**Diversity, identity and inclusion. 11 nov 09.30 (40 min)**

Good morning, dear collegues; *Diversity, identity and inclusion*; the 3 key words for this congress.

Far-reaching terms essential to any art institution taking it´s responsibility for being part of building a sustainable and humanistic society - today and tomorrow.

I feel, knowing the congress programme, confident that this congress in several ways will adress and interpret these 3 themes from the *utmost important* standpoint of *cultural* diversity (multiculturism/pluralism), *cultural* identity and *ethnic* inclusiveness. The importance of this is significant and obvious.

I would myself like to approach these three title headlines from the perspective of *music itself*, as well as from a *student* *perspective*- reflecting in a personal way and sharing some of my thoughts on diversity, identity and inclusion from the horizon of improvised music; my own field.

Let me start, though, with a few words around improvisation;

**Improvisation**

The word Improvisation comes from the latin ”*improvisus*”, meaning *unforeseen, unexpected.* In Encyclopædia Britannica improvisation is explained as being; ”.. in music, the extemporaneous composition”. And the word ”Extemporaneous” is, in the same dictionary, said to mean; ”carefully prepared but delivered without notes or text”. . So, here we get a definition, improvisation can be understood like this; To create or perform something, well prepared, but yet without having decided the definite form or structure in advance.

Improvisation touches, in it´s close connection to everything that sounds and resonates, a number av human senses and capacities. The knowledge of the unconscious as well as the lore of our clear intellect. The personal expression- maybe sprung from what we call ”the soul” or our inner resonance, the reflective balance of afterthought, the instantaneous and constantly variable relation to what surrounds us, imagination as well as the mythical term *intuition*- all of this, *and more*, will enrichen the musical moment.

Improvisation as phenomenon is most likely the oldest way of creating music - and throughout history maybe the most important and essential way. The Indian raga, the Spanish flamenco, African music traditions - and more - have been and continues to be improvising art forms.

Also our western classical music once included significant elements of improvisation. Bach, Mozart, Liszt and many others were good improvisers. Improvisation used to be part of musical training. The solo cadenzas in early concertos were improvised. Later things changed… Still, composers like Chopin, Schumann, Schubert and Skriabin, f.ex. all wrote ”Impromptus”; meaning pieces that should be played ”as if improvised”- expressive as if inspired by the muse.

Our western church music, however, we should notice, never lost it´s historical roots. Improvisation has been kept as an essential part of the way a trained organ player works today.

Improvisation (or *snarstevn* in icelandic!) has, through history, been diversified into a great number of practices and methods in different genres and aesthetics with the most varying degrees av freedom and limitations- of musical frames to expand.

Today many musicians, *undepending* style or musical background, again feel the many rewarding dimensions of improvisation- once breaking what is, maybe, a wall of insecurity. Is it difficult to improvise? Is a special kind of gift, a dare-devils mind, or is a certain kind of musicality needed? Maybe a rare sense of melody, of rhytm and pulse that only a few share? Am I musical enough? Yes, we are!

Historian William McNeill writes- and this is interesting- in his book *”Keeping together in time”* about mankinds unique ability and lust for what he calls ”*pulse resonance”* – an expression that describes the syncronisation of our movement with sound, (demonstrera?) feeling both joy, a sense of trance and strength in an intense physical play between hormones and signal centers. A pulse resonance, a way of reacting to pulse, a fascination for rhythm that *only the human being shows*. Well, biologists now say we actually seem to share this gift with cockatoes and fire flies… Björn Merker, neurologist, adds that humans got the pulse resonance gift - while our putative ancestors, the schimpansees, didn´t. This pulse resonance of ours actually marks, he means, the crossroad between man and monkey..

McNeill writes that *all humans are musical*- music has been such a fundamental and rewarding phenomenon in our lifes and our socialisation that those who were not musical already a long, long time ago were extincted by means of evolution..

 The fields of improvisation has become a wide and rich art form of it´s own. To see improvisation only as a synonym to jazz music is by far limiting it´s importance and areas of use. Improvisation is more and more, as in old days, becoming a method and a tool for developing expressive quality also in our students interpretational work. A fruitful tool for finding a natural and confident way of giving life to music.

I sometimes say that for me improvisation is simply an approach to music where the musician is both allowed and required to become a vital part of the musical opus itself…

Now, let´s approach the 3 key words of our congress;

**DIVERSITY:.** from [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language) [dīversitās](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diversitas#Latin) –at that time meaning *contradiction*. Today Diversity means [difference](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/difference) or [unlikeness](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/unlikeness). For me, applied into our music, diversity is:

*The right to be and the quality of being different. The quality and right of being somehow unlike.*

One of the key meanings of *Diversity* is explained in the encyklopedias to be: *The condition or result of being changeable…*

How to handle and how to be open to change, to the unforeseen and unpredictable process, how to handle and even enjoy a constantly new situation- this is an essential challenge in improvised music. Actually, I´d say, in all kinds of music; To listen- and to react in accordance to what you just hear.

Diversity is a challenge that requires you to be prepared for the unprepared- *improvisus*. Now, changes and the unforeseen may create insecurity, insecurity may lead to fear.. I guess some of us in this room have our own memories from study years of feeling and experiencing insecurity and fear, facing the making of music in uneasy, unprepared or stressful situations. One of our challenges as teachers and leaders of art institutions is to give our students all the tools necessary for them to be able to fully use all their knowledge, abilities and experience- *without fear*- in their artistic work and close collaboration with others.

Kenny Werner writes in his book *Effortless mastery* very percipient about *fear-based learning*. About an unsatisfying atmosphere of studies where the fear of mistake becomes stronger than the joy of creating music. About the hard work to re-programme yourself after such experiences.

This fear also easily leads to a defensive strategy from the student;

*”Where defensivness begins, learning ends”… Lerman*

So, creating a school where fear of mistakes is not felt as burdens to carry by our students, building a school where we instead manage to learn students to embrace change and mutability- *each and every student building the* *diversity in our creative institution*- this must be a goal for us.

One of the figures in Tove Janssons beloved tales of Mumin says: *”Everything is very uncertain- this makes me calm.”*

- There is also the expression *Link diversity* in electronics: this means there is two clearly separated physical ways to send the information- so that at least one of them anyway is functioning when something is wrong with the link. A guarantee of functionality. Two ways - meaning there is always another alternative/possibillity.. An axiom in improvisation as well as in other music aesthetics. The anti-thesis of right or wrong.

- Let´s point it out once more; the term Diversity also has the important meaning of *Cultural diversity* = multiculturism, pluralism, ethnic inclusiveness. We know this needs to be in focus when the world changes, when thousands and thousands of people travel over sea and land to seek peace and a better future for themselves and their children. We should as institutions not fool ourselves to believe that diversity in form of f.ex. ethnic inclusiveness is an absolutely common goal in society, an undisputable direction to go, an issue naturally taken care of, with responsibility and reflective efforts, by our politicians and intellectuals. That this inclusion will just happen by itself..

As music institutions, I believe, we have to take the responsibility and the initiatives to become one of the role-models in society. I feel, looking at the *undescribably rich diversity within the fields of music*, we learn from and owe this to the music.

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**IDENTITY.** latin; *idem*- meaning ”the same”. For me, the word *Identity* means: *The right to be yourself, the quality of being unique...*

From the encyklopedias again;

The word Identity means: The [difference](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/difference) or [character](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/character) that marks off an [individual](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/individual) from the [rest](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rest) of the same kind… As when we immediately can identify the pianist by her way of playing..

Identity can also be: a [name](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/name) or [persona](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/persona)—the appearance or character one presents to the world—*the appearance by which one is known by others.*

The latin word *persona* meant mask, or character. As a teacher I have to realise that young art students striving for- and being encouraged by me- to seek artistic clarity and inner resonance, will, even so, feel the need of using their masks; *the appearance by which they want to be seen by others.* They will find their way over time by at first going, unconsciously, into socially rewarding and artistically tickling *roles*, following each other as well as their inspirators, heroes, teachers and role models. An unavoidable and natural motion towards further development. Towards a *musical identity*..

We all, teachers as well as institution leaders, want to support our students way towards this *musical identity,* support their path towards finding their own artistic expression**.** *How can we do that?*

*”The first thing we notice in an act of creativity is that it implicates a* *meeting*”, Rollo May writes in his book ”The courage to create” *”Creativity is the intensively conscious human beings meeting with her world”.*

This, I mean, is why we all, in respectfull curiousity and with an empathetic listening approach, have to make sure to *meet* the student in her working process. To work with *the method of the meeting* - without a too rigid or pre-programmed agenda. To listen..

Through this we will, in our long-term work, become role models for an artistic working method that will both inspire and challenge the student, that will build a reflective alertness in her own way of meeting people, music- and new knowledge. As a result, I believe, the student finds her own method of also meeting classic acquisition of knowledge and demanding tasks with a *rewarding creative and curious approach.*

There is, I´d like to point out, *no contradiction* between this pedagogy of the empathetic meeting and a learning process focusing on result. There is no contradiction between encouraging our students own thinking and reflexion- and to clearly make demands. No, the other way round; Creativity needs limitations.( I quote Rollo May again)  *”Creativity arises through the struggle with and against the things that limits us”.*

In the necessary and unavoidable tension between the need and search for a confirmatory group identity – *showing their persona*- and the aim for developing their individual ways of musical expression- *showing their personality*- our students will continue developing *also years and years after* the education. We are, the psychologists say, the sum of our experiences. Therefore our *identity -in music and in life -* is in a constant process, it expands..

Let me quote Thomas Tranströmer; from his poem Romanesque arches; ” *Inside you, one vault after another opens endlessly. You'll never be complete, and that's as it should be.”*

Having visited many different countries and cultures as an artist and teacher, my own thoughts around *musical identity* were somehow again brought up to date and questioned when I, only a few weeks ago, visited *North Korea* - invited to give the first ever lecture in improvisation. At the Kim Won Guyn Conservatory, I met a school with the most virtuoso and skilled young students- I have *never ever* experienced, playingwise, such a virtuoso level in the field of western classical music - a school in a country were art, though, has totally different starting-points than what we see as natural.

Art in DPRK doesn´t at all mirror the individual, it rather manifests and confirms the over-all esthetic agreement, glorifies the art that upholds DPRKs social and truly *collective* context. Here the personal reflexions in music are omitted, we experience the absence of individual interpretation and personal artistic initatives.

Models, patterns, imitation, artistic agreements and perfection are central terms when music education in DPRK shall be described. Of the artist herself, we sense almost nothing - and a painter doesn´t put his signature to his work. It is an impressive espousal of the thorough craftsmanship.

Why then, is an *expressive musical identity* important, I had to formulate. I share the idea from humanism, the belief that each individual is unique. I believe that if you want to search and share all the widening dimensions of music, to affect and reach the listener, the music must *resonate and be given life* from inside. Shared as if with your own inner voice. Only then I can open for the kind of communication between the listener and the musical opus that I aim for, only then awakens the silent dialogue between the listener and the artist. A *meeting,* once again,with the idea that behind images, letters, movements and sound maybe *something more* comes to pass..

**INCLUSION.** For me this means: The insight that music is about spiritually embrasing each other. About sharing, experiencing, creating, worshiping, reflecting, questioning - together. In all our differences and with all our similarities. Equality in spite of our differences- as music shows us.

Let me quote my distinguished collegue Sten K: *The power and magic of music is that it so clearly shows us that we need each other”*

*Inclusion* istogetherness- as in doing music together. A central phenomena in music. This practical and active togetherness in music we have named;  *playing ensemble..*

The word *ensemble* comes from the late latin word *insimul*, which means isochronal, at the same time. In french language the word ensemble has developed an extended meaning; together. The english word simultaneous obviously also has it´s roots in the latin insimul. Our musical term *ensemble* thus means that two or more individuals, together and at the same time, do music together.

The solitary musician, the soloist, is an exiting phenomenon and the meeting with a single musician and her expression often fascinates the listener. Yet, from the *interplay* between two or more people- *where they include each other*- comes *all* the magic dimensions of humanity´s communication. From the newborn baby´s babbling to it´s mother, over messages carried by rhythms and pitches to the development of complex languages and to what we today call music, the listening, the dialogue and the interaction of interplay has been essential and fundamental.

Beyond the many complex artistic parameters we know of in the interplay of an ensemble, even more of important dimensions occur *as we musically include each other*;

The ability to listen is constantly practised, each active participant needs in every moment to take a standpoint and to make decisions of where to take the music. The naturally fluctuating relation between the individual and the collective that always has to be balanced- in all this, the Ensemble work also carries the essence of social training and of afterthought based on experience. Step by step the musical work therefore also leads the student towards a deepened understanding and promotes her growth towards becoming a democratic and responsible citizen.

Encyclopedia Britannica writes: ”Musical **ensemble**s everywhere have their own internal social structure, typically mirroring that of their society at large in their type of leadership, the amount of freedom available to the individual players, and so on.” *This correlation is also reversible.*

While in the ensemble regularly shaping the music together, in an *experimental and developmental* group creativity, *fundamental* tools are given for our students to become active participants in building our future society- they get, through their experience, the tools also *to develop and change it..*

Do we believe that our society needs people who can cooperate and take own initiatives? Do we need individuals that take responsibility for themselves as well as for their environment? If so, then music is an irreplaceable source. This is a very motivating insight for the daily work we all do…

Stravinskij also thought about inclusion: *”The inner meaning and foremost goal of music is to support the solidarity and togetherness between people.”*

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Now, what happens if we consider, if we imagine the opposite words (to Diversity, Identity, Inclusion); *Uniformity, conformity, exclusion.* Again, from a student perspective and from my horizon;

**Uniformity***:* Grows when there is too much of right or wrong in the music, when maybe J.S. Bach can be played in only one way. To counteract this, I sometimes, with a smile, recall John Cages rule nr 6 from his ”10 rules for students”*: Nothing is a mistake. There is only make.*

Uniformity occurs when we see hierachic levels between different musical practises. When the students opinions are never asked, when they cannot- or feel they cannot - influence their own education. When we practise, because this is maybe how we were once treated ourselves as students, *a judgemental way of teaching.* Uniformity grows if our schools practise a way of teaching where our private preferences, subjective aesthetics and personal taste suddenly become *unquestioned truths* in the eyes of a young student.

Remember Rollo May; creativity needs, it is *depending on* the meeting. Between the teacher and the student and the school leaders. In a sense and atmosphere of dialogue..

We must always beware that tradition doesn´t become frozen ideology. Let me quote Gustav Mahler: *”Tradition is not about preserving the ashes, but to pass on the fire”.*

**Conformity** (= anpassning) I quote from the psychology litterature; ”Conformity is a type of social influence involving a *change* in belief or behaviour in order to fit in with a group”. Conformity is, simply, *leaving your own identity behind*..

This can become the case - if an institution, without reflexion and continuous analyze, teaches in the way things were always taught. If we unreflectedly maybe teach in pride over what we have learned ourselves instead of, humbly in the service of music, doing everything we can to support - through the *inviting dialogue* - the next generation of musicians and musical identities. Art needs not the epigones, the blind followers; art needs the *inner resonance* of each one of us.

**Exclusion** Exclusion will unfortunately be what some students experience, *if* conformity and uniformity is allowed to set the standards.

Can we actively work *against* exclusion?

Well, besides the social dimensions of feeling and being fully included in all relevant groupings, I believe our institutions should make sure to truly involve, include and illuminate the student also to see and understand her own developmental process and truly support the students own active reflexion- we could maybe call it *Artistic process inclusion.* To encourage the student to dare to take the artistic responsibility - not to fear doubt or insecurity and for that reason not trust their sense of way to go. One way to include our students like this, through a pedagogic model, is the *Critical Response Process*.

American choreographer Liz Lerman reflected over her own killing experiences of negative, harsh and unconstructive feedback as a young dancer and she realised the lack of methodical knowledge around how to give and share a fruitful response. She started working out her analyse and theory with the aim of creating a method for giving a critical but non-judgemental response – *the constructive feedback* - that would make each and every student eagerly run back to the rehearsal studio filled with energy, lust and new ideas - instead of silently crying while picking up the pieces of yourself from the floor. She calls it Critical Response Process.

This school, HSM, is today in a stage of learning and using her thoughts. This as one of the outcomes of our eye-opening Music and Gender-project several years ago. Many of us feel we are taking new and important steps towards giving a better and more relevant and constructive feedback to our students. They feel and become included in their own artistic growth.

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For the early mankind music was a way to build the society - a bridge between people, a window between the physical and the spiritual world, a ritual to come closer together. A lingua franca to promote care, respect and the sharing of experiences.

Also today, Music gives us fundamental and obvious hints of how we, with all challenges we see, can approach essential questions around Diversity, Identity and Inclusion- again building our future society. Let´s listen to the messages of music itself…

Thank you!