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Auli Irjala

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION  
OF COMPOSERS AND MUSICIANS  
IN FINLAND

Collection of Data



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*Auli Irjala*

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## **1. Introduction**

This study is part of a larger research project on the socio-economic position of artists in Finland. The paper mainly presents the collection of the sample and problems relating to it. A short outline of general problems in defining an artist is presented; the matter is dealt with more thoroughly in studies concerning Finnish visual artists and writers embraced by the project (Karttunen 1988, Heikkinen 1989). The theoretical frame of reference of the study is based on those of Pierre Bourdieu and Howard S. Becker as well as on cultural economics (See e.g. Bourdieu 1985, and Becker 1982).

## **2. On the Definition of an Artist**

When conducting a study on artists the first question to clarify is who an artist is. There is no unambiguous explanation. The point of departure for the definition must be practical in an empirical study. Even the most brilliant definitions are quite useless if the information on people encompassed by it is not available. Definitions can be divided roughly into objective and subjective. An objective definition is based on external characteristics such as use of time, form of income, membership of professional organization, training, public support and prizes, etc. The problem with this definition lies in the fact that the artist is forced to use his time for other work and can also receive the bulk of his/her income from other sources than artistic work. According to a subjective definition his/her proper profession is that of an artist despite these external factors.

It has been said that social science research on the arts must be without aesthetic value judgments, but this is impossible. There is no such thing as a completely neutral definition of an artist (Mitchell & Karttunen 1991: 2). Aesthetic judgments of an "objective" definition are charged in the criteria: training, public support and professional organizations are part of the art world and are subject to certain agreed aesthetic norms. People put value judgments on all their actions and although works of art as such do not contain values, art as a cultural phenomenon cannot be examined free of them. In studies on artists he/she is examined according to the definition of values in the cultural field in his/her own area.

In earlier studies on artists the *modus operandi* has been an objective definition and the most common factors among external criteria are the membership of a professional

organization of artists and the receiver of state grants to artists or corresponding support. (See Söybe & Nergaard 1989; Bontinck et al 1984.) A Swedish study in the early 1970s used the criteria of the membership of professional organization only (Kulturarbetarnas inkomster 1971) and so did Kristina Hautala in the first comprehensive study on Finnish composers and musicians in 1977. A study on Australian artists includes in addition to membership of organizations and receivers of support also those who have graduated from art schools (Throsby & Mills 1989).

### 3. Who is a Professional Composer and Musician?

The definition of professionalism is linked with that of an artist. In the field of music professionalism is a flexible concept and can be defined in many ways. It can be skill, livelihood, post, membership of an organization or training. The difference between a professional and an amateur can be indistinct: an amateur can be skillful and the professional without training. Only some composers and musicians have a post or earn their livelihood from music. According to the Australian study professionalism measures the amount of training, experience or knowledge as well as the way he/she works. A more precise definition does include circular reasoning: a *professional* artist is a person who in the course of the past three to five years has:

- carried out creative work, *professionally* published or performed, or
- worked as a *professionally* performing artist, or
- has been involved in creating a work as a *professional* artist, or
- obtained full-time artistic training, or
- obtained support in order to work as an artist. (Throsby & Mills 1989: 5.)

The following list of criteria for the definition of a composer/musician can be compiled on the basis of earlier studies on artists:

1. a person with professional training in music, and/or
2. a person belonging to a professional music organization, and/or
3. a recipient of state grants to artists, and/or
4. a person who has given as his/her occupation in the census as that of a musician or composer, and/or
5. a client of a copyright organization for music.

### *3.1. Training*

The Sibelius Academy of Music is the only institute of higher education giving the university-level training in creative and performing music and associated occupational branches. It concentrates on western classical music, although jazz and folk music began to be taught in the 1970s and was included in the curriculum in 1983, reflecting changing attitudes and the overlapping of borders. The Oulunkylä Pop/Jazz conservatoire was established in 1972 and in 1986 it was granted the status of a legal conservatoire. It is the only music institute specializing in Afro-American music and popular music. Training in popular music is also given in the Rhythm Institute (Rytmi-instituutti) established in 1990 in Seinäjoki. There are about 140 music schools in Finland of which 60 have legal status.

Training as such will not make a person into an artist. Not all with musical training work as an artist but, for example, as a teacher. There are many autodidact persons and those who have studied music privately. In Australia musicians and composers constitute the largest group of artists who have studied or practiced privately or, outside a public training system (Throsby & Mills 1989: 35). 11 per cent of the members of the Finnish Musicians' Association have not received professional training (Vikström 1985: 6). Training in classical music and popular music have a different status in the field of music. In the former training is strictly organized and forms a fixed part of the entire institution of classical music. In the latter professional training does not have an equally dominant position, there are only a few training institutions and training is not a precondition for access to the field. The use of training as a criteria is mostly supplementary, aimed at reaching young people and those who are not members of professional organizations.

### *3.2. Professional Organizations*

There are many and heterogeneous - some 50 national professional and amateur - organizations in the field of music in Finland. The Finnish Amateur Musicians' Association alone has more than 30.000 members. According to a cautious estimation some 40.000 people in Finland belong to some professional or amateur music organization.



When using professional organizations as a criteria of defining who is a composer or a musician those who have not wanted to organize themselves or do not have the required competence to become a member of an organization are excluded. On the other hand professional organizations may have members who do not practice music professionally. It appears, however, that Finnish composers and musicians are organized to a great extent. According to a questionnaire by the Finnish Musicians' Association, 86 per cent of those who replied estimated that nearly all their colleagues belonged to a professional organization (Vikström 1985: 27). A high degree of organization makes this criteria useful especially if the organizations are distinctly professional. Why then do people want to join professional organizations? There are perhaps two main reasons: to pursue labour market interests and the desire to be part of a group, improving their status. According to the above-mentioned study, the most common reason for joining the Finnish Musicians' Association is to protect income and labour relations interests (40 per cent) the second most common was to secure unemployment benefits (21 per cent) as well as the feeling that one has to belong to an organization (21 per cent) (Vikström 1985: 29, 70). The reason for belonging to the Society of Finnish Composers may be the desire to belong to the composer's elite rather than to protect labour market interests. (See e.g. Leponiemi 1990; Heiniö 1987: 194.)

### *3.3. State Grants to Artists*

The state plays a part in the field of arts and through its support measures participates in the definition of an artist. The national arts councils act as proctors in the field. A person who has received a state grant or a prize has been accepted in the field. It appears that arts councils certainly do not extend the limits of the field because the grant policy focusses on those persons who have made their way to the field by other routes. The Act on Artist' Grants stipulates that "priority must be given to artists who have proved their competence" when distributing grants for periods of more than one year. A long-term (15 years) grant is given to an artist over 40 years of age and with a reputation. (L 734/69.) Although the Act does not in the field of music give guidelines in respect to types of music, public support does not cover the entire music field, but concentrates on classical music. Decision makers believe that classical music holds a key position when attempting to develop and foster cultural heritage and to

educate the people, and that popular music with commercial links can live without support (Heiniö 1987: 194).

Through their organizations artists are also themselves represented in the national arts councils. When selecting the members of the National Music Council, the professional music organizations, and institutions as well as various cultural organizations are heard. The cultural heritage and values of the reference group is reflected in the decisions made by the members of this Council. (Oesch 1990: 11, 19).

### *3.4. Census Data*

The population census uses the classification of vocations compiled by the Central Statistical Office. Classifications for vocations in the arts are drawn up in such a way that music professions are included in two main categories: 1) musicians and composers (category 076) and 2) performing artists etc. (category 075) whose sub-group is singers (0753). Singers are defined as persons who "perform parts in operas, operettas, for example, as well as those in concerts and in churches; perform folk songs, pop music and such like; sing in choirs or are soloists in orchestras". Musicians and composers are understood to mean persons who "compose or adapt musical works, conduct orchestras, play in orchestras or do other work related to music". (Ammattiluokitus, professional classification 1987: 66-67.)

The number of musicians excluding singers, opera singers and pop singers in 1970, 1980 and 1985 (Liikkanen 1988: 22, professional classification from the year 1980):

	total	percentage of women
1970	2779	12.3
1980	3230	18.6
1985	4642	29.7

### *3.5. Copyright Organizations*

There are two copyright organizations in the field of music: Teosto, Finnish Composers' International Copyright Bureau and Gramex, the Copyright Society of Finnish Performing Artists and Phonogram Producers. Teosto monitors copyrights of composers, lyric writers and adaptors and pays copyright fees. It also grants rights to

perform and record music and monitors their implementation. It has about 7000 clients of whom 65 per cent are composer-lyric writers, 21 per cent composers, 19 per cent lyric writers and 4 per cent music publishers. It is impossible to distinguish professional composers from its clientele. There are differences in the numbers of works composed and works performed but it is not possible to define a professional based on them. Gramex monitors the rights of performing artists and phonogram producers and pays recording fees. A performing artist receives compensation only as a private individual and is liable to preliminary taxation. However, producers receive their fees without preliminary taxation. Gramex has about 1700 producer-clients and 17 000 artist-clients who are classified as musicians, soloists and conductors. It is not possible to distinguish between a professional and amateur musician among Gramex clientele either.

#### **4. Earlier Finnish Studies on Composers and Musicians**

Kristina Hautala's study "The Structure and Economic Status of Artists in the Fields of Drama, Dance, Music and Industrial Arts" (1977) examines the position of composers and musicians. In it the definition of the artist is based on membership of professional organizations, as has been done in the present study but there are differences in the selection of professional organizations. Hautala has included her study music teachers, church musicians and Music Officers of the Finnish Army, which are not included in the present study.

As part of the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions' organizational study project the Finnish Musicians' Association carried out a questionnaire study among its members in 1985 (Vikström 1985). There have also been studies conducted on composers and musicians residing in Helsinki and Ostrobothnia (Keskinen & Pettinen 1986; Hakanen 1990) and on orchestra musicians (Uurtimo 1975).

#### **5. The Present Study**

##### *5.1. The Definition of a Composer and Musician*

In this study the definition of the professional artist was made on the basis of one of the aforementioned criteria, membership of a professional organization. The other two

most useful criterias would have been receiving professional training and receiving a state grant. The great number of educational institutions makes the use of training criteria difficult. Resources would not suffice to include in the study everyone who has graduated from the Sibelius Academy, various conservatoires and institutes of music. Between the years 1980-1989, 280 persons have received a state grant for music for periods of one, three or five years. 43 of them did not belong to any of the 7 professional organizations in 1989. Fifteen year grants were awarded to 11 persons who are all included in study group through their respective organizations. By contrast, including these 43 outsiders in the study would have made the categorization difficult. These categories are used to examine the heterogeneous study group. Receivers of grants cannot be handled as a separate group of their own because it differs from categories compiled on the basis of organizations. Non-members of organizations cannot be dealt with among the members of the various organizations because it is not clear to which group they might belong. One person may belong to the organizations of pop music and classical music composers, or both an organization for jazz and rock music. The number of persons who receive grants but are not members of professional organizations is relatively small (43) compared to the whole group (4132) so it has been excluded from this study.

There is no register of composers and musicians in Finland so this could clearly not be used as a criteria. Works presenting Finnish composers do exist but they are limited and reflect the values of their time and their author.

The study examines the members of the seven Finnish professional music organizations. The organizations are:

- Solo - the Association of Recording and Performing Artists in Finland
- The Finnish Jazz Federation
- The Finnish Musicians' Association
- The Opera Singers of the Finnish Actors' Union
- The Association of Finnish Soloists
- The Society of Finnish Composers
- The Guild of Light Music Composers and Authors ELVIS.

Membership criteria differs by organization. The Finnish Musicians' Association requires recommendations from two members. Finnish Composers requires quality production of at least five works and a recommendation by one member. ELVIS

requires published works (without quality criteria) and Teosto membership. The Board of Directors of the Association of Finnish Soloists elect members who must be highly qualified - quality is proved by the winning of a competition, for example, or by performing at least two live concerts in Helsinki. A performing artist active in the field of music and over the age of fifteen can become a member of Solo. The Jazz Federation is a joint body for 34 sub-organizations and does not have individuals proper as members, but a register with "jazz musicians who have performed gigs". The Musicians' Association is most distinctly a professional organization because it is affiliated to the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions. It is the largest organization in terms of membership having 3137 members in 1989. Correspondingly the other organizations had a total of 995 members.

The Musicians' Association is divided into sub-sections according to locality, type of music (Rock Musicians, Popular Musicians) and their field of competence (Conductors, the Choir of the Finnish National Opera). Other than regional sub-divisions are dealt with as groups of their own in this study (membership in brackets): the Choir of the Finnish National Opera (48), Finnish Conductors (20), Rock Musicians (253), Popular Musicians (391). Members of the Choir of the National Opera and the Opera Singers of Finland's Actors Union are joined together under the heading Opera Singers (113). There was no overlapping between these two sub-organizations. Thus the number of organizations to be dealt with as separate groups is ten.

The Finnish Organist Society (560 members) and the Music Teachers Association in Finland (1700 members) are excluded from the study because their inclusion would have excessively increased the study group, already large. Restaurant Musicians (about 200) and Ship Musicians (about 200) did not give information on their members.

The organizations, the sub-sections of the Finnish Musicians' Association and their members included in the study:

Solo - the Association of Recording and Performing Artists in Finland	96
The Finnish Jazz Federation	180
The Finnish Musicians' Association	2425
Popular Musicians	391
Rock Musicians	253
Finnish Conductors	20
The Choir of the National Opera	48
The Opera Singers of the Finnish Actors' Union	65
The Association of Finnish Soloists	307
The Society of Finnish Composers	89
ELVIS	257
<b>Total</b>	<b>4131</b>

One person can belong to more than one professional organization. Table 1. shows the overlapping of membership.

*Table 1. Overlapping of membership in different organizations.*

	ELVIS	Jazz Federat.	Conductors	National Opera	Musicians Association	Opera-singers	Rock musician	Soloists	SOLO	Composers	Popular musicians
ELVIS	257										
Jazz	28	180									
Conductor	2	0	20								
Nat. Opera	1	0	-	48							
Musicians Ass	20	14	-	-	2425						
Opera sing	0	0	0	0	2	65					
Rock	28	44	-	-	-	0	253				
Soloists	0	2	1	2	71	28	0	307			
SOLO	14	0	0	0	4	0	4	5	96		
Composer	13	6	1	0	4	1	1	0	0	89	
Popular m	44	33	-	-	-	0	-	0	14	0	391

There is no overlapping between the sub-sections of the Finnish Musicians' Association.

## 5.2. Sampling Method

The study is carried out using a sampling method with allocation of quotas and systematic sampling. The allocation of quotas was chosen because memberships in organizations vary greatly; the smallest sub-section has 20 members (Conductors) and the largest 2425 (Finnish Musicians' Association). The sampling was carried out on the basis of three quotas: 1) small organizations 100%, 2) medium sized organizations 30%, 3) the largest organization 16%. A simple random sampling method was used because the number of the basic group was known and it was in a random order (alphabetical order A-Ö). In the quota for medium sized organizations every third was sampled whereas in the largest quota every sixth. (See Liedes & Manninen: 1974.)

Sampling by quotas:

### *Small organizations: 100%*

	membership		
Finnish Conductors	20		
Opera singers	113		
Jazz Federation	180		
Society of Composers	89		
Solo	96		
<b>Total</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>--&gt;</b>	<b>498</b>

### *Sample 1. Medium-Sized Organizations: 30%*

	membership	sample	
Popular Musicians	391	131	
Rock Musicians	253	84	
ELVIS	257	85	
Soloists	307	102	
<b>Total</b>		<b>402</b>	<b>--&gt; 402</b>

### *Sample 2. The Largest Organization: 16%*

	membership	sample	
Musicians' Association	2425	404	
<b>Total</b>		<b>404</b>	<b>--&gt; 404</b>

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**Sample total** **1304**

65 people belongs to more than one organization. Of those 57 persons belong to two organizations, 7 to three and one to four organizations. The final sample totalled 1230 individuals.

Table 2. Overlapping of membership in the sample.

	ELVIS	Jazz Federati	Con- ductors	Musicia Associat	*Opera- singers	Rock musician	Soloist	SOLO	Com- posers	Popular musician
ELVIS	85									
Jazz	5	180								
Conductors	1	0	20							
Musicians	0	2	-	404						
*Operasing	0	0	0	1	113					
Rock	4	15	-	-	0	84				
Soloists	0	1	0	3	8	0	102			
SOLO	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	96		
Composers	4	6	1	0	1	1	2	0	89	
Popular	7	9	-	-	0	-	0	5	1	131

\* 'Operasingers' includes the Choir of the National Opera and the Opera singers of the Finnish Actors' Union.

In the estimation of the sample gender and age division was taken into account.

Table 3. Average age and share of men and women in different organizations and in the samples.

ELVIS	total	men	women	women %	men/women	average age
organization	257	238	19	8	12.5	47.0*
sample	85	79	6	8	13.2	46.8*
Rock Musicians	total	men	women	women %	men/women	average age
organization	253	229	24	10	9.5	31.5
sample	84	80	4	5	20.0	31.3
Soloists	total	men	women	women %	men/women	average age
organization	307	172	135	<del>78</del> 44	1.3	44.5*
sample	102	55	48	<del>87</del> 48	1.4	42.2*
Popular Musicia	total	men	women	women %	men/women	average age
organization	391	353	38	<del>11</del> 10	9.3	43.5
sample	131	115	16	<del>14</del> 11	7.2	43.3
Musicians' Asso	total	men	women	women %	men/women	average age
organization	2425	1823	583	<del>32</del> 24	3.1	37.0
sample	404	298	104	<del>35</del> 26	2.9	39.0

\* No data available for all the members in the organizations.



## 6. Classification of Music

*Today hardly any other form of art is equally clearly divided into various sub cultures as music. Each of them have their own musical language, musical awareness, norms and world of values, their own musicians and audiences, organizations and institutions as well as their own socio-economic position and history. -- The existence of various types of music does not create differences of opinion so much as their connotative labels. (Heiniö 1987: 187.)*

Dividing music into serious and light or into art and entertainment is connotative. As Kimmo Salminen puts it (1989: 13-14) the borderline between art and entertainment should rather be sought after within different types of music and not from an overall picture. The term classical music really means more sophisticated western music of a certain period, not all music that is termed classical. Although everybody probably understands the meaning of light and classical music, one should use more specific terms. The possible seriousness or lightness of music is a subjective adjective not a term for types. In his classification Salminen uses the threefold division: classical music, popular music and folk music (1989: 17). Heiniö adds jazz music to this as a division of its own. Of these classifications classical music is the most distinctive because training and public support concentrate on it. What the other types have in common is that they are outside systematic training and support. The joint feature of jazz and folk music is that they are not entirely tied to the commercial cultural industry like popular music is, but partially belong within the sphere of public support as classical music does. (Heiniö 1987: 187-188.)

Hautala divides her research group into representatives of classical and light music. Her representatives of classical music include orchestral musicians, organists, military bands and music teachers (1977: 85). For the sake of comparison division into two can be used in the present study, however, using classical music and popular music as terms. In a more precise division the organizations will form the basis for classification.

## 7. Creative and Performing Musicians

In the Artists' Grants Act (A 845/69) artists in the field of music are divided into creative and performing artists. Its practical application is that the artist has to signify which one he/she belongs to (nowadays many consider themselves as both) when applying for a state grant. In the field of music this reflects the dominance of classical music because in it, the division into two is more unambiguous than in other types of music in which creative work and performance cannot be distinctly separated. Thus creation means composing - the creation of something new. Presented side by side the division seems implicitly to exclude the creativity of a performer as though performing music would not require creativity. Kimmo Salminen has used the terms "creative creativity" (kreatiivinen luovuus) and "interpretive creativity" (tulkinallinen luovuus) which take better account of the creative nature of both functions.

Heikki Laitinen has examined closer the concept of composing and divides it into three according to the time when a work is performed: 1. composing in advance, 2. composing at the time of performing and 3. composing afterwards. Composing in advance can be writing music which is characteristic of classical music or by composing while playing which in turn is characteristic of rock music. Also composing at the time of performing i.e. improvisation is a feature of popular music. According to Laitinen improvisation became less important in classical music at the beginning of last century. Copyright does not recognize improvisation either. Composing afterwards means the retrospective handling of a phonogram which takes place in studios. In official contexts only advance music writing is considered composing. (1990: 16-17.)

1. composing in advance
  - writing music
  - composing while playing
2. composing at the time of performing,  
i.e. improvisation
3. composing afterwards

In this study the intention is to examine the profession of a composer and that of a performing musician separately. However, the terms creative and performing musician were not purposely sought. The division into two will be based on organizations, in other words members of the two organizations of composers: the Society of Finnish

Composers and The Guild of Light Music Composers and Authors, ELVIS, are considered composers. It is clear that many artists do both - compose and perform.

**LIST OF TABLES**

*Table 1.* Overlapping of membership in different organizations.

*Table 2.* Overlapping of membership in the sample.

*Table 3.* Average age and share of men and women in different organizations  
and in the samples.

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