

# Music listening and matters of equality in music education

*Eva Georgii-Hemming, Victor Kvarnhall*

Music education does not take place in a cultural vacuum, isolated from society and the conditions and norms present there (Woodford 2005). Music played in music education contexts is a part of the students' music and culture socialisation, and has therefore consequences for inclusion as well as exclusion. In other words, the repertoire in the classroom is important for challenging as well as preserving various societal constructs, for example relating to gender, ethnicity, age and socio-economic categories. Awareness and considerations regarding these complex issues is important for promoting equality in schools and society.

In this article, we discuss musical conventions and connotations. In order to conduct a succinct discussion on equality in music education which teachers as well as researchers can relate to, we use two adjacent pedagogical strategies to exemplify our argument. The strategies, based on music listening, can be used in music education striving for inclusion and equality. There are other ways of exploring the issue, but we limit the scope to how listening, combined with teacher guidance, can be developed to a point where students can make adequate verbalisations of the sounding music. Such a teaching method aims to unravel preconceived notions of music as well as exceed them. This has implications for a democratic agenda and a shift towards a critical orientation in music education.

The ambition is that students should be able to embrace music, which through its conventions and connotations may be perceived as 'foreign'. We focus on the ways in which students can take in music on equal terms, and not avoid the music based on certain perceptions about for example girls/boys. We don't mean that all students will always have positive experiences from all music – that would be impossible. However, we argue that music education in schools can have an important task in getting students to understand different forms of music and treat them with respect. This idea is related to more general aspects of democracy and equality as well as issues of integration.

Beginning with a brief overview of recent research on music education and definitions of inclusion – in the context of popular music and informal practices, the article then outlines the theoretical dimensions of the research. It moves on to introduce music-cul-

tural socialisation before discussing the key issue music listening and how listening practises can be developed in order to improve equality and inclusion. Finally, the conclusion gives a brief summary. The critical perspectives we develop in this article, through the use of concrete examples, also create a foundation for further music education research. Until now, these perspectives based on music listening and its potentials for equality in music education have been lacking within the international research community.

## **Inclusion, equality and popular music in education**

The issue of inclusion/exclusion in society and in school has for a long time been one of the most debated, yet at the same time one of the most complex (Biesta 2007; Weis, McCarthy and Dimitriadis 2006). The issue can be located on several different levels, in that it refers to the societal institutions as well as the societal structures regarding conditions for men and women, native and foreign-born, rich and poor, and young and old. Whilst the question of what equality looks like has been contested (McLaughlin 2002; Richardson and Monro 2013) most agree that it concerns awareness of respect for different groups and cultures.

In educational contexts, the expression 'inclusion' can be said to express striving towards organising an educational system where everyone has opportunities to actively participate (Wright 2010, pp. 263–281). It is fundamental for music education that rests on a democratic foundation to consist of equality, in terms of ways of working and relationships as well as when it comes to knowledge content and repertoire.

In music education research in the 21st century, matters relating to inclusion and equality have mainly focused on how to make the most of student experiences from varied musical contexts. The analyses have often been limited to how informal and formal contexts may meet (Finney and Philpott 2010; Green 2008; Väkevä 2010). The studies have mainly been carried out in countries where music education is often dominated by a Western canon and where the teacher is perceived as an authority in the learning process of students (cf. Allsup and Westerlund 2012; Benedict 2009). In these studies, popular music and related ways of working have been highlighted as a successful way towards inclusion. Yet, at the same time critical discussions have emerged. Researchers have also highlighted the fact that multicultural perspectives as well as anti-racist feminist perspectives have been overlooked (Clements 2008; Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010a; Hess 2014; Karlsen and Westerlund 2010). These are important because they may reinforce certain aspects of social justice and subverting hegemonic practices.

There is a critical debate in the Nordic countries where popular music has gained considerable educational recognition over the past decades. The debate, now spreading to Anglophone countries, questions to what extent music education based on (some)

popular music actually mirrors the experiences and the musical cultures of the students, and it also highlights the fact that popular music is not automatically equal or inclusive for everybody (Davis and Blair 2011; Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010a, 2010b; Hess 2014; Sernhede 2006; cf. Green 2008).

Centring popular music does not necessarily eliminate power dynamics. Firstly, the emphasis on popular music can instead provide a limited education, lacking in range of genres and, consequently, the exclusion of musical experiences and expressions. Secondly, the debate highlights gender issues that follow from the dominance of music-making in pop band-like ensembles (Bergman 2009), and thirdly how activities like improvisation, composing and listening have been given a relatively lesser role in music education (Lindgren and Ericsson 2011; Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010b). This relates to considerations of the democratic task of schools. To develop tolerance and understanding between geographic, ethnic, social and musical groups, education must facilitate meetings between people of different background, gender and who have different interests (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010b). All in all, these have reference to issues of social inclusion as it may undermine integration or social inclusion agendas.

We do not oppose the fact that current music education research shows a greater need to include the experiences of the students and to develop a broader perspective of music use, knowledge and learning (Feichas 2010; Green 2008; Karlsen 2011, 2009; Väkevä 2010). Our stance is that a variety of dimensions of the student's experiences should be involved in school and that music education should be a meaningful and important experience. We also realise that there is a relationship between current music educational matters (and thus the need for change) and educational traditions in different countries. However, in order to achieve a democratic music education that strives for inclusion and equality, more substantial development is needed in regards to musical conventions and connotations, and how teachers can consciously work with them.

## Current perspectives

The arguments in this article evolve from the idea that people develop knowledge and understanding through acquiring and interpreting already existing perceptions in society (Bernstein 1983; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Shapiro and Sica 1984). We, as individuals, are born into a certain context which is important for our thoughts, ideas and notions, but also for what we learn and how (Bowman 2012). This means that our experiences, interpretations and our learning are to some extent collectively influenced (Georgii-Hemming 2007). Our everyday understanding and interpretations are taken for granted and are seldom reflected upon.

However, this does not mean that we need to simply accept 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about music choices. The school is one place where our experiences, perceptions and arguments can be tested and challenged through meeting others and their experiences and viewpoints. Our starting point and central argument can thus be described as a hermeneutic educational perspective (Fairfield 2010; Gustavsson 2009; Schuback Sá Cavalcante and Ruin 2006) in that we look at how students' perceptions about musical practices are formed in a culturally specific context – as a dialogue between the individual and the collective and between text and context. This in contrast to approaches which either asserts the text (Adorno 2003; Benzer 2011) or the context (DeNora 2000; Finnegan 1998).

Within music research, there are re-occurring questions about the relationship between text and context. Music researchers are concerned with whether the meaning of music is intrinsic in the musical structures—in what could be heard or seen in music scores—or extrinsic, created by the listener (Reimer 2003; Small 1998; Varkøy 2010).

It is true that music is not a one-way communication from a 'sender' to a 'receiver'. One single song can have different meanings – for different listeners as well as for the same person, depending on the context. This is why previous music sociological research have often focused on how musical meanings are constructed through discourse, of us 'thinking and speaking about it, interpreting it' (Lilliestam 2009, p. 144; see also Martin 1995; Finnegan 1989; DeNora 2000; 2003; Clayton, Herbert and Middleton 2003).

But what is often forgotten is that people's interpretations and understandings of music are already shaped by associations from media, from conversations in the workplace or from social media (Brown and Volgsten 2006; Ganetz 2005; Green 1997). Through musical experiences, we place ourselves (or are placed) in certain social positions (Hesmondhalgh 2008, 2013). Music is, in other words, an arena for the construction and negotiation of identities, cultural meaning and power.

Undeniably, music as a subject has many potential functions and music teachers choose activities, ways of working and repertoire based on their perception of the purpose of music education. We, the authors of this article, are both teachers in music teacher education and when we meet students or practising music teachers they often speak of the importance of the social dimensions within the subject. They describe how the subject of music can help to develop an ability to co-operate, strengthen students' self esteem and provide a sense of community. They also commonly mentioned the emotional aspects of music (de Boise 2014a; Juslin and Sloboda 2010) or its 'creative potential' (Burnard 2012). Occasionally, the importance of sharing a cultural heritage and students having the opportunity to work with different forms of knowledge is being highlighted (Georgii-Hemming 2013). Other arguments state that music education can

fulfil a recreational need or stimulate an interest in music that can come to fruition later in life.

Thus, there are many solutions, but we relatively seldom hear anything about the fact that music education can contribute to an increase in knowledge and understanding of unfamiliar music and therefore a diverse response of cultural practices. As a result, this could be one method for working with issues of social equality in music education. Such an approach can take different forms. It could be a matter of critically exploring musical conditions among different groups (e.g. according to gender, ethnicity and socio-economic groups) as a part of studying relationships between music, society and culture (Campbell and Andersson 2010; Regelski and Gates 2010; Wright 2010). It could also be a matter of listening to and reflecting on perspectives, musical preference and quality (Gracyk 2007; MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell 2002; Small 1998).

As mentioned in the introduction, this text is focused on how listening practises can be developed in order to contribute to an awareness among students of preconceived notions of music, through describing the sounding music rather than students' 'taken-for-granted' assumptions. Even though it is reasonable and many times important to connect such ways of working to issues like cultural recognition (Taylor 1994), cultural awareness (Campbell 2002; Davis 2005; Shehan 1988), cultural identification (Söderman 2011), aesthetic listening (Reese 1983) or music appreciation (Levinson 2009), these issues are not the focus of our text. In other words: the opportunities in working consciously with music listening, that we wish to highlight, do not involve gaining an increased insight into the people 'behind' the music, nor developing a cultivated musical preference (see Burke 2008).

The role of the teacher is therefore to facilitate discussion *about* the music with a conscious focus on social equality.

## Music-cultural socialisation

To be socialised into a culture means acquiring norms and values, without being particularly aware of this process (Macionis 2010). These thought patterns are linked to our perceptions of other individuals and groups and relate to who have been given influence and power. A critical view of, and insight into, music-cultural socialisation is therefore important for music teachers because the interests of some social groups may not be equally represented. The aim of education is presumably to encourage a diverse range of cultures. We argue that *one* way of working with such questions is to use music listening because, as highlighted above, music can encourage a range of different cultural practices.

In an educational system founded on democracy, music education based on equality is fundamental. Such an education should make the most of students' own experiences, yet at the same time, meeting the 'unknown' – to be confronted with different perspectives and horizons of thought – is crucial in order to challenge our 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and promote social equality (Gadamer 1960; Gustavsson 2009). Music and music teaching have, as mentioned, to do with a dialogue between experiences, between the individual and the collective, between past, present and future (Kearney 1996; Ricoeur 1993). Music articulates understanding of individuality and group, of time and place, and integrates experiences and themes in a variety of contexts. Music is at the same time individual, social and cultural.

In this context, encountering something new in school means having opportunities to embrace music associated with groups other than the one you identify with due to socialisation into a particular cultural habitus. It involves understanding why you value music in a certain way, or why you prefer certain music practices to others (Georgii-Hemming 2013). As we get to know 'the other things' or 'the others', our awareness of the well known also increases (Georgii-Hemming 2007).

When people listen to music, they seldom hear the sound only. Listeners will associate (in a more or less conscious way) to personal memories, particular places or musical and social conventions present in society. It could be cultural perceptions – connotations – of how a particular music is linked to certain (groups of) people, e.g. women, men, or homosexuals (Green 1988; 1997). It could also be certain musical conventions that are associated to a certain genre: key change, a particular 'sound' or typical suspended or added tone chords.

These connotations and conventions can influence how the music is perceived, which in turn can turn people 'deaf' for music that is seen as foreign. When tastes 'have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes', as expressed by Bourdieu (1984, p. 57; see also de Boise 2014b). Increasing competency to embrace such music does not involve learning to 'like'. It is rather about being able to connect with various music styles, performers or listeners with a sense of respect.

One of the necessary conditions is that the students experience what Lucy Green calls 'inherent musical meaning' (Green 1988; 1997). We experience this kind of meaning when we listen to music styles and music traditions that we are familiar with. Different musical elements (in a style or a tradition) imply other musical elements (Koopman and Davies 2001) and we carry with us such implications as a part of our listening practices, regardless of us being aware of them or not. One may, for example, expect a key change in the chorus of a Eurovision Song Contest entry, as well as one may expect a so called 'break' in Western pop songs, where the character changes. It is not possible, of course,

to predict exactly how a song of a certain genre will sound, but one could talk about likeliness. In order to discover and experience such regularities, one needs a level of familiarity with the musical conventions of the musical genre/tradition. In other words, one needs a 'hearing aid' that counteracts 'deafness' towards certain types of music. The music teacher has the opportunity to become that 'hearing aid'.

There may be variations in terms of how and why teachers work with music listening in music education (Elliott 2014). For the purpose of this text, we have focused on methods that involve adequate descriptions of the sounding music (e.g. soundscape, tempo, rhythm, instruments), and discussions about the contributing, musical, factors that can make music being perceived as un/interesting, novel or predictive. We argue that this can contribute to students overcoming taken-for-granted perceptions, and therefore has both an important function in the shaping of an equal music education as well as linking to broader issues of social inclusion.

## Music listening

It is certainly no exaggeration to argue that music listening is a central, ubiquitous activity for many (young) people today. New technology has made it possible to listen to music wherever and (almost) whenever. People listen to music at home, at work, at the gym or while travelling. Music accompanies sporting events, shopping, parties and ceremonial events (Bull 2000; 2005; Lilliestam 2009; Sloboda and O'Neill 2001). Hearing and listening to recorded music are probably the most common ways of experiencing music today in Western societies.

When we speak of music listening, we may have to make some distinctions. Of course, we acknowledge that music can engage, form thoughts and emotions, and make us forget time and space (Varkøy 2010). However, the relationship between the characteristics of the music and emotional responses is a matter for the subject of music psychology (Gabrielsson 2008) and philosophy of music (Kivy 2002), and thus something we do not intend to explore further into at this point. This text is about perceiving music, in the sense of understanding the musical material – for example shape, expression, 'sound', instrumentation, and so on. But the text is also, and above all, about perceptions about music. We therefore want to focus on music listening within the music classroom (primarily upper and upper secondary school, year 7–12) with a particular emphasis on musical form and musical associations.

### What happens when we listen to music?

Leaving aside physiological processes, what actually happens when people listen to music? Listening to music is different than when people listen to other kinds of sounds.

Sounds from nature, industries or cities can of course be perceived as beautiful, annoying, pleasant or stressful – just like musical sounds, but they differ in important ways (Bull 2000). Musical sounds are created with the intention of them being heard as music and are therefore organised in a way that makes it possible for people to recognise these sounds as music (Frith 1996; Wright 1975; Green 1988; 1997). It is, however, not possible for every individual to understand (even if a listener does not appreciate) every piece of music. It is often difficult for Western music listeners to fully understand and appreciate music made outside of Europe and the English-speaking countries, perhaps in particular Western Europe (Clayton, Herbert and Middleton 2003). But also certain musical genres or musical characteristics can be hard to understand for the 'common' Western ear – such as for example music with mixed or complex meters (Middleton 1999).

### Music and associations

This means that people's capacity to understand and appreciate music is limited, and that boundaries are created through musical socialisation (Martin 1995). We find the music that surrounds us during our childhood and throughout our lives familiar; different musical rules and conventions are being acquired and form a kind of musical knowledge. Even though this knowledge can seldom be expressed verbally, it is often subtle and sophisticated: '[p]eople who know nothing of formal music theory can instantly identify a "wrong" note' (Martin 1995, p. 9). People's understanding of music is therefore neither natural nor intuitive, but rather a product of being brought up and living in particular cultural contexts, where particular musical conventions dominate.

People, however, do not only hear tones, harmonies, 'sound', rhythms or meter when they listen to music as noted previously. Music is also associated with something 'outside' of the music: phenomena, social groups, nations, historical periods, personal memories, and so on (Green 1988; 1997; Wright 1975; Martin 1995, chap. 2). Such associations can sometimes become so stark in a society that they, as with musical rules, become conventions (Green 1997, p. 7). They thus become connotations, which can then have a powerful impact on how people perceive certain music, something that is often exploited by those making music for advertisement (among others). Heavy rock music can, for example, be used in adverts marketing their products to (young) men, because such music carries connotations of masculinity (Järviluoma, Moisala and Vilkkö 2003, pp. 84–107, cf. Cook 2010, chap. 1).

Several studies illustrate that this is an essential part of everyday music listening – Liljestam's (2001) study of college students in Gothenburg, for example, found evidence of such judgments. Participants, largely ethnic Swedish, listened to a number of different music excerpts, from various genres, and then discussed the music. Re-occurring epi-



thets were for example 'nigger music', 'girl's music', 'children's music', 'gay music', 'typically Swedish music'. The reasons they made these judgements was to distance themselves from certain music, and thereby certain groups, associated with it.

This highlights the fact that such connotations are actually a part of how the music is perceived, being valued and being understood. In addition, it also means that the connotations, like other connotations, are collectively shared and as such shaped through musical socialisation. Therefore, such processes constitute yet another kind of musical knowledge in a society. We argue that, above all, such connotations could make people 'deaf' to some music (cf. Green 1988), since it is associated to a certain social group, a life style, particular places, political ideas and other things (Green 2005). In many ways, these connotations make individuals unable or unwilling to approach certain types of music (Bergman 2009). Starting from the point of discussing social connotations (e.g. 'black music'), rather than musical properties can, therefore, undermine equality agendas and actually have an adverse effect.

We would like to stress the importance of music education where the influences of these connotations are being considered, given that they can often swamp the musical pieces so that the actual experiences and the judgments of the music piece become reduced to an afterthought. This is what happened in the example below:

Is this the type of music to which you can go out and dance? (Discussion leader)

Yes, you could if you are [whispers] a nigger.

(Lilliestam 2001, p. 71)

The comment is about Fugees' song 'FU-GEE-LA'. The boy making this comment (and he was not alone in talking in this way) can in other words not see himself engaging in Fugees' music since it is tied to groups in society that he cannot or does not want to identify with. This kind of stand is mainly based on a perception of cultural differences and in particular the idea of crossing cultural boundaries as difficult or impossible. The sounding music in this example becomes so closely connected to a 'black culture' that it is impossible to separate the music from the people who have created it and their context. We argue that developing students' ability to separate music from such connotations is important for those who want to focus e.g. social equality agendas in music education.

### Music listening in the classroom

When music teacher colleagues or teacher training students talk about students having 'musical experiences' in the classroom, they tend to focus on playing, singing and creating music (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010b). So what place and what function does music listening have in music education in school settings? What place and what

function might it have? When we highlight listening, talking about and discussing music, it should not be understood as more important than other activities. It is, however, one way – like many others – toward musical experience.

In regards to listening as a part of music education, 'active' or 'attentive listening' is sometimes mentioned (cp Lilliestam 2013; Madsen and Geringer 2001; Rinsema 2013). In order to stimulate active listening (Ericsson and Lindgren 2010, p.186), the teacher gives tasks designed to be completed while listening. We argue that tasks like identifying tempo, instrument, form or to follow music via some kind of score, can fill several functions. On a general level, they can contribute to catching the attention of the students.

There is an obvious place in music education for learning musical terminology and musical constructs, as it is included in the aims of many curricula (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations 1994; Lgr11, p. 100; National curriculum in England: music programmes of study 2013). We argue that these types of tasks can also be used in working with matters of equality.

We would like to add a particular type of discussion to listening tasks that focuses on verbalising how we perceive music as form or expression, which connects listeners own perceptions with that of other people – namely argumentation and critical analysis.

### **Music listening and the critical task of the teacher**

It is possible (and vital) to communicate and discuss music, its values and our perceptions, in music educational settings without the music being defined entirely by cultural connotations or stereotypes. To critically analyse music means that students should weigh pro's and con's with different points of views in a way that is open towards other, maybe opposite, views (Rolle and Wallbaum 2011).

The relationship between 'values', 'points of view' and 'opinions' should in this context not be understood as students arguing their personal preference. Instead, we see argumentation (and analysis) of what it is about music – soundscape, tempo, form, melody – that can shape students' perceptions of it as interesting, uninteresting, innovative or predictable.

According to this perspective, music education can create possibilities for a musical practice supported by critical argumentation in addition to performances (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010a). When the musical argumentation develops, students can become understanding towards different perceptions of music. They get opportunities to leave culture-bound perspectives behind, and discover new ways of hearing music. Put simply, it may mean that listeners can overcome pre-judged ideas about certain music as 'old man's music', 'girls' music' or 'boring'. It will thus become possible to accept as well as listen to other people's preferred music, even though it may not be to the taste of

the individual. This can also be a way of discussing cultural difference in other areas or subjects.

In order for students to be able to engage in this kind of argumentation, they need to be guided by a teacher. The competency to be able to make informed arguments – about the music listened to, but also about choices made in relation to private musical practices or 'musicking' (Small 1998) in the classroom – can be developed: this is what we would like to call 'the critical task of the teacher'. Without providing definitive answers we would still like to try and clarify what we mean by this. We would like to emphasize again that this type of approach focuses on actually changing students' perceptions, in this case in relation to music. The teacher's role, as we understand it, is to focus chiefly on so-called externally-driven musical perceptions, but also on understanding unfamiliar music through a musical lens. For example, it can be common to describe unfamiliar music as uneventful, boring, unstructured and chaotic, but these perceptions are often founded more on the lack of knowledge on part of the listener, rather than on the sounding music itself (cf. Green 2005, p. 10). The critical teacher must deal with these kinds of situations in the classroom through making students familiar with different kinds of music and through verbalising the sounding music. The teacher must therefore be aware of issues around structural inequalities and diversity as well as have a well-informed understanding of music.

The boy in the previous quote who did not feel motivated to listen nor dance to the music of Fugees implies that it is only suitable to do so if you are a 'nigger'. There is an aversion founded on an idea about the (inherent) blackness in the music – and that there are no other aspects of the music beyond its associations. In order to counteract the reproduction of such ideas it is imperative to focus the classroom discussion on the musical object.

Our suggestions for teaching strategies thus have two key aims: (i) that students should be able to embrace music where the *musical conventions* are perceived as unfamiliar/foreign. And (ii) to be able to embrace music where the *connotations* are perceived as unfamiliar/foreign. This does not necessarily include a complex operation. In regards to (i), this may for example entail repeated listening to music that students perceive as uneventful, boring, chaotic or disorganised. The teacher could then function as someone who can guide students through the listening process. The guidance could take several forms, for example by talking about the music, and through illustrating different musical characteristics on an instrument, or with help of sequencer-software such as Fruity Loops. It could involve *identifying* a returning and varying melodic theme, to grasp instrumentation, or understanding musical structure. Such relatively simple identifications are a step closer to familiarity with a musical object. Another step is to be able to

relate to musical conventions and stylistic moves in order to experience the typical versus the unexpected in a tune or a piece of music (Green 2005), something that requires other skills among teachers.

In regards to (ii), which is the phenomenon that we wish to chiefly highlight, the same method as in (i) will be of use here too; the difference lies in the aims. Whereas (i) focuses on students realising that pieces that sound disorganised and uneventful are actually highly organised and eventful, (ii) relates to realising that music appreciation is not inherently tied to the perceptions we harbour.

One of the reasons for people remaining unfamiliar with a lot of music is the fact that externally-driven perceptions are so strong that they do not incentivise actual engagement. The lack of engagement means that experiences of inter-musical meaning are ruled out (Green 1997, p. 249; 2005). Thus, the strategy we refer to encourages teachers to take up the problem from a different angle. By learning to hear the internal organisation of music, it can be regarded as more detached from such connotations. One way of doing this is by considering the choice of music used for listening and discussions in the class room. For example choosing Siouxi and the Banshees instead of Sex Pistols as an example of punk/new wave, or Missy Elliott instead of Public Enemy as an example of rap/hip hop. Focusing the discussion on the structure of music, the typical and atypical within a genre, can result in externally-driven connotations (in this case gender) being counteracted. This is a prerequisite for students being able to experience the inter-musical meaning and consequently realise that connotations (in this example particularly 'female' music) are not harboured in the sounding music. Again, the teacher must be familiar with music conventions and connotations as well as the impact of social inequalities and judgements about music.

This familiarity also creates opportunities for rational argumentation about music. The aim, from our perspective, is to learn how to talk about and discuss music, as well as test these reasons in order to move beyond our culturally imprinted associations. We can draw a parallel with religious studies where one can try arguments for and against the existence of God, without the purpose of students starting, or ceasing, to believe in God. Equally, the purpose of argumentation in music education is not that all students should be taught to like a certain genre. Rather, the purpose is to test arguments for the most reasonable way to understand or describe music and also to embrace other peoples' arguments through a constructive dialogue. To reiterate, this has implications for music education as well as broadening cultural awareness in other respects.

## Conclusions

People's interpretations and understanding of music are imprinted by associations that reoccur in media, through conversations at work or in social media (Frith 1996; Hesmondhalgh 2008, 2013; Volgsten 2006). Our understanding is coloured by time and place, it is collectively shared, which also means that we load music with meanings based on aspects such as gender, class or ethnicity.

From our perspective, one important, but overlooked, purpose of listening in music educational contexts is that students can develop skills that help them to move beyond musical unfamiliarity and externally-driven musical connotations. These skills, which can be developed, could be to understand different musical conventions and not distance themselves from music because its externally-driven connotations. To acquire conventions and viewpoints is precisely what happens when we are socialised into a music-culture. Music education has an important role to play in these socialisation processes.

Music education and music educators must be clearly aware of and consider equality issues. Consciously working with musical conventions and connotations, well-thought-out choices of musical repertoire, educational activities and methods are therefore important. But, to discuss relations between music and gender, class or ethnicity directly can be problematic. These questions are complex and require certain skills and insights of the teacher. In addition, music and musical perceptions often connect to students' identities, emotional experiences, personal values and so forth. Working with the pedagogical strategies introduced in this article, on the other hand, do not have to be difficult. The focus of this article has been on the sounding music and music educators most likely have the music theoretical knowledge required to discuss this. Nevertheless, we have demonstrated how such pedagogies, founded on an awareness of the underlying problems, also have the potential to promote equality in school and society.

Moreover, further music research as well as informed discussions on music; musical practices and music education in relation to different forms of equality issues –class; social, cultural and musical exclusion/inclusion; ethnic diversity; gender and many more – are needed and urgent. It is our hope that this article will contribute to the development of both.

## References

- Adorno, Theodor W. 2003. *Essays on music*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Allsup, Randall E., and Westerlund, Heidi 2012. Methods and situational ethics in music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 11(1), pp. 124–48. Available online: [act.maydaygroup.org/articles/AllsupWesterlund11\\_1.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/AllsupWesterlund11_1.pdf) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Benedict, Cathy 2009. Processes of alienation: Marx, Orff and Kodaly. *British Journal of Music Education*, 26, pp. 213–224.
- Benzer, Matthias 2011. *The sociology of Theodor Adorno*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas 1966. *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. 1. ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
- Bergman, Åsa 2009. *Växa upp med musik. Ungdomars musikanvändande i skolan och på fritiden*. [Growing up with music: Young people's use of music in school and during leisure time] PhD. Diss. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 1983. *Beyond objectivism and relativism: science, hermeneutics, and praxis*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pa P.
- Biesta, Gert 2006. *Beyond learning: democratic education for a human future*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Bourdieu, Pierre 1984. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. [New ed.] London: Routledge.
- Bowman, Wayne 2012. Practices, virtue ethics, and music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 11(2), pp. 1–19. Available online: [act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman11\\_2.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman11_2.pdf) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Brown, Steven and Volgsten, Ulrik eds. 2006. *Music and manipulation: on the social uses and social control of music*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Bull, Michael 2000. *Sounding out the city. Personal stereos and the management of everyday life*. Oxford: Berg.
- Bull, Michael 2005. No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening. *Leisure Studies*, 24(4), pp. 343–355. Available online: [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0261436052000330447](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0261436052000330447) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Burke, Seán 2008. *The death and return of the author: criticism and subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*. 3. ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Burnard, Pamela 2012. *Musical creativities in practice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, Patricia Shehan 2002. Music education in a time of cultural transformation. *Music Educators Journal*, 89:1, pp. 27–54.
- Campbell, Patricia Shehan and William M. Anderson 2010. *Multicultural perspectives in music education*, vol I and II. [E-Book]. Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Clayton, Martin, Herbert, Trevor and Middleton, Richard, eds. 2003. *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Clements, Ann C. 2008. *Escaping the classical canon: Changing methods through a change of paradigm, Visions of Research in Music Education*, 12 [Online]. Available online: [www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v12n1/vision/3%20AERA%20-%20Clements.pdf](http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v12n1/vision/3%20AERA%20-%20Clements.pdf) [Accessed 13 January 2015].
- Consortium of National Arts Education Associations 1994. *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able To Do in the Arts*. Washington D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cook, Nicholas 2010. *Music*. New York, NY: Sterling.
- Davis, Robert A. 2005. Music education and cultural identity. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37(1), pp. 47–63.
- Davis, Sharon G. and Blair, Deborah V. 2011. Popular music in American teacher education: A glimpse into a secondary methods course. *International Journal of Music Education*, 29(2), pp. 124–140.
- de Boise, Sam 2014a. Contesting 'sex' and 'gender' difference in emotions through music use in the UK. *Journal of Gender Studies*. Available online: [dx.doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2014.894475](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2014.894475) [Accessed 13 February 2015].

- de Boise, Sam 2014b. Learning to Be Affected: Masculinities, Music and Social Embodiment. *Sociological research online*, 19(2).
- DeNora, Tia 2000. *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- DeNora, Tia and Adorno, Theodor W. 2003. *After Adorno: rethinking music sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elliott, David James 2014. *Music matters: a philosophy of music education*. 2. ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ericsson, Claes and Lindgren, Monica 2010. *Musikklassrummet i blickfånget. Vardagskultur, identitet, styrning och kunskapsbildning*. [The music classroom in focus: Everyday culture, identity, governance and knowledge formation]. Research report 2010:1 Halmstad: Halmstad University. Available online: [www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:375589/FULLTEXT01.pdf](http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:375589/FULLTEXT01.pdf) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Fairfield, Paul 2010. *Education, dialogue and hermeneutics* [E-Book]. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Feichas, Heloisa 2010. Bridging the gap: Informal learning practices as a pedagogy of integration. *British Journal of Music Education*, 27(1), pp. 47–58.
- Finnegan, Ruth 1989. *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finney, John and Philpott, Chris 2010. Informal learning and meta-pedagogy in initial teacher education in England. *British Journal of Music Education*, 27(1), pp. 7–19.
- Frith, Simon 1996. *Performing rites: on the value of popular music*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Gabrielsson, Alf 2008. *Starka musikupplevelser: musik är mycket mer än bara musik*. Hedemora: Gidlund.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg [1960]. *Truth and method*. First paperback edition. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ganetz, Hillevi 2009. *Rundgång: genus och populärmusik*. Göteborg: Makadam.
- Georgii-Hemming, Eva 2007. Hermeneutic knowledge: dialogue between experiences. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 29 (1), pp. 13–28. Available online: [rsm.sagepub.com/content/29/1/13/full.pdf](http://rsm.sagepub.com/content/29/1/13/full.pdf) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Georgii-Hemming, Eva 2013. Music as Knowledge in an Educational context. In: *Professional Knowledge in Music Teacher Education*, eds. Eva Georgii-Hemming; Pamela Burnard, and Sven-Erik Holgersen. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Georgii-Hemming, Eva and Westvall, Maria 2010a. Music Education – A personal matter? Examining the current Discourses of Music Education in Sweden. *British Journal of Music Education*, 27(1), pp. 21–33.
- Georgii-Hemming, Eva and Westvall, Maria 2010b. Teaching Music in Our Time. Student music teachers' reflections on music education, teacher education and becoming a teacher. *Music Education Research*, 12(4), pp. 353–367.
- Gracyk, Theodore 2007. *Listening to popular music, or, How I learned to stop worrying and love Led Zeppelin*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Green, Lucy 1988. *Music on deaf ears: musical meaning, ideology, education*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Green, Lucy 1997. *Music, gender, education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Green, Lucy 2005. Musical meaning and social reproduction: a case for retrieving autonomy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37(1), pp. 77–92.
- Green, Lucy 2008. *Music, informal learning and the school: a new classroom pedagogy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Gustavsson, Bernt 2009. *Utbildningens förändrade villkor: nya perspektiv på kunskap, bildning och demokrati*. Stockholm: Liber.
- Hesmondhalgh, David 2013. *Why music matters*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell.
- Hesmondhalgh, David, and Toynbee, Jason, eds. 2008. *The media and social theory*. New York:

Routledge.

- Hess, Juliet 2014. Radical musicking: towards a pedagogy of social change, *Music Education Research*, 16(3), pp. 229–250.
- Järviluoma, Helmi, Moiasala, Pirkko and Vilkkö, Anni 2003. Not only Vision – Analysing Sound and Music from the Perspective of Gender., In: Helmi Järviluoma, Pirkko Moiasala and Anni Vilkkö eds, *Gender and Qualitative Methods*. London, England: SAGE Publications, pp. 84–107.
- Juslin, Patrik N., and Sloboda, John A. eds. 2010. *Handbook of music and emotion: theory, research, and applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karlsen, Sidsel 2011. Using musical agency as a lens: Researching music education from the angle of experience. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 33(2), pp. 107–121.
- Karlsen, Sidsel 2009. Access to the learnable: Music education and the development of strong learners within informal arenas. In: Elizabeth Gould, June Countryman, Charlene Morton and Leslie Stewart Rose eds. *Exploring social justice. How music education matter*. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators Association, pp. 240–251.
- Karlsen, Sidsel and Westerlund, Heidi 2010. Immigrant students' development of musical agency – exploring democracy in music education. *British Journal of Music Education*, 27(3), pp. 235–239.
- Kearney, Richard, ed. 1996. *Paul Ricoeur: the hermeneutics of action*. London: Sage.
- Kivy, Peter 2002. *Introduction to a philosophy of music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Koopman, Constantijn and Davies, Stephen 2001. Musical Meaning in a Broader Perspective. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59(3), pp. 261–273.
- Levinson, Jerrold 2009. The aesthetic appreciation of music. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 49(4), pp. 415–425.
- Lgr11, *Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011*. [National curriculum for compulsory school, pre-school and leisure centre] The Swedish National Agency for Education. Stockholm: Skolverket.
- Lilliestam, Lars 2001. "En dödsmetal-hardcore-hårdrocksgrej, det är jättesvårt att förklara": göteborgska gymnasister tänker och talar om musik. Göteborg: Institutionen för musikvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet.
- Lilliestam, Lars 2009. *Musikliv: vad människor gör med musik – och musik med människor*. 2. rev. uppl. Göteborg: Ejeby.
- Lilliestam, Lars 2013. Research on music listening: From Typologies to Interviews with Real People. *Volume 1*, 10(1), pp. 109–110. Available online: [www.cairn.info/revue-volume-2013-1-page-109.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-volume-2013-1-page-109.htm) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Lindgren, Monica and Ericsson, Claes 2011. *Ränderna går aldrig ur*. In: Claes Ericsson and Monica Lindgren eds. *Perspektiv på populärmusik och skola*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, pp. 23–39.
- MacDonald, Raymond A. R., Hargreaves, David J. and Miell, Dorothy eds. 2002. *Musical identities*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Macionis, John J (2010). *Sociology*. 13th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education.
- Madsen, Clifford K. and Geringer, John M. 2001. A focus of attention model for meaningful listening. *Bulletin–Council for Research in Music Education*, 1(147), pp. 103–108.
- Martin, Peter 1995. *Sounds and Society: Themes in the Sociology of Music*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- McLaughlin, Eithne 2003. Equality and equity policy. In: Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan eds. *The Encyclopedia of World Government and Politics*, 2nd ed., Vol. I. London: Routledge, pp. 711–23.
- Middleton, Richard 1999. Form. In: Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss eds. *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, pp. 141–55.
- National curriculum in England: music programmes of study 2013*. Department for Education. Available online: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study) [Accessed 13 February 2015].
- Reese, Sam 1983. Teaching Aesthetic Listening. *Music Educators Journal*, 69(7), pp. 36–38.
- Regelski, Thomas A. and Gates, Terry J. eds. 2009. *Music education for changing times: guiding visions*



- for practice. Dortrecht: Springer.
- Reimer, Bennett 2003. *A philosophy of music education: advancing the vision*. 3. ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Richardson, Diane and Monro, Surya 2012. *Sexuality, equality and diversity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ricœur, Paul 1993. *Från text till handling: en antologi om hermeneutik*. 4. uppl. Stockholm: B. Östlings bokförl. Symposion.
- Rinsema, Rebecca 2013. Meaningful Listening: An Inclusive Concept? Paper at *The Ninth International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music Education*. Teachers College Columbia University, New York City, June 5–8 2013.
- Rolle, Christian, and Wallbaum, Christopher 2011. Ästhetischer Streit im Musikunterricht. Didaktische und methodische Überlegungen zu Unterrichtsgesprächen über Musik. In: Johannes Kirschenmann, Christoph Richter and Kaspar Spinner eds. *Reden über Kunst. Fachdidaktisches Forschungssymposium in Literatur, Kunst und Musik*. München: Kopaed, pp. 509–535.
- Schuback, Marcia Sá Cavalcante and Ruin, Hans 2006. *Bildning och filosofi: en brevväxling*. Stockholm: Högskoleverket. Available online: [www.uka.se/download/18.1ff6bf9c146adf4b4967b7/1404210259396/0627R+Bildning+och+filosofi+-+en+brevv%C3%A4xling.pdf](http://www.uka.se/download/18.1ff6bf9c146adf4b4967b7/1404210259396/0627R+Bildning+och+filosofi+-+en+brevv%C3%A4xling.pdf) [Accessed 24 September 2015].
- Sernhede, Ove 2006. Skolan och populärkulturen. In: Ulf P. Lundgren ed. *Uttryck, intryck, avtryck. Lärande, estetiska uttrycksformer och forskning*. Vetenskapsrådet: Stockholm, p. 11–19 Available online: [konstfack.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:802805/FULLTEXT01.pdf](http://konstfack.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:802805/FULLTEXT01.pdf) [Accessed 24 September 2015].
- Shapiro, Gary and Sica, Alan eds. 1984. *Hermeneutics: questions and prospects*. Amherst: Univ. of Mass. P.
- Shehan, Patricia K. 1988. World musics: Windows to Cross-Cultural understanding. *Music Educators Journal*, 75(3), pp. 22–26.
- Sloboda, John A. and O'Neill, Susan A. 2001. Emotions in everyday listening to music. In: Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda eds. *Music and Emotion. Theory and research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 415–429.
- Small, Christopher 1998. *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Söderman, Johan 2011. Folkbildning through hip-hop. How the ideals of three rappers parallel a Scandinavian educational tradition. *Music Education Research*, 13(2), pp. 211–225.
- Taylor, Charles 1994. *Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Varkøy, Øivind 2010. Musikkopplevelse som eksistensiell erfaring – i Kunnskapsløftet. In: Geir Salvesen and Jon Helge Sætre eds. *Allmenn musikkundervisning: perspektiver på praksis*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 23–38
- Volgsten, Ulrik 2006. Between ideology and identity: media, discourse, and affect in the musical experience. In: Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten eds. *Music and manipulation. On the social uses and social control of music*. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 74–100.
- Väkevä, Lauri 2010. Garage band or GarageBand®? Remixing musical futures. *British Journal of Music Education*, 27(1), pp. 59–70.
- Weis, Lois; McCarthy, Cameron and Dimitriadis, Greg, eds. 2006. *Ideology, curriculum, and the new sociology of education: revisiting the work of Michael Apple*. London: Routledge.
- Woodford, Paul 2005. *Democracy and music education: liberalism, ethics, and the politics of practice*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Wright, Derrick F. 1975. Musical Meaning and its Social Determinants. *Sociology*, 9(3), pp. 419–435.
- Wright, Ruth ed. 2010. *Sociology and music education*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

## Abstract

Peoples' interpretations and understanding of music are imprinted by associations that reoccur in media, through conversations at work or in social media. Our understanding is coloured by time and place, which also means that we load music with meanings based on aspects such as gender, class or ethnicity. Music education is a part of the students' music and culture socialisation and the repertoire in the classroom is therefore important for challenging as well as preserving various societal constructs. In order to achieve a democratic music education that strives for inclusion and equality, a substantial realisation is needed in regards to musical conventions and connotations. In this article we address these questions, but also how teachers can consciously work with them. We give some examples based on music listening. Until now, these critical perspectives based on music listening and its potentials for equality in music education have been lacking within the international research community.

## Keywords

democratic music education; gender; equality; sociology of music education; philosophy of music education

## Authors

Eva Georgii-Hemming is Professor at the School of Music, Theatre and Art, Örebro University, Sweden. She is the main editor to the anthology *Professional Knowledge in Music Teacher Education* (Ashgate 2013) and has contributed to international anthologies such as *Learning, Teaching and Musical identity* (Indiana UP 2011). She has published articles in journals such as *British Journal of Music Education*, *Research Studies in Music Education*, *Music Education Research* and *Nordic Research in Music Education*. Her research interests have led to frequent presentations and keynotes at international conferences in Europe and the United States.

Victor Kvarnhall received his PhD in Musicology from Örebro University in the fall of 2015. The thesis is a study on boys and the reproduction of male dominance and gender segregation within popular music life. Especially, it offers a critical realist explanation of why boys adapt certain reproductive approaches to popular music/making.