



ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

## ***Music, Gender and Education – experiences from a Swedish perspective***

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### **Goal:**

Develop strategies for gender equality and norm critical teaching, so that all staff and students by 2012 are regarding gender equality and a norm critical perspective in music as points of departure in their daily work.

## ***Music and Gender***

***- voices of norms, hierarchies  
and change***

**2009-2012**

***Academy of Music and Drama***

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## What did we do?

Workshops for interrupting gendered patterns in concerts and music theatre:  
 Queer dance workshops for world music students  
 Drag king workshops and gender catwalks for opera students

- Focus groups with students and staff:
  - gender and hetero normativity in genres
  - gendered power relations when playing together
  - norms for what counts as artistic quality
  - master and apprentice traditions
  - norms for entrance exams



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## Programmes for Improvisation and World Music

- Students and teachers wrote fieldnotes after each ensemble lesson for 6 months
- Followed up by analysis and reflections in focus groups



## Some results:

To speak up about gender equality – a relief and a problem

*"it's like burning your ship for the future"*

*"you can't afford to be seen as difficult – you have to adjust to a freelance market"*

Gender issues was at the time viewed as a problem only for women:

*"We have no gender in our group – we are all guys"*

Tensions between instrumentalists and singers when playing in the ensemble. Gender or instrument?



- Division of labor
- Everyday concepts seemed to be gendered:
  - *"personal/artistic expression"* *"individual voice"*
  - *"being authentic"*
  - *"to loosen up"* – *"to be open minded and free"*



The project Music and Gender shows a need for developing forms for talking about norms in higher music education in a broad sense



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### ***When Music Makes a Difference – Gender and Genre Practice in Interplay (2014)***

- Upper secondary schools with a music profile
- Preparing for higher music education
- Followed 71 music students, aged 16-19, for one year
- They were playing in 8 groups – diversity of genres
- Pop/rock, jazz, early music, vocal ensemble
- How is gender and music in interplay performed in settings where music is at stake for the students?

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## Some conclusions

- Students' own choices of music activities was a dilemma since it increased stereotyped gender performance
- Cultural capital reduced the effect of gender for girls
- Focusing on public events enforced the effect of gendered performance – since the students played it “safe”
- Focusing on the unknown and experimental in music contributes to a gender neutral teaching and learning

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## Music education – a feedback loop in Scandinavia?

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graph TD; A((Municipal music schools for children)) --> B((Middle schools with a music profile)); B --> C((High schools with music profiles)); C --> D((Preparatory courses for higher music education)); D --> E((Higher music education)); E --> A;
```



## So, what happened next – keeping the results in mind?



A few requests articulated by the students in the music and gender project to reduce the nervousness and stress faced ensemble playing:

- Clear leadership that clearly states the teacher's goal for each lesson.
- Individual feedback from the teacher.
- That the teacher makes sure that everybody in the ensemble is included and acknowledged in the working process.
- A permissive atmosphere in the ensemble room that makes it possible for the students to show nervousness and uncertainty in front of the group without fear of being downgraded as a musician by the teacher or the other students.



- To strengthen the ensemble teacher's ability to visualize the norms and dynamic processes in the ensemble room.
- -Without preconceptions and with use of our deeper, newly acquired insights, rediscover ensemble teaching as if we never had done it before.
- -To develop pedagogical tools and strategies to create a permissive atmosphere with a broad repertoire of possibilities where EVERYBODY in the ensemble room is included.
- -To study how other artistic ensemble practitioners can be fruitful for our ensemble work.
- -To study how other ensemble practitioners in team sports can be fruitful for our ensemble work.
- -To develop pedagogical tools and strategies to strengthen mutual connection and understanding between singers and instrumentalists in the ensembles.



## And today?

- A follow-up study
- What about the current situation concerning gender equality and hetero normativity for students and teachers?
- What kind of effects, if any, due to the project specifically are recognized? Did the project matter? What kind of change?
- How do the participating teachers describe the outcomes from a retro perspective position?
- How do current students describe their experiences regarding gender issues? As a problem? As something from the past?



## A question still to be answered:

- What about the students awareness today compared to 2010?
- Changes/progress in society as a hole?
- In preparatory educations specifically?
- Changes/progress/increased knowledge as an effect of the project?
- A combination?



## Coda

- To get all Heads of Unit on board
- The benefits was not only about gender equality – it was also about pedagogical development
- An on-going process in need of uphold and repetition, time and room for elaborative work without pressure
- Other schools in Scandinavia have started music and gender projects inspired from our work