

## **Competition and confession: Exploring the hermeneutics of the musical self in prime-time television**

The recent years, Norwegian television channels have broadcast a remarkable number of entertainment shows based on competition. Whether engaging in cookery, relationships, medieval skills, LEGO building, conducting, dancing, or singing, a common design is that one by one participant must leave the show until a final master is appointed, either by judges or by spectator votes. Quite a few shows involving performing arts are talent shows, such as Idols, X Factor, The Voice, So You Think You Can Dance or Got Talent. Shows like Strictly Come Dancing, Maestro and StjerneKamp ('battle of stars') feature already established artists and celebrities apprenticing in art activities that are new to them. Performing arts, especially singing, are frequent activities on prime-time television. However, few shows involve singing without a competition aspect. There is yet another striking feature of contemporary Norwegian television entertainment: There is confession. Celebrities and lay persons give accounts of their experiences and opinions, what they believe in and how they have managed through difficult times. An obvious premise in talk shows, confession has also become essential to competition entertainment, not unlike generic sports interviews. Contestants ritually provide their reactions, strategies, hopes and fears. In vocal competitions they confess their relation to the song they are singing and what singing means in life. Judges and mentors confess, praising the singers' performance or recounting why it did not do it for them. Even in the Norwegian Eurovision Song Contest the performers (not the songwriters) confess nowadays. There is a peculiar relationship between the competition and confessional trends in which specific modes of musicianship and musical learning emerges. Competition-confessional events seem to amplify certain discourses connected to music, such as identity, strong feelings, entrepreneurship, and psychic health, while cultivating artistic skills. These are discourses that also permeate music education. Foucault, in investigating a genealogy of sexuality, argues that confession is a ubiquitous technique through which people devote themselves to the imperatives of knowing and caring for the self. It may be worthwhile to undertake a 'genealogy of musicality' by investigating how individuals are led to practice a hermeneutics of the musical and musicking self, both on themselves and others, and how individuals come to experience themselves as subjects of musicality. This paper will explore some possibilities for the investigation of a hermeneutics of the musical self as it takes shape in competition-confessional practices on prime-time television and how this pertains to music education.