

The Music Classroom as a Local Place and a Public Space

Democratic Education Towards Music as a Language of Us All

Cecilia Ferm Thorgersen

*I find it hard to speak emotional
Cos these things are the things that
Can't be said
And when it's struck it strikes
The memory from our heads
Once I wrote two plays
To be immortal for a night
And despite the unknown hours
Something happens
When the light turns out the lights
Then we fade and yawn
To music that's the language of us all
Cat Empire*

1. Introduction

Many young people need and use artistic expressions to communicate their feelings, experiences, and ideas. There are many examples of expressions that would never have been used if the only available form of expression had been words. To handle different forms of expressions in order to understand the world and make change is a human right (FN Article 19, The Riksdag Administration 1991, p. 1469). But even if this is something that can be agreed upon, several questions have to be posed. Regardless of form, who do actually get the possibility to express themselves? What is democracy? What does it mean to 'own' and handle a form of expression to be able to change things? What constitutes the process of embodying a form of language? How could school activities be organized in order to encourage such development in the spirit of democracy? How do factors such as political directives and regulations influence the process? How can schools be viewed as arenas for artistic expressions and impressions?

The new curriculum for Swedish primary and lower secondary schools, Lgr11, sheds light on democratic values, equality and uniqueness in relation to varied forms of expres-

sion. For example, there are several formulations in it that underline the right of pupils to become themselves, to express themselves, to respect other pupils' opinions, to gain knowledge of different kinds and that teaching should be in accordance with democratic principles. In addition, the directions from the Government say that all pupils should be given the chance to develop as listeners, composers of music and musicians. *All* pupils should also show basic knowledge in relation to the *standards* or *knowledge requirements* in *all* areas mentioned in the syllabuses. When we look closer upon such formulations in the regulatory documents and connect them to the theme of democracy, some questions appear regarding the organization of school activities in ways that offer music as a form of artistic expression to all pupils in order to make them ready to participate and express themselves in a democratic society.

One way of answering these questions is to investigate and use a philosophy as a guideline. Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, in which she deals with democracy and common sense,¹ provides a philosophy that takes the place and rights of human beings in a democratic society into account and offers a possible view of the school as an arena for growth towards such a society. She underlines the relation between communication, individual, and common growth, as well as meaning-making, as a basis for a democratic society.

Men in the plural, that is men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and themselves. (Arendt 1958, p. 4)

In later works she emphasizes that such communication is for all, that all voices have the right to be heard and that plurality is a precondition for individual and common growth. She also underlines that art is a tuning language that lets the 'invisible' (the unknown) appear in the 'visible' (the conceptualized) (Arendt 1969, p. 728) and offers possibilities for different perspectives and meaning-making in relation to an audience (Arendt 1981). Arts activities engage the senses and contribute to collective memories and history. Eventually, according to Arendt (1958), the arena for communication, where human beings become clear to others and themselves, has to be seen as a public space. In this paper, I will offer a view on democracy where the philosophical basis for music in school activities implies that the music classroom should be seen as a local place and a public space.

1 Arendt's political definition of common sense is developed in her writings in discussions of both Aristotle's and Kant's ideas about judgement and *sensus communis*. In her later works, Arendt defines common sense as an expanded consciousness towards a universal inter-subjectivity by which individual judgements are guided (Holm 2002).

2. Political directives and regulations relevant for democracy

In the following, the expressions that relate to democracy in the Swedish curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools, as well as the syllabus for the subject music, which has been in use since the fall of 2011 (National Agency for Education 2011), will be presented in general terms. It should be kept in mind that the directives not only imply that the school should impart knowledge about fundamental democratic values. Democratic forms of working are also to be used in practice and prepare pupils for active participation in society.

Respect for the intrinsic value of each person – inviolability, solidarity, equality

In the general part of the curriculum, it is stressed that education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which society is based. It is also said that everyone working in the school and the pupils should encourage respect for the intrinsic value of each person. The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, as well as the equal value of all people should guide activities in school. Furthermore, discrimination, and degrading treatment of individuals or groups should be actively resisted. Pupils should be able to consciously determine and express ethical standpoints based on knowledge of human rights and basic democratic values and personal experiences. Finally, concern for the well-being and development of each individual should permeate all school activities (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 9).

Responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns

It is clear in the regulatory documents that equality between the sexes should visibly and consciously be taken into account in the schools, and that traditional gender patterns should be counteracted. Teachers should be aware of the way in which girls and boys are treated and assessed, since the demands and expectations that are placed on them contribute to their perception of gender differences. Thus, teachers should provide scope for pupils to explore and develop their abilities and their interests independently of their gender (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 10).

Discovery and use of own individual uniqueness in society

According to Lgr11, the task of the school is to encourage all pupils to discover their own uniqueness as individuals and thereby make them able to participate in society by giving their best in exercising their freedom responsibly. Teaching in the schools should stimulate each pupil towards self-development and personal growth. It should focus not only on intellectual but also practical, sensual, and aesthetic aspects of reality. In partner-

ship with the parents, the school should promote an all-round personal development of pupils into active, creative, competent, and responsible individuals and citizens (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 9–11).

Non-discrimination – use of background and experiences

No one should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, religion or other belief system, transgender identity or its expression, sexual orientation, age or functional impairment, or be subjected to other degrading treatment in Swedish schools. Teaching should be adapted to each pupil's circumstances and needs. Furthermore, it should promote the pupils' future learning and acquisition of knowledge on the basis of their backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge. The internationalization of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate diverse values. A secure identity is provided by awareness of one's own cultural origins, sharing a common cultural heritage, and the ability to understand the value of others. The school is seen as a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen intercultural ability among everyone who works there. Pupils' experiences of music should be challenged and deepened through such cultural meeting places. In this way, teaching should contribute to pupils acquiring knowledge about and understanding of different musical cultures, both their own and those of others (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 9 & 95).

Encouragement of different ideas and their expressions

Lgr11 also says that schools should be open to different ideas and encourage their expression. They should emphasize the importance of forming personal standpoints and provide opportunities for doing this. They should stimulate the creativity, curiosity, and self-confidence of its pupils, as well as the desire to explore their own ideas, solve problems, and provide scope to exercise their ability to create and use different means of expression (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 10 & 16).

Incorporation of different forms of knowledge and expressions

According to Lgr11, acting, rhythm, dance, music, art, writing, and design should be part of the school's activities. Pupils should be encouraged to try out and develop different modes of expression and experience feelings and moods, be able to use and understand many different forms of expression, such as language, art, music, drama, and dance, and also to develop an awareness of the range of culture existing in society. Schools should impart the more unvarying forms of knowledge that constitute the common frame of

reference needed by everyone. Shared experiences and the social and cultural world that makes up the school provide scope as well as the preconditions for learning and development, where different forms of knowledge constitute a meaningful whole. Pupils should be able to use knowledge from science, technology, the social sciences, human sciences, and aesthetics for further studies and life. The teaching should give them opportunities to develop sensitivity to music, making it possible for them to create, work on and share music in different forms (National Agency for Education 2011, pp. 12, 95). According to the current syllabuses in music included in the curriculum, teaching in music should essentially give pupils the opportunity to develop their ability to:

- play and sing in different musical forms and genres,
- create music as well as represent (form) and communicate their own musical thinking and ideas, and
- analyse and discuss musical expressions in different social, cultural and historical contexts (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 95).

To be able to reach these goals, pupils are expected to treat and incorporate the following dimensions of music: *Playing and creating music*, *Musical tools*, and *Musical functions and contexts*. Furthermore, the directions from the Government say that all pupils should be given the possibility to develop towards all the goals and meet all dimensions of music mentioned in the curriculum. All pupils should show basic knowledge in relation to the *standards or knowledge requirements* of all areas mentioned in the syllabuses.

The message of the directives and regulations regarding democratic issues puts some demands on music educational activities in schools. To work in line with these ideals in music education might demand some kind of guideline. In the following Hannah Arendt's thoughts on democracy are presented, e.g. the importance of being able to make one's voice heard, based on her reasoning about *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, common sense and the public sphere. These thoughts are explored as a basis for democratic school music activities.

3. A view of democracy from Hannah Arendt's perspective

Hannah Arendt tried to understand exile, statelessness, Jewishness, refugees, black people, the freedom of thinkers, and her own being in the world through the philosophy of phenomenology. For her 'back to the things themselves' meant to view the existence of human beings among others through 'story telling' and the political definition of 'common sense' (*sensus communis*) (Arendt 1971; Benhabib 1990). In her phenomenological research, Hannah wanted to support human plurality and interaction. In addition, she tried to understand the preconditions of human beings for sharing a common world

and what exists between human beings in the world ... which is neither you nor me but something to which we both belong' (in Moran 2000, p. 288).

A crucial starting point in Arendt's thinking is the balance between *vita activa* (the action life), consisting of work, production and action, and *vita contemplativa* (the philosophical thinking life), consisting of different ways of thinking considered in terms of thinking, willing, and judging. Arendt seeks to see and make connections between the two possibilities. She thinks that *vita activa* takes place in the world into which we are born, through speech and action, where participants and audience depend on each other. She writes about political life, constituted by human action, both existential (connected to being) and aesthetical (connected to imagination, experience, and artistic forms of expressions), where human beings become real and true. In this social context, human experience becomes meaningful when we talk with and make sense to each other and ourselves. In such interactive activities, different forms of languages are needed to try out, modify, and create ideas and insights. But to reach common sense, human beings also need to step back, Arendt says, and think, imagine, value, and reflect, which are activities that constitute *vita contemplativa* (Arendt 1958, 1971). Before going deeper into common sense and the local room where human beings depend on each other, *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* will be presented a bit more thoroughly.

Vita activa

As mentioned briefly above, *vita activa* consists of: Labour (*animal laborans*), which focuses on human beings survival activities; Work (*homo faber*), which contents creation of necessary things that can give profit and can provide safety but which is also mandatory and not in harmony with nature, and; Action (the political life), where human beings are seen as political beings. Acts at this level do not have any goals beside themselves; they concern economics, politics, and art, contributing to something lasting, and this level of activity is also called *the good life* (Arendt 1958, Varkøy 2015).

Political life is characterized by equality and pluralism. According to Arendt (1958, p. 189) human beings are born into political life and do not need any other qualifications to participate in the good life. Together people create political and economical institutions in society, which in turn become carriers of history. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt underlines that norms are created in cooperation between active human beings, an activity in which language functions as a pre-condition. In the political life human beings meet as equals in a public space, where they speak and act, and freely express their opinions. Through human actions in public, things get 'real', and through conversations and actions *with* each other, the Who (as distinguished from the What) appears in relation to a common and meaningful world – where people are related as well as sepa-

rate. To speak with Arendt: human beings are new in the world and bring newness to the world – but only by acting and speaking.

[A]ction has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. (Arendt 1958, p. 9)

According to Arendt (1958) equality concerns people's mutual recognition and respect for each other's rights, not only each other's existence. In being with others in the common, given world, individual existence becomes possible. Another important issue that constitutes Action, in Arendt's view, is that human beings want to live forever, and actions within the political life, which could be political, economical or artistic, survive human beings: immortality is an impetus. But *vita contemplativa* is needed as well; in the meeting between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, common sense becomes possible (Holm 2002), something that I will come back to.

Vita contemplativa

In 'Thinking and Moral Considerations' (1971), Arendt says that thinking is about dealing with objects that are absent and hence removed from direct sense perception. Thereby, an object of thought is always a re-presentation of something or somebody that is absent, just present in the form of an image.

Thinking is equally dangerous to all creeds and, by itself, does not bring forth any new creed. However, *non-thinking*, which seems so recommendable a state for political and moral affairs, also has its dangers. By shielding people against the dangers of examination, it teaches them to hold fast to whatever the prescribed rules of conduct may be at a given time in a given society (Arendt 1971, p. 436).

Arendt underlines that philosophers, who primarily deal with thinking, have not only separated themselves from political propaganda, rhetorical speech, and expressions of opinion, but also from the communalism that she describes as man's most human condition. Furthermore, she says that when philosophers turn away from most of the perishable world of illusions to enter the world of eternal truths, they withdraw into themselves (1971). In addition, Arendt states that freedom resides in natality, and the responsibility to respond to the appearance of something or someone new is what she calls *thinking*. This kind of thinking cannot be acquired in conventional ways; it is not a capacity for reflexive problem-solving, or a skill or a strategy: rather it is a search for meaning (Arendt 1958).

Therefore, although it inspires the highest worldly productivity of *homo faber*, thinking is by no means his prerogative; it begins to assert itself as his source of inspiration only where he or she overreaches herself, as it were, and begins to produce useless things, objects that are unrelated to material or intellectual wants, to the physical needs of human beings no less than to his

thirst for knowledge. Cognition, on the other hand, like fabrication itself, is a process with a beginning and an end, whose usefulness can be tested and which, if it produces no results, has failed (Arendt 1958, p. 171).

In this sense, Arendt underlines, thinking is something that exists within every person and is not a function of intelligence, and by that, once again, it stands in contrast to cognition or knowledge as construction (Arendt 1971). Thinking is no prerogative of the few but an ever-present possibility for everyone.

Common sense – the meeting between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*

Common sense is something human beings strive towards – in other words inter-subjective validity. If we just step back and watch the world from the outside, we lose the common sphere, the common sense, therefore we need to combine action and reflection (Holm 2002).

Human beings need to take into account different backgrounds and experiences to find common sense. Otherwise individuals can be excluded from traditions, lose their power of initiative and feel rootless. If human beings lose common sense they cannot value the shared world. Common sense also includes several senses in interplay in experiencing of the world. Contact with other people's sense-connected common sense is needed, which in turn presupposes curiosity and respect, an ability to imagine and dedicated partaking in creative processes, where we also go into each other's worlds of imagination (Holm 2002).

Hence, an important starting point is the right to be allowed to make oneself heard.

Holistic being in this setting is a way of being where *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* are balanced, which in turn can be seen as a prerequisite for holistic learning, where 'everyone' has the possibility to experience and embody forms of expression and are able to handle the world. Arendt (1958) underlines the weight of diversity in common activities, which can be seen as a view of democracy. Just as language is seen as a prerequisite for equality, music should be understood as a language or a form of expression. Plurality has also to be seen as a crucial point of departure, but the challenge is to really include everyone, which might not always be taken in consideration in the organization of teaching.

Democracy and education

According to Arendt (1958), freedom has nothing to do with making choices; rather, it has to do with the possibility of creating something that did not exist before, neither as thing or image, nor as knowledge. Instead, freedom is seen as the possibility of the impossible, the possibility of withdrawing from others and thereby recognizing the social and historical chain of our thinking and acting (Arendt 1958).

Hence, in education it becomes important to raise children's awareness of the social positions through which they are related to the world and to one another. After all, the possibility of bringing about new relations and new realities begins with the realization and recognition of the reality of this necessarily relational position. For human beings to realize and recognize this fact, they need others who question their needs and thoughts. So, the challenge for education is to create a space in which children can encounter other people and where they can start the quest to find out what such an encounter means (Arendt 1961). It could be a space where the collective search for an answer to the question 'What happens to me, why does it happen, and what do I have to do with it?' can start (Vansieleghem, 2005). The answer to such questions is not a matter of getting to know oneself better or of building one's identity but of looking at life as if one had not seen it before and of changing it. It is about looking for an answer to something that has been confusing and where human beings together with others, try to respond. 'And just because we do not know what has happened to us, we need the other, for it is only in speaking and acting that we can express ourselves to others' (Vansieleghem 2005, p. 29).

Arendt (1958) stresses that newcomers are constantly being born and are continually in the process of being introduced to one another and to the world. The relation to the other has to be seen as a kind of obligation to answer the call of the other. It is the appearance to the other that gives a measure of value and meaning and that transcends the endless chain of ends and means generated by the utilitarianism of *homo faber*. Hence, it is the experience of the presence of the other that matters. This experience has nothing to do with making judgements or presenting arguments, but solely with exposure to the other.

Only through this constant mutual release from what they do, can men remain free agents, only by constant willingness to change their minds and start again can they be trusted with so great a power as that to begin something new. (Arendt 1958, p. 240)

This view of democracy requires that human beings have the courage to give up the position they hold and to engage in an uncomfortable position that is not theirs. This act of 'disposition' is freedom, which cannot exist without the other. The impossibility of relying on and trusting oneself totally is the price that has to be paid for freedom (Arendt 1958). It is in this way that democracy has to be understood based on Arendt's thoughts, as the possibility of transforming the self, of putting the self in question.

4. The music classroom – a local place and a public space

From Hannah Arendt's point of view, individual backgrounds and experiences make extensions of the local room, such as a school setting, possible. Here the weight of action,

reflection, and common sense becomes crucial (cf. Kanellopoulos 2007). To be visible and make one's voice heard as well as to express ideas constitutes crucial dimensions of the extension of the room. Arendt stresses that people have to review critically and see through other people's eyes to be able to create their own meaning. Consequently, diversity constitutes a prerequisite for the individual; the social interaction creates unique human beings. At the same time the public sphere, for example school areas, are created by unique individuals who, in collaboration, can create new chains of actions and thereby widen the sphere to become something new (Larsson 2002). Depending on the human beings that interact within a common place, the common space creates a specific base for specific individuals and personalities to develop.

Diversities such as class, gender, geography, economy, and musical belonging are present and could be taken into account and viewed as possibilities for conversations, contradictions, exchanges, imagination and new learning, with unknown results (Larsson 2002). An important starting point here is the right to make oneself heard, as mentioned earlier. If different ways of identifying oneself, different perspectives, and different groups are considered as important in a social context, and if they are encouraged and respected, then different rooms can function as spaces for listening. Arendt says that to have great poets, there must be great audiences, too, and furthermore, she claims that what is true of poets is true of all human beings: 'Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a *spectator*' (Arendt 1971, p. 19).

Arendt also stresses that the coming together of a plurality of persons, not based on *what* people are, but on *who* they are, is what makes changes in lived reality possible. Instead of being excluded *within* an educational setting, individuals are offered holistic musical learning, where 'everyone' has the possibility to experience and embody music and become able to handle the world.

The question is to what degree schools allow the multiplicity of 'youthful' (musical) voices to be truly heard. Questions such as who are expected to make their voices heard, who are seen as possible participants, and who have access to the specific areas frame and underscore the aspects of democracy, according to Arendt. Democratic spaces must allow everyone to present her or his story, to share the story and in one way or another define herself, and in the end to reject taken for granted knowledge. In order for this to happen spontaneity must be nurtured, and opportunities should be facilitated where music can be used as a language or a form of expression in the sharing of experience in public spaces.

5. Music as a common language

So, how could music in school be organized based on an Arendtian understanding of democracy in harmony with the described political directives and regulations? When it comes to the *Respect for the intrinsic value of each person – inviolability, solidarity, equality* and the *Responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns*, seeing schools as local places and common spaces where every pupil has the right to be heard independent of her or his background and prerequisites, and where plurality is regarded as a starting point for individual and common growth. In the common musical space, individuals become clear to themselves and others by expressing themselves and get feedback, which implicate the *Encouragement of different ideas and their expressions* as well as the *Interest and curiosity for the other as a starting-point for education in music and for a cultural future life*. To make this happen, music has to be *incorporated as a form of expression of knowledge among all pupils*.

In other words, if a plurality of persons comes together, not based upon *what* they are, but *who* they are, changes in the lived world though active participation in musical activities could be possible. This kind of music teaching and learning demands a balance between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*; action and reflection through one's own musical expressions and experiences become crucial (cf. Pio & Varkøy 2014). Hence, the pre-conditions for holistic musical learning where everyone has the possibility to experience and express music and handle the world can be expressed as:

- All pupils should be able to present and share their story.
- All pupils should be able to define themselves in relation to others.
- All pupils should be able to relate to knowledge that is taken for granted.
- Spontaneity has to be encouraged.
- Possibilities for using music as a form of expression and sharing experiences in public spaces must be created by teachers.

Still, as music education philosophers and teaching practitioners we have to put the following questions to our selves:

- How do we make pupils understand that all voices are expected to be heard?
- How do we convince all pupils that they are seen as possible participants?
- How do we make the local place a public space accessible for all?

As mentioned above, Arendt stresses that art lets the invisible appear in the visible. Art creates memory and history and demands an audience. Thinking concerns the abstract, non-present and invisible. To make such thoughts visible and present for others, and thereby making it possible to react to them, music could be used. As I have said many

times now, to be visible and to be heard is an important democratic issue. Performances created through activity engage the senses in interplay, among listeners as well as performers. Therefore, pupils in schools have to be given the possibility to incorporate and use music as a form of expression, to become able to handle the world musically. This could happen if individual backgrounds and experiences are taken into account of and if extensions of the local room, such as the music classroom, are made possible. Here the weight of musical action, reflection, and common sense become crucial. My investigation of Arendt's thoughts concerning democracy could be regarded as a functional guideline when it comes to the encouragement of music educators to interpret the steering documents and with this as a basis organize music teaching in a way that offers *music as a language for all*.

References

- Arendt, Hannah 1958: *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Arendt, Hannah 1981: *Life of the Mind*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Arendt, Hannah 1971: Thinking and Moral considerations: A lecture. *Social Research*, 38 (3), pp. 7–37.
- Arendt, Hanna 1969: *Denktagebuch*, vol. 2. Munich: Piper.
- Arendt, Hannah 1961: *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Benhabib, Seyla 1990: Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative. *Social Research*, 57 (1), pp. 167–196.
- UN Article 19: [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19] Available at: <www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> p. 8 (Accessed 1 December 2015).
- Holm, Ulla, 2002. Common sense – att utgå ifrån eller sträva mot? *Ord & Bild* 2–3, pp. 38–51.
- Kanellopoulos, Panos, 2007. Musical Improvisation as Action: An Arendtian Perspective. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 6 (3), <act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Kanellopoulos6_3.pdf> (Accessed 1 December 2015).
- Larsson, Berit, 2002. Betydelsen av att komma till tals. *Ord & Bild*, 2-3, pp. 65–71.
- Moran, Dermot 2000: *Introduction to Phenomenology*. New York: Routledge.
- National Agency for Education 2011: *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011. Syllabus for Music*, pp. 95–104. Available at: <www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2687> (Accessed 1 December 2015).
- Pio, Frederik & Varkøy, Øivind 2014: Musical experience as existential experience. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, in press.
- The Riksdag Administration 1991: Yttrandefrihetsgrundlag (1991:1469). Reprint SFS 2011:508. Available at: <www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19911469.htm> (Accessed 1 December 2015).
- Vansieleghem, Nancy 2005: Philosophy for Children as the Wind of Thinking. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 39 (1), pp. 19–35.
- Varkøy, Øivind 2015: The Intrinsic Value of Musical Experience: A Rethinking: Why and How? Frederik Pio & Øivind Varkøy (eds.): *Philosophy of Music Education Challenged: Heideggerian Inspirations*. Dordrecht: Springer 2015.

Abstract

Many young people need and use artistic expressions to communicate their feelings, experiences and ideas. To use, as well as experience, different art forms is a human right. But even if this is something that can be agreed upon, we have to ask several questions. The aim of this paper is to describe the place of democracy in the current Swedish curriculum for compulsory schools (Lgr11, National Agency for Education 2011) and to investigate how Hannah Arendt's thoughts about democracy can be used as a guideline for organizing music education in Swedish schools in line with the curriculum. What challenges and priorities can music educators gain from Hannah Arendt's writings in this respect? Arendt underlines that human beings become clear to themselves and to others through interaction in social life. To do so they need different forms of languages to try out, modify, and create ideas and insights. Questions that have to be elaborated upon when using Arendt's view of democracy are for example: Who is expected to raise their voices and be heard? Who is seen as a possible participant? Who has access to specific artistic areas?

The Author

Cecilia Ferm Thorgersen, Ph.D., is a Full Professor in Music Education at Luleå University of Technology Sweden, where she graduated in 2004 on a thesis about teaching and learning interaction in music classrooms. Her research focuses on music teacher education quality, communication and assessment in the music classroom, special needs in music education and the philosophy of music education. She has presented her work internationally at several conferences and in well-known journals.