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What is on offer within Norwegian extracurricular schools of music and performing arts? Findings from a national survey

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a survey among rectors of schools of music and performing arts in Norway. The aim was to map the schools' offerings in terms of musical genres and related instruments and ensembles, and to determine how the availability of different genres was distributed demographically and geographically. A questionnaire including structured and open-ended questions was sent electronically to all rectors in August 2019 (response rate 58.4%, or 227 out of 389 rectors). The rectors were selected for the survey because they were the ones that had the complete overview of their school's offerings. The data were analysed statistically and qualitatively. The results show that popular music and Western classical music occupy almost equal space in the schools; popular music is slightly more available. Norwegian folk music and other genres have more marginalised positions. The distribution correlates with patterns of social class and local, regional, and assumed cultural-musical identities, but no unequivocal governing logic of access was found. The findings were interpreted against a Bourdieusian-inspired framework that highlights the symbolic meanings of music.

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Access; musical genres; popular music; schools of music and performing arts; social class; symbolic meanings of music

Introduction

Access, or the logic that guides inclusion into and exclusion from particular activities or practices, has recently been the focus of many music education scholars. These topics have typically been framed under the umbrellas of social justice, activism, policy, or democracy (see, e.g. Benedict et al. 2015; Hess 2019; Schmidt and Colwell 2017). This article will approach the phenomenon of access from a slightly different point of view, exploring the musical content offered in a particular school system in Norway – extracurricular schools of music and performing arts – and how these offerings are distributed across the country. We will also consider how the symbolic meanings of such content make the question of access quite a complex one to both ensure and investigate.

The Norwegian system of extracurricular schools of music and performing arts (SMPA) is enshrined in legislation and designed to reach all children and youth aged 6–15 in Norway. The law governing it states that each municipality, 'alone or in collaboration with other municipalities, shall provide courses in music and other cultural activities for children and young people, organised in association with the school system and local cultural life' (Norwegian Education Act 1998, § 13–6). Originally only music schools, the SMPA have, over time, expanded their activities to include

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other cultural expressions as well, such as dance, creative writing, theatre, and visual arts (Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts 2016). The explicit vision of its member and advocacy organisation, the Norwegian Council for SMPA, emphasises a broad, inclusionary ambition summarised as ‘Schools of Music and Performing Arts for all’ (21). Still, the most recent numbers available (for the school year 2018–2019) show that only approximately 13% of the main target group, children and youth aged 6–15 years, attend SMPA. According to recent research in Norway and the other Nordic countries (see below), SMPA attendance is also highly stratified along the lines of gender, social class, and ethnicity. Furthermore, attendance levels vary greatly among the different Norwegian municipalities (Berge et al. 2019, 60), and this variation seems to be connected to both municipality location and size (Kleppe 2020), the latter also correlating with money spent per capita on SMPA (see Berge et al. 2019, 99), with small municipalities spending more than larger ones.¹

Policy documents and reports show that genres such as popular music and folk music were included in SMPA early in the school system’s existence (Dugstad 1989; Kommunenes sentralbyrå 1989). However, they also show the hegemony of Western classical music in these schools; it was considered self-evident that this musical genre underpinned the teaching traditions of the SMPA (Karlsen and Nielsen 2020). In the curriculum framework of today, musical genres are barely mentioned at all, and teachers are free to choose both the content and modes of instruction. However, recent analyses reveal that strong traces of the dominance of Western classical music remain (Ellefsen 2017; Ellefsen and Karlsen 2019; Karlsen and Nielsen 2020), at least at the level of policy documents. With this as a backdrop, this article reports the findings of a national survey distributed to all SMPA rectors in Norway and designed to map, on an overarching level, what is on offer within the SMPA in terms of music. The following research questions guided this investigation: *Which musical genres, including related instruments and ensembles, are offered in the Norwegian SMPA? How is the availability of different genres distributed demographically and geographically? How can the patterns concerning the available musical content be interpreted with respect to the complex relationships between access and the symbolic meanings of music?*

Earlier research on SMPA in the Nordic countries

The research on SMPA in the Nordic countries has grown exponentially over the past decade and includes many different approaches (Rønningen et al. 2019). This brief overview will focus on studies relevant to the topic of access in particular. It is also limited to research conducted in Norway, Sweden, and Finland since these countries have many political and demographic similarities.

In a recent article, Väkevä, Westerlund, and Ilmola-Sheppard (2017) argue that extracurricular music education in Finland can be understood as a closed or autopoietic social system. A similar view appears in a Norwegian report (Berge et al. 2019), which states that the SMPA are ‘characterised by static organisation’ (187, our translation) and are, despite good intentions to the contrary, not available to all and are thus ‘Norway’s best-kept secret’ (186). Both accounts conclude that these school systems would, among other benefits, increase their own resilience by a more direct approach to the challenges connected to widespread participation.

From a large national survey of Swedish sixth-graders, we know that ‘the typical Swedish Community School of Music and Arts student is a Swedish-born girl with well-educated parents’ (Jeppsson and Lindgren 2018, 191). Norwegian research largely confirms this picture, demonstrating that the SMPA primarily serve middle-class children and youth (Bjørnsen 2012; Gustavsen and Hjelm-brekke 2009). Girls are overrepresented (Berge et al. 2019), and children from immigrant backgrounds are underrepresented (Kleppe 2013). The school fee that most Norwegian SMPA students have to pay may also hinder participation by socio-economically disadvantaged groups (Gustavsen and Hjelm-brekke 2009). Furthermore, Finnish research points out that this school system is characterised by ableism (Laes 2017), and that it has limited accessibility and relevance, as perceived by the Sámi population (Kallio and Länsman 2018).

Despite this seemingly unified picture of the SMPA as sites of social and cultural reproduction, these institutions also encompass contradictory discourses, many relating to matters of inclusion and exclusion. For example, in focus group discussions with SMPA leaders in Sweden, Tillborg (2017) identified several areas of discursive tension, revealing binary oppositions between, among other things, whether SMPA offer education *or* some form of leisure activity, the goal of 'reaching all children *versus* improving a few children's special skills' (70), and a focus on 'classical *versus* non-classical music' (70). Likewise, in an analysis of music teachers' professional identities in Norwegian SMPA, Jordhus-Lier (2018) found 'several institutional and teacher discourses competing to define the field' (vi). Most prominent were the institutional discursive tensions of breadth versus depth and the teacher-related oppositions of versatility versus specialisation. Breadth is 'dominant in policy documents' (vi–vii), and specialisation was the most central discourse among the teacher interviewees. Acknowledging that this situation 'does create some tension' (vii), Jordhus-Lier also emphasises that the field of SMPA in Norway is currently an open one where '[n]one of the discourses has hegemony' (vi). A similar picture appears in the work of Jeppsson (2018), who interviewed Swedish SMPA teachers about the schools' work of legitimisation in relation to socially inclusive music education. She found that discourses of elitism and specialisation existed both at odds and peacefully side-by-side with discourses of inclusion and broad participation, but also that teachers often experienced little room for negotiation and felt 'subjected to impact from sports, patterns of gender stereotyping, and politics and policy at different levels' (50, our translation).

To sum up: The most recent research on Nordic SMPA indicates that they are national fields of quite intense negotiation over matters of access. They are also sites that are not unambiguously characterised by static reproduction but where the answers and solutions to 'who should be included,' 'on what terms,' and 'through what means' are currently up for grabs. This is also visible in quite extensive work on the policy level (see Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts 2017; SOU 2016, 69). Altogether, this makes the SMPA quite interesting arenas for further exploration.

Theoretical framework

The survey findings reported in this article are interpreted using a theoretical framework based primarily on Bourdieusian perspectives (Bourdieu 1984, 1986/2011).² This means, among other things, that music – seen as a cultural commodity and a form of artistic expression – is understood as part of a symbolic cultural economy which exists side by side with the monetary one. It also implies that an individual's cultural capital, which can be built partly through knowledge of and engagement with various kinds of music, is believed to have a certain exchange value and may function as a vehicle for social mobility or immobility. Similar perspectives are highlighted by Burnard, Trulsson, and Söderman (2015), who show how Bourdieu provides a range of generative conceptual tools with particular relevance for music education and thereby 'helps us to deepen our understandings of musical upbringing and socialisation through habitus, identity formation and musical likes and dislikes' (4). This anthology further showcases how music may become part of familial action, for example as a means of class remobility (Trulsson 2015) or for establishing a specific sense of gender and class (Hall 2015).

According to Bourdieu, music is the cultural medium and means of social stratification par excellence, because of its perceived purity as an art form. In his understanding, music 'infallibly classifies' (19) the ones who attend to it in different ways, and 'represents the most radical and most absolute form of the negotiation of the [social] world' (19). From the point of view of parents aiming to maintain, obtain, or secure a social (class) position for their children, either as a form of social and cultural reproduction or as an attempt at social (upward) mobility, encouraging their children to attend extracurricular music education then seems to be a wise strategy. However, this strategy will only succeed to the degree that the parents are familiar with the musical hierarchies that are valid within the context in which they live.

In France of the 1960s, depicted in Bourdieu's seminal work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Western classical music held unquestioned hegemony and was self-evidently the music of the dominant class. Since then, things have changed. In the early 1990s, Peterson (1992) detected a shift in the taste patterns of US middle-class consumers from so-called classical music snob to cultural omnivore. More recent contributions in cultural sociology have confirmed omnivorousness to be the current dominant cultural and musical preference (Bennett et al. 2009; Faber et al. 2012), albeit within certain limits. Following this lead, a group of Norwegian researchers has coined and further developed the idea of musical gentrification (Dyndahl 2015; Dyndahl et al. 2014; Dyndahl, Karlsen, and Wright 2021) to describe the processes involved in the selective uptake of 'musics, musical practices, and musical cultures of relatively lower status' (Dyndahl et al. 2014, 54) that enriches the cultural and musical diet of middle-class omnivores. Exploring this phenomenon empirically in a range of different contexts, they find musical gentrification to be a useful metaphor for the structural forces at play when the topography of music-related distinctions and hegemony changes over time. It is significant that processes of musical gentrification involve both inclusion *and* exclusion, and while new musics may be elevated to a higher status, other well-known hierarchies of (for example) gender and ethnicity may remain. Furthermore, new patterns of distinction appear *within* the range of popular music styles (Vestby 2017) even while Western classical music seems to retain some of its positive distinctive value, at least for the professional middle class and other elite groups in society (Bennett et al. 2009; Bull 2019).

So, in this context of hegemonic musical multifariousness and in a field which Bennett et al. (2009) call the 'most divided, contentious cultural field' (75) of all, how do the Norwegian SMPA realise their vision of existing 'for everyone'? What do access, societal integration, and inclusion mean when engagement with a broad spectrum of musics may be what maintains social classes and allows for upward social mobility? And how can a school system with an already demographically skewed student body – socio-economically, ethnically, and in terms of gender – cater to the potential target group members' cultural identities under such circumstances? Below we will describe the current offerings in Norwegian SMPA, including recently reported changes and plans for development. Towards the end of this article, we will discuss the patterns detected against the backdrop drawn up above.

Methods

The present study was designed as a survey, and is part of a larger research project in which one research area focuses on SMPA in Norway (see footnote 2). An earlier sub-study within the SMPA research area of this project involved a discourse analysis of all SMPA curriculum frameworks (Karlsen and Nielsen 2020).

Participants and the SMPA

The survey questionnaire was sent electronically to all SMPA rectors in Norway. The selection of rectors as informants was connected to them having the complete overview of their school's offerings in terms of instruments, ensembles and genres, as well as the general development and future plans. The original sample included 58.4% (227 rectors) of all SMPA rectors in August 2019 (389 individuals). Most of the SMPA had their own rector, but not all. Therefore, the sample selection also includes municipal inspectors of culture or education who simultaneously served as SMPA leaders. According to Berge et al. (2019, 76), the rectors in SMPA have versatile backgrounds, with 73% having formal pedagogical education, 71% having formal artistic education, and 46% having formal leadership education.

As mentioned in the introduction, the current curriculum framework for the SMPA outlines five primary art disciplines offered at these schools; music is one (Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts 2016). Of the responding rectors, 224 (98.7%) led SMPA which

offered music. These 224 rectors, with their respective schools, constitute our final sample. In addition to music, some of the included SMPA also offered visual arts (170 SMPA, 76.7%), dance (153 SMPA, 66.5%), theatre (130 SMPA, 56.4%), creative writing (19 SMPA, 8.4%), and other art forms/activities (33 SMPA, 23.3%).³

The survey participants worked as rectors in SMPA throughout all counties in Norway. Of the participating SMPA, 146 (65.2%) were located in small municipalities with up to 10,000 inhabitants, 72 (32.1%) were in medium-sized municipalities with 10,000–74,999 inhabitants, and 6 (2.7%) were in large municipalities with 75,000 inhabitants or more (see Table 1). The SMPA had varying numbers of music students, ranging from 12 to 5,000. On average, the schools included in the sample had 228 music students (*Mdn* = 130; *SD* = 467.8).

The rectors were invited by email to log into a web-based questionnaire. When signing in, they were informed that their participation in the project was voluntary and that they could withdraw whenever they wanted. They were also informed that their answers would be anonymised and that it would be impossible to identify particular schools in the published material. The survey was conducted in line with the ethical recommendations of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Questionnaire design and procedures

As shown in the Appendix,⁴ the rectors were asked to answer several structured questions about which musical genres, ensembles, and instruments their SMPA offered. They were also asked about certain background information (location, types of art disciplines offered, total number of students, total number of music students). They were then asked two open-ended questions regarding recent changes in their SMPA's offerings and whether plans existed to expand or develop the teaching content.

The questionnaire was administered through a standard survey package⁵ and accessed through the registered email addresses of rectors/SMPA leaders published in the GSI⁶ and on the SMPA's or municipalities' websites.

Limitations

The statistical analyses conducted on the data reported here examined only frequency and correlation. Consequently, we cannot claim certain knowledge about any causal relationships. Another limitation of the study concerns the level of detail in descriptions of (and therefore reports on) musical genres. Since we wanted the questionnaire to be easy to understand and answer, we decided to use broad genre categories, knowing this might result in some inaccuracies (see Dyndahl et al. 2017, for a more elaborate account of the perils of categorising music, particularly popular music). While most survey questions were answered by all respondents, the last question concerning recent developments received somewhat fewer answers. The trends detected in this part of the material are therefore reported with some caution.

Table 1. Number of municipality inhabitants/municipality size: Frequency and percentage of SMPA (*N* = 224).

SMPA	Frequency	Percentage
Small municipality (>10,000)	146	65.2
Medium-sized municipality (10,000–74,999)	72	32.1
Large municipality (<75,000)	6	2.7
Total	224	100.0

Analysis

The data analysis included two separate procedures; SPSS and NVivo were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. All the structured questions about the music genres, instruments, and ensembles offered at the SMPA included one opportunity for free-text comments (in addition to the standardised alternatives). When these comments coincided with other options available in the questionnaire, the research team determined their categorisation before subjecting the comments to further analysis.

The answers to the open-ended questions were subjected to a qualitative analysis using open coding. Most of the codes emerged from the data; some were derived from the research questions. The two open-ended questions were coded separately, which resulted in two different sets of codes. Important topics related to genre, instruments, and ensembles were identified. In all, between 40 and 50 codes were created for each question. After the first round of coding, some codes were merged, while others were organised into hierarchies. For instance, the more specific code ‘adapted to students’ wishes’ was organised under the broader code of ‘genre.’ This process resulted in five overarching codes for each question. This analysis highlighted the most relevant topics based on frequency and/or relevance.

Results

Musical genres offered and emphasised in Norwegian SMPA

Our first research question addressed which musical genres, with their related instruments and ensembles, the SMPA *offered*. As can be seen in Table 2, nearly all the investigated schools (222 SMPA, 99.1%) offered education in popular music; slightly fewer offered education in Western classical music (211 SMPA, 94.2%). In addition, 39.3% of the schools (88 SMPA) offered education in Norwegian folk music, and a few also offered some other genres (9 SMPA, 4.0%).⁷

We also asked which musical genre received the *main emphasis*⁸ in the school’s music department. As shown in Table 3, more schools emphasised popular music (122 SMPA, 54.4%) than Western classical music (94 SMPA, 42%), while no schools gave prominence to Norwegian folk music (0 SMPA, 0%). Some rectors reported that other genres were emphasised (8 SMPA, 3.6%), but quite a few of them commented that musical genres in their school were evenly distributed or that they found it difficult to make this kind of assessment.⁹

Since inclusion or exclusion of different musical genres in the SMPA’s music departments also relates to instruction in particular instruments and the existence of specific ensembles, we asked the rectors which instruments were taught and which established ensembles were offered at their school. As shown in Figure 1, most schools offered instruments related to popular music, including *guitar popular* (212 SMPA, 94.6%), *percussion/drum set popular* (200 SMPA, 89.3%), *bass guitar popular* (185 SMPA, 82.6%) and *voice popular* (182 SMPA, 81.3%). We also found that some instruments related to Western classical music, such as *piano classical* (213 SMPA, 95.1%) *guitar classical* (155 SMPA, 69.2%), *voice classical* (152 SMPA, 67.9%), and *violin* (148 SMPA, 66.1%) were offered at a relatively large number of schools. However, aside from *piano classical* – which was the most commonly taught instrument of all – these instruments were less common than instruments related to popular music. Adding to this picture, typical symphonic orchestra instruments, such as *oboe* (19

Table 2. Musical genres offered: Frequency and percentage of SMPA ($N = 224$).

SMPA	Frequency	Percentage
Popular music	222	99.1
Western classical music	211	94.2
Norwegian folk music	88	39.3
Other genres	9	4.0

Table 3. Musical genre, main emphasis: Frequency and percentage of SMPA ($N = 224$).

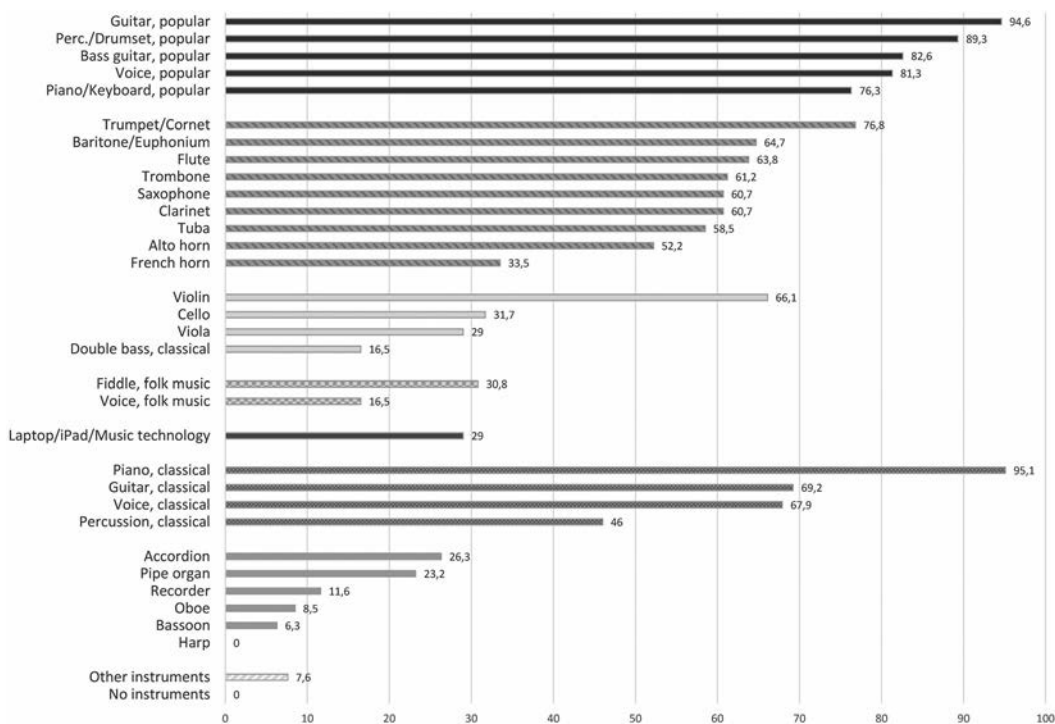
SMPA	Frequency	Percentage
Popular music	122	54.4
Western classical music	94	42.0
Norwegian folk music	0	0.0
Other genres	8	3.6
Total	224	100.0

SMPA, 8.5%), *basoon* (14 SMPA, 6.3%), and *harp* (0 SMPA, 0%), were offered at only a few or none of the SMPA.

Norway boasts a long tradition of wind bands, and even though the rectors reported a slight decline in student demand for wind instruments (see the qualitative analysis below), these instruments were among those more frequently offered (for example: trumpet/cornet, 172 SMPA, 76.8%; baritone/euphonium, 145 SMPA, 64.7%; flute, 143 SMPA, 63.8%; clarinet and saxophone, 136 SMPA, 60.7%). Half the schools surveyed offered a *wind band* (see Figure 2). *Big band* – another ensemble that requires wind instruments – was also an option for students at some of the SMPA (23 SMPA, 10.3%).

The ensemble named *band popular music* was the most common (166 SMPA, 74.1%). On the other hand, *string orchestra* – which uses instruments typically associated with Western classical music – was offered at only one-third of the schools surveyed (74 SMPA, 33%). Many schools also offered *guitar ensembles* (100 SMPA, 44.6%) and *choir* (92 SMPA, 41.1%); only a few offered *fiddle* (16 SMPA, 7.1%) or *accordion ensembles* (10 SMPA, 4.5%). The latter two ensembles are common in Norwegian folk music.

Seen together, our findings show that popular music, with its related instruments and ensembles, is the musical genre most commonly offered in Norwegian SMPA, while Western classical music is

**Figure 1.** Instruments offered: Percentage of SMPA. $N = 224$.

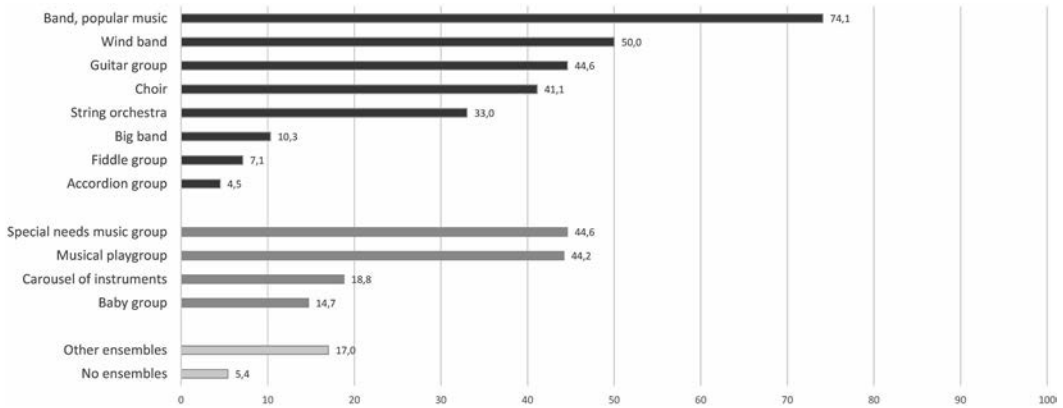


Figure 2. Ensembles offered: Percentage of SMPA. $N = 224$.

slightly less accessible. It is also worth mentioning that the instrument we called *laptop/iPad/music technology* was only offered by a relatively small number of schools (65 SMPA, 29%). This may suggest that the SMPA, despite their strong emphasis on popular music, are still lagging behind regarding facilitating their students' digital musicianship.

Changes and developments over the past ten years

We also examined rectors' descriptions of recent changes at their schools. As already mentioned, an open-ended question asked whether the rectors had experienced changes during the past ten years, especially regarding genres, instruments, and/or ensembles. Many reported no changes in the genres taught, but of those who *did* report changes, the largest increase was in popular music. However, some rectors said they take a broader approach to genres, while others, as noted above, asserted that they did not 'label' music and that talking about genres did not 'make any sense to them.' We also found that genre development in schools was partly related to students' expressed wishes. This included letting the students themselves decide what kinds of music they wanted to focus on, but it also meant that schools adapted their offerings based on what they thought would attract more students.

Changes in instruments taught were fairly evenly distributed; voice had the largest increase and wind instruments the most pronounced decrease. Only 12 out of 224 schools reported developing a stronger focus on music technology in the previous decade. The rectors reported an increased focus on ensembles and playing in groups in general, but this change was not specifically related to genre. Those who did mention genre reported that the number of popular music ensembles had expanded. Interestingly, some rectors reported a decline in students who wanted to play in rock bands; they suggested this could be because the singer-songwriter tradition is overtaking these bands in popularity. Overall, we found that an important expressed reason for changes in genres, instruments, and ensembles was teacher competence, suggesting that developments quite often occurred due to the knowledge and skills brought by teachers that the rectors had been able to hire. Several rectors also noted a tendency for fewer students to take music classes in favour of dance and visual arts.

Demographic and geographic distribution of the availability of musical genres

Our second research question concerns the demographic and geographic distribution of the availability of musical genres. A chi-square test was used to explore the relationship between differences in reported teaching content and the size of the municipality in which the SMPA were located. As

can be seen in Table 4, Western classical music ($\chi^2(2, 224) = 7.37, p < .05$) and Norwegian folk music ($\chi^2(2, 224) = 6.23, p < .05$) were significantly related to the number of inhabitants in the municipality. Western classical music was more frequently offered in medium-sized municipalities, and Norwegian folk music was more likely to be offered in small municipalities. As expected from the almost universal inclusion of popular music (222 SMPA, 99.1%, see above), we did not find any significant correlation between municipality size and popular music offerings. However, the size of the municipality seemed to be the most important variable influencing the availability of Western classical music and Norwegian folk music.

The musical genre most emphasised at a given SMPA was also significantly related to municipality size ($\chi^2(4, 224) = 36.05, p < .000$). SMPA in small municipalities emphasised popular music over Western classical music and other genres, while SMPA in medium-sized and large municipalities emphasised Western classical music more than popular music and other genres.

Analyses of variance (one-way ANOVAs) were used to examine the relationship between music educational offerings (musical genres) and number of music students at a school; the different musical genres were the dependent variables in these analyses. The number of music students at a school significantly affected whether the SMPA offered popular music ($F(4, 215) = 2.96, p < .05$) and Western classical music ($F(4, 215) = 4.28, p < .002$). The number of music students had no effect on offerings of Norwegian folk music or other genres. These results support our other findings that popular music and Western classical music are widely offered in SMPA. However, it is also interesting that the number of music students in a school had no effect on offerings of Norwegian folk music and other genres. It is *not* the number of music students that seems to be the most important variable regarding availability of education in these genres. Still, as shown below, other correlations exist.

Table 4. Chi square tests of the relationships of musical genres offered/emphasised with municipality size and county ($N = 224$). Chi square test of the relationship of genre emphasised with number of music students in the SMPA ($N = 224$). ANOVA tests of the relationships of musical genres offered with the number of music students in the SMPA ($N = 215$).

F-test (χ^2)	Musical genre	Popular music	Western classical music	Norwegian folk music	Other genres	Main emphasis		
Number of inhabitants		N.S. ^a	$\chi^2(2, 224) = 7.37, p < .05$	$\chi^2(2, 224) = 6.23, p < .05$	N.S.	$\chi^2(4, 224) = 36.05, p < .000$		
						Popular music	Western classical music	Other genres
Small		144	13	66	6	99	41	6
Medium-sized		72	72	20	2	23	47	2
Large		6	6	2	1	0	6	0
Number of music students		–	–	–	–	N.S.		
Counties		N.S.	N.S.	$\chi^2(17, 224) = 42.19, p < .001$	$\chi^2(17, 224) = 42.19, p < .004$	$\chi^2(34, 224) = 65.61, p < .001$		
						Popular music	Western classical music	Other genres
						122	94	8
F-test (ANOVA)								
Number of music students		$F(4, 215) = 2.96, p < .02$	$F(4, 215) = 4.28, p < .002$	N.S.	N.S.	–	–	–

N.S. means that the relationship is non-significant.

A chi-square analysis was used to explore the relationship between the county in which an SMPA was located and the musical genres offered at that SMPA. As shown in Table 4, there were no significant differences in offerings of popular music or Western classical music among counties. However, the counties differed significantly in offerings of Norwegian folk music ($\chi^2(17, 224) = 42.19, p < .001$) and other genres ($\chi^2(17, 224) = 42.19, p < .004$). For example, Sámi music was offered more frequently in Northern Norway, and traditional music from other countries was offered more frequently in the capital area and in parts of Western Norway. Furthermore, the genre emphasised at a given SMPA differed significantly by county ($\chi^2(34, 224) = 65.61, p < .001$). The most pronounced reported emphasis on Western classical music was found in the SMPA located in counties in the capital area and in parts of Western Norway; SMPA in Mid- and Southern Norway emphasised popular music. Interestingly, these emphases align with the profiles of the music academies and conservatories in the same regions. For example, music conservatories in Mid- and Southern Norway¹⁰ are well-known for their education in popular music, while the Norwegian Academy of Music (in Oslo) offers the most comprehensive Western classical music performance programmes in the country.

Overall, our findings suggest that, while the availability of some musical genres is fairly equally distributed among SMPA across the country, other genres are limited to schools in small municipalities or specific parts of Norway. Moreover, which genres are emphasised by the schools included in our sample vary by municipality size and county location. A school's number of music students seems to have little impact on this picture. Consequently, while the general genre availability in the SMPA might be quite good, in reality, it may be impossible for many students in Norway to access educational opportunities in certain musics, at least through this particular school system.

Plans for further developments

We also explored rectors' ideas about further developments at their SMPA regarding musical genres and the related instruments and ensembles. While some rectors (28 SMPA, 12.5%) chose not to answer this question, 132 SMPA, 58.9% reported – perhaps a bit surprisingly – that no developmental plans existed (see Table 5). The responses indicate that this was mainly due to a lack of resources and also because many SMPA surveyed were in the process of merging with other schools.¹¹

When commenting on plans, several rectors indicated that there were plans to increase ensemble playing in general, regardless of genre. However, when we examined the answers about genres, instruments, and ensembles that could be related to a particular genre, we found that most plans for future development involved popular music in one way or another. Complicating this picture were plans related to expanding the variety of genres offered. Some rectors also reported a desire to focus more on music technology and on collaboration with external bodies (such as wind bands, compulsory schools, and local community music organisations), and other arts disciplines such as dance, theatre, and creative writing.

Discussion

Our findings pertaining to the first research question asked, namely which musical genres – including related instruments and ensembles – are offered in the Norwegian SMPA, suggest that both

Table 5. Plans for development, musical genres and music technology: Frequency and percentage of SMPA ($N = 224$).

SMPA	Frequency	Percentage
No plans	132	58.9
Popular music	35	15.6
Western classical music	21	9.4
Norwegian folk music	11	4.9
Wind band	6	2.7
Increase genre variety	7	3.1
Not reported	28	12.5
Music technology	19	8.5

popular music, Western classical music, folk music and also other musics are taught, but also that popular music and Western classical music are the main genres, occupying almost equally sized spaces within this school system. However, there are currently several signs pointing towards slight dominance by popular music: (1) Overall, the percentages regarding popular music availability, emphasis, instruments and ensembles are somewhat (but not a lot) higher; (2) popular music has been more visible on the developmental agenda for the past ten years, and it still is; (3) classical music ensembles are not available at a high percentage of SMPA, and since certain symphonic orchestra instruments are taught only to a limited extent (or not at all), many students are effectively prevented from participating in practices related to them. Arguably, the 'battle of hegemony' (if there ever is one) is clearly between popular music and Western classical music; the other musical genres we studied are far more marginalised.

With respect to our second research question, concerning how the availability of different genres is distributed demographically and geographically, a similar short summary would render the following: Popular music and Western classical music are widely available and offered throughout the country, with the main variations connected not to what is taught, but to the degree to which these genres are *emphasised* by the SMPA. For popular music, this means increased emphasis in small municipalities and in the regional areas of Mid- and Southern Norway, while Western classical music is more emphasised in schools located in medium-sized and large municipalities and in the capital area and Western Norway. Norwegian folk music is typically offered in small municipalities and Sámi music in municipalities located in Northern Norway, while traditional music from other countries is offered in the capital area and in certain parts of Western Norway.

Having answered our two first research questions, we now aim to raise the interpretive level of the discussion and approach the third one, that is, how the patterns concerning the available musical content can be interpreted with respect to the complex relationships between access and the symbolic meanings of music. We divide our answer to this particular research question into two parts, based on the two sets of findings elaborated on in the sections above.

The pattern elicited from analysing what kinds of musical genres are offered in the Norwegian SMPA may, as we see it, be interpreted in at least two different ways in the light of earlier research and the theoretical framework outlined above. First, the broad availability of and access to popular music and Western classical music could point towards the discursive openness described in recent research (Jeppsson 2018; Jordhus-Lier 2018; Tillborg 2017) in which offering a wider variety of musical genres implies a conscious effort to cater to and welcome a more demographically varied student body. Contradicting the plausibility of this interpretation is, however, the quite limited accessibility of Norwegian folk music and other musical genres. Second, it is possible that popular music is the genre that has been most effectively gentrified into the SMPA to fit the omnivorous tastes and needs of the middle class (Bennett et al. 2009; Dyndahl et al. 2021; Peterson 1992). In this light, the pattern could be understood primarily as one of social and cultural reproduction. If this is the case, although SMPA offerings may appear to indicate an open musical discourse, they actually represent mechanisms of social closure (Berge et al. 2019; Väkevä, Westerlund, and Ilmola-Sheppard 2017) that still pertain to the logic of social class. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that, based on rectors' responses, the SMPA now seem to have gone even further toward the inclusion or gentrification of popular music than recent analyses of the SMPA curriculum framework suggest (Ellefsen 2017; Ellefsen and Karlsen 2019; Karlsen and Nielsen 2020).

The analysis of the geographic and demographic distribution of musical genres suggests patterns that we interpret as having the following significance with respect to access and music's symbolic meanings: Norwegian folk music is typically offered in small municipalities where one would also expect to find strong folk music communities. Therefore, providing access to such music in these locations could be understood as catering to a pre-existing local identity. Likewise, the Sámi music available in Northern Norway can be seen as an attempt to meet the assumed cultural-musical identities of the large Sámi population living in this area. Traditional music of other cultures is offered at

SMPA in the capital area and in Western Norway; this could be because these geographical locations correlate with the settlement patterns of certain immigrant groups (Kornstad, Skjerpen, and Stambøl 2018). Hence, this could be interpreted as an effort to include children and youth with immigrant backgrounds. For the two genres that are widely available throughout the country – popular music and Western classical music – we have already suggested that the geographical variation, not necessarily in accessibility but in emphasis, could be related to specific schools' proximity to higher music education institutions with different profiles. Still, other interpretations could be equally valid. For example, the emphasis on popular music in Mid-Norway could be understood as an expression of a strong regional rock music identity. This phenomenon is manifested (among other things) in *trønderrock*, coined to denote the regional particularities of rock music originating in this area, and in the fact that *Rockheim* – the Norwegian national museum of popular music – is located in the Mid-Norwegian city of Trondheim. The stronger emphasis on Western classical music in the capital area and in Western Norway could, again, be interpreted through the logic of social class. If Bull's (2019) and Bennett et al.'s (2009) conclusions about the positive and distinctive relationship of the UK's elite and professional middle classes with classical music also have some relevance for Norway's more egalitarian society, the capital area is likely to be inhabited by a larger part of this segment of the population (Korsnes, Hansen, and Hjellbrekke 2014), as are cities (and their nearby municipalities) in Western Norway that host larger universities. These geographical areas might contain disproportionately more parents for whom classical music has retained its cultural capital value, something they want to pass on to their children. This would create enough interest to support an emphasis on classical music in the SMPA.

Concluding remarks

To return to the matter of *access* – in this case that of individual students – the patterns of availability and emphasis observed in our study have several implications. Access to musical genres, activities, and practices – in other words, offerings at Norwegian SMPA – is *not* equally distributed. Rather, it seems to be quite dependent on where one lives, in other words on the size and location of one's local municipality. As Berge et al. (2019) remind us, 'the SMPA are marked by local circumstances and traditions' (187) – for good and bad. Such local adaptations 'may strengthen the SMPA, but also hinder innovation and development. At the same time [they] contribute to making the SMPA relevant and admissible for many people' (187). As a consequence, the *logic* that governs access – in other words, SMPA inclusion and exclusion – seems to be not one, but manifold. This logic is not mainly or unequivocally one of social class as suggested by some previous contributions (Bjørnsen 2012; Gustavsen and Hjelmbrække 2009; Jeppsson and Lindgren 2018). Rather, our findings and interpretations demonstrate that it could also potentially include regional, local, and assumed individual cultural-musical identity. In addition, as some of the comments in response to open questions in our questionnaire indicate (see above), this logic is also connected to teacher competence and, not least, to 'the market': the schools seek to adapt their teaching content to attract more students. Consequently, if one wishes to *increase* access and make a larger number of musical genres more widely available to current and future users of the Norwegian SMPA one would need to approach this challenge from many different angles simultaneously.

As mentioned above, the survey data presented in this article allow for interpretation but are not sufficient to establish causality. Currently, we know quite a bit about which musical genres are offered at Norwegian SMPA and how they are distributed demographically and geographically, and our data also allow us to develop rich interpretations of, and hypotheses about, the complexities that seem to regulate the local composition of these offerings. An interesting direction for future research would be to look further into such complexities and interview SMPA rectors and teachers, located in different regions of Norway, about which negotiations and dilemmas they face when choosing what should be on offer, musical genre-wise, in their own schools.

Notes

1. As a consequence, municipality size was used as a variable in this study (see under Methods), based on the assumption that it would be relevant for what was on offer in the SMPA. Given that Norway is a small country with a current population of about 5.3 million people (Statistics Norway 2020), and also in large parts fairly sparsely populated, we made the following division: Small municipalities with up to 10,000 inhabitants (rural areas and small places); medium-sized municipalities with 10,000 to 74,999 inhabitants (mainly small and medium-sized towns); and large municipalities with 75,000 inhabitants or more (bigger cities; only nine Norwegian municipalities had this many inhabitants at the time of the data collection, but this covers the major cities in each part of the country).
2. The survey reported in this article is part of a larger research project in which nine music education researchers collectively map the conditions of musical upbringing and schooling for children and youth in Norway. The project, called *The Social Dynamics of Musical Upbringing and Schooling in the Norwegian Welfare State* (DYNAMUS), commenced in spring 2018 and is supported by the Research Council of Norway (see DYNAMUS n.d.). The project is based primarily on a Bourdieusian theoretical framework, and one of its research areas focuses on the Norwegian extracurricular SMPA in particular.
3. This latter category includes, among other things, gymnastics, filmmaking, cooking, contemporary circus, and parkour.
4. The virtual design of the questionnaire is not shown in the Appendix, only the questions as stated.
5. *Nettskjema*, administered by the University of Oslo.
6. GSI (Grunnskolen Informasjonssystem) is the Norwegian national register of compulsory schools published by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.
7. The category 'other genres' includes Sámi music and traditional music from other countries.
8. The findings for emphasis all relate to responses to question 9 in the questionnaire (see Appendix). Question 10 addressed a similar matter but was excluded from the analysis since it proved too difficult to answer accurately.
9. Some of these comments implied that our fixed categories for this question (popular music, Western classical music, Norwegian folk music) were perceived as too structured, and that (for example) ensembles such as wind band and choir should be defined as separate musical genres.
10. The music conservatoire in Trondheim (Mid-Norway) has offered performance programmes in jazz/improvised music for decades, while the conservatoire in Kristiansand (Southern Norway) offers extensive education in popular music.
11. In August 2019, when the survey was conducted, Norway was in the middle of a process of merging smaller municipalities into larger administrative units. This process was completed 1 January 2020.

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