

# PRIhME

## Assembly 4

February 2023

We cannot always perceive the weakening of structures until they collapse. When structures begin to collapse, the impact of past efforts becomes tangible.

(Sara Ahmed)

### paper tiger (noun):

one that is outwardly powerful or dangerous but inwardly weak or ineffectual"

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paper%20tiger>

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Dear participants

of the PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly,

PRIhME is slowly coming to an end – the fourth and final assembly is around the corner. In addition to discussing **what the possible blueprint for the conservatory of the future is**, this final assembly will also discuss **recommendations for the AEC on how to deal with power relations within Higher Music Education (HME)**.

Since utopias can express an idealized future and PRIhME to some extent is a utopian project, we have included a short expert paper written by **Alexandra Kertz-Welzel** discussing **utopian thinking within HME**. A central question here is what alternative view of HME can we imagine? While some ideas can be, excuse our pun, utopian, there are, as Kertz-Welzel writes, also real utopias with changes that can be implemented realistically. Our hope here is that you take this as an inspiration to reflect upon how our future within higher music education can be imagined and enacted - we hope, in other words, that the project will not be remembered as a paper tiger...

The second expert paper offers a personal account of issues encountered by **Antje Kirschning** who works as a woman's representative at a German HMEI. Fitting for the final assembly Kirschning brings up some themes from past assemblies. Her paper concludes by **looking beyond the borders of music education for ideas on how to deal with power relations and misconduct**.

**Assembly 4** is also about providing recommendations for the HME Sector in dealing with power relations, as well as ideas for complaint procedures. Power is multidimensional and intersectionality thus plays an essential role in how we are perceived and how misconduct and abuse is shaped by various factors in interplay. This is reflected in the additional material. The material also shows that complaint procedures, following Sarah Ahmed, should take into account those who normally are not heard.

The process of citizen democracy which is the foundation of **PRIhME** also means that we as individuals must be aware of our civic duty in raising issues and making sure that these changes are implemented. Otherwise, the rules and recommendations that our institutions adopt remain paper tigers – "outwardly powerful or dangerous, but inwardly weak or ineffectual". As a reminder of your duty, we encourage you to fold your own paper tiger and to keep it as a reminder close to where you work [you will find the folding instructions on **page 15**].

We as the editorial board look forward to hearing or reading about the outcomes from the final assembly. We wish you a good stay in Rome and many fruitful, but also controversial discussions!

The PRIhME Editorial Board

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[expert paper]

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**Alexandra Kertz-Welzel**, The Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany

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# Utopian Thinking in Higher Music Education

**Alexandra Kertz-Welzel**, Institute of Music Education  
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... caring for today and tomorrow are intertwined. To build this future, we must envision it first. Even as we strategize for the realities of today, we must picture where we are headed and summon the hope to continue moving.<sup>1</sup>

## The Significance of Utopian Thinking

Utopian visions have played an important role in the history of societal and institutional transformation, and constitute a significant aspect of the politics of change. They offer something to aim for. This impact of utopian thinking might surprise, given the fact that we often use the term "utopia" to characterize unrealistic ideas. Utopia is, however, a multifaceted concept. In philosophy and politics, it has been a powerful driver of change by offering alternatives to the status quo.<sup>2</sup> In sociology, utopia is used as a method for societal transformations.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the arts have always been utopian, providing new perspectives in sounds, colors, or stories.<sup>4</sup> Education also includes significant utopian elements in terms of preparing the next generation for an unknown future.<sup>5</sup> It seems that utopia and utopian thinking are ubiquitous and powerful. Utopia offers opportunities for sustainable changes in various fields, including higher education.

This text discusses utopia and utopian thinking as viable tools for institutional changes. It presents concepts of utopia and utopian thinking which can be utilized for transformational processes within academia, thereby contributing to reimagining and transforming power relations within higher music education.

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<sup>1</sup> Brodsky, A. & Nalebuff, R. K. (Eds.) (2015). *The feminist utopia project*. Feminist Press at the City University of New York, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Goodwin, B., & Taylor, K. (2009). *The politics of utopia*. Peter Lang.

<sup>3</sup> Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as method*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>4</sup> Kertz-Welzel, A. (2022). *Rethinking music education and social change*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, P., & Freeman-Moir, J. (Eds.) (2013). *Better worlds. Education, art, and utopia*. Lexington Books.

## What Is Utopia?

Quite literally, utopia is both a good place and a place which does not exist.<sup>6</sup> It is a place for dreams, but also for strategically imagining sustainable change. It is future-oriented, and is also connected to past and present. Utopia is an ambivalent concept which can lead to significant improvement or devastating damage. Utopian ideas can be found in political programs or works of art, in personal dreams or institutional visions. Thus, "as we strategize for the realities of today, we must picture where we are headed."<sup>7</sup>

The sociologist Levitas<sup>8</sup> describes utopia as a critical and imaginative method. Utopia embodies a desire for a better way of being and living but can also represent a dangerous fantasy in respect to ideologies or totalitarianism. Socially, utopia can suggest an alternative way of living or a model for a better society. Utopia can function in a variety of ways: it can critique a situation, function as a catalyst for change, or even become a compensation. Despite these ambiguities, "if we abandon utopian impulses in personal or political thinking, we imprison ourselves within the world as it is."<sup>9</sup>

How can utopia help us to move beyond the status quo? Levitas proposes using utopia as a method for the imaginary reconstitution of society – or the imaginary reconstitution of whatever field we would like to see improved.<sup>10</sup> Thus, utopia can function as a hermeneutic method for unearthing visions of alternative realities we already hold. Likewise, it can be an exploratory tool for elaborating how a different reality in various parts of our lives might appear. It can also concern real utopias as the implementation of our visions. To further explain how this is possible, Levitas presents three modes of utopian thinking. The *archaeological mode* is about uncovering hidden notions of alternative realities as for example in political programs, curricula, research, or in the arts. The *ontological mode* further elaborates the ideas developed in the first stage by specifying a better reality. The *architectural mode* fleshes out the ideas presented before to explain how the proposed concept would look like in reality, including its consequences – prior to returning to the archaeological mode. These three modes of utopian thinking can be applied to any number of fields, including higher education.

Certainly, utopia and utopian thinking are problematic and might "express much of the best and some of the worst in us."<sup>11</sup> This notwithstanding, such concerns do not diminish

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<sup>6</sup> Claeys, G. (2013). The five languages of utopia: Their respective advantages and deficiencies with a plea for prioritising social realism. *Cercles*, 30, 9-16.

<sup>7</sup> Brodsky, A. & Nalebuff, R. K. (Eds.) (2015). *The feminist utopia project*. Feminist Press at the City University of New York, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as method*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>9</sup> Ozan, E. (2022). Introduction. In E. D. Ozan (Ed.), *Rethinking utopia*. Lexington Books, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as method*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>11</sup> Sargent, L.T. (2007). Choosing utopia: utopianism as an essential element in political thought and action. In T. Moylan & R. Baccolini (Eds.), *Utopia method vision. The use value of social dreaming*. Peter Lang, p. 310.

the usefulness of utopia and utopian thinking in politics and transformational processes – as utopia's relation to politics and political thinking indicates.

## Utopia and Politics

There is a close connection between utopia and politics. Utopia provides a "critical analysis of socio-political reality as much as its ideal vision."<sup>12</sup> It helps to explain the shortcomings of the current situation, and facilitates developing alternatives, as "utopias are statements of alternative organizations."<sup>13</sup> Utopian ideas can be found in the ecological movement, feminism, or socialism. Many groundbreaking ideas which now seem common were first developed as utopian visions. Women's rights, universal health care or unemployment benefits would not have been possible without having been first imagined in utopian thinking.<sup>14</sup>

This raises the issue of how realistic utopias should be.<sup>15</sup> There might, on the one hand, be completely unrealistic notions which are important as the first stages of developing alternatives. But on the other hand, there might also be notions with a strong connection to reality. The concept of real utopia offers a realistic approach to utopian thinking which is informed by scientific knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Real utopias are "utopian destinations that have accessible waystations, [and] utopian designs of institutions... can inform our practical tasks of navigating a world of imperfect conditions for social change."<sup>17</sup> Real utopias are focused on changes that can be implemented. Wright refers to a participatory city budget where neighborhoods gather for a "participatory budget assembly," or worker-owned cooperatives. *The Real Utopia Project* develops alternatives which can be implemented:

The idea of "real utopias" embraces this tension between dreams and practice. It is grounded in the belief that what is pragmatically possible is not fixed independently of our imagination, but is itself shaped by our visions ... Nurturing clear-sighted understandings of what it would take to create social institutions free of oppression is part of creating a political will for radical social change to reduce oppression. A vital belief in a utopian ideal may be necessary to motivate people to set off on the journey from the status quo in the first place, even though the likely actual destination may fall short of the utopian ideal.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Goodwin, B., & Taylor, K. (2009). *The politics of utopia*. Peter Lang, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Parker, M. (2002). Utopia and the organizational imagination: outopia. In M. Parker (Ed.), *Utopia and organization*. Blackwell Publishing, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Neville-Sington, P., & Sington, D. (1993). *Paradise dreamed. How utopian thinkers have changed the modern world*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>15</sup> Friedman, Y. (1975). *Utopies réalisable*, <http://www.lyber-eclat.net/lyber/friedman/utopies.html>

<sup>16</sup> Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias*. Verso.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias*. Verso, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias*. Verso, p. 6.

Real utopias are inspired by the tension between dream and reality, between what could be and what is possible. They represent a pragmatic approach which is driven by utopian ideals uniting people in the transition from the current to a future state.

For Wright, real utopias are part of the "emancipatory social science." Their goal is to generate "scientific knowledge relevant to the collective project challenging various forms of human oppression."<sup>19</sup> This follows a three-step procedure. First, it suggests a diagnosis and critique to identify institutional power structures which systematically harm people. This phase should be guided by considerations as to social or political justice and institutions' connection to the overall goal of enhancing human development. The second stage creates alternatives to the current situation, addressing desirability, viability, and achievability, thus connecting utopia with reality. The final step develops a concept of social transformation, transitioning from the status quo to a better future, including strategies for collective action and overcoming problems linked to transformational processes.

The third stage suggests that transformations are not easy to accomplish. There are various challenges involved. The field of change management addresses these issues in different contexts, among which is higher education.<sup>20</sup> Approaches used in change management can prove particularly powerful when being combined with utopian thinking.

## Utopian Thinking in Higher Music Education

Utopian thinking can certainly facilitate changes in higher music education. Developing clear visions of how schools of music could be different, following Levitas' three modes of utopian thinking or Wright's concept of real utopia, can be a starting point for sustainable transformations.

One of the challenges of (higher) music education might be to find a balance between its artistic-aesthetic and its societal mission. Today, it cannot only be about art for its own sake anymore and a sole focus on music's autonomy. We have a responsibility for society. In international music education, however, there has been a tendency to exaggerate the societal mission and marginalize the aesthetic since social change has been proclaimed to be the main goal of music education.<sup>21</sup> It is time to find a more balanced concept, reuniting both dimensions, for instance in terms of politically and socially responsive

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<sup>19</sup> Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias*. Verso, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> For more information see: Tagg, J. (2019). *The instruction myth*. Rutgers University Press; Buller, J. L. (2015). *Change leadership in higher education*. Jossey-Bass.

<sup>21</sup> See for instance: Hess, J. (2019). *Music education for social change*. Routledge.

music education and aesthetic music education.<sup>22</sup> Both are deeply rooted in the utopian potential of music and education.

These two aspects of music (education) might correspond with dimensions of higher music education. For transforming power relations, it can be useful to take a closer look at the balance between artistic-aesthetic and societal aspects of music as they shape how academies are organized and work. In view of the current crises worldwide and the need to rethink the mission of culture and cultural institutions, utopian thinking can play an important role in rebalancing and refining the mission of music and also power relations in higher music education.

## Future Perspectives

Utopian thinking can play a part in sustainably transforming power relations in higher education. It facilitates developing shared visions of an alternative future. Sustainable changes in higher education are a complex matter since "it takes courage and ingenuity to make the compromises needed to survive, let alone improve, the current world."<sup>23</sup> In view of current worldwide challenges, positive as well as realistic visions are much needed. Utopian thinking can offer such perspectives and can certainly constitute an "antidote to the learned helplessness of the present day."<sup>24</sup> This is true for power relations in higher music education as well as in many other fields.

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<sup>22</sup> Kertz-Welzel, A. (2022). *Rethinking music education and social change*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Brodsky, A. & Nalebuff, R. K. (Eds.) (2015). *The feminist utopia project*. Feminist Press at the City University of New York, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ozan, E. D. (2022). Introduction. In E. D. Ozan (Ed.), *Rethinking utopia*. Lexington Books, p. 2.

# Institutions of Higher Music Education as Power-Sensitive Places of Learning

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University structures and everyday contact favor the transgression of boundaries, discrimination, and misconduct of power. These can include use of exaggerated pressure to perform or fear-mongering as didactic tools, lack of evaluation criteria, non-transparent selection procedures, sexist beauty standards, lack of an existing normative framework with commonly agreed basic values, lack of pedagogical pre-service and in-service training for teachers and professors, or the blocking of access and networks. This article reflects upon these issues related to power by drawing on the author's experience as a women's representative [*Frauenbeauftragte*] at a German higher music education institution (HMEI). The text begins with childhood musical experiences, when talents are discovered, and discusses specific aspects of musical socialization. These include touching while making music, discussing opera texts and the feelings they or the music trigger, and teaching in private rooms (in other words, mainly non-institutional spaces). The author illustrates how trusting closeness and appropriate boundaries, which form the basis for students developing free from anxiety, must always be balanced sensitively by teachers and professors. The constant shifting from the role of stage artist to that of teacher or professor at a HMEI is a demanding task for which very few artists are trained. The author argues for making professional support systems, such as personal training and supervision for teachers and empowerment seminars for students, widely available; she supports establishing institutional codes of values and designation of intimacy coordinators. Effective prevention requires open avenues of communication in which agreement as to appropriate boundaries can be reached and artistic alternatives for action can be developed in a mutually caring way.

Taking as a premise the inexistence of a power-free space, power relations within individual and group teaching must be reflected upon, analyzed, and models of needs-oriented communication and respectful leadership need to be discussed "at eye level" within HMEIs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Olejniczak JH (2021) Eine Frage der Haltung – Machtvolles Musizieren durch gewaltfreie Führung und bedürfnisorientierte Kommunikation. *üben & musizieren* 1:16 – 19.



The specific characteristics of HMEIs shape many music students from childhood on. The artistic career path is often set then, ideally due to outstanding talent and a passion for making music. In other cases, this can be the result of music teachers' or parents' ambitions. At specialized schools or boarding schools, musically gifted young people receive intensive support and instruction from their professors. This so-called master-apprentice model dates to when children received private lessons from a master teacher, usually a man. As with training of outstanding craftsmen, there is an emulation of the master's playing, practice techniques, repertoire, as well as a standard of moral conduct. This "spiritual-artistic leadership" can create dependencies which can potentially lead to abuses of power.<sup>2</sup>

### The Transition from Disrespect to Sexualized Misconduct and Violence is Fluid

Some students recall childhood music lessons as exclusively positive and respectful experiences. Others, on the other hand, were forced to endure these, accompanied at times by the threat of punishment or even physical violence, as was the case for the pianist Lang Lang. To date, there has been no study of mistreatment and the transition to sexualized misconduct and violence against children and teenagers in the field of music, as has been the case in the field of competitive sports. HMEIs can rightly assume that some of their students have been exposed to misconduct at a young age and consequently must offer adequate counseling and effective help. Many music students have learned at an early stage to subordinate themselves by putting aside their own needs. Numerous musicians experience a high degree of heteronomy [foreign determination] and may accept forms of discipline that would be unacceptable to their peers. They must practice many hours each day and compete directly with their fellow students. As a result, they often engage less in academic self-governance, as opposed to students in academic universities.

### Distinguishing the Real vs. Perceived Influence of Teachers and Professors

Universities hold very demanding entrance exams and the influence of teachers and professors on students' artistic careers is considerable. Even today, some students apply to study with an artist-pedagogue to master his or her distinctive style, hoping to make a career as a student of this idol. Student dependency on professors can be enormous, all

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<sup>2</sup> Hölscher F (2022) Meister, Guru – und Täter? Zwischen Lehrverständnis und Übergriff. In: Fulda E (Ed.) *Begegnung. Nähe. Grenzen. Ein Handbuch für den Hochschulalltag*. Präsident der Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt (HfMDK), p. 20-31.

the more so as teachers/professors in turn have the power to recommend students within their networks in the music and culture business – or not.<sup>3</sup> Changing one's place of study or professor due to dissatisfaction can have significant consequences on an artistic career. Students must be encouraged to question the influence of their idols, as this may exist or appear to be so. Only fear and the feeling of powerlessness offer perpetrators such power. In addition to nourishing their artistic talent, students' resilience and self-reflection should be supported and strengthened sustainably.

## Proximity and Trust Are Prerequisites for Good Music Education

Making music is an intensively physical and indeed sensual act; in singing, the body itself becomes the instrument. Lessons often take place in private settings, sometimes in private rooms which are located in non-institutional spaces and over long periods of time. This close cooperation, often in a friendly atmosphere, creates confidentiality. The physical and emotional distances between participants are often negotiated non-verbally. Closeness in lessons and in music making ranges from routine procedures (about which there is an unspoken agreement) to inspiring intimacy. This requires the teacher/professor to constantly balance between desirable closeness and a necessary distance. "Proximity without entanglement" promotes openness, dedication to an (artistic) belief, the courage to be oneself, a willingness to take risks in a protected setting, equality within the encounter, and a capacity to establish one's own artistic profile. Most teachers act conscientiously and treat their students respectfully. However, temporary professional closeness in private must never become too important.<sup>4</sup> The nature and intensity of the teaching encounter must be delineated by clear rules.

## Music Triggers Feelings and These Should Be Addressed

Jazz and popular music often convey strong emotions, which in turn generate emotions among performers. This can in turn lead to the performer feeling touched and too psychologically close for comfort. Similarly, operas contain intimate, erotic, and violent scenes with strong feelings such as joy, love, sadness, and hate. Teachers/Professors

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<sup>3</sup> See: Eggert M (2015) Macht und Missbrauch. *Neue Musikzeitung* [[link](#)]; and Kirschning A (2022) Sexismus – Übergriffe – Machtmissbrauch überwinden. Vom mühsamen Kulturwandel an Kunst- und Musikhochschulen. In: *Netzwerk Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung NRW*, Mense L, Mauer H, Herrmann J (Hrsg.) Handreichung Sexualisierter Belästigung, Gewalt und Machtmissbrauch an Hochschulen entgegenwirken. Essen, p. 43–46 [[link](#)].

<sup>4</sup> Köhler S (2022) Kommunikation und Körperausdruck im Einzelunterricht. In: Fulda E (Ed.) *Begegnung. Nähe. Grenzen. Handbuch HfMDK*, p. 32-53.

should ask students how this makes them feel and what the music, plot, and texts trigger inside them. Students need to learn to "turn on" these respective emotions during a rehearsal or concert and then "turn them off" again. In addition, fear, self-doubt, anger, and other feelings can be released during practice and performances.<sup>5</sup> These personal moods, which cannot be ignored but might influence the lessons, should be addressed. At the same time, teachers / professors must respect students when they do not wish to discuss them. This is a difficult balancing act that requires discernment and care.

## Agreeing on Appropriate Touch

At the beginning of every teaching relationship, teachers/professors should discuss whether students may be touched and, if so, when where and how. This sounds obvious and banal. However, it is rarely done, because many teachers are uncertain about the topic of touching, though such an exchange could help find solutions whilst clarifying uncertainties. Touching during music lessons, insofar as it is necessary for correcting posture, for example, should be pertinent, announced, justified, and limited to what is necessary. Teachers must always ask in advance whether they may touch students. This question is not simply a rhetorical phrase, and teachers also must be able to explain their request in a different way if the answer is "no". While teaching, teachers/professors must repeatedly encourage students to address changes and discomfort, since consent is only valid for the moment. A handbook issued by the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts presents four examples of such concrete inquiries and discusses how they can be built into the daily teaching routine at the university (Köhler 2022). Since the global pandemic, when attention often had to be paid to keeping a safe distance, it has become more important to learn how to talk about the need for more spatial and emotional closeness, to express corresponding wishes, and negotiate until everyone present feels comfortable (e.g., with the help of the method of systemic consensus building).

In the name of art, countless interpersonal misunderstandings take place every day. These can include persons in positions of power crossing boundaries under the pretext of artistry and non-verbal or verbal misconduct. At first glance, these situations can appear harmless, however their accumulation may lead to discomfort and strain the teaching relationship through a spiral of silence. Their great dependency on instructors respected for their artistry leads students to avoid certain situations, inconspicuously evade them, or express their displeasure through their body language. It is not the

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<sup>5</sup> Schmidt T (2022) Macht und Verantwortung. In: Fulda E (Ed.) *Begegnung. Nähe. Grenzen. Handbuch HfMDK*, p. 54-59.

student's responsibility to clarify or even contest such situations, and in this hierarchical relationship it is hardly possible to counter them.

## Teaching in Locations Outside the University

Initially, a HMEI is a neutral place. Teachers/ Professors and students are all guests of the institution, even if some teachers have taught for decades and have their own furnished studio fitted to their taste and needs. Students, on the other hand, only stay for a few semesters, and at best have a locker. Among the many people who populate the building, students also meet familiar faces, ranging from fellow students, other teachers or administrative staff.<sup>6</sup>

Teaching in locations outside the HMEI, such as in the teachers' private rooms, increases the existing imbalance, exacerbating the asymmetry of the power relationship. Teachers hold an active role and the students a passive one, reinforced by the nature of the space. Teaching in private rooms is like a "home game": the students learn (unintentionally) in which neighborhood or district and in what kind of house (e.g., with or without a garden) and with whom the teachers live, how the apartment is furnished, etc. This information provides significant insights, allowing for conscious and unconscious interpretations.

The teachers/professors take on the role of the host: they may offer a drink, even if it is just a glass of water. They may even offer the students something to eat. The teacher is highly familiar with his entire (living) space, while the students only get to experience those rooms that are shown to them. This might sound obvious, but using a restroom, for example, is an intimate act in a place where personal items are often kept, e.g., for personal hygiene. Many students have only recently moved out of their parental home and live quite modestly, either alone, in a shared apartment, or dormitory. Now they experience another home, usually long established.

This social imbalance adds to the psychological-emotional imbalance. The fine line between a friendly teaching relationship and a friendship is much more likely to be blurred under these more intimate psychological conditions.

Private rooms may also offer advantages, however, as they are often technically and acoustically well designed and equipped and offer greater flexibility timewise. Given the shortage of space at universities it is worth considering whether such exceptions should be made, with prior approval of the university management. Here, as with home office workspaces, certain standards should be met and regularly reviewed. Nevertheless, private spaces can facilitate encroachment or create an atmosphere in which students

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<sup>6</sup> Linsmeier F (2022) *Das ist privat* [[link](#)].

feel uncomfortable and at the mercy of others. It is known from experience reports that some teachers display obscene art or "as if by chance" leave books with ambiguous titles lying around that embarrass their students. A professor at Munich's Music Conservatory who was under criminal investigation received students in his bedroom and put them in compromising situations. If some form of misconduct occurs, be it unintentional or planned, it is much more difficult for students to escape, and there is no direct person to contact to offer help and advice.

Teachers/professors hold higher status and thus more control over spatial positioning. They are allowed to move freely and determine the distance between those present and the pieces of music. In contrast, students are expected to follow instructions and to be cooperative.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, even a slight moving away of one's chair to create a comfortable distance can appear impossible to students. Often, those affected only become aware of the discomfort afterwards, as they are unable to perceive their own need for distance within the situation itself. By repeatedly being asked, those affected learn to pause and reflect on such situations.

## Professional Training for Teachers and Professors

In appointment procedures, HMEI seek "outstanding artistic personalities with an international reputation." Professors see themselves first and foremost as excellent artists and far too rarely as experienced pedagogues. Usually, they have no additional didactic or psychological training. However, as soon as they accept a professorship, they regularly switch roles: as an artist on stage, they are the center of interest, whereas as a teacher and instructor they should serve the students.<sup>8</sup> Professional accompaniment allowing for reflection on their teaching and development of a learning biography are advisable for teachers lacking specific pedagogical training. Suitable reflection formats include collegial consultation, supervision,<sup>9</sup> or team teaching.<sup>10</sup> Power imbalances and competition also exist within boards and commissions. Further mandatory training for teachers and professors can facilitate respectful interactions and a mindful university culture.

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<sup>7</sup> Lindmaier H (2021) Balancieren zwischen Nähe und Distanz – Drei Perspektiven auf machtsensibles Verhalten im Instrumentalunterricht. *üben & musizieren* 1:21-24.

<sup>8</sup> Wissenschaftsrat (2021) *Empfehlungen zur postgradualen Qualifikationsphase an Kunst- und Musikhochschulen*, Köln [[link](#)].

<sup>9</sup> Heiss IS, Scharnick E (2022) Was passiert eigentlich in dieser sogenannten Grauzone? – Nähe und Distanz im instrumental und gesangspädagogischen Alltag. *Musikpädagogik* 93(1):51-60.

<sup>10</sup> bukof (Bundeskongferenz der Frauen- und Gleichstellungsbeauftragten an Hochschulen e.V.) (2016) *Handlungsempfehlungen der bukof zum Umgang mit sexualisierter Diskriminierung und Gewalt an künstlerischen Hochschulen* [[link](#)].

## Student Seminars

Students at HMEI need to learn how to best perceive and communicate their own physical and emotional boundaries. This includes recognizing and respecting the needs of the other person, addressing boundary transgressions, and finding mutually agreeable solutions. Non-verbal and verbal methods must be developed jointly and be simple to implement in everyday life so that all can agree and be reassured that agreement has indeed been reached. The ideal solution here would be to offer ungraded seminars to all students which discuss these issues and take the international composition of the student body into account. As there are many different culturally influenced customs, an international student body would enable a discussion which takes the different views into account.

## Code of Values: How Do We Want to Treat Each Other?

In conclusion, here are some reflections as to identifying, training, applying sanctions, or if need be, removing teachers/professors who disregard boundaries and engage in abusive behaviors. Preventive measures must prevent hierarchical situations from being exploited or misconduct towards those in lesser situations of power.

One preventive measure is to establish a specific code of values, including rules of conduct to ensure respectful interactions in everyday teaching and rehearsals. Such codes already exist, for example at the German Stage Association, on the freelance scene, and at individual art colleges.<sup>11</sup> They should be developed in a participatory manner to address a broad range of questions. These could include use of first-name or last-name terms with and by whom; who is allowed to touch who and under what conditions; ways to portray and rehearse hate, violence, love or eroticism, and ways to prevent outdated gender roles or sexist stereotypes from being reproduced. Until now, objections from students could be dismissed with the argument "we've always done it this way." A code of values makes it easier for students to address those often-taboo issues and to stand up for their own rights. For the code to be effective, it must be simply formulated, easy to understand and available in many languages.

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<sup>11</sup> Kirschning A (2018 b) #MeToo an den Musikhochschulen – Ein Wertekodex als Meilenstein auf dem Weg zu professionellem Umgang mit Nähe und Distanz. *üben & musizieren* 4:44-46.

## The Cornerstone of Consensus:

### "Only When a No Has Been Established, Can a Yes Be Trusted"

The Berlin Schauspielhochschule (Theater Conservatory) Ernst Busch offers another possible way forward. It started a professional training course for an "Intimacy Coordinator" at the beginning of 2023. The course was initiated by Barbara Rohm.<sup>12</sup> The training curriculum was developed in cooperation with the Bundesverband Schauspiel e.V. (BFFS) (German Federal Association of Drama Acting) and intends to create new standards. This is essential, since professionalizing the entire work process is long overdue in acting, film, opera in relation to scripts, casting, repeatable choreography, work on stage or on set, and the full line of production and marketing. The goal is to be able to directly address individual boundaries when depicting intimate scenes or nudity and to make a "no" the impetus for a creative process.<sup>13</sup> Intimacy should look truthful and none of the participants should feel pushed or blindsided during the process. The key is consensus among all participants. Intimacy coordinators do not limit creativity. On the contrary, they support performers in perceiving and naming their own physical and mental limits without worry and help them in recognizing and respecting these for others. Only when performers feel comfortable and safe in intimate scenes can they focus completely on the role and their scene partner.

Intimacy Directors International established the so-called **5 Cs** as principles for safe intimacy:

- **Context:** an understanding of the production context is clarified between the production developers and actors, so that intimacy always serves the story.
- **Communication:** ongoing communication is ensured among all participants, with opportunities for discussion, and reporting of discomfort and/or transgressive behaviors.
- **Consent:** Individual limits are established for each participant, including actions and forms of touch they find acceptable within a production or parts of a production.
- **Choreography:** Based on the agreed upon consent, a safe choreography is created and implemented in the shoot. This may not be deviated from without prior consultation. An unprepared action or touch may not be performed spontaneously on an actor without that person's prior consent.
- **Closure:** After the production as well as parts of a production have been performed, a closing moment such as a small ritual should mark the end of the intimacy, thus drawing a line between the personal and the professional.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ms. Rohm is the former long-time chairwoman of *Pro Quote Film*, co-founder of the *Themis* trust center against sexual harassment and violence in the culture and media industry as well as the founder of the culture change hub. A second Intimacy Coordinating training course in Germany started in January 2023, [\[link\]](#).

<sup>13</sup> Bundesverband Schauspiel e.V. (BFFS), Berlin 2022: *Erfahrungen von Schauspieler\*innen mit Nacktheit und simuliertem Sex*. Part 1 of the survey on the portrayal of intimacy, nudity, and sexualized violence among actors of the Bundesverband Schauspiel e.V. (BFFS). In cooperation with the Institut für Medienforschung Universität Rostock and the *culture change hub*, Barbara Rohm [\[link\]](#).

<sup>14</sup> Erica Morey. 2018. The 5 Cs of Intimacy: In Conversation with Siobhan Richardson. *Theatre Art Life* [\[link\]](#).

Instead of reproducing clichés of intimacy, breathtaking results are achieved based on respect and informed consent by all. Intimacy Coordination integrating clear and well-defined parameters for interaction achieved in a respectful and open context can serve as a model for other professions. In some countries, intimacy coordinators are now obligatory for television broadcasts (since 2021 at the BBC).

Despite the #Metoo debate and the Times Up movement, too little is still known about the background and mechanisms of misconduct at HMEIs. Anyone intending to support those affected in enabling them to break their silence must understand the dynamics inherent in the cultural workplace. Those who want to create effective prevention measures must ensure open avenues of communication in which boundaries, a culture of consent, and alternative courses of action can be discussed and defined.



# Recommended further reading / listening / folding

## Folding Your Paper Tiger



click to access



click to play



click to play

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## Performance Norms and Creativity

(podcast)

Leech-Wilkinson, Daniel. 2020. **Challenging Performance Podcast: Episode 1.**



click to listen

(e-book excerpt)

Leech-Wilkinson, Daniel. 2020. **Challenging Performance: Classical Music Performance Norms and How to Escape Them.**

[https://challengingperformance.com/the-book/..](https://challengingperformance.com/the-book/)



click to read

### Preface

This is an eBook, a website, and a set of podcasts. It's addressed to performers of western classical music and it's about freeing performance from unnecessary rules and constraints and from much of the anxiety that comes with classical training and

practice. The aim is to encourage performers to find many more ways (old and new) in which classical scores can make musical sense.

If you're a passionate believer in the status quo you may hate it. But it might still be worth reading because the questions it asks are reasonable ones and need much better answers. Having someone

ask them may enable you (rather than me) to see what those better answers might be, enabling you to place normative performance practice on a more reasoned footing. There's also the possibility that you'll end up agreeing with much that's in here, but in either case a world of new possibilities for performing your repertoire may open up.

Be aware that this is a polemical piece rather than a scholarly tome. It's expressed strongly. It may

annoy and unsettle, though I hope it will also reward.

I've written it and published it online, and it's free to use, because I want to reach performers, especially young professionals and conservatoire students. And also because it's good to be able to improve the text in response to reader suggestions and as better ways of thinking become clear.

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## 1. Empowering Performers

Much of this book is concerned with how to refuse to be policed, and about the benefits that could result for musicians and audiences if that kind of oppression were to be thrown off. It goes without saying that in many quarters this will not be popular. Many jobs in classical music are conceived and practised as faithfully ensuring that the imagined composer's imagined wishes are performed as brilliantly and as persuasively as possible within the boundaries that define obedience. A lot of belief and self-belief is tied up in that process. Nothing threatens that as powerfully as a brilliant and persuasive performance of an alternative musical reading of a well-loved score, as Glenn Gould found with Bach, and Patricia Kopatchinskaja is finding at the time of writing with Tchaikovsky. The more powerful the alternative, the more hideously it threatens and the angrier the response.

This book aims to show the flaws in this kind of normative thinking, and to offer young professional musicians a way out of the straightjacket that norms attempt to impose, licensing much more varied performance in theory and offering models of how it can be achieved in practice. At the same time I shall argue that a more creative approach to playing canonical (and non-canonical) scores will bring benefits for musicians in well-being, prosperity and public esteem, and for

audiences in fascination, revelation and pleasure. Most importantly, the book aims to empower performers and music lovers sufficiently for them to overcome the inevitable appalled hostility of gatekeepers to the profession (teachers, examiners, adjudicators, critics, managers, and the rest) who will have to face their demons at last, before sheer economic self-interest leads them to see classical music in a fresh light.

The consequences may well be hair-raising. Some of them were already set out quite a few years ago by Richard Taruskin in an essay that (perhaps not surprisingly) has been little cited thus far. His 2009 collection of essays, *The Danger of Music*, is perfect for dipping into, and that will have to do as my excuse for having reached its final essay only after several years of thinking and giving talks about the ideas set out now in this book. Taruskin argues there are no limits of principle that can be placed on the musical interpretation of a score, and that the worth of what a performer does with a score can only be judged by the listener. This may seem an insanely anarchic view to hold about classical music. But I hope as we work through the arguments that construct the case I make here, I may gradually persuade you that this is the only criterion that really counts. Or at any rate, if I fail at that, you may at least take away a more liberal view of what musicians are entitled to do when they use scores as a starting-point to make art with sound.

## 7.4 Conservatoire and creativity: Juniper Hill's *Becoming Creative*

Some attempts are now being made at the next stage of musical education, in conservatoire, to deal with the problem of classical music as the obedient performance of 'proper' behaviour. By this time it is already very late, since such tight reins have already been placed for so many years on the child musician's delight in creative self-expression. Moreover, conservatoire's overriding task is to fit its students for work where, as things stand, there is rarely any room for individuality beyond those tiny differences between soloists that the culture celebrates (and often, in its claims, exaggerates) for want of any other distinguishing characteristics.

Creativity in conservatoire is thus difficult and can easily be perceived in some quarters as unhelpful. We get a sense of this from Juniper Hill's recent studies of musical creativity. Comparing attitudes in different musical traditions, and on different continents, Hill (2018)<sup>1</sup> emphasises how strange WCM is in its fear of creativity and hostility to improvisation, and also how damaging that can be to classical musicians.

Hill sees six ingredients in creativity: "(1) generativity, (2) agency, (3) interaction, (4) nonconformity, (5) recycling, and (6) flow." She notes that "realizing pre-existing works should only be considered creative when the process also involves other components of creativity" (Hill 2018, 4). Yet several of these ingredients are perceived as dangerous for WC musicians: above all "it is the component of nonconformity that threatens to make creativity socially undesirable. Powerful social mechanisms encourage conformity and work as adverse motivators against individuals' intrinsic desire to be creative" (Hill 2018, 12).

Hill identifies "Four mechanisms for enforcing conformity to sociocultural norms [which]

emerged as significant in this study: (1) direct punishment, (2) socially induced emotions, (3) anticipation of judgment from others, and (4) internalization of norms as values" (Hill 2018, 12). "Feeling that they are being watched, individuals anticipate the judgement of others and thus modify or censor their own behaviour accordingly" (13).

Direct punishment takes the form of strong criticism by teachers and other gatekeepers of non-normative performance, leading readily to being thought unsuitable for work and thus to ingrained fear of transgression. [...]

It's all too easy to see how this kind of treatment generates the socially-induced emotion of shame as a habitual response to any kind of mistake or overstepping of lines (Hill 2018, 114–6). Thus self-esteem and courage are vital for creativity (13), fortifying one against criticism and against attempts to shame one for challenging normative practice. (...) As Hill points out, "One of the main factors inhibiting improvisation in today's classical music communities is an underlying attitude that the creative potential of performers is somehow inferior. To encourage the incorporation of more improvisation into western art music is inherently to advocate for performers to be allowed—and to allow themselves—to exercise greater authority in the creative process" (Hill 2017, 223).<sup>2</sup> [...]

On the *moral* level ... the promotion of diverse musical expressions may help musicians realize that their previously internalized value judgments are relative, situational, and socio-culturally constructed. Challenging their community's aesthetic judgement system may in turn help them feel less compelled to conform to socio-idiomatic boundaries and give them more inner resources for coping with negative feedback. On the *social* level, seeking and building supportive social relationships may help to provide a relatively judgment-free space in which musicians

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, Juniper. 2018. *Becoming Creative: Insights from Musicians in a Diverse World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, Juniper. 2017. Incorporating Improvisation into Classical Music Performance. In ed. Rink, John, Helena Gaunt and Aaron Williamson, *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 222–240.

experience less fear and anxiety about receiving negative feedback and thus feel freer to explore, experiment, develop new ideas, and take creative risks. On the *psychological* level, increasing self-esteem and improving perception of one's own

potential are important for motivation, ... developing ... inner resources..., and for developing the self-confidence and courage to take risks in one's own creative work.



## Intricacies of Assessment

### (article excerpt)

Wickström, David-Emil. [forthcoming]. **Entering Hurdles – Admission Policies, Artistic Standards, and Music Theory.**

The underlying notion of admission exams at HMEI is that they provide a fair and highly competitive way to identify the most talented and promising candidates who demonstrate “high artistic standards”. As such, admission exams convey the idea of *meritocracy* that emphasize individual responsibility and the notion that anyone can pass the admission exam through hard, persistent work (Banks 2017). As previous research... has shown, *meritocracy does not reflect reality* as admission exams contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities by favoring candidates with privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Drawing upon these findings, I argue that the artistic standards employed at admission exams to identify and select the most “talented” candidates should be made more inclusive. I suggest that a way to make admission exams more meritocratic is to consider if and how music theory exams should be integrated into the admission process because these exams disadvantage certain candidates. [...]

While “access” has become an important buzzword in the discourse on widening participation in HME, another phrase I often encountered in discussion on this topic refers to the need to maintain “high artistic standards” which has become a means for these institutions in neoliberal times to *maintain differences in respect to artistic training*. The assumption underlying this phrase is that widening participation to students underrepresented or not

yet represented at HMEI entails both a lowering of the unique artistic standards as well as a reluctance to risk giving a place to an applicant with a non-standard musical training. [...]

Hiding under the guise of universality, “high artistic standards” are discursively constructed (...) and defined by individuals and groups differently. They are based on a set of measurable skills in which a performance is compared with a reference (e.g. recording, sheet music) and a set of skills where a reference is less obvious or the spectrum of possibilities is very broad (e.g. interpretation, personal sound). [...]

*Notions of artistic standards not only differ between traditions, but also within a musical tradition.* Different national or regional education traditions as well as different institutions have different ideas on what constitutes high artistic standards. This includes e.g. the repertoire a candidate has to prepare for their main instrument, possibly also repertoire for a second instrument (if this is required) and theory. If yes, what skills does this theory test assess? Is there also an essay requirement examining the cognitive skills? These different parts of the admission exam not only make up the artistic standards, but also reflect (ideally) the competencies needed to complete the degree program and should thus be

linked to the program's overarching learning outcomes.

Finally, are these the only relevant components that will guarantee the (prospective) students a long-term artistic career within the music business? What about "non-artistic" skills like the ability to reflect on music's role in society or, more mundane, being able to survive as freelance artist and e.g. navigate the tax system – in other words, a cognitive / intellectual skill set – or being able to fulfill the academic components (e.g. writing a term paper) of the degree program. Ideally, the admission exam is linked to all the learning outcomes of the degree programs and also assesses these skills. [...]

Regularly questioning and adjusting the artistic standards on which the admission criteria within HME are based and aligning them not only with the learning outcomes of the degree program, but also with current practice, is not only essential to remain current, but also as a tool to reflect on what prospective students the HMEIs want to have. This not only includes reassessing the artistic

requirements for the admission exams and e.g. opening the repertoire lists to more composers who are female and people of color, but also aligning the admissions exams with the current reality of the applicants as well as the needs of the market place. As the examples from RMC, the School of Music in Piteå and Popakademie have shown, a critical reassessment of the admission procedures based on musical tradition needs (and not unreflectedly continuing HME-traditions) and thus aligning the musical criteria with the practice in the respective traditions as well as questioning the musical skills so far required can help in opening up e.g. popular music programs to those with different musical and educational paths and thus making the admission exams more meritocratic. Furthermore, exploring what skills besides the musical ones are needed is one step towards changing and opening up HME. This means that artistic standards should be thought holistically and also include non-musical skills like entrepreneurship and cognitive skills!

### (handbook excerpt)

Cox, Jeremy. 2010. *Admissions and Assessment in Higher Music Education. AEC Publications 2010 – Handbook*. Utrecht: AEC – Association Européenne des Conservatoires Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen.



[click to access](#)

**1.8** [...] Assessment [...] inherently favours simplification, categorisation and a systematic and progression-based view of students' development (although competence-based assessments, referred to above, at least attempt to acknowledge the way that skills occur in interactive complexes, rather than discretely). The result is that assessment methodologies tend to focus upon those elements which are most easily measured and categorised; but they can therefore sometimes feel as though, in the process, they miss the most important parts of the learning they supposedly measure.

**1.9** In formulating an assessment task, the hope is that everyone – student, student's teacher,

examiners, outside world/profession – will share the same understanding of what is being assessed, how it is being assessed and against which benchmarks. This depends both upon the quality of the words used to describe the assessment and the capacities of the individuals involved to read, understand and enact them. The texts have to be sufficiently detailed to minimise loopholes but not so unwieldy as to alienate those required to read them. All-in-all, it is asking a great deal to balance this array of requirements within verbal formulations - added to which, in music one is dealing with an art-form part of whose fundamental value is its capacity to convey things which words cannot encompass.

**1.10** Even assuming that everyone enters the assessment event with a good shared understanding, there is still the question of whether the way a student performs on a given day is truly representative of his or her wider abilities. In this context, the fact that much assessment in Higher Music Education addresses not just a student's 'performance' in the generic sense, but specifically his or her achievement as a musical performer, only serves to heighten the danger that the performance that is assessed may be an unrepresentative one. It could be argued that consistency is one of the many desirable attributes of a musician and that a performance in an assessment that departs radically from the student's normal standard is symptomatic of a weakness in his or her armoury as a performer for which it is right that they should be penalised. This view is rarely of much consolation either to the student who has fared uncharacteristically badly, or to their teacher.

**1.11** In recital-style practical assessments, another problem is that such events are neither purely artistic events nor out-and-out assessments within an educational framework. As hybrids, they sit somewhat uncomfortably between the two. This is especially true if there is only a small audience other than the jury – or, worse still, none at all. The normal dynamic that operates between performer and audience is distorted in a myriad of subtle ways that may be more disconcerting to the highly-attuned performer than to his or her more thick-skinned, technically-oriented counterpart. An assessment regime that favours technically secure, predictable performances over inspiring ones is distorting the very nature of the event which it claims to be measuring – and in a direction that most musicians would probably regard as unfortunate.

**1.12** For assessments undertaken during a programme of study, the dangers of the uncharacteristically bad performance can be lessened by an overall assessment regime that ranges over a number of events. This may still place greatest emphasis upon a final recital but with other events contributing to the student's overall profile of achievement according to some pattern of weightings. Even so, if all the events are of the hybrid recital-examination type, the more subtle

problems discussed above still remain. The lure of 'playing the assessment game' can discourage the very risk-taking from which musical creativity draws its vitality.

**1.13** Of all the assessment types [...], the entrance audition is the most prone to the danger of an uncharacteristic performance leading to an anomalous result. There is often little or no prior knowledge of the applicant among the panel (and any such knowledge, insofar as it may represent a vested interest, should be declared by the panel member concerned). Just as the applicant is unfamiliar to the panel, the panel, the audition room, indeed, almost everything about the occasion is unfamiliar to the applicant. The task facing audition panels is therefore one of the most complex and subtle of all assessments, requiring them to reach beneath the surface of the occasion and try to divine the real qualities – including potential for further growth – possessed by the applicant. Despite this, admissions can be one of the areas of Higher Music Education practice least subject to quality assurance scrutiny.

[...]

**1.15** As has already been discussed, music is an art-form whose strengths lie where those of words do not, and vice versa. In addition, music touches us all in highly individual ways, such that it is very difficult to say with certainty that any two individuals hear a piece of music in precisely the same way. This subjective aspect of how music is apprehended poses a particular problem for assessment, with its requirement for objectivity, consistency and repeatability. In practice, experienced musicians trained in the same broad traditions – classical, jazz, etc – show high degrees of consensus about most performances. Where they do disagree widely, it is often over an idiosyncratic interpretation which may actually contain more ingredients that are musically stimulating, whether positively or negatively, than any number of more routinely proficient performances. Once again, the musical 'risk-taker' may fall foul of assessment processes that work best when dealing with the predictable.

**1.16** Most forms of musical assessment seek to balance out individual subjectivity, usually by having at least three individuals involved and by

promoting modes of operation that neutralise extremes, whether by a literal averaging of panel members' marks or through a more discursive journey towards a mark that finds consensus among the panel as a whole. What is being sought is an 'inter-subjectivity' which, although it has some of the characteristics of objectivity, is not the same thing and should not be confused with it.

[...]

**6.3** Criteria can relate to some kind of fixed standard, they can be applied to the range of performance within a group of students or they can compare an individual student's performance with that which he or she achieved previously. The technical terms for these types are, respectively, criterion-referenced, norm-referenced and

ipsative. In the examples of formative assessment given in the last chapter, assessments representing each of these types were referred to. An assessment to place students in groups of comparable ability level will be norm-referenced. If all the students in a particular year are unusually strong or weak, this makes no difference; they simply need to be placed in groups where they are compatible with one another. An interim assessment giving feedback on progress may be ipsative, concentrating on how much the student has improved, rather than how their previous or new achievement level corresponds to an external, fixed standard. Finally, an assessment which acts as a dry-run for a summative assessment will need to be criterion-referenced against the criteria for that assessment.

### (article excerpt)

Sandberg-Jurström, Ragnhild, Monika Lindgren, & Olle Zandén. 2022. **Musical skills, or attitude and dress style? Meaning-making when assessing admission tests for Swedish specialist music teacher education.** *Research Studies in Music Education* 44(1), 70-85.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X20981774>

Referring to earlier research on admission tests, the authors point to the need for improved transparency: "These previous findings raise questions about the credibility and validity of admission tests, especially given the observed lack of transparency of assessment procedures. Also, with non-auditory aspects and unarticulated perceptions of knowledge and quality, there is a risk that the reliability of the assessments may be weakened" (p.71).

The study reveals to assessment cultures, the music-centered and the person-centered: "Even though it is possible to recognise some overlaps within and between the assessment cultures, there is a great discrepancy between the constructions assessing musical skills and assessing person-related skills. A similar discrepancy is found between assessing the applicant's musical ability to cope with the education and profession and how well the applicant's personality and suitability to be

a teacher fit the same. Here, the applicants' abilities to do and know something can be set in opposition to being and behaving in a particular way, which can be seen as striking in tests intended to assess instrumental skills. Although the criteria communicated to both assessors and applicants via institutional channels regarding primary instrument tests only recommend assessing technical competence and artistic performance connected to the music played, person-centred traits are nevertheless assessed in these tests", (p. 82).

The article concludes: "In order for the tests to be more reliable and fair as selection tools, we consider it important that those designing and implementing the criteria and standards must strive for transparency, and that the measures are based on the applicants' musical knowledge and skills rather than on their personalities" (p. 83).

(article excerpt)

Sandberg-Jurström, Ragnhild, Lindgren, Monica and Zandén, Olle. 2021. **A Mozart Concert or Three Simple Chords? Limits for Approval in Admission Tests for Swedish Specialist Music Teacher Education.** In E. Angelo, Knigge, J. & Waagen, W. (Eds.) *Higher Education as Context for Music Pedagogy Research*, edited (pp. 19-40). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

“In Sweden, as in many other western countries, universities must strive for strengthened societal democracy by promoting broadened recruitment. From this perspective, it is important to review various selection methods, not least given the lack of positive results in a recent Swedish experimental study of aptitude testing and assessment procedures for access to teacher education (Universitets- och högskolerådet, 2018). Hence, the interest in this article, which is part of a larger project about assessment of entrance auditions to Swedish specialist music teacher education financed by the Swedish Research Council, is what is considered decisive for approval on main instrument in entrance auditions. The purpose is accordingly to *critically examine jurors’ views of the limit for approval in main instrument auditions to Swedish specialist music teacher programmes, and to problematise these with regard to issues of transparency and broadened recruitment*” (pp. 20-21).

“There is a striking difference between the views of how jurors define and argue for limits for approval when assessing applicant’s musical performances on main instruments. What is considered to be the requirement for approval differs markedly from the highest level with very high requirements, such

as a Mozart concert, to the lowest level with acceptance of major deficiencies, by way of singing and playing three simple chords. The jurors also judge the applicants on the basis of premises other than the criteria and standards communicated to both evaluators and applicants through the institutions’ information channels. The applicants’ potential for musical development, their capacity to meet the educational and professional requirements and their ability to adapt to teachers and fellow students as well as future students, school and society is presented as essential by the jurors. Person-related evaluations of applicants’ knowledge representations are also voiced, and it does not seem uncommon that the level for pass is adapted to the ratio of the number of applicants to the available places” (pp. 36-37)

The authors provide alternative scenarios to change the selection methods, and conclude with a concerned voice: “Regardless of which scenario is realised, however, criteria and standards for the approved level, as well as criteria for ranking approved applicants, must strive for transparency in order for the tests to be considered reliable and fair as a selection tool for music teacher education in Sweden” (p.38).





## Policy Matters (!)

### (book chapter excerpt)

Schmidt, Patrick and Richard Colwell. 2017. Introduction. In Patrick Schmidt & Richard Colwell (Eds.) *Policy and the Political Life of Music Education*. Oxford University Press, 1-8.

In near simplistic terms, policy can be defined as "what we do, why we do it, and what difference does it make" (Dye, 1976, p. 1). But as the reader will see throughout this book, policy is also much more. Policy can be formal or informal, obvious or subtle, soft or hard, implicit or explicit and is "revealed through texts, practices, symbols and discourses that define and deliver values including goods and services, regulation, income and status" (Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 2). Policy can consist of rules and regulations, legitimized because of custom or historical precedent, but it can also consist of ideas, whose adoption and implementation can lead to profound outcomes and thus could be said to be "the mechanisms through which values are authoritatively allocated for society" (p. 3).

**Policy then is not simply about problem solving, but about *problem grappling*.** Policy practice aims to convene opinion and establish debate and directives. Policy thinking helps us understand how to possibly enact proposed ideas and follow up on the outcomes of implementation. As a field of action, policy is a key pathway through which varied and often divergent educational ideas become established in practice. In other words, **policy is the realm in which educational vision is actualized.** We take the statements above as a sign of the importance of professional knowledge about policy and suggest that interest, need, and specialization in policy will grow among educators, including music educators.

[...]

... policy thought can be a **constructive force in music education decision making**—a force needed at a time when many teachers don't understand why and how to have a role in policy practice. We teachers are key stakeholders in educational policy and our voice is essential to its process and progress. Policy impacts the lives of educators and the quality of their work. It influences the nature of our programs. And it weighs on the educational decisions we make for our students. Consequently, understanding the world of policy and how it can impact the music education field—from legislation to classroom instruction—is an essential capacity to be developed by music educators at all levels. The central idea here is simple and the primary reason we wrote this book: **Policy matters!**

We hope that some of the ideas in the following chapters might strike a chord with you, the reader, impacting how you see the music education field and how you will act on it. Our most important hope is that after reading this book you feel compelled to know more about policy and to see yourself as **an active participant, and not a bystander**. Only one thing is as valuable as understanding the impact that policy can have, and that is the realization that **policy without participation is the basis for an undemocratic environment**. So, join in!



## On Complaint

If power is tricky, complaints are sticky. (Sara Ahmed)

(article excerpt)

Andrzejewski, Alicia. 2022. **When Students Harass Professors: Women and People of Color Are Most at Risk. Colleges Must Do More to Protect Them.**

*The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (August 8, 2022).



[click to access](#)

If you look up the verb "to harass" in The Oxford English Dictionary, you'll find that it involves a process of "using up and wearing out." To harass is to tire, to exhaust through repeated attacks. One of the lesser-known definitions of harass is "to scrape," suggesting small, repeated acts of violence that add up to deeper wounds. Everyone I interviewed for this piece described this process, no matter the severity of the harassment they had faced. A kind of wearing away.

That sort of abuse most often targets women, people of color, younger instructors, and those with less experience or fewer credentials. Research also suggests that Black women in positions of authority are at particular risk of being sexually harassed by students due to "intertwined expectations regarding sexuality and servitude." As the legal scholar Angela Onwuachi-Willig puts it, female faculty of color are "never presumed competent." Some students have difficulty acknowledging authority when it appears in the form of a woman, a person of color, or a faculty member whom they perceive as inexperienced. Often harassment is an attempt to assert dominance.

[...]

As the feminist scholar Sara Ahmed notes in *Complaint!*, her 2021 book on harassment and bullying in higher education, "making a complaint is never completed by a single action: It often requires you do more and more work. It is exhausting, especially given that what you complain about is already exhausting."

[...]

What can be done? There are obvious problems with removing students from classrooms at will; "any behavior that makes an instructor feel unsafe" is a standard far too subjective and problematic,

especially for students of color, Black men in particular. But some behavior does warrant removing a student, paying customer or not. Colleges must articulate where that line is, and enforce it. In the case of severe offenses, we need ways to hold students accountable for violence or aggression beyond simply handing them off to other faculty members.

In *Complaint!*, Ahmed writes that to "hear with a feminist ear is to hear who is not heard, how we are not heard." I, and every person I interviewed, needed those feminist ears to be present at each step of a clear complaint process.

We also need, collectively, to get better at thinking about how power works. Power is not a single, unitary attribute, a treasure that professors have and students lack. Rather, as Kimberlé Crenshaw teaches us, it accrues along multiple axes, many of which have little to do with one's job title or official position. It is no coincidence that so many of the stories in this piece concern female faculty of color abused by white male students — or that both of the students who sexually harassed me were older than I was.

Those of us committed to feminist theory and pedagogy work to make power and privilege visible to our students so that we may, then, attempt to reorganize the hierarchies we have inherited. This includes our own authority as instructors. Feminist scholars often prize democratic classrooms that affirm students' agency. We tend to be cognizant of our own power, and wary of misusing it. Those are good instincts — but taken to an extreme, they can obscure how we are still vulnerable, our positions and credentials notwithstanding. Four years ago, *The Chronicle* reported on the experience of Jody Greene, a tenured literature professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz who had been

stalked by a student. Greene, a feminist scholar, told the reporter: "My worry about my power made me less able to see that I was in danger."

I do not dream of being able to swiftly remove students from my classroom. I dream about an academy where I can teach authentically and

without fear. An academy where complaints from disempowered members of our community, whether instructors or students, are freely spoken. And an academy where all of us — not just those being scraped away — are invested in hearing, and addressing, these complaints.





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