



# The Social Construction of Musical Talent

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# The social construction of musical talent

- How is musical talent socially constructed in music education as a professional field and how is musical talent related to musicianship?

# What is meant by the social construction of reality

- Berger & Luckmann (1966) The Social Construction of Reality
- Mental representations of actions are learned and become habitualized and institutionalized
- Knowledge of what 'is' becomes embedded into the institutional fabric and structure of society

# Discourse

- Sets limits for the sayable and the possible
- Foucault (1969): discursive formation restricts individual freedom
- Discursive power: "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization"... (Foucault 1976, The history of sexuality, vol 1.).

# Research on musical talent

- Carl Seashore, "The Measurement of Musical Talent" (1915)
- Karma's musicality test (80's-90's)
- Gagne's (2000) developmental theory distinguishes giftedness from talent: inherent *gifts* develop in interaction with environment into specific expert *talents*.

# Gardner's categories of intelligence (1983)

- Bodily-kinesthetic
- Interpersonal
- Verbal-linguistic
- Naturalistic
- Intrapersonal
- Visual-spatial
- Musical

# Everyone is talented enough?

- John Blacking, *How musical is man?* (1973)
- International Society for Music Education (ISME)
- Ava Numminen, *From a poor pitch singer to a progressive singer* (2005)

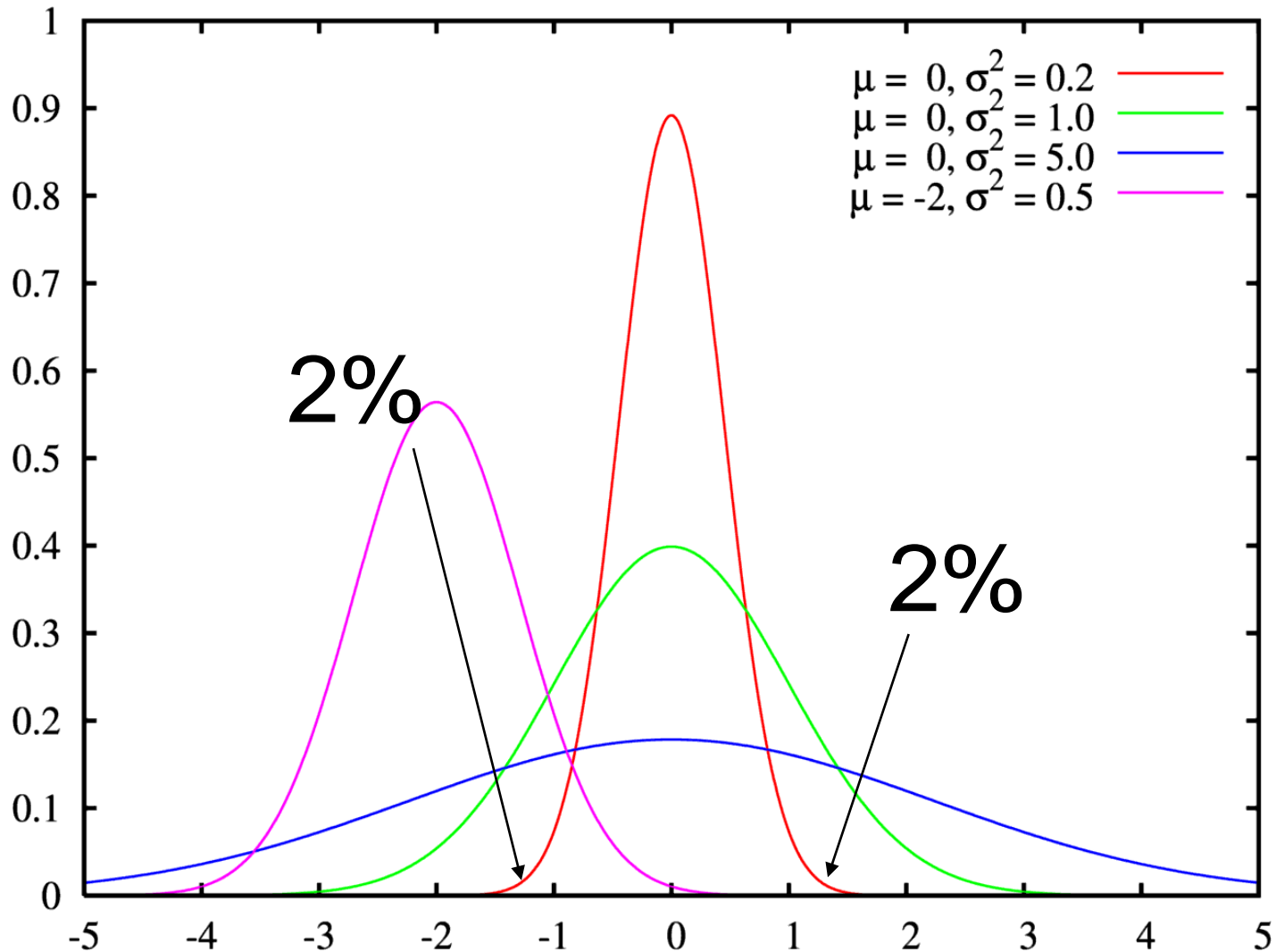
# Disabled musicians and talent

- Resonaari music school for students with special needs
- Music not merely as therapy – committed, goal-directed music education
- Musicianship – a rise from margins

# Resonaari: special music education



# “The bell curve” of musical talent distribution



# Musicians from margins: Resisposse



# Disabled culture: Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät



# Conclusions

- Efficiency and achievements are often measured against musical practices in which the criteria are defined by professional musicians, not necessarily music educators.
- Selecting students to music performances strengthens elitistic discourse

# Conclusions

- There is more hope than ever before for anyone to become a musician outside of school settings (“Experience economy”, Talent & Idol competitions, Guitar Hero, Sing Star, online music communities )
- Culture of participation

# Conclusions

- Music educators need to widen their conception of musicianship to enhance democracy
- Music educators need to reconsider the meaning of talent in its professional discourses
- More research is needed on what the socially constructed reality of music education is

# [ Group task ]

Reflect in your peer-group:

What kind of socially constructed discourses *restrict* democratic participation within the given educational context you yourself work or study?

What is the world that is in many ways given to you that did not need to be constructed in such ways and that restricts individual freedom?