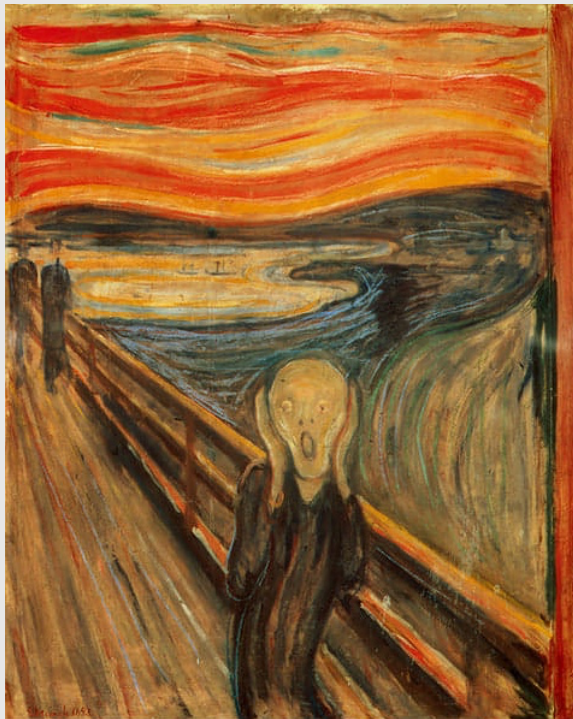




Master of music in performance

The nature of existential anxiety in stage performance



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Abstract

The master's thesis explores the nature of existential anxiety in stage performance. The term 'stage fright' is being questioned in relations to existential anxiety being a phenomenon that is suggested as being more grounded in the human condition. The nature of anxiety can manifest itself in different forms in connection with stage performances. A suggestion for musicians is to try not to fight or conquer stage fright, but instead try to surrender to existential anxiety that has the potency to lead the performer forward. The seemingly intertwining between the personal and artistic level of a musician also shows the complexity of the journey into becoming an authentic performer.

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1 Introduction

What is the purpose of writing about existential anxiety in stage performance? Most musicians have in some way experienced what is often referred to as ‘stage fright’. For some musicians this is not necessarily a major problem, but for others it can be nerve wrecking and gradually even leaving them vulnerable to anxiety and depression. It can become a destructive path on a musician’s journey into achieving their full potential as an artist. This could prevent them from performing at their best and be able to go out on stage and have an authentic connection with the audience.

According to The Music Industry Research Association (MIRA), reports show that musicians and artists are more vulnerable to mental health issues because of the uncertainty and pressure of achieving a successful career. (Yglesias 2018). Recent reports also show that suicide, anxiety and depression is on a rise. According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, death by suicide has risen by 25% since 1999. Reports are showing similar developments in Norway. Author and science writer, Clay Rutledge, believes we are facing a contemporary crisis of meaninglessness and expresses the following:

In order to keep existential anxiety at bay, we must find and maintain perceptions of our lives as meaningful. We are a species that strives not just for survival, but also for significance. We want lives that matter. It is when people are not able to maintain meaning that they are most psychologically vulnerable. (Rutledge; Yglesias 2018).

This shows why existentialism is still highly relevant in our contemporary society. There is a bigger focus on mental health issues both on a personal level and in mass media in general. People write more openly about mental illness than before, and many programs on television focus on openness when it comes to mental health. At the same time, we often read about musicians struggling with alcohol and drug abuse, where some even commit suicide.

For some musicians, music can appear to be the sole meaning of their lives and existence. Is a musician’s ambiguous and uncertain journey of trying to become a recognised artist, leading them into mental health issues and struggles with existential anxiety in stage performance?

My suggestion is to stop trying to ‘conquer’ stage fright, in fact the term stage fright can in many ways be misleading. Especially in the realisation of the nature of existential anxiety. Many people are not aware of the true nature of anxiety, and without knowledge comes fear and despair of not living authentic lives. Could an inward search for authenticity and a bigger understanding of the nature of existential anxiety help both artists and people in general handle the uncertainties of existence more constructively?

1.1 Background

‘Stage fright’ is by many musicians believed to be an obstacle to a great performance. The background for writing about the stage performance started many years ago in the early years of my musical journey. For most musicians, stage fright has a tendency to interfere with the performances. It can even become an enemy, an object threatening to destroy them both as a person and as a musician. The approach to fix this problem, is often through psychological theory. This thesis will mostly suggest a philosophical approach to ‘stage fright’ or the term existential anxiety, that will be applied in this thesis.

From various pilot studies in related subjects such as a former Master of Arts with focus on intimacy in concerts, a bachelor of philosophy with focus on a general emerging of anxiety throughout society and the study of expressiveness in music performance in the subject Muk401, there was a continuous discovery of layers leading to this study. The subjective and theoretical discoveries on this journey lead to an existentialist approach to stage performance.

The anxiety or existential anxiety that is found within existentialist is the anxiety that rocks with your whole existence. It puts you back for a minute and shakes you in the moment you realise that you live now, and you could stop living in any second. You are here now fully responsible and free to choose the life you want to live. It is the creepy feeling that we usually try to conquer or escape. To become a true and authentic artist, the discovery leads to a realisation that the performer has to surrender to that feeling, because within it lies all the possibilities for an authentic and soulful performance. The existential anxiety in stage performance can affect us both negative and positive. Negative anxiety can prevent us from having a good performance, tensing the body making it difficult to be free technically and

express the music emotionally. On the contrary, positive anxiety can help us to experience a great performance, giving us just the amount of adrenaline to bring the musician into a flow. The discovery lead to a realisation of that the experience musicians go through is not necessarily a fright for the stage, but something deeper and more grounded in human nature. This realisation is related to existentialist conceptions suggesting that anxiety is a grounded part of human nature. This can also be applied to musicians in stage performances.

The phenomena or term anxiety often gives associations to psychiatry. In the next part there will be a brief explanation of the way anxiety has been applied to this thesis, separating anxiety into four different forms.

1.1.1 Clarification of the nature of anxiety

For this thesis a distinction has been made between four different forms of anxiety. When related to musicians and performances, one often talks about what we call 'stage fright'. A quick google search on stage fright, reveals numerous articles about this subject. Especially under the sentence; 'How to conquer stage fright'. After reading many books and articles on the subject throughout my study years and through experiences with concert performances, the struggle to conquer stage fright led me astray. This term is more of a popular name on something that could be more grounded in human nature, namely existential anxiety. This is why this thesis has not focused on the general term for experiencing anxiety or stage fright but suggested to examine the nature of anxiety.

Anxiety is part of our complex fight, flight, freeze response. This was described by Cannon (1927, 1929) in the 1920's as being part of our key behaviour that occur during perceived threat. For instance, at the event of a dangerous animal chasing us, this type of anxiety is there to help us survive. All humans experience anxiety to some extent, but the problem occurs when anxiety appears in situations when it is not desirable, such as in stage performance.

The third distinction that has been made in understanding anxiety, is through the psychiatric term anxiety. The psychotherapist Sigmund Freud made this term known to the public. In our contemporary society there seems to be a struggle for more openness when it comes to understanding the mind. Anxiety, depression and a number of personality disorders are more

openly spoken of in a variety of documentaries on the subject. In these programs people openly show panic attacks and how anxiety can manifest itself in a person. This type of anxiety is in psychiatric terms a disease of the mind. But it seems like conditions like anxiety and depression are experienced by most people at some point in their lives. At least if we listen to the mass media. This type of anxiety is often viewed as a negative anxiety that makes us sick. With this in mind, in earlier parts of society, maybe only ten or twenty years ago, people tried to hide these conditions. The fact that people are speaking more openly of experiences of anxiety, shows that so many people experience it that it seems to be a part of human nature. Anxiety is not necessarily connected to mental disease but could be part of our nature as it was described by the existentialists.

The fourth form of anxiety is more in line with my own understanding of the nature of anxiety. The existentialist conception that anxiety might be a natural part of human nature, part of having a consciousness and part of understanding the human condition with the knowledge that we all know we will someday die. Thoughts like this were first proposed by both Søren Kierkegaard and later by Martin Heidegger. As I see it, existential anxiety is like both these thinkers proposed, a part of being human and the nature of it can be experienced when we realise our own mortality, when we're questioning if we live our lives authentic or think about if we live out our full potential.

After deciding to mostly leave out the three first ways of understanding the nature of anxiety through mental illness and as a type of fright, the focus for this thesis will be on existentialist understanding of anxiety. There will be a discussion of the nature of anxiety itself and also of how it can manifest itself in stage performance being more than a stage fright.

1.1.2 Definitions of anxiety

The general psychiatric definition of anxiety is according to The American Psychological Association (APA): *an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.* (Felman 2018:1) The Freud museum gives a short introduction to anxiety according to Sigmund Freud. Claiming a distinction in anxiety should be made between a traumatic experience triggering an 'automatic anxiety', where the helpless ego is overwhelmed. The 'signal anxiety' can according to Freud be activated in the

ego response to dangerous situations. Seeing it as part of our defence system. This general term often referred to as a neuro and mental disease share some similarities yet is distinct from existential anxiety.

Anxiety for Kierkegaard is explained in many different ways. In his book “The sickness unto death” he writes the following:

...there is not a single human being who does not despair at least a little, in whose innermost being there does not dwell an uneasiness, an unquiet, a discordance, an anxiety in the face of an unknown something...an anxiety about a possibility in life or an anxiety about himself... (Kierkegaard 1849:39).

In “Either/or” Kierkegaard writes the following about anxiety:

The fact that anxiety is a phenomenon of reflection is something language itself indicates; for I always say ‘to be anxious about something’ thus separating the anxiety from that about which I am anxious; I can never use anxiety to refer to its object...Anxiety, furthermore, always involves a reflection upon time, for I cannot be anxious about the present, only about the past or the future...(Kierkegaard 1843 :127)

According to Kierkegaard, anxiety has no object as opposed to fear or fright where there is a fright for a specific object. For Heidegger anxiety was more of a general mode and for Sartre it is in anxiety man gets his possibility for freedom. (Crowell 2004:1-4).

All these different definitions of anxiety have some of the same essence within. It seems that in anxiety there is also some sort of feeling of unease. It also seems like anxiety is in a way an essential part of being human. This will be further discussed in chapter four.

1.1.3 Theoretical considerations

For this thesis, the basis of the research has been grounded in existentialism with Søren Kierkegaard as the main theoretic. To get a full grasp of the ideas behind existentialism, it was necessary to first look into the historical perspective of existentialism in a wider perspective. Main theory and central phenomena within existentialism was extracted and clarified to merge with the focus of the thesis. This included contemporary theory of existentialism. To merge existentialist theory with the stage performance, the most relevant

phenomena was anxiety, authenticity, freedom and possibility as it was described by Kierkegaard. These terms were mainly found in his books «Begybet angst» and «Either/or». His view of the stages of existence lead to a subjective understanding and transformation of how this can also be applied to musicians in stage performances. This will be discussed further in the reflections of the stage performance.

The need to merge the nature of anxiety with the stage performance led to a discovery of the contemporary musician and philosopher Yaroslav Senyshyn who supported my subjective experiences and similar ideas from stage performance. He brought a deeper dimension into an existentialist view of the stage performance. In this he described both his subjective experiences and similar experiences made by other musicians with a basis in Kierkegaardian existentialism. Essential for this thesis has been for an artistic inwardness to discover and reveal what lies within existential anxiety. Because of this inward approach, Simone Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre's more outward approach to anxiety that 'we become ourselves through others', were left out of this thesis. They also wrote about many of the same ideas already provided by Kierkegaard, accordingly, they are only mentioned briefly.

After a diverse critique of existentialism, the past 50 years it was also essential to show what is viewed as some of the downsides of existentialism. Hence the importance of Theodor Adorno's most known critiques of existentialism and Kierkegaard.

For the methodological approach to this thesis it was natural to use phenomenology since Existentialism and phenomenology are in many ways connected. Heidegger is also important for this period. For this reason, some of his thoughts were integrated into the methodological part of the thesis, bringing existentialism and the methodologies together. Lavery's article was chosen as a basis for the methodological understandings instead of some of the standard Norwegian books on the subject because it highlighted more of the differences and similarities of the two sometimes intertwined methodologies, hermeneutic phenomenology.

1.1.4 Research question

What is the nature of existential anxiety in stage performance?

1.1.5 Methodology and approach

The thesis begins with an introduction to the subject of the nature of anxiety in stage performance. This highlights the importance of a deeper understanding, and possible outcome of a lack of understanding the nature of anxiety both in the lives of musicians and in stage performance. The first chapter of the thesis shows the background and theoretical approaches for writing about existential anxiety. The second chapter about methodology is a fusion between hermeneutics and phenomenology. On the basis of an article by Susann M. Laverty, these terms were first explained from a historical perspective introducing the most important theoretic and how they evolved the methodologies. Secondly the methodologies were presented through how it has been applied to this thesis. Existentialism and phenomenology share many similar ideas in which gave the integration of hermeneutic phenomenology a contextual basis.

One of the main focuses in this thesis has been to constantly peel into new layers to get a bigger knowledge of the field. Giving the nature of existential anxiety new perspectives. The same process can be applied to a musician on stage constantly having to learn from their mistakes to gain bigger knowledge of becoming a more accomplished artist. Hermeneutics is a valuable method in grasping the theory of philosophy. Kierkegaard writes in almost a poetic way, making it necessary to analyse his writings repeatedly to get a deeper understanding of what his intentions were. In addition to this, hermeneutics can also be an important tool for singers trying to interpret the lyrics in the arias they are performing. This can be an important tool in making the performance become more authentic. This is especially essential in the interpretations of arias, since arias are often written in a foreign language. An important tool is accordingly text studies with translation into different languages to interpret the composer's intentions in the texts.

Chapter three of the thesis proceeds into the theoretical grounding of the master's thesis. After a presentation of historical perspectives of existentialism and the phenomena's anxiety, freedom, possibility, authenticity and the four stages of existence in Kierkegaardian terms, Senyshyn's view of Kierkegaard is also clarified. In addition, Senyshyn's own experiences as a musician and some of his own terms are presented; Anxiety in stage performance and the conjunct self. His somewhat critical view of Kierkegaard's stages of existence is also

presented. Before the discussion part in chapter four, there is also some critical perspectives on existentialism.

Chapter four is dedicated to both a theoretical discussion of the nature of existential anxiety in stage performance and also shows a subjective reflection of my own experiences in stage performances. The main focus in the discussion is the phenomena or term anxiety and the nature of anxiety as it is used in existentialism. There is also a discussion of the phenomena often connected to anxiety. The discussion will then move into how anxiety can manifest itself within stage performance, leading to the discussion of the stages of existence. In the discussion of the stages of existence, the character of 'the soprano's metamorphosis' is introduced in accordance with existentialist traditions and to show how the nature of anxiety and the different stages of existence can manifest itself in an artist. After the discussion there will also be a reflection that leads to the final master's concert, which will be inspired by this thesis. There will accordingly be an attempt to apply the phenomena within existentialism into my own artistry.

2 Methodology

For the methodological approach the thesis is based on a music philosophical direction. This will be a fusion between a subjective phenomenological approach and a hermeneutic text study following philosophical traditions. The intertwining between these two traditions are often referred to as Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

To get a deeper understanding of the increasingly popular methodologies, hermeneutics and phenomenology, Susann M. Laverty's article *Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations*, has been used as a basis. This has deepened the understanding of how these different and sometimes intertwined methodological approaches can be confusing. The confusion lies in the essential differences and similarities that can be somewhat diffuse, as they are often referred to interchangeably. Accordingly, a historical perspective will show the lines drawn between the research methodologies. The most known philosophers applied is Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer, who helped define the different fields within these methodologies.

According to Denzin and Lincoln, we find a large variety of research methodologies in modern society, including ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. According to Lavery, this leads to a concern about the use of qualitative methodologies without a proper understanding of them, stating that: *phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology are often referred to interchangeably, without questioning any distinction between them.* (Lavery 2003:2). She puts focus on distinctions in the early developments of the philosophies of hermeneutic and phenomenology to show the existence of differences and similarities. According to Lavery, Spiegelberg (1960) described phenomenology as ‘a movement rather than a discrete period of time.’ This supports the view that phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology should not be understood stationary, but dynamic and evolving also in our society, making the following ideas also subject to changes and developments over time.

2.1 Phenomenology

For the historical part of the methodologies, phenomenology as it was described by Edmund Husserl, often referred to as the father of phenomenology will be applied. Over time, Husserl’s philosophy changed, *moving from attention to mathematics to seeing phenomenology as equally objective and subjective, and finally having subjectivity dominate his pursuits.* (Lavery 2003; Cohen; Reeder, 1987). This led him into trying to find a universal foundation of science and philosophy, also called ‘pure phenomenology’. Phenomenology is a study of lived experience in the lifeworld. The lifeworld is understood as *what we experience pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization...includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense.* (Lavery 2003; Husserl 1970). Such a study of phenomena wants to repeatedly re-examine the experiences that is taken for granted and try to uncover new and forgotten meaning. Husserl wanted with this method to discover true meaning through a deeper and deeper penetration of reality. (Lavery 2003:4). This is also connected to the transcendence of the consciousness.

Husserl studied phenomena as they appeared for the consciousness. According to him, within experience there is an occurrence of both minds and bodies, but with an elimination of mind-

body dualism. He viewed intentionality and essence through understanding of a phenomena, as the core of our understanding of phenomenology. Viewing intentionality *as a process where the mind is directed towards objects of study*. (Lavery 2003:4). Husserl also developed the process of phenomenological reduction. This means in order to achieve contact with our inner essence, we must, explained by Lavery: *bracket out the outer world as well as individual biases in order to successfully achieve contact with our inner essence.s* (Lavery 2003:4). During this process one must suspend one's judgment or take away former beliefs of a phenomena in order to see it more clearly. This process of bracketing is explained by Lavery via Klein and Westcott (1994), as a three-fold process using exemplary intuition, imaginative variation, and synthesis. (Ibid).

In exemplary intuition, the researcher chooses a phenomenon and holds it in his/her imagination. He/she then moves to develop examples of similar experiences through imaginative variation. Finally, integration of these variations is achieved through synthesis of the essences of interest. (Lavery 2003; Klein and Westcott 1994).

The thought with Husserl's reduction was to "*see things 'as they are' through intuitive seeing*". (Lavery 2003:5) Through careful description he wanted to show the immanent character of conscious experience. (Ibid). Husserl's phenomenology later developed into a different form, hermeneutic phenomenology as it was described by Martin Heidegger.

2.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is by far, in addition to Søren Kierkegaard, one of the most influential philosophers within existentialism. Hermeneutic phenomenology is similar to phenomenology, concerned with lived human experience and the lifeworld. After years of admiring Husserl's works on phenomenology, Heidegger in many ways abandoned Husserl's thoughts. Some of the biggest differences is seen in the exploration of lived experience, where Heidegger abandoned Husserl's focus on the understanding of phenomena. Instead he focused on what he called «dasein» 'the mode of being human'. (Lavery 2003:6).

In his lecture and later article "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger gives an explanation of art as concepts of being and truth. This is connected to the art experience, the source of work of art, and is expressed as follows:

The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. However, neither of them alone bears the other. Artist and work are, each in themselves and in their mutual relations, through a third, namely through art, which is the first from which artist and artwork have their name. (Lavery 2003; Heidegger 1950).

The quotation is an example of the interpretation-process within the hermeneutic circle, according to Lavery. Heidegger believed that all understanding has a connection to a given set of fore-structures, where one's historicity must be included. In this example one must have a pre-understanding of art to be able to interpret the art piece, based on their own lifeworld the interpretation process through the hermeneutic circle goes from parts of experience, to the whole experience. This continuous interpretation then goes back and forth over and over again to increase the depth of understanding. (Lavery 2003; Annells 1996; Polkinghorne 1983). This will be applied to the master's concert.

Heidegger wrote in his book «On Being and Time» (1927) many of his main ideas of phenomenology. According to him our being is being-in-the-world because we and the things we do are always in the world, where language and understanding are inseparable structural aspects. Our Activities are not studied through bracketing the world, but we interpret the activities and their meaning by glancing at our contextual relations to things in our world. (Lavery 2003:6).

To get a full understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology, also Hermeneutics by Gadamer will be central to fully grasp the concepts within these methodologies.

2.2.1 Hermeneutics by Gadamer

“Only when our entire culture for the first time saw itself threatened by radical doubt and critique did hermeneutics become a matter of universal significance”. (Gadamer, 1983:100).

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was influenced by the philosophical works of both Husserl and Heidegger. He transformed Heidegger's work into practical application. For Gadamer hermeneutics was not about developing a procedure of understanding, but rather a further clarification of conditions where understanding itself happens. (Lavery 2003:7). Based on this he stated the following:

Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditional text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks. (Gadamer 1960/1998:295).

Gadamer also stated that "*Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting*". (Gadamer 1960/1998:389). This is similar to Heidegger's view of language and understanding. To Gadamer, the interpretation is a fusion of horizons, where horizons meaning different vision from a specific vintage point. For him this is a dialectical interaction between the interpreter's expectations and the text's meaning. (Lavery 2003; Polkinghorne 1983). He formulated it like this:

Understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning. Questioning opens up possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one's own thinking on the subject...To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were. (Gadamer 1960/1998:375)

For Gadamer interpreting is always an evolving process, not likely to be definitive. In the search for meaning, he acknowledged the presence of historicity of understanding. (Lavery 2003:7).

2.2.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology vs phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology in our contemporary society is as mentioned earlier, fusing into each other. Lavery has drawn some lines between the methodologies. According to her, both of the methodologies arouse out of German philosophy. Many of the thoughts within these methodologies must have sprung out of Kierkegaardian existentialist thoughts. Having both worked with and influenced each other, they all tried to uncover the lifeworld and lived human experience. Husserl and Heidegger

both believed that the world found through empirical scientific explorations is just one lifeworld among many other worlds. According to Lavery, the main differences between these directions is found within ontology, epistemology and methodology. (Lavery 2003:8).

Some of the main differences between these philosophers is seen in Husserl's focus on epistemological questions like 'the relationship between the knower and the object of study'. Heidegger on the other hand moved on to more of an ontological question regarding 'the nature of reality' and 'Being' in the world. Gadamer pushed his methodology into a direction of making his philosophy a rigorous science, being conflicted between 'phenomenology as describing experience and phenomenology as a quest for certainty'. (Jones 1975; Madison 1988; Lavery 2003:10).

The distinctive differences between the methodologies is that research in the field of phenomenology is descriptive and has a focus on the structure of experience. These are organising principles in which gives form and meaning within the lifeworld. The structures as it appears in our consciousness is meant to make the invisible visible. Hermeneutics is interpretive and has a focus on historical meaning of experience, this is connected to the cumulative and developmental effects this can have on an individual also on a social level. Included in this sort of interpretive process is an explicit statement of philosophies or historical movements used as guiding interpretations. In addition to these, interpretations made by the presuppositions that has motivated the individuals who made these interpretations should be included. (Lavery 2003; Barclay 1992; Polkinghorne). According to Allen (1995) there is no clear distinction between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology, but he still claims that phenomenology is foundationalistic, seeking a specific answer or valid text interpretation independent of the biographic, historical or social position of the interpreter. On the other hand, Hermeneutic phenomenology is claimed to be non-foundationalistic, focusing on the arisen meaning from the interpretive interaction historically produced text and the one whose reading it.

When comparing the research methodologies of phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology, it becomes obvious that both differences and similarities occur in these different traditions. The similarities that occurs is seen in the focus and outcome of the research like data collection, subject selection and understanding the concept of lived

experience, the differences appear in the position of the researcher, processing data analysis and issues of credibility. Laverly points out an important note that ‘the process itself is often more cyclical than linear’ in both the methodologies. (Laverly 2003:11).

According to Osborne (1994), with use of the methodologies of phenomenology or hermeneutic phenomenology in research, the chosen methodology must be followed throughout the project and reflect upon the philosophy. According to van Manen (1997) the requirements of using a Methodology is an ability to be insightful, reflective, sensitive to language, and constantly open to new experience. This has been in mind while working with the thesis.

2.3 Methodologies applied to the thesis

In the work of constructing the master’s thesis, it was natural to choose a methodology that lie close to and has probable sprung out of early existentialist thinking. Existentialist thinking lies in a fine line between phenomenology and hermeneutics; Hence the natural placement would be the fusion between hermeneutic phenomenology. Even though the main focus in this thesis is on philosophy of music, many music methodologies that has earlier been important to my thinking, has been left out including critical theory, interviews, concert observation and analysis, music analysis. For this thesis it was important not to grasp too many methodologies, but instead focus on the main themes in which has sprung out of existentialist thinking.

In previous music exams where phenomenology has been a foundation, text and literature were just a minor part of the exam. Since this thesis is of a bigger format, it is an important task to also try to understand the deeper meaning of the text through hermeneutics. Maybe especially within what Adorno criticised Kierkegaard for, a poetic way of writing philosophy. While reading “Either/or” and “Begrebet angst”, there has been a need for continuously ‘peeling’ into new and new layers of the text to try to grasp what Kierkegaard wanted the reader to realise about themselves and the world they live in. The more I read Kierkegaard and the same texts over and over again, the more the notion of the complexity of all the layers

within his writings become visible. This process of digging deeper into his works will proceed continuously.

The intertwined methodologies hermeneutic phenomenology includes the best from both worlds in line with the subject of this thesis. One of the focuses has been of the lifeworld's of musicians, having a different layer than people who don't practice music. The process of understanding existentialism and philosophical theory in general is related to the process of understanding a work of music. This process is never-ending, because there are always new layers to discover and new ways of achieving knowledge and understanding. To fully understand Kierkegaard, it has also been necessarily to look into his historicallity because it is believed to have affected both his life and philosophical works. This was also highlighted by Adorno. There has also been a focus on having a cyclical process while trying to extract the layers of meaning.

One of the continuous linguistic issues that has occurred while trying to interpret and grasp the texts of Kierkegaard, has been the representation of language in the different terms. Kierkegaard wrote in old Danish, and one of the terms that was most challenging to represent the same layer of meaning in, was the main focus in this thesis, namely angst/angest/anxiety. Old Danish being the closest to my own language, Norwegian, angst in Norwegian and angest in old Danish, has for me the same layer of meaning. But in English, to me anxiety isn't quite the same as angst. As Kierkegaard expressed it *anxiety is the absence of fear*. In my eyes in English to have anxiety or being anxious also has an element or dimension of fear/frykt in it. Accordingly, there has been an ambivalence whether to choose the term Angst or Anxiety in my thesis.

3 Theoretical grounding

3.1 Existentialism and anxiety – A historical perspective

Existentialism is associated mainly with some European philosophers around the 19th and 20th-century, and is a term used by philosophers who view the nature of humanity as a philosophical problem and also shares a belief that this problem must be solved through

ontology, the philosophical study of being. Within Existentialism, philosophy is understood as a fully integrated part of life. Some of the most central thinkers who tried to grasp the meaning of the term existentialism was Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Hegel, Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Camus and Nietzsche. (Burnham/Papandreopoulos 2011:1).

The term existentialist was not often used by the philosophers themselves. Sartre once stated «Existentialist, what is that? », but was later to acknowledge the term in his book «Existentialism is humanism». In the article «Existentialism», Existentialism is explained through seven themes, where I will mostly go into two of these themes to explain the connection between Existentialism, anxiety and authenticity and how it can be linked to the stage performance. I will also show a historical perspective of Existentialism.

While some philosophers, like Sartre, stated that there is a necessity for professional philosophers, Existentialism in general is built upon a belief that life can be lived without a technical and educated understanding of philosophy. This set of thinking leads back to the old Greek society where particularly Socrates was an example of an uneducated philosopher who in a pursuit for the good life, walked around in public spaces and taught philosophy through conversation and dialog with the everyday man and woman. (Crowell 2004:1-3).

The idea of philosophy as a way of life was also influenced by German idealism after Kant. As partly a response to 18th century enlightenment, Neoplatonistic influenced, Hegel and Schelling thought of philosophy as an integral part of human history. There's a number of ways existentialistic thought are manifested. Firstly, there was often a critique of specialisation through intellectual and manual labour in modern life. This critique also aimed at philosophers, leading to experimentation by the existentialist thinkers writing with different genres or styles as a way of escaping the specialisation mark. Sartre for instance in addition to books, wrote philosophical plays and Kierkegaard wrote his works in a poetic way. For the existentialist, life is studied from within. The fundamental truth of my existence for thinkers like Kierkegaard, are not representations. The truths of existence should be acted, felt and lived immediately. This set of thinking also shows similarities with the immediate experience in a stage performance. Both Heidegger and Nietzsche believed that one must recognise that the Philosopher is part of human existence and is also an existing human being. Thirdly, an important existentialist concern is also the study of life itself. (Crowell 2004:3-4).

Thinkers like Adorno believed that when writing and understanding philosophy, it's also important to look at their contemporary society and their own history. Kierkegaard and Sartre both experienced that their freedom was taken away from them, Kierkegaard within society and Sartre with the experience of World War II. This naturally led them into existentialist thinking.

When it comes to existentialist thinking in our contemporary society there are many indications that shows some similar thoughts. When considering finding a meaning with our lives and the anxiety for not using the possibilities we are given, it seems like we have endless possibilities and the freedom of choice. Modern thinkers like Melsom writes about this, especially when it comes to the younger generations.

Neuroexistentialism is a term developed in our contemporary society.

Naturalistic thinking that today is a big field of study argues that the field of neuroscience confirms that humans are like animals, just complex biological systems operate in accordance with the natural laws. The late diseased scientist Stephen Hawking was one of the supporters of such a view. According to Ephrat Livni in the article *Feeling anxious? It's not you, it's our philosophical era of neuroexistentialism*. The contemporary thinkers Caruso and Flanagan define existentialism as: *"the diminishment of the human self-image caused by profound social or political changes"*. (Livni 2019). According to them this has throughout history lead to waves of anxiety. The first wave being of 19th-century thinkers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, questioning morality in a world without a deity to demand what is right or wrong. The second wave of the 20th century following the horrific happenings of Holocaust and World War II, was writers like Sartre, Camus and Beauvoir. They questioned the meaning of existence after inhumane human suffering and tens of millions of deaths. (Livni 2019).

According to Flanagan and Caruso, the philosophical crisis or third wave of angst in the 21st century, has its roots in changes due to scientific discoveries. What they call [N]euroexistentialism, *"is caused by the rise of the scientific authority of the human science and a resultant Flash between the scientific and humanistic image of persons"*. (Flanagan/Caruso; Livni 2019). This growing anxiety comes from the scientific knowledge that the existence we experience is only a result of a neural process. According to Livni, the notion that *"If the brain's processes give us our experience of life and there is no "immaterial*

spirit” or soul, then when the brain stops functioning, nothing follows life, and nothing “survives” us – this leads us into existential angst”. (Livni 2019).

The modern shifts within existentialism, shows how this tradition is still highly relevant in our modern society. In the following phenomena within existentialism will be clarified.

3.1.1 Anxiety and authenticity

Kierkegaard was the first philosopher who tried to define a concept of anxiety or «begræbet angst» as he called his book on this subject. It is somewhat problematic to find the right term in English, the Norwegian word angst deriving from the old Danish word angst, is often translated into anxiety or anguish. Accordingly, for this study, I have used the term anxiety.

Anxiety as a term in existentialism, is often viewed as the notion that our, the human existence is in a way on its own. The recognition of this fact makes humans fall into anxiety. But as Kierkegaard describes it, anxiety doesn't have to be the psychiatric term often linked to negativity and illness of the mind. For Kierkegaard, anxiety can be both negative and positive. *Because it is in anxiety we get conscious of our authentic self, and in this notion we are free to decide exactly what we want to do with our lives.* Heidegger often referred to anxiety as a mood, or a basic mood in humans. (Crowell 2004:1-2).

In existentialism, anxiety and authenticity has a strong connection. The nature of existence is recognised by those who are authentic, and they also live in accordance with this nature. Existentialist philosophers often see the modern condition of the world as an obstacle to authenticity. I will go further into this matter when explaining Kierkegaard's stages of existence. Historically existential philosophy must be understood from the experience of the 19th, 20th crisis of values. Tracing back to an increasingly secular society, the rise of philosophical and scientific movements who questioned values that had been viewed as traditional and also the experience of two world wars and mass genocide. (Varga; Guignon 2017: 1-3). Sartre for instance was a prisoner of war and this experience probably also influenced his philosophy.

In existentialist philosophy, freedom is also a part of the experience of anxiety and authenticity. Because freedom is partly defined by my own decisions coming from my own values and knowledge. This freedom makes me aware of my own responsibility for both my actions and me. When existing as an authentically free being, I must take full responsibility for my whole life and what I choose to do with my life. This recognition of one's own responsibilities is by far borrowed from the Kantian notion of freedom. (Varga; Guignon 2017: 1-3). The next part will clarify how existentialist thinking can be linked to the stage performance and how existential anxiety and authenticity can affect the performance.

3.2 Kierkegaard

There is, in every person, something which to some degree prevents him from being completely transparent to himself; and this can be on such a scale that he is inexplicably woven into the circumstances of life which lie outside him that he is almost unable to reveal himself. But he who cannot reveal himself cannot love, and he who cannot love is the unhappiest of all. And you do the same wantonly, you train yourself in being a riddle to everyone. My young friend! What if no one bothered to guess your riddle?... (Kierkegaard 1852:398).

These words expressed by Kierkegaard in one of his most known works, «Either/Or», and shows in many ways the essence of his philosophical thoughts. The statement that in every person there is something that to some degree prevents us from being completely transparent to ourselves, shows the search for authenticity in which leads to a life lived in different stages of existence. The unhappiness expressed is also an expression of despair. If we are all just riddles, how can we live authentic lives? In the following there will be a short presentation of Kierkegaard followed by an explanation of the different terms and phenomenon used throughout Kierkegaard's philosophy, especially anxiety, freedom, authenticity, the different stages of existence and performance both on stage and in life.

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is often viewed as the father of existentialism. Although he is mostly known as a philosopher, Kierkegaard had a great love for music and performances, and also had many thoughts about art and music aesthetics. In many ways he was an outsider in the history of philosophy because of his complex and somewhat peculiar authorship. Writing his philosophical texts and books with synonyms, with irony and often through dialogs. Two of his characters Socrates and Christ for instance,

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claimed that the way one chooses to live one's life, is the main criteria for a life in truth. Since Kierkegaard dedicated a book to anxiety, it is essential to look at some of his views of the subject.

In the following I will firstly go into his concept of anxiety before I show how this can be connected to authenticity. Thereafter I will explain the concepts of freedom and possibility that can occur in the experience of anxiety and lastly show how humans in the experience of anxiety has a tendency to try to escape their own responsibility and authenticity shown by Kierkegaard's stages of existence. In the quote below, Kierkegaard expresses his view of the music performance as a higher and more spiritual art. Adorno, one of his critique's would have objections to this view, but the main focus in this thesis will not be a discussion about where the music value lies, but rather of the music performance holding within it a possibility for a more spiritual and soulful experience that I will later argue in my interpretation of Kierkegaard's stages in the musical performance.

Music exists only in the moment of its performance, for if one were ever so skilful in reading notes and had ever so lively an imagination, it cannot be denied that it is only in an unreal sense that music exists when it is read. It really exists only in being performed. This might seem to be an imperfection in this art as compared with the others whose productions remain, because they have their existence in the sensuous. Yet this is not so. It is rather a proof of the fact that music is a higher, a more spiritual art. (Kierkegaard 1852:129)

3.2.1 The Concept of Anxiety

The following quote shows the essence of Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety and gives an insight to how humans can consciously and unconsciously use this both in a positive and negative way both in everyday life and I will later also connect it to the stage performance;

Angsten kan i sin tvetydighet være både en venn og en fiende. Den kan hjelpe mennesker fremover, men den kan også ødelegge et menneske. Kierkegaard omtaler angst som en form for svimmelhet som oppstår idet individet skuer ned i sin egen mulighet. Frihetens mulighet skaper angst, fordi den også bringer med seg ansvaret for egne valg, ansvaret for eget liv og dermed også muligheten for å mislykkes, miste seg selv. (Kierkegaard via Grelland 2003).

The concept of anxiety in existentialism is by far derived from Kierkegaard's book "Begybet angst". In the first chapter he makes a distinction between the concept of anxiety and fear. Fear being defined as a fear that is directed towards an object, for instance the fear of spiders, while anxiety has not an object. Some interpreters have claimed that the book should be viewed as a somewhat ironic work because of its, at times, peculiar expressions. Kierkegaard were known for the use of humour as a tool in his writings. The message in the book shifts between a quite heavy message about the existence of man connected to anxiety and religion, especially the sin present in every human being at birth, directly resulting from Adam's disobedience to God, with shifts to ironic phrases. According to Kierkegaard, the first and original sin repeats itself in every individual. This is part of what he believed eventually leads to existential anxiety linked to the choices we take, and the freedom and possibility we have. Existential anxiety is often described as the feeling one get standing on a mountain ledge. In that moment, you are confronted with the freedom of choice whether to stay on the ledge or to jump. This experience of freedom can according to Kierkegaard lead to a dizziness described in the previous quote. In the moment where an individual realises their absolute freedom to choose their own destiny the dizziness in which leads to anxiety occurs. In this lies one's own responsibility, because in the freedom of possibility lies also the possibility to fail or lose yourself. According to Kierkegaard, the anxiety that is felt in this situation can be applied to all aspects and choices in life. (Grelland 2003).

In the following, the different phenomena will give a deeper clarification of the concept of anxiety. The first phenomena connected to anxiety in this thesis is freedom.

3.2.2 Freedom

According to Kierkegaard, the human freedom is part of the experience of anxiety. In addition to reading the works of Kierkegaard, Hans Herlof Grelland has been an inspiration and help for me on my journey of understanding existentialism and Kierkegaard. Some of his perspective has accordingly been used in the thesis and in the following lines. Grelland's understanding of Kierkegaard, suggests that anxiety is the feeling that implies freedom even before it is recognised. Meaning that before the awareness of anxiety, we are in a sort of state where we are not self-conscious, we then wake up to a self-reflected and conscious state where we get aware of our freedom, choices and responsibility. (Grelland 2003).

Freedom as part of existentialism can in many ways be traced back to the historical conditions these philosophers experienced. Like mentioned above, Sartre for instance was a prisoner of war, and Sartre's wife, Simone de Beauvoir, lived in a society dominated by men. This has probably in different ways narrowed their experience of freedom, while our modern society in many ways are an example of that the welfare state has led to almost too much freedom, making it hard for people to decide because they have so many different possibilities of choice. That the enormous amount of possibilities in our modern societies leads the younger generations into anxiety, because of fear of not being able to live out their potential. (Melsom 2017).

In Kierkegaard's book "Begybet angst", one of his synonyms *Haufniensis* implies a definition of anxiety saying that "*anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, where freedom gazes into its own possibility*". Because anxiety exists between the alluring and the frightening part of the possibility. This is why the feeling of freedom can be experienced unpleasant, since it creates so many possibilities that it's hard to know the outcome of. Many possibilities that lies ahead are possibilities we don't want and some possibilities we can even be attracted to, but we don't necessarily have the courage to pursue these possibilities. Kierkegaard often link this part of the human being to the sexual part where there's often an excitement between attraction and fear. The same excitement conditions can often be found in the freedom experienced in our possibilities. This can also apply to the stage performance and will be further discussed in chapter four.

3.2.3 Authenticity

Authenticity is both important in everyday life and in the stage performance and in existentialism. In Kierkegaard's work on authenticity, he suggests that everyone is to "become what one is". (1992 [1846]:130). This has often been linked to his critical view of his contemporary society and also a certain essentialist thinking in philosophy and science. Kierkegaard criticises modern society as causing inauthenticity. According to him this leads to a widespread despair making individuals act out defiance, denial and spiritlessness. Kierkegaard proposed to understand the self in relational term rather than acting as items among others, this was expressed through in "...". The self is a relation that relates itself to

itself". (Kierkegaard 1980 [1849]:13). Later other existentialist philosophers like Beauvoir took this a step further claiming that we can only understand ourselves through others, proposing that we become ourselves through others. (Jørgensen 2017). This relational discussion is also central in the stage performance, the performer must relate to the audience, and in philosophical terms how should a performer seek authenticity in their performance? According to Kierkegaard, our identity is constituted over time through concrete expressions in which the self-manifests itself in the world. Through passionate commitments to a relation to a matter outside oneself that appears meaningful to an individual's life, it is possible to evade despair and hollowness and in Kierkegaard's words "become what one is". (Kierkegaard 1980 [1849]:13). Beauvoir and Sartre also suggested a similar thought that through meaningful projects an individual will become and stay true and authentic. (Jørgensen 2017). For Kierkegaard his ultimate commitment was his strong relation to God.

In the following, Kierkegaard's idea of the four stages of existence will be presented. He shows how the phenomena; existential anxiety, freedom and possibility all correlates to the possibility of becoming an authentic self. This will later be incorporated into an artistic layer of existence in chapter four through a soprano's metamorphosis.

3.2.4 The stages of existence

Similar to one of his inspirations, Socrates, Kierkegaard also wanted to awaken his readers and followers to live in truth rather than forcing upon someone a specific view. According to him people are free, and it's up to each individual to manage their own freedom. In Kierkegaard's book «Væren og Beven» he describes four stages of existence where each stage shows how an individual comes closer to the experience of authenticity. The stages show how people go into different roles and appear a certain way to the outside world. When they realise, they're not being true to themselves, they fall into despair and anxiety. For this thesis I early on decided to try to adapt these four stages into how an individual appear in the stage performance. I will therefore firstly give a presentation of how Kierkegaard used the four stages of existence.

The philistine: These individuals are narrow-minded citizens who live their lives not being conscious and following norms without any second thoughts. This would in our society be the

sort of people who vote for Trump or work as influencers creating make up blogs, this is of course a generalisation. Kierkegaard would probably look at these sorts of citizens as what he called philistines. These individuals don't live authentic lives and aren't conscious about their own existence. If they're outside world falls apart and they realise they are not being true to themselves, they fall into despair and existential anxiety.

The Aesthetic: The aesthetic has understood that the philistine lives a superficial, empty and meaningless life. This individual lives in the moment and doesn't take responsibility for its own life. They see the beauty in the world but has a hedonistic lifestyle. They also fall into despair if they realise, they are not living authentic.

The Ethicist: The ethicist is morally responsible and self-conscious. In this stage the individuals are honest and responsible and live in accordance to their own existence. The ethicists will at one-point experience anxiety and despair at the realisation of the lack of meaning in their lives. They are more authentic than the individuals in the two first stages, but they have still not reached the fourth and final stage.

The religious stage: Because the ethicists are only human beings, they can't choose themselves nor separate good from evil. They are driven by remorse, but the religious individuals see that remorse and sin cannot be repealed by themselves. According to Kierkegaard only God's forgiveness can bring meaning into people's lives. The religious individuals give up who they are trying to be to be able to experience they're true self through God.

What these stages of existence have in common is that they all experience despair and existential anxiety when their view of the world is changed or made conscious. The last stage can only be reached through giving up who they think they are or what they believe the world is. Some of Kierkegaard's message is that everyone can choose their lives and choose to break out of these different stages of existence. His last stage, the religious stage, assumes the religious to become authentic beings. This is often criticised, but at the same time Kierkegaard also highlighted music as something more meaningful and spiritual. I therefore decided to let the fourth stage of the stage performer stand as a spiritual stage, I found some of the same thought in Senshyn's book.

Although Kierkegaard speaks of the religious stage as the final and highest form of existence, he at the same time speaks of a spiritual or soulful way of existing. He does this while claiming that man consists of a synthesis of a physical psychological part and also has a spiritual part. He expresses spirit to be the essence of who we are and as being fundamentally friendly, but spirit means also being in anxiety.

Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit... spirit is a friendly power... how does spirit relate itself to itself...? It relates itself as anxiety. Do away with itself, the spirit cannot; lay hold of itself, it cannot, as long as it has itself outside of itself. Nor can man sink down into the vegetative, for he is qualified as spirit; flee away from anxiety, he cannot, for he loves it; really love it, he cannot, for he flees from it. (Kierkegaard 1844:43,44)

Kierkegaard implies in these lines, the spiritual level that will be applied in this thesis. In this thesis corporation of the stages into the artistic layer of existence, the religious stage will be replaced by the spiritual stage. This will be discussed further in chapter four.

3.2.5 Anxiety in stage performance

In addition to his writings, Kierkegaard had a great love for the arts. He regularly went to performances like theatre and opera and integrated his experiences into his philosophy. For instance, in the book “Either/or”, he uses characters from Mozart opera Don Giovanni, where the character of Don Juan reflects upon an example of the aesthetic stage. He uses two different examples of people in the aesthetic stage to show how this is manifested in both life and on the stage. These people also eventually fall into despair. (Senyshyn 2001). In many ways it seems like he found inspiration to the stages of existence in life and authenticity viewing the stages he saw in performances as a mirror of the stages of real life. The article below also implies that acting, roles and masks in the shows Kierkegaard watched, reflects upon the life we live masked in different roles and different ways of acting in the lived life.

In his less known work, the article «The crisis and a crisis in the life of an actress», Kierkegaard writes a story of an actress in two different stages of her life. This article helped inspire to the character of the soprano used in chapter four. In the further use of this article, it will be referred to as “The actress”. The article tells the story of a young actress playing Juliet, in the play Romeo and Juliet, and tells about how she after 19 years dreads doing the same

role over again because she lacks the youthfulness and beauty, she ones had. In this article, Kierkegaard shows a deep insight and understanding of lives of artists, both technically, career wise and spiritually. For instance, he shows his insight to what traits is needed to become a successful artist, these possessions are listed in the following order: luck, youthfulness, soulfulness, right rapport with the tension of the stage and definable possession. (Senyshyn 2010:155).

According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard shows a great sense of reality by pointing out that luck is one of the most important part of becoming a successful artist, even for the most gifted performer. Also, youthfulness is a trait of importance, warning us that “ *«youthfulness», as an indefinable possession is not to be taken in the statistical sense; rather, we should think of it in terms of the restlessness and unlimited youthfulness pertaining to essential genius*”. (Kierkegaard 1847:78). Kierkegaard sees this as a form of energetic restlessness, bringing life to the performance.

A secure technique is also an important trait in an artist according to Senyshyn, and he reads in Kierkegaard's lines in the following, that he in a sense makes a psychological observation of the live performance in which must be projected by the actress an absolute assurance and exuberance and soothe the audience preventing them from the experience of negative anxiety. This implies that not only a performer can experience anxiety in the stage performance, but also the audience. The possible experience of anxiety of the audience will not be further discussed in this thesis as my main focus is on the artist in the performance. Only a brief clarification of what Kierkegaard called 'the gaze of the audience' that can create anxiety in the performer. In Kierkegaard's own lines:

The illusion of the stage and the intently gazing eyes [of the audience] are a great burden to bear, as is quite evident when there is a lack of rapport with the audience. Where rapport does exist, the burden is still present, but it becomes light. Tension may make the actress anxious prior to the performance of the play, but under the pressure of the stage she is 'light as a bird just set free'. (Kierkegaard 1847:78).

These gazing eyes might be a picture of the critical and measuring eyes of the audience. Artists sometimes express that they feel naked on the stage, this might occur at the sense of these gazing eyes. Kierkegaard also uses the musical term *rapport*, often used in terms of performativity and the sensation of connection between the audience and performer. It seems

that Kierkegaard has the insight to the importance of rapport, expressing that the lack of rapport can be a burden, implying what could be anxiety and nerves, but when rapport exists in the performance, he implies that it is still a burden, but it becomes a lighter burden. This could also be a link to the experience of negative and positive anxiety. Where the lack or existence of rapport between the performer and the audience can affect how the performer experiences anxiety in the performance.

This means that in the temper of her immediate passion she is attuned to thought and an idea; that her still unreflective inwardness is essentially in league with ideality; that every touch of a thought or idea strikes a note, giving a full-toned resonance; that she is an original, specific sensitivity. (Kierkegaard 1847:78-79).

These expressive lines by Kierkegaard show the experience of an authentic stage performance. At the times when everything feels in line, the feeling of immediacy and presence in the performance combined with being attuned to thought and idea. The authenticity in the inwardness, yet not reflected but in league with the ideal. Leading to optimal resonance, completely in one with herself and her sensitivity. It's impressive that Kierkegaard is able to express and experience this artistic experience through the artist. Senyshyn writes that this for Kierkegaard is a definition of an indefinable possession of «soulfulness». This implies that Kierkegaard must have seen this performer as someone who had reached into the deepest part of themselves and was at the final stage of existence.

Further in Kierkegaard's article, he according to Senyshyn gives an explanation of anxiety connected to tension in stage performance:

In the tension of the theatre this anxiety marvellously manifests itself as potency. The notion that an artist must not be anxious is in general very narrow-minded, and to be without anxiety is above all a false indication of artistic greatness. For the more powers he possesses, the greater is his anxiety so long as he is outside the tension which exactly corresponds to his powers. (Kierkegaard 1847:79).

The way he expresses anxiety in the stage performance is similar to Kierkegaard's writings of anxiety in human lives in *Begrebet angst*. Anxiety that lies in the possibility of the stage performance is according to Kierkegaard manifested as potency. The anxiety that is already present before the performance has started, is there because of the potential that lies in the coming performance. He also talks about that it is a misconception for anyone to claim that an

artist should be without anxiety. To him it is a false indication of a great artist, rather the more anxiety the artist has, the greater powers he possesses. This is similar to his quotation of the great man that will be used later in the thesis, but part of it goes as follows: *The more profoundly he is in anxiety, the greater the man*. This quote would be very similar if man was switched out with artist. Senyshyn also states that although the actress in the article is *anxious in the wings*, she doesn't repress her anxiety, but conceals it in order to receive her freedom. He describes this as the potency or possibility in a live performance, of the experience of a positive anxiety.

Kierkegaard also shows insight to the tension that lies within a performance 'so long as he is outside the tension which exactly corresponds to his powers'. While reading reviews of a concert it is often expressed that the tension and expectations could be felt throughout the location. Making it a phenomenon experienced by both the performers and the audience. Going further into the tension and rapport in a performance he says the following:

"... she is in the right rapport with the tension of the stage...Thus the lightness is invisibly grounded in the strain produced by the tension, but this strain is neither seen nor suspected; only the lightness is revealed".

(Kierkegaard 1847:78-79).

According to Senyshyn this relates to the aesthetics of tension and its relation to anxiety in live performance. He also relates this to the paradox of dramatic technique of relaxed tension stating the following:

...in our modern concept of technique – in music and all the performing arts – we use the minimum of tension or its equivalent i.e. the maximum in relaxation – to produce the most emotive tension in the music performed. (Senshyn 2010:157).

Senshyn is stunned about the artistic insight shown by Kierkegaard and calls this final possession a definable and essential possession. He states that Kierkegaard is appropriate in his observations concerning articulation, technique and projection saying they are universal to all the live musical performing arts, both vocal and instrumental. The next will part clarify the writings and terms of Senshyn with both the concept of the artist in crisis, the conjunct self and his understandings of the philosophy of Kierkegaard related to the nature of anxiety in stage performance.

3.3 Senyshyn and the artist in crisis

Yaroslav Senyshyn (1950-) is a professor in philosophy and well-known music performer and has both experience with stage performances and philosophy with a special interest for existential philosophy related to music performance. In his book «The artist in crisis» he is in many ways inspired by the same crisis or despair found in Kierkegaard's concept of existential anxiety. When talking about the artistic crisis that is often experienced by performers, he draws both upon his own subjective experience and on the experience by other musicians. Senyshyn writes the following about live performance:

At any rate, I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that the consideration of anxiety in live performance is an important one for all performers. As soon as an artist begins to worry about the possibilities of her performance in any way whatever, then that artist is already experiencing anxiety. (Senyshyn 2010:20).

He points out that anxiety in live performance is important, and also expresses that the artist experience anxiety when they start to worry and reflect upon the possibilities that lies in the performance. This draws back to Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety where anxiety often starts in the awareness of one's possibilities. Senyshyn writes that artists have a tendency to project themselves into the future, worrying before the actual performance. He draws back on Heidegger's thoughts on how we often project ourselves into the future and that such a projection can lead to anxiety and conscious awareness of our own being and mortality. Because it is impossible to predetermine a performance such as the possibilities ahead and the outcome, an awareness of time can manifest itself as anxiety. Senyshyn expresses more of the thoughts of Heidegger that anxiety can manifest itself in different forms, in some forms that's especially useful in stage performance, is the form Heidegger expresses as *the peacefulness of a creative yearning*, according to him if we weren't anxious, we wouldn't be able to create anything. Senyshyn also uses Rollo May expressing some of the same thoughts "*instead of running away from anxiety, it is wisest to 'move through it', achieving a measure of self-realisation in the process*". (May; Senyshyn 2010:23).

The suggestions above could be possible solutions to how to use the possibilities that lies within anxiety to have a positive outcome in stage performance, in the next part I will go

further into the positive and negative sides of anxiety and relate it to the stage performance. I will also relate many of Senyshyn's thoughts to Kierkegaard that he uses throughout his book.

3.3.1 Positive and negative anxiety

Contrary to the psychiatric diagnosis of anxiety, an often overwhelming and sometimes life-controlling condition, existentialism anxiety is often viewed as a phenomenon that can be both positive and negative. Musicians often experience anxiety or stage fright as a negative force they want to escape from. Senyshyn points out that anxiety can make a performer and a performance great because it can awaken individuals to their creative and unlimited potential. Before music performances, musicians often talk about the positive side of being a little nervous. In my opinion this is some of the same thought that lies within positive anxiety. If a performer is able to embrace the positive part of anxiety, it can in Heidegger and Kierkegaard's spirit, open up to creativity and possibilities. In the possibility the performer can either fall down in despair or move up to what Kierkegaard called the ethical or religious stage. In order to move up to the different stages one must first fall into despair, because within despair lies the possibility to achieve a new level of existence. I will go further into this later in the thesis.

Throughout his book, Senyshyn uses his own stage experiences to show his subjective experience of different performances. In the following phrase, he shares a common artistic experience when one tries to take hold of a situation where nerves and negative anxiety is about to take over:

«And then, just at the most cowardly moment in my life, I took hold of myself and thought: «Look stupid, you have been practicing very hard for this moment of truth. You must know in which octave the piece begins. Now stop this and trust your practicing. Close your eyes for just a moment and trust yourself. Trust your work. Trust your reflexes and go with the flow». (Senyshyn 2010:19).

I'm sure many performers will recognise this sort of self-mentalisation trying to take control over your own nerves and go into the deepest part of one's self, where it's possible to find authenticity. Senyshyn describes how by channelling his own thoughts he was able to go into the flow area of his inner self. This flow is often described by artists as an experience of being able to use one's whole potential, also stated by Senyshyn earlier. Senyshyn suggests the following for the artist in the stage performance vis-à-vis the philosophy of Kierkegaard:

“As human beings, performers must realise that they all have intrinsically a positive anxiety. They must not fear it but invite it, even though instinctively this is not an easy task. They must learn to utilise it and bring life to their interpretations”. (Senyshyn 2010:23).

According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard had problems with defining despair and looks upon this as one of his weaknesses. According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard called positive and negative anxiety the angelic and the demonic state of being. The notion of anxiety as a state of being is in a way similar to Heidegger’s view of anxiety as a basic mood. Within the fear that is expressed in the phrase above, lies the possibility to fall into despair or demonic state that Kierkegaard would have implied. Senyshyn describes the despair as a serious and often debilitating problem in the lives of gifted performers:

“Unfortunately, these exhilarated feelings were punctuated by a constant and mating sense of debilitating fears of possible failure. These undercurrents of negative anxiety were at this time, at and rate, very effective prodders of the need to practice like mad”. (Senyshyn 2010:16)

The phrase shows a typical example of how negative anxiety in stage performance leads the performer into self-doubt and fear of the possibility of failing. When Senyshyn looks back at this unfortunate experience, he sees that the positive outcome of it for him was that it led him to practice more, but not all performers are able to turn such a negative experience into something positive. For some it can lead them into more negativity, despair and even an artistic crisis that the topic of Senyshyn’s book is about. For Kierkegaard despair can lead to a deprivation of freedom. For the artist a lack of freedom in performance could lead to more mistakes, less expressiveness and the absence of authenticity. I will go further into this under the part about authenticity.

As mentioned, in his book, the artist in crisis, Senyshyn draws both on his own experiences as a musician as well as other famous musicians. In the following I have chosen a few quotations that is specifically relevant to my thesis and shows how many musicians has somewhat similar experiences with anxiety in performances.

The following quotes was made in a conversation between the famous pianist Claudia Arrau and Joseph Horowitz:

“But what about the purely negative impact of anxiety, when it leads to memory lapses and wrong notes? What determines whether anxiety has a positive or negative impact – whether you use it creatively or destructively?” (Horowitz; Senyshyn 2010:28).

“I don’t know how it happens, exactly. Thirty years ago, anxiety would often get in the way of performance. But with time, I understood that one should try to simply let things happen, and not worry so much about pleasing or succeeding. Then anxiety become less of a handicap, and more a part of the creative stream”. (Arrau; Senyshyn 2010:28).

In Senyshyn’s eyes, this reflects upon Kierkegaard’s writings about the paradoxical nature of anxiety. Even though most performers in some degree experience some of these aspects of anxiety, not everyone is aware that it’s actually happening. This indicates what Kierkegaard would classify as the concept of despair in relations to the self. This means escaping from the authentic self and into despair. The effect of negative anxiety in which could lead to self-destructive thoughts and mindset in the performance, could ultimately lead to failure. (Senyshyn 2010:28).

Senyshyn continues the discussion about negative anxiety pointing out that modern psychologists would question how much anxiety a performer can tolerate. He questions if too much anxiety could destroy a performance. Senyshyn uses the following quote by Kierkegaard to answer this question.

“If a human being were a beast or an angel he could not be in anxiety. Because he is a synthesis, he can be in anxiety; and the more profoundly he is in anxiety, the greater the man”. (Kierkegaard via Senyshyn 2010:40).

This quotation goes straight to the core of my research question. For Kierkegaard existential anxiety lies at the core of human existence and in everything we do. If a performer fails, in Kierkegaard’s eyes, he is not really failing, but is building moral character. According to Kierkegaard a person must fail and fall into despair at the different stages to move up into the next stage. I will go further into this under Senyshyn’s interpretation of the four stages of existence. Related to the stages is also the phenomena of despair or crisis as the term Senyshyn mostly uses. Connected to the artist experience of despair he adds the term «the conjunct self», which is similar to Kierkegaard’s authenticity. I will go further into this in the following.

3.3.2 The conjunct self

How can the artist or any human being extricate herself from despair in order to relate once again with her conjunct self? Although we know that an artist should become bored and dissatisfied with the aesthetic life and proceed to the higher stages mentioned already, how is this supposed to happen? (Senyshyn 2010:44).

Senyshyn discusses the phenomena of despair through Kierkegaard, Arrau and his own experience as an artist. He speaks of *the conjunct self* in the same terms that Kierkegaard would call authenticity. It seems like he suggests that one must extricate oneself from despair to become a conjunct or authentic self. This formulation varies from Kierkegaard's because Kierkegaard often expresses that it is through despair one becomes closer to authenticity, not in trying to freeing oneself from despair. If the individual tries to extricate itself from oneself, there is a possibility that one tries to escape and ends up falling into one of the lower stages again.

Senyshyn uses a part from Kierkegaard's "Either/or" to show how despair can have a positive expression:

[d]espair is not only the culmination of the aesthetic life but it is also the beginning of its redemption. To truly despair is to make a choice in the form of an ethical decision...Mere despair is of no value in itself; what is of value is to choose oneself as despairing. Then, even though he is in despair, he at least possesses an abiding self rather than being utterly subject to the tides of changing vicissitudes. To choose oneself is to recognize eternal norms and validity for one's responsible value decisions, even while one grieves over his helplessness. (Kierkegaard via Senyshyn 2010:44).

Like mentioned earlier, it is often expressed by Kierkegaard that it is through the experience of despair and for Senyshyn also through artistic crisis, that creativity emerges, or the culmination of the aesthetic life appears. In this phrase he also speaks of choosing oneself, especially the last sentence can also apply to the artist and performer, because when one chooses oneself, one has to recognize the responsibility of value decisions. There's an ambivalence in being both in despair and at the same time possessing an abiding self, or what Senyshyn calls a conjunct self. Where Sensyhyn talks about extricating oneself from anxiety, Kierkegaard often expresses that possessing an abiding self also means that one has to accept being in despair. And out of this despair creativity can emerge. Senyshyn uses a phrase by

Kierkegaard in which he finds the essence of despair. Kierkegaard expresses this ambivalent human condition through a poet in the aphorisms of “Either/Or” Volume 1, in my eyes this also applied to the musician and performer:

“What is a poet? An unhappy man who in his heart harbours a deep anguish, but whose lips are so fashioned that the moans and cries which pass over them are transformed into ravishing music”. (Kierkegaard 1852:34).

Senyshyn expresses that he finds it hard to agree with Kierkegaard that there is no unique feeling associated with despair. He believes that the feeling of despair is shown in Kierkegaard’s writings. Maybe the difficulties for Kierkegaard is that there are so many different feelings connected to despair, that he might have found it hard to recognize just one specific feeling. He also uses the verb despairing instead of as just the feeling of despair. This might imply that he doesn’t make distinctions about specific feelings, he also calls anxiety a term, not a feeling. I will come back to this in the discussion part.

According to Senyshyn, performers has a tendency to punish themselves if they make mistakes in a performance. This is something Senyshyn connects to anxiety and despair.

Is punishment not a good friend in that it acts as an ally in gaining oneself? And is not this purpose of punishment for the artist: to gain one’s self in order to be reintegrated into an artistic society as a significant individual fully functional in her art? (Senyshyn 2010:29)

Punishment in performance and while practicing is by far a tool for musicians to continuously improve their skills. Senyshyn calls it an ally or a tool for gaining oneself. In the conversation between Arrau and Horowitz, punishment is also discussed and expressed in the following way by Arrau:

...We do the most inexplicable things. We frustrate ourselves constantly. Out of fear – fear of failure and, strange as it may seem, fear of success as well - we artists suddenly fall sick before major appearances. We create frightful emotional upsets...the least sign of imperfection can cause one to give up in the middle of an otherwise fine performance. Worst of all, the struggle may suddenly lose all meaning, and the artist, lost in a terrible maze of conflict and despair, may give up performing all together. This giving up is a real death; Death of the soul. (Senyshyn 2010:29).

These expressive lines made by Arrau shows the artistic journey and despair many musicians experience, it is part of the artistic crisis Senyshyn writes about and reflects on the thoughts of the different stages of existence by Kierkegaard. The punishment in the inner conflict while playing would in Kierkegaard's and Senyshyn's eyes be able to destroy a performance if the performer gets overwhelmed by negativity and despair. Even more so according to Arrau it could destroy the performer. This also reflects upon some of the same thoughts Kierkegaard has about anxiety, it can be a friend or an enemy, leading us forward and open up for the possibilities, or if used in a negative way it could destroy us.

Senyshyn also discusses self-deception in our unconscious mind and how it can affect an artist in a performance. He uses Kierkegaard to explain how we in certain situations can't manage to deal with our anxiety, instead we cope with despair. This is a form of self-deception that ultimately can lead to loss of genuine humanness or loss of the conjunct self. He gives different examples like a musician who struggles technically, rationalizes with long hours of practice. The same self-deception in a performance can also be a musician just focusing on the aesthetics in the music, focusing on making it beautiful and even overacting without being a conjunct self, lacking real, genuine feelings.

After discussions about anxiety, despair, punishment and the conjunct self, Senyshyn concludes the chapter with the following findings:

In conclusion, although the implication of anxiety in the form of punishment and despair can lead to negative attributes in a performer, it is the positive side of anxiety and its corollary – the self-knowledge attainable in despair – that ultimately leads to a conjunct self and this the possibility of a creative performance...(Senyshyn 2010:45).

The phrase above highlights how despair and punishment in a performance can lead to negative attributes and on the contrary how positive anxiety can open up for the possibilities of a creative and authentic performance through a conjunct self. The topic of the conjunct self naturally leads into Kierkegaard's four stages of existence. Senyshyn has tried to use these in an aesthetic way and applies it to a performer and how this can transform into authentic performances.

3.3.3 Senyshyn on Kierkegaard's stages of existence

Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage of existence is perceived by Senyshyn to be somewhat meaningless and lacking depth. He uses different examples from Kierkegaard's writing to show how Kierkegaard has a negative view of the artist who seems absorbed in the aesthetic and shallow form of existence. At the same time Senyshyn uses Kierkegaard's article «The crisis and the crisis of an actress life» to further show examples that in a performance an actress can only reach the aesthetic stage. To me Senyshyn here misinterprets Kierkegaard's project of the stages. I will show this by using some of the quotes that to me is contradictory. The first part starts with Senyshyn's view on Kierkegaard's stages of existence:

Once again, I have the rather unenviable task of disagreeing with Kierkegaard. This time I will make a plea for the aesthetic life in spite of Kierkegaard's conceptualization of it as an experience that lack substantive ethical and spiritual dimensions. And yet, I will hope to reveal synchronically, in spite of his bias, his uncanny genius for generating profound insights within the realm of aesthetic practice vis-à-vis his analysis pertaining to the dramatic arts. (Senyshyn 2010:131).

According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard has a desire to separate the aesthetic form of existence from the ethic and the religious categorisations. In the phrase above, Senyshyn makes a somewhat sharp critique of Kierkegaard's view on the aesthetic arts in the way he perceives it. Senyshyn also claims in this second example that Kierkegaard writes that all art expressions lack the possibility to reach a higher stage than the aesthetic.

According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard's view is that the aesthetic sphere or stage is lacking in substance. He also assumes that Kierkegaard looks at the stages one dimensionally. He sees existence one at the time in the different stages by stating that the religious category is absent in the notion of the ethics. An individual that is at the aesthetic stage of existence, like an artist, is not able to conceive the other stages as long as that individual is at an aesthetic stage. He also proposes that the aesthetic stage is incapable of satisfying the individual, saying that there lies no meaning in this stage, there's only meaning in the ethical and religious stage of existence. According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard claims that there is a lack of ethical and religious *struggle* at the aesthetic stage of consciousness, being based on the immediacy of feeling where this fleetingness leads to boredom and despair. This can lead to existential anxiety.

According to Senyshyn, Kierkegaard talks of three different senses of the aesthetic. This is according to Senyshyn also supported by Adorno. Where the first sense of the aesthetic is more of a general sense of the term aesthetic, the second sense shows a deeper understanding of the substance of a man quoted by Adorno in the following lines taken from “Either/Or”:

‘The aesthetical in a man is that by which he is immediately what he is; the ethical is whereby he becomes what he becomes. He who lives in and by and of and for the aesthetical in him lives aesthetically’. (Kierkegaard 1843:182)

Aesthetic deportment appears as an absence of decisiveness from the perspective of the ‘ethical’. The ethical recedes behind his doctrine of the paradoxical-religious. In the face of the ‘leap’ of faith, the aesthetic is deprecatorily transformed from a level in the dialectical process – that of the failure of decisiveness – into simple creaturely immediacy. For it is precisely this immediacy that should be broken by paradox and that constitutes the absolute contrary of decisiveness. Thus the aesthetic finally falls...(Senyshyn 2010:133).

According to Senyshyn, this affirms the desire by Kierkegaard to separate the aesthetics from the ethical and religious. The aesthetic lacks the decisiveness to break away from creaturely immediacy and can therefore not proceed to a higher ethical stage of existence (Senyshyn 2010:133). The third sense of the aesthetic is also described through Adorno’s understanding of Kierkegaard. Saying that the aesthetic can only be at a subjective level and cannot become objective. ‘*The process of communication is a work of art; or: ‘the greater the artist, the greater the inwardness’*. (Senyshyn 2010:133). This inwardness or passion constitutes to Senyshyn an aesthetic experience.

In the understanding of Kierkegaard’s aesthetic consciousness, Senyshyn starts by using *talent* in the aesthetic components of live music performance connected to the aesthetic stage of existence:

Thus, Kierkegaard may be inadvertently and indirectly implying that some form of talent associated with ethics can operate within the stage of sphere of existence simply because he encourages talent to do so. But, of course for him the *heightened* awareness of an ethical consciousness in one’s talent can only lead to a Kierkegaardian dethroning of the aesthetic stage – a wilful and determined departure from this stage to the ethical or religious stage. In order to realize all these Kierkegaardian ‘spheres’ of life: aesthetic, ethical and religious stages, one is lead to consider the importance of the implications of the ‘self’. (Senyshyn 2010:137).

Senyshyn also uses a quotation by Kierkegaard to show how someone with a talent, in this example, a physicist, are able to understand and explain nature, but can't understand himself. Part of what Kierkegaard says is: "*He does not become transparent in regard to his spiritual destiny, to the ethical guidance of his talent*". Senyshyn's thoughts of this is that although Kierkegaard sees limitations in the life of someone with talent, he also sees the possibility for achieving great accomplishments. In the process of the aesthetic creativity, Senyshyn expresses that Kierkegaard were prevented from seeing that the creative genius could seek the spiritual through ethical struggle, because of his favouring of the religious stage. To Senyshyn this contradicts with the famous quote by Kierkegaard about music being a more 'spiritual art' because it exists only in being performed (Ibid:137).

Senyshyn gives many examples of Kierkegaard's contradictions asking the following: "*If music is a spiritual activity, how is it possible to perform it without spirituality in the aesthetic stage of existence if one is so spiritually inclined?*" (Senyshyn 2010:138). Senyshyn suggests that to Kierkegaard performing music was not as spiritual as the spirituality of the religious stage of existence. What if the music in the performance would be of a religious character, would the same apply then? Kierkegaard suggests that *only through a religious reflection can genius and talent in the deepest sense be justified*. Senyshyn concludes with the following based on his interpretation of Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage:

The individual, as a performer, is categorized by Kierkegaard to exist in the aesthetic stage of existence without a significant degree of ethical consciousness and therefore must end this stage of her life in utter despair because the aesthetic life is – according to Kierkegaard – based on the *immediacy of feeling*, which can only lead to doubt and despair. (Senyshyn 2010:137).

Kierkegaard's literature is often made with irony, humour and probable a whole lot of provocations. Senyshyn seems to be utterly provoked at Kierkegaard's somewhat contradictions, but isn't this just part of stating philosophical points and opening up the eyes of the reader? This will be further discussed in chapter four in addition to clarify how the stages of existence is connected to the nature of existential anxiety. In the next part Adorno's critique of existentialism and Kierkegaard will be clarified.

3.4 Critical perspectives on existentialism

After the period of the existentialists, there has been many critiques of the philosophy. In the book «Eksistentielle terapier», Mick Cooper, a professor and existential psychotherapist, shows different critical views on existentialism. Because existentialism is such a diverse way of thinking, is it really possible to find commonalities in all these great thinkers? The first critique is aimed towards the seemingly contradiction between an anti-essentialism and at the same time trying to describe the characteristics of human existence. Cooper uses the following quote to show the critique of this contradiction:

Hvis hvert eneste menneske på jorden er unikt og ikke kan opfattes som et eksemplar af en klasse, hvordan kan man da foretagende generaliseringer om den menneskelige eksistens, som en filosofi om eksistensen nødvendigvis må gøre? (Cooper 1972; Macquarrie 1972).

What Macquarrie means, according to Cooper, is what the existential philosophers are describing is not characteristics of the human existence but rather the possibilities. The project of existentialism has not been to try to make human existence into some limited, essential characteristics, but rather build up on human existence, describing some layers of commonalities in the complexity of humans. According to Cooper there's undisputed tension between the emphasis of universal characteristics and the emphasis of the unique and personal characteristics (Cooper 2003:63) This is similar to the next contradiction found in existentialism and is a critique of philosophers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. On one side man is encouraged to look inwards into their inner truths. But at the same time how can you follow your inner truth when the philosophers encouraging man to do so, makes demands to follow that specific philosophy. Cooper answers this with saying Kierkegaard and Nietzsche had the notion of this contradiction. Nietzsche explicitly encouraged people to follow their own path and not follow his path (Ibid:64). A third critique of existential philosophy is that the basic of the philosophy is amoral, and the claim is as follows:

...I og med at eksistensfilosofien betoner menneskets frihed, selvskabte værdier og fraværet af absolutter, er den en etik-løs filosofi, hvor «alt er tilladt», hvor værdier som retfærdighed, lignes og barmhjertighed ikke længere har forrang over deres modsætninger. (Cooper 2003:64).

Cooper draws out an example with Heidegger's sympathies with the Nazis in the 1930s, that probably made it even worse for the thoughts of the moral of existentialism. While philosophers like Sartre and Camus was actively fighting against Fascism, where Sartre was even a prisoner of war. As a correspond to this critique of amoral, Cooper suggests that it is often claimed that existentialism is fundamentally ethical, "*that people should be conceived as and treated like people and not like a Collection of statistics or deterministic mechanisms*". (Cooper 2003:64).

Cooper also speaks of a fourth critique of existentialism where many claims that it is too morbid because of its focus on despair, anxiety, guilt and seeing death in the eye giving it a quite negative focus. He exemplifies this with a quote by Schrader: "*Nogle læsere er nået til den konklusion, at for at være eksistentielist skal man blot fremhæve og gruble over de mørke sider af livet og kosmologisere sin smærte*" (Schrader 1967; Cooper 1967:13). Kierkegaard would probably have looked upon this sort of statement as one of an aesthetic not being able to look inward. He also wrote about for instance positive anxiety being part of existential anxiety.

Cooper also points out positive parts of existentialism, feelings like happiness and hope is also parts of the phenomena's in existentialism (Ibid:65) The human condition in existentialism consists of all spectres of human feeling and experience, something Kierkegaard shows through most of his works. Many of the philosophers in addition to Kierkegaard like Heidegger, Sartre and Beauvoir wrote about how to find meaning in life, clearly such a search is of a hope of a positive outcome. Cooper writes further that the meaning of existentialist focus on some of the negative aspects of life, is precisely to offset the tendency of modern cultures denial of the painful and unpleasant sides of life. Appointing it as a philosophy of balance. Balance is also relevant for the fifth critique Cooper describes. Macquarrie points out critique of existentialism, saying many claims it to be irrational, because its value on passionate exploration above objective and systematic thinking. Macquarrie answers with the following:

Eksistentielisme, når den er bedst, er hverken irrationel eller anti-rationel, men dens ærinde er snarere at bekræfte, at den menneskelige erfarings fylde bryder ud af de begrebsmæssige tankers lænker, og at vores liv kan begrænses af en for snæver rationalisme. (Macquarrie 1972; Cooper 2003).

It seems that some of the point of existentialism is precisely that part of it should be absurd, ground breaking and shakes with one's reality. Like Macquarrie expresses in the quotation, existentialism should make humanity break out of the chains that bind us to specific terms and ways of thinking, so we can be able to understand ourselves and the reality in which we live, in new ways.

According to Cooper, the reason why there has been a decreased interest for existentialism is that: "*Existentialism is fundamentally based on the assumption that our existence is real, that it is a phenomenon, that is, and that transcends the words or discourse, it is described by*". (Cooper 2003:66). Cooper states that postmodern thinkers like Derrida and Lyotard is one of the reasons behind this, because they claimed that: "*all forms of knowledge is always encapsulated in a set of language-systems or a 'discourse', and it is not possible to get outside of such a system and prove the existence of a phenomena*". (Cooper 2003:66). According to Cooper this means that it's not possible to transcend the limits of language and detect that existence really do exist. Ultimately in Derrida and Lyotard's eyes our existence is just a narrative of our assumption (Ibid).

If reality or our existence is real or just a narrative of our existence, at least in human lives, our assumption of reality is important, and also learning to understand it and ourselves. Even though postmodernism thinking highlights language as a barrier, it seems that in our modern world, in the search for meaning in our lives, existential thinking can after all be relevant. This will be further discussed in chapter four. The next part will show the critique given by Adorno both of Existentialism and Kierkegaard.

3.4.1 Adorno's critique of existentialism and Kierkegaard

As we've already seen, there are many critiques of existentialism, and also Senyshyn brings out many critical arguments about Kierkegaard's understanding of art and music. One cannot talk about critique of Kierkegaard without mentioning maybe one of his biggest critiques, Namely Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno was an important social critic, part of critical theory, known for his aesthetic theory and belonged to the Frankfurt school.

In David Sherman's book, *Sartre and Adorno: The dialectic of subjectivity*, Adorno's critiques of Kierkegaard are also discussed, as one of Adorno's main work *Kierkegaard: Construction of the aesthetic*, is in many ways a critique of both existentialism itself, Kierkegaard and indirectly also Hegel. Sherman points out that one of Adorno's main critique of Kierkegaard is of his poetic way of writing, where Kierkegaard in some of his works repeatedly stating in various ways, 'I am a kind of poet'. According to Sherman, Adorno addresses a crucial need to stop interpreting philosophy as poetry. Using the following statements from Adorno: *which, «tear[s] philosophy away from the standard of the real», and thus «deprives it of the possibility of adequate criticism»*. (Adorno; Sherman 2007:18). Showing clearly Adorno's view of critical theory as the real way of interpreting philosophy.

According to Sherman, the essence of Adorno's critique of Kierkegaard is the distinctive attributes of poetry within the philosophy of Kierkegaard, this phenomenon is shown evidently through the exposition of 'the aesthetic'. This will often within art and art theory be referred to as immediacy, or subjective communication. In many ways the opposite of Adorno's view of dialectic. In Sherman's eyes, for Adorno the main point of aesthetics is to 'give form to the contents of experience', but Kierkegaard 's interest according to Adorno was *«but [merely] with the reflection of the aesthetic process and of the artistic individual himself»*. (Sherman 2007:18-19). This leads to what Sherman sees as Adorno's main critique of Kierkegaard: *«He who as a philosopher steadfastly challenged the identity of thought and being, casually lets existence be governed by thought in the aesthetic object»*. (Sherman 2007:19). For Adorno in such dialectics, both the concrete object and the concrete subject is lost, suggesting that instead of understanding Kierkegaard poetically, but rather philosophically, his poetic pseudonyms must be pierced.

The following critique by Adorno's takes the discussion of the dialectics further and goes as follows: *“His antipathy for art expresses the longing for an imageless presence...an imageless self-presentation of truth”*. (Sherman 2007:19). Sherman understands Adorno's critique of Kierkegaard in the following way after Adorno states that Kierkegaard's view of subjectivity must be understood in a socio-historical context:

As evidenced by the «immanent dialectic» that he proffers within the framework of his explication of the three «spheres of existence, » Kierkegaard purports to operate in a dialectic way. Yet, this

estrangement from the world leads him to take undialectic stances on the internal relations between subject and object, internal and external history, and history and nature. (Sherman 2007:19).

Explaining Kierkegaard's need of building the three spheres because of his experiences in the world and his own society, leading to a need for inwardness and subjectivity in Kierkegaard, trying to escape the subject – object relation. His philosophy adapted to the society, where he became externally powerless due to being part of a declining economy class. To Adorno, the first and aesthetic sphere is where we find real truth. (Sherman 2007: 23). Adorno tried to make logical and a somewhat hermeneutic approach to understand Kierkegaard, although he was well knowledge for the critique of existentialism, Kierkegaard and also phenomenology, his ambiguous relations to these ways of thinking, sometimes became apparent.

4.1 Discussion of the nature of anxiety in stage performance

When examining the nature of existential anxiety, it became clear that I was writing about two different layers of an artist's life. It seems like the personal and the artistic life is dependently intertwined. With singing, it's hard and maybe impossible to put aside our personal layer, because we have to express the emotions which lies within the music and text. Maybe this is also why music has such a huge impact on the performers and the people watching the performances. Because the performance reflects upon our personality and spectre of emotions. On stage we become more transparent. For some this makes them want to present more of who they are, projecting it through positive anxiety. For others this transparency can get too personal and revealing, leading them into despair and negative anxiety. The nature of anxiety is unpredictable and can manifest itself very differently in different performances. The journey the musicians have to go through to become a great and authentic artist, can lead them into all these different spectres of anxiety and emotions. It seems like the nature of anxiety can appear in different forms, where thinkers like Kierkegaard separated anxiety into positive and negative anxiety.

In the introduction I also highlighted the importance of being aware of the mental health challenges many musicians face on their journey. In my eyes, artistic souls are often sensitive and highly emotional people. The pressure of constantly having to perform at their best, leads some into anxiety and depression. In the journey of becoming an artist most are at some point,

faced with self-doubt, nerves and many ups and downs. In the music education system, you don't learn how to handle these challenges. Unfortunately, it seems like such challenges are highly common for musicians, something also scientific research on the topic confirms. Is there a way of preventing performers handling these issues solitarily?

In many ways research findings supports the suggestion put forward by contemporary thinkers Caruso and Flanagan's, that we are being hit by a third wave of anxiety throughout society. According to them the third wave is caused by what they call neuro-existentialism, a notion brought forward by science, that our consciousness and the world before us is created through brain activities caused by neurones. According to Melsom, another contemporary thinker, the welfare state in our western civilisation also leads the newer generations into existential anxiety. Because of the welfare, we have a freedom to choose among a seemingly countless amount of possibilities. Many choose their education out of their field of interest instead of considering the job opportunities after they finish their education. This can lead to feelings of unease and thoughts of an uncertain future. Leading to additional questions about how to live meaningful lives. Research show that the uncertainty whether musicians will become successful artists, drives them into mental illness and what Melsom and the existentialist thinkers call existential anxiety. This can manifest itself both on a personal level and in the performance situations. The first topic of discussion will in the following consider how the nature of anxiety can appear in different forms in a musician's life and in stage performance.

4.1.1 The nature of existential anxiety

According to Caruso and Flanagan, there has been three major waves of anxiety in society, caused by shifting political and scientific conditions. The first wave in the 19th-century led by thinkers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, made the foundation for existentialist thinking. Kierkegaard tried in his works to give a definition of what the nature of anxiety really is. Some of his most important suggestions about anxiety is that anxiety has no object and that anxiety is the absence of fear. One might think that fear is a type of anxiety, only manifested in a different way. Heidegger saw anxiety as more of a general mood in humans and for him, existential anxiety is ultimately anxiety for death. For Sartre it's in anxiety man gets the consciousness of his freedom, with similar thoughts as Kierkegaard of the possibility and

freedom that lies in the experience of existential anxiety. For Kierkegaard, anxiety has the possibility to push us forward or push us down, sometimes manifested in us as positive or negative anxiety.

There are many different perspectives of what is believed to be the nature of anxiety. Heidegger suggested existential anxiety to be a general mood in humans. We can all get a glimpse of this anxiety in our daily lives for example when we; answer the telephone, cross the road, present a thesis or when we perform in a concert. We live our daily lives doing all sorts of activity that can bring forward this feeling of unease. When considering how quickly and often this feeling can occur, it might suggest that the nature of existential anxiety is grounded in humans like a general mood. At the same time, we're often not aware of this feeling. Kierkegaard might claim that the reason for this is that we are not being transparent to ourselves, refusing to search inwards. To Heidegger existential anxiety is ultimately the anxiety for death, this view takes Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety even further. Heidegger suggestion might ultimately be similar to the anxiety about not finding meaning in our existence. For musicians, the goal at the end of the artistic journey might seem like the meaning in their life. If they have doubts and ambiguous feelings about their future possibilities, it can lead to a feeling of lack of meaning in their existence. Ultimately even leading to an anxiety for death like suggested by Heidegger.

Heidegger's thoughts have many similarities with the way Kierkegaard perceives existential anxiety. In "Either/or", Kierkegaard shows many different ways into the nature of anxiety. To him, anxiety can only be experienced in the past or the future. Suggesting that anxiety occurs in the process of thinking and worrying about something that will occur in the future or dwelling on what has already passed. This is another indication of anxiety being part of the human condition. This can be exemplified through someone writing a master's thesis. When the writer gets into a state of flow, being completely present in the moment, anxiety has a tendency to vanish. Like Kierkegaard suggested, anxiety is not experienced when we are present in the moment. When the date for the delivery of the thesis comes closer, anxiety starts to manifest through worrying thoughts about if the thesis is good enough, ultimately questioning if one is good enough as a person. This self-doubt sometime leads the writer into being unable to write because they get absorbed in the negative anxiety that can lead to despair of not being good enough. On the other hand, this anxiety can help the writer forward

into pushing oneself into writing a good thesis. If the writer surrenders to a positive anxiety, it good make them turn into a greater writer. Similarly, with anxiety being present in the past, thoughts often occur after the thesis is delivered. Was the thesis written good enough? The process of self-doubt starts over again, and some might go from believing that they wrote a great thesis and in the next moments, switches to believing that what they wrote was terrible. A similar example with the writer can also apply to a musician in a stage performance. This will be further discussed in part 4.1.3.

In addition to Senyshyn's critique of Kierkegaard, Adorno especially gives a critique of Kierkegaard's way of writing in a poetic manner. Traditionally existentialists had a tendency to write untraditionally, leading the reader into the discovery of new layers. Like his inspiration Socrates, Kierkegaard didn't necessarily try to convince his readers about the truth, he wanted the reader to discover this on his own. Hence Kierkegaard was being true to his own believes.

Through the aesthetic stage of existence, Kierkegaard tries to show us that most people, which is often referred to as the philistines, are not aware of existential anxiety. People have different levels of existing mostly on the outside or the inside. Some people choose to live their lives in a comfort zone. They get a job, a car, a family and a dog and they seem satisfied with living their lives this way throughout their life. Some people realise at some point that they are living their lives more on the outside than being connected to their authentic self. According to Kierkegaard, at this realisation they fall into despair because they don't want to be who they are existing as, they want to be something else. Kierkegaard also talks about

4.1.2 Phenomena's connected to existential anxiety

Existentialism and Kierkegaard has received a variety of critique. According to Cooper, some claim that existentialism is too morbid, because of the focus of phenomena like anxiety and despair. Both on a personal level and in stage performance, there is also the possibility of experiencing positive anxiety, making the argument fall at its own statement. There is also clearly a positive vibe to the possibility of freedom. Another main critique is the supposed contradiction that we should follow our inner voice, but at the same time the philosophers tell

us how to live our lives. In my opinion thinkers like Kierkegaard only suggested how to live a richer and authentic life. This is also shown in his sometimes-unclear poetic way of writing.

When writing about the nature of anxiety, Kierkegaard introduced a variety of different phenomena. These can also be applied to musicians in stage performance. The freedom that lies within the performance can be experienced both positive and negative. Like Kierkegaard expressed, anxiety can help us forward or destroy us and it can prevent us from achieving our goals. Similarly, in the stage performance, if we fall into negative anxiety, we can experience a lack of freedom. This can lead to an experience of being restrained, letting our ego take over our mindset and freedom.

According to Kierkegaard freedom is implied through the feeling of anxiety. This feeling is there before it is recognised as anxiety because we are not self-conscious. If we are lucky, we have an awakening, making us self-reflect and being conscious. In this self-reflection we get the notion of our own freedom, making us able to choose our lives as responsible beings. Both Kierkegaard and Sartre suggest that existential anxiety is connected with our freedom to choose how we live our lives. They also bring forward that this is connected to finding meaning in our lives. Writers like Grelland and Adorno both highlighted the importance of understanding Kierkegaard and many of the existentialists out of the society they lived in. With the experience of being robbed for one's freedom, there is in a way a bigger appreciation for being able to choose freely. Hence Kierkegaard, Beauvoir and Sartre's experience of freedom, or limited freedom probable led to a wish for more freedom. From being a prisoner of war, Sartre experienced the limits of freedom, Beauvoir experienced the limits of freedom because of her being a female in society dominated by men. They both experienced part of their freedom being taken away from them.

When writing about the freedom that lies within the possibility, Kierkegaard compares anxiety with human sexuality. There are according to Kierkegaard possibilities that we are attracted to, and possibilities that we don't even want. Still we don't necessarily have the courage to pursue all of these possibilities. This is linked with attraction and fear. Kierkegaard would probable say that people who don't have the courage to pursue the possibilities are not living in accordance with their desires and hence live unauthentic lives. As artists, we also get possibilities that we want to pursue and are even attracted to, but there are always

consideration's whether to pursue one possibility or the other. For instance, when it comes to building a career, networking can be one of these possibilities. Unfortunately, some artists even are faced with possibilities suggested on the basis of the #Metoo campaign, where they are offered possibilities in the music business in exchange for personal violations.

According to Kierkegaard, our freedom is partly in the experience of anxiety, defined by our own decisions. This means that the choices we make come from our own values and knowledge. This leads us to an awareness of having a responsibility for ourselves and the actions we do. The notion of ourselves as authentic and free, gives the realisation of our responsibility. This could lead to existential anxiety because if we are responsible for what we choose to do with our lives, this means that many people expect from themselves to take highly meaningful choices. Kierkegaard suggested that it's possible to 'become what one is' through passionate commitment to a relation outside oneself. To him this commitment was God, but Sartre and Beauvoir had similar thoughts. They claimed that meaningful projects will lead an individual to become and stay true and authentic.

For many musicians, their meaningful project in life is music. Because in the freedom that lies within the possibilities, there is also a chance to fail or succeed. Because this journey musicians go through, follow them most of their lives, it's maybe not surprising that the fear of not succeeding can lead them into despair and negative anxiety.

Musicians' artistic life and personal life seems to be intertwined. The search for meaningful lives goes parallel with the search for authenticity as performers and individuals. In addition to experiencing existential anxiety connected to our choices in life, the freedom and authenticity is also connected to our responsibility.

According to Kierkegaard, those who are authentic, recognise the nature of existence. Like many musicians, this means that they live in accordance with this nature. Kierkegaard claimed that society was responsible for people not living authentic lives. For him the authentic person would have the courage to stay in anxiety, and that it is from falling into despair that the possibilities emerge. On the contrary, Senyshyn suggests that to be authentic or what he names the conjunct self, one must extricate from despair. This mind set is in accordance with many performers. Some of the same meaning lies in conquering and fighting stage fright. In

my experience as a performer it is at the times when we try to fight and get away from this unease, that the performance can turn badly. On the contrary in the times we have the courage to surrender to the existential anxiety, and sometimes also experience despair, that we have to possibility to grown both as individuals and as performers. At the times when we have the courage to be transparent to our vulnerability, our authenticity is revealed for us. Kierkegaard also suggests that creativity emerges from the experience of despair. Senyshyn implies a path that might possibly make it harder to grow into the higher stages of existence. When trying to fight of stage fright or existential anxiety, there is a higher risk of falling into the lower stages of existence. In the following, the stages of existence will be discussed.

The four stages of existence can be seen as a critique of Kierkegaard's contemporary society. Especially the philistine represent what Kierkegaard believes is the majority of people not having the capacity to look inwards into their own authenticity. They are the people who seemingly live their lives on the surface. In our modern society, these are the sort of people that is often portrayed in the media and today it's even possible to make a living out of being a makeup blogger and influencer. If Kierkegaard lived today, he would probable categorise this sort of people as philistines.

The aesthetic level has slightly more insight. They appreciate all the beauty in the world, and they often live hedonistic lives. This lifestyle can also in our society be looked down on, being people who spend money on pleasures and don't search for the deeper meanings in life. People on this stage has to Kierkegaard, the possibility to fall into despair when they realise, they're not living authentic lives.

In the understanding of Kierkegaard's stages of existence, his writings imply that he found inspiration to the stages from observing the society in Denmark and stage performances, mirroring the stages of real life. This probable reflects upon that people in general act out different roles in their daily lives putting on masks in fear of being transparent of their authenticity. In my eyes we don't necessarily stay in one stage at a time. These stages can also shift from one moment being reserved in more of an aesthetic role, and in the next being able to go into a more ethical stage in the meeting with others. This is a shift many performers experience on stage. In some performances it can be hard to be authentic, and other days it is easier to be more transparent. Senyshyn concludes that the aesthetic stage is not in favour of

the artist. The way he reads Kierkegaard, he interprets that Kierkegaard believes that people who work with music and art will always be at an aesthetic level and will for this reason not be able to move into the higher stages of existence. Did Kierkegaard with the love for the arts really say that no artists are able to look inwards and go into the higher stages of existence? In my eyes, the article “The actress” clearly shows the opposite. Kierkegaard show a surprising insight into the maturing journey of the actress. In saying that music is a higher and more spiritual art, there is also an implication that he despite believing the religious stage can be achieved only through God, he at the same time confessed that there is some sort of spirituality that can be experienced though stage performances. Because of Kierkegaard’s use of irony and humour, it’s not always that easy to grasp the true meanings of his writings. Hence readers can probably misunderstand his intentions.

When it comes to the religious stage of existence, this can be in a way be challenging to clarify. Did Kierkegaard mean that people without a religion are not capable of reaching the highest form of existence? Senyshyn also states that the final stage should be transformed into more of a spiritual stage, if we assume that all people has the capacity of being spiritual. In my eyes a synthesis of the psychical, the physical and the spiritual must be present in an artistic stage performance to experiment the highest form of art experience.

4.1.3 Anxiety in stage performance

Part of being an artist and a performer is having experience with ‘stage fright’ or what I suggest is existential anxiety. In «Either/or», Kierkegaard describes how anxiety can’t exist in the present moment, it’s connected to the future or the past. When an artist know they will have a performance in the future, the creeping anxiety can already start to manifest itself a long time before they are in the stage performance. They start to worry about what could go wrong, if they will know the pieces well enough and if the technical preparations will be sufficient. They are in a process of doubting their own authenticity. The ego that is often written about in existential philosophy, has a tendency to talk us down. This can lead to an experience of negative anxiety. Often when we accept ourselves and the conditions we are in and get aware of our ego, we can more easily ease of the negative anxiety and embrace the positive anxiety that can help us forward. After we have finished a performance, we can also experience existential anxiety. We analyse what went wrong and what could have gone better.

Maybe a better tool would be to praise ourselves for what we accomplished and what positive experiences we can bring into the next performances. Some performers are good at this and some fall into despair at the experience of negative anxiety.

Kierkegaard talks about the freedom that lies within the experience of existential anxiety. In my opinion, many artists go through this experience both in stage performance and through their journey to reveal their potential as an artist. It seems like we are completely free to choose the destiny of our lives. Hermeneutic phenomenologist and existentialists like Heidegger believed that our lifeworld consists of many layers, I see the passage above as parts of layers in an artist's life in addition to many other layers.

When it comes to the nature of anxiety in stage performance, It seems like the times in which we sense this unease, is often the times when we are faced with our own and/or other's expectations. This is also confirmed by Senyshyn. In his books he tells about many experiences with anxiety that has threatened to ruin his performance. Senyshyn calls the despair that musicians sometimes go through, a crisis. When artists go into a crisis, I believe they are closer to the nature of existential anxiety, being more transparent to themselves. Instead of trying to push the fear away, they learn from such a condition as despair or crisis. Sometimes this can be experienced both on a personal and an artistic level. Kierkegaard suggested that going through despair or a crisis opens up the possibilities for creativity. This implies that there is a bigger possibility of being able to go into an artistic flow if courageous enough to surrender to existential anxiety.

From personal experiences and from the writings of Senyshyn it seems like most musicians sometimes go into despair. Similarly, when coming up from such a negativity, we often see easier the possibilities that lies in front of us. This shows that many of Kierkegaard's thoughts also applies to musicians and their stage performances. Because of this it might be better to not be afraid of falling into despair and existential anxiety, instead of trying to fight or flee the unease. In accordance with Kierkegaard and Senyshyn I would suggest that musicians should try to exist only within the moment of performance while performing. In this lies a bigger possibility of riding the musical wave of flow.

When writing about stage performance, Senyshyn highlights Kierkegaard's conception of

potency. The potency that lies in the upcoming performance, makes anxiety manifest itself before the performance has started. According to Kierkegaard there more anxiety a performer withholds, the greater is the potency of a powerful performance. Most of us have had conversation with musician that say before each concert, that I don't really get nervous. If this is true or not, in my eyes the existential anxiety has in it the potency of a greater power and flow of energy. When talking about the actress, Kierkegaard highlights that she is anxious in the wings. She doesn't repress her anxiety, but in order to receive her freedom, she conceals it. According to Senyshyn and Kierkegaard this opens up for the experience of positive anxiety in a performance.

Senyshyn also highlights that Kierkegaard writes about rapport and the gaze of the audience. He sees this as a burden the performer has to relate to. Musician often get affected by how the audience response to their performance. If the audience seems uninterested, it's harder to keep up the energy and positive anxiety. If the energy from the audience is positive and mutual, it's much easier to go into the state of flow. This is related to the tension in the performance felt by both the audience and the performer. Kierkegaard suggests being outside the tension which corresponds to one's power. If the tension affects the body too much, it can also destroy a performance.

Kierkegaard describes the experience of an authentic stage performance at the times when everything feels in line. The feeling of being present in the moment and being attuned to the thoughts and idea of the piece. This simultaneous inwardness and outwardness can lead to optimal resonance being completely in line with one's own sensitivity.

Rapport from the audience can be a burden, implying what could be anxiety and nerves. When rapport exists in the performance, Kierkegaard implies that it is still a burden, but it becomes a lighter burden. This could also be a link to the experience of negative and positive anxiety, where the lack or existence of rapport between the performer and the audience can affect how the performer experience anxiety in the performance.

Anxiety in stage performance can manifest itself in different forms. Kierkegaard shows an insight to the performers world that can help a musician forward. Being aware of phenomena's like anxiety, tension, rapport and how we talk to our ego, can make it easier to

surrender to existential anxiety. Like the actress, musicians should maybe not try to repress their anxiety, but have courage to embrace it so that it can turn into a positive anxiety leading us forward throughout the performance.

4.1.4 The soprano's metamorphosis

The first thought that led to this master's thesis was the possibility of redefining Kierkegaard's stages of existence into an artistic layer. Accordingly, this will be a suggestion to apply the stages as a transformation into the artistic stages of existence. This can illustrate the journey many musicians go through to achieve matureness and mastering of their artistic performances. A deeper search into the layers of the understanding of Kierkegaard's stages of existence, led to the realisation that the stages could be applied to the journey of an artist. In which is partly an inward journey to discover one's own layers of authenticity and possibilities.

In the work to understand existentialism and Kierkegaard it was essential to build an artistic character inspired by Kierkegaard's stages and 'the actress'. Other existentialists like Beauvoir and Sartre also made characters to illustrate how different phenomena can manifest itself in a person's life. As a phenomenological study, the soprano's lifeworld could help in clarifying the possible outcome of a singer's life and to get a better understanding of the nature of anxiety experienced through the character's eyes. The character of the young soprano goes through a metamorphosis similar to Kierkegaard's 'The actress'. The character is partly fictional and partly made from my subjective experiences on the journey to become an authentic musician.

Some people go through life as philistines. They live their lives on the outside and doesn't have the courage to look inward. They are satisfied with the way they live their lives, even though their lives are really empty, meaningless and superficial. Some singers stay in the aesthetic stage their whole lives. This is the sort of artists that don't really evolve. They are happy with their voice and their performance, because they lack the ability to look inward and explore their own lifeworld. The aestheticians who realise they are not living authentic lives, can fall into despair.

The character of the soprano is not like the philistines in general, she is a young aesthetic. She sees the beauty in everything, and she lives a hedonistic lifestyle. She has always searched for a deeper meaning in life, trying to understand existence and constantly evolving from her inward search for growth and authenticity. She has the potential to become a great artist, but this doesn't mean that her journey is easy. At the beginning of her metamorphosis she is a larva, being young, naive and vulnerable. She doesn't yet have much experience of the ethical or spiritual stage. Sometimes by coincident in her performances, she gets a glimpse of these stages, but she doesn't have the tools to apply it consciously to her artistry. When she performs, she displays a natural technique and she has the ability to act out emotions, but not genuine emotions. This prevents her from connecting with the audience.

When the soprano realises, she is not authentic, she experiences existential anxiety. In one performance she is overwhelmed by negative anxiety. At that point she falls into a deep despair believing she will never become a great artist. After a while she manages to learn from her experience, she is able to move on to the next metamorphosis, the ethical stage. In this stage of existence, the soprano is turning into a young adult. Her technique is more evolved and genuine. She is starting to communicate with the audience through more authentic emotions from her own lifeworld. This makes the performance more authentic and real. She doesn't act the emotions but feels and projects them to the audience. With a greater performance she nevertheless falls into despair when she realises, she is not performing completely authentically. A life event makes her lose all meaning for music and for what was once important in her life. She withdraws and stop performing music for many years, stuck in a condition of despair. She is trapped in her cocoon, unsure if she ever returns to music.

By coincident the soprano after a few years meets someone who leads her back to her musical journey, she is slowly getting released from her cocoon. For many years she is fighting herself and her voice, trying to get back the natural beauty she ones had, and heading for the path that can lead her to greatness and achieving her full potential. The most important journey goes inward into her own lifeworld, peeling of small layers of the cocoon. This leads to achievement of a grounded technique who makes the singing seam easy and unrestrained. The technique starts to flow in accordance with the rest parts of the performance. Authentic feelings are communicated to the audience and the audience responds emotionally, in a mutual ethical meeting through music. It touches something within the soprano and within the

audience. It goes even deeper than the ethical meeting, an aesthetic experience in which moves and leaves traces and neither the performer or the audience really understood what they just experienced, a transcendental experience, higher, deeper and more spiritual than words can describe.

This shows how at the final and spiritual stage, the mature soprano reaches the final stage of the metamorphosis, turning into a free and authentic butterfly. With this freedom and transparency, the soprano can display all her colours. This could lead to a transcendent experience, leaving permanent traces in the audience.

When reading Kierkegaard, you peel into many layers to discover what he is trying to make people realise about the world. When writing about such a complex subject as existential anxiety, one realises that existential anxiety also consists of many layers. When looking at the artist or soprano, you have an artistic level, but also a simultaneous personal level, where both layers affect each other. For many musicians, music can feel like the meaning of their lives. If the artist is not able to achieve the goals of an artistic career, this can affect them enormously both on an artistic and personal level. In the metamorphosis of becoming an artist, it's not possible to put our personal life aside, because the artistic level is such a deep part of us. That is also maybe one of the reasons that studies show that artists have more mental health issues than people in general.

4.2 The master's concert – A phenomenological subjective reflection

After the search for the nature of anxiety in text studies, I want to try to apply this to my final master's concert. One of the challenges with existential anxiety and mental states in general is that it isn't really that visible. The way I will try to apply it in my own lifeworld is through the inwardness reflected upon by Kierkegaard. Allowing myself to be and exist in anxiety throughout the performance, leading me forward and even accept that sometimes it will make the performance difficult for me.

In the focus of my own concerts, it's always been important for me to try to express authentic feelings. When I was younger, I was also very focused on beautiful singing. Sometimes the

focus on making the voice and the sound of the voice beautiful, and at the same time trying to sing well technically, made the performance more in an aesthetic existence. When I started to focus on intimacy in concerts, I also had a bigger focus on the audience and how I could express myself authentically and making the audience feel the same emotions that I tried to express. I believe I then came closer to the ethical stage of existence in stage performance. The main focus I've had the last years is both on perfection in the technique and at the same time trying to get an ethical connection with the audience, often referred to as mutuality in music theory. Mutuality is the experience you sometimes have on stage when it at times feels like you are able to draw back and forth with the audience, sometimes this can show with facial expressions or even sounds from the audience. For instance, if you sing an emotional aria on stage and you see some of the audience having tears in their eyes, you know the mutuality is there. A few times I've had a glimpse into the last stage of Kierkegaard's stages of existence. As I've matured as an artist, I've seen more of the last stage of existence.

One of the deepest experiences I've had in someone else's concert is seeing great artists like Arve Tellefsen, the famous Norwegian violinist. I also get the same experience from my teacher through many years, the famous Norwegian/Italian opera singer Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz. Recently when I've heard her sing, it becomes clear to me that a few great artists, especially the experienced ones, have arrived at the final stage of existence. At that stage I believe aesthetics in form of beauty and technique, the ethical, mutual meeting with the listeners and the inward spirituality/religious stage of existence is released in a flow of a profound and divine experience. I believe that it's some of the same experiences Kierkegaard writes about in «the artist» where he portrays an actress in first in the young and then in the mature stage of performance. I believe the lives of an artist is a journey through the different stages of existence. We go through what Senyshyn refers to as a crisis, and what Kierkegaard calls despair through the experience of existential anxiety, in a search within ourselves to be able to discover the new layers or stages of existence.

As part of the reflections on my master's concert, what struck me with the mentioned Arve Tellefsen concert, was that he used mostly songs that was personal to him, he also told some stories about them, saying they had been part of his artistic journey. Knowing they were personal to him, made the audience feel closer and more connected to him. Hence the decision to choose arias for my concert that has been special to me throughout my musical journey. In

my experience it's easier to have a more authentic performance if the pieces have a meaning to the performer.

The first song I chose for the concert, made me realise my dramatic potential and has always been special to me. I saw a tiny glimpse of what I believe is Kierkegaard's final stage of existence. The earliest song I learned of these is 'My man's tone now', I remember at that time, when I was only 16, they told me I would have enough maturity and dramatic capacity to sing this when I would get around 35. Now that I'm not far from that age, I have realised that the dramatic power that I then had to really work to get enough of comes much more naturally now. It's a very different way of singing it, and that takes me back to Kierkegaard's thoughts of the mature actress. Especially with dramatic voices like mine, it takes more time to gain the dramatic, powerful and overtone rich voice that is finally starting to unfold. It's not before I reach my 40th and 50th that my dramatics will be truly mature enough to sing the most dramatic roles. Accordingly, I have also decided to use the most dramatic and recently songs I've learned namely «Tu che la vanità» from Verdi's Don Carlo. This aria is the most dramatic I've sung by now. This aria appeals to me through the deepest level of my existence. It moves me transcendently in a way I am not able to explain. One of my own inspirations, Maria Callas in my opinion portrays this role to sublime perfection.

The song that will be first in my concert is 'Sure on this shining night' by Samuel Barber. This is a song that has followed me for many years through my early student years. This was one of the first songs that made me feel connected to the spiritual level. Even though I only had a few glimpses of this in my earlier years, I want to try how it affects me now that I'm more mature. It takes me maybe even more to the spiritual level, making it easier to perform with a flow. I believe it's the mood in the song that affects me so deeply. The text is written in a poetic way and has a less clear message than most love arias I sing. The mood in the song reminds me of another of my favourite songs, 'Morgen' by Strauss. 'I want magic' from A Streetcar named Desire by the recently deceased André Previn, has also followed me for some years. For my general repertoire, this is not what I would typically choose, but I find the character fascinating. She starts this aria by saying "Real, who want's real". I experience this as a character who is questioning our existence and what we perceive as real. She maybe reminds me slightly of myself. She sees all the wonders of the world and wants to live out her authentic identity knowing she is different from the general public. This character can be

perceived as someone similar to the Soprano who refuses to live a superficial life. The text is written both in a poetical and philosophical manner in which adds depth.

The first part of the concert consists of the three English and American pieces that has been mentioned above. It in a way reflects upon my own artistic metamorphosis. The pieces are performed differently and probable at a deeper level than my younger self was able to perform. The second part consists of three dramatic Italian opera arias that reflects more a more mature performer. The dramatic repertoire acquires a lived life consisting of both the lighter and heavier experiences in a lived life. After the shift from the American to the Italian repertoire, the first song that will be performed is 'Voi lo sapete, o mamma' from *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni. This also is an aria who affects me deeply, being highly dramatic. I will also sing the title role of Santuzza in Sicily this summer. This is a big leap in both my personal life and for me as an artist. The first time I heard it was when I on a two-month journey in Italy before Christmas. It immediately felt like it belonged to me. The aria displays a vast spectre of emotions ranging from love, anger, jealousy, desperation and sorrow. Projecting so much expressiveness can be challenging for a musician. It's like an explosion of emotions that can leave you exhausted and almost drained.

'Casta diva' from Bellini's *Norma* is the third Italian aria chosen for the concert. It has a different character from the two other more dramatic and desperate arias. Norma is a pristine who has within her a calmness that gives her authority and gives her the ability to lead the people. She prays to the goddess to help her and her people. This aria is also emotional, but at a calmer level. The character is always in control of her emotions and don't show the same amount of desperation. The desperation is more of a sadness. There is not so much text in this aria and many parts of the text is repeated.

The considerations I've made on the basis of the findings in this thesis, is to try to be more aware of and accepting that I will probable feel some unease at the awareness of existential anxiety. Like Senyshyn writes, this can occur also I while before the concerts and in the moment the concert is performed. I will try to embrace the positive sides of the anxiety bringing forward the possibility to get a greater performance. Musicians often strive to have great performance, but to Kierkegaard I believe every concert is just a part of evolving towards constantly becoming a greater and authentic performer. Like he expressed, the greater

the anxiety, the greater man, or in this case, the greater performer. When there is something at stake like an exam, musician get higher expectations, but I will try to surrender to the positive anxiety instead of having a focus on the end result. Another focus will be on trying to be more transparent for my authenticity, hopefully being able to reflect more genuine emotions.

4.3 Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined *the nature of existential anxiety in stage performance*. This thesis based on music philosophy has been examined through a hermeneutic phenomenological method. The key findings based on the nature of anxiety in stage performance, shows the complexity that lies within the process of becoming an authentic artist. Instead of applying techniques in performances to get rid of stage fright, it is in this thesis suggested that stage fright lies even deeper grounded in humans than a fright for the stage. What we call stage fright should be seen more as the nature of anxiety manifesting itself in the performer before, during and after stage performance. Like Kierkegaard, the suggestion of this thesis is to have courage to surrender to existential anxiety in performance. Surrendering to anxiety in the situation might lead to the experience of positive anxiety. If one tries to fight or conquer anxiety, there is a bigger risk of the nature of anxiety manifesting itself as negative anxiety. The nature of anxiety can help us forward in a performance, making the performance great. If we on the contrary experience negative anxiety in performance and even fall into despair, we will learn from our flaws, making us with accordance with Kierkegaard, even greater performers. Because when coming out of negative anxiety and despair lies the possibility for creativity.

The nature of existential anxiety in stage performance is in my eyes part of one of the layers in our lifeworld. The journey through the lives of artists culminates in the moment of the stage performances like Senyshyn suggests. Through a continuous search within ourselves we are able to discover the different layers or stages of existence. With the ultimate possibility of reaching the highest spiritual level in a performance. At the final stage of the artistic existence, the potency for the positive existential anxiety is projected through aesthetics in form of beauty and technique, the ethical, mutual meeting with the listeners and the inward

spirituality/religious stage of existence is released in a flow of a profound and divine experience. This is only possible through authenticity.

The awareness of phenomena's like anxiety, tension, rapport and ego, can make the process of surrendering to existential anxiety easier in stage performance. Musicians should similarly to Kierkegaard's character the actress, be courageous and surrender into the nature of existential anxiety. This can bring forward the possibility for experiencing positive anxiety in stage performance, that ultimately has the power to lead us forward.

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