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Researching Music Practices – Methodological Approaches
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Keynote I

Toward an agenda for evaluation of qualitative research

Brynjulf Stige - Professor

Brynjulf Stige is Professor of Music Therapy, University of Bergen & Head of Research, GAMUT – The Grieg Academy Music Therapy Research Centre, Uni Health, Uni Research, Bergen. Stige is co-editor of the international journal *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* (Open Access) and a member of the editorial board of *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*. As a researcher Stige has been preoccupied particularly with the cultural and social aspects of music therapy, and he has focused upon themes such as disabled persons’ participation in the local music practice, psychiatric patients’ experience of the music therapy service and music as a health promoting resource in the local community. Stige is now leading the project “Network for research on music therapy and the elderly” (2008-2012). This is a Nordic network which aims to build up a research close to practice, that can increase the competency and develop the music therapy service in the geriatric care. He has published many articles and several books in Norwegian and English. The last book is: Stige, Ansdell, Eleton & Pavlicevic (2010). *Where Music Helps. Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection*. London: Ashgate.

Abstract

The diversity of traditions that characterize qualitative research suggests that general checklists or criteria for evaluation are problematic. Evaluation is essential for research quality and development, however, so this situation represents a real challenge for the field of qualitative research. The present paper presents an approach to research evaluation that the presenter has developed with Kirsti Malterud and Torjus Midtgarden (Stige, Malterud, & Midtgarden, 2009). The approach – labeled EPICURE – encourages reflexive dialogue through use of an evaluation agenda. In proposing an evaluation agenda, the authors shift attention from rule-based judgment to reflexive dialogue. Unlike criteria, an agenda may embrace pluralism, and does not request consensus on ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues, only consensus on what themes warrant discussion. The EPICURE evaluation agenda includes two dimensions communicated through use of two acronyms. The first, EPIC, refers to the challenge of producing rich and substantive accounts based on Engagement, Processing, Interpretation, and (self-)Critique. The second, CURE, refers to the challenge of dealing with preconditions and consequences of research, with a focus on (social) Critique, Usefulness, Relevance, and Ethics. In this presentation, the evaluation challenges in qualitative research are briefly outlined, before the seven items of the composite evaluation agenda EPICURE are presented and exemplified. Implications of using the agenda approach to research evaluation are then discussed, with a specific focus on how to use it at various stages in the research process and on how dialogues and reflexivity can be nurtured through use of this evaluation agenda.

Recommended readings


Or

Keynote 2

Researching musical imagination: Overcoming the curse of creativity

David Hargreaves - Professor

David Hargreaves is Professor of Education at Roehampton University, and has previously held posts at the Universities of Leicester, Durham and the Open University. His books, in psychology, education, and the arts, have been translated into 15 languages. In 2004 he was awarded an honorary Doctorate by the University of Gothenburg, Sweden for his work as Visiting Professor in Music Education Research in that University since 1993. He has appeared on BBC TV and radio as a jazz pianist, and is organist at his local village church.

Abstract

Our recently–published book Musical Imaginations (Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald, 2012) argues for a rethinking of several big concepts in music psychology, and in particular of those associated with musical creativity. We suggest that the importance of music listening as a creative activity has been neglected, and that putting this at the centre of musical creativity (which is usually seen as being manifested in the activities of composition, improvisation and performance) can lead to a more fundamental view of imagination as the cognitive basis of musical perception and production. Recent advances in neuroscience appear to confirm the functional similarities between these different areas of activity in music, and this paper seeks to clarify and redefine some of these existing concepts.

Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell (2005) adopted a socio-cultural approach in proposing a ‘reciprocal-feedback’ model of musical communication which consisted of a combination of two parallel models: of the response to music, and of musical performance. In this paper I present a revised and simplified view which proposes that musical imagination, which consists of internal cognitive representations, is at the core of both musical perception and production. This leads to a view of musical creativity which is much more restricted in scope, which is the corollary of my argument.

This paper draws on concepts and theories in cognitive and social psychology, experimental aesthetics, social-cultural theory, psychometrics and cognitive neuroscience: these involve a range of different methodological approaches, which will be compared and contrasted.

Recommended readings


Other sources


Keynote 3

Presenting the Past in Music Education:
A Research Journey with Its Promises and Challenges

Marie McCarthy - Professor

Marie McCarthy is Professor and former Chair of the Department of Music Education at the University of Michigan. She teaches courses on general music in the curriculum as well as a range of graduate seminars in music education. Her research interests include the social, cultural and historical foundations of music education, the processes of music transmission across cultures, and spiritual dimensions of music education. Her publications include two books, Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture, and Toward a Global Community: A History of the International Society for Music Education, 1953-2003.

Abstract

Approaches to historical research have changed in recent decades due to a number of factors that include revisionist thinking, interdisciplinary boundary crossing, and use of an expanded range of research tools to illuminate the past. New perspectives are stimulating different kinds of questions and opening up areas heretofore neglected and ignored. The master narrative is challenged by the possibility of multiple narratives created around the stories of marginalized individuals and groups or those whose lives were not deemed worthy of documentation. At the same time, there is increased interest in presenting the past using social and cultural perspectives. Furthermore, advancements in technological media are impacting the processes of historical research. The conceptual framework for this presentation is created around these recent developments in historiography.

In the introduction, I address historical research as a mode of inquiry and argue for a more transformative role for history in music education. A review of contemporary trends and developments in historiography follows, focusing on the promises and challenges of presenting the past for the researcher. A range of methodologies is described to show the variety of ways in which data can be approached and presented—quantitative history, oral history, psychohistory and comparative history. With these current trends and methodologies in mind, the process of doing history is examined—from choosing and framing a topic, identifying primary sources, using audio and visual digital media, to interpreting and evaluating evidence. The challenges inherent in imagining and re-enacting the past through historical narrative are highlighted. Approaches and methodologies are illustrated throughout with reference to specific research studies.

Recommended readings


Other sources


**Keynote 4**

**Challenges and Opportunities in International-Comparative Music Research**

David G. Hebert - Professor

David G. Hebert is a Professor at the Grieg Academy-Faculty of Education, Bergen University College, where he teaches courses in music education, performance, and research. A music teacher educator and ethnomusicologist, he previously worked for universities on four continents, including at Sibelius Academy, Boston University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Japan National Institutes for the Humanities (Nichibunken), and Te Wananga O Aotearoa (New Zealand). His writings are in over 20 journals and such books as *Wind Bands and Cultural Identity in Japanese Schools* (Springer) and *Patriotism and Nationalism in Music Education* (Ashgate, in press).

**Abstract**

The credo “Know Thyself” was advocated by Socrates, but as Ptolemy and others would later recognize, it is only possible to fully know our selves and the ultimate significance of human practices (such as music) through systematic documentation and comparison, which enables the production of robust theories and contextualized, verifiable knowledge. Judicious comparison of diverse practices and contexts is an essential component of theory construction, yet hasty comparisons can also be very misleading. It is, therefore, important to carefully consider the common pitfalls of comparison, and how they may be avoided, as we interpret and design international-comparative studies to develop new advancements in musical knowledge.

In this presentation, I will use anecdotes from personal experience to illustrate various aspects of international-comparative music research, including its distinctive prospects, characteristic methodologies, and contemporary theories, as well as potential risks and benefits associated with the application of its findings in such fields as ethnomusicology, music education, and performance science. Specifically, I will demonstrate issues in the representation of sociocultural differences, and how a comparative lens can produce practical insights, particularly through examination of performance techniques, music institutionalization and arts policy, and global norm making. A deeper understanding of such issues may help shape a research agenda toward pioneering findings and actionable outcomes, enabling others to increasingly recognize music’s value and utilize its power in positive ways for an improved quality of life.

**Recommended readings**


Hebert, D. G. (2012). *Wind Bands and Cultural Identity in Japanese Schools*. Dordrecht: Springer. [Front Matter; Chapter 1; downloadable via Springer Link from Grieg Academy UiB/HiB]


**Other sources**


Write a Science Opera (WASO) – Opera, science, education, research and innovation

Oded Ben-Horin – Associate Professor

Oded Ben-Horin is a music educator, vocalist, lyricist, and composer with special focus on science-art collaborations and other creative musical concepts. Oded has participated in a wide variety of musical projects ranging from jazz, contemporary, pop and acapella. After receiving a Bachelors of Arts degree in Musicology and Business Administration from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Oded moved to Europe to continue developing musically. He first moved to Holland, where he studied at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague, then Switzerland where he completed his Masters Degree in Vocal Jazz Performance with Professor Lauren Newton while performing up to 100 concerts a year as an acapella singer. Oded Ben-Horin is Associate Professor of Music at the Stord/Haugesund University College Music Department. He also teaches vocal jazz, improvisation, chamber music, and music theory at the University of Bergen’s Grieg Academy and the University of Stavanger. He has taught jazz vocals at The Royal Conservatory in The Hague, Holland, and has been a guest lecturer at the Bar-Ilan University composition department doctorate program. Oded’s ensemble, The Science Fair, turns to science and technology as the inspiration for its lyrics, and has recorded two CD’s: “Welcome To The Science Fair” (2007) and “Underwater” (2010).
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Abstract

Key words: Multi-disciplinary, opera, science, Europe, creativity, innovation

The western world’s existing education systems face challenges in the areas of Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM). EU policy papers clearly outline the need for more inquiry-based, creative and innovative approaches within these subjects, to both support depth and interest and attract more youngsters to careers in these fields for economic and other reasons (1).

Write a Science Opera (WASO) is a newly-developed approach to multi-disciplinary and creative science education which brings together the opera genre and the traditional science class. WASO is based on the widespread and well-documented pedagogical methodology Write an Opera which is led in Europe by the Royal Opera House (London): a professional development methodology enabling teachers to instruct pupils of all ages during the creation and performance of completely self-written operas (2).

The proposed method supports these goals by providing a creative framework through which school children may realize, interpret and communicate scientific knowledge as well as the common impulses between science and the arts.

Will WASO prove to be an effective method for learning more deeply and creatively about science? About opera? About creativity? Will children feel more ownership towards the learned material?

Preliminary results of school projects based on similar activities have shown positive results, as have the Write an Opera methodology. The combination of forms leading to Write a Science Opera (WASO) will be pioneered in Bergen in collaboration with Den Nye Opera and presented at the conference, thus providing a platform for analysis and discussion.

References

This paper presents a PhD research on an amateur composer-oriented Bach choir. Its main purpose is to study the development of musical identities and musical preferences of choral members as they take shape through the collective learning process of rehearsing and performing large-scale choral music. The study analyses how the choral participation and performance creates a certain type of ‘choral capital’ (a combination of social and cultural capital within the choral setting) and how the choristers reconstruct and relate to the composer (J.S. Bach) by creating certain ‘choral identities’ linked to the composer-orientation of their choir.

This study is based on an interdisciplinary approach, seeking concepts and ideas from different fields of study – primarily sociology and music sociology (music in everyday life and the concepts of social and cultural capital in the amateur choral setting) but also music psychology regarding concepts of musical and vocal identities, history of music (especially Bach scholars, previous biographical writings about J.S. Bach), music and education (choral singing as informal music education) and interdisciplinary studies on music, health and well-being.

The methodological approach of this research consists of a grounded theory based, single case study where the case was the Croydon Bach Choir in London performing J.S. Bach’s Mass in B Minor, using participant observation (where I sang with the choir for one semester) and qualitative interviews as main research methods and gathering demographic background data on choral members via paper-based survey. Whereas many researches on music performances have been conducted, so far choral research, where the direct participation of the researcher as a member of the choir is used as one of the main research methods, is still quite rare.

Results indicate that participants develop a certain socio-musical identity both through their choral participation in general, performance experiences and early music consumption in family household and the emphasis of the importance of choral singing as a fulfilment instead of pursuing a professional career. Through choral singing, participants developed ‘choral capital’ through a) the effects of collective learning on their musical taste and preferences (thus broadening their musical taste and preferences and reconstructing the composer) and b) the well-being factor of collective singing and communal learning through the process of rehearsing and performing the Mass in B Minor. Furthermore, findings
indicated that participants construct Bach as a genius and a devout Lutheran, an image which relates to the romantic image of Bach presented in the late 19th – early 20th century biographical writings on the composer. Thus in general, their choral activities form a valuable addition to their social and cultural capital (‘choral capital’) which they use as a source of well-being in everyday life. In addition, participants create certain ‘choral identity’ by relating to the composer-orientation of their choir; the promotional label of Bach as a synonym for quality choral singing and the emphasis of challenging repertoire.

References
Benefits and challenges by using mixed methods - an approach to researching music teachers’ practices with digital technology

Ingrid Grønsdal – PhD Candidate

Ingrid Grønsdal is currently working on her PhD "Music teachers’ conceptions of the computers' role in their classroom practice" at Stord/Haugesund University College. Her project is associated with the project "Education, Curriculum and Technology", funded by The Research Council of Norway. She is educated as a general music teacher, which she supplemented with studies of history and social anthropology, and in 2005 she finished her MA of ICT in Learning. Prior to the PhD, Ingrid Grønsdal worked as Conference Coordinator of Bergen Interactive Music Conference (BIMUC-07/08) and as the Web Chief Editor for International Society for Music Education (ISME) 2007-2008.

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Abstract

Keywords: Mixed methods, pragmatism, music education, digital technology

The rationale for my study is to investigate the scale and qualities of music teachers’ use of digital tools. Music teachers at primary and secondary school level are required to teach music broadly, but are confined to a minimal time frame. The three main areas of activity in the national curriculum are listening, music making and composing. The learning objectives are to be conveyed through five basic skills, one of them being "the ability to use digital tools". Statistical data from GSI (Grunnskolens informasjonssystem) shows an increase in the pupil-computer ratio from 6,4 pupils per computer in 2004/05 to 2,9 pupils per computer in 2011/12. At the same time the computer-teacher ratio is up from 0,5 to 1,15 computers per teacher. This information functions as a backdrop to the practices I have investigated and it begs the question whether such an increase in equipment has affected music education.

The research presented here draws on quantitative data from music teachers at a national level and qualitative data from interviews and observations at a local level. In this paper I will describe and reflect on the methodological aspects of the study with a special focus on the application of mixed methods and its (or their) internal relationship to and position in my study. The concept of mixed methods will be discussed with regard to different positions (Greene, 2007) as well as its appropriateness to my research theme and research questions. An important philosophical basis for my study is pragmatism as presented by William James (James, 1975) and John Dewey (Dewey, [2008]). Pragmatism is closely linked to the choice of using mixed methods as way of producing data (Creswell, cop. 2009). This presentation aims at discussing the linking of two data sources – quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews and classroom observations - so that they are mixed in a way that serves the research question.

References

Music Performance as Aesthetic Practice

Tom Eide Osa – PhD Candidate


Abstract

Keywords: music performance, late Wittgenstein, practice, meaning as use, rules, paradigms, forms of live

In my on-going PhD Project Genre Knowledge in musical performance, Wittgenstein-initiated ideas formulated in the concept of aesthetic practice by Kjell S. Johannessen meet communities of practice in music, aiming to portray particular meaning-constitutive ways of playing that characterize selected paradigmatic aesthetic practices.

In this paper I discuss the theoretical perspective of the thesis: the concept of aesthetic practice as a subject didactics approach to music performance.

Wittgenstein emphasizes that familiarity with a concept is to apply it right in action, knowledge is found in the correct use of the concept. Learning a concept is to obtain proper use within established conventions, to master the practice that is the concept’s grammar. To describe a concept is to clarify the usage rules in the current context.

In music performance different sets of ways of playing constitute communities of practice. Being able to play in specific ways in a specific musical context shows that the player has knowledge in his playing. He is conversant with the current aesthetic practice and demonstrates knowledge of and sensitivity to the rules that apply. He is able of applying performance practice conventions to repertoire, such as a specific style in American jazz, Western art music or Norwegian folk music.

I understand ways of playing and sets of such as concepts and areas of knowledge. Knowing and practicing ways of playing as concepts are the knowledge in the communities of practice.

Music performance cultures can be identified as representatives of historically and geographically localized styles and genres, characterized and constituted by their distinctive ways of playing. Music performance per se can, due to its primary identity as art, to a limited extent be scientifically articulated by words and numbers, nor by sheet music. In musical performance there can still be talk of concepts and knowledge, which when in practice are articulated nonverbally as sounding music. Such knowledge is to use ways of playing (concepts) correctly in the music performance.

A subject didactics approach to the concept of aesthetic practice, offering viewpoints on concept formation, appreciation, judgement and communication in art worlds, will help the understanding of learning and knowledge in music performance.

References


Bridging Music Education and Performance: Challenges of Studying Affective Learning in a Seventh Grade Jazz Ensemble

Tamara Thies – PhD Candidate

Tamara T. Thies is a PhD Candidate in Music Education at The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, USA. Her line of research encompasses music teaching and learning with a particular focus on affective learning, motivation, curriculum, and secondary instrumental music education. She has presented various music education topics on regional, national, and international stages. In May 2011, she received the Barry Bratton Award for Achievement in Design of Instructional Processes from The University of Iowa College of Education. She continues to serve on the Iowa Comprehensive Musician Project, Iowa Core Curriculum, and Iowa Music Educators Association board/publication editor.

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Abstract

Keywords: Affective learning, music education, performance-based ensemble, instrumental case study, repertory grid

This qualitative instrumental case study explores the qualities, characteristics, and interactions that outline intentional affective learning experiences in a seventh grade jazz ensemble. The overarching research question - “What is the nature of affective learning in the process of improvising and spontaneously creating melodies, where the instructor intentionally incorporates affective outcomes using the Wisconsin Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance model?” - guides investigation into teacher, student, and observer viewpoints of affective engagement.

I am in the interactive phase of analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. Because affective learning in music education is not clearly defined in literature (Nelson, 1983; Teachout, 2005), navigating the synthesis of process- and product-based data among the students and teacher is challenging. A related issue that performance-based ensembles are the primary American music course offerings in secondary settings (Abril & Gault, 2008) emphasizes public performance over education; while reviewed literature indicates that science is only now advancing to reflect neuro-processes that occur during music creation (Limb, 2008).

Data include observations of seventh grade jazz ensemble rehearsals over four months, three interviews with the instructor and six seventh-grade jazz ensemble members, and documents (e.g., instructor-created handouts and teaching materials). I have used a constant-comparative method throughout the data collection and analysis process. This method yields broad categories of instructor-created strategies and processes, instructor and student perceptions, and incremental/longitudinal student growth. Furthermore, specific characteristics of individual learners have surfaced to reveal the complexity of engaging each student affectively.

At this point in the analysis process, another approach—repertory grid—is being utilized to define affective learning. A simplified repertory grid permits examination by designating characteristics that are/are not indicative of affective learning. This repertory grid technique allows me to more clearly focus productive teaching strategies and processes, instructor-student interactive attributes, and resulting performance attitudes that involve affective learning.

References


Changes in Learning Practices in Jazz: What is the function of books as artifact in jazz education?

Steinar Sætre – PhD Candidate

Associate Professor Steinar Sætre works at University of Bergen, The Grieg Academy in the areas of music education and jazz studies. He is currently working on a PhD at University of Bergen, Department of Education. This project is primarily linked up to NATED (Norwegian national graduate school in educational research) at track 4 (Higher Education and Professional Learning).

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Abstract

Keywords: Artifacts, improvisation, institutionalization, jazz education, learning practice

This paper is part of an ongoing article-based PhD-project on changes in learning practices in jazz. Semi-structured interviews with seven American jazz educators are the original source of data in the project, and the main aim of this study is to map out different characteristics of institutionalized learning practices in jazz in higher education.

One focus in this study is the artifacts of jazz education in higher education. A part of this is to investigate the different qualities of books on jazz improvisation as artifact in jazz education. An important question is how the use of artifacts constitutes specific learning practices. What are the purposes of these tools? Related to this, the question of what kind of skills and knowledge can be achieved through these artifacts is discussed.

This investigation of books as artifact includes a content analysis and comparison of commonly used, existing literature on jazz improvisation. Among these are some of the literature on jazz improvisation by David Baker, Jerry Bergonzi, George Russell, Jerry Cooker and Scott Reeves. The analysis will seek information on different aspects, including:

- Overall conceptual ideas on how to learn to improvise in jazz
- Articulated or implicit pedagogical ideas.
- Possible aesthetical/stylistic preferences.
- Musical and improvisational elements included.
- Musical and improvisational elements excluded.

To frame this, existing literature reflection on use of books in jazz education will be used (e.g. Ake, 2002/Nicholson, 2005). Related reflections from the seven informants in this study, where some of them have a large production of learning material on jazz improvisation, will link the presentation to the current situation in jazz education in both an educators’ and an authors’ perspective.

The presentation uses theories by Säljö and Wartofsky as its theoretical framework for understanding artifacts in a learning practice contest, especially Säljö’s discussions on the relationship between artifacts and practical knowledge and Wartofsky’s distinction between three dimensions of artifacts as primary, secondary and tertiary artifacts.

References

Nicholson, Stuart (2005): Is jazz dead? ; (or has it moved to a new address), Routledge, NY.
Multiple roles and the challenge of reflexivity in a participatory action research project

Lars Tuastad – PhD Candidate

Lars Tuastad, music therapist, has been practicing as a music therapist in Bergen prison for ten years, and has been involved in the Norwegian project “Music in Custody and Liberty”. Tuastad is part of GAMUT as PhD student at the Grieg Academy, Dept. of Music, University of Bergen.
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Abstract

Keywords: Participatory action research, multiple roles, reflexivity, improvisation

How can the criminal’s past be turned into a resource? This question is explored through an on-going participatory action research project with “ME AND THE BAND”it’s”. The band consists of x-inmates who want to make a performance out of songs and stories from their own life experiences. I have followed the band members in Me And The BAND”it’s for many years through different phases of the national project “Music in Custody and Liberty”. For the last two years I have been a part of Me And The BANDit’s community of practice. I am the bass-player in the band. But, I am also a music therapist, a friend and a researcher. All these roles are brought into the research field, and are needed to be acknowledged and reflected upon. My presentation will discuss multiple roles and the challenge of reflexivity in a participatory action research project. Furthermore, I will elaborate the notion of improvisation related to the research process. Video clips will be used to scrutinize the theme.

References

“Female with a Male Spirit” – Doing Ethnomusicological Cross-gendered Fieldwork

Olga Witte – Master of Arts

Olga Witte graduated in 2009 as Master of Arts from Musicology and Anthropology at Aarhus University. In her master she focused on Balinese gambelan seen from an ethnomusicological perspective and she has from 2005 to 2012 done extensive fieldworks in Bali. This has led to an invitation to speak at Bali World Culture Forum 2011 about Balinese gambelan. She teaches Global Music Cultures and Ethnomusicology at the Royal Academy of Music Aarhus. In addition to her academic premises she is a skilled jazz pianist and church organist.

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Abstract

Keywords: Gender, Ethnomusicological Fieldwork, Balinese Gambelan, Methodology in Musical Research, Cross-gendered Fieldwork, Gendered Meaning, Sexuality and Music

Many musics around the globe are predominantly practiced by male or female. In some instances gender plays a more subtle role, in others a more explicit. The primary empirical data in this article is the author’s fieldworks in Balinese gambelan groups, a place where gender is paramount in the division of musicians. The prominence of participation and understanding musical performance as connected with social life calls for methodological reflections on doing cross-gendered ethnomusicological fieldwork.

Ethnomusicological fieldwork is not only about sensing “culture” but also about being able to sense culturally. The fieldworker positions herself in the field and generates knowledge by learning to behave as her informants. She will learn to evaluate and react as closer to what her informants do (Hasse 2003). The longer time a fieldworker spends and the more she becomes immersed in the field the more she will be expected to do so. This can cause problems doing fieldwork amongst musicians of the opposite gender. Because playing musical instruments is so important in the construction of identities (Doubleday 2008) it can prove difficult for her both to be accepted as “one of the guys” and to act in accordance with acceptance and suitability in the field. The fieldworker will always be some kind of outsider and therefore has a greater flexibility in negotiating her gender, but still it is not always possible to retrieve a position as e.g. neutral gendered or as the opposite sex (Babiracki 2008).

The fieldworker’s negotiated gendered role will affect what data she generates and how she interprets these. Parts of the field will be more difficult for her to enter, other parts will be more open and she can observe from a new angle. Acknowledgement and reflections upon the effect of the fieldworker’s gender is therefore important in doing ethnomusicological fieldwork.

References

Preliminary Viva Voce Examination

What characterize temporary creative collaborative music partnerships in schools?

A study on how pupil-musician-teacher ensembles create aesthetic expressions, develop musical concepts and shape performances

Randi Margrethe Eidsaa – PhD Candidate

Randi Margrethe Eidsaa is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Agder (enrolment on the PhD program at DPU, Copenhagen). She holds bachelor in music from Agder Music Conservatory and a master in music education from The University of Oslo. Prior to her work at Agder University she taught music for ten years in primary and secondary schools in Norway. She is a composer and a producer of school musicals and co-author of ‘Sanger, Septimer og Triangler, Spektro Musikal’ and ‘Allmenn Musikkundervisning’ - cases presenting pedagogy, didactics, methods and repertoire for music teachers and students. She was a member of the National Committee who revised the music teacher education in 1997 and the Norwegian National Music curriculum in 2006. She is presently working on a PhD research project on creative collaborative music projects in Lower Secondary Schools in Norway.

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Abstract

Keywords: musician-pupil-teacher collaboration, music making, performance production, music awareness

This paper presents a PHD project in progress on collaborative projects (partnerships) in schools. The projects are organised by visiting musicians in collaboration with school leaders and teachers, and the core group of participants are the children. Elstad & De Paoli (2008) call these projects “kunstproduserende kulturproduksjoner” (art producing culture productions) and explain the concept as follows: “The projects are temporary, aim at creating a more or less genuine artistic product that is shared with a clearly defined group of participants or audiences, and the group who is involved includes a broad spectre of participants”(s.57).

The research object

The objects investigated in this study are creative concerts and school operas and the events that take place during the various stages of creation and preparation. The cases I have studied are musical procedures from the very beginning when musicians or teachers introduce ideas through the various stages up to the time when the ensemble’s music is presented to an audience as a final workshop result.

The partnerships are supplements to the Norwegian music curriculum and nationally funded. Two of the projects I observed were funded by the Norwegian national art and culture program The Cultural Rucksack (TCR), the third by one of the Norwegian State Symphony Orchestras in collaboration with TCR and the fourth by Art Council Norway and a regional afternoon music and culture school.

Method

This research project is a qualitative study based on a phenomenological approach. The research data were collected during the observation of four creative music projects; two instrumental concerts and two school opera projects; from 2007 to 2010 and includes field notes, video, sound recording, written music, interviews, opera plots and lyrics written by pupils and pupils’ written reflections. I was partly a participant observer, partly a non-
participant observer. Observation took place in the various partnerships’ natural environment, at the locations that were used during workshops, rehearsals and performances. The four cases, Creative Project (CP) 1 – 4 are described as CP1 Grieg Avantgarde, CP2 Grieg Modern, CP Opera Buffa and CP Opera Pop. The pupils that participated in the partnerships were 6th and 7th graders. In three out of four cases teachers took active positions in the creative processes.

Research Design
The overall research question is how the musical expressions that are created during the collaboration are connected to the partnerships’ didactic content (musicians’/ teachers’ beliefs, methods, available tools, learning processes and learning events) as well as to partnership structure and the relationships between the participants. The data are categorized as aesthetic expressions, didactic content, project design and ensemble relationship.

After this, selected data from all four cases are chosen for further investigation. Details from the analysis singles out key areas for microanalysis and final discussion.

Research Questions
The major research questions are:

- How is music created during creative collaborative partnerships?
- How are the musical expressions connected to the musicians’ didactic strategies, the project structure and ensemble relationships?
- How can we understand the performances in relation to musical meaning, and what ways are the musical expressions related to traditions, beliefs and ideology in music pedagogic?


Preliminary findings
To create music, to shape musical concepts or to produce performances in schools is a complex process which leans on aesthetic, didactic, relational and organizational components:

- Decision making, flexibility, willingness to take risks and an inclusive learning environment are essential for success.
- Collective creative music production is based on close communication between participants.
- The composer’s intention is an essential element is (Hugill 2008)
- Creative partnerships creates spaces (possibilities) for creative work (Craft 2005)
- Musicians introducing musical elements, instruments and composition techniques as affordances (Clarke 2005)
- The musicians’scaffolding (Fautley & Savage 2007, Wiggins 2011)