

88 shades of grey? The disciplined female pianist in the male-dominated world of Western classical music

Earlier research states that Western classical music's educational and professional world is white male-dominated (Ramstedt, 2019). Although studying and performing piano is available for all genders, the repertoire demanded and offered to study within conservatories is mainly composed by white, predominantly European men (Citron, 1993). Furthermore, the curricular design and teacher's expectations, and organisation of the education, point to a narrow conceptualisation of students' futures, mainly striving to educate for a professional career as soloists, a path that very few end up pursuing, at the same time neglecting accompaniment, chamber music, and teacher preparation (e.g., Bennet, 2008, 2012). In this paper female piano conservatory students' life stories are analysed to get a deeper understanding of their experience of the education, how the educational programs affected their possible musical futures, and what is valued by themselves and by their teachers. The aim is to offer a deeper understanding of female piano students' experiences of being and becoming pianists and musicians. The study was performed as a narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2007), where six students from three different European countries told their stories of choosing the piano as an instrument, studying piano at preparatory and conservatory levels, and describing how they view their futures as pianists and musicians. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed in a hermeneutical narrative manner. The result shows how these female pianists are disciplined towards and through conservatory studies, by traditions, expectations, teachers' responses, and self-conceptions, which seem to influence views of possible futures. Finally, we offer suggestions for how conservatory education could be developed to enable and support female, as well as non-female, students to develop their musical futures in a responsible and artistically enriching way.

References

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