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FOCUSING ON SLOWNESS AND RESISTANCE: A CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

This essay reflects on the values of slowness and resistance as fundamental ideas directly opposed to modern culture's ideals of effectiveness and smoothness and discusses how music from the Western classical music tradition can offer such values in music education. At the same time, how we listen to music is highlighted as equally important as what we listen to. Values like slowness and resistance are seen as important critical ideas, not only in the bubble of aesthetics, music, and music education, but also in general discussions of consumeristic modern culture, characterized by unsustainable ideas of constant action and economic growth. Slowness and resistance in musical experience is argued to be important in forming the future of music education for sustainable development. The Korean-born German philosopher of art and cultural

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theorist Byung-Chul Han's discussion of the concept of beauty, is central for the ongoing reflections in the essay. Martin Heidegger's aesthetics of unveiling, and Hannah Arendt's concept of vita contemplativa, as well as music of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt and the Icelandic singer Björk, are also involved in the discussion.

Keywords: slowness, resistance, patience, contemplation

I always liked it slow:
I never liked it fast.
With you it's got to go:
With me it's got to last.
(Leonard Cohen)¹

INTRODUCTION

This essay reflects on the values of *slowness* and *resistance* as fundamental ideas directly opposed to modern culture's ideals of *effectiveness* and *smoothness*. Slowness and resistance can certainly be connected to different kinds of musics and musical cultures.² However, this essay focuses on how music from the Western classical music tradition can offer values like slowness and resistance in music education. At the same time, we argue that *how* we listen to music is as crucial as *what* we listen to. We would argue that values like slowness and resistance are important critical ideas, not only in the bubble of aesthetics, music, and music education, but also in general discussions of consumeristic modern culture, often characterized by unsustainable ideas of constant action and economic growth. Our ideas in this essay greatly relate to ideas presented in previous publications, with the primary ideas being first, the intrinsic value of musical experience as reflection, as well as existential experience, and second, hope versus certainty and belief.³

We call this text an essay. By this choice, we relate ourselves to a certain tradition in writing philosophical texts, a 'slow kind of text,' allowing us to enjoy not taking the shortest way to some sort of conclusion including advice about immediate practical relevance for the music classroom. We follow a path of reflection from one aspect and perspective to another, visiting places of beauty, interest, and relevance, without solving any concrete problem of music teaching. Our project is to invite the readers into a world of ideas, concepts, arguments, and reflections that may bring some insights and ideas that can be of relevance for their own reflections—concerning teaching music in today's world.

AN AESTHETIC STATUS QUO

According to the Korean-born German philosopher of art and cultural theorist, Byung-Chul Han, our culture has made smooth, airbrushed beauty an aspect of post-capitalist consumerism.⁴ What is truly beautiful is smoothed out into objects of pleasure, something arbitrary and comfortable. We prefer art that does not offer resistance. The beautiful is isolated as pure positivity and any understanding of beauty in art is limited to enjoyment of positive objects of pleasure.⁵ We forget, however, that negativity is essential to art. While the positivity of the smooth causes pleasure, art hurts. An artwork shakes, challenges, and upsets us. It calls central dimensions of our lives into question. When the wish of the artist is solely to please, experiences of beauty are made impossible. Beauty is reduced to shallow enjoyment and consumption. Consumption is depriving the world of secrets and unfamiliarity, transforming everything into the familiar.⁶ Han's argument has become a central part of this essay's discussions.

Han refers to Plato when discussing what beauty truly is. Plato maintained that the experience of beauty does not cause pleasure, but rather shock.⁷ Further, Han discusses Kant's isolation of beauty to cause a positive pleasure.⁸ By introducing the concept of the sublime, however, Kant also discusses experiences which cause pain or displeasure instead of immediate gratification. We are overwhelmed by the negativity of the sublime. For example, while looking at a cultural landscape brings pleasure through beauty, wild nature alternatively, whether it is a stormy ocean or an infinite universe, may cause displeasure. Finally, Han points to Adorno, who argues that the sublime is about the subject becoming aware of the radical Other as an individual "realizes its own finitude."⁹ In this life, we will face the existential dimensions of dependency, vulnerability, mortality, fragility in relationships, and existential loneliness. In a culture of positivity, anything that brings these problems to mind is an unwelcome source of discomfort.¹⁰

Han calls his own way of thinking "an aesthetics of veiling." He discusses beauty as a "hideout" characterized by concealment.¹¹ Thus, aesthetic experience is *contemplative*, not consumptive. Beauty evades consumption. Distance is a prerequisite for the contemplative attitude of an aesthetic experience: "Without distance, there can be no mysticism. De-mystification lets everything become available for enjoyment and consumption."¹²

Today's aesthetic regime produces a vast number of stimuli. "It is precisely this flood of stimuli and excitement that makes beauty disappear. It does not permit any *contemplative distance* toward the object and surrenders it to consumption."¹³ But beauty is hesitating, a latecomer. Immediate stimulation blocks

any access to beauty. By referring to Nietzsche, Han insists that the true pace of beauty is long-lasting and slow. “The most noble kind of beauty is that which does not carry us away suddenly, whose attacks are not violent or intoxicating..., but rather the kind of beauty which infiltrates slowly, which we carry along with us almost unnoticed, and meet up with again in our dreams.”¹⁴

In Heidegger’s aesthetics of unveiling, reverberated in Han’s aesthetics of veiling, the aesthetic experience is an unpredictable and uncontrollable event (*Ereignis*) that takes place in the artwork.¹⁵ In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger writes: “Art is ... a becoming and happening of truth.... The essence of art ... is the setting-itself-into-work of truth.”¹⁶ The secrets of art occur momentarily, only to withdraw again immediately, similar to the unconcealed movement of truth in the ancient Greek concept of *aletheia*. *Aletheia* requires “letting beings be” for them to reveal themselves in the openness of being.¹⁷ According to Heidegger, to truly experience art, there must be a certain amount of “letting be,” which is also the original meaning of the German word *Gelassenheit* (releasement). Having an attitude of releasement toward things and openness to the mystery constitutes what Heidegger calls *meditative thinking*, in contrast with modern *calculative thinking*. Heidegger’s notions of releasement, letting-beings-be, openness to the mystery, and meditative thinking arguably are notions of resistance against the ideals of effectiveness and smoothness of our time.¹⁸

A CULTURAL STATUS QUO

Han’s argument of “the aesthetics of the smooth” is not articulated in an aesthetic bubble. It is based on a distinctly critical attitude toward neoliberalism, consumerism, and turbo-capitalism.¹⁹ In Han’s view, art today is entirely subjected to the logic of capital: “Consumer culture more and more submits beauty to the schemata of stimuli and excitement.”²⁰ The beauty of art is a form of resistance to neoliberalism as a political rationality, which only stands to generate more desires and needs.²¹ Foucault points out that one can only be liberated from a specific political rationality by attacking rationality’s roots. Thus, we must critically discuss the development of a sort of consciousness industry “destroying the human soul, which is anything but a machine of positivity.”²²

How can music education contribute to this critical discussion? A consumer culture that generates more desires and needs is not sustainable. Discussing alternative values to consumerism will contribute to the development of a more sustainable society. We believe that focusing on values like slowness and resistance in music is an example of how we can oppose the ideals of effectiveness and smoothness, attacking consumer culture at its roots.²³

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability and sustainable development are well-known terms in international politics. They are often linked to discussions of climate change and environmental issues. Since the UN's formulation of the Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, however, sustainability and sustainable development must be understood as broader terms, identifying a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all.²⁴ In this context, the UN focuses on three main issues: the environment, the economy, and social situations. The relationship between these three dimensions allows one to decide if something is actually sustainable. Sustainability is not only about environmental issues such as garbage sorting, or what we in Scandinavian societies call *flyskam*: being ashamed of flying too often. Sustainability is also about human rights, dignity, and work for peace, cultural diversity, and cultural activity. What is more, we must have a radical change in mentality to create something that is truly sustainable.

What needs to be changed is closely related to the idea of *Homo economicus*: the economical human, a dominant modern philosophy of humankind.²⁵ The economical human plans life rationally and makes careful considerations and calculations of potential gains and losses in all available opportunities for action. The notion of human as *Homo economicus* invades all parts of modern life. This notion colors both our thoughts and our feelings, seeking to define who we are as human beings. Self-creation, self-responsibility, entrepreneurship, and constant frantic activity are fundamental components of *Homo economicus*.²⁶

This narrative then connects to competition and competitiveness, bringing ideas from the area of business to offer solutions for all areas of life and society, including culture and education. In educational politics, this way of thinking introduces buzzwords like evidence-based knowledge and relevance.²⁷ Education is primarily valued as an instrument for economic growth. If *Bildung* or formation is mentioned at all, it is no longer about knowing and understanding your culture, someone else's culture, or even personal development of empathy and compassion.²⁸ It is purely focused on market-relevant factors such as technical knowledge, effectiveness, and employability.²⁹

The dominant consumer mentality, effectively hedonism and searching for immediate gratification connected to the philosophy of *Homo economicus*, undermines any idea of postponing our own needs—a fundamental concept to truly experience the long-lasting and slow pace of beauty. *Homo economicus* has left us with problematic consequences in global climate changes, human rights, dignity, peace, and cultural diversity. The search for unlimited economic growth challenges the earth's ecosystems to a degree we have never

experienced before. When faced with important social, cultural, and environmental challenges, music educators must confront the values of effectiveness, smoothness, immediate satisfaction, relevance, and impact by focusing on values like slowness and resistance. Simply to describe the symptoms of a problem does not help if we do not recognize the roots of the problem. Before doing this, we need to clarify why we consider Western classical music relevant to this context.

WHY WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC?

For decades, the Western classical music tradition has been critically discussed, for both its object-oriented gaze and its supremacy in music education. Estelle Jorgensen stated:

The Western classical music tradition has come under close scrutiny and criticism for its historical association with the upper classes or society establishment, its role taken to be symbolic of upper-class or establishment values and an agent through which the lower or economically and politically disadvantaged classes are oppressed. . . . And its Western roots have been seen as too limited and limiting, and criticized by music educators and others for constituting too restrictive a view of music in a multicultural society.³⁰

However, while Western classical music was dominant in Scandinavian music education and research until the 1970s, the situation is very different today. Cultural hegemony and the marginalization of different musical genres in both society and music education are huge players in this discussion.³¹ As a philosophical development founded historically and socially, this is not problematic. Despite a declared interest in Western classical music, we do not belong to those who in a nostalgic, maybe even a slightly reactionary, way grieve losing the great Western tradition of classical music as the dominant tradition of general music education, musicological research, and public knowledge. We certainly do not find Western classical music to be more valuable than other genres. However, we would argue that marginalizing Western classical music in general music education will narrow the perspective of today's youth when it comes to ideas of cultural plurality and art as critique.³²

Obviously, not all music always offers the same experiences for everybody. Thus, we favor a genuine pluralist position, an open and tolerant approach that does not accept the expulsion of Western classical music from the music educational 'garden of Eden.'³³ The slowness and resistance that can be found in engaging with Western classical music are qualities that are counter-cultural to modern society characterized by consumerism.³⁴

QUALITY

The question of quality is related to both different musical genres and different groups of people. At the same time, it is possible to discuss the quality of specific genres in pedagogical situations. We also recognize that musical experiences are as diverse as the individuals, groups, societies, and cultures that make the music. What seems to be ‘pure aesthetical’ always implies subjective and collective interests, values, and identities.³⁵

Frede V. Nielsen suggests three different criteria for aesthetic quality: Better: external, historical, and aesthetic function.³⁶ One can ask about external function: Is this good music for dancing, for calming a child, or for stimulating the fighting spirit? One can ask about the historical elements: Does this express importance for this time period, for society, for our self-understanding, or for ideas of the future? One can ask about aesthetic functions related to different layers of musical meaning: How can we unfold the “multi-spectral universe of meaning”?³⁷ Music does not merely have exterior layers of meaning, such as acoustic and structural layers, it also has inner ones, which are emotional and spiritual or existential layers. Music has depths that concern our existence as human beings. It has dimensions of beauty, which belongs to the wordless area of our perception and recognition.

When we choose educational content related to the goals for the educational process, we must face the fact that all teaching is accompanied by values.³⁸ Thus, it is important what music is chosen as educational content for a particular time and reason, how one works with the chosen musical content, and which attitudes and relational values characterize the educational situation. For example, one may look at music that is good to relate to the values of slowness and resistance while expressing themes that relate to self-understanding and ideas about the future.

We will now turn our attention to how Western classical music relates to slowness and resistance in a less abstract way. We will do this by first referring to a talk by one of our colleagues in a seminar on music and climate changes; second, by focusing on a concrete piece of music from the Western classical tradition.

A SEMINAR

In spring 2019, Are Sandbakken, viola professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music, discussed the relation between Western classical music and the value of slowness at a seminar on music and climate change initiated by students. He discussed how musicians today depend on fast travel, usually airplanes. Their bodies move so fast that they need a long time to recover and readjust their bodies from their travel. They leave their soul behind, Sandbakken argued. He continued

by discussing the counterpoint that classical music developed in a time where people travelled much more slowly, arguing that the presence of slowness characterizes what this music is about. Haste makes our understanding of time banal and vulgarized. Sandbakken ended his talk claiming that an important mission for Western classical musicians is to regain the lost slowness. This is about music and music experience as critique.

During his talk, Sandbakken characterized himself as a middle-aged man with a certain romantic attitude. We do not find that problematic. In fact, we would love to challenge the anxiety for romantic ideas.³⁹ This anxiety may reduce educational discussions to merely technical discussions while limiting them to psychological and/or sociological perspectives. It may also marginalize any philosophical perspective, removing the discussion of concepts like awe and wonder in musical experience, or of experiences of standing on holy ground, as in Jorgensen's concept of reverence.⁴⁰ We will relate Sandbakken's line of thought to the musical examples below.

ARVO PÄRT: *SPIEGEL IM SPIEGEL*

We will focus on the importance of being able to relate to slowness, even to live slowly. Could developing the ability to listen to and comprehend longer musical continuums help us to move in this direction? Could we simply learn to listen to and work with slow music? By doing so, one could, for instance, get to know the work *Spiegel im Spiegel* by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt.⁴¹

This is a quite simple piece of music. The voice of a violin moves slowly up and down diatonic scales over simple piano triads. The whole piece lasts about ten minutes. The first time we heard the piece, we were with another scholar, a friend and colleague in music education research. We realized that we responded in very different ways to the piece. While we easily accepted the contemplative character of the music, our colleague did not. The music was not challenging enough for him. But what does "challenging" mean in this context? To answer this question, we need to define the concept of challenging. In modern society, what do we usually think about as challenging? Our Western classical tradition of music prefers motion over motionlessness. We have little tolerance for visions of eternal, immaterial, and immovable phenomena. We prefer to listen to something in vigorous motion. In our eyes, challenging music is music in motion, often complex and technically advanced music.⁴²

When our friend and colleague did not find Pärt challenging in this way, it seemed that Pärt's music appeared unmodern and outdated to him. Pärt was a stranger to him, while remaining a popular composer in other circles. How does this work? Is it possible that it is Pärt's strangeness that makes him a positive

challenge to us? Maybe he is just challenging in a way that cannot be judged by the criteria of modern music? When the simple provokes, this may be the challenge.

Another important aspect of this piece of music is its relatively frequent use as background music for existential moments in television programs, such as the history of the Holocaust. The slowness may be connected to existential seriousness, as in the film *The Birds*, an example we will use later when we return to the concept of resistance.

PATIENCE

Another concept related to slowness is a focus on patience, or the ability to postpone satisfaction, by recognizing that practicing an instrument takes time. The viola teacher, professor Morten Carlsen, writes:

More and more we realize that practicing is not forced labor; more and more we realize that it is a refined art which partakes of intuition, of inspiration, *patience*, elegance, clarity, balance, and, above all, the search for ever greater joy in movement and expression. This is what practice is really about.⁴³

And further:

It is hardly possible to survive thousands of hours, mostly alone, to build first-rate skills without developing certain virtues like *patience* and self-awareness.... The student has to come to terms with himself and his limitations during such periods, and it will help to develop a view of practice as having intrinsic value, i.e. an attitude that allows the process to be a goal in itself.⁴⁴

Is it possible that patience could relate to the analog versus digital music discussion as well? We find ourselves close to the educational and political battlefield of digital tools in music education, which we will not go into in this essay. We limit ourselves to hint to the tension between ideas of immediate gratification connected to music making by digital tools on the one hand, and the patience and the ability to postpone satisfaction related to analog music making on the other.

RESISTANCE

So far, we have talked almost exclusively about slowness. Now what about resistance? Slowness can very much be connected with resistance. This means that we already, indirectly, have been occupied with the phenomenon of resistance.

The Norwegian actor, theater director, and filmmaker, Anders T. Andersson's low-budget film on Norwegian author Tarjei Vesaas's novel *Fuglane*⁴⁵ is being shown in Oslo and New York at the time of this writing. Andersen advocates "the long experience." He believes his film *The Birds* to represent a counterpoint to today's fast knowledge offered at the touch of a button by YouTube and other digital media.⁴⁶ The action, or rather non-action, of his non-commercial, dream-like black-and-white film revolves around the slow life and the existential questions of simple-minded forty-year-old Mattis and his sister Hege. They live together in a remote country settlement near a lake in the deep Norwegian woods. Long sequences with artistic pictures of wild nature and birds, contrasting light and darkness, and accompanying minimalist music by the Swedish electronic string band Fleshquartet support the existentially loaded drama of the film. *The Birds* consists of many layers of aesthetic meaning expressed through different art forms, including music. This film is an excellent example of an artwork offering resistance to modern culture through its slowness, black-and-whiteness, minimalism, and its existential themes.

When we look back to Byung-Chul Han's discussion of our culture, we are provoked to ask this question: Will working with art as a phenomenon always to some degree be characterized by resistance? Aesthetic experiences sometimes shake us, challenge and upset us, even make us ask questions about our lives. The beautiful is not pure positivity, but negativity as well. An artwork does not simply offer pleasure, it also hurts.

According to Adorno, the spirit of negativity in genuine art prevents it from every possibility of commodification.⁴⁷ For him, the truth of the artwork only appears as a negation: "In each genuine artwork, something appears that does not exist," however, "because the nonexistent appears it must indeed be possible."⁴⁸ An artwork establishes a utopia by recalling the possible, representing "the imaginary reparation of the catastrophe of world history."⁴⁹ By its negativity, art makes a promise, however; it is "the ever broken promise of happiness," and aesthetic experience is "possibility promised by its impossibility."⁵⁰ By focusing on the artwork as negation, Adorno introduces the critical function of art as social opposition and resistance.

Arguably, this notion by Adorno is currently revitalized by the Icelandic singer Björk, whose world tour staging her multimedia project *Utopia* at the time of this writing is making headlines. Arguably, Björk's project propagates art as resistance to the dominant ideology of consumerism—for climate issues and sustainable development. In an interview with herself Björk states:

as a musician i feel i can suggest the musical poetic angle which is that after tragedies one has to invent a new world, knit it or embroider, make it up.

it's not gonna be given to you because you deserve it, it doesn't work that way. you have to imagine something that doesn't exist and dig a cave into the future and demand space. it's a territorial hope affair. at the time, that digging is utopian but in the future it will become your reality.⁵¹

Björk's multimedia project is another example, very different from *The Birds*, of an artwork resisting the current consumerist culture. The slowness and meditateness of Björk's "Gesamtkunstwerk" is of another type than that of *The Birds*. Rather than being meditative in a traditional sense, it "makes it feel as if you've been shrunk and let loose in an underwater episode of 'Blue Planet,'" as The Guardian-reviewer Michael Cragg writes. Rather than resisting through negativity as black-and-whiteness and minimalism, *Utopia* resists through its unbelievable multi-colored-ness, uniqueness, and maximalism, and through Björk's "anarchic spirit."⁵²

In the negativity, we face existential experiences. These experiences actualize questions of meaning, human dignity, suffering, hope, time, death, belonging, and coherence. Existential experiences cause us to know our own subjectivities from unfamiliar angles. They make us aware of our own finiteness, our limited control over the world.⁵³ These are the frames of our human existence, of being, which may be opened up by musical existential experiences.⁵⁴ Music can jolt us into ontological awareness. Musical existential experiences may set up a resistance to the oblivion-of-being.⁵⁵ We argue that concepts like thinking and contemplation can shed light on discussions of the oblivion-of-being.

CONTEMPLATION

In Han's mind, aesthetic experience is related to contemplation, not consumption. Thus, the next move in our reflection is to actualize the concept of contemplation. This is a further development of ideas we introduced in previous publications by applying Hannah Arendt's concept of action as human activities having their ends in themselves, in order to re-think the intrinsic value of musical experiences.⁵⁶ This intrinsic value can be defined as reflection. According to Heidegger, works of art arise out of the human ability to think and reflect at the same time as the artwork is making us think and reflect about being. Arendt argues that thinking is an action with no end beyond the action itself.

In her book *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt explores the notion of thinking by distinguishing between both truth versus meaning and knowing versus thinking.⁵⁷ According to Arendt, thinking links *vita activa*, the active life, to *vita contemplativa*, the contemplative mind. Thinking aims at and ends in contemplation. Therefore, thinking ends as a passivity, not an activity. It is a point where mental activity comes to rest.⁵⁸ In this discussion, Arendt turns to Kant's distinction

between *Verstand* (intellect), which seeks to grasp the truth that the senses perceive, and *Vernunft* (reason), which is concerned with understanding the meaning behind the sensory input.⁵⁹

Questions of meaning are unanswerable by common sense and science. The unanswerable questions that have been denounced as idle lurk behind the cognitive ones we have answers for. Arendt argues that if we lose our appetite for meaning and our interest in unanswerable questions, we will at the same time lose the ability to produce works of art.

There is no room for discussing Arendt's concept of thinking and *vita contemplativa* profoundly in this text. We limit ourselves to underlining the relationship between thinking and creating and experiencing art. To Han, contemplation is a prerequisite for encountering beauty. We once again face a quagmire of discussions about aesthetics and beauty, colored by strong ideological positionings. These discussions are at the core of every philosophy of music education. This is about the different ways of relating to music in the tension between art and entertainment.

ART AND ENTERTAINMENT

There is a danger of falling into a polarized understanding when distinguishing between art and entertainment. We can easily think of some music as art (classical?), while other genres (pop?) are never seen as art. However, this distinction can also be seen differently. It is primarily about reception;⁶⁰ about *how* we listen to music more than *what* we listen to.

We will argue that art is about the seriousness of and connecting with life, while entertainment is about relaxation. We need both. However, at the same time we need to be able to distinguish between art and entertainment, as well as different ways of relating to music. This is necessary for being able to relate to music as art, as an existential challenger, including the tensions between haste and slowness, smoothness and resistance.

This way of thinking is related to the concept of *existential Bildung*.⁶¹ Neither existential experiences nor *Bildung* come about simply by being exposed to a certain piece of music. The existential musical experience and *Bildung* require a state of listening readiness. All existential experiences and *Bildung* are linked to the subject's openness, readiness, and disposition. This leads to certain consequences concerning music, music education, and learning outcomes. Research-based, reliable knowledge about cause-and-effect relations in these contexts does not exist. There is also no reason to nurture a blind belief in music's power to influence people to become responsible, critical citizens. In previous publications we introduced the concept of hope as a more balanced and sustainable position than blind belief represents.⁶²

HOPE

An objection to the claim that art may contribute to humane development involves stories of prominent Nazi leaders shutting one ear to the cries of pain and despair from the concentration camps, while listening to Bach and Beethoven in the other. Arguably, *how* we listen is just as crucial as *what* we listen to. It is only when we let music shake, disquiet, and challenge us that music can unfold its transformative potential.

There are no simple answers to how music can contribute to *Bildung* of humanity. We can only hope for the ability to convert and implement what music offers us in a reflective life. This hope is our balanced alternative to both hubris and resignation. This hope is neither naïve optimism, nor something similar to religious faith. Hope in our context is not the conviction that something will end well, but a hunch of meaning.⁶³ Hope allows for more nuanced discussions and actions (or non-actions) than the attitude of belief.⁶⁴ Beliefs may lead to an over-confidence in the effects of music that, in our view, does not benefit music education and philosophy of music education over the long-term. The magic of music does not need help from preachers telling us what music can do. Instead, it needs a humbler attitude characterized by hope rather than belief, giving room for wonder instead of over-confidence in music's alleged effects on humans.

In our context, where we are focusing on slowness and resistance versus haste and smoothness, our hope is strengthened by certain trends in our society. In Norway, slow, analog TV programs have become popular. Huge audiences followed "Hurtigruten" (a boat sailing along the Norwegian coast from Bergen to Kirkenes, near the Russian border), a trip lasting twelve days, minute-by-minute. Others listened minute-by-minute to the soundtrack of Norway, Edvard Grieg's collected work and over thirty hours of music.

We see slowness and resistance in musical experience as the stone in the shoe, the pea under the mattress, the break in the rhythm, as the otherness that is always there. We believe these perspectives are important in forming the future of music education for sustainable development. Han argues that we need figures of resistance to oppose the modern culture of consumerism. We need music educators, researchers, and scholars who will speak against the discourses of smoothness that dominate the field, arguing in favor of slowness and resistance. And, as stated above: The slowness and resistance that can be found in engaging with Western classical music are qualities that are counter-cultural to modern society, qualities opposing ideals of effectiveness and smoothness, attacking consumer culture at its roots.

NOTES

¹Leonard Cohen, *Slow*, from the album *Popular Problems*, Columbia Records, 2014.

²As exemplified by the opening quote from Cohen, as well as the reference to Björk later in the essay.

³See Øivind Varkøy, “The Intrinsic Value of Musical Experience: A Rethinking: Why and How?” *Philosophy of Music Education Challenged: Heideggerian Inspirations*, ed. Frederik Pio and Øivind Varkøy (Dordrecht, Springer, 2015); Sigrid Røyseng and Øivind Varkøy, “What is Music Good For? A Dialogue on Technical and Ritual rationality,” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 13, no. 1 (2014) http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/RøysengVarkøy13_1.pdf. Accessed March 1, 2016. See also; Hanne Rinholm and Øivind Varkøy, “Music Education for the Common Good? Between Hubris and Resignation: A Call for Temperance,” *Humane Music Education for the Common Good*, eds. Iris Yob and Estelle Jorgensen (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2020).

⁴Byung-Chul Han, *Saving Beauty* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2018).

⁵In music education, an interesting fact related to this situation is how curricula for Norwegian general education, when saying something about the relation between music and emotions, up to this very day only name one emotion, that is happiness. See Øivind Varkøy, *Musikk for alt (og alle). Om musikkens syn i norsk grunnskole* [Music for Everything (and Everybody). Philosophies of Music in Norwegian General Education], (Oslo: Oslo University, Department of Musicology. Dissertation for Doctor's degree, 2001), chapter 7.4. Even Petter Dyndahl and Siw Graabræk Nielsen, “Musikkundervisning som de gode intensjoners tyranni?” [Music Education as the Tyranny of Good intentions?], *Musikk, handling, muligheter. Festschrift til Even Ruud* [Music, Actions, Possibilities. Festschrift for Even Ruud], eds. Karette Stensæth, Gro Trondalen and Øivind Varkøy (Oslo, CREMAH, Norwegian Academy of Music, 2014), and Røyseng and Varkøy, “What is Music Good For?” 2014.

⁶Han, *Saving Beauty*. As an alternative to such trends, we in other publications, in line with Han, have suggested re-romanticizing the world by rediscovering the poetry of the earth, giving her back her enigmatic dignity, beauty, majesty, and sublimeness. See Hanne Rinholm, “Rethinking the Good, the True, and the Beautiful for Music Education: New Visions from an Old Garden,” eds. Randall Everett Allsup and Cathy Benedict, “*The Road Goes Ever On: Estelle Jorgensen's Legacy in Music Education* (London, Ontario: Western university). <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/jorgensen/>; and Hanne Rinholm and Øivind Varkøy, “Et forsvar for kunstverket. Re-romantisering av musikkpedagogisk tenkning» [A Defence of the Work of art. Re-romantizing the Philosophy of Music Education,] eds. Siw Graabræk Nielsen and Sidsel Karlsen, *Verden inn i musikkutdanningene: Utfordringer, ansvar og muligheter* [The World into Higher Music Education; Challenges, Responsibilities and Possibilities], (Oslo, Norwegian Academy of Music and Cappelen Damm Akademisk, in press, 2020), open access publication.

⁷Han, *Saving Beauty*, 16; Plato, “Symposium and Phaedrus,” *Complete Works* (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge, Hackett, 1997). Plato does not distinguish between the beautiful and the sublime, as the tradition from Kant does.

⁸Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002); Han, *Saving beauty*, 19.

⁹Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, transl. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (London: Continuum, 2002); Han, *Saving Beauty*, 24.

¹⁰Frederik Pio and Øivind Varkøy, “A Reflection on Musical Experience as Existential Experience: An Ontological Turn,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 20 (2) (2012), 99–116.

¹¹Han, *Saving Beauty*, 29.

¹²Ibid., 4.

¹³Ibid., 46, our italics.

¹⁴Ibid., 76; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human. All-Too Human*, (London, Penguin, 1994).

¹⁵This aspect of Heidegger’s aesthetics (if it can be called so at all) mainly is described in Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” ed. David Farrell Krell, *Basic writings*, (London and New York, Routledge, 2011), 89–139; as well as in Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1969).

¹⁶Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”, 127.

¹⁷See Heidegger, “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” 1943 (trans. “On the Essence of Truth” in Hull and Crick, *Existence and Being*, 1949).

¹⁸Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”; Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*; Hanne Fossum (now Rinholm), “Towards an Ontological Turn in Music Education with Heidegger’s Philosophy of *Being* and His Notion of *Releasement*,” eds. Frederik Pio and Øivind Varkøy, *Philosophy of Music Education Challenged: Heideggerian Inspirations* (Dordrecht, Springer, 2015), 75–97.

¹⁹Among music educators and in music education research, it is quite common to find harsh criticism of political ideas labelled as neoliberalism focusing on everything from rigid assessment standards to ideas about knowledge as a commodity and students as customers. Marxists consider neoliberalism as an attack on the class compromise after 1945. Others consider neoliberalism as a political philosophy or ideology that has influenced practical politics since the 1970s. A third understanding of neoliberalism is found within the Foucauldian tradition, considering neoliberalism to be a kind of political rationality, something going deeper and becoming more fundamental than political ideas. See Øivind Varkøy, “Neoliberalism as Political Rationality. A Call for Heretics,” eds. Ruth Wright et al., *Routledge Handbook of Sociology of Music Education*, 2020, in print.

²⁰Han, *Saving Beauty*, 48.

²¹Michel Foucault, “Omnes Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of ‘Political reason. The Tanner Lecture on Humane Values,” (Delivered at Stanford University, October 10 and 16, 1979). https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/f/foucault81.pdf. Accessed March 22, 2019.

²²Han, *Psychopolitics. Neoliberalism and New Technology of Power* (London and New York, Verso, 2017), 32.

²³We are neither economists nor politicians. We are not experts when it comes to discussions of economic growth, sustainability, etc. Thus, this text gives no practical advice for anything related to these very complex discussions. Our mission is simply to problematize some values characterizing our time and culture, lifting up some alternatives.

²⁴See United Nations, 17 Goals to Transform Our World. <https://www.un.org/sustainable-development/> Accessed January 5, 2019.

²⁵The Homo economicus view of the human can be found in different kinds of political ideologies. It is of course easy to relate this view to neoliberalism as well as capitalism in general. However, it is even central in Marxist ideology, only in a different way. See Varkøy, “Neoliberalism as Political Rationality.”

²⁶David Budtz Pedersen, Finn Collin, and Frederik Stjernefelt, eds., *Kampen om mennesket: forskellige menneskebilleder og deres grænsestrid* [The Struggle About the Human: Different Conceptions About the Human and Their Boundary Dispute], (Copenhagen, Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2018).

²⁷See Hanne Fossum (now Rinholm), “From Relevance Rationality to Multi-Stratified Authenticity in Music Teacher Education: Ethical and Aesthetical Frameworks Revisited,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 25, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 46–66.

²⁸The German term *Bildung* is related to personal development, through both knowing and understanding one’s own cultural, philosophical, and scientific heritage and through processes of meeting the unknown. It will be elaborated on toward the end of the essay.

²⁹Konrad Paul Liessmann, *Theorie der Unbildung* [The Theory of ‘Non-Bildung’], (München and Zürich, Piper, 2008).

³⁰Estelle Ruth Jorgensen, *Transforming Music Education* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2003), 78–79.

³¹See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1984); David Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995); Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996), and “Music and Identity,” eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, Sage, 1996); Tia DeNora, *After Adorno* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Pamela Burnard, Ylva Hofvander Trullsson, and Johan Söderman (eds.) *Bourdieu and the Sociology of Music Education* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2015); Petter Dyndahl, Sidsel Karlsen, Odd Skårberg, and Siw Graabræk Nielsen, “Cultural Omnivorosness and Musical Gentrification: An Outline of a Sociological Framework and Its Applications for Music Education Research,” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 13, no. 1 (2014): 40–69, and “The Academisation of Popular Music in Higher Music Education: The Case of Norway,” *Music Education Research*, 19, no. 4 (2017) DOI: 10.1080/14613808.2016.1204280

³²Dag Østerberg, “Musikklandskapets forvandling,” [Changes in the field of music], *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* nr. 3–4, (2009).

³³Rinholm and Varkøy, “Et forsvar for kunstverket;” Rinholm, “Rethinking the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.”

³⁴Of course, we do not argue that all Western classical music is characterized by a slow tempo, or that every kind of “use” of it offers existential resistance. Nor do we argue that Western classical music is the only music that offers these values. The point is that there is no quick fix when relating to music as art (and not entertainment).

³⁵Frith, *Performing Rites*; “Music and Identity.”

³⁶Nielsen, “Quality and Value.”

³⁷Frede V. Nielsen, *Almen musikdidaktik*, [*General music Didaktik*], (København: Christian Ejlers’ forlag 1998), 136.

³⁸Gert Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (Boulder, London, Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 12.

³⁹See Elliott 1995, 23–24; Bohlman 2001, 26; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004), xiv; Christian Rolle, *Musikalisch-ästhetische Bildung. Über die Bedeutung ästhetischer Erfahrung für musikalische Bildungsprozesse*. [Musical-aesthetic Bildung. On the significance of aesthetic experience for musical processes of Bildung], (Kassel, Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1999); Hanne Fossum, (now Rinholm), “På sporet av den estetiske erfaring. Om „det estetiske“ i musikkpedagogikk og musikktenkning, med fokus på tenkning omkring den estetiske erfaring og „det estetiske“ i Tyskland ved inngangen til et nytt årtusen [On the Scent of Aesthetic experience. About ‘the Aesthetic’ in Philosophy of Music Education, Focusing ‘the Aesthetic’ and Aesthetic Experience in German Thought at the Turn of the Millennium], Master Thesis, (Oslo, Norwegian Academy of Music, 2010).

⁴⁰Rinholm and Varkøy, “Et forsvar for kunstverket”; Jorgensen, *The Art of Teaching Music*, 20–25.

⁴¹We are very well aware of the fact that Pärt is disputed among people within the modern Western classical music tradition. He is said to be too simple, too “romantic,” too “mystic,” etc. We have however already declared that we do not hesitate to challenge the anxiety for romantic impulses. We find Pärt’s music to be a productive “heretism” offering alternative ideas and ideals to Western modernism.

⁴²When this piece of music is not challenging according to the ideals of modern Western classical music, does this make it “smooth,” as in Han’s argument about the consumer culture’s influence on today’s aesthetics? We do not think so. Some people are provoked by this music, they find it strange. “Smooth music” is just boring, it surprises or provokes nobody—that is the problem. However, we would like to underline that by using Pärt’s music as an example, we do not thereby exclude different kinds of musical expressions within the Western classical tradition from having a potential for dealing with slowness—from Messiaen to “noise music”.

⁴³Bruser 1997, in Morten Carlsen, “Practice as Self-Exploration,” in *Philosophy of Music Education Challenged: Heideggerian Inspirations*, eds., Frederik Pio and Øivind Varkøy (Dordrecht, Springer, 2015), 231, our italics.

⁴⁴Carlsen, “Practice as Self-Exploration,” 235, our italics.

⁴⁵An English version of the book, entitled *The Birds* was published in 2016 by Archipelago Books.

⁴⁶Anderson said this in a stage interview after the presentation of his film at Vega art-cinema in Oslo on the November 18, 2019.

⁴⁷Adorno does not argue that all Western classical music is genuine art in this sense. He is for example very critical to Richard Strauss’ music. Our discussion is however not a discussion of aesthetic quality, but of slowness and resistance as values characterizing a certain attitude, when engaging with music.

⁴⁸Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 82.

⁴⁹Ibid., 135–136.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹“Björk on Björk: The Inimitable Icelandic Superstar Interviews Herself,” available at <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/bjork-interviews-herself>, capitalization and orthography as in original. Accessed May 5, 2020.

⁵²Michael Cragg, “Björk review—a spectacular vision of Utopia,” *The Guardian*, International Edition, November 20, 2019, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/nov/20/bjork-review-cornucopia-spectacular-vision-utopia> Accessed May 5, 2020. We can confirm this experience, as we attended Björk’s live Utopia show in Oslo Spectrum on December 2, 2019.

⁵³Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1960); Pio & Varkøy, “A reflection on musical experience,” Varkøy, “The Intrinsic Value of Musical Experience,”.

⁵⁴Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art.*”

⁵⁵Pio and Varkøy, “A Reflection on Musical Experience”.

⁵⁶Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998); Varkøy, “The Intrinsic Value of Musical Experience.”

⁵⁷Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego, New York, London, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc., 1971/1977/1978).

⁵⁸Ibid., 6.

⁵⁹Ibid., 53.

⁶⁰See Hanne Fossum (now Rinholm) and Øivind Varkøy, “The Changing Concept of Aesthetic Experience in Music Education,” *Nordic Research in Music Education, Yearbook 14* (Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music, 2013), 9–26.

⁶¹Øivind Varkøy, “Bildung. Between Cultural Heritage and the Unknown, Instrumentalism and Existence,” eds. Mike Fleming, Liora Bresler, and John O’Toole, *The Routledge International Handbook of the Arts and Education* (London: Routledge, 2015), 19–29; Fossum, “Towards an Ontological Turn,” 88.

⁶²Rinholm and Varkøy, “Music Education for the Common Good.”

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Einar Duenger Bøhn, “The Logic of Hope: a Defence of the Hopeful,” *Religious Studies* 54, (2018), 107–116.