

Raising Voices: singing repertoire and practices in Swedish schools

David Johnson, Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, Sweden

This doctoral study aims to (i) investigate current song repertoire and singing practices in Swedish elementary school music education and (ii) to critically assess what factors may be seen to affect singing practices and repertoire choice. It looks to map out *how much* young students are singing in the general music classroom, *what* they sing, and *how* they sing, and to discuss possible implications for pedagogical practice from an ethnomusicological perspective.

Data was collected through a survey of music teachers, conducted on a national level between May and September 2016. In a mixed-mode questionnaire, teachers (N=287) provided a complete list of songs sung during the 2015-16 school year with a chosen grade (grade 4), as well as information such as chosen key, sources of repertoire, and other issues surrounding repertoire selection and classroom singing. Questions concerning factors that might potentially influence singing practice such as teacher age, sex, work experience and professional training, and choice of accompanying instrument were also included. The resulting repertoire list of 2,917 songs was analyzed according to such factors as vocal range, genre, age, and country of origin.

Results show singing to be a popular and important element of classroom music education among teachers and students; singing occupied on average just under two-fifths of class time. Student participation in choice of repertoire was found to be the most important criteria for teachers in repertoire selection.

Singing repertoire was found to have a strongly traditional Swedish character in terms of song origin, language, age, and function. The songs tended to be older Swedish music drawn from popular, children's, traditional and singer-songwriter music. Music of minority cultures from within Scandinavia and non-Western popular and traditional musics had a very low prevalence.

Prescribed singing range was found to be somewhat low and narrow in relation to students' expected vocal range. The low and narrow tessitura was also found to persist independently of school form and other background factors such as accompanying instrument, teacher age, sex, and professional experience. A dominant school singing style regarding prescribed singing range could thereby be described, with most participants placing music within the lower ranges of their student's voices close to spoken pitch while avoiding the upper or head register. These findings suggest that musical change on the microevolutionary level is occurring in Swedish classroom singing culture.