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Music – Their Lives

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Music – Their Lives

The experience of music and view of music of a number of Swedish and English young people

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Introduction

Music plays an important part in the lives of people of all ages. It can have symbolic significance for nation-states and regions, can be a source of deep emotional experience for the individual, or can be an expression of life-style, image and social belonging. Music affects, but is itself affected by forces influenced by different purposes and intentions of an economic, ideological, educational, and political nature. The landscape of music is extensive — so, too, is that of music education. A teaching situation in Music in the Swedish school can vary. Helena plays the violin, Marcus plays the electric bass, Frida plays the trumpet, and Erik plays nothing at all but has a great interest in music and knows a great deal about the music that interests him. All are pupils at compulsory school, where they have a class teacher in Music. Helena, Marcus, and Frida also go to the Municipal School of Arts, where they have a second music teacher. Their music teachers have been educated at one of Sweden's colleges of music. What do we know about, and what do we need to learn about, Helena's, Marcus's, Frida's, and Erik's relation to music? What music experiences have they? Can this experience be counted as knowledge?

Music is linked with the person and the person's interaction with the world around. It is tested and judged on the basis of the person's own experience and everyday practical knowledge. With regard to young people this comes out clearly in, for example, Drotner 1994, Economou 1994 and Stålhammar 1995. In the world of young people there are no fixed boundaries between subjects, no dissection of

subjects into fragments. If young people's own experience conflicts with the process of knowledge acquisition such as can be found in, for example, the school, it is understandable that their values, attitudes, and praxis will begin to emerge outside the framework of the established institutions.

Music is a major leisure interest for virtually all young people. Though linked with image and body, music itself is at the centre. It can involve video, film, graffiti, rock concerts, their own singing or playing, clothes, style, disco, work-out, jazz dance, body-building, jogging, skateboard, snowboard, in-line skates, or computers. Almost all young people say that they are interested in music — but what do they mean by music?

It is sometimes said that young people have a passive attitude to music, that they mainly encounter it in a context of reception. This, though, is a misconception. Most of them are active with regard to music. They compose at the computer or use music in conjunction with other leisure pursuits. Music is important in their lives. They participate in the changes occurring in the musical community. The computer has blurred the boundaries between listening to music and actively practising it. Everyone has the chance to compose, arrange, and mix music. Music is combined with other cultural pursuits. The voluntary music schools that have existed in the majority of municipalities in Sweden are being transformed into schools of arts, and the work of the latter is often pursued in co-operation with the compulsory school. Courses are offered in drama, dance, art education, and music.

Music and the aesthetic dimension play an important role in the IT society of today. More or less all young people have experience and knowledge of music in different forms — but how do they themselves look upon their musical experience and their relation to music? This question should be regarded as fundamental when it comes to educational strategies and quality enhancement within childcare, the school, and teacher training.

Young people's own music and the school's music

Since the subject Music is often given a shape adapted to the external and internal framework of the school, its content is filtered through the teacher's

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conception of the subject, intentions, methods, and didactic considerations. This can give rise to one-way communication, teacher to pupil. An interactive teaching process, on the other hand, presupposes an open perspective which may very well involve disturbance of the given framework and conditions. Here the basis, direction, and process of the teaching derive from the encounter between the pupils' experience and the teacher's. The prerequisite is that the subject (or an item within the subject) should be experienced as real, should be felt to be analogous to conditions and situations familiar to the two parties — that teacher and pupils should reach a consensus in their description of the subject and find a common base for the development and deepening of knowledge.

Against the background of the above, three central questions emerge: (1) How do young people evaluate music today? (2) What does music mean to them? (3) Where, and in what circumstances, does their encounter with music occur? It is in order to obtain answers to these questions, though chiefly in order to elucidate the relation of young people to music in general, that the Experience and Music Teaching (EMT) project is being carried on at the School of Music, Örebro University, with the support of the National Agency for Education. The focus is on problems to do with young people's musical experience and music teaching in relation to cultural conditions and transcultural processes. In the study that in part is described here, Swedish and English 15-year-olds are interviewed. The perspective is the young people's own — it is a question of how they perceive their relation to music, and of what they consider other people's relation to music to be. Thus the perspective is not that of the school but that of the pupils, and the purpose is to elucidate the young people's musical experience and view of music in the light of social background and environment, identity, and cultural values.

The young people to be interviewed were chosen by an English and a Swedish music teacher. Each teacher chose six, three boys and three girls, giving a total of 12. In each of the two groups, three of the pupils play an instrument or take singing-lessons and three do not (or have ceased to play). The reason for choosing English and Swedish young people as the subjects of the investigation is that the two groups encounter, against the background of their own world of music, school systems with

certain similarities regarding goals. Nevertheless there is a divergence when it comes to the paths to these goals. The intention was to reflect music in society both in *Music in the National Curriculum* and in "Lpo 94," as the Swedish curriculum is called. Thoughts concerning "real" music, the music to be found in society, formed the starting-point when the music part of the National Curriculum began to emerge in connection with the major educational reform in England in 1988. When *Music in the National Curriculum* appeared in 1992 in England it had greater concreteness than its Swedish equivalent, in the form of directives and specific examples (cf. DES 1992). Both the Swedish and the English curriculum were revised in the late 90s. It can be said that in both countries the development has been increasingly away from "school music" and towards "music in school".

Yet in spite of this movement away from a more school-oriented music teaching to teaching that reflects the music to be found in society and the wider world, it emerges from the interviews that the school's world of music constitutes no more than a small, limited part of the young people's own world of music. The latter is a world they interpret and evaluate from their own perspective — a perspective often differing from that of the school. Views and value judgements regarding music can be concerned both with music as an independent artefact and with the relation of human beings to music. Or, putting it another way, the discussion of what is to be regarded as quality and what is not can have either an objectivistic or a relativistic basis. In the first case it is a question of intra-musical, aesthetically founded criteria regarding what shall be held to be "good" or "bad", in the second case an important part is played by "experiences of community", "communication between human beings", and "habits and customs".

Since the EMT project has not yet been completed it is impossible to give a final account of its findings here. Nevertheless certain contours are emerging, provisional though they may be. The young people's descriptions are permeated with value judgements of different sorts. When they speak of music in evaluative terms, what they say is often based either on their own norms of value or on norms they take to be those of the school and the adult world. In the first case they are adopting a perspective "from within", in the second a perspective "from without". In concrete

terms it is a question of, on the one hand, their "own music", the music to which they have a personal relation; and, on the other hand, "school music", the music judged in accordance with certain established norms of value associated with the school.

In much of the world, the young people of today are subjected to three musical fields of force bearing different purposes. First, there is the international music industry, where what is offered — often directed towards the young — is reflected in astronomical figures and where financial gain is the main purpose. Second, there is the cultural background and environment that has formed, and continues to form, cultural values, commitments, and preferences, not the least of which are those bearing an emotional stamp. Here affinity and identity are central. Third, there are teaching contexts, represented on the one hand by schools, colleges, and universities; on the other hand, by educational and other associations, churches, private, and individual teaching situations, etc. Here the goal is to convey knowledge and education. It goes without saying that educational philosophy, cognitive approach, didactic approach, methods, and choice of content are of crucial importance with regard to the form and structure of the teaching. In the light of this world of music in which the young people find themselves, it is the purpose of the EMT project to *elucidate young people's musical experience from the point of view of cultural identity, social background, and basic values*. It is hoped that this knowledge of musical experience will constitute a valuable basis for establishing music's place and form in both the compulsory school, the municipal school of music/arts, and teacher training (cf. Stålhammar 2003).

Method and theoretical perspective

The theory as a whole is not a priori but is created as the research proceeds. The method is inspired by Grounded Theory. This means that one type of data collection can be planned in advance whilst other types emerge as the work goes forward. The endeavour is to produce as true a picture as possible of the pupils' own version of how they themselves experience their situation.

Interviews and observations are two of the methodological tools. In order that explanations, connections, and processes of development shall be a part of the "map",

a study is also made of the structural contexts in which the group under investigation find or have found themselves. Cultural outlook, framework factors, cultural heritage, environment, cultural capital, ideologies of teaching — these are but a few of the factors which can contribute to the elucidation of action and interaction, even though the focus is on a very particular course of events (cf. Stålhammar 1994:74f.).

Through comparative analysis the attempt is made to reflect different perspectives and perceptions of situations and phenomena. Different sources are compared in order to obtain as broad and deep a picture as possible. At this stage is not principally a question of providing answers regarding a well-defined factual state of affairs, but more a question of describing the different categories, attributes, and dimensions which have emerged. When the core categories begin to crystallise, the theory emerges — in the form of substantial theory and formal theory. The procedure is the following:

- *compare events and phenomena which are applicable to the different categories*
- *integrate the categories and their attributes*
- *delimit the theory*
- *note down the theory*

In order to create a structure — to see different levels, bring to a focus and see connections, all this in respect of the subject Music Education — inspiration has been derived from the sociologist Derek Layder's further development of Grounded Theory in the form of a "research map" which involves overlapping and dialogue between different lines of research (Layder 1993:72). Since music is a complex phenomenon, as is learning about it and as are people's dealings with it and experience of it, the individual's thoughts and behaviour on a specific occasion cannot alone constitute the determining factor in an analytical reflection (cf. Jørgensen's description of music education, Jørgensen 1995:13).

In brief, the theoretical foundation can thus be described as a *theory-generating approach* in dialogue with, on the one hand, *theories of experience* on the basis of

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Dewey (1989), Swanwick (1994, 1999) and Stålhammar (1995) and, on the other hand, with *symbolic interactionism* based on Blumer (1969). In light of the international research literature there are principally four areas which emerge as central for the EMT project as a whole: (1) people's past and present experience of music; (2) people's relation to music and what they understand by the concept of music; (3) problems concerning educational and didactic efforts; and (4) problems concerning the social and teaching environment.

The value of music

To a somewhat greater extent than the Swedish young people, the English students exhibit a critical attitude to the music teaching they have received at school. This confirms the notion that pupils often look upon the content and disposition of the subject Music from a school perspective. They consider that the subject is of such a nature as to have to be restricted and adapted so as to fit into the school framework. This means that their descriptions of music are often contextualized on the basis either of the school or of life outside the school. As they see it, music-making felt to be natural and rooted in reality does not fit into the school pattern. There is a certain difference, though, between the Swedish and the English young people in this respect. Whilst the Swedish young people's criticism is largely directed against the form of teaching alone, that of the English young people is often directed against both form and content — they consider that school music on the one hand is too classical-oriented, on the other hand is too much concerned with a child-centred repertoire and so-called "beginners' instruments", like the recorder.

The Swedish young people's criticism does not concern genre to the same extent. Rock and pop are a part of their consciousness in school as well, albeit with both form and method adapted so as to fit into the school's pattern. However, the pupils do not always feel that this music truly reflects their own experience: music-making that should be rooted in reality is transformed into a school task. This is a general phenomenon with regard to school subjects, but the effect is particularly striking when it comes to Music, because here the pupils have both a distinct personal

interest and a large prior understanding. This came out clearly in the so-called GRUMUS project (Stålhammar 1995:104–7).

Both the English and the Swedish young people describe their attitude and relation to classical music principally in terms of three factors, though with certain differences regarding the priority to be given to particular factors. In the first place, classical music is associated with school, compulsion, and control. This is particularly true in the case of the English young people. In the second place, it is widely emphasised that classical music has certain indisputable aesthetic and cultural qualities and should therefore be a part of music teaching. In the third place, a number of the young people indicate that they sometimes choose to listen to classical music in their leisure time, chiefly when they want to relax and feel at peace. By virtue of this, they do not express themselves just in objectively evaluative terms when it comes to classical music; they associate it also with leisure, free choice, and well-being. Their hierarchical classification of their musical preferences is not just a question of genres but also — and indeed to a great extent — a question of attitude, context and environment.

Several of the young people say that when musical knowledge and experience is evaluated by the school and the adult world, music is often linked with techniques and measurable knowledge — is linked, that is, with knowledge of written music, knowledge of how to play music, and with factual knowledge about music and its history. These components are considered essential in such evaluation. Knowledge and experience of music are measured largely on the basis of the manner of one's dealings with music. The young people's comments indicate that form and behaviour are essential components of musical experience as those around them, principally the adult world and the school, evaluate it. Little attention is given to whether there is a strong commitment (in terms perhaps of both time and emotion) or a great amount of knowledge concerning areas more difficult to measure or not considered to fall within the realm of music teaching. Young people's knowledge and experience can have great value within their circle of friends but little value in the school and the adult world.

Concerning knowledge and experience, there is a grid that can in principle be laid over all school subjects, Music being no exception. It consists of techniques, measurable knowledge, and progressive methods of learning. This means that any style of music at all can be linked with lack of freedom and control, and with a formalistic school-oriented attitude. Despite the fact that music teachers nowadays are usually well-acquainted with different genres and can play in different styles, there is a possibility that music teaching, regardless of genre or style, will bear a school-oriented stamp which the pupils do not recognise as anchored in reality and which can lead to a distanced attitude to music in the long run.

No matter what the perspective applied by the young people in the EMT project, they present music as part of a larger context. It can be connected with teaching and with various activities, moods, environments, and social contexts. Music and identity emerge with increasing clarity as a central unit, particularly outside the teaching context.

In line with what the Danish media researcher Kirsten Drotner found in one of her projects, the young people in the EMT project link music with image and body (Drotner 1994, Stålhammar 1999a:42). Music here plays an important role, and descriptions of it involve such positive terms as "relax, lovely, like it, get closer to one another, fun". Music is intimately linked with the person — with the "soul", one might say.

The role of music

Myself and music — an individual-related dimension

When the young people describe their personal relation to music, it is in the first place in terms of music being something you can "escape to" — a relaxation from the tasks of everyday life. This is music's *escapist role*. When Judy describes what music means to her, it is evident what a positive and emotional relation she has to it. Fredrik, for his part, sees music as a means of daydreaming and pretending that you are somewhere else.

I think it's probably a form of escapism. Something which I can go to, sort of ... which is away from everything else, my everyday life.... You know,

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something which can relax me, which I feel comfortable with. (Judy, England)

Oh, you can be somewhere else altogether — just sit down and detach yourself from everything else. (Fredrik, Sweden)

In the second place, the young people describe how important music is for channelling different sorts of feelings. This is music's *essential role*. Music plays a large role in the case of, as some of the English young people put it, "a bad mood" or "something depressing you" or "when I'm happy". Both the Swedish and the English young people think that music can both channel feelings and give rise to the manifestation of feelings. Mental well-being and dynamics are consistently linked with music. Thus music plays an important role in the person's inner life. One type of emotion is channelled by one type of music, another type of emotion by another type of music.

You put different kinds of music on when you're in different moods. If you're upset about something, a bit depressed, or if something happened that's not very nice, then you put on some slow music. If you're happy you have, like, pop music. Something with a bit of beat to it. I feel like dancing. (Sheila, England)

For Sheila music is important in analysing, strengthening, softening, or diverting different manifestations of emotion. It is deeply linked with her sense of identity. Thus in her case music is not an independent artefact but is intimately associated with who she *is*. Without prompting from the interviewer, Sheila links music directly to her frame of mind when she describes her attitude to it.

In the third place, the young people emphasise the crucial significance music has in their lives in general. This is music's *existential role*. The young people's attitude in this respect is forcefully brought out in their response to the question "If music were forbidden?"

If music was forbidden, I wouldn't have a life.... My life would stop. (Judy, England)

It'd be horrible. It'd be really awful. I'd hate it! It'd be horrible! ... It's just there and it's just something to listen to and you'd be unhappy if the world didn't have music. It'd be really sad, wouldn't it? Really upsetting! (Sarah, England)

I like music. I really do. I don't think I could cope without it. I suppose I listen to music every day. (Kamilla, Sweden)

Both research, and the everyday knowledge of parents and teachers in particular, indicate that music plays a major part in young people's lives (cf. Andersson et al. 1999, Bjurström 1993, Holmberg 1994, Stålhammar 1995). Common conceptions to be found in the adult world, such as "they've always got music on" and "there's got to be noise whatever's going on", present a superficial and to my mind sloppy image of young people's relation to music. From the interviews it is clear that music today has a deep existential meaning for young people and is linked with identity (as the above comments illustrate).

Experience and environment

The starting-point for the formulation of aesthetic theories has usually been the artistic product itself. In such cases the latter is regarded as a physical object existing independently of the artist, the recipient, and the world around. On this view, the creation is what the product is. The focus is not on the experience or people's relation to art, but on the product. When the artistic object is separated from both origin and conditions, however, a wall is built around it, insulating it from the life-process, as Dewey maintains (1989:9).

In order to achieve a closer understanding of different sorts of artistic products, it can be useful to observe other types of experiences than those usually designated

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aesthetic. By beginning with events and situations — not subjected to the artistic process — it is possible to obtain a greater understanding of background, context, and interaction such as will provide nourishment for scientific reflection. Detaching art from the human context and putting it on a pedestal with a label indicating, for example, style, genre, or critical evaluation can have an alienating effect on many people. Experiencing a sense of familiarity in an environment, feeling at home there, or feeling its appeal can provide both readiness and space for an aesthetic experience (cf. Dewey 1989:11). A large proportion of people's aesthetic experiences are not associated with art at all; nevertheless these experiences constitute a basis for the experience of art. On the basis of such experiences we can feel a sense of familiarity in the face of an artistic experience, feel moved by it, feel surprised by it, feel its appeal, feel repugnance at it, be caught up in it, feel happiness because of it.

This applies to the artist as well. For the artist, too, art emerges from the interaction with his or her own person, the environment, and experience. By drawing attention to theories that isolate art, or place it in its own enclosed world, separated from other experience, Dewey seeks to emphasise the consequences of thus limiting the possibilities of art. Shutting out people's deep experience brings into being a system where certain interpreters determine the limits of what is art or not, and classify experiences as deep or shallow. Aesthetic experience, Dewey believes, needs to be restored to the normal life-process. By going back to everyday experience, he maintains, we can also see the aesthetic qualities of an aesthetic experience.

Were works of art placed in a directly human context in popular esteem, they would have a much wider appeal than they can have when pigeon-hole [sic] theories of art win general acceptance. (Dewey 1989:17

From Dewey's theoretical argument in *Art and Experience* the following points can be drawn:

1. *Aesthetics [i.e., art] should be linked with the general process of human life.*

2. *Those who offer other interpretations cannot ignore and neglect this.*
3. *The attitude to art is based on the interaction between human beings and their environment.*
4. *A person's value judgements are based on experience and environment.*

Both Dewey and the young people in the EMT project describe art in relation to general values. Socio-cultural and emotional experiences form the basis of these explanatory models. The young people indicate their own experiential environment in speaking of "me and music" and "us and music". They distance themselves from value judgements coming from outside. Their own judgements are linked with their own music — with which they have an important prior relation. Other music, such as that of the school and the adult world, does not have the same connection with their emotional and socio-cultural experience. There, it is instead of a question of a "matrix of evaluation" embracing such factors as the utility aspect and what is considered good, distinguished, or historically valuable.

From the young people's descriptions of the role music plays for them there emerges a Grounded Theory, which on a formal plane can elucidate people's relation to music on the basis of two "depots of experience". In the first case the young people's descriptions involve an individual perspective, which is to say the role music plays, or has played, for the individual. It is a question of "music and me", here designated *the individual depot of experience*. This depot contains experience indicating that music has played and continues to play an *escapist, essential, and existential role* for the individual. In the EMT project the social aspect, designated "music and us", is also taken up, but this aspect is omitted from the present article. We turn instead to *where and when* music appears.

The spaces of music

Spatio-temporal worlds

In post-modern society the individual moves, concretely and through abstract systems of thought, in both a local and global world. Time and space exist both as

intellectual models and as palpable phenomena. Through the media, for instance, an infinite number of environments arise regarding which the individual can consciously or unconsciously take up a position. People are granted access on the one hand to environments that they recognise or will encounter; and, on the other hand, to ones with which they will never have any contact. This causes previous boundaries to be erased and a host of worlds, real and fictitious, to pass before the person's eyes. Giddens (1999:105) calls this the media's "collage effect". With the disappearance of such boundaries the person is confronted with a number of choices of both a real and a fictitious nature. Dream and reality merge as the fictitious worlds are interpreted and evaluated on the basis of personal experience. The real worlds are often influenced and controlled by dreams and visions originating in these fictitious worlds. When Sarah describes how sound and image affect her emotionally, Giddens's thoughts come to mind.

If I'm watching something on the television, say something sad, and then the sad music will come on, then I feel pretty unhappy. And you know, I'll be oh-oh-oh, and I'll cry and stuff like that. And then, you know, someone is really happy on telly and, like, you can hear all the happy music, and your body's happy. (Sarah, England)

In both the Swedish and the English young people's descriptions, music is linked principally with leisure time. The context can either be individual or involve friends. Institutional contexts such as schools, courses, churches, or concerts are mentioned only marginally. Taking the young people's own accounts as the starting-point, this section therefore focuses on non-institutional contexts. The concept "spaces of music" is used here to reflect the music environments — or, to use Giddens's term, "life-style sectors" — which the Swedish and English young people evoke in their accounts. Through the way in which you relate to music, signals — often in the form of symbolic acts — are transmitted to the world around. It can be a question of screening oneself off, even of forming a front against those around or, on the other hand, of creating an affinity with them. Entering one or the other space can require both social

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and cultural acceptance. In certain cases the space is totally closed. Music, environment and social context are interwoven to create something whose symbolic expression can be compared to that of a rite. It is important for those involved to be able to recognise both open and hidden signals. In certain cases it can be a matter of attitude, facial expression, style of clothing, behaviour, or choice of words; in other cases a matter of familiarity with the particular music or performer and the evaluation of the music.

All in all it can be said that there is a symbiosis between music and several other factors. The young people's descriptions indicate that their attitude to music is consistently active. Thus, it is wrong to suggest, as is sometimes done, that they are sometimes active in relation to music, sometimes receptive. The interviews point to active involvement on the aesthetic, the social, and the emotional planes (cf. Stålhammar 1995:189f.). Both the section "The Value of Music" and the section "The Role of Music" have shown this clearly.

From the analysis of the interviews it emerges that the young people themselves carry out a certain categorisation of their music environments. In most cases the descriptions can be traced to a certain social context. Though it was not explicitly requested that these environments should be given attention, the young people took such attention for granted in discussing their music. The social environment is present in their *accounts* in most cases.

Because such a broad array of organised activities is available so often to both Swedish and English schoolchildren, young people become involved in a great many things. There is nothing unusual about participating in, for example, football training, scouting, choir practice, and jazz ballet. Of course parental interest and involvement play a major role. Music is a natural feature in many of these contexts, chiefly in the church but also, for example, in scouting and in political associations. Nevertheless the young people's accounts have to do chiefly with their own social environments, not those of organised activities. Their descriptions make clear that the young people's musical activities take place chiefly within three environments or sectors, here designated as "spaces": *individual space*, *internal space*, and *imaginary space*.

Individual space

It's very important. After having a hard day at school I can go home and put some nice music on and whine to the music. When I'm doing my homework I'll put some music on and it helps me think. (Simon, England)

The young people consistently describe their own room at home as a place they can withdraw to, either on their own or with friends. This room is both a creative environment and a place for recreation. Sometimes music is there as relaxation after a hard day at school, sometimes it is a creative centre. It can accompany both cleaning and doing homework, as well as relaxation. It is connected with the situation and gives an extra dimension to the environment. Your own room, or individual space, can be seen as an abstract concept, signifying a place where you can screen yourself off, or distance yourself from the world around. It need not, though, be a question of your own room — it can equally well be a question of insulating yourself from the world around by means of headphones, an earpiece, or simply daydreaming.

At the same time as the young people refer to group solidarity and collective contexts they emphasise the importance of being able to withdraw, be alone, and think and do as they please. There is a dynamic interplay between the individual and the collective. It is felt to be important to be part of a community, but maintaining individual freedom and authenticity is also felt to be important. On both the individual and the collective plane an identity-testing process occurs which includes an experimentation concerning the attitude to be adopted towards both style, genre, and image.

Since young people do so much trying out and experimenting with regard to their attitude, on the one hand, to the concrete environment represented by friends, family, school, and society and, on the other, to the fictitious environment represented by the cinema, theatre, music, and the media, they are sometimes looked upon as society's "seismographs". They function both as interpreters of the spirit of the age and as the vanguard of an intuitively grasped future (cf. Lalander et al. 1999:20).

Internal space

When my friends are round my house we don't really watch the telly or anything like that. We probably go upstairs to the bedroom and put on the music and listen to it. (Sarah, England)

The mood becomes a lot lighter. You sort of don't sit in silence, and it's ever so quiet in the room, but there's music sort of, and then you're more ready to talk and that. (Kamilla, Sweden)

Listening together with friends often assumes the nature of an "internal space" — the door is shut on the external world, both literally and metaphorically. Listening to music creates a mood that unites the group and makes it easier to be together and talk to one another. There is a symbolic distancing in relation to the world around, sometimes amounting to the formation of a front against other people, in particular adults. Music can be both bridge and barrier (cf. Drotner 1995).

The British music scholar Lucy Green maintains that music helps the individual define his or her identity in relation to one or more groups. The individual member of a group of friends or of a sub-culture group uses music as a means to confirm identity in relation to the group. Music contributes to the cohesion of the group and constitutes a symbolic field of force within which it is possible to feel a sense of belonging and harmony. This is a process that can go on within changing groups and with changing music styles, genres, and preferences. In philosophy of music the question of music's meaning is often discussed and problematised. Green thinks, however, that when it comes to different groups' relation to music we should take a greater interest in how groups actually construct musical meaning (Green 2001:50–51). Attention should be given, she says, to

... what those meanings are, how groups come to agree upon them, and how they come to contest them, both within and between groups.

In the small group that corresponds in the present case to internal space, musical meaning is constructed through a host of influences, both real and fictitious in nature. Your own world, including relations with friends, school, leisure, and the immediate environment, encounters and merges with other worlds, both real and virtual. Giddens speaks in this connection of a separation between time and space, whereby "space" can be separated from "place" (cf. Giddens 1990:18, 1999:26). Here "space" designates the area where experiences from different times and environments come together. These experiences need not be the person's own but can come equally well from outside, for instance through the media. "Place" designates the person's own solid, familiar local environment. On the one hand, internal space can be described as a fixed place where a group of young people with the same local connection gather and, on the other, as a space where (through global influences) ideas and experiences come together which have their origin in other times and worlds.

Imaginary space

If you look around this college you can probably section people from the way they're dressed and the type of music they like. (Judy, England)

In the young people's accounts a space is also discernible that has a softer, less distinct contour than in the case of individual and internal space. Then it is not a question of closed doors and impenetrable groups but of a cultural borderland in the form of symbols, style, and behaviour. Crossing this borderland and reaching the heartland is an indication of affinity, acceptance, and participation. This space, here designated "imaginary space", can be represented as a style-based realm of community. It is a sphere where style, appearance, activity, attitude, etc., and music are the unifying factors. It can be a layer of music enveloping a centre of events, for example blasting from a boom-box for enveloping skateboarding or in-line skating. Other examples are cyber cafés and various Internet environments. People around can hear and see, approach, take part, or withdraw.

There is a symbolic value attached to the position adopted in relation to imaginary space. It need not be a question of established groups. Being friends, or

even knowing one another, is not necessary for the achievement of agreement and acceptance. Style and attitude may very well be enough. The way of talking about and relating to music is important. It functions as a symbolic communication, both setting a boundary and signifying status within the group. Being regarded as an "insider" or "expert" is relevant to the social identity being sought. The ability to make distinctions between different styles of music, distinctions that are perhaps imperceptible to an "outsider", can be an important qualification — and the way you dress, move, and express yourself can also be relevant.

Particular and universal fields of force

The young people in the EMT project reveal both a private and a public attitude within their individual, internal, and imaginary spaces. In the first case it is a question of relaxing and escaping from the world around, or a matter of, for example, sending signals to those around by means of provocative music. In the second and the third case it is a question of belonging, of wanting to belong to a group or of attaching oneself to a style — a question, that is, of creating a social identity. "Where do I belong?" is a central question. In the two latter cases, however, the focus on one's own person, on the self, has not been extinguished. Even in the quotations concerning group identity, questions like "Who am I?" and "Where do I stand?" are implicit. The three spaces point to a striving for both a personal image and social belonging. This can be felt to be a dualistic attitude.

The simplified and stereotyped image that one sometimes encounters of young people as being at the mercy of the mass media and peer pressure is not in accord with the thoughts and reflections presented by the young people participating in the EMT project. Instead there emerges a complex image where both personal integrity and social affiliation are of central importance. Temporal and spatial factors play a major role. From the young people's descriptions it is apparent that they may very well find themselves in different "spaces" or in different positions on a temporal scale. Their attitude can thus change, depending on time and space. The three spaces involve a constant process of interaction where music is present both on a personal, a concrete social, and an abstract social plane. In the latter case the essential features are style

and symbolic belonging. In this process music is present as a signal to those around, as an emotional accumulator, and as a catalyst for style and image. Identity has a private and a public side, and music plays a major role with regard to both. We can see how both local and global currents of influence shape this changeable identity.

In the musical landscape today we can see a large field of tension. There is a fascination with both local and global manifestations of culture. Now that young people can move freely in both the local and the global sphere, the feeling of alienation and respect vis-à-vis the universal has diminished. There is, for example, a dialectical attitude to music and its different forms of expression, and a relation between the local and the global. At the same time as styles of music spread globally, local styles become increasingly important. In the media there are many examples of mixtures of musical styles, but a striving for genuineness and authenticity in performance is also in evidence. Further it is evident that musical life is becoming increasingly homogeneous in that the same types of institution, media, and modes of performance are found in the majority of countries, especially in the West. At the same time, the number of styles and forms is increasing, and musical life is becoming increasingly diversified. The dominant traditions reflected in concert halls and opera houses mingle with the lesser traditions in the form of folk music, ballads, and so on (cf. Lundberg et al. 2000:60).

The application of a relational perspective brings out the interplay between the local and the global. The focus is not on the polarisation between them but on their relation. Through this relational perspective there emerges an elucidation of how people move within the local and the global sphere, bringing out the relation between the different forces and environments. This is reflected in the young people's descriptions of the three spaces. Both local and global — or, putting it another way, particular and universal — forces can be discerned in their descriptions, and there is a relation between the two. This relation exists as well between individual, internal, and imaginary space. These spaces, which symbolise the person's musical attitude and preferences in relation to time and environment, have their origin in both particular and universal forces. The local and global currents bear a relation to both temporal and spatial factors.

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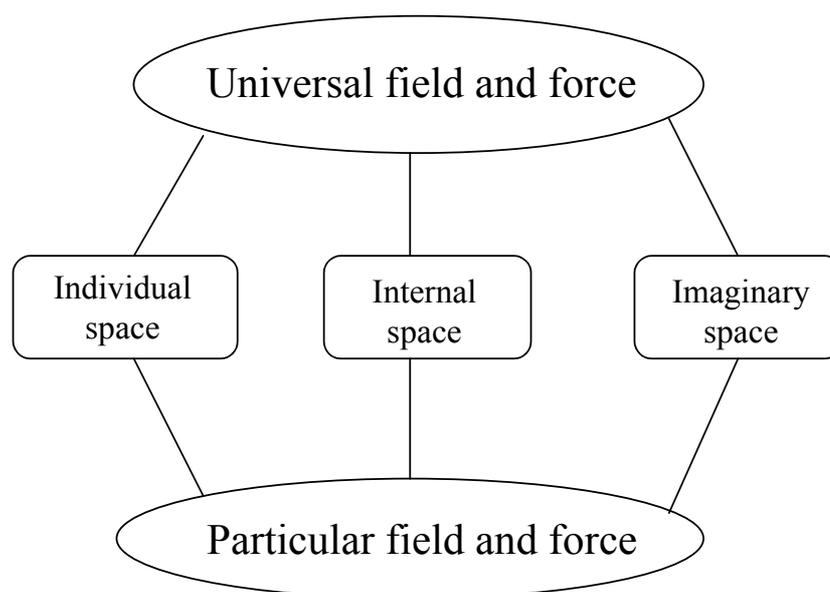


Figure 1

Musical experience

Much sociomusicological research has taken a "people-to-music" direction in the sense that it has indicated how music reflects human beings and their environments from which it has emerged. Often the attempt has been to explain the nature of certain musical phenomena by setting forth the social and ethnic environments in which these phenomena have been created. Simon Frith emphasises that music is linked with identity and is a process going in opposite directions, not only from people to music but also from music to people. Frith's point of departure is that people do not simply create music, but music also "creates" or forms people (cf. Frith 1996:108f.). Because music moves in time and space, he maintains, it acquires a life of its own and gives rise both to aesthetic norms and attitudes. An interest in a certain style of music cannot be explained merely by group affiliation or social background and social affiliation; it is also a question of how music affects the individual. In Frith's opinion, it affects both the social environment in relation to the individual and the individual in relation to the social environment.

When a cultural phenomenon, in this case music, is moved from one context to another it takes on new dimensions. African-American music is often cited as an example of this acculturation (cf. Lilliestam 1988). Music both affects and is affected

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by society. The interviews with the young people in the EMT project point to a process where individual, local, and global forces combine to give music its expression and meaning. A link arises between individual, internal, and imaginary space. Musical experience can be described then in both individual and collective terms, and there is a connection between them. Music does more than reflect group membership or style. The musical 'object' influences and changes the subject too. An interactive subject–object flow is the result. A connection thus exists between musical experience — or, more broadly, aesthetic experience — and both individual and collective identity. A piece of music not only reflects the person or environment that has produced it; it also creates and shapes identities. Kirsten Drotner speaks of *skabe sig selv* (creating oneself) when she describes young people's aesthetic activities, and Ruud goes so far as to present music as a metaphor for identity (Drotner 1994, Ruud 1997:38). An aesthetic experience is more than a matter of being moved by a "work"; it can also be described as a process involving both individual and environment. Frith describes musical experience in terms of "self-in-process", which is very much in line with Dewey's description of the concept of experience (Frith 1996:109). For Dewey, finding oneself "in" a situation means having an active relation to one's environment (Dewey 1989:19)

Summary

Aesthetic quality is linked not only with an object but also with a context. It has to do with both our perception of ourselves and of those around us and with how we wish to appear — or, as Crozier puts it (1996:71), with "the private and the public 'self'". This is also what Ruud means when he presents musical experience as intimately bound up with our self-image, and with how we appear and want to appear to those around us. *People have an active attitude with regard to musical experience.* For these young people, thoughts and reflections about music and the hierarchical classification of their music preferences are *not in the first place linked with musical genres but with life-style, context, and environment.* The qualities of music are evaluated on the basis of these parameters, with value judgements being relativistic.

The young person's own experience is linked with knowledge of the musical domain, which can have *great value for the individual and the individual's circle of friends but little value in the school and the adult world*. Norms of value in the case of the latter two are associated with techniques, measurable knowledge, and progressive methods of formal learning. The young people in the EMT-project applied "a matrix of evaluation" involving such factors as utility and what is considered good, distinguished, or historically valuable.

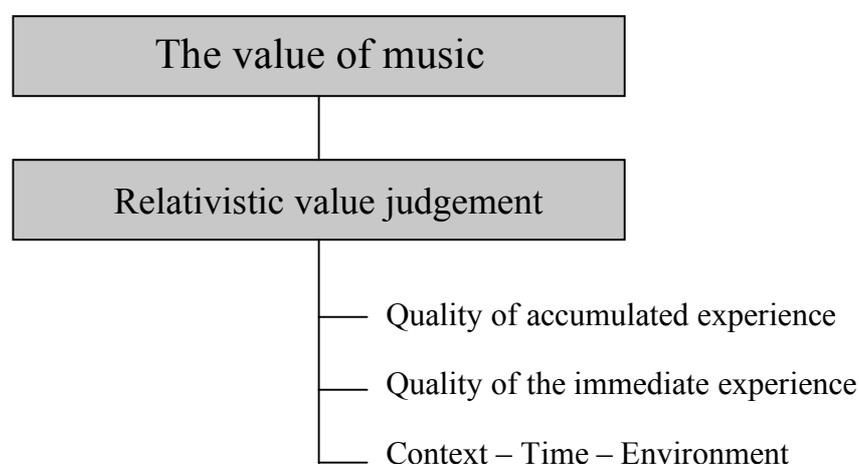


Figure 2

The young people's descriptions of the role played by music in their lives are based on socio-cultural and emotional experience. *With regard to their own experiential environment they present both an individual-related and a socially related description in referring to "me and music" and "us and music"*. In the first case we can speak of an *individual depot of experience*, and in the second case of a *social depot of experience*. We can see how music plays an escapist, an essential and an existential role for the individual, and for the group a mood creating, uniting, and distancing role.

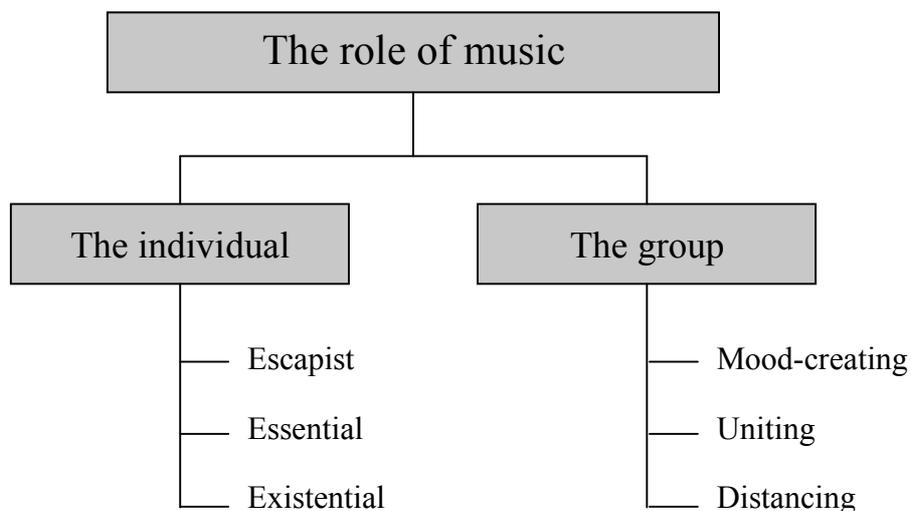


Figure 3

The young people move in *both a local and a global world* and there is an interplay and relation between the cultural manifestations deriving from these two worlds. The particular and universal forces are linked with both the concrete and fictitious worlds. Against the background of these centres of force we can see how the individual's attitude and preferences with regard to time and space can be described in terms of three types of "space": individual, internal, and imaginary. *In the case of individual space the world around is excluded.* No one outside is given the chance to intrude. Here you can screen yourself off from the world around, or keep this world at a distance. Your own experience and your own choices can emerge in their full force. There is the chance, on the one hand, to reflect on and interpret reality and, on the other hand, to acquire a distance from it. *Internal space is a question of listening with friends.* The music unites, contributes to the mood and facilitates communication. Often the door is shut on the outside world, both literally and metaphorically. Through a symbolic distancing vis-à-vis this world, a lack of engagement is indicated with regard to other people, in certain cases even a front against them — especially adults. *Imaginary space is a style-oriented sphere of community.* Style, appearance, activity, attitude, and music are the unifying factors and function as a signal to the

world around. Being at the heart of the area is an indication of belonging, acceptance, or participation.

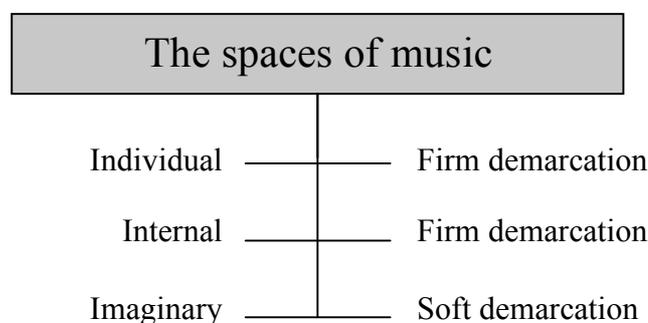


Figure 4

The young people test and evaluate the music teaching they receive on the basis of their own experience. In their world there are no sharply defined boundaries between subjects, no dissection of subjects into fragments. Music for them is linked with the person and such interaction is with the world around. It is tested and judged on the basis of personal experience and everyday practical knowledge. Music's value, role, and "spaces" are all central factors when the young people in the EMT project describe their relation to it.

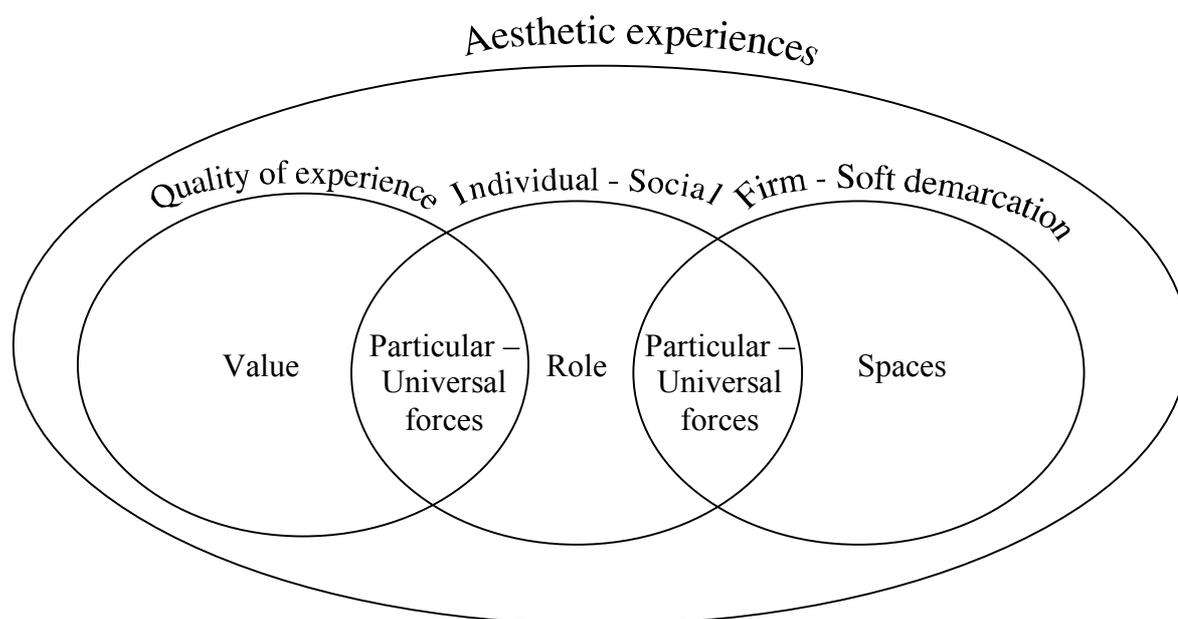


Figure 5

When the experience of young people conflicts with the process of acquisition of knowledge such as can be found in, for example, the school, it is understandable that their own values, their own attitudes, and their own praxis begins to emerge outside the established institutions. It is a question not of style of music but of attitude. When this is set beside the investigation referred to above (Stålhammar 1995) concerning the interaction between teacher and pupils, it is learning — or, better, *the formation of knowledge* — which emerges as the central factor in the encounter between pupil and teacher or between pupil and pupil. There is, then, a transition from teaching as instruction or as proceeding by way of pupils' being occupied, to teaching as experiment; at the same time there is a transition of the role of the teacher from that of pedagogue/leader to that of guide, and a transition of the role of the pupil from that of recipient/participant to that of co-creator. Here the words of the sociologist Tomas Ziehe are highly apposite: learning, he says, occurs "between tradition and the untried" (Ziehe 1986). This implies co-operation between teacher and pupils, which in turn implies that the knowledge and experience of both parties must be taken into account, and which further implies that the main focus of music

teaching will not be on music as an independent artefact but on people's relation to music and experience of it.

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