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Artists as Vulnerable Workers

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Summary¹

Artists are vulnerable workers not only on account of professional contingencies (underemployment, intermittent and multiple jobs, freelance work, precarious contracts, low salaries in certain categories), but also on account of their dependent identities, which are exposed to specific forms of symbolic power, inequality and gatekeeping processes if they wish to achieve recognition. This paper focuses on the two perspectives, making use of certain European and Portuguese references in order to portray ambivalent and diversified features in the artistic condition. The research in Portugal combined statistical analysis with qualitative approaches to professional experiences and locations in various areas (in particular the visual arts, composers and musicians in the main orchestras), with particular attention to gender issues.

Key-words: artists, profession, vulnerability, identity, visual arts, serious music

Resumo

Os artistas são trabalhadores vulneráveis não apenas por contingências profissionais (subemprego, intermitência e pluriactividade, trabalho independente, contratos precários, baixos salários em certas categorias), mas também por identidades dependentes particularmente expostas a formas específicas de poder simbólico, desigualdade e processos de gatekeeping para o reconhecimento. Este texto reflecte as duas perspectivas, trazendo referências para o contexto europeu e português que retratam ambivalências e diversas características da condição artística. A pesquisa combinou, em Portugal, análises estatísticas e qualitativas sobre enquadramentos e experiências profissionais em várias áreas. Nomeadamente, as artes visuais e a área da música erudita - compositores e músicos nas principais orquestras - com particular atenção a questões de género.

Palavras-chave: artistas, profissão, vulnerabilidade, identidade, artes visuais, música erudita

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1. Vulnerability in profession and identity

The first meaning of vulnerability, as associated with work is precariousness – in institutional, contractual and wage relationships that imply risk, insecurity and even exclusion, in the more critical situations of professional disqualification and discontinuity. However, because I am talking about artists, whose professional condition is particularly marked by a personal dimension (the sense of self) and an inter-subjective dimension (recognition by others, especially the circle of peers), I would like to consider the two issues of profession and identity.

In fact, artists are vulnerable workers not only on account of professional contingencies (underemployment, intermittent and multiple jobs, freelance work, precarious contracts, low salaries in certain categories and great inequality in rewards and reputation), but also on account of their dependent identities, which are exposed to specific forms of symbolic power, competition and gatekeeping processes in the search for recognition. Thus, the focus on identity introduces the element of interaction, the dimension of power(s), and the problem of individuals facing a collective system of players: the artistic space with its agents, locations and audiences. Or, using another form of conceptual symmetry, if profession carries the notion of labour markets, then identity evokes that of intermediary agents, so crucial to recognition. Various categories of intermediaries cross artists' trajectories: political and institutional, in funding and programming agendas; operational, mediating and commercial, in the whole body of staff, producers, directors, editors, promoters, and market agents such as art galleries; and aesthetic and discursive, in the performance of critics and the media.

So, from this perspective, and with particular sensitivity to the experience of the individual, vulnerability is not reduced to indicators of professional insecurity but can encompass “ontological insecurity”. This expression was also applied by Anthony Giddens (1991) to general forms of contemporary personal identity, quite similarly to other authors, referring to individualism or processes of singularization in post-modernism (Bauman, 2001; Kaufmann, 2005). As a matter of fact, this second meaning of vulnerability seems consistent with certain specificities in the artistic condition, such as its “regime of singularity”, so dependent on recognition and well analyzed by Nathalie Heinich (2005), for example.

This is the meaning that I followed in the theoretical framework for my research about artists and powers in Portugal (Conde, 1999; 2000a; 2001b; 2003b; 2008b;

2009a).² However, such conceptual crossroads also emerged from empirical inference, (which is usual, heuristically, for “grounded theory”) in research combining statistical analysis and qualitative approaches on the basis of interviews and ethnographic observation of Portuguese artists, careers and professional locations in various areas, namely visual arts, composers and musicians in the principal orchestras.

My purpose here is to mention certain data, including that on gender inequality, observed in relation to access to and achievement in a number of art worlds (Conde, 2000b; 2001a; 2003a; 2003b; 2009c), though the aim is to insert them in a wider reflection on the artistic condition, in Portugal and abroad, under the guidance of those conceptual connections. For this reason, we must begin by contextualizing that condition within European indicators and perspectives. Ambivalence, as is also underlined in other approaches to art and culture in the contemporary situation and public sphere (Conde, 2008a), is the opening note, then, to think about the inconsistency – and vulnerability – attached to the peculiar condition of artists.

2. A condition with centrality and fragility

First of all, we must clarify the fact that artists, as authors and 'interpreters' in literature, cinema, and the visual and performing fields (music, theatre and dance) are a tiny, but key, segment among the cultural professions. This only changes a little when the traditional borders of the sector are extended to other areas such as architecture, design, fashion or the creative work in, for example, advertising, as happens today under the umbrella of creativity at large. Thus, authorship and 'interpretation' distinguish cultural employment within overall employment in the cultural sector, which includes various non-artistic profiles: technical, operational, administrative, and others linked to training, intermediation and leadership or the management of projects and organizations.

² Part of this research was carried out in 2001-2003 with Teresa Duarte Martinho and João Pinheiro at the Observatory of Cultural Activities in Lisbon, and integrated into a European project on professional conditions and gender gatekeeping in the new media arts and serious music field. I am also very grateful to Teresa Martinho for more recent information and, in particular, permission to consult, before publication, her co-authored book, *Trabalho e qualificação nas actividades culturais: um panorama em vários domínios (Work and Skills in Cultural Activities. An overview in various areas)* (Gomes & Martinho, 2009, forthcoming; Martinho, 2008)

Besides other considerations of fluidity and ambiguity in the definition of artists, just by the possible mix of criteria (objective and subjective, professional and amateur, trained or self-taught), this distinction is usual for the statistical perception of the main artistic core in cultural professions, as is shown in Table I for Portugal.

Adopting only certain categories from the latest census³, we noticed accentuated increases in entertainment and authorship, the latter possibly explained by the higher number of journalists with the enlargement of the media sector in the 90's. But also in dance, one of the most feminized arts, in great contrast to music. Nevertheless, all these cases together represented at round or less than 0.5% of the national labour force, while total employment in the cultural sector was also estimated at around only 2.0-2.5% according to more traditionally restricted criteria.⁴ The European average between 2.5% and 3.1%, considering cultural employment vs this one plus cultural tourism employment (Table 2).⁵

Table 1 - Artists in Portugal, by type and gender (1991-2001)

	1991			2001			Growth rate %	
	Total	%	% Women**	Total	%	% Women**	Total	% Women
Authors, journalists, writers and similar professions	4030	43	34	8217	54	44	104	167
Sculptors, painters and similar professions	1564	17	38	1897	12	34	21	7
Composers, musicians, singers	1992	21	17	2340	15	17	18	14
Choreographers and dancers	373	4	69	706	5	77	89	111
Stage and cinema actors and directors	1141	12	34	1579	9	37	38	49
Music hall artists and similar professions	255	3	29	578	4	28	127	124
Total	9,355	100 (b)	32	15,317	100 (b)	39	64	97

Source: *Censuses of the Portuguese population*, 1991 and 2001, INE – National Statistics Institute.

* Column percentage ** Row percentage; a) Includes musicians, singers and dancers in this genre; b) % rounded up; the total may not exactly coincide with 100%.

³ Other, more recent, perceptions are available in the labour statistics but, as they are limited to employment in enterprises and organizations, they exclude independent work, which is, precisely, normal in a large part of this artistic core.

⁴ Again, the calculations can double the figure, or more, if the reference base is enlarged to all the forms of employment creative employment inside and outside the traditional contents of the culture sector.

⁵ The same argument must be applied to the calculations for Europe.

Another question relates to the practical regimes of professional life and their indicators of vulnerability. A European portrait is given in Table 3, though without our previous distinction because its notion of “cultural employment” envisages all forms of work, whether artistic or non-artistic. Nonetheless, the feature that stands out, recurrently reinforced on the artistic side, is the greater number of temporary, part-time, cumulative and independent jobs in the cultural field. Especially in creative contexts, tasks and careers, these jobs are associated with portfolio-workers and network or project-based organizations, i.e. small enterprises and clusters of activities arranged in more “organic” and “adhocratic” structures (Mintzberg, 1995: 335-343, 457-491; Chiappelo, 1997, 1998; Greffe, 1999; Chong, 2002). This is not the only paradigm because artistic labour is also incorporated and institutionalized in more bureaucratic groupings such as museums, orchestras, corporations and cultural industries. But the former types of versatile workers and frameworks have been seen not only as well-adapted to the economy and production of prototypes in culture, but also recognized, in art, as “anticipators” or even symbolic “role models” in the metamorphosis of contemporary, “flexible” capitalism (Menger, 2001).

Table 2 - Culture and Cultural & Cultural Tourism Employment in Europe (%)

%	Cultural Employment as a % of Total Employment	%	Cultural & Cultural Tourism Employment as a % of Total Employment
EU 25	2.5%		3.1%
< 2.0%	Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia	< 2.0%	Poland, Slovakia
2.0% - 2.5%	Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Spain	2.0% - 2.5%	Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal
2.6% - 3.0%	Denmark, Germany, Slovenia	2.6% - 3.0%	Austria, Belgium, Italy
3.1% - 3.5%	Estonia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom	3.1% - 3.5%	Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Spain
4.0+%	Hungary (5.1%)	4.0+%	Hungary (6.5) Netherlands

Source: KEA Report (2006). *The Economy of Culture in Europe*, p. 318

Table 3 - Cultural Employment and Working Characteristics in Europe (2002)
(%)

	% of workers with temporary jobs		% of workers with part-time jobs		% of workers with a second job		% of employers & self-employed	
	Total empl.	Cultural empl.	Total empl.	Cultural empl.	Total empl.	Cultural empl.	Total empl.	Cultural empl.
EU 25	12	18	17	25	3	9	14	29
Austria	7	11	19	26	4	9	9	39
Belgium	8	17	20	21	3	7	15	29
Cyprus	9	5	6	11	5	5	20	20
Czech Republic	8	15	5	12	2	7	16	29
Denmark	9	10	21	36	11	20	8	17
Estonia	2	2	7	13	4	4	5	5
Finland	17	24	12	24	4	8	9	19
France	14	29	16	24	3	10	9	20
Germany	12	18	21	30	2	8	10	30
Greece	11	21	4	14	3	9	30	31
Hungary	7	11	3	n.a.	2	5	12	19
Ireland	5	n.a.	17	24	2	4	13	28
Italy	9	19	9	17	1	7	26	47
Latvia	11	9	7	10	7	19	6	6
Lithuania	6	2	8	15	7	18	6	8
Luxembourg	4	1	12	16	1	3	7	16
Malta	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Netherlands	14	19	44	56	6	14	11	32
Poland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Portugal	21	35	7	15	7	13	19	27
Slovakia	5	5	2	2	1	6	9	18
Slovenia	15	26	5	15	2	3	9	20
Spain	30	34	8	16	2	6	17	25
Sweden	16	22	21	28	9	14	9	27
United Kingdom	6	10	25	26	4	7	11	28
Iceland	6	5	29	41	17	29	15	35
Norway	10	17	26	29	9	13	5	19
Bulgaria	n.a.	n.a.	2	7	1	1	10	12
Switzerland	13	14	33	45	6	14	14	27

n.a. Data not available

Source: Capiou & Wiesand (2006). *The Status of the Artist in Europe*, p. 65

However, in *The Status of the Artist in Europe* (Capiou & Wiesand, 2006), to quote an European Parliament Report underlining several aspects of insecurity, inequality and inconsistency in EU countries, the same data allows a critical diagnosis.⁶ Besides problems in organizational, legal, fiscal and contractual aspects of the work, also insufficient measures for the social security (as well lack of an european harmonization) particularly in the areas marked by individual work, intermittency, short-term contracts and cross-border mobility, we must enclose other issues. Namely, the discrepancy between credentials and rewards – high qualifications among artists, and low or highly disparate and deregulated salaries in various areas.⁷

This report appeared precisely in the same year, 2006, as another promoted by the European Commission, *The Economy of Culture in Europe* (KEA, 2006), though it has a more positive and instrumental “reading” of those employment indicators. What stands out is its creative and economic input and the features that correspond to a paradigm for a desirable flexibility in contemporary economies of information, new technology and creativity. Bearing this in mind, we may conclude, then, that artists are really available for complementary but also contradictory perspectives.

In fact, they represent an ambivalent condition between centrality and fragility – a source of structural inconsistency in their status. They are at the edge of the “creative class” (Florida, 2005) as a new sort of motor for the “wealth of nations” (recalling Adam Smith’s famous expression), but they continually inspire the question more or less emphatically “Why are artists poor?” (Abbing, 2002). Ambivalence, too, between a double condition of autonomy and dependence, particularly on the public policies and grants that support the greater part of the artistic system. But they have been facing a crisis since the mid-90's, with its insufficient and reduced budgets – in Portugal, too,

⁶ Several areas were scrutinized in the EU countries: the legal and organizational framework of work, individual work in particular, contractual relations, professional representation (by unions, associations or other bodies), taxation, social security measures for artists, and other professional issues such as transmobility inside the EU and from outside. The report proposes “the implementation of key measures addressing the precarious socio-economic status of artists more directly such as: social security frameworks tailored to meet the specific needs of artists; guaranteed protection or remuneration during unsalaried periods; adjustments to taxation laws taking into consideration potentially significant income fluctuations; simplified administrative procedures for hiring resident and non-resident artists; special models of funding for artists; distribution of in-depth information on the status and mobility of professionals, etc.” (p. 51-52).

⁷ Certification, as a way of controlling access to occupations, and collective salary agreements could be part of regulation, but they are not generalized, not even agreed, at least in Portugal (Gomes & Martinho, 2009: 169-174).

where the expenditure on culture from the central administration only represents about 0.6% of the national budget.⁸

3. Activity, recognition and inequality

On the other hand, dependence has to be seen within the art worlds. First as interdependence, both personal and functional, in a division of labor that goes from production to reception. A chain of participants and roles/performances possibly accumulated by polyvalent individuals, as described in the interactionist paradigm and ethnographic approaches (VV.AA. 2007).⁹ A double chain with necessary cooperation as well competition, and inescapable negotiations in several dimensions, in particular those connected with the authority of authorship and the making of valuable/vulnerable reputations.

Except in the case of more bureaucratic and formal institutions, this frequently takes place in small, cosy artistic spheres where relationships mix functionality, affection and power, under charismatic leaders. Trust, inter-knowledge and personal ties brought about in earlier work experiences are usually a factor in the professional commitment, management and recruitment of workers. Consequently, as Eve Chiapello (1997; 1998) observed so well, the ambivalent or ambiguous, and even manipulative, play between expectations and rewards between employer and employee, a kind of play that is typical of domestic regimes with its material and subjective dialectics of “gift/debt”, installs vulnerability as a significant mode of labour regulation in artistic areas.

Another perspective is to relate dependence to gatekeeping and recognition within artistic spheres. For instance, we noticed that in the period 2001-2003 only about 12% of the census category covering visual arts (painters, sculptors, photographers and similar) were indeed active and present in the main professional locations (art centres, galleries, museums, etc.).¹⁰ As a demonstration of the unequal geography of art worlds,

⁸ For a comparative perspective, see ERICarts and European Council (2008). *Cultural policies in Europe: a compendium of basic facts and trends* available at <http://www.culturalpolicies.net>

⁹ This chain is composed of clusters of activities, their tasks and the required skills (meaning constructions, interpretations or adaptations by participants), which can be organized into “an arc of work (that) is the ‘totality of tasks arrayed both sequentially and simultaneously along the course’ of a project” or “a line of work that encompasses different projects”. (Alves, 2007:95)

¹⁰ Calculation based on 223 names related with contemporary art (Conde, 2003b).

almost half (49%) were in the capital, Lisbon, and the south of the country, with only 28% in Porto (and the northern region) and 12% in other places.

Earlier research has shown that the most recognized artists could represent only about 6% of the census value (for 1991) or even less. This happened with a list of 100 artists' names given by 20 critics and curators in 1997 and, even worse, a second reduction to around 3%, or less, would appear if only the top names were considered. This pyramid of success is still strongly restricted by gender: only 14% of women were in that list.

Jointly with recognition, gender is in fact another great source of inequality in the arts, as previously seen in Table 1. Now, too, as demonstrated eloquently in Figure 1 by the scarce presence of women in top positions in the very masculine world of serious music, including a significant unequal share of women by musical instruments (Table 4).

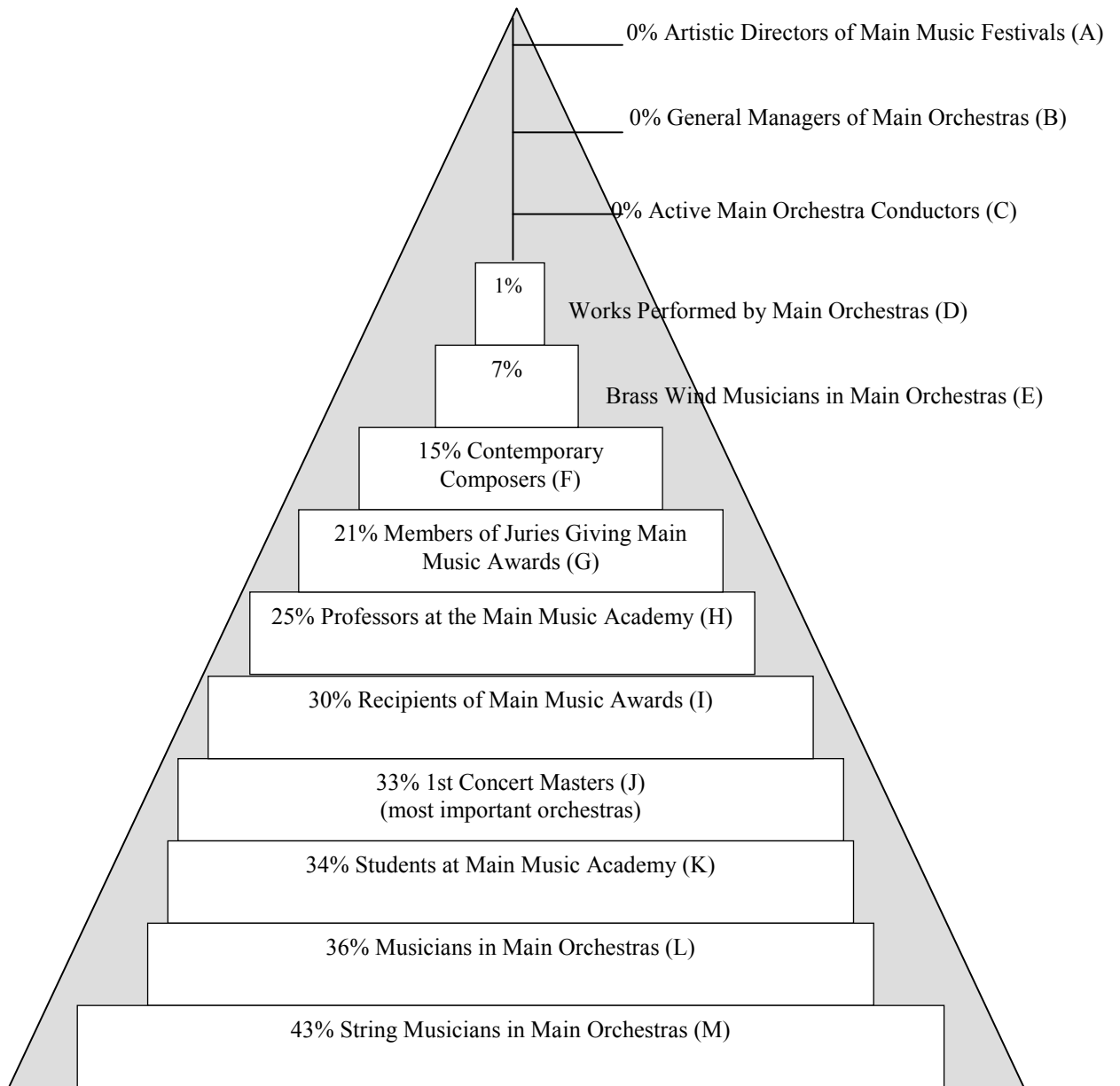
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So, given this data on the filters on recognition and the sexual division in musical work (Ravet & Coulangeon, 2003; Coulangeon, 2004; Ravet, 2008), as in other musical worlds such as jazz, with the gendered “specialties” voice/instrument and singers/musicians (Buscatto, 2007), we see how inequality can correlate with vulnerability and with possible tensions between profession and identity. Better expressed, different opportunities provided to work and legitimation to achieve the status of an artist that contradict a meritocratic and 'universalized' definition of the artist at last only subjectively available for all.

Or, alternatively, as we have seen among women in music, disjointed perceptions between their objective conditions and subjective patterns for the professional identity. In fact, though recognizing different career paths for women and acknowledging how their decisions can be limited by the difficulty of reconciling a musical career with family life and motherhood, women have detached these questions from music itself and subordinated the feminine condition to professional identity. So the most important thing is a de-gendered individuality, affirmed in their artistic worth and performance. This is considered the only criterion for assessing talent, the decisive factor in this area, since it connects personal strengths with technical expertise at the level of composition, orchestral conducting and mastery of a musical instrument.

¹¹ According to a survey carried in the main Portuguese orchestras and the Youth Symphony Orchestra in 2002. These data are being updated in a new research project on professionals in Portuguese orchestras, carried out by Idalina Conde and Fernando Ribeiro at CIES-ISCTE.

**Figure 1 - Pyramid of Women's Success in Serious Music in Portugal
(% and category)(2002-2003)**



Source: Conde, I. (2003b), "Making distinctions: conditions of women working in serious music and (new) media arts in Portugal" in *Culture-Gates. Exposing professional 'gate-keeping' processes in music and new media arts*. Bonn: Arcult Media, 2003 (with João Pinheiro and Teresa Duarte Martinho). See p. 277-278 for details about each category and the methodology used to construct this pyramid. The main orchestras (data collected in 2002) are the Portuguese Symphonic Orchestra (associated to the National Theatre of Opera S. Carlos in Lisbon), the National Orquestra of Porto, the Gulbenkian Orchestra (belonging to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon) and the Metropolitan Orchestra of Lisbon. We must note too that in 2002 there was one female Portuguese professional conductor (in total 13 conductors), however she resided and worked in United States at that time. Other two young women began experience on conducting in Portugal, but not in those major orchestras.

**Table 4 - Share of Women in Portuguese Orchestras
Broken Down by Instrument (2002-2003)**

	Portuguese Symphony Orchestra		Oporto National Orchestra		Gulbenkian Orchestra		Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra		Youth Symphony Orchestra	
	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W
Strings	69	49	70	35	75	44	50	41	57	50
Woodwinds	14	13	14	18	13	38	18	38	17	39
Keyboard	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	75	-	-
Brass	13	7	13	0	10	17	11	0	21	0
Percussion	4	25	4	0	2	0	2	0	5	0

Source: Conde, Idalina (2003a) (with Teresa Duarte Martinho and João Pinheiro). “Mulheres nas principais orquestras portuguesas” (“Women in the principal Portuguese orchestras”), p. 58
Orch % = % in the overall orchestra instruments ; W % = % of women (line % by sections)

Nevertheless, besides the general claim of de-gendered criteria for professional skills, gender is correlated again with another source for competition and inequality in these professional labour markets. As shown in Table 5, the high proportion of foreign musicians in Portuguese orchestras, in 2002 mainly composed by nationalities from the East-European countries (between 46% and 58%) followed by other European regions (between 36% and 41%).¹²

¹² The exception was the Gulbenkian Orchestra with respectively 31% and 28% for these European immigrations and a high rate (42%) for musicians from other origins, including the United States.

**Table 5 - Musicians in Portuguese orchestras:
by sex and nationality (2002-2003)(%)***

	Portuguese Symphonic Orchestra		Oporto National Orchestra		Gulbenkian Orchestra		Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra		Youth Symphonic Orchestra	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Portuguese	69	31	81	19	63	38	80	20	65	35
Foreigners	55	45	69	31	58	42	53	47	50	50

Source: Conde, Idalina (2003a) (with Teresa Duarte Martinho and João Pinheiro). "Mulheres nas principais orquestras portuguesas" ("Women in the principal Portuguese orchestras"), p. 54

* line %

Age and the changes brought about by new generations represent another line to be introduced into this scenario of double inequality related to gender and recognition, and the associated vulnerabilities. Firstly, changes have taken place in qualifications owing to increased access to credentials and diversification in the branches of artistic education. This process has been accompanied by feminization in schools, despite the constraints and barriers in professionalization, particularly in certain areas. Table 6 illustrates younger women's membership, in 2001, of the limited circle of professionals in the visual arts (the 12% quoted above for 2001-2003), of which, in a further breakdown, 67% are men and 33% women.

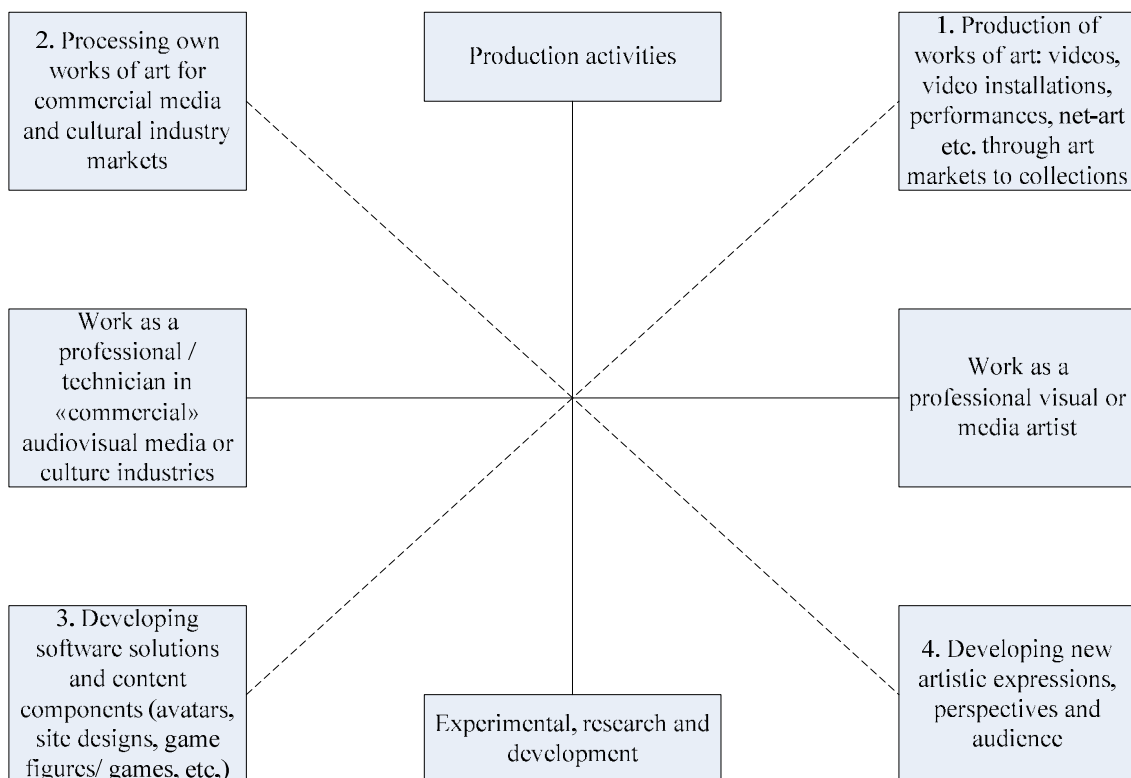
Table 6 - Professional circle in the visual arts, by age and gender, 2002-2003 (%)

AGE	TOTAL (n = 192)	MEN (n = 126)	WOMEN (n = 66)
> 20 years	-	-	-
21-25 years	9	9	11
26-30 years	17	13	24
31-35 years	23	23	24
36-40 years	21	25	14
41- 45 years	8	6	11
46-50 years	4	4	3
> 50 years	17	19	14

Source: Conde (coord), Pinheiro & Martinho (2003). *Culture-Gates in Portugal: Research Report*, p. 172

Secondly, the inequality in recognition must still be seen in relation to alternative ways of dealing with it or getting round it, e.g. the strategies of newcomers in creating their own places, gates and corridors, to be able to work, legitimize themselves and be legitimized. So, if art worlds traditionally involve the generations in artistic struggles for recognition, the “grammars of these conflicts” (Honneth, 1995) have become diversified and complex in the contemporary scene(s). They have been more polycentric, network-organized and trans-local since the 90’s, a movement favoured by the trends of globalization, mediatization and new technologies, which have also brought new art forms (e.g. digital arts and electronic music), new modes of working and, also, redefinitions for artists. Figure 2 shows this prototype of a multi-skilled and multi-centred professional in new media areas, while Table 7 illustrates a role versatility again differentiated by sex, in electronic music.

Figure 2 - Dimensions and types of media artists' activities



Source: Ritva Mitchel (2003), “Gate-keeping and constraints on gender equality in classical music and media arts” in VVAA, *Culture-Gates. Exposing professional ‘gate-keeping’ processes in music and new media arts*, p. 186

Table 7 - Electronic Music Profiles by Sex, 2002-2003 (%)*

	% Total	%W
Musician / Creator	85	43
Performer / Player	38	43
Producer (Sound)	46	-
Live Performance (Authorship / Manipulation)	33	4
DJ (Dissemination)	44	71
Editor	22	-
Producer (Events)	31	14
Critic / Reviewer (Music)	12	-

* Multiple roles usually performed by individuals

Source: Conde (coord), Pinheiro & Martinho (2003). *Culture-Gates in Portugal: Research Report*, p. 169

This “internal” polyvalence may usually be combined, for survival or strategic career goals, with entry into various markets¹³ and work relationships – diversification split into poly-activity and plural-activity corresponding, respectively, to the accumulation of activities in the same artistic field and in other spheres, as happens, for example, in the dance market. It is a professional market where the richness of personal portfolios in terms of contacts, projects, employers and colleagues is crucial for survival in a context highly marked by intermittent occupation.¹⁴ This happens in general in the performing arts and other art forms that contain a strong element of incidental and mobile projects (Menger, 2005).

However, at this point it is important to remark that such indicators, apparently only for a debilitating vulnerability, may have different meanings within the picture of “plural artists” (Bureau, Perrenoud & Shapiro, 2009), depending on their generational profiles, artistic specificities, career phases, institutional environments and labour markets. Indeed, what, for some of them, is a sign of precariousness and even impoverishment may represent, for other “nomadic” artists, an enrichment of personal projects, a desired eclecticism and an alternative kind of entrepreneurship and empowerment. This happens in institutionally well established cases, e.g. orchestra musicians with parallel professional commitments: their own chamber music groups, for

¹³ As Ritva Michell (2003: 186) remarks, the institutional environment of the (new) media artists includes “traditional art markets (Sector 1: sales to museums and other collections); markets opened through new audiovisual ‘windows’ (Sector 2: sales to consumers, as videos, through the Internet or as new developments in the use of cell phones, etc.) and R&D markets (Sector 3: sales of innovative media solutions, components and product designs).”

¹⁴ Rannou & Roarik (2009: 112) analyzed the complexity of employment relationships in “dance intermittency” with four notions – plurality, recurrency, dominance and dependency. They were measured using various indicators based on the number of different employers, the most frequent, recursive relationships with an artist over at least 2 years, and accounts of the “volume of employment” in a career.

example, and a presence in concert halls or festivals as soloists.¹⁵ This opportunity is not available to the majority within the orchestra, with its restricted definition of roles, collective rules and very limited mobility for individuals. Table 8 gives a portrait of these kind of pyramidal institutions again crossed by some gender asymmetries.

Table 8 - Overview of Positions and the Share of Women in Portuguese orchestras (2002-2003)*

	Portuguese Symphony Orchestra		Oporto National Orchestra		Gulbenkian Orchestra		Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra		Youth Symphony Orchestra	
	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W	% Orch	% W
First Violin	4	0	3	100 ¹⁶	5	0	-	-	1	0
Head Assistant / Section Co-ordinator	12	23	14	0	-	-	16	14	16	17
Deputies	6	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assistants	8	67	1	0	-	-	7	33	-	-
Soloists	25	11	33	23	45	41	25	36	1	100
Tutti	46	55	49	36	50	43	32	56	82	38
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	78	-	-

Source: Conde, Idalina (2003a) (with Teresa Duarte Martinho and João Pinheiro). "Mulheres nas principais orquestras portuguesas" ("Women in the principal Portuguese orchestras"), p. 59

* Rounding up percentage values may result in a sum total of around 100% in the column on overall orchestra instruments (% Orch)

Finally, this example reminds us of various kinds of insertions and powers that can operate in artistic trajectories. From pyramidal hierarchies in traditional institutions (such as orchestras and ballet companies) to alternative formats such as platforms, networks and project teams designed with "softened", "diffuse", horizontal or nodular lines of authority and influence. Regularly appearing in audiovisual production, contemporary art, dance, renewed theatrical structures, design, electronic music, curatorship of multidisciplinary activities and event organization (festivals, gatherings, experimental laboratories, etc.), they represent a more reticular and interstitial way

¹⁵ See Ravet (2009) on this multi-activity as a "space of construction of a musician's identity", namely among women in the French context, analogous to the situation revealed by our research in Portugal.

¹⁶ This exception was due to two Polish women in the position of first violin.

(even subversive in certain cases) to cross institutions – traditional pillars in the cultural field – with one's own projects and co-productions. To sum up, they have become both a location and a mediating element for work and legitimation, diversifying their poles, references and decision/opinion makers. Another piece in the chess game of old and renewed symbolic powers.

4. Final remarks: vulnerability, uncertainty and individuality

Thus, different kinds of power and organizational anchors integrate the various lines to take account of artistic vulnerability. A powerful concept itself if considered multidimensionally, as attempted in this paper, with a kind of rotation around a quadrilateral: profession and identity crossed by recognition and inequality – gender inequality in particular. A perspective supported here by European and Portuguese data, with illustrations from traditional to emerging art forms, working conditions and contexts.

Not to repeat general findings and arguments, I prefer to conclude with a few words about vulnerability among artists as creators – individual authors, participants as interpreters in collective art forms and the performing arts, or contributors to other forms of “shared production” and “remixed creativity” (Hartley, 2005). For instance, in new/multimedia projects, usually group-based, with alternative ways of producing and disseminating music (as an example) that are even challenging the legal framework for copyright and the control of oligopolies in major cultural industries. (ERICarts, 2005).

In all cases, my purpose is to pay attention to two crucial aspects of creative agency and its vulnerabilities. One of them is the uncertainty involved in this process of construction, reconfiguration, discovery, imagination and reflexivity that depends on tools (from intellectual references to technologies) but is essentially made up of thought, fiction and emotion, even in less “self-expressive” art forms in terms of figurative representation, allegories or metaphors. Uncertainty is, then, a co-constituent of creativity and innovation and, in cultural industries, for example, is protected as a kind of “inherent paradox” within rationalized organizations, continuously searching for the next novelty inspired by that “fuel” always contingent. (Caves, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Hartley, 2005).

The second note relates authorship to individuality within but also besides the common grounds that it has in the arts. In other words, the condition of individuals who are becoming, or expected to become, individualities by a distinguished (co)signature. This is another way of underlining the personal nature of artistic professions and identities, particularly necessary to understand relationships, as well as tensions, between individuals and institutions (Watson, 1996) that are shared with other contexts for authorship. As I wrote in an essay comparing the worlds of art and science (Conde, 2000), part of their common portrait was precisely the ambivalent experience for individuals of being not only actors in collective systems but also authors by personal commitment and achievement.

Art may intensify the (inter)subjective “drama” by the requisites of the creative work, and also the pull towards ontological and teleological self-narratives. For example, the inner vocation (“born to write”) and proclaimed literary destinies that Debora Ben-Shir (2008) found in the “identity-stories” of poets and writers. Otherwise acclaimed, even persuaded or induced by the “mediatic” modes of presenting “writers' lives”, as Leonor Arfuch (2002) pointed in her analysis of the public exposure and interviews in media with literary authors.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive regard over this persistence, despite all modern and postmodern deconstructions of the myth of the artist (even of the individual as a “unique”, coherent and integrated being) may equally understand the profound meaning that those narratives can have for persons so exposed and 'in demand' as artists. In addition, through ideological dimensions and stereotypes, the narratives can give a sense to the “gift and gift of oneself” (Sapiro, 2007), i.e. the artistic talent and his endowment. A manner to those narratives act, too, as response (or rationalization) from vulnerable persons to their “ontological insecurity”, recalling now an expression quoted from Anthony Giddens at the beginning of this paper.

In corresponding fashion, we understand the central dialectics between that “gift” and the “debt” endorsed to the recognition of peers, the market and society.¹⁷ In other words, the reason why artists are so sensitive to recognition (and inequality), whose importance must not only be explained by instrumental or material rewards; and why they live so much in this expectation, and the huge effects it has on their lives, be it

¹⁷ As Nathalie Heinich (1991) showed paradigmatically in her book on the legacy of Van Gogh and the spiral of overunderstanding after incomprehension.

negative or positive recognition.¹⁸ In fact, in this profession recognition and identity are the necessary accomplishment of self-reference that remains a crucial reference point for authorship and derivative forms of creativity. Vulnerability in this matter is the “price” artists pay for being not only “social selves” (Burkitt, 1991) but also presenting an accentuated or hyperbolic difference as “creative selves” (Cohen, 1994).

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¹⁸ Again, Nathalie Heinich (1999) has an interesting study on the identity troubles and changes in the lives of writers who have passed “tests of greatness”, the important literary prizes in France.

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