

Paper submitted to the EPARM-conference, Graz, 2015

Cecilia K Hultberg cecilia.hultberg@kmh.se

PhD

Catalina Langborn catalina.langborn@kmh.se

Master of Music performance

Affiliation of both authors:

The Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm

Box 27711

S 115 91 Stockholm

SWEDEN

ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES BY MEANS OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE

*Exploration of artistic consideration aiming to enhance theatrical performance of baroque music
(Authors' names are fictitious)*

This presentation addresses theatrical performance of instrumental music, investigated collaboratively by Hanna, performing violinist, and Kate, researcher in music education (experienced musician). The study is part of a major research project investigating the work of Hanna and Sarah (soprano), leaders of a freelance company problematizing timeless gender issues by means of creating thematic theatrical performances of baroque music, selected because of its quality and character suitable for illuminating themes in question. We focus on a revision process aiming to improve the dramaturgical curve of a production inspired by Barbara Strozzi's living conditions, a 17th century Neapolitan composer (occupation unsuitable for women) and unmarried mother (socially vulnerable). Beside the leaders a male lutenist and a female dancer participate, all act on stage, shifting in representing a fictitious "Barbara" by means of signifying attributes. Here, we especially address Hanna's further exploration of the role of instrumental music.

To capture Hanna's ways of coping with qualities noticed in music, scenography and narrative we combined artistic exploration with cultural-psychological analysis. Reflections-in/on-action (logbooks, scores, video-documented rehearsals/performances) were analysed individually and followed up in repeated analytical talks. The partly overlapping, partly diverging pre-understandings helped reveal aspects that remained uncovered in the individual analyses, especially regarding interrelations between verbalised and non-verbalised knowledge.

Results show a development of some instrumental performances from being intermezzi reflecting gender issues, towards becoming integral parts of these. Hanna also recognized a need for more clearness in scenic transition between some works of music. Both findings concern recontextualisation and changed conditions for music performances, for instance a scene representing "Barbara" as a dignified composer (music by Mealli). Implementation: Hanna initiated further revision, collaboratively with the lutenist, drawing on musical structure combined with embodied expression to achieve a dramaturgically more representative performance (both musicians acting as "Barbara").

Contrarily, in a scene depicting an arrogant gallant (inspired by music by Isabella Leonarda), Hanna suggested the instrumentalists perform from the back of the stage to underline, clearly-physically, the vulnerability of "Barbara", remaining alone in the front. The study exemplifies how research through/on artistic processes may enhance practice; how research/practice may act in societal debate.

Technical requirements

Audio/video playback from laptop

During the presentation we are going to show representative excerpts from rehearsals and performances, especially focussing on the music referred to in the abstract.

THE STUDY REPRESENTS

- Outputs from a well-advanced artistic research project that can be shown to be having a lasting impact on the researcher's own musical practice.
 - Comment:
The findings contribute to Hanna's professional development as a theatrically acting musician, an area in which she wishes to achieve expertise. The systematic analyses made her recognize the impact of a dramaturgic/theatrical dimension in music performance, in public and when practising. It helps performers establish an inner contact with their selves, rendering the confidence needed for being devoted to the music without feeling nervous. She implements this in her teaching, too.

- Outputs from a well-advanced artistic research project that can be shown to be having an impact on the subject areas, research questions or research methods used by other researcher(s).
 - Comment:
The collaborative method has inspired further artist researchers.
The project has been presented at conferences in music education and musicology, and is displayed on an institutional website and on that of the company.
To be achieved: Articles addressing different aspects of findings will be submitted journals representing different disciplines, including general education.

- Outputs from a well-advanced artistic research project that can be shown to be having an impact on the musical practice of people other than the researcher(s)
 - Comment:
The artistic research reveals approaches to music performance that correspond to expectations on higher music performance education. According to these, an *educated* musician ought to be characterized by a responsible way of acting in society; here this is exemplified by artistic exploration, which results in elaborated theatrical performance addressing gender issues in an affecting way.
Concerning dissemination: see above.

ANSWERS TO THE THEMATIC QUESTIONS

- Do I integrate findings of my artistic research in my own artistic practice – including teaching practice, and if so, how?
 - The findings contribute to Hanna's professional development as a theatrically acting musician, an area in which she wishes to achieve expertise. The systematic analyses made her recognize the impact of a dramaturgic/theatrical dimension in music performance, in

public and when practising. It helps performers establish an inner contact with their selves, rendering the confidence needed for being devoted to the music without feeling nervous. She implements this in her teaching, as well.

- Who are the peers I am relating to in my own artistic research project, and how do I relate to them? And what is the impact of this relationship with peers?
 - Hanna's research relates to her co-performers and co-researchers implying mutual influences of all participants. It also influences musicians who follow her artistic practice, interested in collaborating with her.
- Can I provide convincing examples of artistic research where it is very obvious that the artistic material itself makes the argument?
 - The music was strategically selected to suit the gender issues focussed on, which means that it does make an argument. Especially so does the music that has been included in a unified whole (i.e. Mealli) presenting gender issues metaphorically.
- Can I provide any evidence from my own experience that music, and our general understanding of it, can be transformed by the outputs of artistic research?
 - The research has transformed our understanding of the music; audience responses indicate that this goes for their understanding, too.