



## “This one Grandma knew, too, exactly this one!” Processes of Canonization in Children’s Music

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**Abstract:** Processes of musical canonization occur at different levels of culture and society. People have a strong propensity to categorize, differentiate, and evaluate the music that is important to them, and music is ascribed value *in action* by people in real-life settings. Based in these premises, the article discusses two questions: First, how does the *idea* of a canon of children’s music influence the daily musical activities and repertoires used in children’s day care facilities and family homes? Second, in what ways is music legitimized in the everyday lives of children? Our data is collected by observation and interviews conducted in two pedagogical day care facilities and nine family homes. Children, day care staff and parents participated in the study. We find that a discussion of canonization in children’s music along the following four paths of legitimation is meaningful: the “good, old stuff,” the need for renewal, the inclusion of other types of music other than that aimed at a child audience, and the need for a wide array of genres and sentiments. Finally, we argue that although the legitimation and canonization in children’s music obviously involve considerations of musical aspects, separating these canonization processes from the prevailing socio-cultural ideas of childhood and children’s best interest is impossible.

**Keywords:** children's music, canonization, early childhood education, discourse analysis, ethnography

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### Introduction

In 2017, the program committee of the Norwegian Conservative Party, Høyre, led by the Minister of Education and Research, Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, made an initiative to establish an official Norwegian cultural canon. The inspiration came from Denmark, where a government attempt was made in 2005–2006 to define the essence of Danish culture through a compilation of 108 of the most important works of architecture, visual arts, design and crafts, film, literature, music, and the performing arts. The aim of

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a Norwegian cultural canon would be to highlight the nation's cultural heritage, both for future generations and for immigrants to the country. Minister Isaksen believed that it "will certainly both engage and provoke, and it will hopefully culminate in a joint public conversation on the main pillars of Norwegian art and cultural tradition" (Borud & Aldridge, 2017 [our translation]). However, most politicians, even those in Høyre, realized that a canon discussion could be very controversial, so the proposal was soon discarded by the party congress.

Nevertheless, examples of formal cultural and musical canonization taking place in historical settings are evident in Norway. On a less explicitly political but still official level, the Norwegian government's wedding gift to the Crown Prince and Princess who were married in 2001 included a CD cabinet, made by Norwegian designers, filled with 530 CDs of Norwegian music.<sup>3</sup> These were meant to represent a cross section of Norwegian music, carefully selected by representatives of Norsk Musikforlag [The Norwegian Music Publishing Company]. Holen (2001) reports that the official status of the collection, along with the aesthetic status it achieved through the selection process itself, made it well suited as a guiding example of what comprises good music. The compilation of children's music, which consists of 42 CDs, cuts across various genres and types, such as classical music, traditional children's songs, jazz, pop/rock-based music, pedagogical music, humorous music, and phonograms containing fairy tales, stories, and music. These were all high-quality productions that fit well with an educated class approach to musical parenting, although the particular choice of children's music could be said to lean more toward the safe side of musical expression than the experimental one.

Both cases show that the concept of a musical canon continues to thrive well in today's society. Moreover, processes of musical canonization occur at different levels of culture and society. In addition to the above examples, worth mentioning is, of course, the music industry's awards and *best of* compilations. In this article, however, we focus our attention on the more informal processes of canonization that take place in people's everyday lives. We base our approach in the premise that people have a strong propensity to categorize, differentiate, and evaluate the music that is important to them, regardless of it being classical music, jazz, or popular music (Frith, 1996), and that music is ascribed value *in action* by people in real-life settings (DeNora, 2000). Therefore, instead of providing an overview of potentially valuable works, our intention is to discuss the following two questions of canon and canonization: First, how does the *idea* of a canon of children's music influence the daily musical activities and repertoires used in children's day care facilities and family homes? Second, in what ways is music legitimized in the everyday lives of children?

Basing on a micro level-oriented analysis of ethnographic data,<sup>4</sup> we find that a discussion of canonization in children's music along the following four paths of legitimation is meaningful: the "good, old stuff," the need for renewal, the inclusion of other types of music other than that aimed at a child audience, and the need for a wide array of genres and sentiments. Finally, we argue that although the legitimation and canonization in children's music obviously involve considerations of musical aspects, separating these canonization processes from the prevailing socio-cultural ideas of childhood and

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<sup>3</sup> For the complete CD list, see <http://www.ballade.no/sak/her-er-kronprinsparets-cd-gave/>

<sup>4</sup> These data are identical with the synchronic data on which we base our other article in this issue, entitled "Decades of recorded music for children. Norwegian children's phonograms from World War II to the present" (Dyndahl & Vestad, 2017). The findings presented in the current article elaborate the last phase of the broader historical picture presented in the former article by focusing on the processes of (contemporary) canonization and bringing out more detailed information on the specific legitimation processes taking place in contemporary children's culture.

children's best interest is impossible.<sup>5</sup> Our approach and scope adds to other recent research efforts on canon and canonization in early childhood education and care, such as Hagen and Haukenes' (2017, forthcoming) work dealing with the singing repertoire of the staff in pedagogical day care institutions. They find that this repertoire consists mainly of songs before the 1960s. Knudsen (2017) discusses the important issue of canon formation in relation to inclusion and exclusion processes. Our perspective, underscoring *in action* negotiations and legitimation of children's music with phonograms as a pivotal point, represents a third, complimentary way of understanding the complex matter of canons and canonization in children's music.

## What is a musical canon, and how does it work?

The general perception of a musical canon is that it is a body of works generally accepted as the most important and influential in shaping the music culture in question. However, such a definition disregards a series of questions on the concept of a canon. Questions, such as *how* are canons determined, as well as *why* and on *what* authority are they identified (Kerman, 1983), challenge the idea of a given, monolithic canon, as well as the forces behind canonization processes giving hegemony to particular musical traditions. However, emphasizing that a critical musicological investigation of the phenomena and practices of a canon (Bergeron & Bohlman, 1992; Kurkela & Väkevä, 2009) would not at all deny its existence and significance is important.

Weber (1999) claims that in the history of (Western) music, what has been asserted as canonical music has exercised "an extreme, indeed intolerant predominance" (p. 341) over other music. Ideology is an essential canonical aspect, according to Weber, along with other matters, such as the hegemonies of criticism and repertoire. Thus, criticism of the ideological nature and status of a canon, much of which is rooted in critical theory, feminism, and postcolonialism, has been put forward in recent decades, with the argument that the musical canon is biased in terms of social class, gender, and ethnicity.

Shreffler (2013) believes that today, the concepts of canon and canonization refer to three related processes, which are the maintenance of the existing canon of older masterpieces, the process by which newer works of music are added to it, and the formation of parallel canons within different traditions and genres. Frith (1996) argues, as mentioned, that categorization, differentiation, and evaluation occur within any genre that has meaning for an audience. For example, when it comes to rock, Jones (2008) has made an in-depth study of the canonical values in the reception of this kind of music. Similar processes are occurring within other genres and styles of popular music, in accordance with the prevalence and recognition that this music has gained in education and research, as well as within the public and cultural spheres (see Regev, 2013; Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skårberg, & Nielsen, 2014; Dyndahl, Karlsen, Nielsen, & Skårberg, 2016).<sup>6</sup>

In this article, our point of departure is that hierarchical canonization is found in all musical traditions and genres. Thus, not only one canon but many canons exist, and they have significant differences, as well as a constantly changing position and status in relation to one another. The question is how these dynamic conditions are included in and have significance on children's music.

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<sup>5</sup> See also Vestad (2013, 2014) and Vinge's (2017) article in this issue, in which the suggestion is that the quality assessment of children's music is strongly related to the fact that the recipients are *children*.

<sup>6</sup> See also our other article in this issue, Dyndahl and Vestad (2017).

## **Ethnographic fieldwork: data collection and analysis**

Our discussion on the processes of musical canonization in children's everyday lives is based on a set of data collected by means of observations and qualitative interviews in two day care facilities and nine family homes over a total period of eight months. The data were gathered as a part of Vestad's (2013) dissertation project, which focused on how young children use recorded music in their everyday lives. The aims of the original study were to determine how children use phonograms in their everyday lives and, more specifically, to arrive at a gallery of practices (DeNora, 2000) and available interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) related to musical affordances. The day care facilities were selected on the basis of a questionnaire distributed to the 114 facilities available in a restricted geographical area at the outskirts of one of the larger cities of Norway. Fourteen facilities responded, and the two selected facilities particularly indicated that recorded music was used very often by their staff and the children. Approximately 100 children aged 1 to 6 years participated in the study, and nine of them also participated in in-depth interviews in the day care and in their family homes with their parents. The families selected were those who had the children that most often engaged with recorded music in the day care facilities.<sup>7</sup> Interviews were also conducted with 10 day care staff members. For this article, the data were subjected to a more in-depth analysis of the negotiations of musical canons at the micro level, in which an ethnographically oriented theme-based approach served as the main analytical tool (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although we do not engage in a full discourse analysis here, and, thus, the affective-discursive order of the data is not properly unpacked, we are inspired by Wetherell's (2012) and Wetherell et al.'s (2015) work concerning affective-discursive threads. This area focuses on "the established, immediately familiar and orthodox procedures for emoting and making sense" (2015, p. 60). Similar to Wetherell et al. (2015), we see these affective-discursive threads as recurring ways of talking and feeling about the matters in question.

## **How does the idea of musical canons work among early childhood education staff and parents?**

In the following section, we will discuss how the idea of musical canons works as a disciplinary tool among early childhood education staff and parents. Kurkela and Väkevä (2009) describe a musical canon as a disciplining tool in the following manner:

Whenever music is examined under a critical gaze, it is disciplined, ordered, and corrected; the canon functions as a basic tool in defining the scope of this disciplining. On one hand, the canon determines what music is worthy of study. On the other hand, it operates as a measure of the competence of the scholars. The canonised music is discussed and argued over; in this process, alternative conceptions of music may become secondary and marginal. It may even become the expert herself who is marginalized—unless she is strong enough to build a new canon. (p. vii)

Throughout the fieldwork, the idea of a canon became obviously understood among day care staff and parents as a collection of music and songs for children that, in general, was considered more important and influential than other music and songs. From this conception came the idea that such a canon might work as a disciplining tool. The staff and parents expressed that they felt the responsibility to act as

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<sup>7</sup> This way of selecting the participants led to the inclusion of both genders in the study. In terms of ethnicity, however, the selection process, which was based on the participants' naturally occurring engagement with recorded music, seemed to have given preference to ethnic Scandinavian children, even if children of many other backgrounds were attending the facilities in question. This is an important factor in itself that should be examined further in terms of how music and musical practices—which, in general, are known for their inclusive effects and for bringing people together—also exclude and separate.

providers and gatekeepers of children's music, but they had too little expertise in music to examine it critically and determine which songs are worthy of children's attention. An indisputable canon, they explained, is one that has the potential to function as a navigating tool in the vast and over-complex jungle of musical offers for children, helping the day care staff and parents ensure that the children were offered something valuable. However, they found what they perceived as an assumed canon of children's music to be vague and fragmented at best, and some even argued that such a canon did not exist anymore. The idea of a vague and fragmented canon, as well as that of a canon that was only available to music experts (and not to ordinary people, such as themselves, with only a common interest in music), left the participants overwhelmed. They were, in a way, left fumbling in the dark, as their competence as providers and gatekeepers was questioned (cf. Kurkela & Väkevä, 2009, p. vii, as cited above).

The hard-to-find canon of children's music was also described with regret on behalf of the children. The pivotal point of this regret was the contemporary lack of a joint repertoire measured up against happy childhood memories—especially for older staff members and parents—of shared experiences linked with a sense of belonging. To “know the songs that everybody else knows and to sing the songs together,” as they described it, were considered rewarding and important in childhood, as well as in older ages. The songbook nicknamed *Mads Berg* (after its collector and publisher)<sup>8</sup> was frequently used in Norwegian schools throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s. In the data, this songbook was described as a basis for reconstituting valuable shared experiences quite later in life: “When we are gathered, we can just pick up *Mads Berg* and sing for hours,” one participant explained. The worry expressed was not a nostalgic hesitation to leave a traditional repertoire behind, but a concern that contemporary children would be deprived of important emotional experiences, which, among other things, involved strong ties between people—in childhood, as well as later in life. This kind of repertoire and sing-along culture remains common among the participants, but it is rarely implemented in contemporary settings of early education and care: “Nobody knows it anymore,” the participants argued.

Moving on to discuss the canon as “a measure of the competence of the scholars” (Kurkela & Väkevä, 2009, p. vii), we found that a hierarchy emerged, in which the presumed experts with knowledge of the canon were ranked higher than those who found themselves overwhelmed and lacking in competence in serving as providers and gatekeepers of children's music. For some staff members, this marginalized position led to their lower engagement with music in the day care institutions. On the other hand, some took a counter-position, in which they argued that what mattered was not a pre-defined canon but what kind of music they themselves enjoyed and what music the children liked to engage with, regardless of whether the music could be thought of as “great music.” The notion of great music belongs to a discourse on canonization, and the staff's efforts may be understood as an attempt to establish parallel canons (Shreffler, 2013) or even to build a new, alternative canon, as Kurkela and Väkevä (2009) suggest, on the basis of other sets of values. Their argumentation for legitimation fits well with an existing academic discourse on music in everyday life, resting heavily on functional aesthetics (see Campbell, 2010; DeNora, 2000; Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2009; Ruud, 2013; Vestad, 2013),

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<sup>8</sup> The full title is *Skolens sangbok* [The School Songbook] (Berg, 1925). It was first published in 1914 and has been published in revised editions for almost 100 years, with the latest one published in the late 1990s. “In song we meet on common ground” is one of the mottos stated in the book; in the ethnographic data, we find this motto as a lived experience (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) which is ascribed strong emotional values of joy, pleasure, tradition, and feelings of community and belonging, followed by an expression of sorrow that contemporary children might not have the opportunity to experience because their repertoire is more fragmented. The older teachers and assistants note that this was already beginning with the younger day care staff members who are not familiar with the traditional school song repertoire.

as it rests on an approach to musical quality that includes how children, in fact, appropriate music and the effects of music on children in their actual everyday life settings. An expression used as a part of this counter-discourse was "little traditions," described by a day care teacher as follows:

I am very fond of Christmas music. [...] It is all about getting that Christmas feeling. [It's] not only about baking Christmas cookies or preparing Christmas presents; [through the music] you are getting that feeling [...] I choose music from my own childhood. One draws what one feels is good, so I think it has to do with whether you think you like music yourself. [...] We always have a lot of music during Christmas. We still do at my parents' house, as well. So it is kind of a little tradition.

A valid interpretation of this idea could be that the teacher is resisting marginalization and is strengthening her position as an expert provider and gatekeeper of music by constituting a specific, personally adapted version of the classic canon of Christmas that works on slightly different premises than the implied great tradition. In this little tradition, her personal experience and voice matter.

These quite sophisticated negotiations have the potential to construct an empowered position that challenges a hegemonic way of thinking within the observed day care settings, which rely heavily on the submission to the idea of one defined hegemonic canon. The possibility of having these negotiations demonstrates that the idea of a canon is in flux. However, the concept of one hegemonic canon was also powerful and continuously reconstituted. Consequently, the ideas of "grand" and "little" canons exist side by side; the former is mostly supported and reconstituted by the staff in charge, whereas the latter is mostly subscribed to by the younger teachers and assistants, while they also simultaneously ascribe the most value to the (to them, lesser known) grand canon. In this sense, the data reveal the privileged status of the idea of a grand canon within the observed professional day care settings.

## **Legitimation and canonization *in action***

What is explored in the following paragraphs is how the legitimation of children's music happens in children's everyday lives—how real people *in action* within real-life settings (DeNora, 2000) ascribe meaning and value to particular pieces of children's music, and how the songs and music in question, in turn, are legitimized. Discussing canonization in music solely as a musically oriented "measure of the competence of the scholars," as Kurkela and Väkevä (2009, p. vii) express, is virtually impossible in the case of children's music. As gatekeepers of children's music, day care staff and parents operate in the intersection of discourses on music and childhood (see also Vestad, 2013, 2014). In other words, their competence as staff members and parents includes aspects other than those of a music scholar and of music alone; it is based on broader views of the value of childhood available in society and acquired through education, on the particular experiences of childhood of each adult and on their prospects for creating "good childhoods" and futures for children in the contemporary. As recent research in childhood reminds us, "childhood (but also any identity) is a historically and culturally contingent construction, not an essential, transhistorical or transcultural continuity, predetermined by inherent biological or physiological factors" (Lesnik-Oberstein, 2011, p. 1). Hence, what constitutes a good parent and day care staff member must be contingent, as well. Zelizer (1994) remarks that in contemporary Western societies, children are ascribed the value of being emotionally priceless, a status that regulates how children are treated in the system of law, as well as in various areas of everyday life.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In her seminal work entitled "Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children," Zelizer (1994) points out that from a contemporary Western perspective, the social value of children is about them being emotionally priceless instead of being economically useful, as in earlier times. In contemporary Scandinavian culture, good parenthood includes engagement, time, love, and respect for the child on the

Furthermore, childhood is partially constituted by materiality (Corsaro, 2005). Cultural artefacts, such as music, literature, television programs, and computer games, to name a few, are arguably important features of contemporary childhood. Parents tend to pass on cultural artefacts—music and others—of their own childhood to their own children (Wetlesen, 2000). By these actions, children are granted access to certain musical repertoires and activities. Basing on our data, we conclude that music is considered a vital ingredient of contemporary childhood. On the one hand, music functions as a tool that enhances “good” childhood, and, on the other hand, it works as a tool that confirms being a “good” staff member or parent.

Overall, we find that emotions play an important role in the legitimation of children’s music. As the participants of our study were not musicians or music educators, Juslin’s (2011) description of the role of emotion in a lay person’s perspective supports our analysis. He asserts that for lay persons, experiences of emotion “are one of the primary reasons for engaging with music” (Juslin, 2011, p. 113). Thus, for the participants of our study, *children’s music* combines two elements, *children* and *music*, each intimately bound to people’s emotions. The ethnographic specificities of emotional threads (cf. Wetherell, 2012; Wetherell et al., 2015) in the legitimation of children’s music are laid out in the following paragraphs.

### ***Traditional children’s songs—the good, old stuff***

The two most prominent categories of children’s music in our ethnographic data are traditional children’s songs and various pop-rock styles.<sup>10</sup> Delving into the micro levels of legitimation in children’s music in everyday life, we would like to present and discuss the following example of a traditional children’s song, mediated in the form of recorded music:

A mother and her four-year-old daughter are listening to traditional children’s songs and rhymes, played from a music CD, *Barnas viser 1* [The Children’s Songs 1] (2005), in the family’s living room. The phonogram features a presentation style that was common in 1950s radio; an “uncle” sings for and with the children (in this particular production, children are present in the studio), the singing voices are foregrounded in the soundscape, and the accompaniment is acoustic. The songs and rhymes they perform already belong to a canon of children’s music, confirmed and reconstituted by the very production of the album, nostalgic as it emerges. Further legitimation is provided by the parents when they buy the album and participate in the enjoyment of its songs that are familiar from their own childhood. The mother has designated what she described as the good old stuff, a recurring phrase in the data, elaborated on as music and songs that have proved their quality by their extended survival. Extended survival was in itself taken as a sign of good quality, and, thus, quality is reconstituted by the same mechanisms as those that constituted it in the first place—the repetition of the music and songs and, consequently, their further survival. In other words, what most strongly vouches for the quality of the children’s songs here is their sustainability, whereas the specific qualities of the music are left opaque.

Furthermore, contributions to an everyday *in action* canonization must rest upon personal emotional validation. In this particular case, the mother verbally ascribed value to the song as something that has survived for generations also when she suddenly burst out, “This one Grandma knew, too, exactly this

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parents’ part, as well as setting clear boundaries (Lindgren, 2015). Lareau (2011) shows that class differences are also involved in parents’ evaluation of the enactment of parenthood.

<sup>10</sup> For further elaboration of the genre and stylistic categories, see our other article in this issue, Dyndahl and Vestad (2017).

one!" The tone of her voice revealed that she was emotionally engaged and touched. Her surprise and joy over re-experiencing songs that *her* mother sang to her as a child were evident. Concepts, such as tradition, continuity, roots, and family tree, were mentioned both in this case and throughout the data by the other participants in similar events. The underscoring of "exactly this one" is significant, pointing to an experience of authenticity and closeness to the past, which is a driving force found repeatedly throughout the data in the parents' choices of music on behalf of their children (see also Vestad, 2015; *in press*).<sup>11</sup> The (grand)daughter, in this case, was contributing to the significance of the moment by showing a strong interest in the song, as well as in her mother's response to it. In this very moment, the child was included in the family tradition, as well as in a canon of children's music, cognitively and emotionally.

This example is consistent with other ethnographic events of the data, also in terms of traditional songs and rhymes being valued by parents and day care staff for their ability to reflect and express something uncomplicated, not only musically (see Ruud, 1983) but also in terms of the lyrics. They were considered "safe" and "nice," and they were, in many ways, expected to correspond with a desire for an innocent and uncomplicated childhood and parenthood.

Overall, this example can be characterized as featuring a rather uncomplicated *in action* maintenance of the existing canon of older masterpieces (Shreffler, 2013).

### ***Challenged by the new? Embracing the new?***

Adding newer works of music to the existing canon and forming parallel canons within different traditions and genres (Shreffler, 2013) can be a complicated process. On a conceptual level, our data reveal the debates between participants, implying discussions of the maintenance of an existing canon, on the one hand, and the formation of parallel canons on the other hand. A good example is the argument between a day care assistant in her early 20s and a teacher who is about 10 years older, which occurred during one of the interviews. The assistant explained that she, in general, liked to play music belonging to the tradition she grew up with for the children, which the teacher thought was fine. Then, the assistant explicated that an important part of this tradition was the character *Captain Sabertooth* (*Kaptein Sabeltann*), a well-known figure in theatre, film, and records since the 1990s. The first phonogram was released in 1991 (Formoe & Eik, 1991). The teacher looked surprised and stated quite clearly that Captain Sabertooth was not really a part of the children's music tradition, measuring Sabertooth against the canonical backdrop of the old traditional children's songs, similar to the ones described in the previous example. In other words, the teacher resisted adding this newer media phenomenon to the existing canon, whereas the assistant considered Sabertooth to be a natural part of the children's music tradition. The point here is not to decide who between the two is right and who is wrong, but merely to draw attention to the fact that what is experienced as "the tradition" is a contested issue that is infused with contingencies. Quite reluctantly, the teacher admitted that the music in question was a part of the assistant's tradition—that is, it was a kind of a parallel canon—but the teacher nevertheless did not ascribe it any value as a legitimate musical repertoire suitable for day care. While the already canonized music is considered a natural element, newer music has to be argued for, in terms of its pedagogical

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<sup>11</sup> Nostalgic sentiments may be a part of the mix of emotions experienced in this and similar examples. However, the overall sentiment of the ethnographic event was not so much about a teary-eyed yearning for lost times. Instead, it was about "touching ground," about finding a base of importance and urgency—the "real stuff"—that worked as a productive force in producing a good childhood. For further discussion on nostalgia and children's music, see Vestad, *in press*.

value in the day care setting. The assistant was not able to produce the necessary, pedagogically legitimate arguments in the setting, and the teacher was at the stronger end of their power relation.

Ascribing more value to older than to newer music was also observed in the other participants' actions and discussions, and the teacher cited previously was not the only one who was reluctant to add new music to the already existing canon. As mentioned, some parents described that they were deliberately looking for the good old stuff, but they complained that finding it was almost impossible. They expressed resentment for what they experienced as the music industry's blatant disregard for this kind of music. The music industry's failure to legitimize this category by not including it in the repertoire on music CDs was considered provocative by some, partly because it was seen as an act of disregard for the competence of the audience (see Kurkela & Väkevä, 2009). One participant spat out, "Do they think we are stupid?" Furthermore, they argued that when traditional children's songs were occasionally a part of contemporary productions, they were changed almost to the unrecognizable and certainly to the undesirable.

Producers and marketers, on their end, seem to be aware that one of the main resources that parents use when selecting music for their children is experiences from their own childhood. Therefore, they consider both parents and children when promoting music: the good, old stuff in terms of song titles, melody, and lyrics is targeted to parents, whereas the fun and catchy musical sound/style, which is based on contemporary pop-rock styles, is supposedly targeted to the child audience. One example of a production consisting of this kind of "re-wrapping" is the album *Splash*, launched in 2001 (Splash, 2001). Dance styles and the heavy use of a vocoder for the children's voices were used in children's classics, such as "Se min kjole" [Look at my dress] (Nyborg-Jensen, 1948/2001) and "Dyrene i Afrika" [The animals in Africa] (Egner & Hartmann, 1953/2001). However, a complex authenticity game seems to be at play here, and undertaking the re-wrapping of classic children's songs is a risky enterprise. One risks to "mess with" icons of childhood and consequently offend the audience who considers the music dear, valuable, and strongly connected to their own personal identity, as well as to their cultural and/or national identity. The fact that such offenses are possible suggests how deeply rooted children's music may be in adults, and the ongoing demarcation processes simultaneously suggest the borders of legitimate children's music.

On the other hand, as we have argued,<sup>12</sup> pop/rock-based music is a regular component of children's music today, and it serves as an intergenerational and global *lingua franca* (Regev, 2013). Even those participants who considered it regrettable that the pop-rock genre was taking up so much space within the genre of children's music today argued that children's songs and music need to be renewed and developed, just as any other kind of music. The adult participants sometimes expressed that the versions they, in fact, listened to as children now sounded dated, and that re-wrappings are necessary to give the repertoire contemporary relevance. However, new wrappings work better when they seem to take the music itself and the children as their pivotal points, and not the interest of earning profit quickly and easily, as the participants argued. *Taking children seriously* was a quality criterion expressed throughout the data, meaning that more respectful ways of preserving the original idea of the songs/music, while making the musical expression updated, worked best. Maj Britt Andersen's way of performing the traditional children's songs of Alf Prøysen in her album *Onger er rare* [Children are strange] (Andersen, 2006) was acclaimed in this respect. Andersen speaks a dialect very similar to Prøysen's. The timbre of her voice resembles a mother's voice, the band members are highly qualified, professional musicians, and the musical rearrangements are performed with an honest and earnest interest in making good music,

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<sup>12</sup> See our other article in this issue, Dyndahl and Vestad (2017).

as felt by the participants. In short, the overall atmosphere associated with the original music is sustained, but with a contemporary sound. Regarding the maintenance of the existing canon, the legitimation of new wrappings therefore seems to be mostly concerned with the right balance between the original and the contemporary, as well as with the overall quality of the production.

Processes of parallel canon formation (Shreffler, 2013) were often based on the children's own initiatives. In general, listening to the children's initiatives is consistent with the authoritative parenting style of the participating (middle-class) families and with the discourse on children's participation, which was prevalent in the staff's conversations in the day care setting (see Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). For instance, when one of the teachers, who was also a mother, encountered the Blue Elves of *Jul i Blåfjell* [Christmas in Blue Mountain] (Hagen & Ringen, 1999) for the first time, she thought that they were strange; elves were supposed to have red top hats, she explained with a laugh, indicating that in retrospect, she was embarrassed with her skepticism. However, as she watched the television series with her children, she realized that the children did not share her reluctance. Instead, they were drawn to the narratives, music, and atmosphere of the series. She explained it as though her children's appreciation was contagious, and, in the end, she was drawn to it, as well. The series and the music became one of their favorites in the family repertoire. Children's television programs were powerful sources for joint music appreciation between parents and children, and the shared practice of watching children's television together, especially during the holidays, helped introduce new musical repertoires. Examples were *Jul i Blåfjell* [Christmas in Blue Mountain] (Hagen & Ringen, 1999), *Jul på Månetoppen* [Christmas on Moon Hill] (Hagen & Ringen, 2002), and *Jul i Svingen* [Christmas in Svingen] (Indregard & Knudsen, 2006). Parents described the atmosphere created by these television series, recurring every year and across families, as rewarding and important. Again, the emotional dimension—particularly related to the rituals and shared experiences in this context—is an important feature of the legitimation of children's music.

### ***Too young to rock 'n' roll?***

Children listening to music produced and marketed to a teenage audience was described as challenging in our data, mostly because of inappropriate, explicit lyrics and sexualized images. On the other hand, being interested in and being able to enjoy music for older audiences were considered a positive sign of maturity. One example that shows this ambiguity is the case of a mother and her four-and-a-half-year-old child listening to a CD of *Celine*, a Norwegian child artist who, at 12 years of age, won the MGPjr finals (the Norwegian version of the Junior Eurovision Song Contest, JESC) and MGP Junior Nordic in 2007 with the song *Bæstevænna* [Best Friends] (Celine, 2007, track 5). The mother commented that they were "listening to music for girls who are a little older," and her daughter found it "kind of cool." The mother was almost giggling when she said this. In combination with her tone of voice, her giggle expressed an ambiguous mix of embarrassment and pride; it signifies that she, in her view, is pushing the edge of the legitimate. In the interview, she explained that she liked traditional children's songs better, and that she did not find music produced for an older audience (i.e., school children) suitable for her daughter yet. *Bæstevænna*, she argued, was teenage music, but it was not all that bad. The music was fun, and the lyrics and the image of the artist were both appropriate, in essence; although she was challenged by the popular music style, that might appear strange and difficult to conceive of as children's music in her opinion, she concluded that the music was, after all, child friendly in a contemporary perspective. *Bæstevænna* was also mentioned by the child's day care teacher and was, according to her, legitimized by its theme of having a best friend. The teacher believed that friendship is important for

children between 4 and 6 years of age, and, consequently, it was important that the emotions of having a best friend were mirrored in the music for children.

On a general level, another mother made a clear stance: "Child stars and commercial children's music often introduce teenage issues too early. Why can't children be allowed to just enjoy being children?" This comment was especially related to issues of sexuality, and it was obviously connected with the common intent to protect (innocent) children from harm. However, it is also about acknowledging that "there is so much more to a child's life than wanting to *grow older*," as one mother expressed it. Steering clear of any sexualized image and explicit lyrics was considered virtually impossible, and it left the parents with only one choice—to communicate good values more clearly—as one family argued. To some, this meant selecting music that allows children to be children. What it meant to be a child in this respect was continuously negotiated in the everyday micro practices of music.<sup>13</sup> For instance, MGPjr was considered an arena of children's music, in which children were sometimes put in situations that were too demanding for their age; nevertheless, it was also an arena that balanced the children's grown-up-like role as artists with their need to be children. From the discussions, we learned that "children's need to be children" includes not only being given opportunities to grow and be taken seriously, but also to receive care and consideration. Childhood ideals are also balanced in intricate ways in the parents' and children's discussions on child artists' styles; these artists should be child-like (but not too childish), ordinary (but still special), and mature (but still cute, with a childish charm). Importantly, from a parental perspective, the greatest concern is not regarding the child artists per se, but parents see in the child artists their wishes and fears for their own children's childhoods. A parallel canon is formed here of child artists and their songs of pop and rock styles, a process in which the ideals of contemporary childhood offered by the media are negotiated by the parents.

### ***Too young to listen to the real stuff?***

The issues considered in the previous section exist side by side with an apparently conflicting consideration: some of the parents argued strongly that they did not understand why children needed music produced especially for them. From observations of what music children use and like, children might just as well listen to "the real stuff," they argued, and that is music produced for a grown-up audience. A supporting argument was that the music produced and marketed to children was often overly simplistic and too "easy." It suffered from too much adaptation. Finally, the social, family-related aspect of children's music was also addressed; the parents explained that listening to music of their own liking together with their children, regardless of whether it was produced as children's music, was rewarding. This made the social and, therefore, the musical experience better for the children, as well, the parents argued. Examples of such music from the data are those of ABBA, Neil Young, and Lady Gaga. One recurring context of listening to this kind of music was in the car, especially "in my Daddy's car," as expressed by the children. In day care, however, a stricter policy on listening to music *not* intended for a child audience was unsurprisingly implemented.

Classical music is modestly represented within children's music in a contemporary perspective,<sup>14</sup> Our data further suggest that classical music holds an ambiguous position in musical children's culture. It is deemed inappropriate for children because rightfully or not, it is perceived to be too advanced. Nevertheless, it is ascribed high status, and the day care staff of one of the units marveled at how children

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<sup>13</sup> See also Vestad (2013).

<sup>14</sup> See also our other article in this issue, Dyndahl and Vestad (2017).

were sitting quietly, listening to classical music and enjoying it. The contradiction was reflected on in the interview by a question raised by the staff: "Perhaps we underestimate children when it comes to music?" Another staff blamed her own weak competence for not providing the children with classical music: "I wish I could introduce the children to classical music; it is so beautiful, but I do not know anything about it." One of the assistants elaborated on the belief that classical music was too advanced by stating that classical music is not easily absorbed by the children. She pointed to successful animated re-wrappings of Tchaikovsky's ballets, "The Nutcracker" (Hurley, Durchin, & McCaron, 2001) and "Swan Lake" (Hurley, Wilder, & Hudnut, 2003), in which the renowned Barbie Doll plays the roles of Clara and Odette, respectively. The assistant was quite challenged by the "pinkness" of Barbie and of the mentioned productions, as she described it, but was also grateful for the "child-oriented package," which, in her experience, worked really well in terms of allowing the children to enjoy types of music other than what they were usually offered.

However, the children were observed to develop a counter-discourse to the common adult belief that classical music was too advanced. For instance, as a part of their afternoon ordinary activity with CD-played music, some of the four- to five-year-old girls played Cécile Chaminade's *Concertino* (Chaminade, 1902/1992), a music CD brought to the day care facility by the researcher and left in a pile with other CDs in order to see what happened, and engaged with the music by moving along with it in ballet-like movements, sometimes softly and other times more eagerly, corresponding with the shifts in the music. Again, as in the examples of television music, children lead the way into music in their home-/day care culture, but in the case of classical music, few adults supported their interest.

### ***Safe or boring? Education, entertainment, and the carnival as a subversive space***

A category of music that holds a strong position in contemporary children's culture is pedagogically oriented music, which is produced with educative intentions, that is, by the allegedly "good guys" (Mouritsen, 2002). Similar to traditional children's songs, educational music is considered safe by parents, who can allow their children to listen to it without fearing that something inappropriate or dangerous might have been included. In addition, they can trust that listening to this music is in the best interest of their child—that it provides something good. The most prominent and celebrated examples of such productions in the synchronic data conveyed social awareness as follows: Maj Britt Andersen's *Indranis sang* [Indrani's Song] (Andersen, 2010), Geirr Lystrup's *Sangen om Yebo* [The song of Yebo] (Lystrup, 2005), and *Sangen om Omis* [The song of Omis] (Lystrup, 2008). What these recordings have in common is that they feature the musical style of different children's cultures, integrated in a story about each child's everyday life and adapted to a Norwegian child audience's musical culture. Other typical types of educational content are related to awareness and knowledge of time (names and characteristics of seasons, months and days of the week), the senses, and the body, as well as letters and numbers. The similarities of the content with that of educational television series, such as *Lekestue* (the Norwegian version of the BBC's *Play School*) (Sæther & Høien, 1967–1980) and *Sesam Stasjon* (the Norwegian co-production of the Children Television Workshop's series *Sesame Street*) (Skeie, Gran, & Høien, 1991–2000), are obvious, and children's needs corresponding with the current knowledge society are prominently featured. Skills and factual knowledge are emphasized, along with issues of social awareness. Particularly in the productions in which Andersen or Lystrup partake, according to the parents and day care staff, the educational messages are followed up with musical seriousness and quality; they carry an implicit aesthetic message, along with other educational messages, that music for children is to be taken just as seriously as music produced for a grown-up audience.

Although educational children's music is a distinguished category, we will nevertheless devote the following paragraph to its counter-discourse, or what might be called the "poop, pee, and fart" category of children's music.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, many parents found much of the available educational children's music to be bland, flat, and *too nice*: "It is so extremely correct all the time," one father explained, stating further that he was looking for more fun, stimulating, exciting, and challenging music for children. This particular father added music produced for grown-up audiences and classical music to his children's repertoire to achieve his goal. This was a strategy for being "politically incorrect," he explained, slightly embarrassedly, but also with a strong hint of critique of the musical preferences of the day care facilities. In our data, the poop, pee, and fart category represented another thread of argumentation opposing the described consisting idea of educational children's music. The category was partly embraced as a category that gave children a break; not everything needs to be educational, as children also need fun and entertainment. What was considered as safe music, including educational music, was described as boring and lacking in musical modes that allow challenge and the opportunity to have fun and laughter. Furthermore, parents argued for a more realistic depiction of children and childhood. The playful, less serious, and, as they described it, the not-so-pedagogically-correct, was appreciated; however, the participants also felt that some of the esteemed "funny" children's music was based on a huge misunderstanding of what children find funny and fantastic, so they would like to offer the children something of greater value and better quality. In short, what is encountered here are complex and conflicting threads of thinking regarding legitimation of children's music. What is at stake is children's needs.<sup>16</sup>

From the data, we would like to present an example that can be considered a compromise between fun, children's life worlds, quality of music, and musical experience, that is, music played and played with, for the sake of a good laugh. It involves a day care class jumping in the sofa, which was *only* allowed with this particular song. The song is the band Lyriaka's *Sjokolade* [Chocolate] (Gravdal & Moen, 2006, track 33). It was first presented to the children when the band performed in the day care's assembly room (their large kitchen). The jumping up and down was also introduced by the band, as the lead singer asked the children to stand up, sing, and jump along as it performed one of the last songs of the concert. The upbeat music accompanies the lyrics, "Sjokolade, sjokolade, jeg digger sjokolade!" [Chocolate, chocolate, I'm diggin' chocolate!]. After the concert, the children listened to the song from the CD about 20 times each day, a staff member narrated. The staff members gathered the children in the sofa, and they sang, jumped, fell, smiled, and laughed as the music played. In describing this scene, the day care staff emphasized the liveliness of the children. Their wild behavior was partly justified by the lyrics about chocolate, which the staff described as something that the children would like to have all the time, if they could. Thus, the theme of the song allowed the children to dwell on something that is very desirable to them, but also forbidden. This focus on the theme was accompanied by the jumping in the sofa, normally considered as bad behavior, thus resulting in greater excitement. It was as if the children were *celebrating*, the staff explained. Bakhtin's (1965/2009) writings on the carnival provide a helpful framework for elaboration of the observed scenes: the existing rules of day care were overthrown within the frames of this play, a play that was gay and gracious. As the carnival in Bakhtin's words (1965/2009) is not watched by the people but *lived* by them, so is the "Sjokolade" song not primarily listened to by the children but rather *lived* by them; they live it "for laughter's sake" (p. 217), and they participate as "fools," rolling around laughing.

<sup>15</sup> See our other article in this issue, Dyndahl and Vestad (2017), and Vinge's (2017) article, also in this issue.

<sup>16</sup> See also Vinge (2017) in this issue for a discussion of pedagogically correct music.

### *Missing the blue(s)*

The conformity of emotions depicted in music produced for a child audience was criticized by staff and parents. They argued that many producers completely lack an understanding and imagination of what children *are*, emotionally speaking, and what they *need* music for in their lives; children, as well as adults, need music to mirror all of their emotions, such as happiness, sadness, fear, and grief, to name a few. Again, this was discussed as a way of taking children seriously. The music industry was criticized by day care staff and parents for disregarding children's needs to calm down and relax; too much music seemed to aim for ease and fun. Children's need for calm music was clearly supported by the data's many video examples, in which children, on their own initiative, lied down in their rooms and in the day care while they listened to music. Often, their listening was accompanied by their slow playing with toys or soft singing along. Equally often, they lay passively staring at the ceiling.

Regarding emotional richness from a child's perspective, the concept "Jul i Blåfjell" [Christmas in Blue Mountain] (Hagen & Ringen, 1999) was mentioned as an exceptional piece of children's culture. As one day care teacher noted, this particular series contains intriguing themes for young children, such as the grief of losing a loved one, the uncertainty of what happens when you die, the secrecy and hiding when old rules are contested, inclusion and tolerance of the unknown, and the longing and joy involved in waiting for a new child to be born. These narratives were closely connected with corresponding emotions carried by the music, which was of many genres, exposed a large variety of music instruments and expressed an abundance of moods. The series arguably offers children unique possibilities to identify with and to mirror their emotions in music. In one of the day care facilities, the children played roleplay along with the series' soundtrack, available on a music CD. In combination with the children's previous knowledge of the narratives, the music functioned as a script for their play, providing the atmosphere of the roleplay and emotional underscoring, along with rhythmic patterns. Through the combination of music and the children's memory of the television narratives, they *lived the experience* of the characters in a musical, aesthetic play mode (Vestad, 2010; 2013). The participants expressed keenly that too few productions like this existed.

### **"Something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue"**

In this article, we have described some of the everyday *in action* negotiations of children's music in a contemporary perspective. The idea of one hegemonic canon exists in the data, particularly in the institutionalized setting of day care, but it is simultaneously challenged by a parallel understanding, pointing to multiple hierarchies. The adult participants' choices are permeated by value judgments (Frith, 1996),<sup>17</sup> and these normative judgments are woven into a fabric of values of music, children, and childhood. Thus, the ideology of the genre of children's music (see Weber, 1999) is heavily invested in the audience it is aimed at, and in ideologies of good parenting and day caring. As described earlier in this text, Shreffler (2013) suggests that the concepts of canon and canonization refer to three related processes: the maintenance of the existing canon of older masterpieces, the process by which newer

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<sup>17</sup> See also Vinge (2017) in this issue.

works of music are added to it, and the formation of parallel canons within different traditions and genres.

As a preliminary result, we find that canonization in children's music moves along four threads, corresponding with the old rhyme emphasizing the good luck charms of a bride: "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue." Similar to how one wishes the bride luck with these charms, parents and day care staff regard children's musical and general happiness in the following ways: *Old* traditional songs are reconstituted as belonging to the canon, re-invested with meaning in contemporary everyday life; it is a way of sticking with the safe and emotionally rewarding. *New* pieces of music, involving new musical genres, styles, and themes corresponding with the realities of contemporary childhood, are added, with some regarded as additions to the old canon and some forming new, parallel canons. Often, but not always, new, parallel canons are formed through the initiative of children. Music *borrowed* from that produced for teenagers and adults and integrated into the category of children's music requires a careful consideration of the lyrics and the artists' styles. However, it has many advantages, such as the shared enjoyment between parents and children, as well as opportunities to grow and develop. Finally, the missing *blue* sentiments, as well as a missing variety of genres, is brought out in our data. This lack is described as delimiting children's opportunity for musical experiences and failing to support their multifaceted emotional needs.

Although we have merely scratched the surface of the processes of canonization in children's music in this article, our findings support the legitimization of children's music by these processes by taking musical aspects, as well as the current social and cultural values of childhood into consideration. We have also shown that canon and canonization perspectives are a valuable approach in examining children's music in that they bring out a preliminary set of mechanisms, or paths, of legitimation. However, further research is needed to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how canonization in children's music works.

## Epilogue

One should explore canonization processes and legitimation processes within and across arenas, within and across practices, and how the various stakeholders—both adults and the children—each contribute to canonization and thus to the current musical culture. Such research should include, but not be confined to, a closer look at the differences in the respective relationships with the canonical repertoire of teachers (who had music as a mandatory part of their education) and teaching assistants (who had shorter educational trajectories), as mentioned in this article. Our efforts in this article and Hagen and Haukenes' (2017, forthcoming) findings that the staff's singing repertoire consists mostly of songs before the 1960s press forth the urgent question of why this repertoire is so persistent. Are we, as humans, given to nostalgia and thus to second-time consumption of cultural products for children as we assume parental roles and the professional role of taking care of children (cf. Wesseling, *in press*)? Is a specific (older) repertoire of children's songs an important part of the discursive ensemble (cf. Krüger, 1998) carried by higher education institutions offering teacher education for early childhood education and care? Alternatively, are these institutions, in fact, providing other possibilities, but the existing practices of music in day care are so heavily invested in with efforts, emotions, and habits such that new repertoires and the ways of doing music that new teachers bring are disregarded? Whatever the answer is, what are the consequences of these on children's perspective?

The results presented in this article show the openness to "something new" and to "something borrowed," and they suggest that a discourse on *having to stick with the old, safe, and for children*

compromises the efforts of bringing in other music and practices. Our participants emphasize that certain types of music are missing from the music produced for and marketed to a child audience. This concern is an important point that producers of music should be aware of. However, the results also suggest that some already existing musical practices are overlooked. One example is the assistants' capacities and knowledge in music acquired outside the teacher education programs, and another is the many musical practices and cultures that children bring with them from their home environment. How might these capacities, knowledge, and practices be better acknowledged as contributions to the grand and little canons of children's day care music and, moreover, to a discussion of the very idea of having a canon as a guideline and the idea of what a canon means? We also believe that exploring and bringing about a better understanding of the *in action* processes of canonization and legitimation of children's music can shed light on how *people* are included and excluded by canons, as Knudsen (2017) calls for. A closer investigation should include sociological and cultural approaches, such as those of gender, class, and ethnicity, because being a child is not only about age but also about being subjected to social and discursive structures related to those other categories.

Finally, a most urgent question is whether the Teacher Education program for Early Childhood Education and Care offer sufficient education in music. Are teachers capacitated to handle the complexity of children's musical cultures and support children's broad range of musical interests, behaviors, and engagement? Are they equipped to handle the new possibilities provided by their musical and cultural surroundings and to contribute to the development of what one might call the subject music of pedagogical day care from within the day care setting? In this article, we have shown that phonograms are already a part of children's everyday musical culture, musical canons, and canonization processes, although they represent fairly new artefacts and fairly new possibilities for musical practices in the day care and family settings. Used in adequate ways, phonograms offer possibilities both in formal learning practices of day care (see, for instance, Tune in to listening resource, 2017, based on the work of Nicola Burke) and in more informal educational settings of day care and family life (see also Vestad, 2013). These pieces of knowledge, as well as knowledge of canonization and legitimation processes, the historical development of children's music in television (Bignell in this issue) and in phonograms (Dyndahl & Vestad in this issue), popular musicological approaches to children's music (Askerøi in this issue), and knowledge of the quality assessment of children's music (Vinge in this issue) should be combined and included in the education of day care teachers, as well as in general music teacher education. This approach serves as one possible way of broadening the competence of teachers so that they may support children's everyday musical engagement and learning toward promoting the best interests of children.

## Author presentation

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