KAPITTEL 10

Negotiating traditional music in educational spaces: An ethnographic case study of the Norwegian Academy of Music

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Abstract: This article engages with issues of musical belongings in institutional spaces in higher music education. It makes an ethnographic case study of the Norwegian Academy of Music and explores how traditional music was established and negotiated as education at the institution, with special attention on the period from 1995 onwards. The study focuses on processes of change and the ideas of traditional music at the Academy, as well as its proximity and relationality towards art music idioms. It draws mainly on newly conducted interviews with central actors involved in education and partly on archival material, such as study plans and interviews. By using assemblage as a theoretical approach, the article illuminates how the actors translate and negotiate traditional music through discourse, material, and practice in forming their relationship with the Academy as place and social context. The study demonstrates shifts in focus from transcriptions, arrangement and harmony to performance practices, functional aspects of playing to dance, fieldwork and the social features of 'being a musician'. It also reveals how the actors tend to place themselves in the position of a musical Other. This musical otherness is multileveled; simultaneously creating senses of belonging and dis-belongings within the Academy, as well as within the field of higher music education in Norway.

Keywords: Traditional music, higher music education, musical belongings, assemblage, institutionalisation, Norway

Citation: Eriksson, K. (2023). Negotiating traditional music in educational spaces: An ethnographic case study of the Norwegian Academy of Music. In Ø. Varkøy, E. M. Stabell & B. Utne-Reitan (Eds.), *Høyere musikkutdanning: Historiske perspektiver* (Kap. 10, pp. 219–246). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.199.ch10

Introduction

Music is often a vehicle for enactments of belonging. It allows us to communicate our individual identifications and group affiliations and may evoke strong senses of community. It may also produce spaces of otherness and reinforce boundaries in social gatherings. This article explores negotiations of belongings within educational spaces, with special focus on traditional music[1] in higher music education. It approaches these issues through an ethnographic case study of how traditional music has been established, negotiated and developed as an education at the Norwegian Academy of Music (*Norges musikkhøgskole*, abbreviated as NMH). The inquiry is part of a larger project at NMH that seeks to investigate the institution's activities and developments throughout its history.

The Academy was founded in 1973. This study takes its starting point in 1995 when Sven Nyhus (1932–2023) was appointed as the first professor in Traditional Music at the institution. The position was initiated through dialogue between the Academy and the Ministry of Culture (Boysen, 1994; Skrinde, 1995). This clearly symbolises a shift in the status of the vernacular art forms—a shift towards being acknowledged as specialised subjects of their own within the academy of art music from the Global North. It also marked a political interest in making traditional music part of higher music education in Norway.

It is worth noting that traditional music had been marginally taught at the Academy already since its founding, but it was first in 1995 that students were enrolled in a formal bachelor programme. This is rather late in comparison to other programmes of traditional music in higher education in the country. For instance, the Ole Bull Academy in Voss had offered courses in traditional music and dance since 1977, and what today is known as the Department of Traditional Arts and Traditional Music at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) in Rauland held one-year programmes from 1987 (Knudsen, 2020, p. 91). Nevertheless, these developments were received with mixed feelings both at NMH and within traditional music communities. Even if Nyhus had a degree in classical viola in addition to being a renowned traditional musician, some teachers were anxious for

1 I use the term 'Traditional Music' to translate the Norwegian term 'folkemusikk'/tradisjonsmusikk', in line with the academic general abandonment of the term 'folk music' due to its controversies and ideological connotations.

what the future might hold, if they had to share resources with traditional musicians. Some questioned why the subject should be taught at an institution that specialised in art music (Arnestad, 2001, p. 136; Bitustøyl, 2012, p. 209; Interview, Nyhus, 2018; Interview, Ofsdal, 2022; Tønsberg, 2015, p. 129). Concerns were also raised in the traditional music communities who feared that oral traditions might lose their distinctive expression when becoming part of a formal programme of study guided by western art music standards (see Aksdal, 2000; Blom, 1987; Kvifte, 1991).

Indeed, the processes of institutionalising traditional music inevitably bring interesting issues to the fore. Teachers at the programmes are faced with a range of choices of how best to transform oral music traditions characterised by informal transmission, collective learning and participatory culture into formalised curriculums and teaching methods (Hill, 2009; M. Johansson, 2009, pp. 54–55). Importantly, once it is realised, it also requires ongoing and continuous work and critical reflection (Knudsen, 2020; Tullberg 2017). Educational programmes may have huge impact on aesthetic values, repertoires, instruments, styles and performance practices—reinforcing certain ways of knowing and experiencing music whilst excluding others (Eriksson, 2017; Hedin Wahlberg, 2020; Vinge et al., 2022; von Wachenfeldt, 2015). How did the teachers and initiators at NMH relate to and reflect on these issues? Which topics were brought into discussion, and how were conflicting priorities solved?

Ways of situating and knowing traditional music

The article aims to explore how traditional music has been situated, negotiated and developed as an educational programme at the Norwegian Academy of Music, with special attention to the period from 1995 onwards. This period has been given less attention in previous research, a gap this article aims to fill. It focuses on the processes of change and the ideas of traditional music's position at the Academy, as well as on its proximity and relationality towards art music idioms. The study answers the following main research questions: How has traditional music been situated as musical education at the Academy? How have the actors negotiated traditional music and its practices in educational spaces?

This enquiry also probes questions of the relationship between educational work and the demands and expectations of a life as a musician in

the traditional scene outside the institution. In this sense, the study aims to shed further light on discourses and practices of traditional music within higher music education in Norway. In a broader perspective, I also hope to provide new insights into how humans negotiate musical belongings in institutional and educational spaces.

Relational thinking through assemblages

During the last thirty years, research within the humanities has moved away from the rigidity of structuralism to embrace ideas of relationality and mobility to better understand human interaction with the social and material world (Born, 2010, 2011, 2012). Within ethnomusicology, focus has been placed on the interrelationship between sounds, people and politics and how multiple factors produce polyphonic meanings in any given social gathering or 'assemblage' (Monson, 2018, p. 192). This article takes its starting point in relationality and the idea of 'assemblage' to explore the translations and negotiations of traditional music that the actors engage with in situated practice and established traditions in educational settings. Assemblage as a philosophical concept was originally introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) to frame social complexity. They advocated a rhizomatic understanding of interconnections in social formations and argued that the non-hierarchal constituent parts of the social are not fixed or stable, rather they may be replaced and displaced due to its multiple functions; 'the rhizhome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). These sets of connections work in different ways to open up and close down possibilities, and therefore induce power dynamics. Ethnomusicologists have argued for the use of assemblage as a resource 'for socially engaged empirical musical studies' (Monson, 2018, p. 191; see also Born 2012), a call this study echoes. I further align my thinking with human geographer Hans Kjetil Lysgård, and the use of assemblage as an analytical approach:

> Assemblage thinking not only implicitly includes the dimension of relational space but also combines the discursive, the material, and practice in the construction of space and thereby manages to integrate the main elements through which mobile transnational actors form their relationship with certain places and social contexts (Lysgård, 2019, p. 11).

Thus, the concept of assemblage may be useful to understand how the actors negotiated traditional music through discourse, material and practice and formed their relationship with the Academy, as social context and place. An important aspect to take into consideration is that these networks of actors are rather small and closely tied together. In fact, since 1995 only a handful of directors and few traditional music faculty have worked at the Academy.

Selected voices

This ethnographic intervention draws partly on newly conducted interviews with teachers involved in the field of traditional music at the Academy (2021–2022) and partly on archival material such as study plans and previously conducted interviews with teachers and initiators at the Academy (2018). Due to the time limit and scope of this study, the article mainly focuses on the directors' and early teachers' experiences: Sven Nyhus (1989–2002),[2] Jon Faukstad, Tom Willy Rustad (2002–2009), Per Sæmund Bjørkum (2009–2010), Steinar Ofsdal (2011–2018) and Unni Løvlid (2018–). The new qualitative in-depth interviews have been conducted from an open phenomenological point of view. I have tried to understand the actors' own perspectives and have described their musical realities as experienced by them, my starting point being the notion that the important reality is what *they* perceive it to be (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 28–29). A semi-structured open-ended interview guide has been used to avoid leading questions and encourage the interlocutors to respond in their own terms (Wengraf, 2001). The questions have focused on the actors' experiences and memories of teaching traditional music and their views of possibilities and constraints in building a programme of study within the framework of the institution. Due to the pandemic situation the interviews have been conducted both online via Zoom and in person in Oslo. All quotes have been approved.[3] The written source material has been set in dialogue with the interlocutors' own ideas and understandings of traditional music (Barz & Cooley, 2008).

2 The time span refers to the length of work as director.

3 The original Norwegian version of key terms in the interviews are enclosed in square brackets. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. This also applies to the study plans, official documents and letters.

Needless to say, the institutional contexts and their actors are intertwined with trends within the traditional music scene and attitudes in society at large (Hill, 2009; Nettl, 1995, 2010). The teachers at the Academy are also active musicians, and national and transnational actors. Altogether, this article embraces an interdisciplinary approach. It is thus in line with the emphasis of recent research that has pointed out the close relationship and mutual connections between ethnomusicology and music education (Avis, 2020, p. 230; Sæther, 2017).

Academic contexts

Norwegian traditional music may be described as a revitalized musical landscape of vocal and instrumental genres with historical origins and traditions from the rural areas in 18th and 19th century Norway (M. Johansson, 2013, p. 361). As a field, it is closely entangled with the work of preserving and collecting tunes and dances in archives and institutions during the 1900s. Certain national associations of performers have also contributed to the transmission of knowledges, tunes and practices.[4] Today, the traditional music scene is characterised by a broad movement of non-professionals as well as a diversity of professional musicians. Traditional music is oriented both to the historical and the present-day, with solo and ensemble performances at social gatherings, festivals, competitions, concert stages and dance venues (Johansson & Berge, 2018; Kvifte, 2010). Before delving into how these musical traditions have been situated at NMH, I will give a brief overview of traditional music in academic contexts.

Post-secondary education in traditional music in the Nordic countries has been over 40 years in the making. In Sweden, the Royal College of Music in Stockholm offered a fiddle course in traditional music in 1976 within the Bachelor Program of Music Education (Hjorth, 2009, p. 12). In Finland, the first programme was initiated at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki in 1983, and in Denmark at the Danish National Academy of Music in 1998. These developments derive in various ways from governmental educational priorities. In Sweden, it was clearly a result of reform policies in the 1970s to include jazz, popular music and traditional music

4 Important institutions: *NRK, Norsk folkemusikksamling, Nordnorsk Folkemusikksamling, Arne Bjørndals samling og Rådet for folkemusikk og folkedans* and organisations such as: *Noregs Ungdomslag* (1896), *Landslaget for Spelemenn* (1923–2009), *Norsk Folkemusikk- og Danselag* (1987–2009) and *FolkOrg* (2009-).

in the curriculums (Hedin Wahlberg, 2020, p. 10). In Finland, the initiative came from inside the Academy during the transition from a private to a state institution, and was backed by state-funding. The Danish counterpart was inspired by discussions with Norwegian colleagues (Hill, 2009, pp. 208–209, 213; Knudsen, 2020, p. 91).

In Norway there are three main institutions that offer bachelor and master programmes in traditional music. The Ole Bull Academy in Voss/the Grieg Academy at the University of Bergen founded a two-year programme in Norwegian traditional music and singing in 1996. The programme's profile has featured a traditional master-apprenticeship form of teaching, revealed in the name *Spellemanns- og kvedarskulen* (Stubseid, 1992).[5] Today, students may pursue a bachelor and master in traditional music or a master in Nordic traditional music, managed in collaboration with institutions in Denmark, Sweden and Finland (Kolltveit, 2019).[6] The Department of Traditional Arts and Traditional Music at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) in Rauland offers programmes at bachelor, master and PhD level. The same applies to NMH. USN has a strong legacy within cultural studies, ethnology and anthropology, and in this sense differs from NMH, that emphasises performative skills in educating professional musicians (Knudsen, 2020, pp. 88, 92). In addition, students may pursue a PhD in traditional music at other universities with PhD programmes. As yet, not many hold a PhD and there are few professors in traditional music in Norway. In 2023 the first PhD student with traditional music as main topic graduated at NMH (Ellestad, 2023). This brief journey through educational spaces is intended to convey how traditional music occupies a minor position in higher music education.

Previous research on institutionalisation processes in Norway were mainly conducted around the 1990s, with a focus on the earlier years of the establishment of programmes (Stubseid 1992). The topic was for instance debated by scholars and practioners in *Norsk Folkemusikklag*'s publications and seminars in 1987 and 1991 (see for example Bjørkum, 1991; Blom, 1987; Kvifte, 1991; Lätt & Kleppen, 1991). Central aspects brought forward

5 A *spellemann* refers to a folk performer who embodies traditional knowledge. The term has specific historical references in Norwegian rural society, during the 18th and 19th century. Contrary to notions of a *folkemusiker*, being educated and professional, a *spellemann* is associated with a self-taught tradition bearer, often male (Johansson & Berge, 2018, pp. 219–222). The study has now changed name from *Spellemansskulen* to *Tradisjonsmusikk I* and *II*.

6 The Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Danish National Academy of Music in Esbjerg and at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki.

for their initiation were the societal need for educated musicians in traditional music as teachers in schools, artists in the professional music scene and as resources in various culture and media organisations. The featured articles also articulate concerns about how institutionalisation tends to threaten the specific teaching methods believed to be inherent to traditional music, such as the master-apprentice relationship, and contribute to standardisation of styles and repertoires to make 'everything sound alike' (see Aksdal, 2000). Knut Tønsberg has written one of the few studies that have engaged with the topic from a more contemporary perspective (2015). He compares the attitudes for and against the establishment of programmes in traditional music with attitudes to the founding of programmes in jazz and popular music in Norway. Tønsberg shows striking similarities between how key actors had double competences within art music and traditional music, or within art music and genres of popular music. The practioners also shared a scepticism towards imposing values of western art music upon these genres.[7] He mainly draws on written sources and utterances in periodicals. The main research questions for this article are, instead, studied to a larger extent through the actors' own lived experiences about these processes. Another relevant study is Ragnhild Knudsen's (2020) survey of the NORDtrad network, a cooperation between higher education in traditional musics within the Nordic and Baltic countries, and the investigation by Tellef Kvifte (2013) on the use of improvisation in traditional music.

Ethnomusicologists have shown an extensive interest in issues of institutionalisation of traditional music in higher education, in Scandinavia (Hedin Wahlberg, 2020; Hill, 2005, 2009; Tullberg, 2017; von Wachenfeldt, 2015) and other parts of the world (Frank, 2014; Keegan-Phipps, 2007, 2008; Olson, 2014; Schippers, 2010). For instance, Juniper Hill has in several studies discussed these processes especially at the Sibelius Academy in Finland, but also in Sweden and other Nordic Countries, in comparison with the British Isles, China, Indonesia, North America, and former Soviet States in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Hill demonstrates how conservatory environments have resulted in a 'westernisation' or 'artification' of oral traditions, denoting an imposition or adoption of art music value systems

7 For example: faithfulness to the score, written notation, harmonic complexity and standard tempered intonation.

or conventions.[8] Hill also highlights the importance of individual agency within these contexts and how, especially in Sweden and in Ireland, a few influential leaders have strongly shaped the music pedagogy (Hill, 2009, p. 221). I would argue that the last aspect also resonates well with how education in traditional music has been situated and played out at NMH in Norway. This will be analysed further below.

Multiple openings

Musician, composer and musicologist Sven Nyhus had a preeminent and versatile position within the music life in Norway when he was appointed adjunct professor at the Academy in 1990. The year before, he had been awarded a government scholarship at the institution, by the minister of culture Hallvard Bakke. Nyhus had by then played in all the major orchestras in the capital Oslo for several years, with a degree in viola from the music conservatory in 1956. Aside from being trained in art music, he worked on reviving and collecting traditional tunes, especially from his home region, the small mountain village Glåmos in Røros municipality in Trøndelag county. In 1971 he started working as a curator at the Norwegian Folk Music Collection (*Norsk Folkemusikksamling*) at the University of Oslo. Here, he conducted extensive work in collecting traditional tunes, and was responsible for completing the last volumes of the largest collection of Norwegian traditional music: Hardanger Fiddle Tunes (*Norsk folkemusikk serie 1*: *Hardingfeleslåtter*). His expertise also included several years as director of the traditional music department at the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (*Norsk rikskringkasting*, abbreviated as NRK), the government-owned radio and television company, between 1978 to 1989. His work contributed to broadening the content of programmes and renewing public awareness and knowledge of traditional music. In addition, he actively produced recordings, composed and published scholarly articles and books as a musicologist.[9] This record of achievement and profound expertise, together with Nyhus's impact on the students at the Academy, were emphasised in a letter from Bjørn F. Boysen, the principal at NMH in

8 She contends that; 'Regardless of idiomatic models, conservatory programmes seem to have artifying effects, such as increases in competitiveness, virtuosity, prestige/status, formal contexts, and professionalism' (Hill, 2009, p. 219).

9 For more information, see Aksdal (2023) and Aksdal & Stauri (2012, pp. 224–226).

1994, to the Ministry of Culture, arguing for his position to be developed into a full-time professorship:

> Through his work at the Academy, Nyhus has, to an exceptionally large extent, helped to shape the entire environment at the Academy. Traditional music has entered our students' everyday life in a completely different way than before, and the number of students who actively take part in traditional music activities is constantly increasing. (Boysen, 1994)

The letter furthermore stresses the need to keep Nyhus at the Academy due to the value of his research and current development of the education, rather than the need to expand the scope of his teaching. Boysen underlined how this alteration would be a consequential extension of the part-time adjunct professorship and scholarship positions. Apart from an important acknowledgement of the outstanding work by Nyhus it would also be a central statement for traditional music to become equivalent to other parts of the music life in Norway. Nyhus had strong formal and informal ties with influential actors both within and outside the institution. When Bakke awarded Nyhus the scholarship at NMH in 1989, the application was supported by many of the major institutions in traditional music and dance in Norway. All emphasised the importance of the position for the educational field, to disseminate and deepen knowledge of traditional music and to develop teaching methods and material.[10] Nyhus had previously spoken with Bakke in person through mutual contacts and introduced the idea of a teaching position in traditional music at NMH (Nyhus, 2016, p. 89; Interview, Nyhus, 2018). Taken altogether, these rhizomatic effects induced power relations and opened potentials for Nyhus. Due to the initiative by Boysen and the board and the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, Nyhus was appointed a full-time professorship in 1995.

Situating the subject

Education in traditional music started on a small scale at NMH, with a few lectures for the students enrolled in the ordinary study path of Bachelor in Music Education (2–3 hours per week). In an interview in 2018, Nyhus

10 Reidar Sevåg at The Norwegian Folk Music Collection, Bjørn Aksdal at The Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance in Trondheim (*Rådet for folkemusikk og folkedans*) and The Norwegian National Association for Traditional Music (*Landslaget for spelemenn*), see supplement 5–8 in Nyhus (1989).

described how the subject was gradually introduced through dialogue with both principals and teachers: 'It was like working your way in, a little here, a little there, it wasn't anything that happened in a plenum or anything like that, but just from man to man' (Interview, Nyhus, 2018). Through his communication skills and his ways of knowing, doing and being, new relations emerged in the assemblage and opened possibilities for Nyhus to act (Lysgård, 2019, p. 11). In his recollections he especially mentioned the importance of changing the location of the obligatory introductory course in traditional music and dance from the Ole Bull Academy, to the premises of NMH instead (at Bygdøy). The course was held over one week each year of study for all the students at the Academy. The territorial shift of the course also enacts a discursive and symbolic shift; to acknowledge the subject within the walls of the Academy. This course was also mentioned by all my interlocutors in their narrations as a crucial starting point for developing a programme in traditional music. The narrative is interesting in itself and may be understood as a central local discursive formation amongst the teachers in the telling of the history of traditional music at NMH.

The idea to engage all students in traditional music education and activities was something Nyhus felt strongly about. For instance, during his first year at the Academy the students who played violin and viola had one obligatory hour per week in *gehørspill* – learning tunes by ear. They performed arrangements in ensembles and made improvisations according to traditional practices. He also noticed an increased interest in traditional music amongst the students. His ideas to develop the subject into a formal education were also well received by the principal and board of directors. Even if the state (in terms of a professorship) backed the music education, it was left to him to develop curriculum and pedagogy. The main concern was if any students would actually apply (Interview, Nyhus, 2018).

Reclaiming musical space: Struggles, visions and aims

In 1995, the first two students started at the Bachelor Programme of Music Performance in Traditional Music; Patrik Andersson and Vegar Vårdal. In line with Nyhus's expertise, their main instruments were fiddle and the Norwegian national instrument hardanger fiddle (*hardingfele*). These instruments are highly valued and have a strong historical legacy within

traditional music in Norway. At this time there was no formal curriculum for traditional music, instead it was developed in collaboration with the students' requests. The main aim with the education was specified in the first formal study plan in 1997, to encourage the students to learn how 'to express and mediate the artistic qualities and intentions' inherited in traditional tunes, drawing on transcriptions and archival recordings (NMH, 1997; see also NMH, 1998). The curriculum emphasises the importance of historical knowledge and understanding of traditional repertoires in Norway, but adds that it may also include tunes outside of Norway. The education was divided between the following courses: fieldwork, chamber music (training in traditional arrangements), traditional music forum (performance and interpretation), piano proficiency and musical transmission (NMH, 1997).

Previous research has brought to the fore how the request to learn traditional music in higher education in Norway came from the students at the academies (Tønsberg, 2015, p. 130). Similarly, Nyhus highlights the importance of the students' strong commitment on the matter: 'I couldn't have had any better messengers or wave makers, than those two there. They went around agitating for this here. It is so, the help they have given me is greater than one can express' (Interview, Nyhus, 2018). Unni Løvlid (b. 1976), currently director of the traditional music section at NMH, is a one of the most eminent traditional singers in Norway today. She is from Hornindal in the county of Sogn og Fjordane in west Norway and embraces a wide range of art forms in her musical activities, including collaborations on contemporary music projects as well as traditional music.[11] She was also one of the students who received musical education from Nyhus. However, Løvlid did not follow the same study path as Andersson and Vårdal. In 1996, she was doing a Bachelor in Music Education and later a Master in Music Performance. At this time, it was not possible to apply for traditional singing at any programme. Løvlid got invited to join the lectures in traditional music by Nyhus and she learned the hardanger fiddle as a second instrument. Løvlid recollects: 'I was both lucky and unlucky' (Interview, Løvlid, 2021). She self-reflexively explained that, on the one hand, she experienced tremendous support from Nyhus and great encouragement from the administration office. They supported her financially to travel around

11 She has released several albums and received awards for her contributions to the traditional music scene (for more information, see Elen-music, 2023).

in the country to meet female singers and learn traditions from them, on her own terms and in the way she wanted. On the other hand, she sensed a kind of confusion and disorientation 'of what to do with us traditional musicians' and a lack of knowledge of traditional music amongst the staff and teachers. She felt torn, and, furthermore, this evoked a feeling of loneliness for her (Interview, Løvlid, 2021).

Multi-instrumentalist Tom Willy Rustad (b. 1966) was also part of the small group of students, and shared similar experiences. He was the first student to do a Master in Musical Performance on the traditional instrument: diatonic button accordion (*torader*). He later became director of the department in 2002–2009, after Nyhus retired. Rustad is a celebrated traditional musician and composer[12] and had a clear vision for what he wanted to do with the subject. Similar to Nyhus's above sentiments, he described a strong sense of willpower and struggle amongst the students during his early years at the Academy:

> All of us who started as students, we were in a way, I guess, a bit like 'warriors' [*krigere*] in the sense that we were very determined in what we wanted – we had our own plan for what we wanted. […] My own vision was to get acceptance for traditional music, and to get acceptance for the instrument that I play. And the reason for that was, when I was doing my bachelor [in 'classical' guitar] we had to close the door [in the rehearsal room] if we played traditional music or old-time dance music [*gammeldans*]. The sound of old-time dance music should not be heard […] It was simply not allowed […]. We sat in all secrecy and played old-time dance music [laughs!] It is completely absurd to think about now! And what Sven Nyhus then did, during our ensemble lessons, he said; 'let's go down to the canteen, in the middle of lunch', and we played for all the students and teachers. And someone even started to dance. So, it was absolutely fantastic. So, people were not strongly against it […]. I have never experienced that anyone was negative towards traditional music at the Academy, I never experienced that, except for that time in the 80s. (Interview, Rustad, 2021)

This multi-layered narration by Rustad depicts empowerment and illustrates a shift in acceptance of traditional music at the Academy. It enacts struggles on many levels, in practice and through discourse. In his way of connecting the past with the present, the place-based memory of playing

12 He currently works as associate professor in Norwegian traditional music at The Ole Bull Academy and as archivist in traditional music at *Gudbrandsdalsmusea* (Interview, Rustad, 2021; Svendsrud, 2022). He plays guitar, flute, jaw harp, cister and contrabass and has released amongst 30 records. For more information, see Rustad (2022).

in secret behind closed doors produced a strong force for action and resistance. Through sound and by performing in the canteen, they managed to create space for traditional music. Here, the material aspects are brought to the fore in the formation of space – creating a sense of being, and feeling, at 'home' – sharing the space with others. In his narrations he also places himself, and the group of students, in the position of the Other. He even describes themselves as 'warriors' of traditional music.

Rustad's struggle was not only directed towards the educational settings at the Academy. In terms of instrument, the ambition to recognise the accordion as a 'proper' traditional music instrument within the institution also signifies a value of status towards the overall community. As previously mentioned, the hardanger fiddle and fiddle historically have strong agency and inherit a firm place within traditional Norwegian music. The same applies to the repertoires linked to the two instruments, that in turn are connected to certain regions in Norway (Aksdal & Nyhus 1993).[13] This way of categorising tunes draws on ideas from the National Romantic Movement, and the geographical mapping of different musical styles. The accordion has a much more ambiguous position within the community. Since its introduction into the musical life in Europe in the beginning of 20th century, it has been very popular within popular and dance music. However, due to the changes in rhythm, sound and tonality that the mechanical instrument brought to the old acoustic fiddle traditions, it has also been received with reluctance and disdain as a threat to traditional music (W. Johansson, 2022). Furthermore, in terms of repertoire, the new modern Pan-European tunes (reinlender, waltzes, mazurkas, polkas, etc.), later called Old-time dances (*gammeldans*), were also often performed on the instrument, the same repertoire that Rustad brought into prominence in the quote above. It was a more modern repertoire than the pre-industrial fiddle tunes which were highly cherished within the tradition (Eriksson, 2017, pp. 166–167; Omholt, 2018, p. 248). In this case, the act of performing Old-time dances on the diatonic button accordion worked as a mobilising force for change and highlights hierarchies of value. I suggest that Løvlid, in a similar way to Rustad, placed herself in the position of the Other in her recollections. She also advocated singing as instrument to be taken seriously within the institution.

13 The Hardangerfiddle; Telemark, Hallingdal, Valdres, Vestlandet and Setesdal, and the fiddle; Røros, Gudbrandsdalen, Setesdal, Hedemark.

These individual struggles for the subject, demonstrated in the utterances above by teachers and students, enact strong subjective agencies in their work for change.[14] Their actions were in turn made possible due to a certain set of connections within the assemblage (Lysgård, 2019). Needless to say, acts never occur in a void. Change is often a consequence of long-time collective commitments to certain causes within a community or an educational field (see Weisethaunet, 2021, p. 31). Since the 1970s in Norway there have been political developments and discussions in favour of bringing other genres into higher music education, in contrast to Anglo-American music culture, and challenging the dominance of art music. For instance, in 1995–1996, the National Evaluation of Higher Education in Norway stated that:

> When it comes to preserving the world's cultural diversity, Norway has a special responsibility for Norwegian traditional music and dance, an obligation that no other nation can be expected to be responsible for […] In today's dynamic society, however, one cannot rely solely on traditional forms of learning traditional music and dance. It must be supplemented by institutional forms of education. Methods for an idiomatic institutional traditional music education must be further developed in a qualified manner. (Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1996, p. 36)

This aim was even more explicitly enacted in a report led by the previously mentioned Bjørn F. Boysen in 1999, where the evaluation committee of the Ministry of Education and Research (*Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet*) underlined the formal requirement to offer diversity of genres at universities and academies. It was clearly stated that jazz/pop/rock and traditional music needed more educational resources.[15] Previous research has questioned if this report in fact had any further effect than acknowledging the post-secondary traditional music programmes that already existed in the country at that time (Tønsberg, 2015, p. 118). Yet, in the case of NMH, I would suggest that it should have had an impact on the further development of the subject. Boysen had supported Nyhus's endeavours, and raised the status of traditional music at the institution. It had contributed to a change of mindset within the Academy. In addition, the

14 Within literature on institutionalisation and revitalisation processes of traditional music in the Nordic Countries, the importance of certain individuals endeavors for change are often emphasised, in terms of 'cultural activists' (Hill, 2009) or voluntary 'enthusiasts' (Ronström, 2014).

15 Called *Boysenrapporten*. (Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1999, p. 17, 57; also quoted in Tønsberg, 2015, p. 114).

demands from the new educational politics would surely have facilitated further implementation. All my interlocutors also experienced an increase of the valuation and acceptance of traditional music and traditional arts generally within society and at the Academy at that time.[16]

The musical Other

Omnipresent in the interlocutors' answers is the tendency to place themselves and students in the position of an outsider or musical Other. This position simultaneously creates belonging and dis-belonging. It evokes community, understanding and strength amongst the actors that share the space, and at the same time as difference and solitude in relation to the general academy. This is a common topic within the broader literature on processes of the institutionalisation of traditional music and other oral traditions. In the phase of formalising and legitimising a subject, the need to distinguish its constituent parts are often made in opposition to art music as a norm (Hill, 2009, p. 215; Olson, 2014; von Wachenfeldt, 2015). Ingrid Hedin Wahlberg has for instance in her study on higher education in traditional and world music in Sweden revealed how teachers and students discursively through 'systems of difference' identify their education through musical boundaries with western art music traditions (Hedin Wahlberg, 2020, pp. 81–90). Great emphasis is put on individual freedom, how the curriculum is more 'open' for changes, in terms of choices of repertoires and individual ideals in musical expression and performative techniques. Master-apprentice situations and socially inclusive methods were also put forward (see also von Wachenfeldt, 2015; and in English contexts Keegan-Phipps, 2007). On the one hand, this correlates well with how the teachers and students quoted above have described the implementation of traditional music at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s at NMH. This approach is also noticeable in the study plans, for example in 1997:

16 However, this may also be our way of remembering and producing a narrative of past practices and experiences. Today we know what has happened and might interpret the past and our experiences from that knowledge.

> Within the framework that is given for the repertoire for the individual instrument, there will be, to a greater or lesser extent, room for freedom of choice and specialisation. The individual student must, in collaboration with his/her teachers, select music that interests him/her, that is suitable for him/her and that will be useful in terms of further development and professional practice. (NMH, 1997)

On the other hand, contrary to Hedin Wahlberg's findings in 2020s, art music standards, training in western music theory, arrangement and harmony still held a safe place within the curriculums during the leadership of Nyhus and Rustad (see for example NMH, 1997, 1998). After Nyhus retired in 2002, Rustad started to work on a larger revision of the curriculums together with violinist and fiddler Per Sæmund Bjørkum (b. 1970) and accordionist Jon Faukstad (b. 1944). All three of them had performance degrees in art music alongside being traditional musicians. Faukstad was the first student on accordion in art and contemporary music at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, in Denmark (1970–1973). His PhD thesis investigates the Diatonic Accordion within Norwegian Traditional Music.[17] With a background and specialisation in musics from the county of *Gudbrandsdalen*, he had taught traditional music at NMH since 1973, together with Nyhus. Besides his career as a traditional musician, he played in larger orchestras such as The Norwegian Radio Orchestra (*Kringkastingsorkestret*) and The Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (*Oslo-filharmonien*) (Interview, Faukstad, 2022). Bjørkum has played in the latter orchestra since 1997, and held a master degree in solo violin performance/chamber music from NMH. He taught at the Academy between 2003 and 2015 and was director of the traditional section in 2009–2010. As a traditional musician, having started at a young age with Pål Skogum, he extends the musics from Vågå in *Gudbrandsdalen*. Both Faukstad and Bjørkum have performed as a duo for a long time and are celebrated and prominent musicians within the traditional music community.[18] The interviews demonstrate how the traditions of art and traditional music were perceived as synergistic rather than oppositional. Faukstad explains:

17 He holds a bachelor degree in history, political science and musicology from the University of Oslo and is professor emeritus at NMH.

18 For more information about their work see for example Habbestad (2023) and Stadsforvalteren (2020).

> I believe we felt that it was not so terribly important that everything should be specifically traditional music. It was more a question of learning things, and, well, learning to identify harmony and intervals and more. In addition, we probably also had the idea that it is important to be able to communicate with the rest of the music life, and not just to come with your own background in everything. Because there are too few for that. And life as a performer is, or rather will be, quite long. And I think it is important to learn about the things that others can. If there has been a discussion, it has been more on that level. (Interview, Faukstad, 2022)

His words point towards the importance of adaptability and having a broader musical expertise in order to encounter the demands of a life as a musician. Bjørkum shared a similar view. By offering general musical knowledge, and not only genre specific skills, the teachers contributed to opening up possibilities for the students to be able to 'make a living out of it […] and to build a profession' (Interview, Bjørkum, 2022). He also emphasised the teachers' responsibilities to help the students explore their instruments further and give them more tools to work with. The main focus was always traditional music and genre specific expressions, but he pointed out that exercises in, for example, violin technique (generally associated with art music traditions), might assist and enrich the students to become better performers on traditional tunes (*slåttespelar*).[19] 'One does not exclude the other' (Interview, Bjørkum, 2022); they may be mutually enriching, he added. His experience was that it facilitated the students' ability to distinguish their own traditional styles of playing, and contributed to diversity of styles, rather than standardisation, in musical expression. At the same time, he described it as a 'balancing-act', to simultaneously keep the focus on traditional music. My interlocutors all stressed the importance for students to meet and learn from other teachers within other genres at the Academy.

Interestingly, it appears that this group of teachers did not express concerns about the previously mentioned 'artification' or proximity to art music conventions to the same extent as the initiators of education in traditional music at the Royal College of Music in Sweden or at the Sibelius Academy in Finland (Hill 2009, p. 215). These institutions developed their own specific music theory and pedagogy from the initiators' own ideals of traditional music in each country. From Hill's argumentation this was

19 As such, both in terms of musical expression through bodily skills (bowing, fingering etc.) and in terms of listening capacities and general knowledge of genre and style (Interview, Bjørkum, 2022).

done in profound opposition to the art music world. Accordingly, the Ole Bull Academy and USN in Rauland shared a strategy of distancing themselves from art music norms (see Knudsen 2020). This echoes the fears of standardisation, expressed in Simon Keegan-Phipps's (2007, p. 102) study, by teachers in post-secondary education of traditional music in England. This concern does not appear in my interviews. Instead, it seems to be self-evident for the interlocutors that the education they provided encouraged and nurtured personal expression and individual style within traditional idiomatic structures. These values might be connected to the strong traditions of solo playing in Norway (see M. Johansson, 2009, p. 49). Moreover, during the first two years at the programme of musical performance the students got oriented in different traditions and music styles in Norway. The third or/and fourth year, depending on the degree, was dedicated to the specialisation of the students' own traditions. From their point of view this in turn reinvigorated variety in musical expression and a freedom of style. Bjørkum commented on the topic and underlined that he was proud that all his students have found their own voice and sound (Interview, Bjørkum, 2022). These descriptions clearly elucidate how the individuality of musical performers was highly valued discursively and played out both materially and in practice at the Academy.

Negotiating and revising art music idioms

If the proximity to art music was perceived as strengths in some instances, the need to diminish and change its dominance in terms of values and terminology was also part of the work with the study plans. In addition to transcription, theory and arrangement, Rustad expanded on the subjects of performance and history. Hitherto, there were no financial resources set aside for these topics. These changes then enabled employment of guest teachers. Furthermore, interpretational issues in connection to dance and learning how to play to dance (*dansespill*) received enhanced attention. The group of teachers also extended the training in fieldwork and gave more resources for the students to travel through the country and collect music themselves. Moreover, this aspect is closely connected to the value of historical knowledge and to including more specific 'traditional music history'. Intriguingly, to do that they removed the word 'traditional music' from the curriculums in the music history courses (Interview, Rustad, 2021). It is a clear example of the discursive power of the word. In order to make space

for the subject the word is removed. It may at first sight be interpreted as contradictory, but it also has to do with another discourse of how to write study plans at the Academy. If the study plans are being shaped in a more 'general' language they become more adaptable and flexible and able to be used for other genres as well, thus alongside traditional music it opens for topics of jazz and improvisation (NMH, 2006, pp. 16–17).

In 2011–2018, Steinar Ofsdal (b. 1948), flutist and multi-instrumentalist, took over as director for the traditional section at NMH. Ofsdal is a renowned traditional musician and previously employed at the Ole Bull Academy from 2004.[20] Together with Bjørkum and the other teachers, he continued the process of modifying the study plans and, to an even greater extent, to 'produce a study programme on the premises of traditional music' (Interview, Ofsdal, 2022a). He described the work as creatively enriching with great support from administration staff and the directors. Interestingly, here another relationship towards the previous mentioned 'artifying effects' is noticeable. In his recollections, Ofsdal especially highlighted one central revision:

> We all agreed on the need to remove the term '*folkemusikksats*' in the title of a subject. For what would the significance of that be? *'Folkemusikksats'* was supposed to, in a way, be the traditional music equivalent of four-part harmony [choral tradition], a form of orchestration and composition technique. The word '*sats*' is taken from art music, but has less to do with traditional music arrangements. So, in our context, we changed the name of the subject to 'traditional music arrangement'. While in the classical [voice leading] four-part harmony there are a number of sharp rules for what to do or not to do, so you can actually say that in traditional music arrangements there is only one rule; and that is that there are no rules. (S. Ofsdal, personal communication, December 21, 2022)

His utterance clearly enacts a divergence between the systems of the different genres and the need to change the name and the content to adequately fit traditional music. Ofsdal clarified that it is of course important to show examples of good and less good arrangements for the students, but it does not mean that there is a certain set of rules to strictly follow (Interview,

20 Ofsdal is professor emeritus at NMH and at The Ole Bull Academy. He also plays cello, bass and hardanger fiddle. He has composed music for theatre, films, radio and TV, released many albums and published books. For more information, see Ofsdal (2022).

Ofsdal, 2022a).[21] Another central issue for Ofsdal, both at NMH and within the community of teachers in higher music education, was to raise the question of the use and definition of 'tonality.' In his experience the concept has been used very differently by individuals teaching traditional music, and he initiated discussions on the topic that also became a central part of his teaching. Apart from focusing on musical skills, Ofsdal emphasised the importance of providing the students with tools to handle the social and psychological aspects of being a musician. He especially mentioned issues of nervousness and stage fright (for example addressed in the subject of performance and interpretation (*formidling*) (Interview, Ofsdal, 2022a, 2022b). In line with an openness towards the wishes of the students, the education gradually started to include traditional music from other parts of the world than Norway, and stressed collaboration between genres and other musical cultures.

Aural training has been a recurring topic of discussion in all my interviews. The subject has mainly been taught by the teachers in art music, even if it was explicitly part of the job description for some teachers in traditional music. This is mainly due to a lack of economic recourses, an element central in the assemblage, forming restrictions in the actors' ability to develop the education. From an analytical perspective, this has strong symbolic value, and for the teachers this has practical consequences. Traditional music is closely tied to oral transmission methods and learning by imitating and listening, trying out what one hears on the instrument (Knudsen, 2013, 2020). This methodology is of course inevitably part of all subjects within education in traditional music. However, my interlocutors wished for traditional music to be even more strongly represented in the teaching of this specific topic. For instance, Løvlid brought forward the need to link the main instrument to aural training to a larger extent:

> When you listen to an archive recording, different individuals will extract different information depending on their values and what they listen for. Someone listens for the sound of the voice, and this can lead to them dismissing a recording, while others might listen for text, or rhythm, or phrasing or the situation as a whole. But every time we shift focus in the way we listen, it will provide new information, and to be trained in being able to take in as much information as possible, for example on a recording on a micro, micro level. (Interview, Løvlid, 2021)

21 By 2014, the title of the theory subject in the study plans had changed from *Folkemusikksats I, II & III* (NMH, 2012, p. 41) to *Arrangering I & II* (NMH, 2014, p. 34).

Løvlid exemplified further the need to delve into the more complex issues of tonality, or the ways of notating rhythmic patterns or the ability to hear bow strikes. She continued: 'Someone who dares to go in and have the difficult discussions then […] to build these secrets that lie behind a material. […] And to build enough reflection and a language about this larger space? What kind of articulated tradition and aesthetics is this?' (Interview, Løvlid, 2021). In her answer she emphasises the necessity of special expertise in genre aesthetics, knowledge of tradition and the ability to analyse archival recordings in detail.

Concluding reflections: Assembling traditional music

There is a handful of individuals who are responsible for situating and shaping higher education in traditional music, since 1995, at the Norwegian Academy of Music. Traditional music has been constituted in the intersections between territorial and relational forces in these educational spaces (Lysgård, 2019). In mapping the actors' different roles, the study has shown how they all have had strong individual agency: their ideas and visions have to a large extent been realized. In their negotiations of traditional music at the Academy, different sets of connections in the assemblage have worked to open up or close down certain possibilities.

It appears that there has been space and opportunity for experimentation and flexibility for the teachers in terms of teaching methods and content within the education. Still, all my interlocutors mentioned the lack of long-term planning for the subject. It created unforeseen problems, a kind of rhizomatic effects, that needed to be taken care of 'on the spot' (*båten blir til mens du ror*). The board of directors appears to have been open for new ideas and encouraged the staff to develop the subject together with the administration office. At the same time, the teachers have had to conform and adapt to a system with art music as the norm. This became extra visible in the ways Rustad spoke about the curriculums and how they had to remove the term 'traditional music' to be able to teach it more, and in Ofsdal's descriptions of the need to change the language to suit the discourse within traditional music. It is also enacted in the recurring discussions of aural training. The actors had to negotiate their ideas and visions in relation to the structural patterns of the institution. It has in turn been experienced with mixed feelings, for instance evoked frustration in terms

of percentages of positions or frustrations caused by the lack of economic resources, resulting in restrictions on their opportunities to develop the education.

Against the backdrop of the arc of arguments in this article, the teachers at NMH practiced an openness in individual teaching methods. Yet, in comparison to the broader literature on the institutionalisation processes of oral traditions, art music standards tend to linger longer in the study plans and training.[22] Furthermore, previous research has proposed that the best way to institutionalise traditional music is to place the programmes in departments of cultural studies or liberal arts rather than in music departments in order to encourage flexibility and protect the genre-inherited ways of learning particular styles of music (Frank, 2014). In this light, the last aspect resonates well in terms of the discussions of aural training at NMH, but differs in connection to the teachers' approach to general training in music theory.

Moreover, in terms of formalising and legitimising a subject, Nyhus, Rustad and the teachers at the end of 1990s, and the beginning of 2000s, directed their attention inwards at the institution. They did not collaborate much with other institutions and their main focus was placed on artistic skills and craftmanship. Ofsdal instead spoke about the importance of national and international networks, and of including traditional music from other parts of the world than Norway. Furthermore, 'to learn the personality of a musician' became central. It highlights today's society's changing demands for the role as musician being an employable entrepreneur (Georgii-Hemming et al., 2016, pp. 283–284; Johansson & Berge, 2018). Løvlid to an even larger extent was oriented outwards. She stressed the importance of building national and international networks with other researchers and institutions, sharing experiences and supporting each other within the field of education. Of course, this is easier to do when a subject is established. This development follows the general patterns described within processes of institutionalisation. All this together reveals the kind of musicianship required today: that students need to

22 In addition to the previously discussed examples from Hill (2009) and Hedin Wahlberg (2020), Alexandra Frank (2014) illustrates in her study of the institutionalisation of traditional music in North America, how the teaching methods have remained close to the traditional ways of oral transmission, and not conformed to western art music standards. Similar results are put forward by Nathaniel Jay Olson in his study of the institutionalisation of fiddling in higher education in North America. Olson demonstrates that there are no standardised methods, rather the teachers' individual ways of transmitting knowledge are emphasised (Olson, 2014).

'develop *both* domain-specific and generic or transferable skills' (Moberg & Georgii-Hemming, 2019, p. 69).

In assembling traditional music, there has been a shift from focus on transcription, arrangements and music theory to performance practices, training in the functional aspects of playing to dance, emphasis on fieldwork and the social aspects of being a musician. Underpinning features which have been utilized over the years have included master-disciple lineages, individual freedom in terms of repertoires, flexibility concerning curriculums and choice of instruments.

To musically belong

This article has in multivocal ways illuminated how music mediates and materialises social formations and identities (Born, 2011). There has been a tendency amongst the interlocutors to place themselves in the ambiguous position of the Other. On the one hand, this position creates belongings and community. It might even evoke a sense of power. On the other hand, the interviews also bear witness to a solitude and powerlessness. To be supported, but not always understood. To have to fight for your right to belong and to navigate the position as an outsider. We recognise this from previous research on higher education in traditional music (Hedin Wahlberg, 2020). These approaches become configurative elements in the musical assemblage (Monson, 2018).

This marginalised position and narrative of institutional liminality is often emphasised in discourses of musicians and their negotiations of belonging and dis-belonging in society (see for example Butler Brown, 2007). The teachers at the Academy are also professional musicians, with multiple belongings and affiliations, entangled in various imaginary communities and musical genres. Their identities are fluid, depending on the situation. From these descriptions certain questions arise: How do individuals establish an exclusive identity within a specific educational field, musical genre, or tradition? The individual utterances in this article may also be interpreted in relation to this prerequisite. Professional musicianship may include developing your own position, individual voice and musical expression within the larger scope of the collective traditions of traditional music, and not only as teacher within the Academy. The voices brought forward in this article are surely not representative for all teachers who have worked with traditional music at NMH. Still, in their role as leaders

and initiators of the programmes, their ways of knowing and embracing traditional music inevitably have had a huge impact on how the subject has been situated and taught at the Academy.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to my interlocutors, for so generously sharing their experiences and memories, the participants in the History Project at NMH for fruitful discussions, the seminar participants at Örebro University and at *Musikforskning idag*, Dalarna University in Sweden, at the *37th European Seminar in Ethnomusicology*, the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz in Austria for enriching comments, Nicole Vickers for language editing, the anonymous peer-review, and Astrid Kvalbein, Gjertrud Pedersen, Hans Weisethaunet and Tina Mathisen for their critical comments and encouragement.

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