienced musicians illustrate the difference maturity makes, by detailing how their experience of music and flow has changed over time. The more experienced players seem to feel more confident and at ease with their playing and seem to be able to reflect on how their focus changed with time. Being able to only create music for your own self enrichment, being aware of how different stages in your life shape you, focusing on your contribution to the group and not only concentrating on your own playing, seem to be characteristics of the more experienced players. Although the less experienced musicians describe emotional and technical maturity, it seems likely that the more experienced players might experience more flow, because of being more mature emotionally.

4.5.2. Emotional investment

Participants mentioned that they were emotionally invested when reflecting on their experiences of flow. As participating in musical activities can be an extremely emotional experience, emotional investment is in line with the factors influencing flow. Some participants found music to be healing, a therapy. An emotional investment results in being totally devoted to the activity, losing all self-awareness, concentrating and focusing on the activity only. They spoke about expressing oneself purely for the passion of the music. Therefore it is highly likely that being emotionally invested in the activity will result in experiences of flow.

... music, uhm, is this healing therapy where it's a conduit and I can express my emotions without having to say them, because I'm not good with that verbal communication. So I can always play and people will hear the emotions going through ... there have been times...where I would actually wilfully sing an emotion though the music I play, so the way that you experience it you kind of...channel it, you amplify it (5).

Participant 7 explained her emotional investment as a result of playing at a meaningful event:

I will, actually I think I experience that a lot sometimes when I perform in church. Uhm, when I do ... you know, when it's part of the worship service, where you're a solo instrument maybe with organ. Or maybe performing with someone else with organ and yes, you have to concentrate, you have to be there, but you can also just really enjoy the music and be involved (7).

Participant 1 is of the opinion that the emotional investment of musicians can be conveyed to the audience and that the audience should be able to experience to a certain extent what musicians experience while performing.

... I would then guess, like the most people that would go to a performance are in a sense similarly constructed in an emotional way. And so most of them should pick up on your emotional investment into what you are doing, so that you end up with flow...and having them experiencing to an extent what you are experiencing (1).

It is evident that having a heightened emotional investment can promote experiences of flow, regardless of the context or personal motivation. The musicians mentioned that an emotional investment, conveyed through flow, could have a contagious effect on the audience.

4.5.3. Life experiences

Life experiences include certain events in the participants' lives which shaped their optimal musical experiences. Specific events were recalled by some participants when reflecting on the influence of these life experiences: "Since I've had children, music is an absolute release valve. It's really therapeutic" (7). Participants also discussed the influence that previous life experiences have on musical experiences:

Usually you tend to go back to your previous life experiences that you can attach to the interpretation of the music. It helps you to set the mood and sometimes it's just so perfectly set that you're going back into that moment (8).

Participant 5 explained the influence of life experiences in different stages of his life:

It has to do with your mental state. As a teenager you are more hormonal and inclined to romanticism more, have more intense experiences, or discovery of emotions – being in love and those types of things, for the first time. Later, if you go through sad periods or mistakes in your life, or go through trauma or people dying close to you then it's more susceptible to being in touch with my emotions (5).

Life experience and varying stages in life plays a role in how we experience music. This was evident in the reflections of the three older participants regarding occurrences that impacted their lives and therefore their experiences of music:

... if you go through sad periods or mistakes in your life that you have to recover from, or go through trauma or people dying close to you, then ... it's more susceptible to being in touch with my emotions (5).

I like the Mozart Requiem. It was something that I've always wanted to play and to achieve it and to actually get to this point where we did this and the audience loved it, and I still listen to it ... there was a lot of things that day. Somebody close to me had just passed away and it was this ... and I knew he loved this music, so it was a big thing for me just to actually experience this whole, uhm, thing. Ja, but it was a good feeling (3).

Considering the effect that trauma can have on musician's experiences of music it is also important to mention the effect other significant events can have on emotional maturity and therefore musical experiences. These events affect different aspects of life and can result in a variety of experiences during a performance. It follows that flow experiences will also be affected:

... since I became a mom, I think after my first child, uhm, I really think you get to a point when you're a mother, that your children can actually embarrass you quite a lot at times and you're not in control anymore. And learning those things makes it much easier to perform, because you care less. You have to overcome what people think of you ... otherwise you won't survive as a parent and then uhm, I think on top of that, for me being a mother, when I started to perform then it was just so nice to dress up and get on stage and it's a completely different world that I actually immersed myself in, that whole experience and it was for me, I think, that in itself became such a wonderful other world that I'm in, than just being a mom at home and uhm, changing nappies and cooking food – which is also in itself wonderful, but the balance is, I found, quite liberating. And I think my music was definitely on a different level. I remember one person saying once after my second baby that “the more children you get, the better you play”. So ja, I thought maybe I must continue! (7)

In conclusion, the influence of life experiences links strongly to flow experiences of orchestral musicians, as these experiences form each person's character and frame of reference and influence the way in which different people experience flow. Whether these are small everyday experiences or significant life-changing experiences like trauma, the effect on people's lives and particularly on how musicians perceive music can be seen. Through the data gathered with this study it became clear that musicians can be either negatively affected by life experiences which will hinder flow, whereas others find engagement in musical activities an effective escape from the daily grind of life. This, in turn, creates a platform for flow and enjoyment.

4.6. Superordinate theme 4: Comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians

During the interviews possible differences between the flow experiences of full-time musicians and the flow experiences of part-time musicians were investigated. Participants were asked to reflect on their perception of experiences of musicians in both capacities. The participants of this study regarded income, available time/frequency of playing, pressure and playing music

for the love of it, as possible factors influencing flow affecting both full-time and part-time orchestral musicians.

4.6.1. Income

The study revealed that worrying about income played a significant role in prohibiting flow in full-time musicians. As a part-time orchestral musician, participant 3 remarked: "I don't have that pressure, because I'm not dependent on the income". The part-time orchestral musicians feel that full-time musicians sometimes create the impression that "it's like a job, I don't really like this and I'm not getting paid enough" (5). Part-time musicians perceive their full-time peers as being financially and artistically pressured because of limited opportunities which in turn affects their relationship with the music, and hence would impact flow.

... I've seen many South African musicians who have started to venture into different fields, because just doing music was not enough financially. And then of course, they sort of have a love-hate-relationship with music. And of course then they will be affected by it (8).

... for lack of description, the run of the mill, "die deursnit professionele musikant" [the average professional musician], I would think that their flow is definitely prohibited by the fact that they not necessarily have many other avenues of revenue or income, which is something that is different in my case [being a part-time musician] (1).

Participant 7, a full-time musician, felt that flow would not be overly affected by pressure of income, however, she remained aware of her dependence on it.

I think I was fortunate when I started with music as a career, that we weren't financially dependent on my income. I never really saw it as a job. And uhm, so when I started with music I always felt like I do what I want to do. Uhm, and...I planned my time according to how it suits me, you know, and how it suits me in terms of my lifestyle. And things did change in our household. We started to be maybe slightly more dependent on what I do and I did come to a point where I realised "okay, now I have to do these things" or it's really handy to have certain extra incomes (7).

It is evident that full-time orchestral musicians might be focused on financial issues connected to their playing. Full-time musician, participant 6, remarked:

Now that it became more of a job there are expectations from me – I have to play in an orchestra to earn money [and] to keep my reputation.

This is also affirmed by the aforementioned part-time orchestral musicians in their observations regarding pressures on full-time orchestral musicians caused by income.

4.6.2. Available time/Frequency of playing

The second subordinate theme regarding presumed differences of part-time and full-time musicians focuses on the limited amount of time that full-time musicians have to master different programmes. The majority of the part-time participants in this study are of the opinion that this limited amount of time and the frequency of playing might inhibit the flow experiences of full-time musicians.

Some people are too busy to practise and they just lose motivation after some time – that will inhibit flow (8).

I'm definitely of the opinion that the enjoyment of the music could be inhibited by having it as a routine job ... if they are playing in another orchestra all day they're gonna be tired and emotionally drained if they had experienced that, because that is definitely the case, if you do have this flow experience, it does drain you emotionally (5).

I think time might be an issue for [full-time musicians] ... I think it is more difficult because they are always in a rush and have to get to know the music. And I wonder sometimes if the pleasure goes away, because they're in such a ... "I have to have this done in a certain amount of time" ... so I think [they] are more pressurised (3).

Lacking time to practice and to rest seems to inhibit flow. Both the full-time and part-time orchestral musicians referred to this factor as a significant differential between full-time and part-time players. Being a full-time musician means regularly having to master a large amount of work in a limited period of time. Furthermore, full-time musicians often have other musical engagements such as teaching, which further impinges on practice time. Regular concert performances also encroach on rest time. As performing can be both mentally and physically draining, being able to rest in between performances is key, in order to establish ideal circumstances for flow. However, being a part-time musician means participating in fewer performances and therefore having to master fewer musical works. It can therefore be assumed that participating in fewer musical activities might more easily result in experiences of flow, as part-time musicians have fewer challenges regarding the availability of time and more often have the mental and physical capacity to fully engage in such activities.

4.6.3. Pressure

From the interviews it became evident that full-time musicians experience more pressure to perform at a high standard in order to get booked for performances. They also seemed highly aware of their reputation and the expectations that they have to live up to regarding their musical performances.

The consequences of making mistakes for a full-time professional musician are slightly different to a part-time musician, because for me [a full-time musician] it's my bread and butter. For me to make a mistake will matter quite a bit more than for a part-time musician, because for a part-time musician it doesn't really matter. It won't be as financially important to make mistakes or have the best quality of music possible (8).

You can say, yes I could experience flow less [being a full-time musician] ... because I mean it is stressful if you sit there and think if I do screw this up someone might not book me again, or they might fire me or ... then what? Because I mean, the music society in Pretoria is not huge. It is quite small, so if you get the reputation that you are an unreliable player, uhm you could get booked less and, ja, so it is stressful and it does affect every orchestral experience I would say (6).

... I think initially you perform and it goes well and it's just nice. But then once something's going well you feel like you have to live up to the good remarks that you receive. So now next time you experience pressure because everyone says "wow, this was amazing" and now you need to be amazing again. So you feel like you can't let people down. You can't let yourself down ... you want to make a good impression (7).

The responses from full-time orchestral musicians confirm that their experience of pressure and stress is greater than that of part-time musicians. Whether it is pressures from within themselves, or from the audience or other orchestral members, this factor plays a key role in their flow experiences, as there as so much more at stake for them.

4.6.4. Playing music for the love of it

While income formed a significant subordinate theme, both full-time and part-time orchestral musicians confirm that they do engage in musical activities purely for the love and passion of it, rather than being focused on the income. Autotelic experiences appear to drive both full and part-time musicians, however, flow seems to occur more frequently when financial worries are out of the equation. Some of the remarks of the full-time participants included:

... if you perform at a wedding and you play beautiful things ... I'm really at the point where I do it for myself in the first place (7).

... sometimes we just enjoy it so much that you don't care if you drive so much. Especially for chamber rehearsals you're not getting paid, so that's purely for the passion of it (8).

Some of the gigs, especially chamber gigs, I don't necessarily do for the money, because I don't necessarily get paid for it as much. I would say, that in general I'm

much more happy generally after a chamber concert, on average, than an orchestral concert. Not always, but usually after a chamber concert ... uhm, my husband would describe it as euphoric, where that isn't a guarantee with paid gigs necessarily, and especially not weddings and other type of gigs. So you could argue, in that case at least, that the gigs that I do for the love of music I actually enjoy more (6).

The views of the part-time participants agreed with this:

[I'm] definitely experiencing more flow ... because I know it's just for me ... my soul-food (4).

Participant 1 remarked on the difference between engaging in musical activities as part of a job as to doing it for the love of music:

I have experienced working with orchestras in other parts of the country, where people consider this ... playing violin, playing clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, whatever, – it's a job. And we rehearse from nine to twelve and as soon as that clock strikes twelve we get up and we leave. We have no interest in, you know, we have no interest in enjoying it in a sense. That is my experience – where you would consider people like that to be full-time musicians. So, a large part of me doing this, being let's say a part-time musician, is because I want to. Not because I have to (1).

When reflecting on the answers given by the participants it becomes clear that simply engaging in activities for the love of it has considerable influence on flow. Herein lies the paradox of the South African professional musician. Playing music purely for the love of it overrides stressful factors such as income, time used and frequency of playing and pressure.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter includes the results of the analysis and revealed four superordinate themes and fifteen subordinate themes. The first superordinate theme, factors that influence flow, included subordinate themes instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill as factors (subordinate themes) that are influential components in the participant's experiences of flow. Performance environment surfaced as the second superordinate theme as musicians showed preferences towards certain settings. This superordinate theme includes solo-, chamber- and orchestral settings and rehearsal versus performance environment as subordinate themes. The impact of life experiences emerged as the third superordinate theme. Within this theme maturity, emotional investment and life experiences emerged as subordinate themes that might have an impact on flow amongst musicians. Finally, the fourth superordinate theme namely comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians emerged. The subordinate themes included

income, available time and frequency of playing, pressure and playing music for the love of it as possible significant factors between full-time and part-time orchestral musicians, which may influence flow. These identified themes will be investigated and discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the flow experience amongst the eight participants will be emphasised by shedding light on the unique aspects of their flow experiences in order to answer the research questions:

What are the lived experiences of flow experienced by professional full-time and professional part-time orchestral musicians?

How do full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians experience flow?

Which factors influence flow in orchestral musicians?

How does the experience of flow impact experience of overall well-being in orchestral musicians?

The study aimed to give voice to eight orchestral-musician-participants. During the conversations with the participants and the data-analysis process, it became clear that flow is a common experience when engaging in musical activities and that various factors impact these flow experiences of orchestral musicians. The four superordinate themes are: factors that influence flow, performance environment, impact of life experiences, and comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians.

5.2. Factors that influence flow

The first superordinate theme, factors that influence flow, involves the following subordinate themes: instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill. In this study the choice of instrument was mentioned as a factor that impacts flow. There seems to be a gap in literature regarding this aspect. This subordinate theme might be related to the “challenge-skill balance” dimension of flow, therefore feeling competent enough to meet the high demands of the situation and ‘sense of control’, in other words having the feeling of total control over what one is doing (Lamont, 2012; Fritz & Avsec, 2007; Soltani et al., 2011). “Sense of control”, along with “concentration on the task”, seems to be linked to certain discomforts caused by instruments. Remarks about becoming one with one’s instrument in order to experience flow support this connection to “sense of control” and “concentration on the task”. The majority of the participants argued that the instrument should

not become a barrier to experiencing the music and becoming one with it. As experiencing flow is described as becoming totally absorbed in the activity one is engaging in (Collins, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Rana et al., 2009), this link to discomforts caused by instruments is relevant in the context of orchestral musicians. Unease with one's instrument, whether it is because of technical difficulties or problems with the instrument itself, can compromise flow experiences. According to Fritz and Avsec (2007), concentration on the task means that the performer is totally focussed on the specific task being performed. No extraneous thoughts or distractions – and which often accompany involvement in any task – should be present. Being totally connected to the task at hand embodies the flow state, and is one of its most common characteristics. In this sphere of flow the performer is focussed on the here and now, so discomfort caused by instruments might inhibit this absolute focus and concentration.

Throughout the interviews for this study, it became clear that individuals display strong preferences for certain types of repertoire. Participants specifically mentioned the effect that preferences for repertoire had on their experiences of flow. Preferences for more well-known or respected composers, particularly from the Romantic period, emerged. Regarding solo repertoire, the string players preferred works by J.S. Bach, as these were described as more challenging and stimulating. This finding illustrates that a musician's repertoire preference significantly impacts upon flow. This writer is unaware of any studies focussing on this aspect. There is, however, literature regarding general music preferences. According to Rentfrow and Gosling (2003), music preferences might be influenced by three factors, namely (i) personality (Arnett, 1992; Cattell & Anderson, 1953; Cattell & Saunders, 1954), (ii) physiological arousal (Gowensmith & Bloom, 1997; McNamara & Ballard, 1999), and (iii) social identity (Crozier, 1998; North & Hargreaves, 1999; North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000). Saarikallio and Erkkilä (2007) investigated music and adolescents' mood regulation and argue that choice of music amongst adolescents is not consciously intentional, but rather strongly based on certain mood-related needs. For this reason, it is also possible that a correlation exists between musicians' moods and preferences for certain works. The effect that repertoire preferences have on musicians' experiences of music also shed light on the impact such preferences have on flow. When reflecting on remarks that were made about the technical difficulty of repertoire and the effect it can have on the flow of orchestral musicians, it again appears to be connected to the challenge-skill balance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Fritz & Avsec, 2007; Soltani et al., 2011). It can therefore be assumed that the balance between preference and skill demands affects flow, whilst music preferences, particularly a challenging repertoire, can significantly enhance or inhibit flow.

This study found that conductor's style and personality are also a crucial factor which affects the flow experience. The participants related better to conductors with good communication

skills and clear conducting gestures. They claimed that a good conductor manages a balance between giving guidelines and allowing musicians the freedom to play and express themselves through the music. Not only does good communication from a conductor correlate with the dimension of having clear goals, but it also relates to the dimension of unambiguous feedback (Bakker, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Fritz and Avsec (2007) underscore that this dimension is focused on clear goals and that it is important to determine whether one is on track in order to accomplish the goals that have been set. In their study analysing “group flow among jazz musicians, Gloor et al., (2013) aimed to explore the drive and motivation of team creativity. They found that teams with more active members prefer more introverted leaders who delegate responsibility to a self-organizing team. One could therefore expect to find a similar pattern for an orchestra, where there is little space for a “prima donna” type musician. Another characteristic of conductors which was emphasised during the interviews was the importance of clear conductor gestures. Clear conducting gestures may impact the perceived challenge-skill balance in musicians. This finding correlates with the statement of Csikszentmihalyi (1988) that maintaining this balance will result in feelings of competence (Collins, 2010; Fritz & Avsec, 2007). In other words, distracting movements by a conductor seem to be a factor that might cause an imbalance in this dimension of flow. In addition, a conductor generating nervousness because of a lack of communication or by being too intimidating, significantly affects concentration. According to Teng (2011) reward dependence involves the tendency to maintain and continue ongoing behaviour and to depend on the approval of others. High levels of skills, in musical performances, are likely to be approved by others, and therefore satisfy musicians with high levels of reward dependence. This satisfaction further motivates them to maintain and continue such behaviour. Good communication and feedback from the conductor creates a positive relationship between reward and flow which supports Teng’s (2011) positive relation hypothesis.

Furthermore, the results of the present study overwhelmingly suggest that environmental influences regarding the venue influence orchestral players’ experience of flow - all of the participants agreed on this. There is a gap in literature in respect of the environmental influences on flow in orchestral musicians. However, it is possible that factors linked to the venue can correlate with unambiguous feedback (Bakker, 2005; Dietrich, 2004; Soltani et al., 2011). According to Fritz and Avsec (2007) the performer can get feedback from various external resources. In a musical context, the acoustics of a venue can be seen as such an external resource. A venue with good acoustics will promote comfort and confidence, as good and immediate feedback is available. When the performer receives feedback that is associated with a flow state, it is not necessary to stop and reflect on how things are

progressing (Bakker, 2005; Gaggioli et al., 2016; Sinnamon et al., 2012; Fritz & Avsec, 2007). Therefore the venue is highlighted as a possible factor affecting flow.

The present findings also suggest that fellow-players impact flow amongst orchestral musicians. The result is consistent with findings of past studies by Ascenso et al., (2017) which argue that social and work-related connections are integral in sustaining positive functioning. The study further describes music-making primarily as a relational space. Therefore, “music performance implies the construction of shared meaning with both the self, the audience and, for group musicians, other group members” (Ascenso et al., 2017:74). Koelsch (2013) investigated social functions of music and suggested that “when playing music in a group, individuals have contact with other individuals, engage in social cognition, participate in co-pathy (the social function of empathy), communicate, coordinate their actions, and cooperate with each other, leading to increased social cohesion” (Koelsch, 2013:204). He further argues that engagement in these functions is of significant importance for the individual, as it fulfils basic human needs. Ballantyne, Ballantyne and Packer (2014) suggest that music provides common ground for experience and facilitates a sense of connection among musicians, and therefore has the potential to influence psychological, social and subjective well-being. Croom (2015) supports the view that music practice and participation can positively contribute to psychological well-being. The impact of good communication between players was also emphasised by the participants of the current study. This reflects the findings of Sawyer (2006), who states that much of the coordination in an ensemble occurs through gestures, facial expressions and bodily movements. Therefore the findings suggest that good relationships as well as good communication between fellow-musicians will promote flow.

The data revealed balancing the level of challenge and skill as an important factor in musicians’ experience of flow, as this balance forms the most salient dimension of this experience. This finding from the present study agrees with that of Csikszentmihalyi (1988), who describes this balance as equilibrium between the pretentiousness of the situation and the ability of the individual to face it. It is important to note that the activity should represent a challenge, but only to the extent that the individual is still able to realise it (Sinnamon et al., 2012; Fritz & Avsec, 2007; Ulrich et al., 2014). In order to have flow experiences, an individual must have a good chance of completing the task. The task should require complete focus and concentration for the individual to become deeply and effortlessly involved in such a way that he or she no longer thinks of the worries and frustrations of everyday life (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009). In a study exploring music practice and participation for psychological well-being, Croom (2015) supports the view of Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) that experiences of flow occur under the conditions of “perceived challenges, or opportunities for action, that

stretch (neither overmatching nor under-utilizing) existing skills; a sense that one is engaging challenges at a level appropriate to one's capacities" (Croom, 2015:49). Supporting the theory of Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Collins (2010) further underscores the importance of balancing the level of challenge and skill by stating that challenges being too difficult can result in anxiety, while too few or insignificant challenges might promote boredom. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988) as cited in Lamont (2012:575) "balancing appropriately high levels of challenge and skill is said to lead to an engaged state of flow, where the individual loses self-awareness through complete absorption in the task". Bakker (2005) illustrates this balance with the example of a beginner piano player. Initially the player will see learning the keys corresponding to the variety of notes as challenging, and therefore might experience flow by simply running the scales on the piano. However, as soon as the player feels confident with the scales, it is important that new challenges are established in order to avoid boredom (Bakker, 2005). In light of this dimension of flow, the remarks of the participants regarding the importance of this challenge-skill balance support previous findings.

5.3. Performance environment

Performance environment was established as the second superordinate theme of this study. Solo, chamber, and orchestral settings, implying individual flow versus collective flow, and rehearsal versus performance settings emerged as subordinate themes. The data of the current study revealed that musicians have preferences regarding solo, chamber, or orchestral settings. Remarks of participants indicated that certain settings would promote flow while others would likely inhibit it. In the musical context, the focus of research has mainly been on the investigation of flow in solo settings. However, there has been a growing interest in the study of flow amongst musical groups (Bakker, 2005; Byrne, MacDonald & Carlton, 2003; Freer, 2009; MacDonald, Byrne & Carlton, 2006). Sawyer (2006) developed a theory on the existence of group flow in music collaborations, and defines it as a "collective state of mind". He argues that group flow is an optimal collective experience, which occurs as a result of members developing feelings of mutual trust and empathy, in which the intentions of the different individuals harmonise with those of the group. Sawyer's view is that group flow emerges through the interactions that occur within a group, and cannot be broken down into the work of individuals. Gloor et al., (2013) further argue that intense flow leads to high performance and therefore high performance will be the result of a team experiencing collective flow. As previously mentioned, strong correlations between happiness and flow exist. Therefore group flow or collective flow is based on flow experienced in relational embeddedness which in itself will increase satisfaction (Gloor et al., 2013). According to a study by Ascenso et al., (2017) the group as a social unit was emphasised in the shared space

of music-making, especially in chamber and orchestral contexts. “It was consistently placed as both a family and a mini society with hierarchies, revolutions and natural leaders” (Ascenso, 2017:75). Group identity was emphasised as a source of meaning, self-actualization, positive emotions and engagement through sharing and learning with colleagues. Regarding performance environment, it is interesting to note the difference in the case of solo-oriented musicians, as relationships appeared hardest to establish and maintain for such individuals. The musicians of the study referred to group projects as sources of wellbeing through positive relationships (Ascenso et al., 2017). The establishment of a preference for chamber music in the current study is further confirmed by Sawyer (2006) who emphasises the interactional processes in ensemble music, noting that “many musical groups achieve synchrony and intersubjectivity without a conductor” (Sawyer, 2006:160). It is possible that the participants in this study experienced flow more during chamber work, due to a more intimate non-verbal connection with fellow players, which could be related to the personality and temperament of the player. It may further be assumed that the preference for chamber music settings is also influenced by the above mentioned factor of fellow players.

When comparing rehearsals with a performance environment, the current study presented certain preferences amongst participants. Although the participants didn't only ascribe flow to certain settings, it became clear that the preferred setting of each participant would be likely to promote flow more than other settings. When reflecting on the reactions of the participants, it seems that the presence or absence of pressure forms a significant factor influencing the musical experiences of orchestral musicians. When considering rehearsals or private practice sessions, some of the participants mentioned the absence of pressure, and therefore were able to play more freely and experience flow more easily as a result. This pressure-factor might be related to a dimension of flow, namely “loss of self-consciousness”. This is consistent with findings of past studies by Csikszentmihalyi, (1988) who contends that it is imperative for individuals, in this case, musicians, to free themselves of their “inner voice”. This inner voice constantly asks how we look in the eyes of others, whether we fulfil their expectations, and whether our behaviour satisfies all the accepted rules (Fritz & Avsec, 2007). Freeing oneself of this inner voice and enabling flow is therefore more likely in the absence of the pressure of an audience. However, the data gathered also revealed that performing for an audience promotes flow for certain orchestral musicians. This finding is supported in a study by Teng (2011), who investigated the impact of temperament and character on flow. Teng (2011:864) argues that “reward dependence is an individual's tendency to continue ongoing behaviour, prefer attachment, and depend on approval of others”. Maintaining and continuing an ongoing activity will probably increase skills in relation to such activity over time. Teng (2011) further states that such high levels of skills are approved and appreciated by others and are likely to

satisfy individuals with high levels of reward dependence, resulting in motivation to further maintain and continue in such an activity. Since the theory of flow posits that a high level of skill enables this experience, individuals with high levels of reward dependence are likely to experience flow. Therefore a positive relation between reward dependence and flow exists (Teng, 2011). A further study by Croom (2012) affirms this relation. Croom (2012:9) states that “a well-executed and emotionally inspiring musical performance requires not only musical knowledge and technique, but also a performer’s confidence and social grace, and the collective manifestation of these features in a single musical act by the performer surely counts as a bona fide accomplishment”, and that

“since people often listen to music because they enjoy it, the musician’s act of performing a musical work for an audience of listeners is at the same time an act of providing listeners with something that they enjoy. Thus, the musician’s ability to competently bring joy and pleasure to others through their musical performances can provide them with another way in which to feel like they have genuinely accomplished something” (Croom 2012:9,10).

On performing, Lamont (2012) argues that becoming a performer “is a somewhat separate achievement” to becoming a musician. Becoming a performer means having a fundamental goal of communication to an audience. Furthermore, Lamont (2012) highlights the sense of community amongst performers and between performers and listeners in strong experiences of performing. The musicians of the present study mentioned that an emotional investment, conveyed through flow, could have a contagious impact on the audience. The remarks about experiencing flow during performances are in line with these findings, and there are therefore good grounds to hypothesise that performing for an audience will result in possible flow experiences. The impact of emotional investment will be further discussed in the following superordinate theme.

5.4. Impact of life experiences

The impact of life experiences emerged as the third superordinate theme. Within this theme, maturity, emotional investment, and life experiences were identified as subordinate themes. Participants mentioned both emotional and playing-related maturity. There is a dearth of literature supporting the argument that emotional maturity plays a role in orchestral musician’s experiences of flow. However, Sahoo and Sahu (2009) investigated the role of flow experience in human happiness and found, amongst other factors, a link between the occurrence of flow and age. The present finding also supports O’Niell (1999), who investigated the development of musical performance skills and confirmed the impact of

maturity regarding playing. O'Neill (1999) contends that the amount of practice an individual does is a significant factor in the determination of musical expertise. The findings of O'Neill (1999) suggest that moderate achievers reported more non-flow experiences when practising and playing their instruments compared to those of high achievers. As higher achievers in music are more mature in terms of playing, this finding supports the hypothesis that maturity regarding playing and technical abilities enable more flow experiences.

A further subordinate theme in relation to life experience is that of emotional investment. The data of this study revealed that participants find music in some settings to be healing or therapeutic, as engaging in musical activities can result in emotional experiences. Being emotionally invested enables participants to experience positive emotions which in turn may result in possible flow experiences. The result confirms earlier literature (Gabrielsson & Lindström, 2003) in which Maslow suggested some consequences of peak experiences (such as therapeutic effects) change an individual's view of himself and other individuals and of the world. Emotional investment was also a trigger for greater creativity. The experience is referred to as a very important and desirable happening wanting to be repeated; the individual is more apt to feel that life in general is worthwhile. Hymer (1984:93) also emphasised the therapeutic functions of absorption in flow by suggesting that "absorption", "engagement", or "flow experience" consists of "the temporary loss of self through immersion in an object that eventuates in self-enhancement".

Lamont (2012) emphasises the growth in existing literature demonstrating the considerable potential performing music has on general well-being. Engaging in musical activities has been shown to have positive effect on mood, quality of life and engagement, and therefore generally to be very rewarding (Lamont, 2012). The participants' remarks about the therapeutic and healing qualities of music support these observations on the influence of music. Regarding emotional investment, Sahoo and Sahu (2009) explored the role of flow experience in human happiness and argue that happiness is the emotion in which one experiences feelings such as contentment, satisfaction, bliss and intense joy. Positive emotions broaden one's attention and enable an individual to become aware of the wider physical and social environment. Thus, this broadened attention prepares one to be open to new ideas and to be more creative than usual. Furthermore, positive emotions offer individuals opportunities to show greater productivity (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009).

In this light, literature on music and its positive and therapeutic effect on the psychological well-being of individuals is relevant. When considering the correlation between participation in musical activities and psychological well-being, Croom (2015) argues that music practice and participation contributes to meaning, and therefore promotes psychological well-being. In a study on music and identity, Frith (1996:109) states that "identity is mobile, a process, not a

thing, a becoming not a being”, and that “music, like identity, is both performance and story, it describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind”. Hays (2005) explored the function and significance of music in individuals over the age of sixty, and reported that music forms a significant part of the individuals’ lives and gives meaning to life experiences. Music helps define and redefine self-identity, to know and understand emotions, and to maintain personal well-being (Hays, 2005).

In a study demonstrating the mood-regulating qualities of music amongst adolescents, Saarikallio and Erkkilä (2007) stated that music seems to have a significant effect on mood improvement. As long as the musical activity is self-selected, adolescents always seem to feel better and change their mood positively. The participants of this study further mentioned that an emotional investment, conveyed through flow, could have a contagious impact on the audience. There seems to be a gap in literature regarding this assumption. However, Lamont (2012) argues that “successful performers will derive considerable pleasure from their ability to make music, being able to meet technical challenges with high levels of skill, and enabling them to connect with other performers and with an audience.” There are therefore good grounds to argue that engaging in musical activities can result in a heightened emotional investment which might, in turn, promote the experience of flow.

Life experiences also surfaced as a subordinate theme. During the interviews it became apparent that certain life experiences can have an impact on musicians’ experience of flow. The remarks of the three older participants in particular, referred to the impact of trauma or other experiences, such as becoming a mother, that affected their lives and consequently their experience of music. It can therefore be assumed that life experience influences flow experience, as individuals deem different things important at different stages in their lives and their focus changes by undergoing certain life experiences. The remarks of the three older participants further revealed that they are not as focused on, or worried about, how others perceive them or their playing. This attitude was described as participation in musical activities purely for themselves and their personal benefit. This sense of being content with oneself and one’s playing relates to emotional maturity and illustrates how experiences might change with age. Concerning responses about different stages in an individual’s life, Carstensen, Turan, Ersner-Hershfield, Samanez-Larkin, Brooks and Nesselroade (2011) give insight into how emotional experience improves with age, by asserting that aging is associated with positive, overall emotional well-being and with greater emotional stability. Since musical activities can be extremely emotional experiences, these findings validate the results of the present study. With regard to research about maturity, previous life experience, and the influence of age, a study by Sahoo and Sahu (2009) confirms that happiness correlates with personality traits like ego strength, maturity and optimism. Supporting this argument is a study by Saarikallio and

Erkkilä (2007:93). Investigating the influence of music on the moods of adolescents, they found that “the most important mood-related goals seem to differ between individuals according to their personalities and the life events they had encountered” and that “the mood-regulatory goals seem to reflect not only situational and mood-related demands, but also personality, life history and gender-specific or age-related needs”. Furthermore, Saarikallio and Erkkilä (2007) argue that adolescents’ current feelings, previous experiences, and situations determine how music is interpreted. Therefore it is evident that certain life experiences, in the context of the individual’s age and personality, can have an impact on how music is perceived and can influence flow experiences. As each individual’s frame of reference is formed by his/her life history and context, there are good grounds to argue that certain life experiences impact the occurrence of flow amongst orchestral musicians, and that maturity regarding age might play a significant role.

5.5. Comparing the Flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians

The final superordinate theme that surfaced is that of comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. This superordinate theme includes income, time and/or frequency of playing, pressure, and playing music for the love of it as subordinate themes. The data gathered in this study revealed the significant impact income has on the experiences of orchestral musicians. The present finding supports the research of Sahoo and Sahu (2009) that flow experience is not only related to age, but that a significant relationship to income also exists. According to Thomson (2013), full-time musicians are juggling more work and shouldering more risk, often for lower rates than before. Interview subjects underscored that “they are hustling more than ever” and some musicians talked about driving farther to pick up freelance gigs, some of which pay fractions of pennies (Thomson, 2013:522). Considering that full-time musicians have to do a large amount of work in order to provide a stable financial income, there are good grounds to postulate that the pressures accompanying providing an income can inhibit flow.

The findings of the current study evidence that a full-time orchestral musician’s frequency of playing and the limited amount of time available are important factors impacting on flow experiences. The data suggests that a high frequency of playing in a limited amount of time might cause musicians to play with an absent-minded approach instead of playing with mindfulness and fully engaging in the music. This finding supports the research of Langer, Russell and Eisenkraft (2009) who established a correlation between orchestral performance and the footprint of mindfulness. In investigating full-time orchestral musicians, there appears

to be a significant link between frequency of playing and mindfulness amongst such musicians. Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman (1996) discovered that the general level of job satisfaction of symphony orchestra musicians was less than that of federal prison guards. Another study by Mogelof and Rohrer (2005:94) cites a retired orchestral musician from an elite orchestra saying: “to the outsider it may look like a glamorous job, but it’s not. It’s a factory with a little bit of art thrown in”. These findings and remarks support the hypothesis of Langer et al., (2009) that musicians enjoy performances more when they play music in what can be considered to be a state of mindfulness. Langer et al., (2009:131) further state that “musicians who mindfully engage their performance by adding subtle nuances enjoy themselves more and rate themselves and their orchestra as performing better”. “These positive effects of performing mindfully are above and beyond what could be explained as a simple practice effect” (Langer et al., 2009:131). When asked to reflect on possible differences between full-time and part-time orchestral musicians, some of the part-time participants of the present study were of the opinion that playing in an orchestra as a routine, full-time job would likely inhibit flow. Supporting this view of the part-time participants, Thomson (2013) states that the majority of such musicians play multiple roles and tend to allocate their music-related income among many categories. Playing various roles and participating in multiple musical engagements will most likely inhibit mindfulness during musical performances. As the lack of mindfulness implies less focus and concentration on the task, there are good grounds to argue that a lack of time and playing too frequently will inhibit mindfulness and impact flow negatively.

The findings of the present study revealed pressure as the third subordinate theme. Pressure to perform at a high standard in order to get booked for future performances formed a significant factor, particularly amongst the full-time orchestral musicians. Full-time participants mentioned awareness of their reputation and living up to the expectations created by past performances. This reputation-related pressure is also a result of financial pressure, as not living up to expectations might result in fewer bookings for performances and affect income. There seems to be gap in literature regarding how pressures amongst musicians impact their flow experiences. However, a study by Thomson (2013) gives insight by stating that today’s musicians face new challenges with diminishing structural resources and ever-increasing competition. This statement supports the remarks of the full-time participants of this study on performance-related pressure and the influence it has on being booked again and therefore surviving as a full-time musician. Thomson (2013) argues that musicians need to understand the revenue streams that generate income, and need to make strategic decisions about how to allocate their time and resources in order to ensure they can build and sustain careers as working musicians. Remarks from the full-time orchestral musicians confirm that they experience more pressure and stress than part-time musicians. These pressures might be

caused by their own expectations or those of the audience or other orchestral members. Nevertheless this factor plays a key role in the flow experiences of full-time orchestral musicians, as there is so much more at stake for them.

The data of the current study revealed “playing music for the love of it” as the final subordinate theme. Responses by both full-time and part-time orchestral musicians confirmed that engaging in musical activities purely for the love of doing so more readily results in flow experiences. According to Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow, activities that lead to flow experiences are said to be “autotelic”. Sahoo and Sahu (2009) elaborate on this by stating that autotelic experiences arise from activities which are not done for some anticipated future benefit, but because the activity in itself is intrinsically and immediately rewarding. Autotelic experiences appear to drive both full and part-time musicians; however flow seems to occur more frequently when financial worries are not present. Supporting the finding of this study, Sloboda (2001) argues that it can be assumed that people engage in musical activities because they want to. This means that these individuals have goals and purposes, manifest or latent, which music engagement fulfils, and therefore music has functionality in their lives. Consistent with this argument, Gabrielsson and Lindström (2003: 161,162) state that flow “refers to a state of intense but yet effortless involvement in an activity, the experience of which is so enjoyable that people will do it [...] for the sheer sake of doing it”. When reflecting on the answers given by the participants of the current study, it is evident that engaging in activities for the love of it promotes flow. Herein lies the paradox for the South African professional musician. Participating in musical activities purely for the love and enjoyment of it overrides stressful factors such as income, time/frequency of playing and pressure.

5.6. Conclusion

The above analysis presents some significant insider perspectives on the lived experiences of professional full-time and professional part-time orchestral musicians. Four superordinate themes and fifteen subordinate themes were identified in this study. The first superordinate theme, namely “Factors that influence flow,” focussed on the impact of the following subordinate themes on orchestral musicians: instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill. The second superordinate theme, “Performance environment,” reflected on the influences of environmental settings such as solo, chamber, and orchestral settings and rehearsal and performance settings. “Impact of life experiences” formed the third superordinate theme and included maturity, emotional investment and life experiences as subordinate themes. Finally, “Comparing the flow experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians” was identified as the fourth

superordinate theme. This theme focused on income, available time and frequency of playing, pressure and playing music for the love of it as subordinate themes.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The goal of the present study was to explore the lived experiences of flow amongst full-time and part-time professional musicians. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the research, and introduced the background, main aims, key concepts and definitions relevant to the research, and the research questions. Chapter 2 provided a thorough overview of existing literature relating to optimal experience including peak experience and flow as well as flow amongst professional orchestral musicians. Chapter 3 explained the methodological procedures followed in order to interrogate the research questions. Chapter 4 presented a detailed analysis of the research findings. These findings were discussed in relation to the literature in chapter 5. Chapter 6 summarizes and presents the conclusions of the research. The main research question and the sub-sections of the research question are addressed systematically in this chapter.

6.2. Addressing the research questions

The main research question is: What are the lived experiences of flow in professional full-time and professional part-time orchestra musicians? The three sub-questions will be addressed first, after which the main research question will be answered.

6.2.1. How do full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians experience flow?

The data revealed that both full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians relate to and experience flow. The findings confirmed instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players, balancing the level of challenge and skill, and setting, as factors that influence on flow. However, there are distinct differences between the experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. The four factors that impact full-time musicians' experience of flow are income, available time or frequency of playing, pressure and playing music for the love of it.

The present finding regarding income is supported by past studies asserting that flow experience is not only related to age, but that a significant relationship to income also exists and that full-time musicians are juggling more work and shouldering more risk, often for lower rates than previously. Furthermore, full-time orchestral musicians seem to be driving farther

to pick up freelance gigs, some of which offer relatively poor pay, in order to meet financial challenges.

The data suggests that a high frequency of playing in a limited time-frame might cause musicians to play with an absent-minded approach instead of playing with mindfulness and fully engaging in the music. This finding is supported by research suggesting a correlation between orchestral performance and the footprint of mindfulness, and general job satisfaction. Furthermore, “musicians who mindfully engage their performance by adding subtle nuances enjoy themselves more and rate themselves and their orchestra as performing better” (Langer et al., 2009:131). As the lack of mindfulness implies less focus and concentration on the task, a lack of time and too frequent playing will most likely inhibit mindfulness and therefore negatively impact flow.

Pressure was identified as a salient difference between full-time and part-time orchestral players. Pressure to perform at a high standard in order to get booked for future performances formed a significant factor, particularly amongst the full-time orchestral musicians. Further factors causing pressure included awareness of their reputation and living up to the expectations created by past performances. This reputation-related pressure is also a result of financial pressure, as not living up to expectations might result in fewer bookings for performances and curtail income. There seems to be a gap in literature regarding how pressures amongst musicians affect their flow experiences. With regard to being aware of one’s reputation, ever-increasing competition is a significant factor when taking limited opportunities into account. Therefore the present findings suggest that full-time orchestral musicians experience more pressure and stress than part-time musicians. The data revealed that pressure has a significant influence in the flow experiences of full-time orchestral musicians, as there is much more at stake for them compared to part-time orchestral musicians.

Finally “playing music for the love of it” surfaced as the fourth factor with regard to the flow experiences of full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians. It was confirmed by both full-time and part-time orchestral musicians that engaging in musical activities purely for the love of it will increase flow experiences. According to Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow, activities that lead to flow experiences are said to be “autotelic”. Autotelic experiences appear to drive both full and part-time musicians, however, flow seems to occur more frequently when financial worries are out of the equation. Sloboda et al., (2001) argue that people engage in musical activities because they want to. Flow “refers to a state of intense but yet effortless involvement in an activity, the experience of which is so enjoyable that people will do it [...] for the sheer sake of doing it” (Gabrielsson & Lindström, 2003:161,162). The findings of the current study make it evident that engaging in activities for the love of it promotes flow. The

paradox of the South African professional musician lies in this: stressful factors such as income, available time/frequency of playing and pressure can be eliminated by participating in musical activities purely for the love and enjoyment of it.

6.2.2. Which factors impact flow in orchestral musicians?

The data gathered for the present study confirmed that certain factors influence full-time and part-time orchestral musicians' optimal experiences. These factors included instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill.

Firstly, choice of instrument might be related to the "challenge-skill balance" dimension of flow. Important, therefore, is feeling competent enough to meet the high demands of the situation and a "sense of control", in other words having the feeling of total control over what one is doing. "Sense of control" along with "concentration on the task" seem to be characteristics linked to certain discomforts caused by instruments. As experiencing flow is described as becoming totally absorbed in the activity one is engaging in, this link to worry caused by instruments is relevant in the context of orchestral musicians. Distress with one's instrument, whether it is because of technical difficulties or problems with the instrument itself, can compromise flow experiences.

Secondly, the findings of this study revealed preferences for more well-known or respected composers, particularly from the Romantic period. Regarding solo repertoire, the string players preferred works by J.S. Bach as these were more challenging and stimulating. This illustrates that a musician's preference for repertoire impacts flow significantly. No known literature exists to support this argument. However, regarding general music preferences, it is possible that these might be influenced by three factors, namely personality, physiological arousal and social identity. Moreover, a possible correlation between musicians' moods and preferences for certain works exists. The effect of repertoire preferences on musicians' experiences of music also sheds light on the impact it has on flow. Remarks made about the technical difficulty of repertoire and its possible effect on flow amongst orchestral musicians, relates to the balance between the level of challenge and skill. It can therefore be assumed that the balance between repertoire preference and the demands on skill impact flow. In conclusion, music preferences, particularly challenging repertoire, can enhance or inhibit flow significantly.

Thirdly, the conductor's style and personality has a marked impact on musicians, which in turn affects their experience of flow. Conductors with good communication skills and clear conducting gestures seem to promote flow. Furthermore, a conductor who manages a balance between giving guidelines, but allowing musicians the freedom to play and express themselves through the music, further enables flow. Not only does good communication from

a conductor correlate with the dimension of having clear goals, but it also relates to the realm of unambiguous feedback. The focus is on clear goals and therefore it is important to determine whether one is on track in order to accomplish the goals that have been set. It is possible that clear conducting gestures may impact the perceived challenge-skill balance in musicians. This finding correlates with the statement of Csikszentmihalyi (1988) that maintaining this balance will result in feelings of competence. In other words, distracting movements of the conductor are a factor that might cause an imbalance in this dimension of flow. 'Concentration on the task' also seemed to be influenced by a conductor whose demeanour causes nervousness because of a lack of communication or by being too intimidating. Furthermore, high levels of skill, in this case musical performances, are likely to win approval by others, and satisfy musicians with high levels of reward dependence. This further motivates them to maintain and continue such an activity. Thus, a positive relation between reward dependence and flow exists and it is therefore in line with communication and feedback from the conductor.

Fourthly, the results of the present study suggest that environmental influences regarding the venue influence orchestral players' experience of flow. It is possible that factors linked with the venue can correlate with unambiguous feedback. In the context of a musician, the acoustics of a venue can be seen as an external resource giving immediate feedback - a venue with good acoustic qualities will promote comfort and confidence. When the performer receives feedback that is associated with a flow state it is not necessary to stop and reflect on how things are progressing. This study therefore suggests that the venue is a possible factor affecting flow.

Fifthly, the data of this study suggests that the influence of fellow-players impacts flow amongst orchestral musicians. This is supported by past studies arguing that social and work-related connections are integral in sustaining positive functioning and that music-making can be described primarily as a relational space. Furthermore, music provides common ground for experience and facilitates a sense of connection among musicians and thus has the potential to influence psychological, social and subjective well-being. Good communication between players was also emphasised and is a valid factor, since most of the coordination in an ensemble occurs through gestures, facial expression and bodily movements. Therefore it can be assumed that good relationships, as well as good communication between fellow-musicians, will promote flow.

Finally, the findings of this study identified "balancing the level of challenge and skill" as the sixth factor that impacts musicians' experience of flow. This balance forms the most salient dimension of this experience. The activity should represent a challenge, but only to the extent that the individual is still able to realise it. Furthermore, the task should require complete focus

and concentration for the individual to become deeply and effortlessly involved. Flow occurs under the conditions of “perceived challenges, or opportunities for action, that stretch (neither overmatching nor under utilizing) existing skills; a sense that one is engaging challenges at a level appropriate to one’s capacities” (Croom, 2015:49). This balance is important because music that is too difficult can result in anxiety, whilst music that is too easy might promote boredom. In the light of this dimension of flow this challenge-skill balance forms the final factor that impacts musicians’ optimal experiences.

Performance environment and life experiences were identified as a superordinate theme. This refers to preferences regarding solo, chamber, and orchestral settings, in other words individual flow versus collective flow. Sawyer (2006) developed a theory regarding the existence of group flow in music collaborations and argues that group flow is an optimal collective experience. This occurs when members develop feelings of mutual trust and empathy, and the intentions of the different individuals harmonise with those of the group. Furthermore, high flow leads to optimal performance and optimal performance will be the result of a team experiencing collective flow. Sawyer (2006) also found strong correlations between happiness and flow. Therefore group flow or collective flow is based on flow experienced in “relational embeddedness” which in itself will increase satisfaction (Gloor et al., 2013:38). A study by Ascenso et al., (2017) highlighted group identity as a source of meaning, self-actualization, positive emotions and engagement through sharing and learning with colleagues. With regard to performance environment, it is interesting to note the difference in the case of solo-oriented musicians, as relationships appeared hardest to establish and maintain for such individuals. The musicians of the study referred to group projects as sources of well-being through positive relationships. The preference for chamber music in this study emphasises the interactional processes in ensemble music. This preference might be due to a more intimate non-verbal connection with fellow players, which could be related to the personality and temperament of the player. It is therefore possible that the preference for chamber music settings is also influenced by the aforementioned factor of fellow-players.

Secondly, differences in experiences occurred when comparing rehearsals with a performance environment. Although flow is not only ascribed to certain settings, it is clear that the preferred setting of orchestral musicians would be likely to promote flow more than in other settings. The presence or absence of pressure significantly influences the optimal musical experiences of orchestral musicians. This pressure-factor might be related to the “loss of self-consciousness” dimension of flow. It is important for individuals to free themselves of their “inner voice” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), which constantly asks us how we look in the eyes of others, whether we fulfil their expectations and whether our behaviour satisfies all the

accepted rules. The pressure of an audience might therefore inhibit freeing oneself of this inner voice and therefore inhibit flow. However, the data gathered also revealed that performing for an audience promotes flow for certain orchestral musicians. In this regard reward dependence plays a role in musicians' optimal experiences as it is "an individual's tendency to continue ongoing behaviour, prefer attachment, and depend on approval of others" (Teng, 2011:864). That being the case, performance settings are likely to satisfy individuals with high levels of reward dependence, resulting in motivation to further maintain and continue in such an activity. Furthermore, performers fundamentally strive toward communicating to an audience, which creates a strong sense of community amongst performers as well as between performers and listeners. The present study suggests an emotional investment, conveyed through flow that might have a contagious effect on an audience. There are therefore good grounds to hypothesise that performing for an audience will result in flow experiences. The impact of emotional investment forms part of the superordinate theme of Life experience.

Life experience in this study referred to maturity, emotional investment and life experiences. The effect of emotional as well as playing-related maturity surfaced. Past research has established a link between age and the occurrence of flow. In addition, the positive impact of being more mature in terms of playing was also confirmed. There are therefore good grounds to postulate that maturity in playing and technical abilities enables more flow experiences.

The subordinate theme, emotional investment, provided further insight into life experiences. Findings emphasised that values change over time depending on the impact of life experiences. Some participants felt that emotional maturity gained with age positively affects optimal experiences. Aging is associated with positive overall emotional well-being and with greater emotional stability and therefore maturity, previous life experience and the influence of age can significantly impact upon the way in which music is perceived. This study correlates strongly with previous findings that personalities and gender-specific or age-related needs, influence the way in which music regulates the moods of musicians, and consequently possible flow experiences. Thus this study found that life experiences, in the context of age and personality, can have an impact on how music is perceived and hence influence flow.

6.2.3. How does the experience of flow impact experience of overall well-being in orchestral musicians?

The findings of the current study confirmed that music in some settings was healing or at least, therapeutic. Being emotionally invested promotes positive emotions which in turn can result in possible flow experiences. Therapeutic effects, including change of an individual's view of him or herself, of other individuals and of the world, and a stimulus for greater creativity can

be a result of optimal experiences. Hymer (1984) further highlights the therapeutic functions of absorption in flow by suggesting that “absorption”, “engagement”, or “flow experience” consists in “the temporary loss of self through immersion in an object that eventuates in self-enhancement”. Engaging in musical activities has been shown to have a positive effect on mood, quality of life and engagement, and to be a very rewarding activity.

Music practice and participation contributes to meaning and therefore promotes psychological well-being. Furthermore, music helps one to define and redefine self-identity and to know and understand emotions. It also helps maintain personal well-being and seems to have a significant effect on mood improvement. There are therefore good grounds to propose that engaging in musical activities can enable heightened emotional investment and promote the experience of flow and overall well-being of orchestral musicians.

6.3. Answering the main research question: What are the lived experiences of flow in professional full-time and professional part-time orchestra musicians?

The findings of the current research suggest that both full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians experience flow. The essence of the musicians’ responses is that they strongly relate to the experiences of flow and that these experiences can be influenced by a number of factors and settings. Flow experiences impact upon optimal performance which is directly correlated with the well-being of musicians. Furthermore, this study identified several differences between full-time professional and part-time professional orchestral musicians, among which income and pressure negatively impacts flow. However, full-time professional orchestral musicians, regardless of difficulties, still report intense autotelic experiences when performing.

6.4. Limitations of the study

The research provides some initial insights into the lived experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. A number of limitations became evident during the course of the research.

Firstly, the research focused on the optimal experiences of professional orchestral musicians and therefore does not represent the experiences of all performers (amateur orchestral musicians, pianists or vocalists). Further research of a more diverse body of performers is needed to ascertain whether the findings relate specifically to professional orchestral musicians, or whether parallels could be drawn with other kinds of performer experiences.

Secondly, the size of the participant sample was small (eight participants) and therefore does not represent generalized findings. The findings need to be explored further with a larger number of participants.

Thirdly, as this research was exploratory, it generated a large body of data, not all of which could be analysed in great detail. For example, the factors that impact on the optimal experiences of professional orchestral musicians or the differences between full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians could be explored as a case study.

Fourthly, this study did not consider musical performance in genres other than Classical music, or in performance contexts less bound by the need to remain within the dictates of the written score.

Fifthly, the study focused on the South African context of professional orchestral musicians when exploring their experiences and therefore the findings cannot be generalized as global/international opinions.

6.5. Recommendations for future research

The experiences of musicians outside of South Africa can be explored. As South Africa has a unique context regarding opportunities to play and income, it would be interesting to investigate possible differences in the views of other orchestral musicians.

Since certain factors which impact flow were identified in this study, it might be interesting to investigate the extent of every factor and explore possible ways in which these factors can be manipulated in order to promote possible flow experiences.

The current research only explored orchestral musicians' experiences while performing, without distinguishing the possible difference it might make to play from memory. As many orchestral musicians generally perform from scores, it might be interesting to compare how a performance from memory compares to a performance from a score. This could be explored using two performances – one from memory, one with the score – of one piece by the same orchestra or group.

Finally, over the last few decades, significant advances in technological methods which measure and record electrical activity in the brain, such as electroencephalogram (EEG), have been made. It would be very interesting to measure professional orchestral musicians' experiences during performance with the use of an EEG, and correlate these results with performers' self-reports of their performances (as was done in this study). The results of such a study might contribute significant scientific data to the current research of orchestral

musicians' experiences, which has only been explored by literature from a psychological viewpoint thus far.

6.6. Conclusions

The aim of this investigation was to explore optimal performance experiences through the lived experience of flow amongst professional full-time and part-time orchestral musicians. The findings of this study identified four superordinate themes when comparing the flow experiences of the participants. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that various factors impact these experiences. Factors that influence flow formed the first superordinate theme and included instrument, repertoire, conductor, venue, fellow-players and balancing the level of challenge and skill as subordinate themes. Apart from these factors, it was also shown that orchestral musicians are influenced by certain settings. Therefore Performance environment was identified as the second superordinate theme and included the following two subordinate themes: solo, chamber and orchestral settings, and rehearsal or performance settings. The third superordinate theme, namely Impact of life experiences, explored maturity, emotional investment as well as life experiences as subordinate themes. Lastly, it was also interesting to note differences between the experiences of full-time and part-time orchestral musicians regarding their view of the musical activities in which they engage. These differences are regarded as the fourth superordinate theme and included responses about income, available time/frequency of playing, pressure and playing music for the love of it. In conclusion, it became apparent that both full-time and part-time professional orchestral musicians can relate to the experience of flow and that multiple factors exist which can positively or negatively affect their flow experiences.

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Annexure A



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TO: Orchestra members

LETTER OF INFORMATION

To whom it may concern

I, Carmi Viljoen am completing a Masters in Music (MMus) at the University of Pretoria. In my dissertation I aim to explore the lived experience of flow amongst professional South African orchestral musicians. I would like to invite you to be part of the study and share your experiences with me.

Procedures: The study requires that a semi-structured interview should be done by myself and the participant. This interview should not take longer than 45 minutes. No personal information from participating musicians will be required for the study.

Risks and discomforts: There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study.

Benefits: Participation in this study holds no direct benefits or financial compensation.

Participant's rights: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Confidentiality is ensured for all participants as all the information will only be handled and used by myself and my supervisor.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. Should you agree to take part in the study, please complete the informed consent form attached

The data gathered during the course of this research study will be used for academic purposes only, and will be stored at the University of Pretoria for at least 15 years for archiving purposes. Note that the data may be used for future secondary research with your consent. There will be no financial benefits for participating in the study.

Your favourable response will be greatly appreciated.

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Annexure B



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INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand my rights as participant, and acknowledge that all data collected from this study will be stored at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years for archival purposes and potential future research. Data may be used for future research.

Participant's Signature

Date

Annexure C: Semi-structured interview schedule

The questions will be asked in the context of a most recent performance experience.

1. Tell me about your performance experience. How many years of performing experience do you have?
2. Can you relate to this explanation of flow?
3. Can you tell me about the first time you remember experiencing flow?
4. How would you describe and explain that experience?
5. Do you think your flow experience has changed over time? If so, how?
6. Do you experience flow often? If so, how often do you experience flow?
7. Do you think that circumstances impact your experience of flow? Why do you think you sometimes experience flow more in certain circumstances? Tell more me about this.
8. Tell me about factors that impact your experience of flow. For example, would you say factors such as repertoire, the venue, the conductor, fellow-players and so forth influence your experience?
9. Tell be about factors that might inhibit your experience of flow.
10. Tell me about factors that might promote your flow experience.

Annexure D: Example of an interview transcript

Participant 1:

Lecturer in Statistics, UP

Male

27 years old

Oboe

Table 2:

Interviewer:	Tell me about your performance experience. How many years of performance experience do you have?	PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE
Participant 1:	I started playing the oboe when I was in high school. I was in grade 10. This was preceded by two years of violin-study. After a while a felt that, you know like when you're building a puzzle and some of the pieces like ... you know the corner of the sky of the puzzle and you think they are two blue pieces that fit together, but as hard as you try just doesn't fit – that's how I felt with violin. And I mean it with all the love in my heart. And then I eventually decided maybe I should give oboe a go. I heard it on the radio once, one Sunday afternoon and I was like – I like that sound. I think I want to play that. So I started playing oboe and it was quite a drive because we had to drive to Johannesburg for lessons. I didn't have a teacher close by, so I only had lessons once every two weeks, maybe. And I started playing in the local youth orchestras, regional youth orchestras, wind band and youth orchestra and then I moved to Pretoria where I played in the University Symphony orchestra for about four years. And then I started playing more because there aren't many oboists around, and then after that pursued further studies. I didn't study music as a bachelors, but I started with my diploma and after I finished grade eight I did my diploma and I did my licentiate and then that kind of gave me the, well, paperwork in order to be ... I don't want to sound "windgat" – but it kind of gave me the paperwork and it gave me the background and the ... you know I became more skilled. Then I started playing for more professional ensembles	<p>Started playing in high school. Two years violin study before. (Uses metaphor to describe finding a "fit".) Violin didn't fit.</p> <p>Heard oboe on the radio. (moment of crystallization) Liked the sound.</p> <p>Access to teacher every two weeks.</p> <p>Started playing in youth orchestras.</p> <p>UP symphony orchestra</p> <p>(Lack of oboists created a demand- filling the gap). Didn't study music as a Bachelors.</p> <p>Finished grade eight, diploma and licentiate.</p> <p>(Paperwork is important – validation of his skill)</p> <p>Started playing in professional ensembles and orchestras.</p>

	<p>and then eventually I started playing the Gauteng orchestra. I've played ad-hoc for the Johannesburg orchestra, regularly. And I play for the KZN orchestra also regularly. And then with the odd other engagements here and there. This has now included one or two or three or so concerto performances as well. I just mention that to kind of put that into structure of what exactly I participate in. And then uhm, also a few years ago in 2013 me and some music colleagues started a quintet. Incidentally the five of us also now all five play in the orchestra as well. And this is taking now a chamber route. This is where I am heading, so my performance career, if I can call it that, consists of orchestral engagements, chamber engagements on a regular basis and also some solo recitals that I've given at some festivals and so on.</p>	<p>Played concerto performances as well.</p> <p>Plays in a wind quintet.</p> <p>More chamber work.</p> <p>Solo recitals and festivals.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Okay. And how often do you play in orchestra concerts?</p>	<p>FREQUENCY</p>
Participant 1:	<p>If I have to give it a ... on a regular engagement I would say on average two weeks of the month. If that answers the question.</p>	<p>Two weeks per month.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Can you relate to this explanation of flow?</p>	<p>RESPONSE TO FLOW</p>
Participant 1:	<p>Absolutely. O yes, definitely.</p>	<p>Definitely experiences flow</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Okay. Tell me more.</p>	
Participant 1:	<p>It really ... uhm in my experience, especially when you play a solo recital or concerto and you walk onto stage – it sounds like a cliché, but the bold bright lights, and people waiting with bated breath and the sense of expectation that hangs in the air, not only from yourself and not only from the audience, but also from the other musicians on stage. I mean, they are probably the most critical audience of everyone there, besides yourself. And then, I mean, it happens – from what I read of your summary of flow, I mean – flow is in a sense not only losing a sense of time, but imagining kind of that portion of time that you are performing actually disappears.</p>	<p>Experiences flow in solo recital or concerto –(when he plays alone)</p> <p>Describes the excitement of the context of the venue, the lights, the audience's expectation. The expectation of self and fellow orchestra members.</p> <p>(Heightened awareness. Sense of responsibility, excitement, fellow musicians are important – most critical audience. Own expectations are high).</p> <p>Orchestra members and self most critical.</p> <p>Loses a sense of time – time passes faster.</p>