

# Proposal of the Simple Three-Phase Musicians' Career Model (Preparation/Education, Active Playing and Fading/Extention) Reflecting Subjective Aspects of Professional Musician'S Life



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**Abstract:** *Careers of professional musicians are unique and their development cannot be fully generalized, as shown by interviews with instrument players and singers of classical music and musical in Slovakia. Their careers do not include all standard career stages; only three of them were identified in all respondents: preparation (tied with music education), active playing (associated with growth, peaks, crises, decrease) and career fading/extinction. The time limits of these stages cannot be set, as they considerably differ. Majority of musicians claim to overcome a professional crisis. A common feature of all respondents' careers is music teaching job at a certain point in their own careers.*

**Keywords:** *musician, career, career model, phases, education, crisis*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Performing musicians, professionals who seem to be always prepared to give excellent performances, who are expected to mediate the music to the audience at the top level, who give impression of dedicated people to art, who might have a reputation of eccentric individuals with their peculiarities. Being a musician is not only profession, it requires commitment, enthusiasm and certainly quantum of hours invested in preparation and mastering own skills, and enormous effort put in the performance itself. Musicians' work should be reflected in their careers that are – as musicians themselves – very specific and original. However, their career growth can only be estimated based on subjective criteria; and financial award frequently does not match their performance level, abilities and preparation. The career of a musician is one of the partial interests in our qualitative research. A number of publications dedicated to professionalism describes careers, but they mostly focus on high management, or on various forms of business and helping professions. A smaller amount of works about sport careers is available, but studies about musicians' careers lag far behind other researches.

The majority of scientific papers and articles focus on various problems, such as playing related musculoskeletal disorders, health problems among musicians, coping with stage fright and anxiety linked to performance, effective practice strategies, musical talent etc., but only few of them pay partial attention to the career development from the ontogenetic point of view. Among the most relevant contributions we can mention researches by Maria Manturzewska (1980), Karl A.

Ericsson (1993) Laura Hölzenspies (2009), David Hargreaves (2017), and others.

### 1.1 Defining a career of a musician

In order to clarify the term career we chose a definition that emphasizes the developmental aspect: “*Career is a long-term process of accepting and executing professional positions and roles, serving to achieve planned goals that are important in the life and the work of the individual.*” (Letovancová, 2015, p. 117) The scholars distinguish professional career and occupational career. Both are developmental sequences, but one is dominated by the autonomy of the profession from the institution and the second one is tied to workplace regulations and occupational norms. Thus, a professional career is a broader concept. It can be developed independently of the institution or organization in which the individual works. (Wieglerová, 2017, p. 10) In our study, we focus on professional careers, because a number of musicians are freelancers not employed in institutions, and thus, they cannot climb the career ladder in the sense of getting higher positions in one organization. We will therefore understand the musician's career as a sequence of evolving experiences gained by performing a music profession in different environments.

In common denotation, career could be defined as “*a progress towards higher status, a higher social position associated with higher prestige, a higher share of power and a higher income level.*” (Petrušek et al., 1996, p. 476) In this sense, classical musicians often do not reach a higher social status or significantly better income, as their career progress, but they gain prestige in the form of better contracts, performing at more famous stages and with prestigious orchestras, higher fees... The share of power in musicians' careers is questionable, since the power usually reflects the position in the ensemble, or is associated with certain jobs (such as the artistic leader, orchestra section manager, principal of a orchestra section, conductor etc.), and therefore usually does not increase when a musician stays at the same music career.

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On the other hand, the natural authority increases with the experience and age.

### 1.2 Professional musician's theoretical career models

The career of a musician can be planned, but its building depends on a number of factors. Sufficient talent, musical abilities, personality requirements and satisfactory physiological predisposition are the prerequisites for success. In addition, it is essential to create the conditions for developing the talent, for acquiring skills and experience, that is, social support and material equipment (the availability of a musical instrument and a place to practice) are necessary. These assumptions form the basis for a successful career of a musician. It should be noted that the child's reference family plays very important role in the beginning of the career. J. Hroncová explains that the family is the "starting point of the socialization process and the connecting bridge" between the individual and society" (Hroncová et al. 2016, p. 55), in which the musician will work and develop his/her career.

Understanding career from the developmental point of view, we can assume that career in classical music requires thorough training. Ordinarily, professional performance activities start during or after finishing the latest phase of the preparation of the expert musician. In the past, several career models were created. We point on some that are linked directly to music and to some, that were created in connection to teaching profession (we find significant correlates between teachers and musicians careers – such as inevitable preparation, own educational standards, licencing process, social status, financial situation, original norms and ethic, commitment and dedication etc.).

(1) M. Manturzevska (1990), after making interviews with 165 Polish professional musicians in 1976-1980, identified 6 stages: sensory-emotional sensitivity and spontaneous musical expression and activity development (up to 6 years of age, resp. when a child starts attend music lessons), intentional musical development (important for the technical development – up to 12/14 years of age), artistic development (until a student graduates from a conservatory), first professional stabilisation (peak of the performance activities; until the fatigue appears and the musician seeks for different activities – still giving concerts), teaching (a number concert performances decrease), systematic retreat from professional activities (slowly retiring from performing and/or teaching music).

(2) K. A. Ericsson (1996) described three stages in the development of elite performance, which are separated by three milestones: year in which practice was initiated, transmission to full-time involvement and experts seeking to make eminent achievements. After the third milestone, the "fourth phase of efforts to go beyond the available knowledge of one's teachers toward an individual creative contribution to the domain" follows (Ericsson et al., 1993 In Ericsson, 1996, p. 19). Later on, Krampe and Ericsson (1995) added one more stage, and after the fourth one (when a musician makes a living playing and/or teaching), the fifth stage appears, during which a musician slowly give up performing and usually continue teaching.

(3) P. Krbat'a (2008), inspired by the biodromal psychology, distinguishes four main developmental phases: the period of playing, schooling, artistic self-realisation/work/stabilisation in music profession and retirement/senescence/last years/death. He characterises the self-realisation period as "the period of transition from

musician's dependence to independence" (Krbat'a et al., 2008, p. 147) with many problems, in which the musician is in risk of personal resignation. However, this stage is a stage of the first stabilisation in music profession that lasts approximately between 35 and 45 years of age. At that point, the first signals of regress appear, and the musician start to prepare for retirement (55-65). The social status and authority peak, the musicians usually dedicate their time to teaching and more seldom to giving concerts. (Krbat'a et al., 2008, pp. 135-152)

Further, the teacher's career models could be modified and applied to musicians. As an example we can mention models by various experts (more detailed list provides i.a. J. D. Eros (2011)).

- Fessler & Christensen (1992), who describe eight stages (with hint of parallel to burn-out effect phases): preservice, induction, competency building, enthusiastic / growing, frustration in the career, stability, wind-down, and exit from the career.
- Huberman (1993), who took into consideration hesitation and possible change of direction, and defined seven stages: entry of the career, stabilisation, experimentation, reassessment, serenity/relational distance, conservatism, disengagement.
- Steffy et al. (2000), who distinguish six phases: novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus.
- Oravcová & Kariková (2011) – they present the following phases of the teaching profession: choice of the profession, preparation and studies, adaptation to the teaching profession/accepting the teachers' role, stabilisation and identification with the teaching profession, stability and termination phase. (Oravcová, Kariková, 2011, pp. 116-131)

### 1.3 Career crisis

At a certain point of the career, majority of professionals face the crisis. Their experiences could be the consequence of not meeting their needs or lack of motivation. The needs that can be saturated in the professional music activity could include Maslow's self-fulfilments and psychological needs (e.g. self-actualisation needs, esteem needs, social needs), Alderfer's growth, relatedness and existence needs, Herzberg's motivational and hygienic factors, McClelland's needs of achievement, power and affiliation etc. (Kollárik, 2011, pp. 312-327) One of the warning signal of starting crisis could be the loss of satisfaction due to the high influence of negative factors, such as noisy environment, poor psych-hygiene (high stress level, stage fright etc.), low financial assurance, exaggerated aspirations and expectations, unfavourable personal traits and so on. One of the main reasons for crisis occurrence are health problems, most often the playing-related musculoskeletal disorders or hearing loss.

Musicians, who overcome the crisis and continue at their path, cannot resist the calling of music, which is stronger than the negative mind set-up or social conditions for career development. Musicians usually decide to stay with music, sometimes with slight variation in genre, position or as a member of different ensemble.

When their music ‘job’ ceases to saturate their needs, they look for new opportunities in music careers and only seldom they give up music completely. Most of the time is the decision to quit linked to health complications, that not rare in performing artists.

## II. METHODS

Musicians’ careers are very distinctive and the model reflecting various subjective aspects of professional musician’s life is missing. Our goal is to uncover typical career progress/regress of a classical musician and suggest a career model that would portray careers of the majority (if not all) of musicians we interviewed. We concentrate on biographical approach, and (at this point) we do not try to specify various determinants of the career development or consider social, ecological, transactional or other approaches. We focus only on typical phases of the career development, and also on characteristics of each phase (including the career crisis).

We conduct a research in which we collect information about musicians’ lives through in-depth interviews. So far we recorded 10 professional musicians in Slovakia (the interviews were conducted between 1.12. 2018 and 15.1.2019). To choose the interviewees we applied purposeful sampling, in which the main criteria were set to receive answers from representatives of various performing specialisations (who play string instruments, wind instruments, keyboard instruments, percussion, and singers), representatives of various age groups (from 31 to 59), representatives of various performing professions (solo players, orchestra players, accompanists, solo opera singers, choir singers) etc. Applying heterogeneous sampling enabled us to capture wide range of musicians’ perspectives of their own careers.

After recording and transcribing the interviews we applied CAQDAS to perform basic data analysis. We approach the data with data-driven coding and we were building the coding scheme without prior conceptualisation (however, we analysed the semi-structured interviews). In addition to qualitative analysis, we used some elements of quantitative analysis.

In the following text, we bring partial results of an ongoing research.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Phases of the musicians’ careers

Based on our research, we tried to describe a model of musicians’ career which would represent the career course of our respondents. We wanted to eliminate the partialisation and find phases during which all respondents went through.

#### 3.1.1 Preparatory phase

The first stage of a musician’s career is the preparatory stage. Successful musicians start to prepare for their careers in their early childhood. It is no exception that children begin with instrument playing at three-four years of age, they attend classes and practice several hours a day. The most frequent reasons for this could be, on the one hand, the interest of the child and, on the other hand, the parent/teacher ambition. Undoubtedly, this intentional training cannot be considered systematic purposeful preparation for the career of a musician. Children (4-6 year olds) simply take music classes, but the reason behind it is

not their vision of a career in music, but the interest in music itself (or the parents’ influence). Most of them do not think about their future profession, but we also interviewed those, who claimed that they never had doubts about their music vocation. They answered the question: “When did you decide to become a musician?” using following words:

- “I think that when I was born; I had a moment when I wanted to be a combat pilot, like any little child, but the music dragged me ... like, I heard the music calling from childhood on.”
- “Well, I knew it since childhood, that I was a musician. I didn’t become one, I just was one...”

In our own experience, children from a musically rich social environment show faster start of musical development in its early stages. “Morrongiello (1992) observed that musical practice leads to more precise perception of melodies, better musical memory, and earlier sensitivity for keys.” (Gembris, 2002, p. 490)

Our respondents began preparing for their careers at different ages. However, their formal music education usually started at the age of 6. Even though they had previous experience with perceptual activities and amateur interpretation, they started formal music education only when they entered elementary school (6 years), in two cases at the age of 9 (for the unavailability of the music school/study department in the region). Two respondents started formal music training after finishing primary school at the age of 14. One of them was a self-taught guitar player and a singer. This contradicts many former researches, in which the early stimulation of music potential is necessary.

After completing the first stage of education, professional musicians continue to study at the secondary or tertiary levels. In Slovakia, the secondary level represents a conservatory. Students go to conservatory for 4-6 years (after successful completion of graduation exams in the 6<sup>th</sup> year, they receive the title DiS. art. – diploma specialist of art, which qualifies them for teaching at elementary music schools). The tertiary level is provided at universities with an artistic focus, where students complying with requirements are, after three years, awarded the title Bc. and, after two more years, Master of Art (Mgr. art.). Some musicians continue their doctoral studies. The preparatory phase does not have to include all three levels – it can be quit after the second level. When a student is extremely gifted, (s)he can start at the second exceptionally at the third level without prior systematic music education.

Our respondents’ length of studies was very variable, as shown in the following graph.

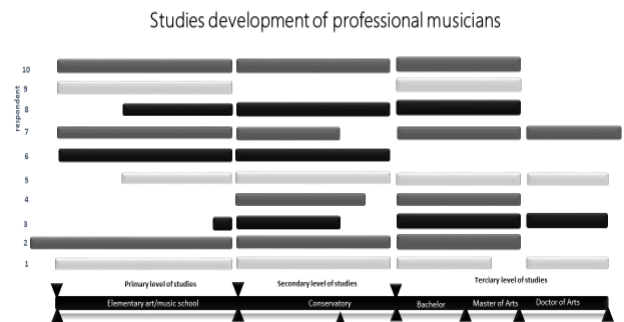


Figure 1: Studies development of professional musicians;  
Source: own

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Very important turning point in the career of a musician is the decision to become a professional musician. We were interested not only in the time of making this decision, but also in the person, who initiated the idea.

**Table 1: Decision making to become a professional musician**

Person who initiated the idea of becoming a musician	Age (years)	Occasion
The musician himself	9-10	seeing a live performance at the opera
	10-12	<i>"I just felt that the music was the one that I enjoyed most and what worked for me the best of all; because I also played football, but I wasn't such a good football player as a music player. So ... I made a decision."</i>
	12	meeting a famous interpreter
	12	choosing the secondary education school
	? before entering conservatory	listening to the records of famous performer
teacher at elementary music school	13	graduation concert performance
parents	13/14	choosing the secondary education school
teacher at the conservatory	16-18	<i>"We communicated a lot, analysed the things..."</i>
Teacher at the general education school	16	<i>"And in the second year, a new physics teacher came from the college ... He arranged my life for me. For he gave me four "failed" grades, I said "Enough". I'm going to the conservatory."</i>
sister	18	choosing the university

Source: own

The decision of a musician to become a professional musician results in active systematic preparation at the conservatory or at the higher level of music education. After graduating, the musicians enter the second stage of their career, the active interpretation.

**3.1.2 Phase of active interpretation**

The phase of active interpretation is usually the longest phase of musicians' career. It starts after finishing the systematic education. (Many musicians continue to master their performing abilities under the supervision of experienced interpreters, they take private lessons, attend workshops and seminars. However, these activities are not systematic, and therefore, we excluded them from the first phase.) Several authors, e.g. Kolláriková in Kasáčová (2004, p. 45), link the beginning of the active career with the adaptation phase following the preparatory phase. Usually it lasts 7 years (Oravcová, Kariková, 2011, p. 121). We did not identify any adaptation phase in our respondents, as early musicians' professionalisation starts already during their studies: they meet at school with music professionals in praxis and many of them often work part-time or have occasional incomes from music activities. Thus, student musicians have working experience (in performance) and are able to anticipate what they would have to face in praxis. Moreover, only few of them seem to have a pre-formed, unchanging idea of their careers, and hence, they are more open to different possibilities – they worked in theatres, orchestras, as accompanists, soloists, members of chamber ensembles, freelancers, later as teachers, etc. Only one response indicated discrepancies between what the musician expected from the praxis and the reality.

We have not recorded the stabilization stage in musicians' careers, either. Their work in different ensembles and environments keeps changing throughout their careers, and even in older age, some of them are not decided to remain with previously chosen 'job'. However, three respondents have a stable position in an ensemble or institution. One of them found his locus in jazz bands, even though he was studying classical music (though, these bands are not the only source of his income and, along them, he also plays classical music and teaches at the conservatory - also in the field of classical music):

- *"... in my two bands, it works so well that we haven't exchanged for years. With [band name] we have been together for about 18 years and with [band name] about 14 or 15 ... it is so incredible, but it works..."*

In some cases, the musicians also moved within different musical genres. The genres popularity evidently evolves over time. Four respondents fluctuated between classical music, jazz, chanson and evergreens.

In all cases, the musicians identified themselves with the role of professional musician during the stage of active interpretation. They set various goals, worked on their accomplishment and they were looking for self-realisation in the music performance. During this phase many of them overcame a crisis, which could (but in our respondents did not) cause leaving the chosen path. The second characteristic feature of this phase is reaching the peak of the career and culmination of performing activities.



The musicians' career is in many cases blocked by certain factors. They might be divided into three groups: social, psychological, and physiological. According to our respondents, they include 'social dysfunction' (inability to attend meetings with managers, to keep good relationships with 'important' people), health problems (not necessarily related to playing, such as ageing consequences or injuries), lack of time (due to the necessity to give many concerts, resp. take another job – usually teaching or playing in a number of ensembles/groups for financial reasons), rivalry (unfair competition), anxieties and actual mental state, certain personal traits (such as laziness, bad habits, lack of discipline),

The phase of active interpretation lasts until a musician starts 'slowing down'.

### 3.1.3 Extinction phase

At certain point of a musicians' career, due to biological changes, his abilities start to decrease, his movements slow down, motoric skills deteriorate, his memory worsens etc. Inevitable changes influence the performance at various music professions differently (singers can usually give excellent performances longer than some instrument players).

Musicians start giving concerts more rarely, and they try to transmit their experience to younger generation through teaching activities. They calm down and try to accommodate to the changing conditions. The health issues are accompanied with changing attitudes toward their profession.

B. Kasáčová specifies the last career stage – professional extinction stage (burn-out), as "a period of professional extinction or conservatism characterized as a pre-retirement period as well..." (Kasáčová, 2004, p. 56) The age limit of this phase is questionable. On the one hand, we were unable to identify extinction stage in our respondents over the age of 50, but on the other hand, reluctance, fatigue and apathy have already appeared in some musicians in the young adulthood (31 years old). One respondent terminated his career due to health problems when he was approximately 48 years old.

We have registered the extinction stage in two musicians. It was signalled by the absence of interpretative goals in one case and by the fatigue, apathy and loss of motivation in the second case. It should be noted that majority of our respondents did not experience the extinction stage also because their age ranged from 31 to 60 years of age, and only five of them were over the age of 50 when career termination is expected. According to German authors Gembris and Heye, the turning point appears between 40 and 50 years of age. "During this period, musicians feel they leave their youth behind and join the older age group. This is also the time when they feel they have left behind their period of peak musical performance and are now on a downward slope. The majority of musicians notice that their performance is declining due to a range of age-related factors that can be divided into four categories: physical problems, cognitive problems, sensory organ problems and psychological problems." (Gembris, Heye, 2014, p. 371) In our sample, respondents of this age, except one, did not mention any events suggesting the presence of the problems described above. One orchestral player had to give up trumpet playing (but not his musical career) for musculoskeletal problems. He perceives lack of prevention to be the cause of his problems:

• "... I should have been more careful not to destroy myself. I can't blame anyone ... Actually, I lacked the recovery. With the time passing, I can evaluate it. That this will be the biggest, the most likely cause of it [playing the instrument] not working..."

Examined musician's career development does not correspond to the career stages of other professions, and therefore we have tried to compare it with musicians interpreting other genres. However, our respondents – classical musicians did not even demonstrate career stages like jazz musicians. Differences have already been noted at the beginning of their careers, as no peer recognition plays a role among classical musicians - as opposed to jazz musicians, in whom the recognition of peers is associated with the beginning of their careers: "The typical trajectory entails a successful introduction of a musician into a field, followed by increasing recognition among peers at jam sessions, stream of engagements and among critics." (Kirschbaum, 2007, p.187)

It is evident that it is not efficient to limit musicians' career phases by their age or years of praxis. Though, it is obvious that the classical musicians' career requires professional training and that after the phase of active playing, the extinction phase will appear. This could be representing simplified model of Super's developmental career approach (Gothard et al. 2001, p. 17), in which the stage of growth (birth – 14) and stage of exploration (15-24) would be conjunct, also the stage of establishment (24-44), and stage maintenance (44-64) and the decline (65+) would be kept separated.

### 3.2 Career growth and crisis

#### 3.2.1 Career growth and trajectory of a musician's career

Career development logically includes its growth, peak and decrease. However, in musicians, the career growth differs from other standard careers. It is impossible to debate about musicians' career promotion/ladder climbing, if (s)he does not work in an institution, since neither career levels nor career positions are available for professional freelance musicians. More research would be needed to find criteria to decide which career periods are career peaks. Indicators of musician's career growth could be music job in a major institution, post of the head of the instrumental section in the orchestra, reaching the position of a soloist, the prominence of orchestras, performers and conductors with whom the musician performs, or the importance of the events in which (s)he participates. These indicators are not comparable to each other and therefore, it is not possible to decide whether a person playing a concert with the Slovak Philharmonic in Bratislava or a person attending the London international music competition is at the higher career stage.

The experts mention specifics of career growth, e.g. in teaching profession as follows: "Career growth is specified by: 1. an effort to improve in a given field, 2. an effort to gain benefits through academic titles, 3. an effort to get the working positions – chief worker, dean, vice-dean." (Chudý, Neumeister, 2013, p. 13) Only the first one of these specifics applies to the sphere of musical art, but is not objectively measurable either.

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### 3.2.2 Professional self-development and self-reflection

The musician's career development and its course is closely related to self-development. On the one hand, the career itself is influenced by it, and vice versa, self-development is determined by the career. B. Kosová described self-development as "a complex of relationships to oneself that includes the cognitive, evaluative, transformative and communicative relationships." (Kosová, 1998, p. 54) Further, in cognitive level, she points on self-awareness and self-cognition, in the self-esteem level on self-evaluation, self-reflection, self-respect and self-confidence, in the self-transformation level on self-motivation, self-control, self-governing, self-improvement, self-education, and in the communication level on self-expression. (Kosová, 1998, pp. 55-56) Our respondents invest time in professional self-development mostly in the sense of practicing (9), going to concerts to follow the events on the music scene (10), watching videos with famous performers (9), and more rarely (3) reading music literature (biographies). In the early years of active performing phase they participate in workshops, and seldom take private classes. Two of them visit their former teachers to get advice about their performance or further path.

We have recorded inadequate self-perception and career-perception in two musicians. Both of them perform well in public, they are successful soloists performing both at home and abroad, but in privacy they have many doubts about themselves and their abilities. They described their careers as follows:

- "... right after school, I shot up myself very [obscurity] high, I stayed there for a long time, stagnating, because there was nowhere to go ... and now, my career declines, I would say so..."
- "... It has never been any career. It was always such a starting something, choking, smoking ... some fire for a while, then just a smoke again, then it was out for a while, then it just smoked again. Well, you know, I don't really consider this to be a relevant career I have..."

### 3.2.2 Career crisis

Integral part of a career development in many professionals is a career crisis, during which they consider leaving the profession. We were interested in how many musicians overcame a crisis and by what thoughts it was accompanied.

Table 2: Career crisis in professional musicians

		Thinking about terminating career		Wanting to end up career		Sum
		yes	no	yes	no	
Experiencing crisis	yes	2	2	2	1	7
	no	1	2	0	0	3
Sum		3	4	2	1	10

Source: Strenáčíková, 2019, p. 50

The respondent, who did not experience the career crisis, was thinking about ending his career for financial reasons (however, he would not give up the music, just keep it as a hobby).

- "... I never thought I'd end up with music ... sometimes, at the university, I was thinking, whether I would do it to the full or whether I would have music as a hobby, to play sometimes, when there is an opportunity, but that I will make a living with something else. But then the music won, because it is like a drug..."

Of those musicians who overcame the crisis, two did not consider ending their careers at all, and one believed that he didn't want to end up with the music:

- "... That was when I couldn't play ... I was at that doctoral studies and I said to myself: "I wouldn't give up this [playing], at least until I finish this [studies]"..."
- "... The music crisis certainly was there, but it was never at the stage that I wanted to quit [playing]..."
- "... Well, I had such thoughts in that pre-graduation period, when I couldn't make it ... How desperate I was, and destroyed mentally, but quit? No ... never..."

Two musicians considered terminating their career during the crisis:

- "... Well, I had such periods already at school ... then the same stage was maybe in the popular band that ... I told myself: "This is enough." So, from time to time, one thinks whether he should not do something else..."
- "... now I am in the second stage that I do not enjoy it [playing], more or less I find it annoying, therefore I cannot enjoy the music anymore, I cannot take it as a hobby ... I often wonder whether it is worth ... the stress ... maybe I would end the music career sometimes..."

Two musicians have decided to end their career during the crisis:

- "... Yes, I overcame crises that seemed like I will not be able to overcome them."
- "...At akada [university – informally, note of the author] I had that crisis ... I really wanted to quit it [music] and to do something completely different ... Well, it certainly took three years ... I had stupid concerts ... My memory was failing, and there were terrible moments on the stage ... Well ... then of course ... gradually, it started somehow breaking into better performances..."

Two musicians tried also other professions during the crisis.

- "... I worked as a messenger, then I delivered pizza on the scooter in the winter in [city name] ... I was doing all sorts of horrible jobs, driving drunkards home... I started doing harder manual jobs, like in the warehouse..."
- "... I worked in the store with electric supplies, in a match factory, for some time I was considering a taxi driver's job, I was trained to be a caregiver in a stationary for disabled, and even I cleaned the sport halls. But miraculously, I always returned to my muse..."

## 4. Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the information about careers that musicians shared with us, we found two common features of all respondents' careers:

- (1) all of them took up teaching job at some point in their lives,
- (2) all of them passed through the preparatory stage linked to professional music education and the stage of active interpretation (with the perspective of a career fading/extinction).

Other common career characteristics for some, but not all music professionals during that period of life, when they perform their professional music activities:

- (1) facing and overcoming the music crisis (7x),
- (2) considering quitting or wanting to terminate a music career (5x),

(3) adding other genres to the classical music in the performing focus; such as jazz, chanson, musical etc. (4x),

(4) playing on ships during a certain period of life (3x).

The collected data suggest, that the careers of professional musicians are so diverse and non-straightforward that it is impossible to strictly determine partial phases that would suit all musicians and reflect all subtle and fine differences in their life-course. The only stages we have found (and can expect to occur) in all classical musicians' careers are: the preparatory stage (decision making and gaining certitude about the professional music career and following studies), the stage of active interpretation (associated with growth, reaching the peak and decrease; many times with integrant crisis), and the stage of career extinction (occurring after the musician changes his mind-set about his vocation, many times caused by effects of ageing). Also, we detected frequent transition to pedagogical career. From the above, we suggest a three phase model of a musician's career. The model would consist of three phases that follow each other, and which cannot be precisely limited by time (neither the years of age, nor the years of performing): preparatory phase, the phase of active interpretation, and extinction phase. The time of their emergence and their duration depends on many determinants that should become subject of further research. Within majority of musicians, the career crisis occurs during the phase of their active interpretation. Similarly, further research would be needed so as to uncover relations and principles within emerging and overcoming career crisis in musicians.

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