

## Panel introduction at "Knowing music - musical knowing" 23<sup>rd</sup> October

Hvordan ser dere utfordringene og mulighetene for «musical knowledge transmission, learning and education» innenfor slike tverrfaglige rammer?

I want to share some thoughts about how I think common denominators can promote learning across the academic music disciplines in the light of some of its challenges. More specifically, I will suggest how common denominators in the form of passion, listening and musicking bodies can allow us to build understanding, communicate, as well as improve learning, across disciplines.

One challenge in studying music, is *plurality* – that music can be so many different things. It involves so many physical, physiological, cultural, personal and technological issues, and means so many things to different people. Our academic traditions have given credit to certain of these, while other are more or less neglected, or perhaps even discredited. We as academics have defining power regarding canons, and implicitly what is good versus what doesn't need mentioning. While canons are useful as pedagogical tools and basis for historical narratives, I am suggesting toning down their importance in favor of bringing out the students passions. Most of us who work with music or dance neither do it for the money nor because we couldn't think of anything else to do. More often, we are driven by passion – we have an inner force that drives us to work and motivates learning. I think that in general academic institutions could be better at bringing out the students' passions as a driving force for learning in interdisciplinary settings, even if it would bring forth different narratives than our canons. We know that emotions can be a powerful driver for learning and memory – we simply learn easier when accompanied by emotions – especially positive ones. Bringing out the students' passions early in their studies, perhaps before they are met with canons, and acknowledging and valuing it, could boost confidence, increase safety and increase motivation. With a knowledge of our students and what they are passionate about, I believe we can design better learning activities and situations. Sharing and comparing what students are passionate about in an inclusive and respectful environment, also implies acknowledging differences. When we discuss how your passions differ from mine, how is it that you dig this music, when I dig another - affords discussing criteria with which you value something, questions of aesthetics, cultural factors, issues of listening context, structure, skills and competencies, and a lot more? Different opinions and references can create tension, of course, and demands a lot of care when guiding discussions and designing assignments.

Another challenge in music education is the high degree of specialization needed in making it or understanding it. Many musical skillsets take years of training to develop to a professional level, often at the necessary sacrifice of overview, generalizations and interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity can sometimes be seen as a disturbance when educating musicians. Still, with the academization of the arts and with it the appearance of artistic research programs, specialist training might need accompaniment from more generalist and inter-disciplinary reflection. I believe that *listening*, especially when coupled with *reflection*, could be a fruitful area of inter-disciplinary exploration, and also one which could provide a foundation for artistic research – both within performance, music technology, dance studies and musicology. Listening is the necessary reception point that all music presupposes, and we all engage in it, in one way or the other. In my opinion, listening,

both as *activity* and as topic, across genres and disciplines can provide bridges in understanding, promote dialogue, sharing of concepts, representations and tools. Also, it will probably feel as a “safer” meeting point between students with different backgrounds, since compared to performing, differences in skills and competencies won’t be so apparent. Here at NTNU we have for several years been running an introductory course entitled *Strategies of Listening as a Tool in Musicology and Music Technology* for the first semester students in musicology and music technology. This course has covered a panoply of genres and practices, giving the students a diverse set of concepts, strategies and representational tools that I believe has strengthened their understanding of each other’s fields and backgrounds, and paved the way for collaborations across programmes.

The last common denominator I want to mention in this short introduction is the body. I believe that musicking bodies could provide a highly interesting meeting point for dance studies, musicology, performance studies and music technology. Musicking bodies can be observed, experienced, felt, measured, heard, graphically represented, and described. Here, there are potentially a great number of intersections between different fields like music performance studies, embodied music cognition, dance studies and NiME studies (new interfaces of musical expression), which could form the basis for learning within an interdisciplinary field of study. Here, musicology at UiO has come a long way, with a world leading research environment, and courses like Music Moves, which is also available as a MOOC. In the Music, Communication and Technology programme, which is a collaboration between NTNU and UiO, we are maintaining the interdisciplinary approach with the body as an important topic, with core components in the programme including motion tracking, embodied cognition, and new musical interfaces.

So those were my thoughts on a few common denominators that could boost learning across music disciplines.