

Läsversion. Tar mindre än 20 min att läsa.

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“BOYS DON’T SING!” Do you hear the hidden questions?

Lennart Hammar, 2009

TO BE INTERESTED IN MUSIC

Interest in music for a great number of people today
is to listen to
when other sings
but for others it is also to participate themselves.

The possibility of listening - as everyone knows,
depends on the enormous technical development
with especially mobile phones and computers.

A LIFE LONG VOCAL BEHAVIOUR?

From the very beginning in each man’s life,
singing is a way of communication/voiceplay/languageplay
between children and parents.

This is perhaps a start of a lifelong vocal behaviour.

But, especially for a boy,
what are the necessary conditions
to get singing as an ability and interest when he grows up?

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

My childhood and youth was characterized by - among other things,
singing and playing instruments.

I belonged to the greatest music school in Sweden: the church –
with all it’s possibilities.

Early in life I started listening to popular music
and was “swept along” by the Beatleswave.

After compulsory school I studied music,
became a music teacher, choir conductor and
and teacher in singing –
with special interest in singing development for children.

I was especially inspired by Inga Olsson Ekström,
who worked with children with singing problems.

My first academic work was an essay on her life and work.
2004 I reached my Bachelor.

CHOIR-SINGING – A MULTI-FACETED ACTIVITY

Choir-singing as activity is well established
with aspects as traditions and innovations.
But choirs are not as frequently heard (and seen) in Swedish radio or TV
as the popular music singing artists
who become models for music- and singing-style for young people.
The “missing male” trend is a well known problem in choir singing in Sweden.
Already in a childrens choir you can see the problem:
A children choir is a choir for girls.

It is interesting to look at popular music
and find that the majority of men are tenors –
an often missing part in many choirs.

To work with boys and singing is a delicate job –
but necessary and deserving.

TO SING OR NOT TO SING IS THE QUESTION. The beginning towards the research question.

The voice is an instrument that belongs to all people – a possibility,
but, at the same time,
what are the necessary conditions
for to practice these possibilities?

In the beginning of the week we heard the little story about
one flute and three children.

I will now make a comparison and say:
there are thousands, millions of boy-voice-instruments
but how many of boy-voice-instrument-users can you find?
In other words, it seems to be more boy-voice-instruments than users.

Voice research¹ in children has been done since about 100 year
but still there are more research in adults than in children.
There is still a need of research and the hope is
to get more knowledge about pedagogical aspects
and early identifying of voice problems. (McAllister-Södersten 2007)

¹ Fagiús, G. [red.] (2007). *Barn och sång* – om rösten, sångerna och vägen dit. Studentlitteratur. (=Bos)

Singing development:

Important aspects are to work with
and to get young people interested in voice quality,
range and to sing in true pitch.

I say this because I think that young people
can get stimulated by a healthy competition.

Today we also can add a very important statement:
everybody has a range. (Fagius 2007)

Of great importance for the singing development is
to have a stimulating environment as a child
but that is not easy to bring about
and that is really a question of social justice. (Welch 2000)

An important task together with young boys is
to inform them and make them interested in their coming voice break.

Today it is clear from the research area that “we are all musical” –
the question of to be or not to be musical
is not any longer a hindrance for to enter musical activities.

To go towards the research question,
the question is what aspects are hidden in the statement “Boys don’t sing”?
What lies behind that thought
or what is inside a boy of different attitudes –
that leads to either singing or avoidance?

It looks like, that among other aspects
it is productive to try find
a gender perspective on singing.

If it is a truth that boys think that singing is for girls
it can perhaps be interesting to study
when Harrison (2003) talks about “avoidance of femininity”

and Abrahamsson and Taavo (2009) talk about that
when boys and girls behave in a special way
it depends on that they want to create a meaning
of what it means to belong to a sex.

HOW THIS WORK STARTED

On account of my interest in boys and singing I started a survey - and it later resulted in contact with the Malmö Academy of Music and my tutor Gunnar Heiling.

My starting point was to study attitudes to singing in boys and their fathers and was carried through in spring 2008. It was very interesting to accomplish the interviews.

All of the 42 interviews were recorded and now the highly actual question is: How do I use this extensive material/data in my master study? How much is possible to use and in what way? It takes a lot of time to transcript the interviews.

Another question is what kind of study have I started? Am I an orthodox qualitative researcher or have I also made an quantitative approach?

At this moment I have made, a total of six transcriptions of my interviews: Three with boys and three with their fathers to try to find out attitudes towards singing in boys and the question of possible singing influences from their fathers.

PROCEDURE

7 interviews are made individual with 6 year old boys and just as many with their fathers.

In the same way

7 interviews with 11 year old boys and their fathers and

7 interviews with 18 year old boys and their fathers.

The interviews with the boys included a moment of structured singing and also a task of listening to voices.

I asked the boys to give me information of what they heard and of their attitudes to what they heard.

I have started but not finished to categorize my material from my first concept: conceptions of to sing.

THEORY – IN INITIAL STAGE

My basic theory comes from Pierre Bourdieu with his conception habitus.

The basic definition is:

“The habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-given perceptions;

it is a general transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions. (Bourdieu, *Distinctions*, 1986.)

To the term Attitude, a socio-psychological term, used in my initial survey, in which underlying components are knowledge, emotions and readiness for action,

I try to add the concepts from above: practices and perceptions and the word offer (Engström, 2006).

The word offer means: “An individual's action /or interest/ is formed in the meeting between habitus and what offers /of musical practises as for example choirs, bands et cetera) in the actual occasion./”

I will try to continue my work with the concepts attitude - that means knowledge, emotions and readiness of action and the concepts perception, practises and offer.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

From the background above which among others consists of the singing knowledge and my theory in initial stage

my aim is to try to come closer to the habitus of the boys concerning attitudes towards singing - which means what they know about singing and other aspects of music, which feelings they can have towards singing and what readiness they can have or not have to sing.

I hope that from the interviews with their fathers understand something about possible influences or not from father to son.

Here comes four more detailed questions:

- a) What ideas (perceptions) can boys and their fathers have about to sing/singing?
- b) What can I (from different observations) find about the boys singing-ability compared to their own conception?
- c) Do boys and their fathers sing? If so, in what practices?
- d) Are there singing-activities for boys to choose - where they live - if they are interested?

My research question is:

What elements in boys' attitudes toward(s) to sing seems to be of most importance for the question of to sing or not to sing?

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological approach is hermeneutic/al which implies a way of getting knowledge through interpretation and understanding. (P-J Ödman: *Tolkning, förståelse, vetande*, 2007.)

I have, I hope, given my preunderstanding above and my intention is to make a wide approach with my conceptions and make categories, and new categories until I have reliable elements from boys' attitudes towards singing that can say something about their possibilities to become singers or not. [Perhaps it would have been better to say: What I ask for?]

I use the following seven steps in my method:

1. Make sure that the material (source) is reliable. How can validity and reliability be secured?
2. Record the interviews.
3. Make transcription(s). Decide criterion(s) of the choice of accuracy.

4. Contextualize the primary text/material with “pre-understanding”-texts.
5. Make selections that clearly point out the research problem and give justice to informant(s).
6. Choose quotations that well illustrate the different categories, important elements of singing attitudes.
7. Make an interpretation: a) Within the text b) related to the context.

When I process my empirical material/data I use the concepts Perceptions of singing, Singing-ability, Practices and musical offer.

ANALYSIS

Just started to categorize with the first concept: conceptions of to sing.

RESULTS

(Later:)

DISCUSSION

(Later:)

Et cetera!

**[The last Power point picture + a singing boy from the CD:
Favoritsånger från Pippi, Emil, Madicken...Naxos:]**

CAN NEW VOICES BE HEARD IN THE FUTURE?

- **Will research make it possible?**