

Music and Gender in Balance

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How can we empower present and future generations to be both sensible and critical with regard to gendered performances? How can we as researchers and educators encounter gender bias in both research design and daily life in academia? And how can we collaborate with other academic disciplines in order to solve research questions related to power, justice and freedom? The BAL-ANSE project and the Centre for Women's and Gender Research at the University of Tromsø (UiT), the Swedish-based Gender and Music Research Network (GeMus), and UiT's new research group Multimodality, Art and Gender in Interdisciplinary Communication (MAGIC) invited researchers from all academic disciplines researching music and musical culture to discuss these questions theoretically, methodologically, pedagogically and artistically. It was the second large subject-specific conference on music and gender in Nordic countries after the international „Gender and Music: Practices, Performances, Politics“ conference in Örebro, Sweden 2016.

The main topics could be summarised as: Gender (im)balance in music creation, education, and history, Negotiating equality, canon and identity, Gender issues in music education in general, Intersectionality.

Many (young and established) researchers, not only from the Nordic countries but also from other European countries as well as from the United States and Australia, followed the call.

The conference opened with a keynote lecture by CECILIA BJÖRCK (Gothenburg) who mapped central gender-related issues currently discussed in music practice and research. She also showed examples of ongoing gender-equalities efforts in music e.g. gender-equal music festivals, a conducting programme, a grown-up rock camp and the project Fatta! working against sexual vio-

lence. The examples showed that efforts are being made through a broad range of genres and musical activities. Björck analysed the linguistic metaphors which were used when talking about the projects and her results were that it is often about claiming space. In the further course of the presentation she discussed how ideas about gender equality in music relate to themes such as freedom/limitation, visibility/invisibility, and neoliberal/social justice discourses.

Another of her topics discussed in the keynote was the impact of the calls for intersectional perspectives on gender-equality work.

ASTRID KVALBEIN's (Oslo) keynote included live performances and was largely about two basic questions: „What histories do we tell about women who compose music now, and those who composed music in the past? And what stories do female composers tell through their works?“ She drew on examples from western art music from the 19th century until today with special regard to the Norwegian composer and critic Pauline Hall (1890-1969). She also discussed if the dissolving of traditional tonalities and work concepts in modernists and avant-garde music might release tensions between so-called masculine and feminine opposites in music and its social contexts.

The negotiation of equality was the topic of Session 2c. The presentation of ANN WERNER, ÅSA BERGMAN (Stockholm) & CECILIA BJÖRCK (Gothenburg) was based on a larger research endeavour exploring music's role in feminism and activism. In particular, the project aims to explore relations between music, emotion and political action in feminist music activism especially by using ethnographic methods. TAMI GADIR's (Oslo) presentation addressed the disparities between the legal. Using the example of the Musikkfest in Oslo and a recent history of gender equality in Norway, she showed how the rhetoric of post-feminism, individualism and meritocracy affect non-male and non-white musicians. She also critiqued the profoundly gendered ideas of 'talent' or 'skill' and by providing examples of DJs from around the world, she showed how such paradigms currently dominate mu-

sis cultures. Åsa Bergman & Cecilia Björck presented their preliminary results of an ongoing study on Swedish culture organisations with an outspoken gender-equality ambition. They are researching how ideas on music, gender, feminism and equality are articulated by different actors within the organisation and worked out two discourses – the policy and the feminist – that persist alongside each other: On the one hand, the expressed goal is to fulfil stated policy goals and on the other hand, it is to challenge power structures within musical life and society.

ROSEMARY LUCY HILL & HEATHER SAVIGNY (Leeds/Leicester) focused on the American Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) (recognised by their Parental Advisory stickers on Heavy Metal discs with 'Explicit' content) and their influence on the discourse about sexual violence against women. Hill and Savigny used critical discourse analyses of the hearing transcript and subsequent newspaper and magazine articles to examine how the reaction to the members of the PMRC and the discourse around violence and freedom of speech served to shape an atmosphere in which critiquing violence against women in metal was derailed. They argued that the PMRC opened up a space where the cultural rejection of sexual violence towards women was possible. But they also contended that cultural and media discourses at the time served to function as a 'backlash' against the perceived successes of women, played out through discursively legitimating sexual violence against women.

CAMILLA HAMBRO (Åbo) argued that previously marginalized music by Nordic women composers could illuminate canonized music from new perspectives. Therefore, the points on her to-do list on Nordic musical heritage were: 1) Dealing critically with traditional representations of women's and men's music production and re-examining their music and 2) Acquiring renewed reflection on existing inequality thinking in traditional, synthesizing music history books, as well as in 'compensatory' women's music history books. She also proposed to turn the perspective of music history from individuals to regions and roles. ORLA SHANNON (Dublin) focussed on the late 19th and early

20th century Irish composer Ina Boyle. Shannon aimed to uncover why her musical identity remains marginalised from the canon of Western art music. By giving an evaluation of Boyle's biography in context of the socio-political upheavals of her time, deconstructing political ploys at work in ongoing revivalist processes, and evaluating the composer's creative contribution to vocal music from a performer's perspective, she aimed to rationalise Boyle's status as a 'forgotten female' and provided a case study on the rehabilitation of women in the canon of Irish art music.

With her presentation on the black woman jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams from Atlanta (Georgia), GAYLE M. MURCHINSON (Williamsburg) brought a further perspective to the discussion: the intersections of race, gender and nation. Focussing on Williams' late 1940s Girl Stars recordings, she showed how to assess jazz performance with contemporary criteria used by musicians themselves. She demonstrated how the recordings and Williams' own experience provided information about music, (im)migration, and the reception of post-World War II, as well as illustrating how Williams negotiated race, gender and power relations with respect to her fellow musicians and white male power figures. The last paper of the session was presented by LISE KARIN MELING (Stavanger). She asked the question of gendered connotations of musical instruments with a special focus on the piano. Her sources were images, etiquette books and Norwegian literature. She also used references from the 19th century, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften*, Jane Austen's novels and Sven Moren's *Paa villstraa*. She stated that the piano was significant for the female performer, but had larger ramifications than the single performer and described it as a cultural phenomenon in domestic art and domestic culture.

At the poster presentation, institutions and current projects were introduced and discussed: The Research Centre for Music and Gender (Hannover, Germany), Quality & Equality in the Arts (Tromsø, Norway), and Nye stemmer (new voices, Bergen, Norway), a project to engage more women composers. Additionally, current research projects on var-

ious topics were presented e.g. the examination of feminist-oriented perspectives and music practices across musical genres in a Swedish context; and gender-specific instrumentation in the Eurovision Song Contest.

The Panel of the Swedish-based Gender and Music Research Network was chaired by ANN WERNER (Kalmar), TAMI GADIR (Oslo), and SAM DE BOISE (Örebro). All three gave a short presentation about their projects, which were followed by a discussion about current gender balance, gender inequalities, gender bias, intersectionality and strategies for studying, analysing and transforming gender inequalities in relation to music.

The lectures were framed by music performances. The conference dinner was introduced by a performance of „Bitches Brew“ from Northern Norway. The all-female band – that evening supported by a male pianist – performed music by and about women with the aim to empower the next generation of performers in the popular music scene.

In a concluding network meeting, several participants of the conference discussed future approaches and research questions, as well as current trends and frames, in order to put forward the idea of more institutionalised music and gender research in the Nordic countries.

Overall, the conference provided a platform for discussing several aspects about music and gender and the discussed papers opened up a number of questions for further research.

Particularly remarkable was the variety of presentation formats such as keynotes, paper and poster presentations, artistic break-outs, network meetings etc., that showed that knowledge acquisition and transfer does not only take place through lectures, but also through artistic presentations like dancing and musical performances.

Conference Overview:

Opening Speeches

Anne Husebekk (Tromsø), Rector at UiT The Arctic University of Norway
Kjell Magne Mælen (Tromsø), Dean at The Faculty of Fine Arts
Ingeborg W. Ovesen (Oslo), BALANSE programme coordinator at The Research Council

of Norway

Hilde Blix (Tromsø), BALANSE project leader at The Faculty of Fine Arts

Keynote

Cecilia Björck (Gothenburg): Music, Gender and Social Change – Contemporary Debates, Directions and Challenges

Session 1a: Gender Imbalance in Music Creation

Catherine Strong (Melbourne): Understanding the position of men in a gender unequal screen composition industry

Henrik Marstal (Copenhagen): Do male musicians really make better music? Gender bias and the concepts of ‘quality’ and ‘relevance’

Miranda Moen (Trondheim): Defining and practising intersectionality in music festivals

Session 1b: Performances of Gender

Laura Hamer & Mike Brocken (Liverpool): A Woman Leader on the Bandstand: Mrs Wilf Hamer and the Performance of Gender

Maddi Krafve (Oregon): Musical Treatment of Superheroes: Male vs. Female

Solveig Mebust (Minnesota): Romantic Muses: Feminized Labor in Composition

Session 1c: GeMus Panel

Ann Werner (Kalmar), Tami Gadir (Oslo), Sam de Boise (Örebro): Past the Point of Representation: New Agendas in Research on Music and Gender

Poster Session

Rebecca Ahvenniemi (Bergen): Is There a Male Gaze in Music?

Maren Bagge (Hannover): Collecting, Researching, Supporting and Teaching in the Field of Music and Gender. The Research Centre for Music and Gender in Hanover, Germany

Rebecca D. Billström (Örebro): Feminist Stories of Music

Hilde Blix, Rikke Gürgens Gjørum, Lilli Mitner (Tromsø): Gender Balance in the Arts. A Matter of (E)Quality?

Bjarne Isaksen (Tromsø): Gender-Specific Instrumentation in the Eurovision Song Contest (1999-2015). The Nordic Paradigm?

Session 2a: Voices, Gender and Meaning

Ingela Tägil (Kalmar/Vaxjö): The Female voice of the Garcia School. Research on opera vocal techniques from a gender perspective

Katarzyna Bartos (Wroclaw): „A stage animal“ – Agata Zubel – Polish soprano and composer

Nadine Scharfetter (Graz): The Voice beyond Gender Connotation. Vocal Compositions by Dieter Schnebel

Tove Dahlberg (Piteå/Luleå): Towards a gender conscious and norm creative opera performance – a singer's perspective

Session 2b: Gender Issues in Music Education I

Silje Valde Onsrud (Bergen): A Norwegian girl choir's place in the life story of immigrant girls

Antonis Ververis (Thessaloniki): Gender hierarchies and stereotypes in music education: Male adolescents' narratives about their choral participation in Music Secondary Schools

Ingeborg Lunde Vestad & Eirik Askerøi (Hamar): Sonic Values: Narratives of Masculinity in the Music Classroom

Session 2c: Negotiating Equality

Ann Werner, Åsa Bergman & Cecilia Björck (Stockholm/Gothenburg): Music, politics and emotions in feminist activism

Tami Gadir (Oslo): Musical „Quality“ Over Gender Equality? When Culture Clashes with Law

Åsa Bergman & Cecilia Björck (Gothenburg): Specific projects or gender mainstreaming? Discourses within a Swedish culture organisation with an outspoken gender-equality ambition

Rosemary Lucy Hill & Heather Savigny (Leeds/Leicester): Explicit Content!! What did the PMRC do for us: Feminism's Backlash and Sexual Violence in Heavy Metal

Performance

„Bitches Brew“ (Norway)

Keynote II:

Astrid Kvalbein (Oslo): Forever Exceptional? On Women Who Compose Music

Session 3a: Gender Issues in Music Education II

Siw Graabæk Nielsen (Oslo): 'Genderfication' and musical gentrification in higher music education

Mikael Persson (Stockholm): The intersection of gender and class in secondary school music education in Sweden

Cecilia Ferm-Almqvist & Linn Hentschel (Luleå/Umeå): The (female) situated musical body

Carina Borgström-Källén & Birgitta Sandström (Gothenburg/Stockholm): The performing body, the place and the gaze – subject conception in vocal education

Session 3b: Negotiating the Canon

Camilla Hambro (Åbo): Gendered agendas and the presence of women in our Nordic music history

Orla Shannon (Dublin): The Forgotten Female: Twentieth Century Irish Art Music and the Cultural Politics of Revival

Gayle M. Murchinson (Williamsburg, Virginia): Mary Lou Williams at the Crossroads: Intersections of Race, Gender, Nation

Lise Karin Meling (Stavanger): Do musical instruments have gender? Historical connotations in the preference of musical instruments

Session 3c: Negotiating Identity

Kate Maxwell (Tromsø): Lett å være rebell i kjellerleiligheten din: The sexist in the basement of Norwegian hip hop

Peter Pichler (Graz): Between 'hypermasculinity' and transgressive gender constructions: the recent balancing of gender in Scandinavian Extreme Metal music

Martina Bratic (Graz): What does the 'feminist eye' in musicology have to say about

„New music“?

Kai Arne Hansen (Oslo): New Directions:
(Re-) Articulating Gendered Identity Through
Musical and Non-Musical Means

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