



**The concert as an expression of pedagogical practice in  
Danish music schools.**

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## ***Introduction***

This project is occupied with the Danish music school and with focus on the teachers' everyday practice.

The aim of the project is – through description and analysis of pedagogical strategies, intentions and actions of the teachers - to present a united understanding of the pedagogical basis of teaching in the music school, regardless of the level of teaching, the subject or the context. Hereby I hope to make a contribution to general pedagogical discussion and pedagogical development within the music school

The project takes its departure in the view, that certain types of scenarios during the music lessons can be described as concerts. *The concert* is a pedagogical event that takes place in the everyday teaching. To illustrate *the concert* as a pedagogical concept in the classroom, I will present two short cases:

### **Case A**

*Ida watches Agnes (Teacher A.) intensively, and after a few seconds they start to play: Agnes the piano and Ida the recorder. They work together as one person and the music gently floats through the room. The last note in "Lover Herren" is stretched out for a long time and then – like magic – they stop playing at exactly the same time*

### **Case B**

*Joanna is standing alone on the middle of the floor, and there is a complete silence in the room. Joanna lifts up her French horn, look at the notes in front of her with a concentrated expression in her face, she takes a deep breath and starts to play "Concerto a tre" by Telemann. When she has finished playing the part, you can hear the sound of clapping hands in the room*

Both the cases above takes place in the classroom, but might just as well have taken place on a stage. *The concert* is an event, which taken out of its context, is almost impossible to distinguish from a performance on stage.

The empirical ground of this project will mainly consist of 4-5 case studies based on video observations of different teachers in different contexts. The project and the theoretical approach is linked to one of my former projects, which was occupied with solo-instrumental-teaching. This project will be described in more details below.

The actual project spread out the field of investigation to include also teaching of children in groups, teaching preschool-children, and teaching teenagers playing in a band, in order to examine if the findings and conclusions from this earlier study, can be found on - and apply to – other levels of music teaching and of other different types of teaching.

## **Background**

In 2007 I made a phenomenological study of solo instrumental lessons conducted by two teachers from Assens music school– one teaching the recorder, the other the French horn. The study was a case study based on an exercise developed by Kirsten Fink-Jensen, lector at DPU in Copenhagen, called *Forbløffende praksisser* (amazing practices). This exercise uses video observation as an important part of empiric material, and the aim is to search for *amazing* events in everyday practice and then link them to theory. In my case I searched for *the amazing practice* in the obvious and recognizable parts of teaching. *The concert* was for me, an event I knew and recognized from my own practice, but not on a very conscious level. (*Tacit knowledge*). I therefore decided to investigate *the concert* further.

The project showed that both teachers used and set up a concert like scenario in the music lessons. The project also showed that even if the teachers set up the concert for different purposes and used different teaching strategies, both events could be seen within the same theoretical frames, and thereby be seen as different aspects of the same theories. The theories used were *Apprenticeship*, *Communities of Practice* and *Bildung*.

### **1. Apprenticeship – the scaffolding master.** <sup>1</sup>

Both teachers could be described as *scaffolding masters*, where teacher A. used the concert as a first step in the scaffolding process: The concert as a way to recruit and motivate the student for problem solving and assignments introduced later in the lesson. Teacher B. used the concert as the last step in the scaffolding process: The concert as a *descaffolding* process, where responsibility for problem solving is handed over to the student and she is supposed to be qualified to solve the problem/ play the music independently.

During the event both teachers used strategies as demonstration, participation and positive evaluation in order to help the students to cope with and overcome the tasks. Beside that teacher A. used teamwork playing (“sammenspil”) and teacher B. used selective attention, metaphors and examples. Some of these categories emerged from the project, others relate to Nielsen (1999)

### **2. Imaginations of communities of practice**

One of the characteristics of apprenticeship is that it takes place in communities of practice. Both teachers were acting in consideration to the actual community of practice consisting of one teacher and one student, but the way the teachers set up the concert scenario, could also be seen as a result of their imaginations of practices outside the classroom, imaginations of tasks necessary to qualify and be able to participate in other musical communities of practice.

The concert related in both cases to authentic situations – a pretended church concert and an actual upcoming concert - and both events reflected specific tasks of the professional musicians. Teacher A. used the concert to reflect the tasks necessary to play in an ensemble and focused on communication within an ensemble. Teacher B. used the concert to reflect tasks necessary to perform, and focused on communication with an audience.

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<sup>1</sup> Nielsen, Klaus (1999). *Musical Apprenticeship*. Psykologisk skriftserie, Aarhus Universitet and Nielsen, Klaus & Hansen, Jan Tønnes (1999) *Stilladsring – en pædagogisk metafor*. Forlaget Klim

### 3. Theories of Bildung

Frede V. Nielsen has identified four overall ideas/ paradigms of music in relation to *Bildung* (dannelse):

- an *education/ upbringing-orientated paradigm* (opdragelsesorienteret paradigme) which is related to formative Bildung theories
- an *anthropological orientated paradigm*
- a *culture-orientated paradigm* (kulturteoretisk paradigme) which is related to material Bildung theories
- an *aesthetic orientated paradigm*.

The project showed that teacher A. could be related to music as an anthropological paradigm and as an aesthetic paradigm. She played the concert together with her student, accompanying her on piano, and used the concert as a way to create a nonverbal communication/ a social gathering and she also made it possible for the student to get a musical experience (musikalsk oplevelse). Teacher B. could be related to music as an *upbringing-orientated paradigm* and as a *culture-orientated paradigm*. He stated in an interview that the ability to mediate (music) is an overall important ability, and as such a mean to become a whole person. Furthermore he stated that he aimed to qualify the students to participate in music cultural events/ studies/ communities of their own choice.

### Conclusion

*The concert* can be seen as an expression of theory on three different levels<sup>2</sup>:

**T1** – level of practice: The concert as an expression of the teacher's choice of actions during the lesson.

**T2** – level of common-sense: The concert as an expression of the teacher's imaginations and experiences with communities of practice.

**T3** – level of well-defined theory: The concert as an expression of the teachers overall reasons and purposes with his/ her teaching music.

The concert, as a pedagogical concept connected to teaching in music, shows big potential. By using the concert as concept, it gets possible to capture essential aspects of music teaching as practice, of music teaching as a trade, and of music in connection to Bildung (almendannelse).

It is, however, important to bear in mind, that *the concert* expresses music as a phenomenon of sound. Through the concert is music brought to live. The validity the conclusions mentioned above are depending on music is actually brought to live in the classroom. Seen from this perspective an important question to discuss would be "How can we ensure that teaching in music-schools is not only a matter of playing an instrument but also a matter about playing music?"

*Birgitte Schade Nov. 2008*

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Eric Wenigers model of relations between theory and practice. (See ex. page 65 in Imsen, Gunn(2005). *Lærerens verden*. Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag A/S, København).