

# Nordic Research in Music Education

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## Editorial, Vol. 4 (2023)

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The fourth volume of *Nordic Research in Music Education* encapsulates six articles that have all been published continuously during 2023: three peer-reviewed research articles, one commentary, and two book reviews.

In various ways, and embedded in different topics, all of the six texts prompt the readers to reflect anew on histories, traditions and ideologies in music education; as well as point towards emancipatory changes in the field. Established ideologies and taken-for-granted narratives in the field may cement understandings and how challenges ahead are identified when such aspects are repeated to the level of naturalisation. However, when new perspectives are disrupting old truths, we may be left unsettled by this new knowledge. The scrutinisation of moral and ethical standards in any field, including music education, is a process that needs continuous work across the breadth of contexts and scholarly interests.

The article *Ideology, selective tradition, and naturalization in the music teacher education curriculum* by Jan Sverre Knudsen and Silje Valde Onsrud is an important contribution to this work. In their document study of national guidelines and curricula for generalist music teacher education in Norway, they detect ideological value systems that they see as part of a

selective tradition that serves to naturalise dominating value discourses. One finding is that the lack of definitions of central subject-related terms contributes to the naturalised status of values. They also trace philosophical discourses in curricula that in some respects appear contradictory and incompatible; for example, values associated with the German/Nordic tradition of *danning* (German: *Bildung*). This implies emphasis on the artwork as an object and music as aesthetic experience on the one hand, and maintaining goals connected to cultural diversity and an activity- and practice-centred music education on the other.

Alexandra Kertz-Welzel takes a historical view of Carl Orff and his position during the Third Reich in her article *Dancing with devils: Carl Orff and National Socialism revisited*. Apart from having been a composer, Orff is also known today for his contributions to music education, particularly through his educational work *Schulwerk*. According to Kertz-Welzel, Orff had a complex and changing (and potentially, opportunist) position towards Nazism. While he sometimes seemed to embrace Nazi aesthetics, for example, he also refused a commission from the Nazi government. Kertz-Welzel draws on recent German historical research to present a more nuanced picture of Orff's actions and position. For current music educators and researchers in the field, it is not only important to understand Orff as a historical figure. His case also sharpens the lens for broader questions, such as those indicated in the article about freedom of speech and art in a democratic society. Do artists have a responsibility to take a stance on political trends and regimes, even when doing so means sacrificing their employment as artists, Kertz-Welzel asks. But we may add the question, knowing Orff was of Jewish provenance, how it was possible for him to work as a composer and be praised for his work by the Nazi rulers, and what moral sacrifices were made. Kertz-Welzel does not attempt to provide answers to such questions, but prompts us to reflect on the positions of artists living under the terror of war—and thus her contribution is horrifically current.

Gender issues are addressed twice in this volume. The research article *Addressing gender inequality in and through music composing studies*, written by Heidi Partti and Kirsty Devaney, begins with the premise that composing remains a male-dominated field within the domain of Western art music. They analysed two case studies of composing education in Finland and England, seeking to better understand how music education may play a role in addressing and alleviating gender inequality in music composing. Both projects aimed at including broader diversity in composing practice. The Finnish project, *Equity in Composing*, targeted female and non-binary students in particular, whereas the ongoing English project, *Young Composers Project*, aimed at diminishing stereotypes in composing more broadly by targeting less represented groups of students in general. Partti and Devaney found three main strategies for increasing diversity in composition practice among young people: challenging narrow and stereotypical narratives of what creativity and being a composer mean; addressing the lack of role models with diverse identities; and introducing a broader pedagogy to reach under-represented student groups. They argue that music education has the potential to develop all three strategies.

The other contribution engaging with gender is a book review by Sam de Boise of *Gender Issues in Scandinavian Music Education: From Stereotypes to Multiple Possibilities*, edited by Silje Valde Onsrud, Hilde Synnøve Blix and Ingeborg Lunde Vestad (2021). This book was released as a paperback in 2023. As indicated by its title, the book has a transformative goal, and according to de Boise, is “admirably affirmative” in aiming toward this end. In conclusion, de Boise states that “we in Scandinavia are not immune to the backlash by forces which look to portray such perspectives as passé or as privileging women over men”.

This journal issue includes a second book review written by Eva Sæther on Gro Trondalen’s (2023) *Ethical Musicality*. Trondalen’s extensive experience as a professor and practitioner in music therapy informs her position when writing about the topic, and the book is directed at anyone interested in the connection between music and ethics. Sæther highlights the usefulness of combining philosophical reasoning with real practical dilemmas to create a novel theoretical framework and welcomes the concept of ethical musicality for advancing the work of music practitioners and researchers who strive towards ethically sound practices, programs, and institutions.

Finally, Ville Langfeldt has contributed the commentary *Holistic and ecologically valid aural training within culturally diverse music education contexts*. Situated in the field of music theory pedagogy and aural training, this text has been adapted from the trial lecture he delivered as part of his PhD defence. Langfeldt uses historical tracing and a geographically broad outlook to examine the concepts of holism and ecological validity in light of research, different teaching traditions, recent pedagogical developments, and the professional requirements of contemporary musicianship.

The diverse perspectives and approaches provided by the authors in this volume of *Nordic Research in Music Education* will provide readers with knowledge, thought provocations, and tools to further the work of scrutinising moral and ethical standards in music education.

## References

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