Tuomas Auvinen: Differences and Similarities in the Role and Creative Agency of Producers in Pop, Rock and Classical

Abstract: Differences and similarities in the creative agency of the producer in the production process of urban pop music produced in a home studio, rock music produced in a conventional studio facility and classical concert hall music produced in a concert hall setting is explore in this paper. Starting from the premise of record production being a collaborative effort, I approach agency as the capacity to make and effect decisions within a structure or even to alter it to some extent, and creativity as contributing to the domain of existing works through exercising aesthetic decision-making. Based on these understandings of agency and creativity, I will examine how different cultures in different production settings and different studios conceived as cultural spaces affect the construction of the producer's agency within creative communities in the production process. Furthermore, I will discuss how differences in understandings of the ontology of the music contribute to the level of creativity, i.e. the contribution to the domain of existing works, that a producer agent can possess. I base my presentation on extensive ethnographic fieldwork of three case studies on production processes, which took place in the course of 2015-2017.

Introduction

The producer as the central figure of record production has often been the object of scholarly studies on the production process. Studies on single producers (e.g. Warner: 2003; Martin: 2014; Hennion: 1989) and more comprehensive historical or canonical accounts (e.g. Moorefield: 2005) lack direct comparisons between producers of different genres, although exceptions do exist (e.g. Burgess: 2013). In this article, my aim is to compare and contrast the roles and agencies of producers in pop, rock and classical by answering the following research questions:

[1] What differences in the producer's role and agency does the comparison of ethnographic case studies of a pop production, a rock production and a classical production reveal?

[2] What similarities can be found between the role and agency of the producer in a pop production, a rock production and a classical production and what do they infer about the role and agency of the producer in general?

[3] What can the comparison of differences and similarities of the producer's role and agency between the different case studies yield about the underlying philosophical underpinnings of different production settings?

Based on issues arising from my research material, the questions are framed though the conceptual binaries of production/consumption (e.g. Théberge: 1997), innovation/tradition (e.g. Moorefield: 2005) and technology/aesthetics (e.g. Warner: 2003; Martin: 2014) which frequently occur in the research field.

Here, I share some results of my forthcoming PhD dissertation, titled "Producer as Creative Agent: Studio Production, Technology and Cultural in Three Case Studies". Next, I will shortly describe my cases. Then, I will discuss my methodology, my materials and explain my theoretical concepts. I will then discuss relevant earlier research. Thereafter, I will explore similarities and differences in giving feedback, editing, formation of authority and the influences of different recording spaces on agency. I will end this article by some concluding thoughts.

Description of Case Studies

The first case study I conducted was on the young Finnish pop producer Mikke Vepsäläinen (b. 1992) and his work on the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Eng. As Long as Others Don't Know) (Ida Paul: 2016) with the singer Ida Paul in a home studio. My second case study was on the classical producer Seppo Siirala (b. 1952) and his production work with the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta as they recorded the Estonian composer Erkki-Sven Tüür's Symphony No. 8 (Tüür: 2010) at the Tapiola-hall in Espoo, Finland. My third and final case study was on the producer Jonas Olsson (b. 1981) and his work on the production of the songs 'Can't Hold Us' (Blind Channel: 2017a) and 'Alone Against All' (Blind Channel: 2017b) with the rock band Blind Channel at Olsson's studio InkFish in Vallila, Finland. The cases were conducted during the course of two years starting in the mid-spring of 2015 and ending in the early spring of 2017. I have already published two articles on my first case study on the producer Mikke Vepsäläinen (Auvinen: 2016; Auvinen: 2017) to which I refer in this article. I have not yet published anything on the other cases and on their part, I will be referring to the original research material.

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Methodology and Research Materials

This study is rooted in the traditions of ethnomusicology and cultural musicology. Here, I have applied ethnographic methodologies such as interviews (Blind Channel: 2016; Mäemets: 2016; Olsson: 2017a; Siirala: 2015; Siirala: 2015c; Vepsäläinen: 2016), field observations written in field diaries and photos (Photo 1–4) during studio production. Furthermore, I have conducted music analysis on music (Blind Channel: 2017; Ida Paul: 2016; Tüür: 2010) under production to the degree in which they have illustrated the similarities and differences of the producers. In my analysis, I refer to my field diary with the letters "FD" and a date in the European form "(date.month.year)". For example, the reference "(FD 1.1.2017)" would mean January the 1st in the year 2017.

In my analysis, I have applied the principles of data triangulation (e.g. Bennett: 2011) to establish a multi-faceted understanding of the object of research, as my material includes different kinds of materials. In the interpretation of my material I have applied the principles of the hermeneutic circle (e.g. Rice: 2008, p. 58) and, to some extent, interpretative phenomenological analysis (e.g. Martin: 2014). I have translated the interviews into English from the original Finnish and aimed at maintaining the original meaning of what the interviewees have said.

One could also ask how comparable these producers are, as they were all very different not only in terms of the musical style but also in terms of age and experience. Vepsäläinen could be described as a member of "the new generation" (Auvinen: 2016; 2017) and Siirala again retired in the beginning of the year 2016 continuing his work on a case-by-case basis. On the other hand, at least in Finland, a "young classical record producer" is an oxymoron in itself, as there only exist three full-time professional classical producers in the country; the numbers of options for possible participants were very few. Also, selecting case producers was not exactly hard. Very few responded with a willingness to take part and most producers I approached did not reply (FD 11.4.2014; 2.10.2016; 10.10.2016).

As I have explained earlier (Auvinen: 2016; Auvinen: 2017), I knew Vepsäläinen from before, which might have been the reason I was allowed to study his work in the first place; it seems to be difficult to find creators who would allow their work to be studies in an ethnographic manner (Bennett: 2011). Siirala was formerly unknown to me; he was recommended by another producer who refused to take part in my study (FD 11.4.2014). Olsson was somewhat familiar to me as I had interviewed him for my master's thesis in 2012. The artists in each case study were unknown to me.

My position as a researcher could be described as somewhere between emic and etic in ethnographic terms. I did some production work in my early 20's so I had an idea on of the process. Nevertheless, I have never worked as a full-time producer and nine years have passed since I last acted as a pro-

ducer. Therefore, I have been able to remain a more etic researcher. All participants agreed to take part with their own identities. I have offered all the participants the opportunity to read through this article before publishing. This way I have made sure that my research will not reflect negatively on my research subjects.

Theoretical Approach

Here, the concept of *creative agency* is central and consists of two separate concepts: *creativity* and *agency*. I use them as operative concepts through which I interpret my research materials through the hermeneutic process. Although the two are often used as an entity in the context of creative processes like record (music) production, I find some degree of separate definition necessary to grasp their essence.

The American social scientist Timothy D. Taylor (2001, p. 35) defines agency as "an individual actor's or collective capacity to move within a structure, even alter it to some extent". This definition works well for collective processes like that of record production. Even more simply, agency could be defined as the "ability to make choices" (Taylor, p. 2017). Furthermore, agency refers "…not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place" as the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984, p. 9) puts it. This would separate agency from *role* which refers more to how the producer ends up acting.

For creativity, I draw from the theories of the Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997, p. 28). For him, "Creativity occurs when a person, using the symbols of a given domain such as music [--] has a new idea or sees a new pattern, and when this novelty is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion in to the relevant domain". This approach has been widely used in the field of the study of the art of record production. Examples include work by Philip McIntyre (2008) and Robert W. Taylor (2017). Similarly, the British sociologist Jason Toynbee (2000: 35), who refers to (popular) music makers as "*creators* [original italics], that is agents who make musical differences in the form of texts, performances and sounds". He (ibid.) adds that this understanding of creativity includes "all stages of music-making from 'writing' through 'performance' to 'production'". These understandings of agency and creativity formulate a good conceptual base here and create a solid connection to the relevant research field.

Earlier Research

Despite (or perhaps, because of) the seemingly obvious differences of the producer's role between classical music and genres of popular music, there exists very little directly comparative ethnographic research. To the best of my knowledge, the field of the study on the art of record production lacks a

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comparative study, in which the role and agency of producers in EDM-based pop-music, rock music and classical music are compared through ethnographic methods. The lack of such research might stem from the idea that the prevailing differences, which result from tradition and the differences in the ontology of the work, are too obvious and an inquiry on the topic would simply be dwelling on facts that everyone already knows. However, similarities between the roles of classical producers and producers of popular music are perhaps not as self-evident and to discuss similarities requires exploring differences. Perhaps the self-evident surface differences are not as clear when they are properly examined and rigorously scrutinized from multiple perspectives.

Comparisons between producers in different genres so far limit to shorter accounts based on for instance inquiries on music criticism. The British musicologist Simon Frith offers one such perspective:

> In this respect rock record producers are seen as both more significant for rock as an art form than producers in jazz, folk or classical music, but less important for rock as a cultural project than producers in pop or dance music. The producer was both obdurately present in the music and readily ignored in the way that music was discussed. (Frith, 2012, p. 221)

Frith's statement can perhaps be seen as a summary of the reception of the differences in the producer's role between different genres. It does not, however, necessarily say much about what actually happens in the studio process.

The shortage of direct comparisons leaves the option of comparing individual studies of popular music producers, which comprises the vast majority, and classical producers. Earlier research on the producer of popular music has emphasized her/his creative and artistic agency and the ways in which developments in music technology contribute to the producer's authority making the producer essentially a creative agent from the 1950's onwards (e.g. Warner: 2003; Horning: 2013, p. 204; Moorefield: 2005). This was obviously a part of a larger transformation of popular music production from craft to art (Heinonen: 2015, p. 34). Scholarly accounts on the creative process of classical record production are scarce, which might stem from the understanding summarized by the American musicologist Arved Ashby:

> … recording has had less an aesthetic influence on classical-musical practices than an ontological effect. In other words, it has helped shape and define the sort of thing that music is. (Ashby, 2010, p. 22)

Furthermore, as Ashby (p. 226) explains, a classical record has often been considered "just a picture of the score taken by somebody". Similarly, the Australian musicologist Colin Symes argues that while the body of research

dealing with "the ways in which the phonograph has transformed the conditions of listening to [classical] music

> ...the nature of recorded sound and its underlying discourses have not been subjected to the same degree of analysis. The neglect is particularly pronounced in the area of classical music, which has been insulated from those developments in cultural studies that have shed light on the way recording has transformed the nature of popular music. (Symes, 2004, p. 60)

According to Symes, the reason behind this neglect lies in the cultural ethos embedded in the analysis of classical music, which has avoided "contextual questions relating to music and the technology in its reproduction" (ibid.). Consequently, scholarly writing on classical record production has concentrated more on the philosophical considerations on the concept of the work (e.g. Benjamin: 1936) than on the creative capacities on the agents involved in the process. Exceptions, especially when it comes to the recordings of Glenn Could, do exist (e.g. Mantere: 2006).

Earlier accounts on the classical producer have often emphasized the producer's mediating capacity of the "relationship between the score, the performing artists and the processes and technologies of recording" (Blake: 2012, p. 195) and the conservative attitudes towards using music production technologies to enhance the final product (Burlin: 2008). Even if the Swedish musicologist Toivo Burlin's account is more historical and it is limited to Sweden, I see his arguments as valid in the contemporary situation. In summary: while popular music producers have largely been thought of more or less as artists and creative forces behind the music, classical producers have been conceptualized more in terms of craftsmanship and servant to the artists and the work. My contribution here is to provide detailed ethnographic analysis on how the roles and agencies of producers between different genres differ and, perhaps more importantly, how they *do not* differ.

Giving Feedback

Giving feedback was a key element of the producer's activities in all cases and aimed at getting the artists to perform their best in each performance. In Vepsäläinen's case, the aim of recording vocals was to record as many takes as possible and get different takes with different feelings and interpretations. The aim was also to strive towards what possible audiences would "dig". Giving feedback also served the purpose of recording a vast amount of takes to be used as raw material in the editing process. (Auvinen: 2016, p. 17–18.) What is also important to note here is the way feedback worked both ways; the singer Ida Paul also comments on Vepsäläinen's activities and had a final say on for example his edits (Auvinen: 2016, p. 18).

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Olsson's work with the band Blind Channel followed very similar lines. What stood out especially in Olsson's case was the overwhelmingly positive feedback he didn't hesitate to give to the members of the band Blind Channel whenever it was appropriate (FD 29.11.2016). This created a good overall feel during the sessions, which also came up in interviews with the band. According to Niko Moilanen, the singer/rapper of Blind Channel:

> We always expect good sessions. I also expect that we are going to have fun. The producer is important also from a humor-perspective. We work long days and it is important that the atmosphere stays good. (Blind Channel: 2016)

Photo 1. Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center.

Here, the good feel of sessions connected to editing practices as well. In the classical case of Siirala and his work with the orchestra Tapiola Sinfonietta, the producer's feedback, to me, seemed somewhat technical. In between takes, Siirala gave statements like "measure number 47 is [rhythmically] inaccurate" or "the string section has problems at measures 48 and 49" (FD 12.3.2016). Or, he would give extremely accurate feedback like "stay [rhythmically] together at measures 200 and 300" (FD 12.3.2016), which has a difficult unified rhythm pattern (Tüür: 2010, measure 21). On other occasions Siirala's feedback was more figurative. He gave comments like "the phrase" in take number two "didn't speak to me" (FD 12.3.2016). In Siirala's

case the soothing effect of the feedback seemed of great importance. Siirala gave his feedback from an instrument-storage room-turned-into a control room through a talkback microphone that was connected to a loudspeaker situated next to the conductor onstage in the concert hall (Photo 1).

Siirala always gave his feedback in a very soft and calm voice despite the fact that the schedule was tight and that the recordings perhaps didn't always progress as fluently as planned. (FD 12.3.2016.) This illuminates how important the producer is from a social perspective in classical record production; the producer has to make people feel that everything is going well and according to plan even if he himself feels that things could be going more fluently. Furthermore, s/he must stay calm and make others feel that there is no rush, even if time is running out. The *social* aspects of the producer's agency thus become a part of the *creative agency* of the producer, as her/his social skills, character and feedback-giving capabilities influence the creative activities taking place.

On the surface, the difference between Siirala's feedback in classical and Vepsäläinen's and Olsson's feedback in pop and rock seemed to be in its quality. While Vepsäläinen and Olsson concentrated on what to me sounded like issues concerning *interpretation* and the "feel" of a performance, Siirala's feedback in classical music, to me, sounded technical. Siirala, however, offered a contradicting perspective. He elaborates:

> First of all, what is interpretation? That needs to be resolved first. I think that everything is interpretation. If there's a wrong note, it is a bad interpretation from the perspective of the recording. You can't separate the right notes and how accurately the musicians are playing   together   from   the interpretation of the work. They are always related…everything is connected to everything. I always aim at everything being correct, the way it is written in the music [in the score]. (Siirala, 2016c)

This statement brings forth an important aspect into how music resists atomistic analysis. Furthermore, it is a reminder of how my interpretation of a situation might completely differ from that of the people whose work I study.

Reasons for the quality of feedback between the classical and the popular music cases can be several. The greatest difference was in the number of artists the feedback was addressed to. In the classical case the feedback was often addressed to an instrument group, like for instance the violins with 16 musicians, or to the whole orchestra and the conductor. Therefore, the feedback couldn't touch deep on the performances of an individual musician. Even with smaller instrument groups, like for example the cornets consisting of two musicians, the producer was not able to give very detailed feedback; tight recording schedules along with union breaks wouldn't allow it. Also, the threshold of giving harsh feedback to an individual musician in front of an entire orchestra might have been high. In the cases of pop and rock, how-

ever, the producer's feedback was pointed towards one musician at a time. Consequently, the possibility of getting deeper into the performance of an individual was therefore possible. Another factor behind the difference in the aims of feedback might lie in the differences of the structuration of producer compensation. Vepsäläinen's compensation was heavily based in his shares in the copyright of the song (cf. Burgess). Thus, his earnings were heavily based on future streaming numbers of the song creating a strong incentive to think of what act as the "ear of the audience" (Hennion: 1983, p. 161). Sirala again worked on a fixed compensation. He did not have to worry about the sales of the record, not to mention the nominal sales of contemporary classical records released by Finnish record companies to begin with. Sales would not affect his earnings in the same direct way as in Vepsäläinen's case.

Editing

Intensive editing was a key activity for all producers here. However, editing in the different cases served different purposes. In Vepsäläinen's work, editing became essentially a mode of composing or arranging. Consider for example the first post-chorus of the song 'Kunhan muut ei tiedä' (Ida Paul: 2016), which starts at 1:05. By heavy chopping and editing, Vepsäläinen has used the last vowel of the punch line that ends the chorus, "ei tiedä", as a rhythmic element of the arrangement. It could even be understood as a counter-melody for the pentatonic post-chorus melody, which sounds like a mallet instrument. In Vepsäläinen's case, editing was also important in the way that the musical background was composed as most of it was essentially digitally programmed or coded through MIDI.

A similar example can be found in the band Blind Channel's cover of the Macklemore song 'Can't Hold Us' (Blind Channel 2017a), produced by Jonas Olsson. At 0:58, one can hear an "aah" -sounding riser consisting of overdubbed male vocals, which form a choir-like sound. This riser starts at the note G and glides into A. The riser works as a sort of a marker leading into the first pre-chorus. The riser appeared to be a spontaneous idea by the producer Jonas Olsson during a recording session. The idea sprung from the Backstreet Boys song 'Everybody' (Backstreet Boys: 1997), in which there is a similar choir-like "aah" –sound at 1:00. This sound functions essentially as a lead-in to the first chorus. During a recording session, Olsson first listen to the song 'Everybody' and then has Blind Channel's lead vocalist go into the recording booth to record several takes and overdubs. Olsson then edits everything together. (FD 19.12.2016.) This is another example of how digital editing as a technological practice is important from the perspective of constructing the arrangement. In Olsson's case, editing during small breaks in the recording sessions also served the purpose of making the musicians feel better. Olsson explains:

> It's nicer for the band to get some finished results. It's very uninspiring to record some takes into some tube or into a kind of a black hole and often the artist's perception of how well s/he has played is very different from the truth. (Olsson: 2017)

Additionally, this exemplifies the important practice of listening to reference material, which was an important aspect also in the case of Vepsäläinen (Auvinen: 2016, p. 25–26; Auvinen: 2017). The producer Olsson sees listening to reference material as an important part of producing. He elaborates:

> The Internet is an important tool. We get to listen to all the music in the world as reference when we want. In the earlier days, we had to cycle to the library. Then they're like "yeah, we don't have that record here, come back in two weeks. We should be getting it by then". (Olsson: 2017)

In addition to this practice as such, Olsson's statement highlights the importance of new technologies in making this practice easier and broader. Listening to reference material can be understood as a form of consumption integrated into production (e.g. Théberge 1997); the producer consumes the music of others through digital technologies (streaming services) for aesthetic and creative ideas to be brought into the music s/he is working on. This practice did not occur in the classical case study. The classical producer's point of reference was the score (Tüür: 2010) of the work under production and a recording of its premier performance. He didn't draw influences from other compositions.

Editing in service of arranging was, however, more prevalent in the case of Vepsäläinen as opposed to the case of Olsson. This can be through understanding the producer's agency in contemporary pop as "tracker" (Auvinen 2016; 2017, Hiltunen 2016). As tracker, Vepsäläinen wrote the song together with Paul and the arrangement was an intrinsic part of the composition; it guided the compositional process as a template for genre apposite creative decisions" (Bennett 2011). In the case of Olsson, however, editing had less to do with arranging and more with enhancing the performances of the musicians. The arrangements were mainly constructed by the band prior to the studio sessions and Olsson even used demo versions of the songs as templates when recording. Olsson's role as an arranger was smaller and mainly restricted to nuances like the one I described above, although seemingly small nuances might bear convey meanings to the listener especially when sound is in question (see e.g. Lacasse: 2000). This suggests that the rock producer is less present in the music than the pop producer also in the real situation of the production process, not just "in the way music is discussed", like Frith (2012, p. 221) suggests. Still, the rock producer remains "more important for rock as an art form than producers in jazz or classical" (ibid.).

In the classical case study, Siirala's editing essentially aimed at constructing the final edit of the *performance* from the 88 separate takes recorded

during the recording sessions (Tüür: 2016). None of these takes were recordings of a performance of the entire piece played from beginning to end but were mostly rather short in duration. Despite the fact that the finished recording was a technologically built ideal performance, Siirala's take on technological enhancements of music was comparably conservative. Siirala states:

> We can use equalizers, but if we start to mess with pitch, we are operating in a grey area. – – I have to confess that I have committed a sin like this in the past, but in these cases, it has been the only option to remedy the situation and the other option would have been not to release it [the record]. (Siirala 2016c)

These notions reflect conservative attitudes towards music production technologies. The aim is to produce the ideal performance (e.g. Blake: 2012) of a score and what the listener hears should be something that has actually been played by the musicians. I see this as a value related to authenticity that arises from the philosophical and historical background of classical music. The other complication with respect to sound manipulation techniques in classical recordings is the recording technique. The orchestra is recorded as a unit and sound sources are not isolated (Photo 1). When all sound sources bleed to all microphones, manipulating one sound source would change the entire soundscape (Siirala 2016c). Even if this may seem like a purely technical issue, it is also an aesthetic one; recording all at once creates a desired orchestral sound, which could be very hard to achieve by recording everything in isolation. Having the space as an element in the final sonic product is obviously also an aesthetic choice stemming from the conventions and tradition of classical music (e.g. Klein 2012). In Siirala's case, however, the fact that the recording space was the home venue of the orchestra, created a significant impediment on his agency. For example, Siirala wished to change the seating arrangements of the orchestra for the recordings. The musicians, however, didn't agree to this because they wouldn't "find each other musically" if arranged otherwise (FD 9.3.2016). Similar considerations of the importance of space in production from an aesthetic viewpoint didn't come up with Olsson and Vepsäläinen.

Still, for me, a question regarding sound manipulation in classical post-production arises: if it is possible, why not use technologies to manipulate the recorded sounds if it makes the end product better? This also begs the question of whether or not editing in the sense of constructing an entire performance from numerous short takes should be called *editing*. To me, the word *editing* refers to making changes and editing a recorded performance. Perhaps editing in this form should be relabeled for example *performance construction*.

Formation of Authority

A key difference in how the producer's agency was constructed was related to how authority and credibility are formed. The classical producer Siirala emphasizes the importance of professional classical musicianship:

> I think it is a requirement that in this trade [classical producer] the producer has personal experience of making music, playing, singing or conducting – – This [giving feedback] is the essential issue in the producer's work. In the recording situation, you have to be able to give credible feedback to the artists so that a [relationship of] trust is established and that you really have an opinion upon which the artists can base their own decisions. (Siirala: 2015)

Siirala's career as a producer started by him replying to a job advertisement in a newspaper and he went on to produce a record on his very first day on the job (Siirala: 2015) with a monthly salary without previous major chart success. The rock producer Olsson on the other hand emphasized production experience on the job. He discusses the beginnings of his career:

> I expressed my opinions many times but people just shrugged their shoulders and continued the old way and didn't want to see the problem. Or then they saw the problem but it was an ego-issue to them, in a way that a 19-year-old can't know and we know better, we've played these songs. (Olsson: 2017a)

Photo 2. InkFish studio.

This comment insinuates that the authority of the producer in rock music comes from prior chart success and experience. Also, the band Blind Channel who Olsson worked with discussed how they chose Olsson as their producer for the very reason that he is a "top producer" (Blind Channel: 2016). One cannot be a top producer without prior success. The construction of authority through achievements as a producer is also reflected in the studio design. In his studio InkFish, Olsson had hung his gold and platinum records on the walls (FD 27.11.2016; Photo 2; Photo 3). This lets all his customers know about his achievements as a producer.

The key difference here is that the authority of the producer in classical music seems to stem more from the role or job description. The producer has the authority because s/he is assigned as the producer independent of the specific achievements. This perhaps reflects the nature of classical music as a more institutionalized art form. Projects are

Photo 3. InkFish studio.

initiated from the top down; the record label wants to do a recording of a work, selects performers, engineers and producers. There exists a collective trust that whoever has been selected to do a specific job, in this case the job of the producer, has endured the necessary scrutiny or jumped through the required hoops to be capable of performing well in the role s/he is acting in. In classical music, the institution in a way works for the individuals and does the screening whereas in popular music individuals themselves have to be aware of the achievements of the people they want to work with. This also leads to the notion that the producer in classical music perhaps does not have to constantly prove her/himself to maintain authority. In popular music again, at least in the cases here, the process starts from the bottom down; artists and producers make contact and offer the package to the record label.

Finally, an important similarity between all cases was that the producer's responsibilities ended after the editing process was finished. Mixing and mastering in each case study was conducted by another engineer. Reasons ranged from what could be perceived as limitations of one's studio (Auvinen: 2016; 2017), to the acknowledgement of the limitations of one's personal skills (Olsson: 2017) and to a self-evident and rigorous differentiation between specialized duties in classical music (Mäemets 2016), which was also manifested in the fact that, unlike Vepsäläinen and Olsson,

Siirala had with him at the recordings the engineer Enno Mäemets to do the actual technical part of the recording. Siirala himself was able to concentrate on giving feedback and, by the powers granted by the red button (Photo 4), mediating communications between the control room and the concert hall where the orchestra recorded. (FD 12.3.2016.) This supports Gibson's (2005: 205) finding that despite the development and digitalization of music technology, which has given more creative power to musicians (e.g. Williams 2012) and producers alike, "high-level mastering and post-production

facilities" as specialized services have still survived. My findings would suggest that this tends to be the case with several very different genres.

Photo 4. Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center.

Concluding Thoughts

The producer's role and agency are strongly formed through digital techno-logical practices, independent of genre. Warner's (2003, p. 33) argument that the relationship between technology and pop music is embodied in the pro-ducer extends into classical music as well. Here, Mike Howlett's (2012) idea of the producer as 'nexus' comes closest to a common description of the producer's role and agency across all genres, styles and production settings. However, as it is difficult to generalize on such a small number of cases, further comparative research is needed. I nevertheless contend that my find-ings have some relevance outside of these cases especially as earlier research has reached some of the same conclusions.

Differences in conventions and philosophical traditions between popular music and classical music shape the producer's agency and role in the pro-duction process despite similarities in working practices. Despite the oppor-tunities provided by digital technologies, the aesthetic aim in the production of classical musical records has remained to stay invisible to the listener

(Klein: 2015). This reflects to the role and the creative agency of the producer.

With regards to the relationship between aesthetic aims and technological practice, all producers regardless of genre did not demonstrate high interest in technologies themselves. For all producers, technology was subordinate to aesthetic values and creative ideas (see: Martin: 2014, p. 232). This was different from for example the engineer in the classical case study, who was very specific about his technologies and equipment (FD 23.3.2016).

The biggest similarity between the three cases was the way the producer gave feedback to the artist(s). Feedback in all cases aimed at increasing the quality of the artists performance. Also, heavy editing was common to all producers but the difference was the degree to which editing was a compositional or arranging (popular music) practice or a performance construction (classical music) practice. The nature of editing here made me question the essence of the term "editing", which to me means making changes to a recorded performance. Here, editing seemed to be a much broader practice.

Differences between technological practices of producers exemplified the different conventions and aims behind production, which frame the agency of the producer. In popular music, producers used all and any technological means to make the music better and music production technologies, much through the agent of the producer, are in the service of new practices and ideas. This came up the strongest in in the way the phases of composition, arranging, pre-production, recording and post-production editing got purposefully entangled and mixed during the process. Recording and sound manipulation technologies can therefore not be isolated as tools that belong only to the recording process to realize a performance on a record but are an intrinsic part of the entire creative process from composition to mastering. This partially connects to how agents work "directly with sound", which constantly evolves (Warner: 2003, p. 18–19; Théberge: 1997, p. 192). In classical music, however, contemporary technological practices seem to be in the service of traditional ideas and aims and goals; reproducing the ideal performance of a score into a recording medium, an idea that prevailed in the beginning of record production in all genres. At play here is the conceptual binary innovation/tradition. All producers here were technologically current in *how* they conducted their work by using the latest digital technologies. However, in popular music, contrary to classical, innovation also expanded into ideas of *what* should be done. The conceptual binary of production/consumption offers an interesting aspect into the differences of the guiding philosophical underpinnings of classical and popular music. The *consumption practice* of listening to reference material reveals that whereas in popular music it is natural to be influenced by and take ideas from other pieces of music, a classical work is viewed as more self-sufficient as the point of reference is the work under production itself.

Finally, rather than differentiating between different genres of music stylistically, a more fruitful distinction might arise from the way the producing agents conceptualize the aims of record production. Perhaps a continuum could be made between *performance music* and *production music*, a dichotomy that was introduced to me by the Canadian engineer and producer Paul Novotny at the 12th Art of Record Production conference.

Acknowledgements

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Photos

Photo 1. March the 12th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center. Photo in the possession of the author.
Photo 2. November the 27th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. Photo in the possession of the author.
Photo 3. November the 28th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at InkFish studio. Photo in the possession of the author.
Photo 4 March the 12th 2016. Photo taken by Tuomas Auvinen at Tapiola hall, Espoo Cultural Center.