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# The Experience of Authenticity Across Three Music Disciplines; Music Therapy, Music Teaching and Music Performance

## Preliminary Findings of a Phenomenological Interview Study

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### Abstract

Across music disciplines, authenticity has been referred to in various ways. Within music therapy and music teaching, only sparsely has it been discussed focusing on the intrapersonal aspects of authenticity. This study seeks to explore and understand authenticity as experienced and expressed by three music professionals practicing within the areas of music therapy, music teaching, and music performance, the goal being primarily to deepen, enrich, and understand the authenticity experience to possibly benefit professionals and their clients, students, and audiences. Three music professionals holding various professional backgrounds were selected based on their assumed ability to reflect on this rather philosophical topic. Preparatory materials were sent out to participants prior to conducting two semi-structured interviews – 1 solo interview and 1 group interview. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed through a thematic coding analysis revealing four meta themes: 1) paradoxes in language and action, 2) imbalance and inauthenticity, 3) roles, relationships, masks, and 4) the field of authenticity. Findings were discussed with chosen theory synthesizing the experience of authenticity as being associated with several interconnected elements: relationship (with self and others), role (self-chosen and assigned), context (role fits the context), professionalism (having skills needed, letting go of control), and personality (transparent persona).

**Keywords:** authenticity; inauthenticity; music therapy; music teaching; music education; music performance

## Introduction

During her professional life, the first author experienced many different situations in which she has questioned and reflected upon her own personal authenticity and inauthenticity – in the roles as a music therapist, music teacher, and music performer. She has been using the concept of authenticity primarily as a tool of consciousness both in reflective retrospection and in the musical, practical here-and-now with clients, students, and audiences. To investigate if and how this concept could be valuable for music professionals across disciplines, this article presents a research study in which the experience of authenticity from three music professionals of different professions is empirically and theoretically explored. This focus is motivated by a presumption that the concept of authenticity could possibly enhance awareness and self-reflection around our practical and professional life, and ultimately be a tool to qualify our professional work for the benefit of clients, students, and audiences.

The concept of authenticity is complex and heterogenous and has been applied within a diversity of disciplinary and theoretical frameworks such as management, marketing, tourism, psychology, sociology, and philosophy (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Kovács, 2019; Lehman et al., 2019; Newman, 2019; Newman & Smith, 2016). From a philosophical stance, authenticity is generally considered a concept within a dynamic process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ in a world that changes rapidly (Small, 1999; Yacobi, 2012). Even though the concept of authenticity has been ruminated since ancient times and can be related back to the writings of Aristotle (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Kovács, 2019; Taylor, 1991), authenticity is often associated by scholars with European existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Rousseau, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus (Donaghy, 2002; Golomb, 1995; Taylor, 1991; Varga & Guignon, 2020; Yacobi, 2012; Yehuda, 2013).

In terms of defining the concept, ‘true (to oneself),’ ‘trustworthy,’ ‘genuine,’ ‘real,’ ‘honest,’ and ‘sincere’ are some of the terms often used to clarify what authentic means (Dammann et al., 2021; Lehman et al., 2019; Moore, 2002; Newman, 2019). However, as Golomb states, “the notion of authenticity, it seems, signifies something beyond the domain of objective language, while the notions of sincerity and honesty have to do with attributes to which language can refer directly” (Golomb, 1995, p. 7). Likewise, Kernis and Goldman (2006) state that the concept is at the very “limits of language” (p. 284), consequently resulting in many loosely described definitions. Some recent scholars find the concept problematic and even argue that the concept of authenticity should be avoided in academia because it is such an indistinct and indeterminable concept, and an unobtainable state of mind (Feldman, 2015; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019; Lehman et al., 2019). The concept can indeed be quite problematic to approach and employ, as Feldman (2015) states:

...thinking about authenticity and consciously trying to be authentic might produce a kind of self-consciousness that is in fact antithetical to authenticity and actually characteristic of *inauthenticity*. The behavior of such hyperself-conscious people may thus appear and also, from the first-person perspective, *feel* phony or pretentious precisely because these people are trying so hard to be “authentic”. (p. 128)

Furthermore, according to Varga and Guignon (2020), critics of authenticity argue that the concept could be associated with narcissism (Lasch, 1979, as cited in Varga & Guignon, 2020, p. 8), self-centeredness, and collapse of society (Bloom, 1987, as cited in Varga & Guignon, 2020, p. 8), and even cause an erosion of the market mechanisms (Bell, 1976, as cited in Varga & Guignon, 2020, p. 9). Charles Taylor summarizes this critique of authenticity as a general concern regarding individualism and self-indulgence, and thus lacks a broader worldview that could possibly be the result of a focus on individual

authenticity: “This individualism involves a centering on the self and a concomitant shutting out, or even unawareness, of the greater issues or concerns that transcend the self, be they religious, political, historical. As a consequence, life is narrowed or flattened” (Taylor, 1991, p. 14).

Taylor does not adhere fully to the critique but highlights how the root of the problem in understanding authenticity could lie in the difficulties of conveying the concept through “the normal fashion of social science explanation” (Taylor, 1991, p. 19). He argues:

What we need is a work of retrieval, through which this ideal can help us restore our practice. To go along with this, you have to believe three things, all controversial: (1) that authenticity is a valid ideal; (2) that you can argue in reason about ideals and about the conformity of practices to these ideals; and (3) that these arguments can make a difference. (p. 23)

In this study, we do consider authenticity as: 1) a valid ideal, although somewhat difficult to discern, and we hope through this article to 2) approach the term, argue in reason for it, and relate it to three different musical professional practices. Unfortunately, we do not know if and how this study on enhanced awareness about the term authenticity can 3) make a difference for other music professionals and their clients, students, and audiences.

We start off our investigation of authenticity building on the rigorous work of Lehman, O'Connor, Kovács and Newman (2019). As a “step toward an integrated framework of authenticity” (p. 25) the researchers uncover through their expansive literature review, an overall framework for the understanding of authenticity from a marketing/management-based point of view, and with connections to other academic disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology. The result of the review is a conceptual framework consisting of three ‘C’-views of authenticity: 1) authenticity as consistency: “An entity is authentic to the extent that it is consistent in terms of its external expressions on the one hand, and its internal values and beliefs on the other hand” (Lehman et al., 2019, p. 12), 2) authenticity as conformity: “An entity is authentic to the extent that it conforms to the social category to which it has been assigned or that it has claimed for itself” (p. 28), and 3) authenticity as connection: “An entity is authentic to the extent that it is connected to a person, place, or time as claimed” (p. 37).

In relation to the present study, Lehman’s first view of authenticity, authenticity as consistency, is of most relevance when trying to approach the internal experience of authenticity. When further elaborating on authenticity as consistency, Lehman’s research refers to Goffmann’s (1957) theatrical metaphor of ‘front stage’ (the outer and public life) and ‘backstage’ (the inner and private life) and the various interpretations of these two stages. Assessing the consistency of how someone’s behavior (front stage) is aligned with the assumed inner representations (backstage), can either be the individual or others judging this individual by asking: Is the entity true to itself? (Dammann et al., 2021; Lehman et al., 2019).

In a complementary way and in a response to the article from Lehman, Dammann, Friedrichs, Lebedinski and Liesenfeld (2021) view authenticity “not as a static concept, but as a developmental process, a subject to change” (Dammann, 2021, p. 1). They refer to Lehman’s 3C-framework of authenticity and add a fourth category: authenticity as continuity: “The continuity perspective captures the developmental character of authenticity, the ever-changing relationships between an individual and himself/herself, others, and the social norms his/her life is embedded in” (Dammann et al., 2021, p. 1-2). To be authentic would in this regard mean being true to and relate to a self that exists within different social contexts.

Authenticity as continuity holds a process-perspective that is both connected to the continuously changing surrounding social norms in which a person is situated, as well as

continuously changing internal and external relationships. These relationships, they argue, are “different across the lifespan; they are different for the same person as a child, adolescent or adult” (Dammann, 2021, p. 2). A supplement to this understanding could be found in Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) notion of ‘multiple selves,’ where the human being is considered having inherent polarities (e.g., feminine-masculine, introvert-extrovert, etc.), which could be thought of as constituting figure-ground aspects of personality with one aspect of these dichotomies (‘figure’) being more dominant than the other (‘ground’). As people function with greater authenticity, they will be able to bring these multiple and perhaps contradictory self-aspects in different life situations into play (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Furthermore, Kernis and Goldman touch upon the term ‘ego’ when correlating findings in research on authenticity and research on mindfulness suggesting that “authenticity relates to non-ego-involved attentiveness and awareness of internal and external stimuli” (p. 329). Hence, the exact opposite of the concerns of the earlier mentioned critics of authenticity.

It is worth noticing that inauthenticity plays a meaningful role in Dammann’s understanding of authenticity as continuity. According to Dammann, experiencing inauthenticity is vital to the understanding of authenticity as it allows for continuous re-assessment and development. In connection to the present study, this view of authenticity as continuity seems similarly relevant when investigating the experience of authenticity by music professionals practicing within different institutions and with various clients, students, and audiences.

The challenge of these two views of authenticity lies within the interpretative nature of the phenomenon (Dammann et al., 2021). It is not possible to objectively judge whether another person is authentic, rather it relies on subjective feelings and assumptions. It must be the individuals themselves who evaluate the inner experience, being a music therapist, music teacher, and music performer, in this study.

### ***Authenticity in Music Professions***

When looking more specifically on the concept of authenticity within the literature of the three music disciplines, authenticity and inauthenticity are referred to in various ways by therapists, teachers, and performers. However, within the music therapy literature, it has only quite sparsely been applied in relation to the intrapersonal experience of authenticity (Dahl, 2018; Hadar & Amir, 2018; Rickson, 2010), and rather seldomly been applied in relation to the authenticity of instruments, musical genre or culture, or to the clients’ authenticity (Chong, 2009; Uhlig, 2006; Veblen, 2018; Yehuda, 2013). The same applies for music teaching literature where the intrapersonal experience of authenticity is rarely referred to (Laurson, 2004; Vannini, 2006), but understood primarily in relation to instruments, culture, or to the teaching of songs and musical works staying as close to the original as possible (Johnson, 2000; Kallio, Westerlund & Partti, 2014; Ojala & Väkevä, 2015; Palmer, 1992; Väkevä, 2009). Within music performance literature, authenticity is used in multiple ways referring both to the authenticity of instruments, genre, or a given stylistic-historical period (Kivy, 1995; Ojala & Väkevä, 2015; Rubidge, 1996), as well as applied in relation to the intrapersonal experience of the performer (Dolan, 2010; Kivy, 1995; McKinna, 2014; Newland, 2013). Moreover, the concept is considered in relation to an outside assessment of the authenticity of a performer or performance (Auslander, 2008; Behr, 2015; Bratus, 2016; Moore, 2002; Strand, 2014). However, even though the phenomenon of music and music making could be used as a lens through which it is possible to learn more about authenticity as concept, phenomenon, or tool, to the best of our knowledge it has not yet been explored and connected across music disciplines. It seems that in the expected quest of striving to enhance awareness as a music professional and, ultimately, increase value for clients, students, and audiences, there can be valuable

knowledge to find and share across these disciplines.

## Research Questions

This leads us to the following research questions:

- 1) How can the concept of authenticity be experienced and understood by music professionals practicing within the three different professions of music therapists, music teachers and music performers?
- 2) How is an experience of being authentically present as a music therapist, music teacher or music performer connected to the experience of the relationship with the clients, students, and audiences?

## Methods and Research Design

The current study serves as follow-up research within a larger research project, called Music, Families, and InterAction (MUFASA) which focuses on different potentials of three different music activities – music therapy, music teaching, and music performance – with volunteer, non-referred families with children in public schools aged 7-10. The study has been evaluated by The Regional Committees on Health Research Ethics for Northern Denmark, and it was declared that ethics approval was not required. As an initial exploration on how to investigate and interview about the concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity, two preliminary interviews with three music professionals not participating in the MUFASA-project were conducted, the findings of which will be elaborated in this article.

The research project is situated within the humanities and structured within a qualitative research paradigm holding a constructivist perspective, and thus not aimed at finding specific *effects* of authenticity. Rather it is focused on the different music professionals' subjective and individual *experiences* of the phenomenon, and in that sense, pertaining to phenomenological, hermeneutical, and existential worldviews. Interpretivist methods are applied, which offer a flexible research design in close relation to the given empirical data (Bruscia, 1998; Jackson, 2016; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The semi-structured interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014) was chosen as a method of gathering rich data (Jackson, 2016) on music professionals' experiences of own authenticity and inauthenticity.

## Participants

Three purposefully selected music professionals were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. These were not practicing solely within one specific professionalism; music therapist, music teacher, or music performer, but rather made use of different combinations of these three in diverse settings. Hence, a rather heterogenous group of participants.

*P* has a MA in music therapy from Aalborg University, and in addition, 2 years of vocal training. He is an experienced music therapist, a singer/songwriter/producer, and musician performing in various original musical constellations.

*H* has a BA in music therapy from Aalborg University and 2-years basic education on church organ. She is an experienced music therapist, as well as having long-term experience as a musician playing and performing improvisational music in various constellations.

*N* has a MA in Popular Music (singer/songwriter) from The Royal Academy of Music, is an experienced music teacher, musician, composer of several albums, and a vocalist/musician in various original bands and improvisational orchestras.

The music professionals, also referred to as interview persons or interviewees, were



invited primarily based on the assumption that they would be able to reflect upon the rather philosophical and abstract phenomenon of authenticity, while also having practical experiences with feeling both authentic and inauthentic while working as music professionals, hence being capable of providing information about the phenomenon under investigation (Jackson, 2016). The recruitment thus functioned as purposeful sampling (Gioia et al., 2010; Palinkas et al., 2015).

### **Procedure**

In preparation for the interviews and to clarify own assumptions, preconceptions, and personal experiences, the first author wrote an epoché containing 18 narratives related to her experiences of both authenticity and inauthenticity (3 of each) when practicing within the three different music professions. This was done both to allow these assumptions and preconceptions to become conscious in order for them not to interfere with the ability to apprehend other people's experiences (Jackson, 2016), as well as being an initial attempt to approach and understand the concept from a researcher viewpoint. As Van Manen (2014) states, "if we want to come to an understanding of the meaning and significance of something, we need to reflect on it by practicing a thoughtful attentiveness" (p. 221). The epoché was further explored and elaborated through use of the Repertory Grid-software applying 12 narratives from the written epoché as elements (Jankowicz, 2004). This gave the author the opportunity to compare the narratives across disciplines and relate to experiences of both authenticity and inauthenticity. Finalizing the epoché before preparing the interview guide and conducting the interviews revealed biases and preconceptions. In that sense, it has been possible to be mindful of leading and biased questions, and to unfold the subjective experiences of the interview persons.

Through preparatory material, the music professionals were all informed about the theme and purpose of the interview, as well as the task they were expected to perform providing transparency and understanding of the research process and its findings (Potter & Hepburn, 2012). The preparatory material contained a short and very general introduction to the concept of authenticity, and a few questions regarding their individual experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity when practicing within their disciplines. It also included questions about their music making experiences, and questions regarding their professionalism. The preparatory material, which can be found in the [Appendix #1](#) "[Preparatory material](#)" in its full length, was sent out three weeks prior to the interviews, aiming to enhance the level of reflection and abstraction based on practical and concrete experiences.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The first interview was a solo interview with P. and was conducted and recorded on Zoom lasting one hour and forty-three minutes. The second interview was a group interview with H. and N., also including musical, improvisational exercises, and was conducted on-site and recorded on Dictaphone lasting four hours and two minutes.

The interview guide was loosely structured with an open question at the onset: "First, could you tell me a little bit about why you agreed to participate in this interview regarding authenticity?" to which all three interviewees expressed being interested in the theme and having positive expectations of gaining new insights. Moreover, the opening question generated elaborate reflections on the theme, which then led to various follow up-questions. These could concern specific situations in which the interview persons had experienced themselves as either authentic or inauthentic, and how that experience felt, or they could be related to their thoughts, feelings, sensations, and impulses while music making with or for other people. Furthermore, there were questions regarding their



terminology and how/if they made use of the concept of authenticity or rather applied other related concepts. Finally, the interviewees were also asked to reflect upon quotations from literature on authenticity, specifically whether they did or did not resonate with the content of the quotations. P. reflected upon chosen quotations during the interview, whereas H. and N. wrote a reflection upon chosen quotations after the interview. The full interview guide and the quotations from literature can be found in the [Appendix #2\) “Interview guide”](#) and [Appendix #3\) “Quotations on authenticity.”](#)

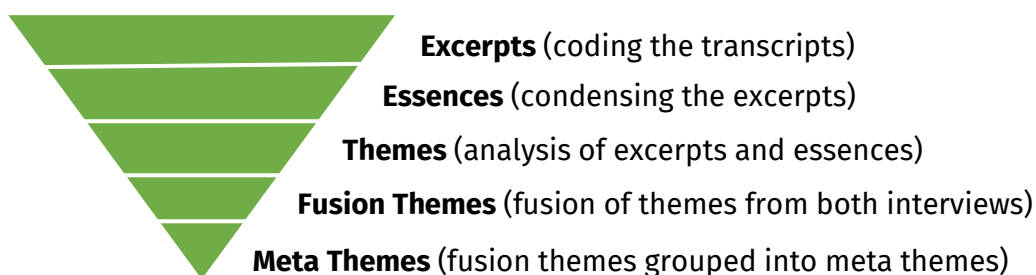
The interviews were transcribed in their full length in a careful and respectful full verbatim, including acknowledgement tokens (Potter & Hepburn, 2012), while minimizing outbursts and ‘uh’s’ to enhance flow and readability. Pauses in the conversation were marked with [...].

A thorough thematic coding analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Robson & McCartan, 2016) was then applied with a focus of not only obtaining knowledge about these specific persons’ individual experiences and meaning making, but also to search for patterns and themes within and across the statements of the three interview persons. The overall data analysis was inductive with the purpose of allowing “research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238) and, ideally, to let these themes develop into a “model or framework that captures key themes and processes judged to be important by the researcher” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238)

Regular word processing software was used in the coding and analyzing of the two interview transcripts. Chosen text excerpts were copied and pasted into a new document under headlines which served as emerging themes. Each interview was analyzed separately starting with the solo interview. Almost all text in each interview transcript was coded and categorized under one or more themes. Each of the coded excerpts was then reformulated into essences, holding a strong connection to the meaning and the wording of the initial text excerpts. All through the coding and analyzing of the interviews, the transcripts were read and re-read several times and the interview recordings were played and re-played to fully dive into the data and to ensure that the reflections and lifeworld of the interviewees were brought forward as clear as possible in the themes and their essences.

The themes found through this first level of analysis (P-interview = 26 themes; H&N-interview = 29 themes), along with their essences and the interview quotes from which they were derived, were all sent for member check to the interviewees. Feedback, corrections, and further elaborations from member check were then added to the data material.

In the further process of merging the two interview analyses, themes from each interview analysis were merged into fusion themes. Some themes were split up in that process and some were excluded when being assessed of falling outside the scope of the study. The process resulted in ten fusion themes which were further grouped under four overall headlines or meta themes. The whole process of analyzing the interview transcripts all the way to the meta themes can be described visually as a process of going down a funnel:



**Figure 1.** The Analysis Process.

## **Validity and Trustworthiness**

The research has been conducted considering Bruschia's standards of integrity for qualitative research (1998) and Stige's EPICURE evaluation agenda (2009).

The issue of validating a qualitative research study is, according to Bruschia (1998), not only a question of methodology and external assessment of the accountability of a study, but it also "requires holding oneself accountable to one's own values within the context of values operating within the entire research community" (p. 197). This is parallel to the concept of 'critique' and 'engagement' from EPICURE (2009). It should be noticed that the first author highly identifies with the study design herself, as she is both an active music therapist, music teacher, and musician, and has often previously been considering her own authenticity in her work across these disciplines.

Considering Bruschia's ideals of quality for qualitative research, we believe the present study holds integrity with regards to relevant criteria such as 'credibility' with the methodology being appropriate to the study, the goals, and the predicted outcomes, as well as with regards to construct validity, with the findings and categories being appropriate representations of the data. The semi-structured interview was used to produce as clear and varied examples of the phenomenon as possible, striving for optimal sampling and a thick description. The data comparison was done within and between participants by meticulously and thoroughly analyzing the full dataset, developing categories, modifying, and refining those categories, merging categories, and finally synthesizing the findings. All these ideals of criteria can also be referred to as processing from EPICURE as described by Stige (2009).

## **Findings**

The analysis process resulted in the following four meta themes:

- *Meta theme #1: Paradoxes in language and action.* This meta theme covers expressions regarding the difficulties of talking about the phenomenon and finding the words to describe it, as well as the conflicting and contradictory issues regarding the attempt to connect the philosophical concept in an academic manner with the practical and lived experience of the phenomenon.
- *Meta theme #2: Imbalance and inauthenticity.* This meta theme covers expressions on how it can be, at times, challenging to navigate the professional roles and retain authenticity. It also covers reflections on experiences of inauthenticity, and the elements and circumstances that generate these specific experiences for the interview persons.
- *Meta theme #3: Roles, relationships, masks.* This meta theme covers expressions regarding authenticity in different professional contexts and within different disciplines, as well as differences and similarities across the experiences of the three interview persons. Furthermore, it covers reflections on how the relationships with others and with oneself can interfere with the experience of authenticity. Finally, it includes how the notion of 'persona,' or 'mask,' could be understood as a vehicle of conveying the inner life of the music professional.
- *Meta theme #4: The field of authenticity.* This meta theme covers attempts to describe and convey the experience of authenticity itself. Furthermore, it includes expressions and reflections on how the experience of authenticity could be approached. This includes issues regarding letting go of control, being musically skilled, being aware of individual energy, and being attentive outwardly and inwardly.

Meta theme	#1: Paradoxes in language and action	#2: Imbalance and inauthenticity	#3: Roles, relationships, masks	#4: The field of authenticity
Fusion theme	Authenticity as a non-linguistic and non-conscious experience	The balance between professional roles can affect authenticity	Different roles but same feeling of authenticity	The experience of authenticity
Fusion theme	Academia versus practice	Inauthenticity	Authenticity and relationships	The road to authenticity – an attempt to ‘point’
Fusion theme		Authenticity and values. When you ‘knock yourself’ a bit against the context	Masks. Layers. Roles.	

**Figure 1.1.** Meta Themes and Fusion Themes.

Figure 1.1 gives a visual overview of the hierarchical structure of the four meta themes and their constituting fusion themes. A more elaborate overview, including the themes applied from each separate interview, can be found in the [Appendix #4\) “Overview - themes, fusion themes, meta themes.”](#)

### Meta Themes Explained

In this section, the above four meta themes and the fusion themes from which they derive will be elaborated further staying as close to the interview persons’ expressed experiences and reflections as possible. In order for their voices to come forward as clear as possible, citations under 40 words will be in italics. Later, in the further dissemination of the analysis, the findings will be discussed and activated with relevant presented theory.

#### *Meta theme #1: Paradoxes in language and action*

Fusion theme: Authenticity as a non-linguistic and non-conscious experience

The three interview persons all expressed the experience of authenticity as a phenomenon hard to grasp through language but on the other hand something very accessible in practice. The experience of authenticity is not necessarily difficult to achieve, as N. puts it: “(...) *it’s mega-accessible, you know,*” but it can, according to the interviewees, not be captured with thoughts, words, or techniques. “*It’s like grabbing for clouds,*” P. states while N. explains: “*Well, as soon as you’ve said it, it’s gone, you know.*”

Being authentic is something you are, not something you are aware of being.

Fusion theme: Academia versus practice

N. sees no point in reading a textbook on authenticity and claims that “*a textbook on authenticity would probably be the worst I could get... [laughs].*” In her opinion, it would distance her from the experience itself. According to H, language can help one to “*point in a direction*” – towards the experience of authenticity – and support a more precise communication. However, she also adds that ‘pointing in a direction’ is not the same as being there, as language is a limited form of expression and not everything can be made available through language and verbal and written communication.

*Meta theme #2: Imbalance and inauthenticity*

Fusion theme: The balance between professional roles can affect authenticity

Two out of the three interviewees are both music therapists and musicians. For one music therapist/musician (H.), she shares that both disciplines “*are in play when I’m in play*” for her experience of authenticity to be strengthened. The other music therapist/musician (P.) experiences how his authenticity is challenged when he, from the outside, is assigned a different role than the one he has taken on himself. He describes experiences with patients and relatives who are video recording him doing music therapy. This creates an experience in P. of being “*pushed into a performer role.*” The therapeutic space is challenged and the ‘we’, who would otherwise maintain the therapeutic space, disappears when they are “*no longer with each other.*” He experiences himself as distanced by the protruding smart phones. He becomes self-conscious and his authenticity is challenged. He experiences how he “*withdraws things,*” in the sense that he does not intervene musically or verbally in the same way, also for ethical reasons, and hence no longer can “*enter the intimate therapeutic space*” with people whether they are patients or relatives.

## Fusion theme: Inauthenticity

According to the three interviewees, inauthenticity can be related to issues such as self-assessment of own abilities, self-judgment, and self-awareness. It seems to be related to divergent expectations from within and from others, and can cause superficial communication, routine responses, and technique exercises. Inauthenticity can also appear when being tired and lacking energy. N. thinks that people can sense when she experiences herself as inauthentic, however, they probably do not realize what exactly they are sensing, she elaborates, as there are many things similar to it. In her view, it is “*easier to accept the semi-authentic than to engage in a deeper and perhaps more demanding presence.*” H. supports this point of view stating that we, in society in general, “*are so used to encountering an inauthentic presence that it does not alert us wildly.*” This supports N.’s experience that people may sense inauthenticity, but may not know exactly what it is, nor let themselves be affected by it. P., on the other hand, has experienced how people react when he is feeling inauthentic, low in energy, and not present:

As a survival mechanism, I have some psycho-structures that step in and make me seem kind, still. That I still listen, that I still do all these things, but my presence inside is frayed. So, that means I get the form of presence: I look like I’m a therapist, I sound like I’m a therapist, but I can see that... in the dynamics of the patients I can see that something is missing. They do not engage in the same way as they did before.

Consequently, when form and content of the therapist, in this case, P., do not match, the therapeutic relationship is affected by it. According to N., human life unfolds on the spectrum of the two opposites, authenticity and inauthenticity, and she believes that it is very much about developing a flexibility between the two and accept both states, so the bridge between them becomes shorter.

Fusion theme: Authenticity and values. When you “knock yourself” a bit against the context

N. has, in some organizations, experienced how poor conditions for music education makes authentic music teaching impossible. There is a schism between N.’s values and how she considers music could and should be taught in a meaningful way for her, and then on the other side, the practical possibilities, and economic conditions for music teaching in the organizations: “*(...) the framework that exists for teaching music ... I simply don’t feel like I*

*can fit into it. (...) And be there... and pass on what I would like to pass on."*

P. reflects upon the values of his workplaces and describes these as "*political tic-boxes*," generalized categorizations that do not have much significance in practice. He expresses himself as somewhat opposed to such 'tic-boxes,' and he sometimes considers himself to be in opposition to the prevailing view of science in the workplace.

<i>Meta theme #3: Roles, relationships, masks</i>
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Fusion theme: Different roles but same feeling of authenticity
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According to the interviewees, the inner experience and sensation of authenticity can be the same regardless of professional context. For N., authenticity can arise when experiencing being part of something greater, both when teaching and performing:

So, it's this feeling that... that you're going from being preoccupied with yourself. Are you good enough? Are you doing well enough? And then to ... being a channel for something else. Helping something along the way. That you unfold a piece of music or some words or, well... Something that comes through.

The ego may well be satisfied by being in that process of authenticity, according to N., but it does not hamper the process. The ego is not a governing element. The ego is, as N. experiences, too slow to be able to control and influence that process. Something is happening that N. herself cannot anticipate or predict on a conscious level.

Some elements of difference between disciplines and roles do appear in the interviews. Even though the feeling of authenticity is the same, the focus and foundation of that feeling seem to be different.

As a music teacher, you can register but put aside your immediate emotions. You focus on the students' motivation and the use of music, genre, or lyrics as a basis for dialogue, reflection, and creative and musical development. As a music therapist, you focus on the patient's needs and desires, and have a non-judgmental, open, respectful approach to all types of music. The music is conveyed from an authentic place in the music therapist and can thus be used therapeutically. As a musician, you can let go and do what the music asks for seeking 'brutal honesty' in the creative process as a starting point for an artistic process. A musician is more at the center of events and the music is given a greater leeway, as P. expresses when reflecting on the difference between being a musician and being music therapist: "*(...) when performing on a stage you can disappear into it [the music] and then you can, like, wake up afterwards. But here [in music therapy] there is a hyper-attention... or a fusion with what is there and those who are there.*"

Fusion theme: Authenticity and relationships
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The experience of authenticity is, according to all three interviewees, influenced by the relationship with others and the relationship with oneself. Regarding the question of what it means to be oneself, H. responds, "*that is the question we must all carry with us and work to answer.*" According to H., it is this scrutinizing that drives us to artistic work, but also to existential and spiritual development. Being authentic is experienced by H. as "*a motion (...) outwards - towards the others, inwards - back to yourself again.*" It is not a condition that lasts, and the easier it is to find confidence in surrendering to the fact that authenticity is a motion, the faster the reciprocal interaction can occur. For example, facing outwards, towards others, facing inwards toward oneself; no matter what, it is an interplay. Authenticity is about listening, according to H., both inwardly and outwardly. The opposite of listening is anticipating events and having expectations and opinions in advance. In P.'s experience, there is a minimum of two instruments in music therapy:

music therapist and client. The client's "*fine-tuning of body and mind*" affects the authenticity of the music therapist, according to P.:

I am the instrument in a way, but... but the patient is, too. So that means, they fine-tune themselves as well. They fine-tune their bodies. And that is ... I cannot measure and weigh how much the music comes from them, but I know that their attitude toward what is happening makes a big difference in terms of how well I can work with the music.

Authenticity is, by P., experienced as coming from a 'we,' from the dynamic interaction between him and the patients.

Fusion theme: Mask and Persona
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In her developmental work as an artist, N. has applied theatrical masks as a way of exploring her musical material. This has revealed unknown and surprising expressions and led her to question what it means to be herself and to realize how both "*the outer shell*", *the context and the circumstances we are put in, shape the person we think we are.*" According to H. and N., we always wear a mask, a filter, an exterior, or a persona which characterizes and affects the person we think we are. Ideally, this persona is transparent, focusing and enhancing the expression of the interior, thus enabling an authentic meeting with others.

H.: Yes it... 'persona' it means 'mask,' and it was the mask of the Greek tragedies ... theatres, comedies, tragedies which was made to focus the sound of the actor to the audience sitting on the ...

N.: So, it was almost like a microphone-like...

H.: Yes.

N.: Oh! Wow ...

H.: And in that way, you can say, it is ... it is the one behind the mask that sends something out ... but it is the mask that focuses it ... the expression.

A well-functioning mask or persona can focus the expression, so that inner states can be communicated precisely to the outside world in relation to a specific framework and task. In H.'s view this also affects the ability to meet others:

And really, only from there you might actually be able to meet other people... with yourself. Not with a learned façade (...) where you can occasionally see glimpses of something more authentic or so... (...) so that... the experiences you have had of how to face the world... that they have gradually been cleaned up. (...) So, they don't stand in the way of the meeting you CAN have with others.

<i>Meta theme #4: The field of authenticity</i>
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Fusion theme: The experience of authenticity
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Authenticity, according to the interview persons, can be experienced as a movement into a field, an intimate field, and an additional space that arises where everybody present in the room is affected by it and touched by it, as P. describes:

I've had sessions where I came out afterwards and I could see the family was all... well, something happened in the room, not just in me, but in the whole room. But I came out with a feeling that I had really balanced a knife edge. That it was really micro things that made the big difference. Phrasings, but also the ability to keep myself out of the equation in one way or another... with intentions.



It can be experienced as magical, easy, and effortless and a place where all the buttons are played simultaneously, or likewise, a state of mind where everything is available and can come into play, as H. states: “... *it's not all in play at once, but it's available.*” It is experienced as an interplay between emotions, thoughts, and body, like being one sphere, sensing a heightened awareness or an opening of a spiritual space. It is the direct opposite of being conscious and controlling and is related to keeping oneself out of the way, cleaning oneself out of the system.

The experience of authenticity is equated with phenomena such as being present, responsive, attentive (both inwards and outwards), centered, being in alignment, and listening.

It is like an 'alignment' or a feeling of ... now the energy plays all the way from head to toe and then... .. and then... something happens which is more than I could think of. (...) It's where something new happens in you. It's where you don't know in advance what's going to happen. It's where you discover something. (...) And it can happen in concert, and it can also happen in a teaching situation, and it can also happen... with oneself or with... a huge stadium concert. But I think it's the same movement that applies. (N.)

However, the encounter with authenticity (own and others') can be both a positive and a negative experience as it can activate our own inner obstacles, hence, activate a need for self-reflection. H. states:

(...) what can happen in an encounter with it is also that you crash into the things that prevent yourself... from letting it flow freely. (...) where I have my obstacles, you could say (...) and then I get the opportunity to work with it.

#### Fusion theme: The road to authenticity – an attempt to 'point'

According to all three interviewees, authenticity cannot be forced, but there are elements to be aware of and consciously work with in order for them to approach the experience. They mention various aspects such as: knowing the instruments well and being able to operate them with an active and vibrant musicality, being open and non-judgmental towards others, being able to let go of control, being able to alternate between 'thinking' and 'feeling', having energy, being rested, and being present. P. states:

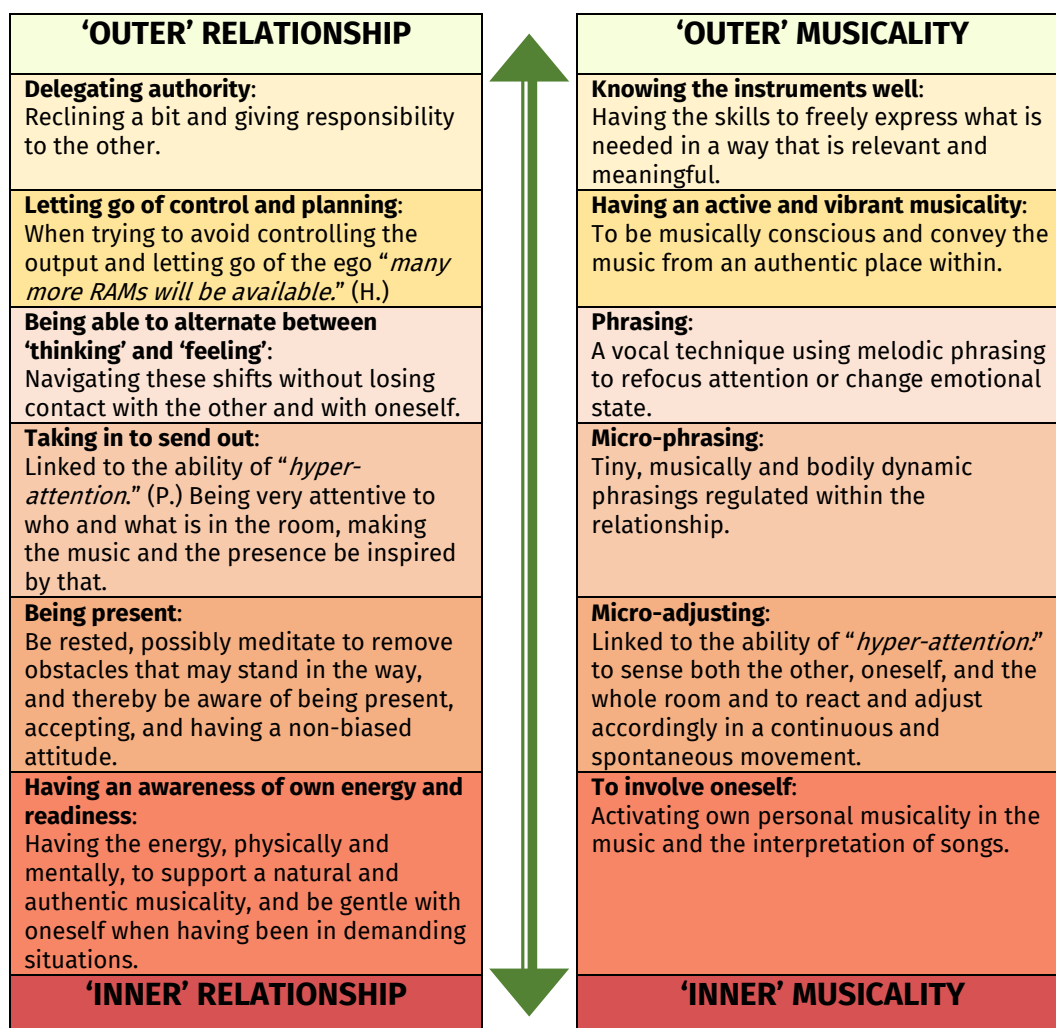
(...) all the technical and musical skills are prerequisites for entering this space, I think. Because you must not be blocked in those areas. I know it sounds harsh to say, but you must know your voice and you must know your instruments to be relatively free... uh... in your way of ... creating this space.

H. reflects upon the ability to let go of control:

And it's almost always... if I have something planned, it's definitely not what we're doing. (...) But, but, having the confidence that if I can... if I can lean a little into the space behind me, then the other will show me... which way we should go today. (...) And that's where one's experience comes into play. How can I answer to that, in a meaningful way, right. And then it becomes fun, because then it is the creative work together. (...) And then we can... in my experience, there is a much greater chance of those moments occurring. The ones where it all just... (*takes a deep breath*) (...) and that 'ego' simply must step back.

The interview persons' reflections on how to approach the experience and state of authenticity have been condensed into so-called stepping stones. For richer elaborations see [Appendix #5\) “Stepping stones.”](#) These stepping stones are distributed into two categories holding primarily either relational or musical qualities.



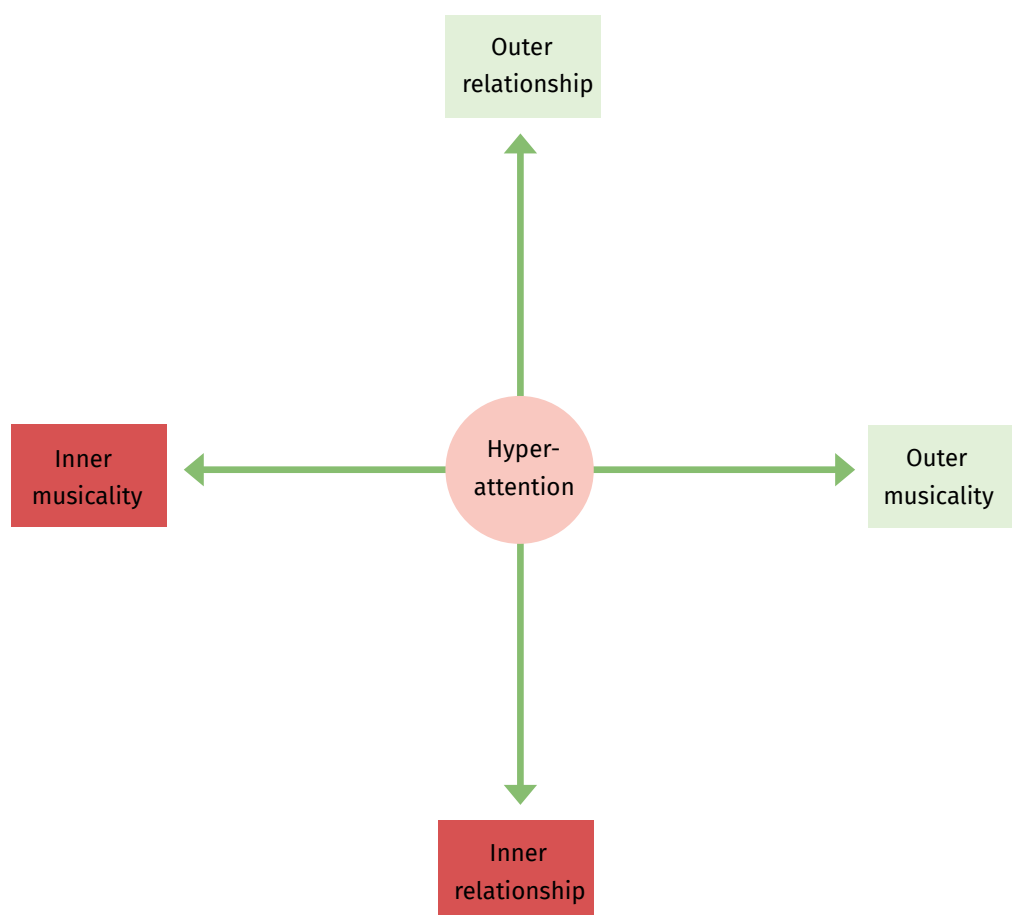


**Figure 1.2.** Possible Stepping Stones Towards Authenticity.

Furthermore, in analyzing these stepping stones, it seemed germane to arrange these experiences and reflections on a continuum in terms of how the awareness of the music professional could be either internally or externally oriented. This is visualized in Figure 1.2.

These two continua could also be intersected (see Figure 1.3) to emphasize how they are mutually related. At the junction of the two axes, we have placed P.'s concept of 'hyper-attention:' an awareness that addresses both the inner and the outer relationship and musicality somewhat simultaneously.

Figures 1.2 and 1.3 could be seen as a tool for the music professional to enhance sensibility regarding their own awareness and focus, although there is essentially no favored position to occupy.



**Figure 1.3.** The Inner/Outer Musical-Relational Spectrum.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the experience and understanding of authenticity across music professionals from three different music disciplines, and to examine how the relationship with others was connected to the experience of authenticity.

Having reviewed the findings of the data analysis, we will now take a closer look at some of the above themes and relate them to selected theoretical material presented in the introduction. The results of the data analysis will be examined primarily through the lens of Lehman's (2019) integrated framework of authenticity in form of their 3C-view of authenticity, more specifically the view of 'authenticity as consistency' and Dammann's (2021) 4C-view of 'authenticity as continuity'. Secondly, we will make use of Kernis and Goldman's (2006) work in 'Multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity'.

### ***Authenticity as Consistency***

The findings related to meta theme #3: "Roles, relationships, masks" seem relevant in connection to Lehman's 'authenticity as consistency' with an entity (here, the music professional) being authentic when there is *consistency* between the external expressions and the internal values and beliefs.

The interview persons all reflect on their personal values and beliefs as well as their different professional roles and how these can vary according to context. Their professional roles could be regarded as acted out on the 'front stage.' Even though the feeling of authenticity is the same regardless of professional role, the focus and foundation of that feeling is different, according to the interview persons, due to the roles of a music therapist,

music teacher, and musician are defined by different tasks. Kernis and Goldman's (2006) notion of 'multiple selves' corresponds well with this meta theme in terms of how different aspects of the self can be activated through different roles and contexts, though ideally communicated through a persona or 'mask' that reveals these aspects of the inner life in a precise and meaningful way. N. and H. reflect on the importance of having a *transparent* persona or mask, which optimally can enhance what lays behind the persona, precisely communicating the inner states to the outside world. Thus, when experiencing authenticity, the 'front stage,' persona, or professional role reflects, and amplifies the inner life, values, and beliefs of the 'backstage' in a meaningful manner in relation to a specific framework and task.

Furthermore, the findings show that the interviewees experiences of authenticity as a consistency between the inner life and the outer expression are highly dependent on the relationship with others and other contextual factors. This becomes apparent when they reflect on their experiences of inauthenticity in meta theme #3: "Roles, relationships, masks." In various ways, all three interview persons express how their inner feelings at times do not match their outer behavior or characteristics. H. experiences herself as a '*stick-man*' when expectations from others does not match her own. N. experiences the meaninglessness of teaching when the conditions for teaching are poor. P. experiences how he becomes self-conscious when being '*pushed into a performer role*' not chosen by himself. P. also describes situations in which he pretends, looks like, and acts like a therapist even though his focus and presence is frayed. All the above examples of inauthenticity show an inconsistency between the external expressions and actions, and the internal values, beliefs, and feelings, hence the exact opposite of Lehman's definition of 'authenticity as consistency,' and in that way, though conversely, supporting their theory.

### ***Authenticity as Continuity***

Authenticity is expressed by the interviewees as a fluent and fluctuating phenomenon, something non-static and dependent on many factors, internally and externally. This is in line with Dammann's 4C-view, and their additional category of 'authenticity as continuity' (Dammann et al., 2021). This process perspective fits well with how H. denotes authenticity as 'a motion,' as something in process rather than a condition that lasts. The process perspective also becomes evident when all three interview persons state how their experience of authenticity is dependent on many factors, specifically the relationship with others, and how this is changeable. P. expresses how both he and the patient are instruments and how his authenticity stems from a 'we' perspective, from the interpersonal and dynamic interaction between him and his patients. The patients' attitude towards the therapeutic relationship influences his experience of authenticity and P.'s own energy, presence, and engagement, which heavily influence his authenticity. This coheres with Dammann's continuity perspective capturing the developmental character of authenticity focusing both on the ever-changing internal and external relationships, and the surrounding social norms. These relationships differ during a life of a human being, and they also might change when going through a crisis in private life, as was the case for P. when he experienced a period of much inauthenticity as a professional music therapist. According to N., human life unfolds between the opposites of authenticity and inauthenticity, and, for her, the focus is on bridging and developing a flexibility between them. In that sense, it is not wrong to feel inauthentic. It is rather to be regarded as a potential for new understandings and personal development. All three interview persons express how they, through a reflexive practice, make use of the experiences of inauthenticity, aiming for further personal and professional learning and development.

### ***The Road Towards and Experience of Authenticity***

Neither Lehman (2019) nor Dammann (2021) relate explicitly to this specific focus in their general conceptualizations of authenticity. Our research findings reveal a non-specific, non-verbal, and even non-conscious phenomenon when it comes to authenticity as experienced by the interview persons. It is quite clear to them how it feels, and it is regarded as a very accessible state of mind, though difficult to control and describe, and inaccessible through thoughts, words, and techniques. It is presented as what seems to be a spontaneous, profound, and spiritual experience where everything is at play, available and experienced as one sphere. It relates to a feeling of being part of something bigger or being a channel for something else.

It could be argued whether these findings are describing an experience of authenticity or perhaps describing an experience of other related phenomena as disseminated by other scholars, e.g., flow (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014), musical absorption (Høffding, 2018), pivotal moments (Grocke, 1999), presence (Mc Guian, 2020), resonance (Rosa, 2019), or congruence (Cornelius-White, 2007). Without a doubt, there are many terms impinging upon the concept of authenticity and the phenomenon of ‘hyper-attention’, as expressed by P., could be yet another closely related term to be investigated further.

As stepping stones towards this experience, all three interview persons stress the importance of letting go of control, having an open mind, and trying not to plan too much. The aspect of control by all three interview persons is often linked to the ego or the analytical intellect, which is regarded as inhibitory to the experience of authenticity. It is not possible to consciously force, control, or plan experiences of authenticity, according to the interviewees, not even to seek them. They must come spontaneously. When looking at the findings regarding meta theme #4, “The field of authenticity,” Kernis and Goldman’s non-ego-involved attentiveness and awareness of internal and external stimuli corresponds well with many of the three interview persons’ stepping stones (Figure 1.2) regarding their view on the path towards authenticity, such as being present, taking in to send out, letting go of control, using micro-phrasings and micro-adjustments, and having an open, attentive, and responsive mindset towards others and self. It seems reasonable to notice that these descriptions stand in striking contrast to Feldman’s (2015) critique of authenticity, as mentioned in the introduction.

The experience of authenticity could be regarded as the result of a professional who is practicing some of the stepping stones revealed in meta theme #4, “The field of authenticity” and summarized in Figure 1.2. It is, of course, not possible to conclude from this study which or how many of these stepping stones are acquired for the experience to arise for one individual. Certainly, there are many more stepping stones still to uncover as the process and experience is a deeply subjective and an individually founded one. Numerous factors are interrelated in the emergence of these experiences of authenticity, and sometimes the experience of authenticity does not occur as it cannot be forced, according to the interviewees.

Regardless of exactly what the interviewees describe, it seems clear from the research findings that these kinds of experiences have potential in music professional work: for the professionals themselves and for the people who interact with these professionals.

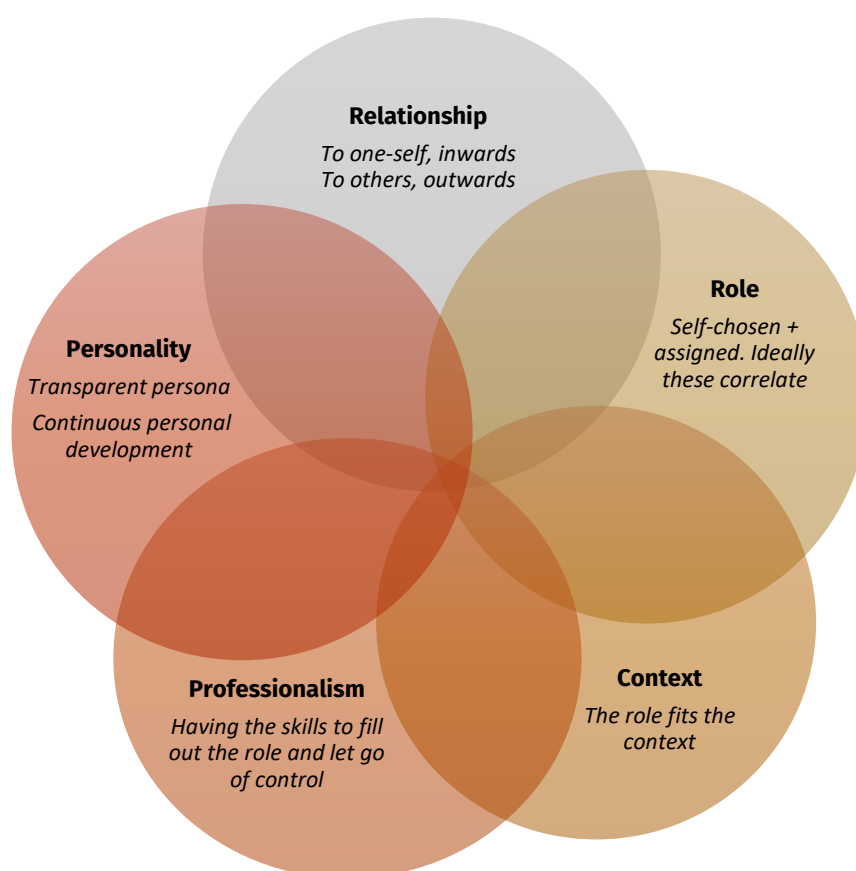
After having been deeply immersed in the phenomenological-hermeneutical data analysis process, the findings of which is disseminated and discussed above, it is evident that many aspects are contained in the experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity for the three interview persons and that these aspects are intertwined and can be linked in various combinations. Throughout the process of disseminating the findings, new interconnected elements started to derive from the findings, resulting in Figure 1.4. The specific components of Figure 1.4 do not show in the initial thematic coding analysis, but are contained in the different fusion themes, and emerged rather late in the process when

looking across the findings. Figure 1.4 is an attempt to both dissect and synthesize the elements that could interfere with or surround the experience of authenticity for the three interview persons, adding yet another framework for understanding.

### ***Authenticity in Music Therapy, Music Teaching, and Music Performance***

Authenticity in the three music professions is associated with several interconnected elements (See Figure 1.4) that must be related in a meaningful way for the experience to arise from within.

The challenge, as a music professional, is to operate these different elements and navigate the span between authenticity and inauthenticity in an ever-evolving personal and professional learning process.



**Figure 1.4.** The Interconnected Elements of Authenticity Within Music Disciplines.

### ***Summary***

With this study, we seek to understand and explore the experience and pertinence of authenticity and inauthenticity from the viewpoint of three different music professionals when practicing within their professions. The current study shows indications for authenticity as a valid and meaningful concept for music professional practitioners, though on a very preliminary level. So far, the research study has revealed two main points of relevance:

- 1) **Authenticity as an experience to strive for**, but not to force, in the musical practice. Even though authenticity is not possible to directly force or control, the professional can still actively work towards it, benefitting the professional and clients, students, and audiences.

The current study does not reveal rules on *how* to be authentic, but it does provide ideas on practical and mental focus points, represented in the so-called stepping stones (Figure 1.2), to be aware of as part of ongoing professional development. It does not reveal, though, which ones or how many of these stepping stones would be necessary and sufficient to generate the experience for the individual.

- 2) **Experiences of both authenticity and inauthenticity might support professional development.** Continuously evaluating the personal experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity in a reflective and retrospective manner could possibly support the ongoing development of the professional attitude and practice according to the three music professionals participating in the study. Experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity can be seen, practically and theoretically, as an opportunity to learn more about oneself on both a personal and a professional level. The figures 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 that outline the findings of the data analysis could be suggested as a framework for that specific kind of professional rumination. However, we need more investigation to further develop and enrich the findings of this preliminary study as these findings are only first steps towards a hopefully more elaborate understanding of authenticity within music professions.

## **Limitations**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the MUFASA-project was postponed. These preliminary interviews have then served as data material in a much more profound way than originally intended. The unplanned happening of events reveals some gaps and pitfalls within the current PhD study.

The selection of participants can be seen as somewhat narrow as all three music professionals were handpicked and selected on the assumption that they would be capable of reflecting on this abstract phenomenon of authenticity. Because of this, and due to the very broad focus of the research project (experiences across three music professions), the group of participants is very diverse and heterogeneous, which makes it rather difficult to extract general conclusions from the interview data. Furthermore, not all interviewees are expressing distinct boundaries between their professions when reflecting upon the questions, and this was not always pursued by the interviewer, which made it difficult to clearly differentiate between the disciplines during analysis.

Two of the music professionals, H. and N., are part of the same improvisational orchestra as the first author and primary researcher who also conducted the interviews. Because of this personal relationship, they might tend to be responding in relation to what has already been established as a common understanding. There is a risk they might be more likely to confirm our presumptions and may even be biased by this common ground. Moreover, the use of quotes from literature on authenticity in the interview guide can be directing the interview persons towards specific theoretical terms. Even though the quotes are introduced only at the end of the interview, there is still a risk that it manipulates the interview persons. The methodological reason for the use of these quotes was simply to enhance reflection and dialogue, making the interviewees consider their own stances in relation to the specific quotes.

Interviewing people about their experiences of their own authenticity and inauthenticity can lead to very personal and existential conversations regarding identity, family, growing



up, family crisis, relationship crisis, self-development, spirituality, life, and death. It seems to encompass many aspects of human life even though the concept itself is difficult to grasp. It can thus be a challenge to stay focused on the topic of research when intriguing themes occur, and likewise, it can be a challenge to untangle all the different aspects in the data material and streamline the findings for dissemination.

Talking about the lived phenomenon of authenticity is quite a task and highlights that this phenomenon is somewhat 'at the very limits of language' as quoted from Kernis and Goldman (2006) in the introduction. The interview persons use various terms when trying to come closer to a description of the phenomenon, which leaves the phenomenon still somewhat in the blur. However, this is also the intriguing part of the research process: trying to come closer to a rather vague and ambiguous phenomenon and expand the understanding of it by shedding light on its impinging phenomena.

## Conclusion

Authenticity is in various ways experienced and described as a relational, contextual, and non-static phenomenon by the three interviewees. It is a dynamic and interactive experience, an oscillation between authenticity and inauthenticity, and through all the grey zones of variants in between. The works of Lehman (2019) and Dammann (2021) support these lived experiences. In conclusion, we will now return to our research questions:

- 1) *How can the concept of authenticity be experienced and understood by music professionals practicing within the three different professions of music therapists, music teachers and music performers?*

The concept of authenticity is considered as quite an abstract and diffuse concept when it comes to verbal reflections, hence, being a challenge to describe. According to the interview persons, the experience of authenticity is very accessible in practice, but it can be very hard to sustain when becoming conscious about it, consequently making it challenging to characterize as a concept. It is possible to be authentic but impossible to simultaneously be aware of the authenticity being experienced.

The three interview persons often associate the concept of authenticity with other similar concepts such as flow, presence, awareness, alignment, open-mindedness, centering, and 'being a channel for something else.' The analysis reveals that it is possible to undertake different music professional roles with the same feeling of authenticity. However, small differences appear regarding the perspective from which the feeling can be achieved depending on context and task. These perspectives are primarily related to focus: focus on motivation of the student, focus on need of the client, or focus on the music itself.

The overall findings correlate well with Lehman's (2019) 3C-view on 'authenticity as consistency,' albeit conversely, as all three interview participants, when reflecting on their experiences of inauthenticity, express a lack of consistency between inner emotions, values and energy, and their external expressions. However, the chosen theoretical frameworks of Lehman (2019) and Dammann (2021) does not consider the lived experience of authenticity. Authenticity is, by the interviewees, experienced and described as entering a field, a spiritual space, something magical, a state of mind where everything is available or at play, a sense of one sphere, a hyper-attention, or the feeling of being part of something bigger. The definition and understanding of authenticity could also be approached when describing its opposite, as it is done in meta theme #2, "Imbalance and inauthenticity," where inauthenticity is related to experiences of self-assessment, self-judgment, self-awareness, of technique exercises and superficial communication, lack of energy, routine responses, and of divergent expectations from within and from others.



However, experiences of inauthenticity should not be regarded as negative, but rather be utilized as a learning opportunity and a relevant and important possibility for further personal and professional development, as also argued in relation to the 4C-view of ‘authenticity as continuity.’

Across disciplines, there are more suggestions as to how the experience of authenticity can be approached. In the fusion theme “The road to authenticity – an attempt to ‘point’”, the three interview persons suggest different elements of relevance to them for the possibility of experiencing authenticity. Albeit N. and H. express that a manual on authenticity would be the worst for them to receive, they, and P., still have some suggestions regarding how to ‘point in the direction’ of authenticity in terms of the stepping stones as shown in Figure 1.2. The experience of authenticity is a subjective one, but there are things to be aware of that could be helpful for the individual in approaching authenticity in their music professionalism.

The benefit of authenticity has in this research shown that an experience of authenticity might affect the relationship with others in a meaningful way, according to the interview persons. P. describes it as something magical happening, where everybody present in the room is affected and touched by it. He also describes the opposite perspective, how people do not engage in the same way in the music therapy when he is not experiencing himself as authentic. H. and N. describe how the encounter with authenticity can be both a positive and a negative experience because it can activate own inner obstacles and, in that sense, activate a need for self-reflection.

The challenge of authenticity is the difficulty of describing it, and consequently it can be a phenomenon hard to consciously practice and reflect upon. Authenticity is not found to be a technique, a method, nor a skill to be trained, but rather a state of mind to be sought and approached through professional, musical, and personal reflection and development over time, as stated both by the interviewees and in Dammann’s (2021) 4C-view on ‘authenticity as continuity.’

2) *How is an experience of being authentically present as a music therapist, music teacher or music performer connected to the experience of the relationship with the clients, students, and audiences?*

For P., authenticity is a relational and reciprocal experience. His experience seems to be deeply connected to the relationship with the client, and his authenticity is affected by the degree to which the clients participate in and ‘fine-tune’ themselves to the music as a second instrument in the music therapeutic relationship. However, when the roles and the expectations changes, he can feel his authenticity being challenged. He stops intervening in a professional way and withdraws elements of his practice, also for ethical reasons. The experience of authenticity is connected to a circular movement, sensing and ‘taking in’ the room and the relationship, and then conveying music and interventions affected by these impressions and communicated from an authentic place in himself. P. described this state of mind as a ‘hyper-attention.’ The music and the relationship are in that sense intertwined, affecting each other and affecting the authenticity of P., as illustrated in Figure 1.3. Also, H. and N. see the experience of authenticity as connected to the relationship with the client, student, fellow musicians, or audience. H. describes an attention facing outwards towards others and inwards towards oneself. It is a motion, all the time oscillating between those two attention points, both listening outwardly and inwardly. The opposite of this is not listening and trying to control the musical output or control the progression of the process.

The experience of the relationship, not only with oneself but also with clients, students, and audiences and furthermore to colleagues, leaders, institutional values, organizations, and economic and temporal frameworks seems highly influential on the experience of authenticity. The complexity of the phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 1.4, showing the

interrelatedness of the many elements inherent in the experience of authenticity. The challenge as a music professional seems to be operating these different elements, navigating the span between authenticity and inauthenticity, and within this span is an ever-evolving personal and professional learning process.

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