

Performing Artists' Income Conditions and Careers in Denmark

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Creativity at Work:

Performing artists' income conditions and careers in Denmark

By Trine Bille, Flemming Agersnap, Søren Jensen, & Trine Vestergaard,

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study careers and income conditions of performing artists in Denmark on the basis of national statistics. The paper uses three different criteria for defining performing artist, and looks at the implications observed on careers and income conditions. The three different criteria for defining performing artists are: 1) Having a job as performing artist, 2) Graduation from a performing art school, and 3) Membership of professional performing artist's association. The paper has focus on three questions: How are the income conditions of performing artists in the period 1996 – 2007? How are the career length and patterns of the performing artists in Denmark? How is the careers related to the income conditions of the artists? The results concerning the living conditions for performing artists shows in general very low income levels for most of the artists, and only about 1/3 of them are working within the theatre sector. A regression model for 2007 shows a positive effect on earning of age, being a man, working in Copenhagen capital area, having work experience, having a basic actor education, and work as a dancer/choreograph or as an actor/director. The analysis of career length shows that most performing actors have very short careers of one or two years. Cross-tabulations for 2007 shows that those with short careers in general have very low income, while those with longer careers have substantial higher income, and most of them have an income high enough to make a living.

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Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this paper is to study careers and income conditions of performing artists¹ in Denmark on the basis of national statistics.

Frey and Pommerehne (1989) emphasise that in the study of artist's careers and living conditions the methods of data collection and analysis may have especially wide implications on the findings. It is quite clear, that different selection criteria will give different results. While census and register data are based on the main income source in the selection of artists, collecting data from the artists associations will provide different results when it comes to careers and income conditions, as membership of artists associations are often based on professional standard.

In this paper we will look at three different criteria for defining performing artist, and look at the implications observed on careers and living conditions. The three different criteria for defining performing artists are:

- Having a job as performing artist
- Graduation from a performing art school
- Membership of professional performing artist's association

The basis of our analysis is accessible data from Statistics Denmark. Our data from Statistics Denmark is real panel data, i.e. register data for the total Danish population for the period 1996-2007. This means that each person (in anonymous form) can be traced over time. Using these data it is possible to explore many different aspects of the careers among performing artists and to carry out a truly longitudinal study of artists' careers.

The paper focus on three questions:

- How are the income conditions of performing artists in the period 1996 – 2007?
- How is the career length and patterns of the performing artists in Denmark?
- How is the careers related to the income conditions of the artists?

Studying a time period of 12 years makes it possible to study variations in the actors' careers. Besides, the results will be related to the three different criteria for defining performing artists, and definitions of careers will be discussed.

In section 2 we give the background of the paper by referring to the literature and former results on the income conditions and careers of artists. In section 3 we describe the data we are using in the paper. In section 4 we describe the three different criteria for defining performing artist and use them on our data. In section 5 we present some results concerning living conditions for performing artists comparing the three criteria for definition of artists and present a regression model explaining the income level of

the performing artists in 2007. In section 6 we look at the performing artists' career length and patterns and look at the income conditions for artists with different career length. Section 6 concludes the papers and set the agenda for further research.

Background

Former quantitative research on artist's income conditions and careers has mostly been based on cross-section samples, and there are only few truly longitudinal quantitative studies of artist's careers (e.g. Coulangeon, Ravet and Roharik, 2005). Alper and Wassall (2006) present an overview of the empirical economic research done on artist's labour market, where the overall purpose has been to get knowledge of artists' employment and income conditions and compare them with other professionals and technical occupations.

In their work Alper and Wassall (2006) includes: 1) Actors and directors, 2) announcers, 3) architects, 4) post-secondary art, drama and music teachers, 5) authors, 6) dancers, 7) designers, 8) musicians and composers, 9) painters, sculptors, craft artists and printmakers, 10) photographers and 11) artists not elsewhere classified.

The most important research questions that have been analyzed in these studies include: 1) As working professionals, to what extent have artists fared less well than comparably educated persons in other disciplines? 2) Has the often reported disparity in earnings between artists and comparably educated groups grown or shrunk over time? 3) Is this apparent "earnings penalty" due to the characteristics inherent in the nature of the artistic labor market?

Some of the main results concluding Alper and Wassall's studies are as following²:

- Artists are found to work fewer hours, suffer higher unemployment and earn less than members of the reference group.
- Disparities in unemployment and annual hours worked are found to shrink somewhat over time, but disparities in earnings do not.
- Artist earned less across all years even when only members working full-time year-round of each group are compared.
- The earnings of artists are found to display greater variability than those of other professional and technical workers
- Many people participate in the artistic labour market, but few succeed to the point that enables them to develop a career in the arts
- In part due to their relatively high educational levels, artists are found to be able to transition from forays into arts occupations or jobs in professional and managerial occupations, not into service occupations as artists "mythology" might suggest
- When artists are young and struggling to make it they do work in various service occupations that tend to provide greater work schedule flexibility.
- Many people explore the arts as an occupation but very few remain as artists for significant periods of time.

Different methodologies have been used:

- a) *Quantitative studies*: Studies utilizing existing information on a group of artists obtained from a variety of sources to develop an understanding of some aspects of artist's careers. Sometimes the data for this research is anecdotal.

- b) *Retrospective studies*: Surveying artists and asking them to recreate their careers by responding to written questionnaires or personal interviews.
- c) *Panel data based on surveys*: Two types: “Quasi-panels” where they follow a group of artists, many of whom are likely to be the same from survey to survey over time, but exactly the same group of people/artists are not followed from the start to the end of a multiyear period, like it would be the case in true panel studies.

Alper and Wassall’s own studies are some of the most extended empirical studies on artist’s employment and earning conditions. They have based their studies on US census data, which obvious have some drawbacks. The US census requires that a person filling out its long form choose a single occupation. This choice is based on time spent at work during a single reference week. This means among other things that: 1) Census definitions result in a bias toward including only those who achieve the most success in their art form as artists. 2) Many artists do also hold non-artistic jobs, i.e. they are multiple jobholders. This aspect cannot be studied using census data.

As Karttunen (2001) remarks there can be serious problems with this: “The census definition of occupation as the primary work done by a person in order to obtain income violate the ideology according to which art is not made for the sake of money. More importantly, it does not accord with how artistic work is actually carried out in our society. Time after time, it has been empirically established that many people who perceive themselves to be artists, or whom arts policy makers might consider as such, cannot live from their art. If self-defined artists earn most of their income as taxi-drivers or waiters, they are counted as such in the census.”

Wassall and Alper (1992) have further established that many disagreements between artist researchers actually derive from the use of different data sources, in particular the census or other government sources, versus surveys conducted by the researchers themselves.

Data and methodology

It is interesting to notice that none of the empirical studies mentioned by Alper and Wassall (2006) are based on real panel data. In this regard Denmark has unique data possibilities based on the national statistics.³ The basis of our analysis is accessible data in national statistics for individual persons. Our data are real panel data, namely register data for the total Danish population for the period 1996-2007. This means that each person (in anonymous form) can be traced over time. People are identified by their unique personal code (CPR number), hence it is possible to track particular individuals or cohorts over time. The register contains, among other things, detailed information about the persons socio-economy (age, gender, family, education etc.), income (annual personal income, households income, earnings per hour etc.), employment (industry, job function, primary job, secondary job, degree of unemployment etc.) as well as many other variables. Using these data it is possible to explore many aspects of the careers among performing artists and other artists.

The main advantage of the register data is their unique horizontal and vertical comparability (Karttunen, 2001)⁴, while their major limitation concerns the identification of the population, which affects the basic enumeration. When using

register data, researchers have little influence on the categories used by Statistics Denmark, which have initially been determined with other objectives in mind.

The overall procedure of assigning people an occupation has important implications for who will be defined as an artist in the register. The fact that only the employed labour force is assigned occupations may have specific implications for the enumeration of artists. Occupation is the activity or work done by a person in order to obtain income. Statistics Denmark assigns people the occupation from which they receive most or most recent income. Besides, the employed labour force is divided into employees (wage and salary earners) and entrepreneurs. The income data for the register are derived from the national tax register that is maintained for determining and collecting taxes. Most grants are exempt from taxes hence they are not included in the tax register.

Definition of performing artists

Studying the careers of performing artists we need a definition of performing artists. According to *Frey and Pommerehne (1989)* there are at least eight criteria that might be applied in order to determine who is an artist:

1. the amount of time spent on artistic work
2. the amount of income derived from artistic activities
3. the reputation as an artist among the general public
4. the recognition among other artists
5. the quality of the artistic work produced (which means that artistic “quality” must be defined somehow)
6. membership in a professional artists’ group or association
7. professional qualifications (graduation in arts schools)
8. the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist.

Frey and Pommerehne (1989) emphasise that in the study of artists the methods of data collection and analysis may have especially wide implications on the findings. Looking at the criteria by Frey and Pommerehne (1989) it is obvious that they will lead to quite different results because the groups of artists, that will be delimited by the different criteria, will be different.

Another problem is that the criteria may actually be contradictive. Karttunen (1998) present a very good example from a finish “status-of-the artists study”, where – among others – the group of “photographic artists” had to be delimited. Starting with the members of the Union of Artists in Photograph, it was considered too limited with only about 60 members. Using the “reputational method”, they ended up with a group of 200 people which were still limited and biased towards the more avant-garde and artistic photographers. After publication of the report, advertising and press photographers criticised the study population for being biased. If they had played a greater role in the study population, the income level of photographic artists would have been much higher.

The most “*objective*” criteria are 1, 2, 6 and 7, as they do not directly relate to the quality of the work: the amount of time spent on artistic work, the amount of income derived from artistic activities, membership of a professional artists’ group or association and professional qualifications (graduation in arts schools). Membership of a professional artist’s group or association is an often used criteria. Graduation from arts

schools and income from artistic activities are common used criteria as well, while time spent on artistic work is often hard to assess and use as a criteria.

Some of the criteria are more *subjective* and more related to the *quality* of the artistic work: the reputation as an artist among the general public, the recognition among other artists and the quality of the artistic work produced (which means that artistic “quality” must be defined somehow). Reputation, recognition and quality are more subjective criteria, while the last one, namely: “the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist” is purely subjective. As Karttunen (1998) points out: “The difficulties of the criteria is due to the fact that anybody at all is free to call himself an artist without a formal degree or any officially recognised demonstration of competence, and their income from it may be insubstantial, or even turn negative.” (see e.g. Abbing, 2002).

The membership of professional artists’ groups or associations can to some degree and in some cases be interpreted as artistic quality. The membership associations for different artists’ groups (musicians, visual artists, actors etc.) do, however, have different criteria for membership, where some of them are quite elitist, while others have very open criteria.

It is therefore quite clear, that different selection criteria will give different results. The census and register data are based on the main income source, while the artists associations are often based on high professional standard. As Karttunen (2001) notice the different definitions will have a partial overlap, but the census definition will exclude an avant-garde artist who lives on service jobs, yet include a “low reputation” artist who lives on the sale of his work. The census data actually forces a market test of who should be counted as an artist.

Some researchers have systematically compared the workings of alternative definitions within their own data. Jeffri and Throsby (1994) concluded that the majority of self-described visual artists in both the United States and Australia could be considered professional by training and/or peer recognition, but only a minority would satisfy the conventional marked-based definition of professionalism.

In this paper we will look at three different criteria for defining performing artist and careers in this field, and look at the implications for observed careers and living conditions. Giving the available data we are able to use three different criteria for defining performing artists:

- Having a job as a performing artist
- Graduation from art school
- Membership of professional artist’s association

Defining performing artists by their job

Based on data from Statistics Denmark one can define a ‘performing artist’ by a job code (and that is what we do), but one might also define the persons by the industry they are registered under or by their education (see Bille, 2008). The job category (following the international DISCO code) normally signifies the most important (primary) job the person has at the Danish labour market i.e. giving the highest labour

income. So the job code information is part of the data delivered from companies, institutions etc. about taxable income for their employed persons.

Defining performing artists by their occupation is an intuitive right definition. Performing artists are defined by what they do: If they work as an actor, they are an actor. But there are also problems with this definition.

The job category in our data for Statistics Denmark normally signifies the most important position the person in question has at the Danish labour market i.e. giving the highest income. The person may have other jobs and may even receive income from more sources (e.g. profit or pension) than from the labour market. It means that persons, who have a (maybe part-time) job as performing artist, but it being a minor source of income, are only registered under the job code giving the highest labour income.⁵ That could – in some cases – be seen as a problem because a number of persons probably part of the time work with performing arts activities, but also have other jobs – for a living. If the other jobs are the most important, their primary income, they may be registered under other job codes and do not become part of the data set. Such persons are difficult to locate or to draw out of the statistics. Besides, the quality of the creative work (the artistic standard) is not taken into account in this delimitation of the group. At the same time the persons we do register as performing artists, are employed in virtually all types of industries.

Another problem with the definition is that only those who actually practice performing arts are counted. In this way it is not possible to define a certain group of people who per definition are “performing artists” and follow their career, look at their unemployment rates etc. Because who does this group consists of? Should everybody who had a job as a performing artist for one year counted? It would in many cases not make sense, since a lot of people would probably do some artistic work for one year, and then do something completely different – because they want to. They do not regard themselves as performing artists and should not be counted as such.

As shown in table 1 we have chosen to define performing artists with some breadth. Beyond film and theatre actors we include dancers, street artists and clowns. Definitions of the categories do undergo some changes over time (like society at large), but we have been able technically to go back to 1996 without any changes concerning our performing artist concept or category.

The composition of this job category is shown in table 1. The table shows a considerable drop in the number of performing artists from 1996 to 2007, but the drop mainly comes from the two minor subgroups: Street artists and Clowns. These two groups are reduced by 82% from 1996 to 2007, while the total is reduced by 30%.

In our data ‘a performing artist’ in one year can as well be a student earning 10.000 DKK as extra in a play as a star earning a million DKK that year. One might argue that to be counted as performing artist one must – at least in one year – have an income above e.g. 100.000 DKK, but so far all are included. We follow the definitions from Statistics Denmark, but with two modifications. We exclude persons under 18 years, because their career length may be very different from the careers of grownups. Furthermore, we exclude persons who through all 12 years are registered as performing

artist, but have no year with labour income, i.e. neither actor income nor non-actor labour income. It may e.g. be individuals on pension.

Table 1. Performing artists 1996, 2003, and 2007

	1996	2003	2007
Choreographers and dancers	192 (9,1)	131 (9,6)	121 (8,3)
Film, stage and related actors and directors	1448 (68,8)	1117 (81,9)	1251 (85,9)
Street, night-club and related musicians, singers and dancers	304 (14,4)	69 (5,1)	62 (4,3)
Clowns, magicians, acrobats and related associate professionals	160 (7,8)	47 (3,4)	23 (1,8)
Total	2104	1364	1457

In table 1 and in the following tables we include those persons having the job code as performing artist for at least one of the years 1996 to 2007. Our database also contains information for the years where the person is registered as something else. So a career may be some years in a row; it may be a sequence interrupted by one or several 'non-actor-year' or there may (for a few) be 12 consecutive 'actor-years'.

Defining performing artists by education

It is also possible to select performing artists by education. The first problem is to make the selection of the relevant educations. A more serious problem is that many performing artists do not have a formal education that qualifies to this work. Many artists are self-taught (Alper and Wassall, 2006). By only looking at persons with a performing art education, one exclude the group of artists, who are doing the same kind of artistic work, but do not have a formal education. Bearing this in mind, it is however, an interesting empirical question, to focus on those persons who have an artistic or creative education and see how they are doing. In which industries do they work, which job functions they occupy, what are their degree of unemployment, their income and wages etc. – and compare it with others at the same educational level.

The impact of education on artist's earnings has been subject to different studies. Towse (2006) discuss the human capital theory and argues that it applies only weakly to artist's decisions about investment in schooling and training and about occupational choice.

Earning functions can be used to explore possible differences in the rewards to education, training and other labor market attributes between artists and a reference group. Results shows that artists do not seem to fit the standard earnings model as well as other workers, and earnings functions for them have poorer goodness-of-fit. Also results shows no or a negative correlation of education with artistic earnings and a positive correlation with non-artistic earnings. (Alper and Wassall, 2006). Rengers (2002) found that characteristics of the artist's education had little or no impact on the artist's career. Self-educated artists have the same earnings and the same supply behavior as those with formal arts education and the prestige of the arts college attended does not have long-lasting effects. However, Filer (1989) found, looking at three-digit occupations that measures of earnings inequality "for occupations where individual

talent and performance are important determinants of earnings tend to be similar to those for artists”, making the arts similar to “equal” occupations.

A report from the Danish Ministry of Culture (2009) focuses on wages, unemployment rates etc. amongst graduates from one of the 18 artistic and cultural educational institutions in Denmark. This includes a broader group of people than the performing artists, which is of our main interest. There are, however, three relevant acting educations; Drama school at Aarhus Theatre (SskA - *Skuespillerskolen ved Aarhus Teater*), Drama school at Odense Theatre (SskO - *Skuespillerskolen ved Odense Teater*) and The Danish National School of Theatre (STS - *Statens Teaterskole*). The Danish National School of Theatre is a broader education than the other two drama schools.

Table 2. The unemployment rate in 2008 (percent) and average earned income in 2007 for the three actor schools in Denmark.

	Full employment	Near full employment	Total: Full employment and near full employment	Partial employment	Full or partial unemployment	Average earned income
SskA	34,20	25,30	59,50	38,00	2,50	290.000
SskO	38,20	31,60	69,70	25,00	5,30	273.000
STS	47,30	25,00	72,30	25,90	1,80	286.000
hereof: actors	42,20	21,10	63,30	33,30	3,30	324.000
In total	42,70	26,40	69,10	28,20	2,60	284.000

Note: The graduates' employment rate for 2008 are calculated for the graduates from the year 1997-2007 who where in the workforce at end november 2007. The average earned income for 2007 is calculated for the graduates from 1997-2006 who where employed at the end of november 2007.

Source: <http://www.karch.dk/dk/Materiale/Files/Nyheder/2009-11-05+besk%C3%A6ftigelsesrapport+2009+DST+Officiel+udgave.pdf>

There are some essential similarities between graduates from these three acting schools; these are high degree of partial employment and high average incomes. This comes as no big surprise since the acting environment is characterized by a lower proportion of full-time employees, employment on contract basis and greater fluctuations in activity during the year.⁶ A common characteristic for all the graduates from the artistic and cultural educations is the fact that the graduates' period of entry into the labor market is larger than that of graduates from other institutions of higher education, according to the report it takes 4-5 years for the artistic educated graduates to penetrate.

The Ministry of Culture uses data from statistics Denmark, but they only look into graduates during the year 1997-2007 from Ministry of Culture's educational institutions that lived in Denmark on January 1, 2008 and were not currently in education. This means that their analysis contains 8459 individuals in the gross population with 621 graduates from the four relevant educations mentioned above (including the National Film School).

In comparison (table 1) we have selected all individuals who have a relevant (performing artist) job as their main occupation. This means that we do not include a

person just because he has a relevant education. In particular this means that we do not include newly educated actors, instructors etc. until the time they get their first job, and since it can take four to five years for a graduate to establish in the industry there are some people not included in our data. Our data consists of 1457 performing artists in 2007, which is quite large in comparison to the graduated from actor schools in the report from the Ministry. This implies that a large part of the people in our data do not have a relevant education.

Defining performing artists by memberships of actors associations

Another very common approach is to select the research population on the basis of membership of selected labour market organization for selected groups of artists, like The Danish Actors Association (e.g. Elstad and Pedersen, 1996 and Heian, Løyland and Mangset, 2008), and collect data by means of surveys. This definition tends to focus on people who function within the bounds of the established art worlds, and who also describe themselves as artists. Such people do normally join the artists' associations. One problem with this approach is that it will only create knowledge of those artists who are members of such an organization. If most artists are members of these kinds of organizations and the degree of organization is high, the problem will be small. But we do not know very much about the degree of organization among artists and different groups of artists, and how it has changed during time. Besides, different arts organizations often have different criteria for membership, which can make membership of artists associations as defining criteria more or less relevant.

The Danish actors association has in 2010 approximate 2200 members divided into 3 categories; 1700 actors, 180 dancers/choreographers and 223 singers. Overall the gender distribution is approximately 50/50 with slight more woman than men.

In our data from Statistics Denmark for the year 2007 there are a total of 1457 people with main occupation as performing artist; 1251 stage and related actors and directors, 121 choreographers and dancers, 62 Street, night-club and related musicians, singers and dancers and 23 Clowns, magicians, acrobats and related associate professionals. Comparing the data we see that there are differences in categorizing which makes it difficult to compare. It is very clear though that there are more actors in the Danish actors association than those registered in the data from statistics Denmark. These differences can be explained by different factors⁷:

- Time difference; the data from Danish actors association are new observations from 2010, whereas the data from statistics Denmark are from the year 2007.
- There are different admission requirements; to be included in statistics Denmark as an actor (or other performing artists) your main income must be from acting. On the contrary to be a member of the Danish actors association you must have had an approved relevant education or have been employed as an actor (or other performing artists) for at least three years.⁸

The membership requirements to the Danish actors association means that members can keep their membership in the association even when they get older (on pension) and are not active as performing artists any more. They may also have got other jobs but keep their membership of the association because that is where their identity lie.

We have got permission to use the registrations of the members of the Danish actors union. It means that we have the additional information in our dataset from Statistics Denmark, who are member of the Danish actor association.⁹ It opens up for supplementary analysis of the relationships between membership and registrations in the files of Statistics Denmark.

The Danish theatrical market

In 2006/2007 there were 85 supported theatres in Denmark of which the most established and largest theatres were: The Royal Theatre (5 scenes), the regional theatres (13), the Copenhagen theatres (5). These 23 theatres produced 2.688 performances or 24% of the supported performances. Next to this ‘regular’ theatre activity there are 62 smaller scenes with 8.587 performances and touring theatres (et al.) with 3.516 performances. There are no tables that directly connect the number of performances with number of performing artists.

Considering length of season (app. 150 days) and a similar period of touring performances (e.g. to schools) we may assume that the 14.791 performances mean 100 performances pr. day. How many performing artists (and extras) does that require?

If we say 4 persons it requires 400 and with an employment only half the season it requires 800. The calculations are very speculative, but may give an impression of scale and dimensions.

Living conditions for performing artists

In this section we will look at the living conditions of performing artists in the period 1996 – 2007.

Descriptive statistics

Income. Income in our study only originates from activities at the labour market paid by salary or wage. Some have their own company and may in a year receive a profit or a loss. It is only about 100 persons (7%) and these persons typically also receive salaries, and the earning by profits is only marginal. To simplify the tables we have chosen not to include this income. Income here comprises all income earned in a year independent of how many different jobs or activities have contributed to the annual income. It is also independent of in which industries the income is earned. Therefore, we are not able to tell how much of the income in table 3 is related to film and theatre and how much to other secondary sources of income, but it is possible to see in which industries the person is primarily working.

Table 3. Labour income and employing industry 1996-2007 (percent)

Income (DKK)	Defined by performing artist job			Defined by membership of actor association			Defined by actor education		
	1996	2003	2007	1996*	2003*	2007*	1996	2003	2007

0-100.000	52.8	34.9	20.9	49.6	48.6	40.3	39.3	45.7	39.9
100-200.000	19.0	18.5	19.6	23.1	22.0	21.6	21.8	17.5	18.8
200-300.000	14.5	18.8	14.1	13.0	13.6	15.8	17.3	14.6	15.3
300-400.000	7.4	14.7	13.5	6.9	8.1	10.8	9.8	10.1	11.6
400-500.000	3.4	7.6	10.5	4.1	4.3	5.7	5.2	5.8	6.7
500-600.000	1.2	2.9	4.8	1.3	1.4	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.8
> 600.000	1.8	2.7	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.7	4.6	3.9	4.9
Total N	2104	1364	1457	1652	1960	1987	788	932	973
Industry									
Theatre, film and TV	35.6	56.1	37.5	39.7	35.5	31.3	47.2	40.0	34.0
Other Industries	23.0	21.9	45.0	33.1	35.9	38.3	22.5	24.4	28.0
Out of industry or unknown	41.3	22.1	17.2	27.2	28.6	30.3	31.4	35.5	37.8
Total N	2104	1364	1457	1652	1960	2204	788	932	984
Actor union									
Member	31	35	36	100	100	100	63	71	75
Non-member	69	65	64	0	0	0	37	29	25
Total N	2104	1364	1457	1652	1960	2204	788	932	985

* In all three years the calculation are based on membership in the Danish actor association in 2010. The other calculations using job as performing artist or performing artist education as definition of performing artists, are based on the actual number of performing artists in the respective years.

If we define the group of performing artists as those people who have a job as a performing artist, the number of actors has from 1996 to 2007 decreased by 30%. It has especially hit the lowest income group 0-100.000 DKK which has been reduced as well in absolute number as in share (from 52.8% to 20.9%). However, in 2007 there are still a considerable number of people (about 40%) who have labour market income below what may sustain a life (about 200.000 DKK). The other types of income like unemployment compensation, study grants and various forms of pension plus 'joint economy in a marriage' are sources of income outside 'our' (labour market) income. The group with above 300.000 DKK has risen from 13.8% in 1996 over 27.9% in 2003 to 30.8% in 2007. So for the most used and more regularly employed actors there have been increased incomes. Over the 12 years there has been an inflation of about 2% per year, and therefore it follows that the increase seems even more than what inflation may indicate.

If we take the group of performing artists with an actor education as a starting point, the income measures look even worse. About 60% of these performing artists have a labour market income below 200.000 DKK, and 40% is earning less than 100.000 DKK. On

the other hand the group of artists with incomes above 600.000 DKK are larger (namely 4.9 compared to 2.0 in 2007).

The same goes for the group of performing artist who are member of the Danish actor association in 2010. These calculations are for all the three years based on exactly the same group of people, namely those people who were members of the association in 2010. It can be seen from the table (table 3) that about 335 persons have left the association from 1996 to 2007, and for the rest their income conditions has improved a bit but not considerably.

Industry. The persons registered as performing artist may be employed in or get their income from many different industries besides the film and theatre industry. And to the opposite, the two latter industries do also employ many more ordinary workers like office and craft workers. The fact is that about 2/3 of the performing artists has employment elsewhere than the film and theatre industry in 2007. If we look at the development for 1996 to 2007 a larger share seems to be employed in other industries (45.0% in 2007 compared to 19.2% in 1996) and a smaller share is out of industries or unknown, i.e. ‘outside employment’ (mainly unemployed) or ‘unknown’ (e.g. on pension or study grants plus ‘housewives’) (17.2% in 2007 compared to 41.3% in 1996).

If we take the group of performing artists with an actor education as a starting point, there are still about 1/3 in the theatre and film industry, but there a larger share in 2007 who are “out of industry or unknown” (namely 37.8 % compared to 17.2 %) and a smaller share who are working in other industries (28.0 % compared to 45.0%).

The same goes for the group of performing artist who are member of the Danish actor association in 2010, where 38.3% is working in other industries in 2007 and 30.3 are out of industries or unknown in 2007. These calculations are for all the three years based on exactly the same group of people, namely those people who were members of the association in 2010. It follows from the table that a smaller percentage is working in the theatre and film industry in 2007 compared to 1996, and instead these people are working in other industries or are out of industry.

Table 4. Age, gender and education 1996 to 2007 (percent)

	Defined by performing artist job			Defined by membership of actor association			Defined by actor education		
	1996	2003	2007	1996*	2003*	2007*	1996	2003	2007
Age									
18-27	9.4	18.7	25.6	32.3	21.7	16.1	2.3	1.5	4.2
28-37	24.0	31.7	35.1	26.5	27.4	27.9	24.0	24.7	25.3
38-47	23.3	20.5	21.1	21.1	23.8	22.2	24.0	23.9	20.5
48-57	20.1	13.6	9.7	12.8	14.6	17.4	22.1	19.5	17.6
58-67	11.2	10.5	6.5	4.7	8.0	10.6	17.4	15.7	16.1
68 +	12.1	5.1	1.9	2.5	4.6	5.9	10.0	14.7	16.4

Total N	2104	1364	1276	1652	1960	2005	788	932	985
Gender									
Men	48.3	54.2	54.2	48.2	47.0	46.0	48.0	47.6	47.6
Women	51.7	45.8	45.8	51.8	53.0	54.0	52.0	52.4	52.4
Total N	2104	1364	1457	1652	1960	2005	788	932	985
Education									
Actor Education	23.5	24.0	21.3	30.0	33.7	37.7	100	100	100
Other Education	76.5	76.0	78.7	70.0	66.3	64.3	0	0	0
Total N	2104	1364	1457	1652	1960	2005	788	932	985

* In all three years the calculation are based on membership in the Danish actor association in 2010. The other calculations using job as performing artist or performing artist education as definition of performing artists, are based on the actual number of performing artists in the respective years.

Age. The age groups start by the age of 18 since that is the age of majority. From 1996 to 2007 the share of performing artist in the younger age groups has increased and in the older age groups it has decrease. In 1996 33.4 percent of performing artist (with a job as a performing artist) was under 38 years old, and in 2007 60.7% were under 38 years old. The total reduction in number of actors is considerable over the 12 years. In percentage it is a decline of 30%. This reinforces the reduction in performing artists in the older age groups.

If we take the group of performing artists with an actor education as a starting point, we see the opposite tendency. The percentage in the old age group (68 +) has actually increased during the years, which means that 16.4% of the artists with an actor education has increased from 10.0% in 1996 to 16.4% in 2007. There are few artists with an actor education in the youngest age group (18-27 years), but it has increased during the period: In 1996 it was 2.3% and it 2007 it was 4.2%. In general the group of artist with an actor education is older than the group of performing artists defined by their job.

The calculation on the group of performing artist who are members of the Danish actor association are for all the three years based on exactly the same group of people, namely those people who were members of the association in 2010. This means of course that the share of the younger age groups is decreasing and the share of the older age groups is increasing. Therefore it is only the age composition in 2007 which is comparable to the other groups (performing artist with a job within the field, and artists with an actor education).

Gender. The distribution over gender is almost the same through time and between the three definitions of performing artist groups. The share of women is in general a little larger than the share of men. But in 2003 and 2007 the share of men has been larger than 50% of those with at job as performing artist.

Education. The formal theatre education comprises a degree from one of the 2 year programmes at theatre schools and for older actors 2 years of ‘internship’ at a theatre. The registration concerns the highest completed education. So a performing artist with e.g. an exam from the Danish School of Theatre (2 years) who later have completed an

exam from a teachers college or a university is not registered as having a theatre education. Courses completed at evening school, folk high schools et al. are not counted as an education giving industry competence. Here we apply only 2 categories of education: actor education and other education.

As to education the main observation is that the specific actor education plays a minor role (less than 25%). When this status is cross-tabulated with income we see a modest increase in the share of actors with more than 300.000 DKK per year. For the members of the Danish actor association the share with an actor education is higher – about 1/3.

Cross section regression for 2007

An OLS-regression model for 2007 explaining the income level on the cross section of performing actors shows some significant results. The income of the performing artists can be explained by different variables. The income of performing artists is higher for artist working in Copenhagen capital area. It increases with age, and women have significant lower income than men. Similar results on negative gender effects for women in performing arts are found in other studies (e.g. Coulangeon et al., 2005). Dancers and choreographers as well as actors and directors are earning the most compared to street and nightclub dancers and clowns. Besides, work experience has a positive impact on earnings. All these variables are significant on a 5 percent level. A basic movie related education has a positive significant impact on earnings on a 10 percent level, but a real actor education has no significant effect on earnings. The model is robust and explains 10 percent of the variation in income. The model can be developed further by including more explanatory variables like industry, membership of artists association etc. And the next step will be to estimate a model including all the 12 years and performing artists and estimate a pooled model using the whole panel.

Table 5. Regression model explaining performing artists' income.

Variable	DF	Parameter estimate	Standard error	t Value	Robust Standart error	Robust t Value
Intercept	1	3,2376	0,1506	21,50	0,1609	20,13
Arledgr_2007	1	0,0000	0,0001	-0,18	0,0001	-0,15
Log (experience new)	1	0,0904	0,0212	4,27	0,0242	3,74
Copenhagen	1	0,0825	0,0294	2,81	0,0296	2,79
Gender	1	-0,1061	0,0293	-3,63	0,0293	-3,62
Age	1	0,0579	0,0087	6,66	0,0102	5,66
Age squared	1	-0,0006	0,0001	-6,75	0,0001	-5,55
Actors and Directors	1	0,0621	0,0308	2,02	0,0316	1,96
Street and nightclub dancers	1	0,0922	0,1027	0,90	0,1127	0,82
Dancers and Choreographers	1	0,1622	0,0701	2,32	0,0475	3,41
Education basic (Movie)	1	0,2384	0,0930	2,56	0,1353	1,76
Education movie	1	0,0252	0,0391	0,65	0,0414	0,61
Education Dancer	1	-0,0259	0,2738	-0,09	0,1415	-0,18

Baseline group: Clowns etc. and people no longer in the performing artists group.

Analysis of Variance					
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	12	113	9,4439	21,38	<,0001
Error	2111	932	0,4417		
Corrected Total	2123	1046			

Number of Observations Read	2565
Number of Observations Used	2124
Number of Observations with Missing Values	441
R-Square	0,1084
Adj R-Sq	0,1033

A t-value is marked with if the parameter estimate is significant at a 5 percent level. If it is significant at a 10 percent level it is marked with

Definition of careers and career length

In this section we will look at the career length of the performing artists for the group of performing artists demarcated by their job function (table 1).

Careers in our data are number of years with ‘acting’ as the primary labour income (also called ‘actor years’). Careers may vary from one year to twelve years. And there may be years with some acting, but not so much that it leads to a primary income. Some of the careers may also be longer as shown because they may comprise years before 1996 and years after 2007.

In principle we have two career concepts: a gross and a net concept. The gross (or the maximum) career spans from the first ‘actor year’ to the last year of registration as actor and consists of the number of years in between. The net career only counts the number of years which forms a row without interruptions or without intermediary or ‘in-between’ years (with ‘non-actor income’) i.e. without ‘holes’.

Table 6. Gross career length and number of ‘in-between’ years

In-between years/ Gross career	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1	3598											3598
2	808											808
3	398	148										546
4	359	155	92									606
5	88	45	42	34								209
6	63	55	26	36	24							204
7	26	33	33	27	29	12						160
8	23	20	16	28	16	17	11					131

9	28	31	13	20	22	14	13	12				153
10	24	24	15	18	19	16	10	3	7			136
11	28	18	12	15	18	13	5	7	2	2		120
12	75	44	33	20	23	23	11	12	6	5	0	252
Total	5518	573	282	198	151	95	50	34	15	7	0	6923

Table 6 shows vertically down the Gross careers 1 – 12 years long. Horizontally is shown whether persons have no in-between years (0) or 1 – 10 in-between years. The ‘total’ column gives the number of actors within each gross career length and the ‘0’ column shows the number of actors with net careers of that length. While the number of actors in a year varies between 1300 -2000 the data for all 12 years comprise 6923 persons.

The dominant career length is one year (52%), the career type with the second largest number of persons is the 2-year career length. The two types together accounts for 63% of the population. There are only 75 persons (or 1%) who are registered as actor all 12 years.

Similar, but not as extreme results are found in other studies. Caoulangeon et al. (2005) found for performing artists that 17.8% of newcomers disappeared in the first year, 8.3% in the second, so 26.1% of performing artists exit the market in the first two years. During the third and following years, the probability of definitive labour market exit appears strongly diminished. The evaporation rate between the 3rd and 8th year after labour market entry is almost the same as in the first 2 years.

According to Caoulangeon et al. (2005) actors’ vulnerability during the first two critical years may be interpreted as a sign of relative weakness of entry barriers to labour market. This trend was reinforced with the rise of the audiovisual sector. This sector allows spotting the inexperienced debutant actors, who will maybe later consolidate their professional competence in the theatre sector. This means that part of the selection process for actors actually occurs after labour market entry.

Table 7. Number of persons distributed over 11 career types in total database and in 1996, 2003 and 2007. Total number and in percent.

	1996	2003	2007	1996-2007
One actor year	396 (29 %)	302 (28%)	452 (43%)	3598 (52%)
2 actor years	139 (10 %)	136 (13%)	145 (14%)	808 (12%)
3-5 actor years without ‘in between’s’	438 (32 %)	138 (13%)	130 (12%)	845 (12%)
3-5 actor years with one ‘in between’	120 (9%)	89 (8%)	72 (7%)	348 (5%)
6-7 actor years without ‘in between’s’	27 (2%)	61 (6%)	31 (3%)	89 (1%)
6-7 actor years with one ‘in between’	29 (2%)	41 (4%)	25 (2%)	88 (1%)
8 actor years without ‘in between’s’	56 (4%)	103 (10%)	40 (4%)	103 (2%)
8-11 actor years with one “in between”	39 (3%)	82 (8%)	40 (4%)	93 (1%)
12 actor years without “in between’s”	75 (6%)	75 (7%)	75 (7%)	75 (1%)
12 actor years with one	44 (3%)	41 (4%)	44 (4%)	44 (1%)

“in between”				
Resting career types				832 (12%)
Total	2104	1364	1457	6923

Net careers amount to 80 % of the gross careers and careers with only one ‘in-between year’ amounts to 8%. So in the following we only look at net careers, occasionally also including careers with one in-between year.

The career tables 6 and 7 indicate that the groups of performing artists consist of a number of different subgroups. More than half the people only appear in the population once i.e. they have a ‘career’ of only one year. As we look at the longer sizes of careers there are declining numbers of persons.

In future research we will estimate survival function for the performing artists using event history techniques and look into the factors that affect the probability that the artists exits the performing arts labour market.

Career patterns

It is also possible at present time to say a little about career patterns. In table 8 we have looked at the patterns for the net careers of the length of (only) 3 and 4 years. Careers, each of a length of one year, do not have a pattern and careers of 2 years may be heavily influenced by whether it is early or late in the first year the career starts. So these two career lengths are excluded from the pattern analysis. As the table shows there are growing number of pattern variations within the career types, so we have pt limited the analysis to the variants in table 8.

We look for where in the career the top year is placed i.e. the year with the highest income. Top year can be the first year or one of the succeeding or preceding 2-4 years. The table shows a clear likelihood of the career to be a ‘shooting star’ i.e. that most likely the career starts with a ‘top year’ followed by some lower years.

Table 8. Career patterns within careers of 3 and 4 years length

Career patterns	Number	Pattern
3 years without “in between years”		
Top year-1. post year-2. post year	236	\--
1. preyear –Top year- 1. post year	153	- \-
2. preyear-1. preyear-Top year	133	-- \
4 years without “in between years”		
Top year-1. post year-2. post year-3. post year	179	\---
1. preyear-Top year-1. post year-2. post year	136	- \--
2. preyear-1. preyear-Top year-1. post year	74	-- \-
3. preyear-2. preyear-1. preyear-Top year	100	--- \

Careers and income conditions

Careers are the outcome of all 12 years, but the descriptive statistics only relates to one year (at a time). So cross-tabulations are done only for the 3 years 1996, 2003

and 2007 and we only correlate for persons with an actor year in the respective year. The correlations are only carried out for persons with a net career. We only show the table for 2007, but comment in the text if there are variations between the 3 analysed years.

Career and income. Table 9 shows that there are huge variations between the income distributions for each career length. It is clear that for the very short careers of one or two years the lowest incomes dominate. 40.2% of those with only one year as a performing artist have an income below 100.000 DKK and 62.4% has an income below 200.000 DKK. On the other hand only 9.0% has an income above 400.000 DKK. For those with two years as performing artist the 51.8% has an income below 200.000 DKK, and 13.8 have an income above 400.000 DKK. In the other end of the scale those with 12 actor years without in between year only 13.3% has an income below 200.000 DKK, and none of them has an income below 100.000 DKK. And 46.6% in this group have and income above 400.000 DKK. It is therefore quite clear that those with short careers in general have very low income, while those with longer careers have substantial higher income, and most of them have an income to make a living.

Table 9. Career length correlated with labour income, 2007

Income (1,000 DKK) / Career length	0-100	100-200	200-300	300-400	400-500	500 +	Total
One actor year	40.2	21.2	17.5	12.0	4.0	5.0	452 (43%)
2 actor years	28.3	23.5	20.0	14.5	6.2	7.6	145 (14%)
3-5 actor years without 'in between'	11.5	21.5	25.3	25.3	6.9	9.3	130 (12%)
3-5 actor years with one 'in between'	13.9	23.6	22.2	19.4	9.7	11.1	72 (6%)
6-7 actor years without 'in between'	0.0	6.5	16.1	35.5	6.5	35.5	31 (3%)
6-7 actor years with one 'in between'	4.0	8.0	28.0	36.0	16.0	8.0	25 (2%)
8 actor years without 'in between'	5.0	10.0	12.5	35.0	32.5	5	40 (4%)
8-11 actor years with one "in between"	17.5	7.5	22.5	22.5	17.5	12.5	40 (4%)
12 actor years without "in between"	0.0	13.3	17.3	22.7	33.3	13.3	75 (7%)
12 actor years with one "in between"	2.3	4.6	31.8	20.5	22.7	18.2	44 (4%)
Total	259 24.6	198 18.8	210 19.9	191 18.1	104 9.9	92 8.8	1054

Conclusion and further research

The purpose of this paper is to study careers and income conditions of performing artists in Denmark on the basis of national statistics. In the paper we have been looking at three different criteria for defining performing artist, and we have looked at the implications observed on careers and living conditions. The three different criteria for defining performing artists are:

- Having a job as a performing artist
- Graduation from a performing art school
- Membership of professional performing artist's association

The paper has focused on three questions:

- How are the income conditions of performing artists in the period 1996 – 2007?
- How is the career length and patterns of the performing artists in Denmark?
- How is the careers related to the income conditions of the artists?

The results concerning the living conditions for performing artists show in general very low income levels for most of the artists, and only about 1/3 of them are working within the theatre and film industry. In the group of performing artist with a job as a performer 20% is earning less than 100.000 DKK, while in the groups of artists defined by their education or membership of artist's organisation, 40% is earning less than 100.000 DKK. The age composition is also different for the different groups of artists. Those with an actor education are older than those with a job as a performing artist. Between 1/4 and 1/3 of the artists have an actor education. The regression model for 2007 shows a positive effect on earning of age, being a man, working in Copenhagen capital area, having work experience, having a basic movie related education, and work as a dancer/choreograph or as an actor/director. Having an education as actor or dancer seems to have no significant effect on earnings. The next step will be to estimate a model including all the 12 years and performing artists and estimate a pooled model using the whole panel.

The analysis of career length shows that most performing actors have very short careers of one or two years. In our future research it will be possible to carry out a truly longitudinal study of performing artists careers by estimating survival function using event history techniques and look into the factors that affect the probability that the artists exit the performing arts labour market. Cross-tabulations for 2007 shows that those with short careers in general have very low income, while those with longer careers have substantial higher income, and most of them have an income high enough to make a living.

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Appendix. Definitions of variables used in the regression in table 5.

Experience new: The employment experience term from 1980, 1000 pr. year (erhvervsferfaringsbegreb - erhver) ¹⁰

Arledgr: Rate of unemployment (Årsledighedsgrad)

Actors and Directors: Dummy variable=1 if the discokode =245500

Street and Nightclubdancers: Dummy variable= 1 if discokode=347300

Dancer and Choreographer: Dummy variable=1 if discokode=245400

Clowns etc.: Dummy variable=1 if discokode=347400

Copenhagen: A dummy variable on whether a person works in Copenhagen or Frederiksberg

Gender: A dummy variable taking on the value 0 for men and 1 for woman

Age: The persons age

Age squared: The persons age squared

Education basic (Movie): A dummy variable for a basic movie related education (value=1 if code: 5801-5807)

Education movie: A dummy variable for actor and director education (value=1 if code: 5849, 5850 5855)

Education Dancer: A dummy (value=1 if code:5856)

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Notes

¹ The two words performing artists and actors are used interchangeably in this paper.

² According to Alper and Wassall (2006) the most striking findings are related to the consistently poorer labor market outcomes of artists. Alper and Wassall summarize several hypotheses that have been advanced to explain what makes the artist labor market unique:

- 1) Throsby's (1994) "work preference" model of artist behavior, which postulates that the artist is driven to create, and will maximize time spent working as an artist subject to constraints of earning sufficient income, from either inside or outside the arts, to finance an acceptable level of consumption.
- 2) Another set of theories lies in the roles of risk-taking among artists and the rewards to those who rise to the top of their profession. Although these theories were mainly used to explain income distributions among artists, they also have implications for labor supply.
- 3) A related theory is found in the literature on the earning of superstars (Rosen, 1981, Adler, 2006) and "winner-take-all-markets".

³ Finland is one of the few other countries which have had the same data possibilities for several years.

⁴ Looking at employment and income conditions for creative labour and artists we need in most cases a reference population. As Alper and Wassall (2006) observes: "Most Census-based studies have compared artists' labor market outcomes to a reference population. The choice of reference population has not been consistent, ranging from specific occupations with comparable educational attainment to specific professional occupations, to all workers, and to all managerial, professional and technical workers." Based on data from Statistics Denmark it is possible to select the reference population that suits the analyses best. The reference population can be the total work force in Denmark, or it can be the persons with an education on similar level, etc.

⁵ In the data from Statistics Denmark there is, however, information on primary and secondary job as well as primary and secondary industry.

⁶ Another relevant education is the National Film School (*Den Danske Filmskole*) which educates animation instructor, photographers, instructors, editors, scriptwriters, sound engineers and producers. These graduates seem to have better conditions than the graduates from the acting educations. They have the largest personal average income compared to graduates from all the other artistic and cultural educational institutions. Especially producers and sound engineers have high average earnings, while animation instructors have a very low average income relatively. The National Film School graduates are also characterized by a larger employment rate (81 pct.) than the acting graduates.

⁷ We have lately received a positive answer to our application for admission to the registrations of the members of the Danish actors union. It opens up for a supplementary analysis of relationships between membership and registrations in the files of Statistics Denmark.

⁸ <http://www.skuespillerforbundet.dk/Default.aspx?ID=155>

⁹ All participants remained anonymous.

¹⁰

<http://www.dst.dk/Vejviser/dokumentation/times/emnegruppe/emne/variabel.aspx?sysrid=128300×path=19|1013> |