

Participation, Orality and Multidirectional Music-making in a Mediatized and Professionalized World

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Much discourse on contemporary musicking focuses on institutionalized and professionalized music, whether commercial or connected to elite institutions, and is often limited to a binary relationship between producer and consumer. When music is primarily regarded as a product we risk becoming blind to the dynamic character of music as an unfinished process, as a fundamental and widely disseminated human activity and behaviour (cf. Merriam 1964, Blacking 1974, Rice 1987, Bjørkvold 1991, Lilliestam 2006 etc).

This paper discusses the fact that present Swedish and global music milieus also include activities with a stress on multi-directional communication within small community and affinity groups, usually including strong elements of the oral-derived and the spontaneous. When music-making is multidirectional and partly improvised, and performed in an informal context, the boundaries between performer and audience may become fluid and blurred. What space is there for this kind of activity? Are music market and small-scale participatory activity always dichotomies? I will discuss these issues on the basis of key-words like everyday music-making and creativity, lifeworlds, flow, meaning-making and orality versus mediation in late modernity.

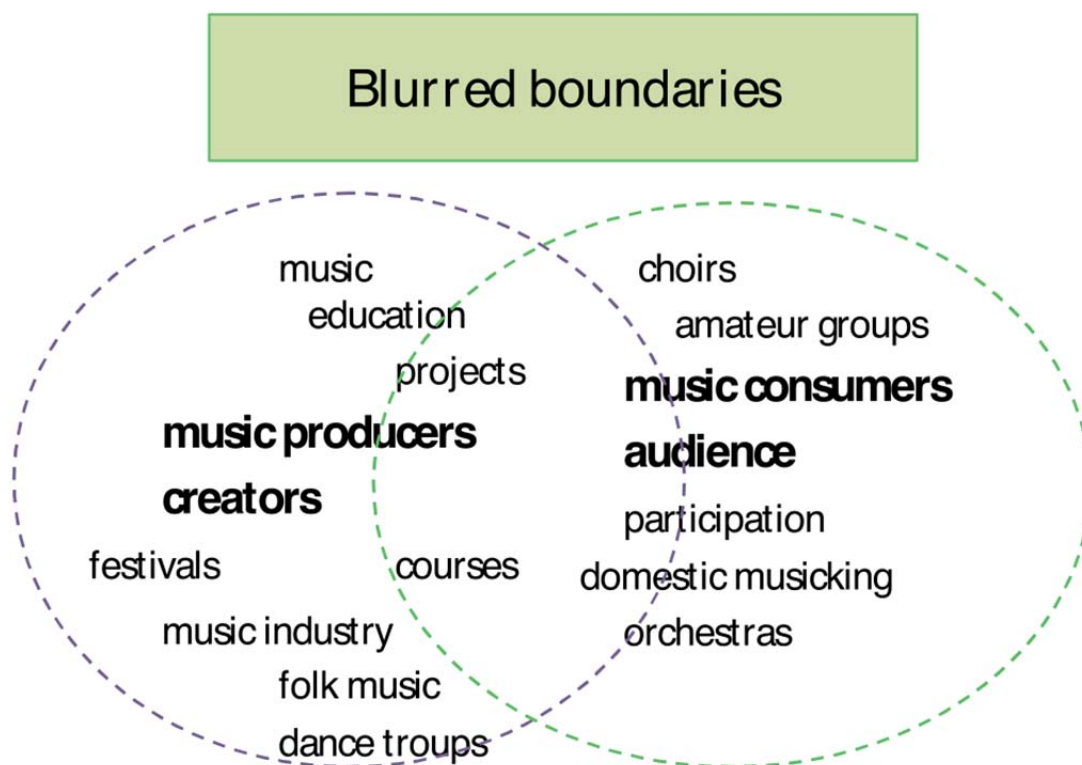
INTRODUCTION

Much discourse on contemporary musicking focuses on institutionalized and professionalized music, whether commercial or connected to elite institutions. This discourse is often limited to a binary relationship between producer and consumer. The conditions of music-making as a whole deals with " ... contemporary professionalized and artistic music-making as a process where musicians, concert situation and audience co-operate." My project, "Music for making or music for listening", represents a sidelight and an attempt at problematization of some of the concepts. As this is a work in progress, this paper is rather a sketch of my project than a report.

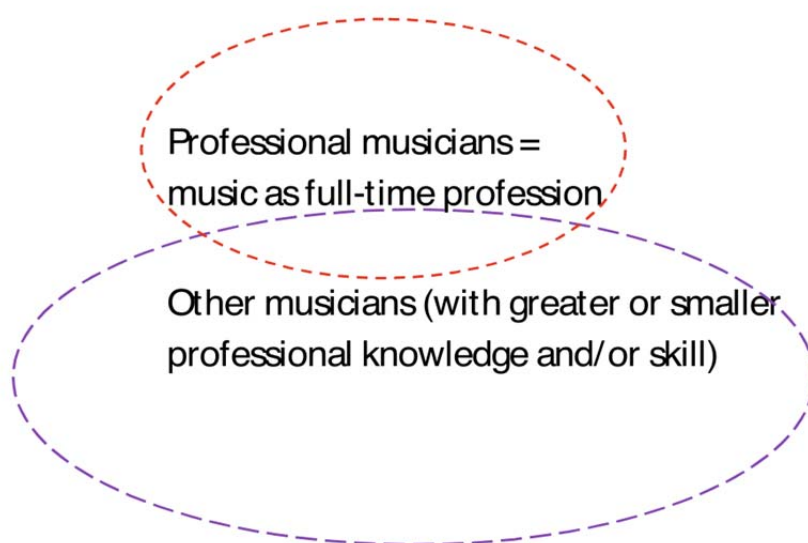
The music market as well as the cultural institutions depends, at least partly, on a broader, informal, "everyday" musical activity, which is my focal point. Audiences are to a great extent made up of music-makers, who are active in informal milieus, outside or on the borders of great festivals, institutions etc. Especially narrow genres – like jazz, Early music, folk and world music, the small-scale singer-songwriter genre (visa) – need an audience with deep knowledge of the genre, and many of their audience members are musicians or participants in music-making. It is a question of overlapping circles, not separate spheres. (See Fig.1)

Fig. 1 shows a general model of music producers/creators within one circuit or circulation and music consumers /audience within another. But at a closer look we find a great number of musical expressions and situations which cannot be assigned to only one of the main areas, e. g. courses, festivals, choir singing and several kinds of domestic or informal music-making where the stress is on participation and activity. The boundaries between music producers and music consumers are quite often blurred and overlapping.

A few examples of recurring and annual events of this overlapping kind are an international ethnic music camp for young people, the choir festival in Skinnskatteberg and the folk dance festival in Rättvik.



Another structure of overlapping areas is showed in fig. 2: on one side musicians with music as full-time profession and on the other side other musicians (with greater or smaller professional knowledge and/or skill). Both types of musicians might have or lack formal music education.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMES AND KEY-WORDS

My main point of departure is a view of music as a fundamental human capacity and expression and as a process, characterized by participation and multi-focal communication. That view is based on the classical concepts within ethnomusicology (Merriam 1964, Blacking 1974, Rice 1987 etc.) but also other kinds of input: Howard Gardner wrote about musical intelligence as one of seven (or nine) human intelligences together with logical/verbal intelligence, spatial intelligence, kinaesthetic intelligence, emotional intelligence etc. (Gardner1998). There is also Jon Roar Bjørkvold's concept *Den musiska människan* – meaning the innate capacity for music and other forms of creativity in every child (Bjørkvold 1991). Christopher Small coined the term *musicking* for all kinds of activities connected to music: listening, playing, rehearsing, talking about music, arranging music etc. (Small 1998). His thought have been used and expanded by Lars Lilliestam (2006) who in his research has focused even more on the surrounding activities and approaches, more on what might be called active consumption or use of music. The use of music in peoples' lives and lifeworlds has been studied by many other authors, e.g. Tia DeNora (2000), Alf Gabrielsson (2008) and others. But they often seem to concentrate on the use of others' music and omit the actual music-making by the persons they write about. Thereby they also overlook the possible everyday creativity that is to be found among "non-professionals". Contemporary academic discourse is in great parts of the world more focused on patterns of consumption than on patterns of everyday culture.

The aim of my project – which is a work in progress – is to study music-making as small-scale and informal activity and participation in the field between and on the borders of, on the one hand, mediatized and professionalized music-making, and on the other hand listening/music consumption. At the centre of the study is oral/aural-derived music-making, where musical expressions are neither equivalent with works of art nor with products – rather processes. Musical events or situations might be workshops, courses, sessions, dances,

singarounds, gatherings, amateur concerts/performances, happenings etc., sometimes combined with expressions of poetry, story-telling, drama, dance, visual arts etc. Some key words are:

- everyday music-making and creativity
- everyday aesthetics connected to performance/activity rather than (passive) experience
- music as influence on and expression of peoples' lifeworlds or horizons of understanding
- music as meaning-making
- orality/aurality versus mediation/literacy in late modernity
- flow as the purpose of musicking
- gender, generation and other intersectional aspects

Below I will briefly present some questions and problems grouped under a couple of headings:

PERFORMANCE AND CREATIVITY

Whom do we count as “creative music-makers”? I would like to propose that the present rather stereotyped discourse of professionals and amateurs might be informed and nuanced by adding concepts like musical specialists who are appointed by and interacting with a knowledgeable community (Merriam 1964, Herndon & McLeod 1982, Lundberg & Ternhag 2004, Åkesson 2007). Is that concept useful only historically or can we adapt it to facets of late modern society? A related concept is traditional referentiality (Foley 1991), which stresses the need of the listeners' knowledge of a (traditional) genre for full contextual interpretation of each single item. What is the role or importance of common frames of reference when there are great gaps between generations in society? How dependent on contextual understanding are musical genres; what kinds of audiences are needed for the continuance of small genres like baroque opera, polskas from Värmland or medieval ballads?

Examples where these questions are relevant are a couple of small Scottish festivals for unaccompanied traditional singing, attended by “musical specialists” of several kinds, with or without formal music education. These milieus are characterised by blurred boundaries between artist and audience, and the roles of performer and listener shift between individuals among the attendants. There is a lot of skill and knowledge present; there are very few full-time musicians.

EMBODIMENT AND PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS

Music-making originates in the human body (Blacking 1974); singing as well as handling an instrument or dancing are bodily acts. But the conception of music-as-product, music as processed sound, is separated from the musicking human body and from personal encounters. What does embodied knowledge mean in late modern musical milieus? Inspiration might be found in Michael Czordas' (1994) writings about embodiment generally, and further with Leslie Dunn and Nancy A. Jones (1994) who connect embodiment to gender and voice. Ingrid Elam discusses embodiment in relation to choir singing and flow in a couple of articles (2005, 2009).

Media and global/trans-local circulation create and influence local musics. Simultaneously we find values as the un-plugged, presence and personal encounters. Possible tools to think with might be de-mediatization (Lundberg, Malm, Ronström 2000), liveness (Auslander 1999) or a “post-digital society” (Fleischer 2009).

Further examples of case studies that bring up the importance of embodiment, presence, liveness etc. are workshops for singing and dancing the so-called medieval ballads, singing

circles (“visstugor”) with informal performance of traditional songs, and amateur choirs performing their own arrangements of songs and who add some choreography and acting.

MATERIAL

- Interviews with different actors. These may be professional and semi-professional musicians/tutors/workshop and choir leaders etc. who work with amateur musicians; key persons promoting non-arranged, acoustic music-making; pedagogues working on different levels of music education; members of musical associations; and musically active scholars.
- Inquiries and questionnaires to the same categories.
- Case studies, including participation/observation, of creative work like projects, small-scale festivals and workshops engaging both “professionals” and “amateurs”. Most of the case studies are Swedish, but I also add a small Scottish side-study; it is interesting to compare the different patterns of tradition-revival-post-revival, as well as generation and gender issues in the two countries.
- Websites and existing documentation (CD, DVD, radio/TV programmes, archival material etc).

CONCLUSION

In this short presentation of a project in progress I have focused on a section of contemporary music-making which can be described as small-scale and informal activity, with emphasis on participation and multi-directional communication. I have argued for the importance of bringing active everyday music-making and creativity into focus and questioning a binary image of musical life being constituted by music producers on one side and music consumers on the other. Besides, I have presented a number of conceptual frames and keywords which I am using for my study of musicking outside or on the borders of institutions and market.

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