



## SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

### Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects

Registration number, Östersjöstiftelsen: **S2-20-0010**

Project manager: Ann Werner

Project title: Conservatory cultures: Nation and gender in the conservatoire music educations of Estonia, Finland, and Hungary

#### 1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

In studying belonging of nation and gender in higher classical music education we conclude **that our most important and first (1.) result is that the national imaginaries of our three institutions had direct bearing on how higher classical music education was gendered.** For example, the Sibelius Academy of music, one on the higher music education we studied situated in Helsinki, Finland, was understood by participants as belonging to a modern Western international sphere of Western Art Music. This construction of belonging resulted in the pursuing of gender equality ideals, and a denial of masculine genius cultures. The masculine geniuses and Russian past were constructed as placed in the past and hidden from view. The belonging imagined in the Finnish institution of higher classical music education colored its online presentation, the interviews, and the performances of students there. The other two institutions we worked with imagined their national belonging in the borderlands between Eastern and Western Europe differently, where The Liszt Academy of Music in Hungary looked to the imperial times of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre constructed ideas of a free Estonian nation and successful culmination of 20<sup>th</sup> century struggles for the institutions. Accordingly, these two ways of imagining belonging in terms of nation also colored their constructions of gender.

Nira Yuval Davies (1997) has argued that the intersection of nation and gender places women outside the issues of the nation by placing them outside the political (in the private). She further argues that women still shape the ideas of the nation as the mother and muses of for example the cultural institutions. **Our second (2.) result show that, today, when national ideals intersect with gendered ideas in higher classical music education the gendering is not only the expected traditional one, where women are muses, ornaments and mothers of masculine genius.** The way the nation is imagined differently in our three contexts have different consequences for the gendering of HME (higher music education). The relationship between tradition and renewal in HME is a tension played out in the national and gendered ideals. And gendered ideas in classical music were multiple.



While the national cultures and ideals in our three institutions affected the gendering of HME **our third (3.) result is that some instrument departmental cultures had more in common regarding nation and gender belonging across the three institutions** and national cultures than what they had with other departments in their own institution. Percussion stood out as a higher classical music education program with an international profile and a contemporary repertoire where the 19th century ideals of nation and gender were not fore fronted in any of our institutions. The students in percussion argued, independent of gender, for musically breaking with traditional national and gender-binary ideals, across the three institutions. Also, percussion students were open for and encouraged to compose, improvise and play in varied constellations with students from other departments, as well as vision a varied future as musicians for themselves. This result complicates the picture of national music cultures and gendering effects of those as shown in result one and two, when departmental cultures also cross national borders like in the case of the percussionist.

## **2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline**

The first conclusion of ours, that the national ideals coloring higher classical music education institutions also shape how the education is gendered, will hold significance for music education research to come. Music education research has provided rich analysis of gender in HME. Often the national and regional contexts the research has been carried out in has affected how gender is constructed. But those national contexts are rarely analyzed as taking part in the construction of gender in HME research. Our results show that to apply an intersectional analysis of nation and gender, as well as implicitly the ideas of ethnicity and race that co-construct the nation, is important to understand higher classical music education's reproduction and transforming of power dynamics. It adds to findings about how classed ideals influence HME in previous research and calls for research on gender in higher music education that does not detach gendering processes from the national and cultural specificity. Our project results show that this knowledge is important, and that policies, the organization and leadership of, as well as teachers and students participating in HME are involved in the processes of power.

## **3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe**

The three HME institutions of the project existed in the borderlands of different Europes, negotiated national as well as gendered borders, and illustrate the borderlands of different musical and pedagogical traditions. We argue that the borderlands between Eastern and Western Europe are not peripheral, but the perfect places to explore nation and gender in times of political change because negotiations of nation and gender are significant there.



Gloria Anzaldúa (1991) argues that subjectivities are destabilized in borderlands, putting questions of gender, race and ethnicity at the fore. Our institutions negotiated their belonging to borderland regions of Europe through both tradition and transformation of higher classical music culture giving them a ‘mestizas’ subjectivity, a border consciousness. These findings are part of our main results (1 and 2) and help us understand how differently the region has negotiated its belonging after an intense period of change after 1989.

#### **4. New research questions that the project has led to**

The project has led to questions about how higher music culture more broadly is embedded in belonging of nation and gender in Europe including Western and Eastern institutions. One example being competitions in classical music (such as the Fryderyk Chopin piano competition in Warsaw or the Jean Sibelius violin competition in Helsinki) and meeting places for the classically trained musician (like the Classical Next conference). Another research question it has generated is how higher music education is shaped by intersectional power trajectories today, including but transgressing our question about nation and gender in European borderlands. To answer this question a study of institutions in several national context including an analysis of power in general, not focusing on nation and gender, would be needed.

#### **5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community**

##### **Book**

Werner, Ann & Cecilia Ferm Almqvist (*forthcoming 2025/2026*). *Nation and gender in higher classical music education*. New York: Routledge.

##### **Thematic sections (open access)**

Werner, Ann (ed.) (2024). Nationhood, gender and classical music education. *Baltic Worlds*. 17:3, 45-104. [https://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Baltic\\_Worlds\\_2024\\_vol.17\\_no.3\\_Theme\\_Section\\_Werner\\_et.al\\_pages-45\\_104.pdf](https://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Baltic_Worlds_2024_vol.17_no.3_Theme_Section_Werner_et.al_pages-45_104.pdf)

##### **Peer reviewed articles (all open access)**

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia & Ann Werner (2024). Maintaining and challenging conservative teaching and learning culture in conservatories: The need for holistic pedagogy in educational fields of tension. *Research Studies in Music Education*. 46(2), 257-270 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X231187766>

Werner, Ann & Tuire Kuusi (2023). Gender equality discourse in classical music higher education: Women, individualisation, and change, *International Journal of Music Education*. 0(0) Online first September 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614231199473>



Holmgren, Carl & Cecilia Ferm Almqvist (2024). Att öppna för ett annat musikaliskt varande: Kultivering av klassiska musikerstudenters professionella omdöme. *Högre utbildning*, 14(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.23865/hu.v14.5281>

Werner, Ann & Cecilia Ferm Almqvist (2024). Nation, gender, and classical music on higher music education institution websites. *Swedish Journal of Music Research*, 106(1):147-166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58698/stm-sjm.v106.17587>

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia & Kristi Kiilu (2024). Music conservatory assessment approaches. Distribution and negotiation of values. *Baltic Worlds*, 17:3, 60-72.

[https://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Baltic\\_Worlds\\_2024\\_vol.17\\_no.3\\_Theme\\_Section\\_Werner\\_et.al\\_pages-45\\_104.pdf](https://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Baltic_Worlds_2024_vol.17_no.3_Theme_Section_Werner_et.al_pages-45_104.pdf)

Borgström Källén, Carina, & Cecilia Ferm Almqvist (2025). Gender equality in higher music education: Consecrated and peripheral positions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 24(1), 71-87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14740222241276164>

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia, & Hentschel, Linn (2024). Cultivating ambiguities within higher music education – preparation for singers’ professional societal participation in opera conservatory and music theatre programs. *Nordic Research in Music Education*, 5, 23–42. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nrme.v5.5806k>

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia & Carl Holmgren (*in review*). A Narrative Inquiry of Female Conservatoire Students’ Voices Regarding Futures in the Male-Dominated World of Western Classical Music: The Communicative or Controlled Mirroring Pianist Body? *Music Education Research*.

Werner, Ann, Cecilia Ferm Almqvist, Tuire Kuusi, Kristi Kiilu, Gergely Fazekas (*forthcoming* June 2025). Power and responsibility in higher music education. Issues of bullying and harassment, *Trio*, 14(1).

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia (*in review*). Re-thinking Conservatory Education as an Open System: Learning to Play through Playing – Letter from a Piano Student to an Educational Philosopher, *European Journal of Philosophy of Arts Education*.

Holmgren, Carl & Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia (*in review*). Challenging Conformity in Higher Music Education through Exploring Cross-Instrumental Collaborative Workshops on Musical Interpretation. *Research in Arts and Education*.

### **Book chapters**

Werner, Ann & Cecilia Ferm Almqvist (2024). ”Det finns stycken som ryska pojkar spelar” Konstruktioner av nation och kön i klassisk musikundervisning. Pontara, Tobias & Bergman, Åsa (eds.). *Klassisk musik i det moderna mediesamhället. Konstruktioner, föreställningar, förhandlingar*. Göteborg: Makadam förlag, pp. 73-115.

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia & Ann Werner (2024). Gender in higher music education, Brüstle, Christa et al (eds). *Music, Power Relations, and Beyond: Critical Positions in Higher Music Education*, Donostia-San Sebastián: Musikene-School of Music of the Basque Country, pp. 75-83.



Werner, Ann & Cecilia Ferm Almqvist (2024). Marketing conservatoire education. The employable white musicians of European classical music, Prokop, Rainer & Rosa Reitsamer (eds.). *Higher Music Education and Employability in a Neoliberal World*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 26-37

#### **Other publications (non-academic)**

Werner, Ann (2024). Introduction. The national and gendered meanings of higher classical music education. *Baltic Worlds*, 17:3, 45-48.

Werner, Ann (2024). Olli-Pekka Martikainen. Music education for new needs. *Baltic Worlds*, 17:3, 73.

Fazekas, Gergely (2024). Nation, gender, and music history. *Baltic Worlds*, 17:3, 74-78.

#### **Organised conferences**

Symposium in Stockholm November 23, 2022:

#### **“Higher music education in Nordic, Baltic and Central Europe today – themes and trends”**

This symposium was given at CBEES, Södertörn University and was open for all. It included paper presentation, commentators on papers and a panel on the main theme. The abstract description of the symposium was:

“A symposium arranged within the research project ‘Conservatory cultures: Nation and gender in conservatoire music education in Estonia, Finland, and Hungary’, funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European studies. The symposium begun with a presentation of the research project, followed by short papers by all project participants. The themes tying the individual papers together were formed by an interest in research on higher music education in Europe today, focusing on pressing issues in Estonia, Finland and Hungary.”

Study week at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Estonia, January 23-25, 2024  
**“Study week”**

All members of the project arranged lectures and workshops with results from the research project ‘Conservatory Cultures’ at the Study Week for all teachers at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn, Estonia. The Study Week also included workshops for the project researchers and an open lecture.

#### **Web page for public communication**

<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/conservatory-cultures/>