

# Abstract

## Academic Jazz- a foundling in the family of classical music ?

*Berit Andersson, School of Music, Theatre and Art, Örebro University, Sweden*

### **Research questions:**

What kind of arguments were used in public reports and Jazz magazines to promote the introduction of Jazz music as a section of the higher musical institutions in Sweden ?

What were the perceived musical and other qualities within the Jazz genre that motivated a need for a higher academic education within the established classical institutions?

### **Method:**

In order to find answers to the questions, I have studied public reports concerning culture and education during the period 1971 to 1978 as well as jazz publications from the same period.

### **Sources and results:**

The source material for my empirical study so far are two reports from The Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs (called The Council) – “A New Cultural Policy” SOU:1972:67 and “Music – Man – Society” SOU:1976:33 -

I am also in the process of studying the Jazz magazine “Orkesterjournalen” (OJ). So far I have covered volume 39-44, i.e. from 1971 to 1976. My focus is to see if I can find articles that present arguments to promote Jazz as a discipline at a university level.

In ”A New Cultural Policy” SOU:1972:67, the Counsellor for Cultural Affairs points out that the musical institutions (e.g. Symphony Orchestras, Concerts Sweden and Regionmusiken) predominantly represents the European art music. The Council for Cultural Affairs therefore suggests that the underrepresented genres should be given additional resources.

In ”Music-Man-Society” SOU:1976:33, the Organizational Committee for Higher Musical Education (OMUS-74) introduces the concept “neglected genres”. I interpret this new concept as a paraphrase and a further development of the description “underrepresented genres” in “A New Cultural Policy” SOU:1972:67.

OMUS considers Jazz to be a neglected genre, and wants to see a strong commitment to the new musical genres, including Jazz. OMUS also points at the current imbalance between the Swedish musical higher education and the real-world realities that the students meet as professional teachers.

OMUS describes a development of the Afro-American music (which includes Jazz music) along two separate lines. One is a development towards commercial entertainment music and another towards a serious, artistically and aesthetically demanding form. It is the latter line that OMUS argues should be introduced as a new education at the higher musical institutions. At the same time, OMUS expresses certain fears associated to Afro-American education at the academic institutions, due to the unfamiliar environment from a genre perspective. The Committee fears that the academic education might lead to a smooth school-version of the genre.

So far I have not found any explicit argumentation for the introduction of Jazz education at an academic level in the magazine Orkesterjournalen. The material I have found that concerns Jazz music and education is of a more informative nature:

OJ October 1971: An article covering the first Swedish pedagogically oriented improvisation course, taking place during 10 days at Bollnäs folk high-school. Among the participants were several music teachers who had felt a need for such a course for a long time.

The participants believed that improvisation had been neglected in past musical education, and that the course was an important pioneering work.

OJ January 1972: Information about a meeting in November at the folk high-school in Ingesund, where the basic structure of a possible future education in Improvisation was laid out. Representatives from various interest groups participated, e.g. The Swedish Jazz Federation, The Association of Swedish Jazz Musicians, The Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Concerts Sweden, individual musicians and a large number of music pedagogues from different places in Sweden.

The meeting concluded that the balance in the current educational offering needed to be improved. The imbalance is described as a strong focus on the traditional European art music, despite the fact that, according to the meeting, the twentieth century is more influenced by Afro-American musical currents. The pedagogues emphasized that Afro-American music is what the students are interested in.

OJ May 1975: Information about a summer course in Improvisation at Kävesta folk high-school in Örebro. The course teachers were all professional active Jazz musicians.

OJ July/August 1975: The Association of Swedish Jazz Musicians asks for a public report, aiming for a conscious, culture-politically guided development of the Jazz genre.

OJ May 1976: An article about a new Jazz education in Malmö, administered by Malmö Jazz Institute. One of the initiators of Malmö Jazz Institute states that it is obvious that Jazz and other improvised music requires the same educational quality as European art music.

OJ September 1976: An article about the Jazz summer course at Ingesund folk high-school. The writer thinks that a problem with this course is that it is such a small part of the overall educational offering from the school.

### **Preliminary analysis of my findings**

Many of the wordings in the argumentation to promote the introduction of Jazz at the university education level appears to be based on the report "A New Cultural Policy" SOU:1972:67. The Council states that *the activity within the musical institutions predominantly represents the European art music*, and wishes to see a *broadening of the available genres within those institutions*.

OMUS picks up the thread and points out the imbalance between Art music and Afro-American music within the musical institutions educational offering.

The Council's suggestion that the underrepresented genres should be given additional resources is being used in the OMU'S argumentation, rephrased, when they consider Afro-American music to be a *neglected genre*.

Wordings like *culture-politically- and music-politically important* appear several times in the argumentation, both in "Music-Man-Society", SOU:1976:33 and in the articles in OJ.

The report "A New Cultural Policy" gave a culture-political legitimacy to the actors working for an introduction of Jazz at the university level.

The wordings from OMUS, where they describe the preferred Jazz music as a *serious, artistically and aesthetically demanding form of music*, seem to be an attempt to reach a higher status level by using a language more common within the art music. Along with this ambition to describe the Jazz music as a serious genre, the spokesmen had concerns regarding how the education were to be carried out. One suggestion from OMUS was to locate the education to places natural for the genre, such as workshops at existing Jazz Clubs.

In OJ's coverage of Jazz music and Jazz education, improvised music is described as being neglected in the past. The first course in improvised music is seen as *music-politically important*. The various actors that OJ interviews wants to see a *better balance in the educational offering*, and the imbalance is described as an *almost total focus on traditional European Art music*. The pedagogues that participates in the Improvisation courses states that the Afro-American music education is what the students ask for.

In the published letter regarding the public report that The Association of Swedish Jazz Musicians required, wordings like "*a conscious culture-politically guided development of the Jazz genre*" were used. One of the interviewees believes that jazz and other improvised music *requires the same educational quality level as the traditional Art music*.

So far, my conclusions regarding the questions in my study can be summarized by the following, slightly rephrased statements:

- Jazz music is a music genre that has a serious aim, is musically challenging and has an artistic ambition.
- Within the musical institutions there had been an imbalance between the traditional European Art music on one hand and other genres on the other.
- Afro-American music was what the pupils are interested in.
- The twentieth century was strongly influenced by Afro-American musical currents.
- Music pedagogues and teachers needed an education that include improvisation and other related genres for their future profession.