Sensing Traditional Music Through Sweden’s Zorn Badge

Precarious Musical Value and Ritual Orientation

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Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Museum Gustavianum, Akademigatan 3, 753 10 Uppsala, Saturday, 3 June 2017 at 13:00 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The examination will be conducted in English. Faculty examiner: Professor of Music Martin Stokes (King’s College London).

Abstract


This thesis investigates the multiple and contested spaces of belonging that may be evoked by ritualised musical performance. It makes an ethnographic case study of the Zorn Badge Auditions in Sweden, in which musicians play before a jury in the hope of being awarded a Zorn Badge and a prestigious but also contested title: Riksspelman.

Building on theories of ritual and performance in combination with Sara Ahmed’s theorisation of orientation, the thesis attends to sensory ways of experiencing and knowing music while tracing the various ways in which Swedish traditional music is performed, felt, heard, sensed and understood in audition spaces. It draws on interviews with players and jury members, participant observations of music auditions and the jury’s deliberations, showing how musical value is negotiated through processes of inclusion and exclusion of repertoires, instruments and performance practices. The study also illuminates how anxiety and uncertainties are felt on both sides of the adjudication table. The auditions trigger feelings of belonging and harmony, but also rupture and distance. A brimming of felt qualities contributes to the sensing of history, tradition, memory, place and geography, as well as close emotional connections between music and individual performers. The thesis reveals how gradual adaptation, and the lived experiences of time within tradition, allow the Zorn institution to negotiate change and thereby maintain its position within Swedish society.

Keywords: traditional music, Sweden, folk music, music auditions, ritual, orientation, sensory ethnography, ethnomusicology

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ISSN 0081-6744
urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-319842 (http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=nbn:se:uu:diva-319842)
To My Dearest Family,
Lovely Friends and Supportive Colleagues.
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Acknowledgements

This thesis has drawn from many collaborations and encounters. I am so very grateful to all my interlocutors for so generously sharing their life experiences, visions, feelings, ideas and hopes about music. Special thanks to all the musicians, the Zorn committee and the jury members for opening their door to me, sharing their personal experiences and love of music, whilst exploring musical paths together. This thesis could never have come to life without you.

My supervisors Lars Berglund, Dan Lundberg and Rachel Beckles Willson, have guided and supported me unceasingly, with insightful advices, thought-provoking comments and dialectical critique. They have generously shared their knowledge and provided constant care and inspiration for my creative work and intellectual thinking, while simultaneously introducing me to the wonderful world of music research. Tellef Kvifte served as an opponent at my final seminar in September 2016, and provided insightful questions that helped me to finalise this thesis.

I am also very grateful towards the broader international community engaging with my work. I would like to thank the department of music at Royal Holloway for hosting me as a guest PhD student in spring 2014, especially Tina Ramnarine for advice, encouragement and generosity. Ana Hofman at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies in Ljubljana for inviting me as a guest in May 2015. Anna’s enriching comments, dedication and friendship have guided me within my studies of ethnomusicology. Thomas Hilder, for his support and all of the enriching discussions about music, together with the participants at the Sixth Annual International Workshop in Ethnomusicology, Hannover in the summer of 2014. I am especially grateful for the participation in the research project Mixa eller Maxa (“Pluralize or Polarize?”) about cultural heritage, identity and politics at Svenskt Visarkiv in Stockholm; all the discussions I shared with Mathias Bostrom, Madeleine Modin, Anders Hammarlund, Mats Nilsson and Ingrid Åkeson, and the staff at Svenskt Visarkiv. I have learned so much from all of you.

To write a thesis is a journey and it is by no means a journey undertaken in solitude. Along the way I have met many fellow PhD students and music colleagues and I would like to give my humblest thank you to all of you, especially Ester Lebedinski, Angelina Liljevall, Mischa van Kan, Tina Mathisen, Polona Sitar, Kim Ramstedt, Veronika Muchitsch, Peter van Tour, Linus Johansson, Andrea Jordan and Mikaela Minga, for sharing endless cups of coffee, ups and downs, and for offering continual inspiration as critical thinkers. To all my wonderful colleagues at the Department of Musicology at Uppsala University, I am
forever grateful to you for your guidance, constant support and friendship. Gunnar Ternhag, Johannes Brusila and members of the Swedish-Finnish network for PhD students in musicology has also contributed to shaping my work, for which I am very grateful. I would also thank the attendants at my seminars at the universities of Uppsala, Stockholm and Gothenburg. Samantha Blickhan and Guy Damman for language editing and insightful comments on my work.

To support my participation in conferences in Switzerland (ESEM), Portugal (ICTM), Finland, Ireland and Sweden, conduct fieldwork in Sweden and Denmark and exchange studies in England and Slovenia, I received several grants from: Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien, Kungliga Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, Sven och Dagmar Sahléns Stiftelse, Gertrude och Ivar Philipsons Stiftelse, Göranson-Sandvikens resestipendium, as well as for printing this thesis, Kungliga Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Uppsala.

Finally, I present this thesis to my dearest, lovely and supportive family for encouraging me to stretch my wings and for always being interested in my work. And Olav, for constantly reminding me of the most important things in life: love and music.

/Karin
Imagine you are the next in line to step over the threshold into a room in which you have chosen to be tested. You are nervous and excited at the same time, and are trying to remain focused. Standing still outside the door, your thoughts are spinning, your hands are clammy. Your fingers feel the object through which you must prove yourself, as though it was part of your sensing body. The door opens, and you enter. Now you are inside the room, where you have the chance to become part of a particular community.

Now shift your perspective and imagine you are sitting in a line, behind a table in a warm room. You are starting to feel the strain of a long day in the same room. The taste of your last cup of coffee still lingers in your mouth. Your judgement in the next few minutes will determine whether or not a new member will be admitted into your community. You are with colleagues and in good spirits, yet you are nervous about the implications of the decision you are about to make. Your colleagues suddenly fall silent, and sit up a bit straighter. The door turns wide open, letting the person in.

These two opening vignettes, the space between them and in their intersections, set the stage for this thesis. In the first, a person is nervously waiting for the moment to be tested for membership in a particular community. In the second, some members of that community are equally anxiously waiting for the test to start. There is anxiety on both sides. In the first, there is fear of not being able to perform in a desirable manner, as well as fear of being rejected. In the other, the fear of not being able to uphold the value system of the community you are embodying. Both tableaux are also linked by the feeling of belonging and the desire to belong. Communities uphold, transmit, negotiate and carry certain values, ideas and traditions. Sharing similar values may promote understanding of the other. But what happens when the understandings of the meanings and values differs? Whose voice and experience matters?

In any enactment of belonging, the struggle over who is included and excluded emerges. Music is often a vehicle for these processes, and may bring out multifarious values. Music embodies realms of experiences, capturing our deepest imaginations—moving, sensitising or mobilizing us. Simultaneously, being a nomadic art, music is intensely rooted in place (or in the notion of place) and
frequently animates individual and collective belonging or cultural identification.\(^1\) Traditional music and folk music especially evoke these associations. This thesis explores new approaches to the issues of value production and senses of belonging through sensory ethnography.\(^2\) It approaches these problems through a case study of the Zorn Badge Auditions in traditional music (henceforth the Zorn Auditions) in present-day Sweden.

Every summer between eighty and one hundred musicians participate in the Zorn Auditions (Zornmärkesuppspelningarna). The auditions started in 1933, and since then they have been held in different locations in Sweden almost every year.\(^3\) Contrary to other forms of traditional music competitions in Scandinavia, these auditions are not held in public. In a closed solo recital, the player’s performance is judged from the primary criteria of traditionally informed playing. The Zorn jury mainly search for what they perceive as stylistic authenticity in musical expression, demonstrated in a single regional tradition. They consider general musical abilities, such as rhythm, technique and sound production, and the more elusive concepts of musicality and artistic creativity. The auditions are open to both amateurs and professional musicians, aged sixteen and older, and there are no restrictions with regard to nationality.\(^4\) The players may receive different prizes, from the lowest Certificates—the Bronze badge and the Post-Bronze certificate—to the highest award attainable: the Silver badge.\(^5\) In addition, every year one or two pre-eminent musicians are given a Gold badge, at the discretion of the jury. With the Silver and Gold badges comes a very prestigious and desirable—but also debated and contested—title: riksspelman. The title has also become an important marketing brand for traditional musicians and has significance both within the folk music community and in Swedish society at large. At present, 900 players have received the title.\(^6\)

Over the years the Zorn Auditions have turned into a cultural institution enjoying independence of interpretation when it comes to issues of musical tradition. The acts of revival, restoration and canonisation within the auditions’ practices—upheld by the jury’s work and the players’ performances—have certainly contributed to shape and transform the musical landscape in Sweden. Since

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5 No prize money is involved, only the honour and the title are at stake. The Zorn Badge was originally designed by the Swedish artist and painter Anders Zorn (1860–1920).
6 The Database of the Zorn Committee (Zornmärkesnämndens databas).
2016, the auditions have been part of the intangible cultural heritage list in Sweden, related to the work with UNESCO’s conventions.7

Aims and Questions

The opening sketches of this chapter linger on uncertainties and feelings of ambivalence. They indicate how two sensory worlds converge in the audition room. This thesis aims to explore the multiple and contested spaces of belonging that may be evoked by ritualised musical performance. It also seeks to offer a study of the Zorn Auditions as an examination of musical value, with special attention to sensory ways of experiencing and knowing. By ‘staying with the trouble’,8 the thesis tunes into the controversies, inversions and shifts in these processes of inclusion and exclusion. It traces the various paths of the players and jury through the auditions, and highlights the diverse ways in which traditional music is performed, sensed, heard, felt and understood.

More specifically, this thesis focuses on the following research questions: How are musical values sensed, transmitted, maintained and negotiated within these spaces of belonging and channels of cultural knowledge production? What broader politics do these places—material and imagined—embody? How are practices, spatio-temporalities and historical timeframes mobilised in order to create senses of belonging and group formation?

Finally, this thesis will contribute to a richer understanding of musical judgement processes, how agreement is reached and how uncertainties are solved and handled.

Research Perspectives and Existing Literature

The key questions in this study have until now remained comparatively unexamined within previous research on the Zorn Auditions and the Swedish folk music scene. In the following I will present an overview of recent research based on a selection of the most important studies related to the main areas of this thesis: contemporary Swedish folk music, performance and ritual studies, music contests and music auditions involving musical judgement processes. Further literature is addressed at relevant points throughout this study.

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The practices of the Zorn Auditions have mainly been investigated regarding the period before 1980. Märta Ramsten’s thesis *Återklang* (1985/1992)\(^9\) includes an in-depth study of the Zorn Auditions during the national and international folk music revival between 1970 and 1980. Ramsten engages with ideological perspectives and highlights changes in musical ideals, instruments, repertoires and performative techniques. Her study serves as an important starting point for this project, which aims to cover a broader time span and also to include the last 40 years of practice.

David Kaminsky is the only scholar to have investigated the auditions from a contemporary perspective. His study especially focuses on the ambivalence the auditions tend to trigger within the folk music community in Sweden.\(^{10}\) Since its start, the institution has been a point of controversy within organisations, in the pages of periodicals, and at public seminars; today this is often addressed on social media such as Facebook.\(^{11}\) On one hand, critics have questioned the vagueness of the criteria for judgements, the jury’s competence and ability to enhance the status of so many different regional styles, as well as the system’s intrinsic conservatism. On the other hand, advocates insist on the necessity of the auditions in safeguarding traditions, securing musical quality and encouraging people to play traditional tunes.\(^{12}\) The significance of inspiring traditional solo playing is stressed especially, in contrast to the diversity of musical genres performed in duos, trios or ensemble groups that characterises the folk and world music scene in Sweden overall.

Kaminsky draws on aspects of national identity and egalitarianism in order to explain the enacted ambivalence of taking part in the auditions. He argues that it is a specific Swedish cultural phenomenon, manifested in the auditions through the Jante Law. He associates the experience of ambivalence with the hierarchical system, as an expression of the anxious desire amongst musicians to distinguish themselves above others. Rather than being a ‘typical’ Swedish approach, however, I contend that this scepticism towards competing in music or being evaluated in the creative arts may be found in many musical cultures and societies all over the world.\(^{13}\) This thesis, to a larger extent than both Ramsten and Kaminsky, emphasises the negotiations between players and jury, as well as locating the

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\(^{11}\) Especially in the online forum ‘Swedish Folk Music’ (*Svensk Folkmusik*).


\(^{13}\) For a closer discussion on the problems of competing in music, see Chapter One of this thesis.
audition practices in relation to relevant Scandinavian and international contexts.14

In several studies, Kaminsky has engaged more profoundly with how folk music is used in contemporary Sweden and the ways in which it has retained its symbolic value. His dissertation highlights the struggles of folk musicians and dancers to maintain cultural currency, whilst simultaneously challenging the problematic, nationalistic and ideological agenda on which it was originally based.15 Kaminsky’s study brings fruitful insights into the contemporary folk music scene, especially in relation to the rise of anti-immigrant extremism in Sweden—including efforts to preserve culturally ‘pure’ Swedish folk music—and the ensuing debates within the community.16 My main objection to the study is that Kaminsky disregards the narrowness of the Swedish understanding of folk music, as Dan Lundberg also points out.17 This narrowness of view will be further elucidated in this thesis. Kaminsky’s studies serve as fruitful comparisons.

The Zorn Auditions are not the only events involving musical judgement within the folk music scene in Sweden today. However, the title rikspelman still remains attractive for players in comparison to other events. In recent years, several contests in traditional music have begun.18 Dan Lundberg has mainly investigated this trend to compete from an ideological perspective and compared it to the popularity of competitions in Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lundberg highlights the importance of visibility for folk musicians today, and how the competitions become a platform to gain recognition within the community.19

14 Kaminsky translates the Swedish word uppspelningar as ‘trials’, instead of ‘auditions’, which is used throughout this thesis. He deliberately avoids the term ‘audition’, arguing that participation does not necessarily ‘result in entry or rejection from a musical organisation.’ Still, he acknowledges that the translation was made in order to draw a thematic connection between the Jante Law and the Zorn Auditions (Trial/Jury). As my thesis argues, the Zorn Auditions are about inclusion or exclusion from an imagined musical community of Rikspelman, hence I use the word audition. See Kaminsky, ‘The Zorn Trials and The Jante Law’, p. 27.


18 For example, The World Championship in Chromatic Keyed Fiddle (Världsmästerskap i nyckelharpa) 1990— in Clog fiddle (Träskofiol), 2013—, or for Fiddle teams (spelmanslag) 2003—; music contests in solo instrumental playing, Neck of the Year (Ärnts Näck) 1995—, or its counterpart for vocal herding calls Huldra of the Year (Ärnts Huldra) or Pelle Förs tävlingen (2008—); in ensemble playing (such as Samspelmedaljen) or for newly-composed traditional music, The Spelman’s Tune of Sweden (Sveriges Spelmanslag) 2003—. See Dan Lundberg ‘Tävla i folkmusik,’ in Bilder ur musikskapandets vardag. Mellan kulturpolitik, ekonomi och estetik, ed by Alf Arvidsson, (Umeå universitet: Etnologiska skrifter no. 59, 2014), pp. 163–179 (pp. 160–167). Lundberg also mentions The Scandinavian contest NORD (2008–2011) and a contest in relation to Gnestatämmman, in 2011, for younger players, performing a pop music hit, using stylistic traits of folk music.

Lundberg and Owe Ronström have in several studies analysed the contemporary folk music scene and its relation to heritagisation, professionalisation, revival and tradition. Ronström highlights a shift in ideas from the older musical mindscapes of traditional musicians, such as spelmän, towards a discourse of heritage, where folk musicians are positioned within a global and international arena. If the ideas of tradition embraced the local, rural and pre-industrial society with focus on time, heritage is instead urban and centres around places, play and experience. Ronström connects these ideas to the professionalisation and festivalisation of folk music today, which he explains is a shift ‘from the informative to the performative in relation to the past.’ He interprets this change as a homogenising opposition to the diversifying potencies of late- or post-modernity. Issues concerning the relationship between tradition and modernity within Swedish folk music have also been studied by Ingrid Åkesson, who focuses especially on vocal music traditions. Åkesson has analysed contemporary performers’ overlapping attitudes towards traditional vocal styles and material in terms of continuity and change. These studies reflect how the older, essentialist, object-oriented, linear and static view of musical tradition has been replaced with a more dynamic and symbolic understanding of the concept. Tradition is seen as a process of interpretation depending on selectivity and creativity, actualised in present perception through references to the pasts. From this perspective, traditions are continually altering in order to suit current circumstances, dominant interests or narratives.

22 Ibid, p. 56.
25 The concept of tradition has been extensively restated and problematised within humanistic research. The most famous discussion regarding this aspect of tradition was launched by Erik Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger and their concept of ‘invented tradition.’ Taking a top-down perspective, it reveals how many traditions that appear to be old in fact are only fictionally continuous,
Further important research interests to which this thesis responds are performance and ritual studies. As part of the ‘performativity’ and ‘practice’ turns within humanities, contemporary music festivals and various forms of national and international music competitions have been explored in terms of modern rituals or ritualistic events, forming a vibrant and vast body of research. Relevant studies often reflect how the social dramaturgical models of Victor Turner (‘social drama’) and Erving Goffman (‘front’ and ‘back’ regions of everyday life) and Clifford Geertz (‘theatre state’) during the last thirty years have been reinterpreted and replaced by the concepts of performance and performativity.

Performativity merged from the domain of language studies with J. L. Austin’s ‘speech act theory’, on ‘performatory utterances’ (1975), but was later developed by Jaques Derrida (1988), and then substantially transformed by Judith Butler (1990, 1993). Performativity is today extended to all sorts of practices and events that happen because someone is doing them. This indicates a shift in focus from agency to effect, and the transformation of a category to an analytical concept.
In the field of the performing arts, the work of Richard Schechner has been especially important. He understands the performing arts as ritualised behaviour permeated by play, but he argues for an expanded understanding of what performance is: namely that it is a means of understanding cultural, historical and social processes. His concept of ‘restored behaviour’ in performance can be applied to everyday life as well as marked performance contexts.33

This interest in performance norms and their relationship to everyday life can be traced through the work of Chris Goertzen, who has published several studies on traditional music competitions. In his comprehensive musical ethnography of the twentieth century folk music revival in Norway, he investigates fiddle clubs, concerts and the local, regional and national folk music contests called Kappeik. He has also written about the fiddling contests in the state of Texas.34 These studies offer interesting perspectives into the worlds of music competitions. They shed light on how contests shape and encourage players to perform certain repertoires and performance styles, as well as create controversies over competing in music, and illuminate the tensions between tradition and aesthetic qualities for the stage.35 Similar questions have been raised by Scott Spencer in relation to the annual Irish traditional contests called Fleadh Cheoil na Éireann. Spencer explores how tradition and authenticity is negotiated and understood within the formal competition setting in comparison with the more informal jam sessions held in the evenings. He shows how different aesthetic systems operate within the two spaces and result in contrasting forms of transmission.36 The topics raised in these studies will also be further investigated in this thesis.37

Another important work within this research area is offered by Lisa McCormick. McCormick examines international classical music competitions from a sociological perspective and shows how these events may contribute to build

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35 Ibid. Interestingly, in 2015 Per Åsmund Omholt (Institutt for folkekultur Rauland) started a study on questions of quality and selection within the Norwegian Kappeik system, as part of the research project: ‘Kvalitetsregimer i endring: Kulturpolitiske perspektiver på tradisjonskunsten i samtiden’, a collaboration between Mats Johansson and Ola Berge ved Telemarksforskning. It will be interesting to compare Omholt’s result with this study in the future.
cosmopolitan solidarity and foster global values. Drawing on a range of different materials, such as interviews with competitors, audience and jury members, she highlights how inclusion and exclusion are produced and the central role of emotions in these processes.

Music auditions have also previously been analysed through Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the artistic fields. With emphasis on value derived from social, symbolic, economic and cultural domains of capital, cultural production has been described as a ‘game’ ordered by ‘entry-specific rules.’ Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot’s sociology of critical capacities has also been applied in studies of gatekeeping and valuation of artistic fields. In stark contrast to Bourdieu, these writers argue for an open-ended multitude of orders, so-called multiple ‘regimes of worth’, in which values are established through practical negotiations.

Inspired by this thinking, Erik Nylander has examined rules of artistic entry in jazz through music auditions at jazz music programmes in Sweden. Through participant observations of music auditions and interviews with jury members, Nylander highlights the discrepancies between sayings and doings during gatekeeping procedures and selection of candidates. He shows how the institutional need to formalise certain standards clashes with notions of individual artistic creativity.

This thesis contributes to these various research fields in three specific ways. It provides further insight into the musical judgement processes by closely attending to the jury’s deliberations. It illuminates to a greater degree the sensorial involvements and affective tensions of experiencing and learning traditional music in contemporary Sweden. And, it further problematizes how ritualistic acts orient the actors involved in the auditions, leading them in certain directions in the world.

In the next sections of this chapter I will turn to the Swedish term spelman and then introduce an historical overview of the Zorn Auditions, which I will follow with the main theoretical approaches and methodologies used in this thesis.

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Spelman and Folk Musician

The term Spelman has specific historical connotations in rural society in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Sweden. It refers to a folk performer, often male, who embodies traditional knowledge. Contrary to notions of the folk musician as being trained and professional, a spelman is often associated with a self-taught tradition-bearer, that almost mythically ‘comes out of tradition,’ linked to a certain geographical place, local village or region. In the discourses of spelmän, tunes are often presented in a geographical and genealogical frame: ‘from’ somewhere and ‘after’ someone. Even if today’s players of traditional musics are a heterogeneous collective in terms of backgrounds, ethnicity, age and gender, these notions of spelmän are still vibrant and alive within the community. Most of the young performers today also call themselves folk musicians rather than spelmän, since the term still ‘carries weight’ and is connected to in-depth knowledge of local traditions. In addition, the prefix of ‘Riks’, emphasises the nation-wide importance and expertise endorsed in the title. Accordingly, the most central criterion for the Zorn jury in their valorisations is ‘qualities as spelman’ (egenskaper som spelman). The title in itself also denotes male performers. Requests have been made by female players awarded with the title to change it into: Rikspelkvinna (’kvinna’ means woman).

The term ‘folk music’ is used regularly in this thesis, because my interlocutors use it alongside another term, namely ‘traditional music.’ ‘Folk music’ functions as an open concept, i.e. it is whatever its users allow it to be, combined with the ramifications emerging from its frequent contestation.

To Audition or Compete?

The problems of music competitions have been evident even since the start of the Zorn Auditions. Originating as competitions for spelmän organised by folk

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44 The Zorn Statutes, ‘2.4 Norms and Criteria of Judgement (Normer och bedömningsgrunder), The Zorn Badge, Rikssfunktionärshandboken, 2012-2012.


46 See for example Karin [Larsson] Eriksson, Bland polskor, gånglåtar och valser: Hallands spelmansförbund och den halländska folkmusiken (Dissertation, Department of Musicology, Gothenburg University, 2004), pp. 45–47.
music enthusiasts, the practice later developed into something more akin to its current form. The Zorn badge was originally designed by the Swedish artist and internationally famous painter Anders Zorn (1860–1920). The badge is in the form of a violin in the middle of an olive wreath, with a horn placed on one side, and a wooden duct folk flute on the other. Zorn was also initiator of the early competitions in Sweden; the first one was held in Gesunda, Dalarna, in 1906.

![Figure 1. The most famous photo of the first spelman’s competition in Gesunda, 1906. Anders Zorn is placed in front of the fiddler on the wagon. (Original photo in Zornsamlingarna (The Zorn Collections), Mora. Photographer: Wiborg)](image)

Zorn had a huge interest in traditional culture and during his life time played a central role within important cultural spheres in Sweden. The first contest was held only a year after the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden in 1905, which underlines the event’s nationalistic undertones. Shortly after, many local contests were organised in different parts of Sweden. These initiatives were clearly inspired by the Norwegian contest system for traditional music, called Kappleik, that started in 1888 and is still in practice today. It is also

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47 Although designed and financed by Anders Zorn, the artist Vicke Andrén also contributed to the final design of the badge, and it was manufactured by the jeweler, Hallberg. See Ramsten and Ternhag, Anders Zorn och musiken, pp. 155–158.

possible that the legacy of competitions in the British Isles, held since 1781, influenced these musical events in Sweden, a hundred years later.\footnote{The first Kappleik was held in 1888 for the Norwegian Hardingerfiddle in Bo, Telemark, and is still today an important musical institution within the Norwegian folk music community. See Fantulien. Innføring i norsk og samisk folkmusikk, ed. by. Bjørn Aksdal and Sven Nyhus (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993), pp. 249–252. Regarding the British Isle: in 1781, a bagpipe contest was arranged by The Highland Society of London; in 1792, in Ireland for harp players in connection to The Belfast Harp Festival; and in Switzerland, in 1805, for alphorn. See Dan Lundberg ‘Tävla i folkmusik,’ pp. 170–171. Lundberg suggests that the later trend to compete in Sweden was due to the comparable longer period of traditional musics being performed in ‘living tradition.’}

The idea of music contests was rapidly rejected by Zorn. In 1910 he instead organised the first national gathering of spelmän, called Riksspelmansstämma, at Skansen, an outdoor museum of Swedish folk life in Stockholm. The traditional music collector and lawyer Nils Andersson (1864–1921) was also part of organising the event. Instead of a contest, it became a meeting point for the invited players, and the Zorn Badge was distributed as a memento.\footnote{75 spelmän were invited from all over Sweden, and 65 attended. They had positioned themselves in high ranks at the different local competitions the previous year, and each province in Sweden was represented.} The instruments represented on the badge were the ones allowed at the first competition in 1906. Zorn and Andersson were then convinced that since Swedish folk music includes so many different regional styles, it was unreasonable to compete against each other. Interestingly, during the 1920s and 30s, the local competitions were gradually replaced in favour of these more egalitarian musical gatherings of spelmän, called Spelmansstämmor.\footnote{In some parts of Sweden, the contests continued for a longer period of time. For example, at the student clubs (Norrlands nation) in Uppsala, competitions were held until 1946, and at a musicians gathering in the area of Uppsala in 1947. See Eriksson, Bland polskor, gånglåtar och valsor, p. 68.} This contrasts with other Scandinavian and Euro-

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Spelmän from different parts of the country are gathered at the first Riksspelmansstämma in 1910, Skansen, Stockholm. (Photo: Musikmuseets spelmansbilder, Svenskt visarkiv).}
\end{figure}
pean countries, where music contests were maintained and still take place to the present day.

The initiative to start the auditions in 1933 may be explained as a continuum starting with the previous contests, in line with the aims of encouraging older ways of playing and rescuing vanishing repertoires. The initiator was Svenska Ungdomsringen för Bygdekultur, SU (the Swedish Youth Association for Local Heritage), now named the Svenska Folkdansringen, SFR, (the Swedish Folklore Association).\(^52\) It is a non-profit association, with no religious or political affiliation and aims to safeguard traditional folk arts, such as dance, music, costumes and crafts. The event in 1910 was also revived as a celebration, marking the culmination of the audition week. The host organisation got approval from Zorn's widow Emma Zorn to use the badge in his name.\(^53\) Connected to the association is a music section called the Zorn Badge Committee (Zornmärkesnämnden). It consists of a jury of nine members and a small secretariat of three people who handle the institution's administrative matters.\(^54\) The aims of the organisation are declared in the statutes, as follows:

The Zorn Badge in gold, silver and bronze is distributed by Svenska Folkdansringen and aims to stimulate interest in Swedish folk music so that, in accordance with the intentions of Zorn, new generations may be encouraged to preserve and continue its traditions and so that understanding of the music and the styles of playing, which we have inherited from spelmän of former times, may be promoted.\(^55\)

The Zorn Auditions clearly draw on ideas from the National Romantic Movement: to rescue, preserve and protect cultural heritage, and the geographical mapping of different musical styles. The statutes inform the practices of the institution and are an ongoing concern for the jury, and are therefore interpreted, negotiated and re-negotiated in each music audition. Neither the repertoires

\(^{52}\) The association was founded in 1919 under the name Svenska Folkdansringen. In 1922, it changed to Ungdomsringen and in 2005 back to the original name. Svenska Folkdansringen is the umbrella organisation of Swedish folk dancers, and most of the dance groups in Sweden are member organisations. Alongside music and dance, it focuses on different forms of handicraft and the transmission of knowledge of folk costumes. See Eriksson, Bland polskor, gånglåtar och valser, p. 73; Kaminsky, Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century, p. 170; The website of the host organisation <http://www.folkdansringen.se/riks/index.php/english> [Accessed 31 Marsch 2017].


nor the accepted instruments are further specified in the statutes and instead are left to the jury’s expertise and interpretation. Many of the judges in the early competitions also continued as jury members at the auditions. From the beginning, people were rewarded who promoted folk music in various particular ways. The first three to receive the rewards were an official of the host organisation, a fiddler and a headmaster of music education. It was not until 1956 that the gold badge became an award exclusively for musicianship.

Interestingly, the two initial arrangements in 1933 and the next in 1935, were in the format of public competitions. At the time, the musicians played on stage in front of a jury and audience. This changed in 1937, and the auditions have been held behind closed doors ever since. The main reasons stated for abandonment of the open performances were first those of the jury, so they could work more freely and not be affected by the reactions of the audience, and secondly to make the situation less nerve-wracking for the player. The last aspect also aimed to invite musicians who were more shy or reserved, encouraging them to play without being scrutinised in front of the entire community. The issue of transforming the auditions into public events has been raised frequently since then, especially during the 1970s and 80s. In 1973, an official claim was addressed to the host organisation and a debate regarding the auditions was organised on the matter. Nevertheless, the practices remained unaltered. Still today, voices are occasionally calling for the auditions to be held in public. One prevailing reason for this is a wish for the jury’s work to be more transparent. Many musicians also report on experiencing the jury as more frightening than a supportive audience. However, the jury today underline that they have no intentions of changing the current practice.

The early folk music contests also enabled some of the winners to start touring in Sweden. Ville Roempke calls these travelling solo players estradspelmän, and highlights how their activities changed the previous practices of spelmän. Instead of participatory performances mainly for dancing or at ceremonial occasions, the stage required longer presentational concerts, with intermittent storytelling for the audience. Moreover, these players were not only folk performers; art musi-

56 For example, Olof Andersson and Sven Kjellström. The Archive of the Zorn Committee.
58 Roempke, ‘Ett nyår för svensk folkmusik’, p. 278.
59 Hembygden, 2 (1937); Sven Aksell describes the early auditions at an organized debate about the Zorn Badge in Södertälje: ‘Statuspryl för spelmän, eller verktyg för stilbildare,’ SVABA2017 and BA201707, 16 June, 1973. Recordings held at Svenskt Visarkiv (the Centre of Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research) in Stockholm, Sweden.
60 The official letter was read out loud at the public arrangement, by the representative from the local host organization, Arne Blomberg. Ibid, BA201702. See also Ramsten, ‘De nya spelmännens’, p. 46.
61 Interview with the jury, 16 January, Stockholm.
icians could also incorporate traditional tunes in their touring performances. They became a vital part of modern musical life. The first world war made the touring more difficult, and their popularity quickly declined. In the mid-1920s, their activities ceased completely, due to the new popularity of the record industry. It is difficult to draw a direct parallel to the Zorn Auditions from these practices. Yet, there are clearly similarities. The most obvious one is the focus on solo playing and traditional music for the stage. Some of its performers also later became judges at the auditions. The performances of estradspelmän were often held at outdoor museums or local community centres. The auditions are also frequently held at these locations, as are the activities of the nationwide local heritage movement that started in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Swedish Local Heritage Federation (Sveriges Hembygdsförbund) is closely interrelated to the practices of Svenska Ungdomsringen and the auditions. They share similar ideas and values of preservation and of promoting cultural heritage in local areas. This grassroots movement was parallel and sometimes intertwined with the amateur movement of organising spelmän and their music activities, under the umbrella term of Spelmansrörelsen.

Spelmansrörelsen and the Collection Svenska Låtar

Between 1925 and the 1940s, traditional musicians started to organise themselves into formal associations based on the different geographical provinces in Sweden (spelmansförbund). From the beginning, these associations were not intended to compete with the SU, which included both dancers and musicians. Nevertheless, the result was a shift or separation from the folk dance movement. These organisations encouraged the players to perform in ensembles, often from sheet music, modelled on chamber art music performances. Additiona...
tionally, in the 1940s a new style of large-group unison fiddling (spelmanslag) emerged, contrasting with the solo performances that had previously dominated the public stage. The resulting groups were both social clubs and performing ensembles, and are still today an active part of the contemporary folk music scenes in Sweden. Finally, 1947 saw the establishment of the National Organisation of Swedish Spelmän (Sveriges Spelmänns Riksförbund, SSR) was founded.66 The impact of these processes of formalisation and institutionalisation, considering ideologies of repertoires, instruments and performative practices of traditional music in Sweden, has been comprehensively surveyed by Karin [Larsson] Eriksson, Märta Ramsten, Ville Roemple, Gunnar Ternhag and Thomas von Wachenfeldt. Frequently addressed issues include the tensions between the creative individual and the performing collective.67

The province-centred mapping of folk music Sweden is manifested in these organisations for spelmän, and has its basis in the collecting of traditional tunes by scholars and enthusiasts in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Particularly influential are the Folk Music Commission (Folkmusikkommissionen, FMK) and its initiator Nils Andersson, and the later editor and musician Olof Andersson (1884–1964). The commission was originally appointed by an assembly of sixty collectors and researchers, who gathered at the First Meeting for Swedish Folk Knowledge (Första mötet för Svensk Folkkunskap), held in Stockholm, in 1908. The work of collecting and editing traditional tunes resulted in the 24-volume Swedish Tunes (Svenska Låtar) first published between 1922 and 1940. The collection institutionalised a system of classification based on Sweden’s geographical provinces and the individual tradition-bearers’ own repertoires, including 7910 tunes.68 Svenska Låtar, is clearly the most influential collection of traditional tunes in Sweden during the twentieth century and is especially

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67 See for example: Karin Eriksson’s dissertation focus on a local spelmans association in the county of Halland; Eriksson, Bland polskor, gånglåtar och valser; Ville Roempke, ‘Ett nyår för svensk folkmusik’; Gunnar Ternhag, Hjort Anders Olsson; Thomas von Wachenfeldt, Folkmusikalisk utbildning, förbilde

68 All provinces except Lappland, Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Ängermanland, and Gotland are included. Placing the musician in focus, also contrasted with previous practices in which the music was classified by types of tunes. Mathias Boström, ‘100 år med Folkmusikkommissionen. Översikt och vägledning’, in Det stora uppdraget: Perspektiv på folkmusikkommisionen i Sverige 1908–2008, ed. by Mathias Boström, Dan Lundberg and Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Nordiska Museets förlag, 2010), 13–38 (pp. 20–21); See also Boström, ’Låtar av “större arkivaliskt än musikaliskt intresse?” Spelmansböckerna och Svenska låtar’, in Leksittens festskrift till Magnus Gustavsson, ed. by Mathias Boström (Växjö: Smålands musikarkiv, Musik i Syd, 2015), 47–65 (p. 47).
significant as a standard reference within the practices of the Zorn Auditions.

Previous research has shown how the commission’s ideology—rather than the ‘intentions of Anders Zorn’—has functioned as the guiding principles of the jury’s work. Zorn never specified the desired repertoire for the first contests, other than in a request for ‘old tunes.’ Nils Andersson, on the other hand, the main music expert in these arrangements, was explicitly interested in polkas, waltzes and marches, and the older tunes of herding music. Polska is the most popular Swedish traditional dance and music form. It is performed almost always in triple metre, and have many regional and local variations.

A conservative approach towards the repertoire has implications also for the accepted instruments within the auditions. In the beginning of twentieth century, the diatonic accordion became the main symbol of the industrialisation, modernisation, and urbanisation of Swedish society, and was for a long time banned within Spelmansrörelsen. The Pan–European styles of dance music that gained popularity in Sweden, such as schottisches, mazurkas, polkas etc., were well-suited to the accordion. The instrument’s limited scales and chordal underpinning, was clearly not suitable for the old tunes that Zorn, Andersson and the Commission aimed to preserve.

The repertoires associated with the accordion, later named gammeldans, or old-time dances, still have an ambivalent position within the auditions, and were for a long time rejected. Between 1933 and the beginning of the 1970s, fiddle, clarinet, horn, pipe or nyckelharpa (keyed fiddle) were, in general, the only accepted instruments at the auditions. The only vocal music accepted was the herding call, which is a high-pitched semi-song-like call used for calling home cattle from their pastures in the

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69 Ramsten and Ternhag, Anders Zorn och musiken, pp. 192–195. The Folk Music Commission are also richly investigated by music scholars. See the anthology Det stora uppdraget: Perspektiv på folkmusikkommisionen i Sverige 1908–2008, ed. by Mathias Boström, Dan Lundberg and Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2010). In one of the chapters, Niklas Nyqvist also investigates the inspiration of the commissiion’s work for the Swedish parts of Finland: ‘Folkmusikkommissonen som inspirationskälla i Svensksfinland’ in Det stora uppdraget: Perspektiv på folkmusikkommisionen i Sverige 1908–2008, ed. by Mathias Boström, Dan Lundberg, and Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Nordiska Museets förlag, 2010), 125–130. All the collected material of sheet music from the commission’s work are digitalized by Svenskt Visarkiv/Musikverket (Swedish Performing Arts Agency) and accessible by the website <fmk.musikverket.se> [Accessed 4 september 2016].

70 The first call for tunes for the collection, was published in the periodical Fataburen i 1909: ‘Val-låtar, gånglåtar, skänklåtar, brudlåtar, långdanser, polskor, kadriljer och gammalvalser.’ Ramsten and Ternhag, Anders Zorn och musiken, pp. 194–195. The judges in the early contests also often had to explain to the players what kind of tunes they preferred, since the musicians were used to being updated on the latest dance music, and that in these contexts was clearly rejected (polka and mazurka, for example). Eriksson, Bland polskor, gånglåtar och valser, p. 62.

71 See Kaminsky, Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century, pp. 47, 168.

mountains. Herding calls had a somewhat mythical status in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Swedish culture. In the 1980s, due to the revival of medieval instruments such as the Swedish bagpipe, hurdy gurdy and different forms of nyckelharpa (silverbasharpa/kontrabasharpa) were introduced to the auditions. The first rikspelman on the diatonic accordion was awarded as late as in 1979. Still today, the five-row accordion is not accepted for playing, and the issue of why will be further investigated in this thesis.

Since 1973, Svenskt Visarkiv (The Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research) in Stockholm has recorded and documented the auditions for prosperity. Svenskt Visarkiv preserves, collects, researches and publishes instrumental and vocal traditional music, Swedish jazz and older popular songs as well as social dances and newer artistic practices. It is part of Musikverket (Swedish Performing Arts Agency), a governmental institution to preserve and ‘bring to life’ cultural heritage as music, theatre and dance in Sweden. All the tunes performed at the auditions are becoming part of the archives collections.

Figure 3. Several generations of spelmän performing at Rikspelmanstämman, Skansen, Stockholm, 2012. (Photo: Svenskt Visarkiv).

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75 The performances awarded the Silver Badge are public material. See the website of Svenskt Visarkiv: <http://musikverket.se/svensktvisarkiv/?lang=en> [Accessed 17 April 2017].
Theoretical Approaches and Methodologies

My thesis approaches the Zorn Auditions as ritualised musical performances, understanding rituals as particular ways of embodying meaning, through repeated choreographed actions. The research focuses on how knowledge is gained and how values of traditional music are transmitted and sensed through repeated practices within particular localities. It also explores negotiations of belonging between individuals and community and, in line with recent work on rituals, engages with dynamics and flows, tuning into the tacit, co-experienced and covert aspects of ritual participation, as well as the ruptures, disagreements and divergent views over its content.

The study is especially focused on the phenomenological, lived experience of being in-between states. It explores the crossing of boundaries and anxiety over passages (often explicitly enacted in the performance setting of auditions). To develop a richer understanding of the act of auditioning, I have combined the concept of ritual with Sara Ahmed’s writings on ‘orientation.’ Orientation, as theorised by Ahmed, addresses ways in which bodies inhabit and materialise space, and how bodily positions become directed towards and against particular objects in worlds. Our actions create lines of direction, in regard to both thoughts and movements. To be oriented means to ‘find our way’ and ‘feel at home’, to know where one stands, what to do and which way to turn. It is an effect of arrival and depends on the paths and lines well-trodden before us, and on taking certain points of views as given. As Ahmed points out: ‘When we are oriented, we might not even notice that we are oriented […] When we experience disorientation, we might notice orientation as something we do not have.’

For Ahmed, such times of disorientation, or ‘queer’ moments when bodies are unable to extend themselves, are as interesting as those in which they feel aligned in time and space. Her interest inspires this thesis, which engages explicitly with feelings of disorientation, of being ‘out of line’ with others and of not knowing which way to turn. It concerns both players during the act of auditioning, and the jury in the musical judgement process. By exploring disorientation, this thesis aims to consider and reconsider ways that objects that are reachable for the actors within and beyond the auditions; and by combining that with ideas of ritualisation, this research seeks a richer understanding of what these and

80 Ibid, pp. 5–6.
other habitual and monitored actions do in shaping bodies and worlds. As Ahmed describes it:

the orientations we have towards others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies [...] Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as “who” or “what” we direct our energy and attention towards.  

In ways I have developed from thinking through Ahmed’s work, this thesis seeks to trace what a gathering such as the Zorn Auditions may do to social relations in space: how recognised routes are disturbed as new paths emerge, and in what directions the repetition of actions may take the actors involved. Ahmed focuses particularly on orientation in regard to sexuality, which she links to a social framework of race and queer studies. She discusses how lines may be informed by normative heterosexuality and addresses the political ramifications of how certain bodies are ‘out of line’ in desire. I have adapted her work because it can serve to illuminate experience and learning even in a more specific institutional context, one characterised by other types of ‘desire’. As Ahmed argues, ‘to live out a politics of disorientation might be to sustain wonder about the very form of social gathering.’ To my knowledge these two perspectives—ritual and orientation—have not before been combined in the field of research into traditional music or music auditions.

This thesis also engages with the various modes of assessment at the auditions, particularly in regard to experiences and sounds that are ascribed to various pasts. The starting point is often when the elusive idea of ‘tradition’ is brought to the fore as an invocation of the past. I align my thinking here with the understanding of tradition as presented by Barry McDonald, namely as a ‘personal relationship’ that depends on an individual’s affective and conscious engagements expressed through cultural forms across time. McDonald argues that tradition is ‘a human potential that involves personal relationship[s], shared practices and a commitment to the continuity of both the practices and the particular emotional/spiritual relationship that nurtures them.’ I find that this way of thinking works powerfully in combination with the writings of Ahmed, offer-

81 Ibid, p. 3.
82 See for example ibid. pp. 11–24; 167–179.
ing a way of thinking through the real and imagined proximities of bodies and objects in time and space.

Sensory Ethnography and Interventions

In order to explore into the practices creating the heterogeneous web of relationships that produce the Zorn Auditions, this thesis is based on ethnography. It draws primarily on multi-sited fieldwork at the Zorn Auditions, conducted from 2012 to 2016. The ethnographic material involves open-ended, semi-structured interviews with players and jury, as well as participant observations of the music auditions and feedback conversations. Finally, it draws on observation of the jury’s private deliberations. It was the first time a researcher was allowed to witness this part of the proceedings.

The writing of ethnography involves translating, re-forming and re-presenting the fieldwork experiences and describing the musical practices of whom we study. It is an extension of field performance: ‘to listen, feel, question, understand and represent, in ways true to one’s own experiences.’ Experientially-grounded observations and lively, textured narratives are used to give agency to the people who figure in them and to sensitize the assumed reader. Because ethnography is an experiential process through which understanding and knowledge are produced, sensoriality is crucial. In line with recent work in the field, this study embraces the fluidity of experience, and an expressively creative style of prose, to contribute to a range of recent and ongoing interventions in normative academic styles of writing. It seeks to engage the reader, in line with the understanding that all knowledge is embodied practice, through touch.


87 All auditions observed are recorded and digitalized and held at *Svenskt Visarkiv* in the Zorn Database, Stockholm.


sound and vision. As noted by Deborah Wong, ‘performativity sets into motion a series of spiraling, discursive responses, and ethnography should, too.’

This thesis is inspired by the well-acknowledged work on sensory ethnography by Sarah Pink, and other scholars engaging with sensory studies. It strives to open up diverse ways of knowing, embracing the multisensoriality of experience, knowing, practice and perception, following Pink’s understanding that the senses are interconnected and interrelated. It aims to rethink the ethnographic process through the senses, and attend closely to the actors’ sensory involvements. The use of a creative style of prose, such as the sketches opening this thesis, are a part of this project, making explicit my creative act of writing and thus avoiding an apparently neutral—but institutionally normative—practice of representation. The use of language in this way acknowledges my sensory engagement with the environment and my shared experiences with participating interlocutors. My senses are used as a route to knowledge, allowing me to attend to the fluidity of visually-apparent boundaries and the tactile, aural and sonic qualities of musical geographies. The auditions are grasped as sensory environments that cohere temporarily, and my focus is directed towards how bodies constantly reconfigure them. By exploring and working with performative interventions in writing, my aim is to develop a richer insight to the performance space of the now, with the world as it flows.

The concept of performativity contests the very notion of the subject, and is understood as an act in the here-and-now that produces a series of effects. It is an endless process of repetition involving similarities and differences. From this perspective, texts, doings and knowings, and the words of knowing do not describe a pre-existing world. Instead, meaning is understood as generating through processes, rather than residing in something. John Law describes the shift from constructivism towards heterogeneity with focus on enactment, in the following words:

We are no longer dealing with construction, social or otherwise: there is no stable prime mover, social or individual, to construct anything, no builder, no puppeteer […] Rather we are dealing with enactment or performance. In this heterogeneous

90 Sara Pink, Doing Sensory Ethnography, pp. 4–6.
93 Pink, Doing Sensory Ethnography, pp. xi-xv; 2-8; 25–50.
Focus is placed upon practice instead of representations of social relationships. The research question of ‘why’, is replaced with the question of ‘how’, and more specifically of how human and nonhuman formations are enacted and performed, assembled and related. According to this approach, apprehending the world is about engagements and dwelling, not construction or building. The social is seen as a set of practices and transformations that moves, acts and interacts. Such an approach thus aims to ‘work in and on the world’ —not to make a view of it, but taking up a view in it.

Following the same line of argument, this study aims to explore and describe the complexities of the Zorn Auditions, without ascribing them to an underpinning system of meaning or simplifying the multifaceted trajectories involved. The actors located at the Zorn Auditions are caught up in an unfolding web of relationships, material and social, entangled and interrelated. In this sense, the physical and figurative presences at the auditions—the players, the secretariat, the jury, the archivists, visitors and volunteers, as well as material objects such as tables, protocols, exhibitions, instruments and spatial arrangements, aims, repertoires, objectives and aspirations and inscriptions as the statutes—all assemble and enact a set of practices that make our untidy, messy and precarious reality. This may be better phrased as ‘our realities’, because there are multiple and different realities that relate to one another. The practices that carry these webs of relationships need to be traced and explored.

I contend that a penetrating understanding of the multiple practices of the Zorn Auditions can be gained through the idea of associating entities. As Law and Annemarie Mol articulate:

There are then, modes of relating that allow the simple to coexist with the complex, of aligning elements without necessarily turning them into a comprehensive system or a complete overview. These are some of the ways of describing the world, while keeping it open, ways of paying tribute to complexities, which are always there, somewhere, elsewhere, untamed: To list rather than to

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classify; to tell about cases rather than present illustrative representations; to walk and tell stories about this rather than seek to make maps. Of course—this is the nature of our list, of any list—there are other possibilities too, told elsewhere or waiting to be discovered.\textsuperscript{101}

The ‘list’ suggested assembles elements but makes no claim to be complete; rather it recognises its own incompleteness, and the parts are not in hierarchal in their relationship to one another. It has a range of modes of ordering and selection, which exclude, include, contest or depend on one another. What is in the background at one moment may in the next shift and reappear in the foreground. The list of entities involves both humans and non-humans—distinct events, technologies and materials translated to work together. By following the actors and attempting to approach them as means of associating entities at the Zorn Auditions, my aim is to reassemble and show how multiple versions of our reality relate, overlap, coexist and interfere.\textsuperscript{102} At such points are the intersections, or what Marilyn Strathern calls ‘partial connections’,\textsuperscript{103} when the different orderings meet or join together; these points are as interesting as when entities are unable to coexist, or certain entities cannot even be thought of, even while they are present.

To consider the Zorn Auditions, along with Swedish folk music and its traditions, as open ended lists, is to recognise that they have a certain coherence, but also to take full account of their fluidity, and their constant reconfiguring, depending on different viewpoints and priorities. The questions of what is in, and what is out, in a particular enactment, will be of ongoing concern in the chapters to come. It will contribute to tracing and forming the main directions and lines through the project.\textsuperscript{104}

This thesis offers some encounters, directions and musical routes into the realities and worlds of the Zorn Auditions, but there are always other possibilities as well: other stories to be told and other paths to be walked on, to be made visible, audible, and sensible—elsewhere.

\textbf{Multi-Sited Fieldwork and Interactive Encounters: Sharing Experiences, Sharing Lives}

The approaches presented in the previous sections have methodological implications related to reflexivity: shared social experience is an integral part of ethnographic research processes. As a researcher I am of course also part of the relational networks that produce the auditions. By doing fieldwork, ‘we weave our-

\textsuperscript{101} Law and Mol, \textit{Complexities}, pp. 16–17.
\textsuperscript{102} See Ibid. pp. 6-17.
selves (or are woven by others) into the communities we study, becoming cultural actors in the very dramas of society we endeavour to understand, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{165} I use this section to further introduce the diverse methodologies used for this study, along with the material on which it draws.

During the five years of research, I engaged in many conversations as well as in a variety of activities with the people involved in the auditions. Sharing emotional moments of joy with the players who succeeded, but also wiping tears and supporting those who failed. Hearing multiple life stories of hopes, aims, dreams, struggles and worries. Doing interviews at bus stops in pouring rain or whilst swimming in a lake, on benches under trees or outside on green lawns during warm summer evenings—at cafés and restaurants, in formal offices, or by phone and Skype in my living room. I have been playing music together with the jury, taking notes at meetings, being actively silent, dancing, singing, attending concerts, waiting and sharing endless meals and cups of coffee. Hanging out with the secretariat or talking to the enrolled volunteers, trying to figure out what is going on all around the audition site. I recall all the hours spent in the audition room, experiencing music-making together with the jury, players and the archivists, alongside analysing the jury’s judgements or assisting Svenskt Visarkiv with their recordings. All occasions were framed by defining moments of jokes and laughter, waiting and boredom, but also those of anger, tension and disagreements. The latter were expressed in discussions over larger issues of musical values and dilemmas, or smaller ones, such as keeping to the strict time schedule. I have been listening, sensing, learning, observing, imitating, performing, asking questions, feeling, and analysing—thus sharing experiences and sharing lives together.\textsuperscript{166}

Indeed, fieldwork is today reconfigured as an experience, in the aftermath of the ‘crisis of representation.’ It involves dwelling in experiential moments and committing to social relationships that depend on forms of reciprocity.\textsuperscript{167} As Jeff Todd Tinton describes:

Fieldwork is messy, empirical, difficult, partial, step-by-step, but it grounds our explanations in the dialogue between self and other. It counteracts the intellectual tendency to theorize the world without living in it. It posits a paradigm for knowing based in knowing persons. This paradigm differs from prior scientific ones; its epistemology is humanistic.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{165} Barz and Cooley, ‘Casting Shadows’, p. 23.
The ‘fields’ are thus shaped in a play of relationships between interlocutors, researchers and other involved actors and extends across physical sites in a constant process of becoming renewed and transformed over time. Importantly, this also includes the processes of research and writing, and the realms of the academy. From this point of view, in an interconnected world we are never really ‘out of the field.’ This study is therefore inspired by rethinking the field as ‘more of a sense of a mode of study, that cares about, and pays attention to, the interlocking of multiple social-political sights and locations.’ As previously mentioned, following circumstances and tracing movements in the shifting of locations are thus guiding principles in my work.

One important aspect to take into consideration when investigating the Zorn Auditions is that the folk music community in Sweden is a small and to a large extent a participatory culture, characterised by informality. This has many implications for the audition site. The two archivists from Svenskt Visarkiv that are documenting the auditions are both ethnomusicologists and also traditional musicians themselves, involved within the folk music scenes. The director of Svenskt Visarkiv, Dan Lundberg, has been recording the auditions since 2002, and additionally is one of my thesis supervisors and a rikspelman. This gives the aforementioned academic perspective a further dimension. The archivists are actively involved in the audition practices and in an on-going dialogue with the jury, players and the secretariat. They record all the auditions, are responsible for the technical equipment on site, and provide the players with the opportunity to buy their own recorded performance. One of them is always present in the audition room, but they are not allowed to stay during the jury’s deliberations. The archivist follows the last player out of the door and waits until the jury has finished. In the social situation that follows, it is common that archivists support and encourage the players or comment on their performances (‘well done in there!’). They also know many of the performers from before. The participants often ask them for advice on their playing, for more information about tunes or recordings held at the centre, or about questions related to Swedish folk music in general. In that sense, they also perform the role of on-site experts. Occasionally, the archivists will give public presentations of recent research on topics related to tradition and folk music, which furthermore underlines their positions as specialists.

111 The majority of ethnomusicologists in Sweden are also performers or musicians themselves, and actively engage with the music or scenes they are studying.
112 This refers to the present situation in 2017.
Interestingly, the jury rarely share worries or tricky questions with the archivists. Sometimes, they may ask what they think about the performance, but the jury members state very firmly that they are the ones making the judgements. The archivists, on the other hand, also follow a policy of not getting involved in the judgement process, since that is not their profession on site. However, Svenskt Visarkiv’s relationship with the jury is by no means without frictions. The director and several of the employees have raised criticism towards the jury on multiple occasions; both in informal conversations, formal interviews or at public held seminars on the matter, also organized by Svenskt Visarkiv. Recently, gender issues have been a recurring topic, both in regard to the demographics of the jury, which consists of fewer women (now three) than men, as well as the jury’s tendency to reward the gold badges only to men. During my fieldwork I often heard jury members comment: “They have another view on this [topic] than we do.” Despite the contested views, the documentation by the governmental institution Svenskt Visarkiv clearly contributes to legitimise the auditions as important to the musical heritage of Sweden.

The activities of Svenskt Visarkiv have had huge impact on my work at the auditions. The very idea of conducting a research project about the auditions was inspired by one of the previous archivists, ethnomusicologist Mathias Boström. He worked at the auditions between 2008 and 2015, often together with Lundberg. In ethnography, reference is often made to how the academic world has shaped the work through conference visits and seminar attendance. That is indeed true for this study, but I also had the fortune to be able to engage directly, in continuous conversations and consultations, with archivists Lundberg and Boström, during my annual weeks of fieldwork. They generously shared their ideas, thoughts and experiences of the auditions and helped me solve tricky issues or unforeseen problems that emerged on site. They also facilitated my work by making video recordings and taking photos of the events. Indeed, writing a thesis is always collaborative work. Moreover, Lundberg has experience in conducting interviews with participants at the auditions (in 2006) and with the jury (2007), providing material on which this study draws. In addition, as mentioned above, he has been through the process of auditioning himself.

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113 Boström has since then left Svenskt Visarkiv for another position.
114 One hour and 20 minutes. SVABA4317 and SVABA4318.
Figure 4. The author of this thesis takes notes and Mathias Boström from Svenskt Visarkiv record the session at the Zorn Auditions, Tobo, 2013.

Svenskt Visarkiv’s participation in the auditions thus blurs the categories of insider/outsider, subject/object, and underlines the assertion that the field is ‘everywhere and nowhere, and anyone and everyone is an insider.’\textsuperscript{115} I contend that we all play multiple roles in our lives and draw on different personae when we enter diverse relationships and engage in complex encounters. The field is no different. Being a field researcher, a player or a jury member are not separate from who we ‘really are.’ Rather, we are performing different parts of being ourselves. Clearly, there are differences in the field but cultural boundaries also exist in other areas of our lives. As Ruth Hellier-Tinoco points out: ‘Dealing with differences in relationships is part of life, it is not unique to field contexts and relations and our skills in handling such difference surely comes with patience and practice.’\textsuperscript{116} Indeed, every relationship is different and always involves responsibilities—and in the act of doing research, the most important are in regard to ethics.

From my point of view, my relationships with the players have generally been uncomplicated during the research process. They enthusiastically shared their experiences and no one has turned down my request to do an interview. Musi-

\textsuperscript{115} Barz and Cooley are referencing Deborah Wong in ’Casting Shadows’, p. 19. See Deborah Wong, ’Moving: From Performance to Performative Ethnography and Back again’, pp. 76–89.

\textsuperscript{116} Hellier-Tinoco, ‘Experiencing People’ p. 29.
cians tend to enjoy talking about their creative processes and the players within the auditions are by no means different in that matter. The relationships with the jury have—unsurprisingly—been more complicated, and changed a lot between the first encounter at the auditions in 2012 and the final writing.

In the next section I introduce further methodologies embraced in this study: participant observations and qualitative research interviews. By discussing these methods, I attempt to shed light on my interactive encounters with the jury and the players, and how they have changed during the years of research and fieldwork.

The Players
I have conducted 18 individual open-ended, semi-structured research interviews with players at the auditions (from 2012 to 2015) that each lasted between 45 min and 1.5 hours each. They were all conducted from an open phenomenological standpoint: ‘understanding the social phenomena from the actor’s own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what the people perceive it to be.’ As multisensory encounters, interviews are creative places that allow people to share their values and opinions and define their experiences in collaboration with a researcher. I was interested in what was said and how it was said, as well as what was left out of the conversation. The interview became a route into understanding the players’ sensory engagement with the auditions, and I was seeking nuanced descriptions of their emotions and feelings about participation. The open questions and topics discussed concerned aims and objectives of participation, preparation and expectations about auditioning. Our encounters were guided by the players’ associations, what was important to them and why. In all of the interviews, I introduced the purpose of the conversation before we started and outlined the main themes, but I did not show the interlocutors the whole questionnaire beforehand.

As discussed above, this study also draws on interviews conducted by Dan Lundberg and Tommy Sjöberg during their documentary work on the auditions in Mora, 2006 and in Degerberga, 2007. The occasion in Mora also marked the centennial celebration of the first spelman’s competition in Sweden 1906. The material held at the Svenskt Visarkiv consists of 19 interviews with the players, each between five and 20 minutes in length. I used similar questions to those

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117 Only one of my interlocutors changed his mind at the end of the interview and withdrew his participation due to the emotional state of talking about his experiences directly after audition and being too open-hearted about what he felt.
120 See Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, pp. 80–81.
of Lundberg and Sjöberg in my interview study, for both the jury and the players, in order to be able to compare the answers between the different years of audition. Lundberg and Sjöberg conducted their interviews both before and after the players had auditioned. Players who had already received the Silver Badge were also interviewed.

Since the auditions are a highly formal event, the on-site schedule guided my work. I requested interviews from all my interlocutors only after they had auditioned. When the last player in the session finished, I sometimes left with them, along with the archivists. It was a relaxed situation in which to talk about their performance and how they felt; I then asked if they were interested in an interview. Since there is a long gap between the performances and the announcement of the results, it was a good interval in which to talk. Another opportunity for listening to performers’ views was in the evening, when the jury met with the competitors to give them feedback on their playing. I did participant observations during these feedback conversations with 18 of the players, 14 of which I also interviewed (see Table 1). I followed one of the players, Anna Mogren, continuously over three years as she attended the auditions, and also conducted follow-up interviews with her.

Only three of the players requested anonymity, but in the thesis all players are referred to by their initials. In order to ensure anonymity for the jury, if jury members are mentioned by the players in the interviews, I have left out the specific year of the interview. For this reason, I use a general ‘ZA’ (Zorn Auditions) to identify my own conducted interviews, in contrast to the date and place noted in the interviews of Lundberg and Sjöberg. Sometimes I also refer to the time period of my fieldwork (2012–2015).

In regard to the selection of interlocutors, I was striving for a mixture of age, gender, instruments and the number of times they had auditioned. In the end I interviewed eight men and 10 women between the ages of 25 and 73. The majority of the players interviewed were between the ages of 28 and 43. This is interestingly close to my own age, and could possibly be the result of unconscious bias. However, this is counter-balanced with the interviews made by Lundberg and Sjöberg, where many of the interlocutors’ ages are between 50 and 74, within the total of 12 men and 7 women. In terms of geography, two of my interlocutors are from England, one is from America and one is from Germany; all others live in Sweden. In total, this study draws on 37 interviews: 20 men and 17 women.

122 The anonymous players are identified as A1, A2 and A3.
Table 1. Interviews with non-anonymised players at the Zorn Auditions 2012–2015. Abbreviations: C: Certificate, B: Bronze Badge, PBC: Post-Bronze Badge S: Silver Badge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Repertoire</th>
<th>Previous auditions and rewards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>29 F</td>
<td>Herding Call</td>
<td>Dalarna</td>
<td>Debut (Bronze)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JH</td>
<td>25 M</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Västergötland</td>
<td>3 (Bronze)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHS</td>
<td>28 M</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Gotland</td>
<td>Debut (Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EML</td>
<td>29 F</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Norrbotten</td>
<td>2 (PBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBM</td>
<td>28 M</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Västergötland</td>
<td>Debut (Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>52 M</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Norrbotten</td>
<td>5 (PBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT</td>
<td>73 M</td>
<td>Harmonica</td>
<td>Several counties</td>
<td>3 (Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>29 M</td>
<td>Nyckelharpa</td>
<td>Uppland</td>
<td>2 (Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RW</td>
<td>34 F</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Västergötland</td>
<td>Debut (Bronze)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD</td>
<td>43 F</td>
<td>Bagpipe</td>
<td>Dalarna</td>
<td>Debut (Bronze) Complications with instrument, due to bellows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD</td>
<td>43 M</td>
<td>Cow Horn</td>
<td>Dalarna</td>
<td>Debut (Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GH</td>
<td>41 M</td>
<td>Hurdy Gurdy</td>
<td>Dalarna</td>
<td>3 (Bronze) Disqualified once due to a bowed lyre from Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSN</td>
<td>33 F</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Blekinge</td>
<td>3 (Silver)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>35/37/38 F</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Västergötland</td>
<td>Debut (Certificate) 3 (Bronze)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>28/29 F</td>
<td>Cow horn</td>
<td>Several counties</td>
<td>Debut (Certificate/Bronze) 3 (PBC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During my fieldwork I observed 219 auditions:

2012 Borås: 43 of 87 (only music auditions)
2013 Tobo: 67 of 96 (music auditions and deliberations)
2014 Umeå: 60 of 62
2015 Korrö: 49 of 79
Becoming ‘A Fly on the Wall’—Multisensory Participation

The last performer is leaving the audition room. The archivist sitting next to me slowly removes the headphones, rises from the table and walks out. Shortly after the person representing the secretariat also leaves. The door is closing. Silence. This is a new moment, a new shared space. I am left in the room alone with the jury. They are sitting in a row, almost directly opposite me. The light green tablecloth reaches the floor, so players are not distracted by their feet. Cups of coffee, glasses of water, a bowl of candy and small name plates are decorating the table, together with the judgement records. ‘Who will start?’ says one of them. ‘It was clearly a Bronze’, says another. My pen is scratching the paper; it feels like it echoes in the room. I do my best not to disturb them, whilst attentively observing. I know it is impossible, but I am trying to become invisible, to blend into the wall—to become ‘a fly on the wall.’

To observe is to attend to people and objects, to follow them in practice and participate in perception and action. Indeed, the observer is also always observed. ‘To become a fly on the wall’ is certainly impossible, but the expression captures something else. Apart from my mixed feelings about being present on site, the phrase was used by the jury several times in a positive manner commenting on my attendance in the audition room and of not disturbing them in their work. The situation described above, strange at first, soon became a regular working routine. After a couple of days, we got used to each other’s presence. Music auditions are sensitive events and it took time to gain the jury’s trust and confidence, to participate with discretion during their judgements and the players’ auditions.

From the start of the project, I was granted approval by Svenska Folkdansringen and the Zorn Committee allowing me to take part in the auditions and to access the Archive of the Zorn Committee (minutes from meetings, protocols, judgement records, letter correspondence etc. from 1933 to today) held at Svenskt Visarkiv. I first met the jury panel at the auditions in the summer of 2012, and was welcomed warmly. My background as an amateur fiddler—with a family involved in the Swedish folk dance scene—probably facilitated the first encounter. In addition, one of the jury members is a close family friend. I have never sought the title myself, nor have I been especially interested in participating in music auditions or competitions. What interested me the most about this project was the strong emotions the auditions tend to evoke and how they aroused such passions within the folk music community. I was curious to learn more about the ways in which music matters for the people enrolled in the auditions.

123 Field notes The Zorn Auditions, 2013.
While getting to know the event and the people involved, I conducted interviews with the players and I was also invited to do participant observations of the jury feedback conversations.\textsuperscript{127}

During my first year of research, the Danish folk music community established the association Danmarks Rigsplejemed and was planning on starting a Danish version of the Zorn Auditions. I met the initiator Paul Bjerager Christiansen, when he was visiting the Zorn Auditions in the summer of 2012. In April 2013, the Danish association conducted test auditions for their own selected judges and then evaluated the performances together.\textsuperscript{128} Bjerager was very open about their practices and had invited me to do participant observations during their test deliberations. I travelled to Roskilde, along with two members of the Zorn jury, who acted as consultants for the Danish initiators. I believe this occasion was important for the later developments in my observations of the Zorn jury, since the members could see how I worked in these situations. During the trip to Roskilde, we also played music together and that certainly contributed further to my gaining their trust and confidence. The next summer, in 2013, the current jury panel invited me to participate in their private deliberations at the Zorn Auditions.

One considerable limitation of these participant observations, both in 2012 and from 2013 to 2015, was that I was allowed to attend, observe and take notes but not to record the sessions. In 2013, the jury panel and I had a long discussion regarding this issue, since from a research perspective it made the material less transparent. Were it on record, it would offer a more secure reference, if the jury was to disagree with my notes on the situation. They told me that they did not feel comfortable with the conversations being recorded, and having their own voices on tape. Therefore, I had to rely on pen and paper.

The jury members made clear their reason for inviting me as a listener in the second year. They stated that since the feedback conversations with players were so sensitive, they could not really express their full thoughts and ideas and criteria for judging one way or another. On the other hand, they asserted that during deliberations I would get a more transparent and truthful picture of their work, since they could talk more freely and be honest and straight-forward in their judgements. I clearly stated the purpose of the observations and how my main issues concerned their ideas and values about traditional music; how they judged certain tunes, instruments and performative techniques; what was left out and

\textsuperscript{127} For the players, I received consent both in written form and verbal agreement on record. For the jury, I only received verbal agreements.

\textsuperscript{128} Bjerager had already invited me to attend the association's meeting in November 2012, regarding the form and content of the auditions. I conducted interviews with Bjerager and participant observations of the event (recorded and held by the author). I also conducted follow-up interviews with Bjerager in April 2013 and participant observations of the judge's performances, 13 April to 15 April 2013, Roskilde, Denmark. The musical performances were recorded.
why. In January 2014, I sent a formal request to the Zorn Committee of participation in the jury deliberations the upcoming years. They gave their written consent for my participation in the auditions, and to conduct participant observations during their deliberations in 2014 and 2015. Each year, before the auditions started, I asked the individual members in the panel for their consent and kept them updated on my work. Regarding the material from observations, it is important to keep in mind how these discussions during the deliberations also involved elements of jokes and were sometimes informed by explicitly relaxed styles of behaviour, coping mechanisms during a long working day that involved reaching decisions under time pressure. These aspects have of course been taken into consideration during my interpretations of the material. When I started this project the secretariat took notes during the jury’s deliberations. This changed in the second year, since the jury wanted to limit the number of people present in the room. Members wanted to take extra precautions about sensitive issues not reaching the community, so one of the members started to take notes instead.

Anonymity has been a crucial ethical issue from the beginning of this project. Protecting the participants involved has been a main concern. In addition to music auditions and musical judgements tending to be very sensitive subjects, this was the first time in its 86-years existence that the institution allowed a researcher to observe their practice to this extent.

The Jury
The constitution of the Zorn jury has varied since the start of the auditions. It has included both folk musicians and performers of art music, academic scholars and music teachers. The aim of the Zorn committee in appointing jury members has been to cover a broad range of expertise in both regional repertoires and instruments. The current jury consists of nine members, three women and six men between the age of 38 and 76 (see table 2). Not all members are present every year: for each week of the yearly auditions the panel is made up of four members. Typically, three are from the jury and there is one local representative, often selected from the local spelman’s organisation that arrange the auditions. The current jury are all traditional musicians and rikspelmän, with the exception of one ethnomusicologist, whose primary qualifications are academic.

129 Conversations with the jury panel, Tobo, 2013.
130 Official decision by the Zorn Committee, protocol from meeting. Email correspondence with the director of the Zorn Committee, 29 January 2014.
131 As a consequence of this decision, two of the members of the current secretariat then left their positions.
Table 2. The Zorn Jury

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member since</th>
<th>no. years</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Region of expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fiddle, Nyckelharpa</td>
<td>Uppland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Västerbotten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Södermanland/Småland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Fiddle</td>
<td>Hälsingland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Diatonic accordions, clarinet, (nyckelharpa, harmonica, flutes)</td>
<td>Västergötland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Ethnomusicologist</td>
<td>All provinces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Fiddle, Herding calls, horns</td>
<td>Dalarna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Fiddle, Clog fiddle</td>
<td>Skåne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Fiddle (Cow horn, Nyckelharpa)</td>
<td>Hälsingland/Gästrikland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The region of expertise may be understood as the main area of competence. Several of the jury members have knowledge of music from other provinces as well. Noticeably, a majority of the jury play the fiddle. Five of the members are also educated music teachers. Most of the members are active within different spelman associations, and play in various music groups, trios or duos.

New candidates for the jury are appointed by the Zorn Committee when one of the nine positions becomes vacant. The formal decision of election or re-election is made every second year at the national assembly of Svenska Folkdansringen. However, the noted numbers of years above clearly show how the jury members tend to stay for a long time in their positions. Interestingly, this contrasts with how many music juries are working, with a change of membership every second year at least. The jury members often state that a ‘long time commitment’ is important in order to create continuity within their practices, and to cherish their ‘gathered experience.’ In that sense there is also a tradition within the jury, transmitting knowledge from member to member.

The jury and secretariat have a shared annual meeting during one weekend each year to create continuity between the different jury panels, address current issues and possibly difficult judgements in the year ahead. This gathering is also an important social event for the jury. During these occasions, they often invite a scholar or expert to give a lecture on a topic of music and dance, an instrument, repertoire or region. Recently they introduced a new working routine of having another jury member ‘stand by’ during the audition week, available on Skype or by phone; in order to help the jury with judgements they find extra tricky. Often this has concerned diatonic accordion, bagpipes, herding calls and horn.

132 The jury consists of six ordinary members and three rotating members.
133 The statutes of The Zorn Badge, ‘2.2 The Zorn Committee’, Riksfunctionärshandboken 2010-2012.
134 The transfer of knowledge within the jury is also emphasised in their own description of their work at the Zorn Badge website <www.zornmarket.se>
I have participated in three of these annual meetings, both to do participant observations and to keep the jury updated on my work. In 2016, I went with questions, in order to clarify critical issues that I had identified in my observations and in the interviews with players. I presented them in the form of a group interview (2 hours) at the 2016 meeting, the only time that the jury members were all gathered. The jury received my questions beforehand so we could be more effective during the relatively short amount of time. The topics concerned aims and purpose of the Zorn Badge, the jury members’ own experiences of the musical judgement process, the constitution of the group, how they handle challenges and disagreements, select instruments and repertoires and about the future of the institution.

My strategies during the interview with the jury slightly differed from the ones conducted with the players. In interviews with elite groups or experts in a community, used to being asked about their thoughts and opinions, it is even more important to be aware of ‘prepared tracks’ and narratives. Therefore, I took a more active and ‘confronting’ role, trying to encourage them to make explicit what was left implicit, and working with more precise questions. Still, my aim was also to let the jury members’ own reflections and associations guide the conversations, so I simultaneously tried not to stir the interview too much. During this interview I asked the jury members to comment on elements from my notes during observation, such as recurring concepts, snatches of dialogue between jury members and players, and occasionally between different members of the jury. At the end of this interview, we also discussed issues of anonymization; I suggested complete anonymization, i.e. that I would write in the style of ‘one jury member said, another answered’ and so forth. Asked whether they were comfortable with this, the jury answered in the affirmative.

I also conducted an open semi-structured interview with the jury panel during the summer of 2015 (3 hours). This was in the evening after the first day of auditions. The topics mainly concerned the members’ experience of participation over the years, current debates on instruments, how to handle criticism and what they listen for in a musical performance. This evening encounter had a more relaxed atmosphere than the interview in 2016. We sat down in sofas with a glass of wine after the feedback conversations had ended for the day. When it went quiet, I deliberately stayed silent in order for jury members to put forward ideas and thoughts (independent from my questions) and point towards what they found important for me to know about their work.

Because my research project changed over the years, I regularly updated the jury on my work. This happened at dedicated meetings in Stockholm January

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135 I held one presentation in connection to the group interview in January 2016, and one presentation for one hour in September 2016.
136 All were present except for the ethnomusicologist. The interview was recorded.
138 The interview was recorded.
2016, and in Tobo (one hour) in September, 2016. On these occasions I gave presentations on the main questions, perspectives and content of my work. Despite these attempts to make my analyses and use of the material clear in advance, there was some disagreement about the content of the thesis when I voluntarily, and purely as a courtesy, shared Chapters Three and Four with the jury. This occurred just a few weeks before submission, at a time when the chapters were ready and had been edited. I considered their comments and made a few adjustments.

All material produced for this thesis, such as interviews, observations and correspondence, is currently held by the author. Once the thesis is published and defended this material will be handed over to Svenskt Visarkiv. All observations are anonymised. Copies of social media posts drawn upon in the thesis are held by the author; and recordings of public debates occurring in symposia and seminars are held at Svenskt Visarkiv.

Thesis Outline

The main research questions of this thesis are investigated over five chapters. Chapters One and Two explore the auditions mainly from the perspective of the participating players. They focus on the players’ emotional, aesthetic and sensorial experiences of taking part in the event and their encounters on the journey through the auditions. I suggest how the auditions may be understood as enacting a rite of passage and develop the concept of orientation, drawing on the writings of Sara Ahmed, in order to seek a richer understanding of the act of auditioning.

Chapters Three and Four engage with the jury’s process of musical valorisation. They attend to sensory ways of experiencing and knowing music, examine processes of inclusion and exclusion, and consider preferable repertoires, instruments and performance practices. I discuss how anxieties and uncertainties are handled during judgements, and highlight how musical instruments are active participants in the ritual, shaping the social life at the auditions. I also analyse how the institution copes with change, as well as the jury members’ lived experience of time in relation to tradition.

Chapter Five draws together the main perspectives and conclusions of this study and further reflects on the ways in which traditional music is felt, sensed and understood within these localities. It opens up the topic for a general discussion of the human need to belong and the broader politics embodied by the

139 All were present except for one jury member.
140 See Turner, From Ritual to Theatre. Turner’s presentation of the concept will serve as a starting point for the discussion.
141 See Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, pp. 1–24.
audition practice. Finally, it sheds light on how the institution maintains its position within contemporary Swedish society.
1. Playing for Silver: Player Perspectives on the Zorn Auditions

Rites are choreographed actions; they exist in the moments of their enactment and then disappear. When effective, their traces remain—in the heart, in the memory, in the mind, in texts and photographs, in descriptions, in social values and in the marrow.¹⁴²

Imagine you are next in line to step over the threshold into the audition room. Standing outside the door, the air is humid and the room is warm. Feelings of joy and excitement are fused with total determination and focus. Your fingers clutch the instrument as an extension of your sensing body and you feel the touch of wood on your skin. You hear the final notes of a polska fade away, inviting you to enter. The door opens and your bodily horizons change. The physical movement over the threshold becomes a symbolic cultural marker, like crossing the borders of different social spheres. A moment ago you were on the other side of the door. Now, you are inside the room, where you have the chance to become part of the community of rikspelmän. The doorstep orients the behaviours on the audition site; it marks physical borders through the design of the buildings. It divides spaces with specific purposes from each other: you are allowed in some, not in others, though you may wish to enter those prohibited spaces. The doorsteps help you to find your way. Once in front of the jury, your heart is pounding and adrenaline surges through your body. Your deep breaths render audible the complete silence. All your training, perhaps a year of practicing a limited selection of tunes, your musicality and knowledge of traditions are all to be evaluated and valorised in one session, in what feels like a single moment. In the performance you are expected to demonstrate that you embody the folk music community’s multi-layered and contested ideals, norms and values. ‘Welcome, the stage is yours’ says one of the jury members with a discreet nod, breaking the silence in the room. It is time to audition.

¹⁴² L. Grimes, Deeply into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage, p.7.
Figure 5. The audition space in Rammakyrkan/Kinnarumakyrkan, a church in the town of Borås from the Zorn Auditions in 2012.

Threshold Experiences

Music auditions may be described as ritualistic events: regularly repeated symbolic acts, which involve certain set of practices of cultural communication, organisation and social interaction.\textsuperscript{143} This is especially significant for auditions involving the re-enactment of traditions. As specific occasions designed to stage and display musical performance, individual and collective expectations and experi-

\textsuperscript{143} This definition of ritual derives from Jeffrey C. Alexander, ‘Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy’, \textit{Sociological Theory}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ser., 22 (2004), 527–73 (pp. 527–528).
ences, musical tastes and aesthetic sensibilities, are all constantly re-negotiated. In a closed recital, before a panel of expert adjudicators, the musician is challenged to demonstrate musical skills and artistic traits. As an entry test, music auditions are also given a gatekeeping function: to examine, valorise and regulate standards of musical styles, repertoires and performative techniques.144

The introductory sketch describes the transitory moment of auditioning for the Zorn Badge from the player’s point of view. It was assembled from defining moments of shared experience during fieldwork conducted from 2012 to 2015, through participant observations of the auditions and from interviews with participating musicians. My sketch highlights the participatory and sensory experiences of audition and points out certain directions and tensions of the act. The threshold is conceptualised both as a material entity and as a metaphor, describing the experience of auditioning as a place of entering, beginning, changing or becoming. Simultaneously a demarcated boundary and a transitional space—a dwelling point in-between spaces. The notion that individual or communal life entails crossing a series of critical thresholds has been extensively theorised within anthropological research.145 In many societies, the threshold functions as a spatio-temporal metaphor in rituals, especially for the decisive transitions in rites of passage, marking the cultural shift from one phase of life, or social status, to another.146 Taking part in entry tests is a common rite of passage for many musicians. Auditions are necessary for admission to music schools, orchestras and conservatories, as are recitals for securing music degrees, awards or prizes at competitions or festivals. It is therefore not surprising that the threshold has also been used as a compelling metaphor for creative processes in art.147 The act of auditioning, then, is balancing on the threshold. It becomes a resonant space in between, where the thrill of being rewarded merges with the risk of rejection from the institution, and, as it follows, the collective of rikspelmän.

One of the main purposes of an event such as the Zorn Auditions is to celebrate traditions. Through the act of celebration, individuals temporarily become part of rituals: symbolic communities filled with objects and acts, used by the participants in various ways, often to define a place for themselves in an ever-

146 Transformative ritual practices are connected to transitions in life, such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. The most familiar example is the wedding ceremony: the newly married couple standing on the doorstep of the church being showered in rice by the congregation, or the groom carrying the bride over the threshold into their new home, as a kind of fertility rite, entering into their new life together. Other examples of rites of passage are different forms of entry tests for specific occupations, graduations, or for that matter writing a thesis and getting a degree within academia.
147 See Mukherji, Thinking on Thresholds.
changing world. The multifarious values underpinning modern rituals highlight a shift in recent research on rituals and festivals. Rather than regarding rituals as a separate category following a fixed script or scenario, recent scholarship has emphasised the cultural complexity, as well as the multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings of rituals. In this view, performance is never only enactment or expression. Instead, it highlights how the ritualistic acts themselves produce and reproduce different meanings on each occasion the ritual or festival is performed. As Ana Hofman points out: ‘It is necessary to emphasize that rituals are not [a] ‘natural’ reflection of the social environment, but discursive practices through which social relations themselves are constantly reproduced.’ Hence, rituals are also transformative, performative and effective.

In the same line of argument, the conceptual framework of this thesis approaches the Zorn Auditions as enacting a *rite of passage*. The concept is used to sketch and follow the overall contours of the seven-day event, as well as the culturally specific transition of the individual musician’s entry into the community of *riksspelmän*. In this chapter, I will explore how the Zorn Auditions enact Swedish Folk Musics, and how its values are performed. The power dynamic and dialogue between the individual musicians’ personal accounts and the Zorn Auditions’ official narrative as a musical institution are important aspects of this. Furthermore, approaching the auditions as a ritualised event raises questions of the presumable importance of taking part, the players’ aims and objectives, and the effects of the entry test for an individual musician into a larger community. Why do musicians desire to participate, and how do they perceive and experience the auditions? How are the values and ideas of traditional music enacted and negotiated between the different actors involved in their interactions? These questions will be further explored in this chapter, with the aim of contributing to a richer understanding of the auditions as practices of cultural knowledge production. I also aim to shed light on the tensions interwoven in the ritualised and recursive processes of the Zorn Auditions, such as shared experience, belonging and affiliation on one hand, and ambivalences, resistance and conflicts, on the other.

As an environment for musical performance, the Zorn Auditions distinguishes itself through a series of occasions that unfolds at specific stages of the event. Following a tripartite structure, with beginning, middle and end, the auditions are comparable to the three central moments in the initiatory process in rites of passage. Originally theorized by Arnold Van Gennep in 1909 (1961) it

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150 Hofman, ‘Socialist Stage’, p. 133.
was later elaborated by Victor Turner (1982), mainly through shifting the analytical focus from ritual as representation to ritual as process, and the transformation of becoming, especially concerning the state of liminality. Although later criticized and continuously developed, it serves as a fruitful starting point in framing the event:

1) Separation (pre-liminal state): The musician is removed from the ordinary flow of life and everyday routines and habits. This includes travelling to the audition site, the act of registration and especially the moment of warming up in a designated rehearsal room.

2) Transition (liminal state): During the audition the player is ‘betwixt and between’ their former social status and an uncertain future.

3) Incorporation (post-liminal): This is performed throughout two stages. At the end of each day of the auditions, the institution reveals the awards with a list. After this announcement, the musicians have the opportunity to talk to the jury to get feedback on their playing and a statement with the reasons why they were awarded or not. Some musicians are then incorporated into the community, whilst others, although taking part in the initiatory rites, are excluded. At the end of the week, all the newly-awarded musicians are celebrated in the public ceremony at Riksspelmansstämmam: a practice reintroducing the transformed individual into their new prestigious role and as an enhanced part of the social group.

The boundaries between these three phases are never to be understood as clear-cut or fixed. Rather, they are ambiguous, interrelated and overlap, as well as offer a vocabulary to elaborate and address the actors’ elusive experiences at a variety of boundaries and discontinuities within the Zorn Auditions. This experience-oriented view of rituals and their practices focuses on the actors’ interrelations and encounters, and on how ritual dynamics are generating and creating effects, rather than just symbolism and representation. The underlying tensions of considering ritual as a cultural dynamic of flow—involving on-going processes of change and subversion, and the specific features of repetition, standardisation, formality and duration—entails interesting intersections in which this study


engages. Hence, with emphasis on how, rather than what, the ritualisation of the auditions are put in focus.  

To be Oriented: Lines and Directions

The sketch that opens this part of the study also ‘lingers on uncertainties’ and highlights the unsettled expectations, sensibilities and experiences at play for the musician during the audition. The unfolding of the musician’s physical movement into the audition room, tells a story which stresses the sensory touch of the instrument, the awareness of the body, the coexisting feelings of anxiety and excitement, and the main effort of trying to successfully follow the lines set by the institution. As previously highlighted, the audition is a highly guarded space, where the community evaluates and regulates musical standards of traditions and repertoires, technical skills, bodily behaviour/vocabulary and musicianship. Therefore, one of the key aspects of a successful audition is to be attuned to the environment: its norms, ideas and values. How, then, does one engage successfully in the auditions? I find the concept of orientation, as theorised by Sara Ahmed, helpful in developing an enriched understanding of the act of auditioning.

In Ahmed’s work, orientation is a matter of how we reside in space. Our bodies are oriented towards and against reachable objects: these can be objects of feeling, judgement and thought, as well as material objects. Perceptions of the world are then shaped in relation to the closeness of bodies and objects through action. Our actions shape lines of directions. Ahmed writes:

Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. To say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way, we know which direction we face, only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view.

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Once situated at the Zorn Auditions, the participants are required to follow specific lines of thought and motion on their journey within the ritual. They are guided through certain routes, stops and paths, entangled by humans, objects and aims. The jury, volunteers, archivists and other participants, as well as buildings, carpets and microphones, protocols, musical tastes and the statutes, all together orient the behaviours on the audition site. To engage successfully in the auditions is to ‘find your way’ as the objects guides you. In the introductory sketch, the threshold was conceptualised as one of these objects, and will be further addressed in this part of the thesis.

In recent studies of the politics of musical performance, liminality has become a key concept of theorising the experience of standing at crossroads: unstable and risky spaces, emphasising temporal instability and in-between-ness. By mapping onto Turner’s rites of passage, I will here demonstrate how Ahmed’s concept of orientation may contribute to a richer understanding of the sensory engagements in the audition practices, (in line with the main aims of this thesis). More specifically, this chapter will explore the players’ various encounters and manifold experiences of taking part in the Zorn Auditions.

The next scene opens on an ordinary warm summer day at the Zorn Auditions in a small village in Sweden.

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This photo was taken in Korrö—a small forest village in the southern parts of Sweden—on the first day of the Zorn Auditions, at the end of July, 2015. It shows the moment just before the secretariat published the list of awards from the day’s auditions. Kept on tenterhooks, the players waited in the yard on the audition site, chatting and sharing experiences of their auditions. Archivists from Svenskt visarkiv were present as well, handing out recordings of the players’ auditions so they could listen to their performances afterwards. At any moment, the list would be pinned to the green door of the main building by one of the officials from the Zorn Committee. As an observer, one might wonder: how did all these people end up in a yard in southern Sweden, waiting for their results from a folk music audition to be revealed?

In this section, I will follow the players’ movements during the first phase of separation in the rites of passage, and investigate how they find their way through the auditions, their encounters and engagements. The journey starts when the players arrive at the audition site. By taking a tour of the surroundings, I will address the significance of geographic location and the actualisation of time, spaces and places on site. Henceforth, the notion of site is here understood as an active and never-ending incarnation of events: ‘Site is not so much a result...
of punctual, external causes […] as it is an insertion in to one or more flows.”

Thus, let our exploration of the players’ journeys begin.

At the Zorn Auditions

Morning has just broken in Korrö, a few hours earlier on the same day as the photo above. The birds are calling and it is calm, warm and sunny outside. Red wooden houses sit on opposite sides of a river and are connected by two stone bridges. An old sawmill, a tannery and dye works bear witness of a time at the end of the nineteenth century, when this place flourished. On the buildings, small informative signs explain the historical functions of craftsmanship to the visitors. Since the industry ended around 1950, five of the fifteen houses have turned into hostels and the surrounding woods are part of a national park. Nowadays, the area has taken the form of an outdoor museum. Symbolic narratives of the past—of local Swedish rural society, village life and manual labour—are manifested and revived in the configurations of the buildings. Vernacular artefacts and tools are displayed and invite the visitors to re-imagine their use in times past. Scents of tar, wood, and grass from newly-mown lawns lingers in the air; fragrances that are intensified by the humidity from running streams nearby. Korrö is a popular place for tourism in the summer season, and hiking and canoeing are popular ways of seeing the sights in the area. Since 1985, the annual folk music festival Korröfestivalen, has been held in the area. The festival is famous in Sweden, with visitors from all over the world, and has helped to place the small village of Korrö on the larger Swedish map.

The festival will start three days from now. Today, though, just a few people can be seen outside. The yard in front of the three main houses is empty. The sound of voices and music is heard from the annex, and discrete movements can be seen behind the curtains in one of the large windows of the manor. The Zorn Auditions have just started.

Picturesque locations, like the outdoor museum in Korrö or local community centres situated in the countryside outside larger cities, are common geographical settings for the Zorn Auditions. The selected location draws attention to the importance of cultural heritage, reinforcing the Zorn Auditions’ emphasis on the local, regional and provincial. Their significance is embodied by the physical material on site: in the historical remains and preserved buildings and objects, which provide tangible evidence of a Swedish pre-industrial past. The use of heritage in this way—in Arjun Appadurai’s words, ‘a production of local-

160 Fieldnotes 20 July, 2015, Korrö, see also <www.korrofestivalen.se> [Accessed 22 July 2016].
ty’—establishes a sense of connection between people in the community and specific places and collective memories that those places carry.\textsuperscript{162}

Indeed, the selected setting also has practical and organisational implications. As explained in the introduction of this thesis, the local amateur folk dance, or spelman’s, organisations that host the event in collaboration with the Zorn Committee and Svenska Folkdansringen are often linked through shared principles and values, as part of connected movements, to the different local and regional community centres in Sweden. Ever since the auditions started in the 1930s, they have often been held at these types of locations.\textsuperscript{163} The centres’ main activities include various forms of social gatherings showcasing crafts, dancing or music, with the aim of utilising local traditions and history. The conceptual legacy of the cultural mapping of Sweden as a nation compounding twenty-five distinct provincial parts manifests itself in the county museum project.\textsuperscript{164} As an important part of shaping nationality and regional identity, the mosaic-like image of Sweden as a whole with distinctive parts was for a long time received as unproblematic by the folk music community. Institutions such as Skansen, Sveriges Spelmäns Riksförbund and the collection of Svenska låtar in many ways represented and reinforced this regional focus.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{The Zorn Auditions, 2012, held at an outdoor museum in Ramnaparken, Borås; Ramnaskyrkan/Kinnarummakyrkan, where the music auditions were held in 2012.}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{163} Yet again, estradspelmän performed at similar occasions and places, see Roempke, ‘Lyssna till toner från hembygd och färdernesland’, pp. 94–124.


To favour a site of national cultural heritage—such as an outdoor area with historical, aesthetic and cultural value for the community—as the setting for a musical event is of course not exclusive to the Zorn Auditions. Comparisons may be fruitfully made to other forms of geographical settings for international traditional music competitions or festivals. Similar to the old village gatherings in the Balkan area, the Horn competitions in the Alp regions in Switzerland, or the Highland games in Scotland, the selected places for the events are often made with the purpose of addressing notions of nationality or to emphasize spatio-temporal conceptions of the region. In the case of the Zorn Auditions, they contribute to the symbolism of the event: to recollect, revive and affirm the indefinite ‘pasts’ of an old rural Sweden through the ritualised act of performing traditional musics. Often, these museums or community centres do not facilitate practical issues, nor are they the most convenient locations for housing many people or holding auditions, which indicates the significance of representa-

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167 In line with the main aim of the organisation articulated in the statutes: ‘to preserve and continue its traditions, and so that understandings of the music and the styles of playing, which we have inherited from folk musicians of former times, may be promoted.’
The selected surroundings are therefore important features for the ritual setting, and enact the central values of the institutions’ endeavours.

Although these locations are common, other characteristic locales for auditions are also being used for the event. In previous years the auditions have been held at music schools as well as in concert and public halls, places more common for entrance exams associated with music education or larger public events. These spaces strongly differ from the nostalgic environment of an outdoor museum, and again highlight the changing and transformative aspects of the ritual. Instead of the affirmation of cultural heritage, attention is directed towards professionalism and formality, other central values of the institution. Since the auditions are held at different locations each year, new environments are introduced to the returning musicians with a different combination of jury members. Thus, the institutionalised behaviours are similar, but never identical.

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168 This aspect is interesting in many ways, as it is also more difficult for the participants to travel to these places in comparison to the cities, where public transport often facilitates the journey. In 2012, at the audition site in Borås, the rehearsal rooms were in a house and the auditions took place in a church. It was often rainy and cold during the week, and the players had to walk between the buildings with their instruments, and then wait in a small, cold room with humid air, before entering the church. Sequestered places like this are often chosen for rituals. See Schechner, *Performance Studies* p. 71.

169 For example, in Örebro 2011 (concert house), Tobo 2013 (School/education in folk music and folk dance) and Umeå 2014 (School for music and cultural activities). Chris Goertzen highlights how similar locales are used for the Norwegian Kappleiks, for example in gyms or assembly halls at schools. See Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, pp. 91–92.

The Setting

Since the Zorn Auditions are quite large, many people are involved in their arrangement. Planned action and efficient organisation are therefore key aspects of making the network functional and durable during the week of auditions. Every year around eighty to one hundred musicians participate altogether, and each day approximately twenty musicians audition.\(^{171}\) During a fifteen-minute session each musician performs three or four tunes for the jury. The jury listens to three auditions, and then they have fifteen minutes for private deliberation before the next musician enters. The previous performer, the archivists from Svenskt visarkiv and the person from the secretariat are then obliged to leave the room. This means that a constricted time schedule guides the behaviour on the audition site. The choreographed actions draw on punctuality, where the clock is central, directed by the time for audition.

This also draws attention to the ritual dynamics of the physical movements characterizing the setting, and the shifting locations of active spaces on site. During the first part of the day, activities are gathered around three main spaces: the registration office, the rehearsal rooms, and the performance setting in the audition room. Every day, players with heterogeneous backgrounds, of various ages and genders, carrying their different instruments in and out of houses, moving back and forth over thresholds in a structured order, like a cycle, guided by the volunteers and the secretariat. Doors open and close, shaping ritualized gestures and forming repeated patterns and boundary zones. The space outside the audition door literally becomes a guarded place. The volunteers, or people from the secretariat, are positioned there throughout the day. They are assigned to keep disturbing elements away (to keep the noise down, and remain as silent as possible), to guide the next participant in, and/or the previous one out of the room. The audition site is clearly characterized by boundary zones, where only the jury has access to all of them.

During the second part of the day, when all the scheduled participants have played for the jury, the locations of the main activities shift. At first, the activity is directed around the place where the list is announced. Afterwards, it is directed around the place where the jury receives the players to give feedback on their playing. The institution intentionally does not use the audition room for this, instead they strive to use a space nearby with a more relaxed and cosy atmosphere for conversations. Often, they are situated around a table, in sofas or easy chairs in a smaller room. Sometimes, if the weather allows it, they have also

\(^{171}\) The regional auditions are a much smaller event, where the competitors may only be awarded Certificate or Bronze Badges. The number of participants varies considerably, for example in Linköping 2013, 19 players auditioned and in Järvsö 2015, 15 players performed. The regional events are not held each year. See the website of The Zorn Badge, <www.zornmarket.se> [Accessed 27 February 2017].
been known to sit outside on the lawn; for example, in Umeå these conversations was held under a tree in the yard.

Therefore, for the players that auditioned early in the morning, there are many hours ahead of waiting for the results until the list of rankings is announced, and for the opportunity to talk to the jury afterwards. During these ‘in-betweens’ the musicians have a lot of time to intermingle, share experiences of the auditions, consider possible outcomes of their playing, and to play music together. It becomes an important space for forming *communitas* (a shared sense of belonging), and engendering community spirit.\textsuperscript{172}

To summarise so far: once at the audition site, the players are required to follow specific routes and lines, directed by the secretariat or volunteers. It becomes clear that the ritual space is highly active and ‘is orienting and re-orienting the bodies of participants, directing them into meanings that they are frequently made to produce and enjoined to bring before their conscious awareness.’\textsuperscript{173} In the following section, these different activities, directions and re-orientations that the players encounter on their journey through the auditions, will be investigated and addressed in detail, mainly from the point of view of the participants.

**Beginnings: Becoming Part of the Zorn Audition Map**

The first passageway for the players on their journey of becoming *rikspelmän* is to go through the registration procedure. In Korrö, informative signs displayed on the grounds directed the way to the registration office, situated in the annex where the secretariat waited to welcome and introduce the participants to the specific routines of the event. The players encounter the secretariat as agents of the institution: they handle their applications, answer questions and provide information about what will happen in the time leading up to the auditions, and direct players to the rehearsal rooms. All three members of the secretariat are dancers within *Svenska Folkdansringen*, and two of them also play the fiddle. In the annex, they were sitting down at a wooden table behind two computers. Cardboard boxes occupied the sofa behind the table, along with a fiddle and a bow, so that members of the secretariat could play when the assigned duties of the day were completed or during tiresome moments of waiting between the scheduled events. Many of my interlocutors commented on the kind reception and treatment they got from the secretariat whilst arriving; others were too nervous to remember the situation.

At registration, each player is asked to name the three tunes that they are going to perform for the jury, which are then listed in the database. Sometimes the

\textsuperscript{172} The term was first introduced by Victor Turner, in *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 44, to describe unstructured egalitarian community experiences and feelings of togetherness. In more recent festival theory, the experience of communitas is a well-known phenomenon.

\textsuperscript{173} Kapferer, ‘Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice’, p. 42.
secretariat also asks: ‘If awarded, what do you want it to say on the certificate: which region or area is being represented stylistically, or is there a musician in whose style you are playing?’ This is a delicate issue of great importance to many participants. The idea that some parts of Sweden are considered to be ‘stronger’ or ‘weaker’ areas of tradition is under negotiation in several ways, and underlines the dynamics of centre and periphery within the folk music community.174 It is also a recurring topic amongst my interlocutors and tends to evoke strong feelings and raise questions: why does the institution offer to specify local styles, influential musicians or even towns on the certificates when the participants play tunes from the counties of Dalarna or Hälsingland, when neither Västergötland nor Västerbotten, for example, are further specified in the written dedications?175 These discussions highlight both the symbolic importance of what is written on the certificate and its material function as an object of tangible evidence of transition within the ritual. From time to time, the tunes or the names of the influential spelmän are misspelled in the judgment record by the secretariat. Since the members of the community highly value and share a strong belief in the detailed knowledge of the area the tunes are ‘from’, as well as the tradition bearers the tunes might be played ‘after’ (in the style of)176 these small mistakes create friction and tensions between the jury, the secretariat and the players. Clearly, the registration process maintains a regionalist focus, emphasising the idea of the importance of traditional knowledge and the transmission of different regional styles.

The regional values were furthermore visualised by a colourful geographical map of Sweden and its different provinces, displayed in the entrance to the registration office (see Figure 13). Red pins point out where the auditions have been held since they started in 1933, up until the year 2000.


175 For example, Interview: RW F/34 years old, Fiddle (B) ZA and casual conversations with the players at the audition site. The jury is well aware of this controversy, and regularly discuss the written sentences on the certificates.

176 The mindscape of spelmän rather than ‘folk musicians’ is emphasized. See Ronström, ‘Emergent Musical Identities’, p. 3.
The map intriguingly embodies the notions of stronger and weaker areas of tradition; the empty spaces in the north contrasts to the compactness of pins in the middle of Sweden, with the majority clearly assembled in the county of Dalarna, followed by Uppland or Södermanland. Indeed, the map informs the players of the history of the auditions, and stresses the importance of understanding just what kind of ritual they are participating in.

The players’ sonic encounters at the registration office furthermore immersed them into the ritual environment. In Korrö, the walls of the old annex were thin and the musicians next in line to audition continually occupied the rehearsal rooms on the upper and ground floor. The different traditional tunes generated a continuum of sound. During one occasion, music from a bagpipe shared the soundscape with a vocal herding call, creating an unusual sonic experience. One of the players was also keeping time in a polska by tapping their foot, and the sound echoed in the roof of the registration office.

For the final act of the registration routine, a photo is taken of the player. It is then inserted in the judgment record, so the jury will recognise his/her face in the audition room. In the photos, the logo of Svenskt visarkiv is often seen in the background, as a discreet reminder that the state is part of the event.

Figure 13. Map of Sweden displayed at Korrö 2015.

Figure 14. One of the players, Anna Mogren, registers at the office in Korrö, 2015.
Exhibitions are frequently displayed at the auditions, to amuse and inform the participants. Customarily, the local host arranges an exhibition with spelmän from the region in which the auditions are held. The exhibits are usually displayed in a room nearby the registration office. The Zorn Committee also regularly bring along a smaller exhibition that portrays the history of the Zorn Auditions. In Korrö, that exhibition was located next to the map of Sweden, and greeted the players when they entered the annex to register.

Figure 15. Exhibition ‘The Zorn Badge, 1910–2010’ (Zornmärket 100 år) Korrö, 2015.

The exhibition was created as part of the centennial celebration in 2010. It refers to the first national folk musician gathering held at Skansen in 1910, when the Zorn badge was first distributed. Since 2010, the exhibition has been displayed at the different locations of the auditions. On four large cardboard screens, the history is presented through photos of riksspelmän at various time periods, reports from newspapers of the first competitions and gatherings, quotations from musicians and the jury, informative texts about the auditions and statistics. One board presents entertaining stories and sensational anecdotes in the form of ‘Did you know…?’, for example, that musicians received certificates in ensemble playing at the auditions, or that a famous art musician once was part of the jury, or the years in which the winners received the title playing unusual instruments, such as bagpipe, harmonica or one-row accordion. Differences and changes are put forward as means of showing progress over the course of the auditions’ history. On the last board, entitled: ‘present-future’, the procedures of the auditions are briefly described, from the moment of audition to the end of the week, when the badge and certificates are distributed.

The exhibition educates the players in the presumed shared knowledge of the rite of passage, reminding them that they are part of the tradition of auditioning, and also might be part of the larger history of riksspelmän. Conversely, the exhibi-

177 The exhibition is often displayed at registration and sometimes also present at the public stage performance at the end of the week.
tion enacts the community’s emphasis on the importance of knowledge of history, as it gives value to the awareness of specific pasts, of their ancestors before them, whilst building bridges between the present and the future. Hence, through this narrative, stories are told both about the past and about the past’s relation to the present. The institution’s presentation of intention and reception of the auditions thus creates a linear narrative of continuity, as if the ritualistic actions have always been an important element of people’s lives. Furthermore, it gives the participants the impression that they are part of a larger, important and legitimate cultural framework.

Interestingly, the history of the Zorn Auditions is at once told from a position both inside and outside the contexts within which these traditions function: providing newspaper clips alongside the institution’s own instructions and telling of the event. Thereby, the exhibition explores and lingers within positions of identification and may be described as producing an act of cultural memory, inviting the viewers and players to perform that act together.

‘A Role to Fulfil:’ Ritual Belonging and Connecting with the Past

One of the participants in the 2015 auditions in Korrö was the fiddler Anna Mogren. It was her fourth attempt at the title *riksspelman* and she later described how, for her, the auditions represent a joyful encounter with the people working at the event. I first met Anna in the summer of 2012, at her debut audition in Borås, where she performed local tunes by a musician from her home area. After her first try she was awarded the certificate. Together with Ida Malkolmson, a friend playing cow horn, she decided to try her luck again the year after and travelled 500 kilometres north by car from Borås to the village of Tobo, situated in the county of Uppland. Mogren was called upon stage at the end of the week to receive the bronze badge and Malkolmson was awarded post-bronze certificate. The two women, both in their thirties, are representative of a trend in recent years, concerning both age and gender. They provide a

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181 Interview: AM F/37 years old, Fiddle (B) Z.A.
182 Tunes from Per Pärson in Äspered, an area close to Ulricehamn in the county of Västergötland.
183 This is an example of how the auditions function as a kind of contact zone for new and old friendships between the participants. Ian Russell has described a similar function of competitions in bothy ballad singing. See Russell, ‘Competing with Ballads (and Whiskey?)’ p. 187.
contrast to the early years of the auditions, when the majority of the participants were men over fifty years of age.\textsuperscript{184}

![Figure 16. Ida Malkolmsson and Anna Mogren with their awards and certificates at Riksspelmansstämman, in Österbybruk, 2013.](image)

Anna is a trained musician from the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg (Högskolan för scen och musik) and works as a music teacher. For her, making music is a significant part of life and is interconnected to mood, feelings and strong emotions. She got genuinely interested in Swedish folk music after she turned thirty, although she had practiced it since her early teenage years. Apart from work, her daily routine involves family duties and she described an urge to be able to create her own space of recovery—‘to take a break from reality’—when everyday life got too stressful. With the use of her fiddle, and specifically by playing folk tunes from her home region, she created that space for herself. The act of performing music thus enriches her life, and has become a vehicle

\textsuperscript{184} See the Database of the Zorn Committee.
and catalyst for her emotions. For her, the Zorn Auditions function as a form of emancipation, as well as a reason to play and to practice. She emphasised how the selection of tunes is a careful process, and expresses a strong sense of responsibility and sensibility for the music of local traditions:

When I look at the list of participants, there aren’t many from my area or home town or even from [the county of] Västergötland, who are part of this little clique of ninety-six who auditioned this year. In that sense I have a role to play; I think what I’m doing is important. Partly, it’s important for me to be able to feel my roots and the connection back in time and to my home. And it’s also important because I feel really appreciated, it’s not so much an understanding of what I do but an appreciation from people around me, at home… It’s important that I do this to keep the tradition alive, not just for my own sake. Well, I do this for my own sake, but it has a positive effect for the tradition and for the folk music and for the musical life round here.

Here, the ideas of tradition as both a personal relationship and individual expression are given value and are intertwined with the importance of taking part in the collective re-creation and durability of the region’s traditions. With focus on individual self-perception and through the sense of intimate distance, she narrates the relationships between pasts, presents and futures. Anna speaks of the significance of fortifying the local idiom, since it is a so-called area of weak tradition, hardly represented within the auditions. She locates herself ‘inside’ tradition, and in a sense aspires to continue the work of previous musicians. The feelings attached to the past, in form of ‘roots’ and ‘home’, connected to notions

185 Both for calm and for strength. Interview: AM F/37 years old, Fiddle (B) ZA. As a research area, music’s important function and potential to enrich people’s lives are well investigated. See for example: Tia DeNora, Music in Everyday Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Lars Liliestam, Musikliv: Vad människor gör med musik – och musik gör med människor (Göteborg: Ejeby, 2006/2009). Recently, scholars have especially focused on the connection to the realm of affect (emotions, feelings, moods) e.g. David Hesmondhalgh, Why Music Matters. Music making as an essential and necessary vehicle for emotions amongst semi-professional musicians can also be found in Marika Nordström’s study: ‘Berättelser om livet som musiker’ in Bilder ur musikskapandets vardag. Mellan kulturpolitik, ekonomi och estetik, ed by. Arvidsson, Alf, (Umeå: Etnologiska skrifter, Umeå universitet nr 59, 2014), pp. 63-89.

186 Interview: AM F/35 years old, Fiddle (B) ZA.


188 McDonald, ‘Tradition as Personal Relationship’, 47–67. This is also a recurrent answer amongst my interlocutors who play less common repertoire, in contrast to the ‘stronger’ areas of tradition, as for example Hälsingland or Dalarna.
of place are actualised in present perception. Thus, she sensorially connects the past with the longing for the now; to be able to ‘feel the roots’ and ‘keep the tradition living.’

Indeed, the concept of a collective shared past is entangled with ideas of tradition. In Anna’s sense of things, the stress lies upon the continued production of locality: on the specific tunes, their regional province and age, situated within a geographical and genealogical frame, connected to the mindscape of spelmän. However, it is important to consider the context of her answer. As previously argued, the institutional practice of the Zorn Auditions values the ideas of spelmän rather than folk musicians. Thus, this localised focus could be a way for Anna to confirm a belief of shared understanding of the main aim of the auditions.

Still, Anna is also an illustrative example of how the boundaries of these two categories are, in reality, much more blurred: she is a trained musician, for whom performance, style and technical skills are equally important. Another central aspect of her answer is that taking part in the ritual is in itself seen as an important act, especially for the effects it can generate for the community at large, and to make her specific, local tradition visible.

The musician is transported into a sequestered space for rehearsal directly before the audition, which can be interpreted as part of the separation phase in rites of passage. In Korrö, Anna has been directed to the old sawmill by someone in the secretariat, to tune her instrument, to warm up and to practice the tunes she is going to perform for the jury. Standing in the middle of the mill, her body is oriented towards a row of photographs in black and white: portraits of old folk musicians from the county of Småland. Behind her, colourful visual representations of musicians—upon whom the title of riksspelman has already been bestowed—are attached to the wall. These former awardees are introduced to the viewer by a written dedication of the award, followed by a short interview where the musicians tell their stories: why they auditioned, as well as their experiences of the audition. All the featured musicians were part of an exhibition of spelmän performing music from the region of Småland.


191 See Schechner, Performance Studies, p. 72.
Figure 17. Anna, rehearsing in the old saw mill in Korrö, where the exhibition of riksspelman from the region of Småland was held.

One musician in particular has captured Anna’s attention. It is a portrait of a female fiddler named Ida Sofia Erlandson, ‘Ida i Rye’\footnote{‘Rye’, is the name of a local place in the county; ‘Ida I Rye’ means roughly Ida in, or from, Rye.} (1852–1931). In the explanatory text attached to the photo, the visitors may read about Ida’s musical life. Today, the gender balance amongst musicians that perform traditional music is relatively equal, but in the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘Ida i Rye’ was one of the few female fiddlers who was hired to play on different ceremonial occasions, and who participated in a fiddling competition in 1916.\footnote{She came in fourth place and was awarded an ashtray. Text at the exhibition: Riksspelman på Småländska låtar: ‘En kvinnlig föregångare bland fiolspelmännen’ by Mathias Boström. Visited 21 July, 2015, Korrö.} It becomes clear that Anna identifies with her, as she speaks of how they are both female fiddlers, taking part in contests and auditions although they are separated by a century, and experience two very different realities.\footnote{Conversation with AM, 21 July 2015.} Anna jokes that she will play before Ida in order to get better luck in her aspirations for the Zorn Badge. Then, she lifts her instrument and starts to play a tune from her home region. Situated within an exhibition of riksspelman, the pre-existing photo becomes an important entity at play: the image acts—and solicits—a moment of identification that orients Anna’s behaviour at the auditions. In the proximity of body and object, the act of performing music in front of the old photo creates lines of individual belonging and relationships to traditional musicians of former times. Here, the lines function as forms of alignment—of being in line with other players before her—in the moment of performance.\footnote{The analysis here works with the crucial question by Sara Ahmed: ‘What difference does it make what we are oriented toward?’ See Queer Phenomenology, pp. 1, 12–17.}

The acoustics in the sawmill also confirm a nostalgic frame of interpretation. It becomes clear that the music does not operate alone as a passage for recollec-
tion; equally important and interlinked are other memory triggers in the exhibition, which acts as ubiquitous background material. This reasoning draws attention to how the photos and written words revitalise and deploy traditions, both of performing at the auditions and of transmitting local repertoires. The directions for the players are clearly organised in the exhibition, in the way they are expected to move and what they will face on their way through the audition process, but also how they might feel and experience the moments before, during and after they play for the jury, as well as their possible subsequent honouring with the title of riksspelman. Hence, the exhibition assembles collective directions. By following the paths of spelmän before them—the traces of past journeys—the players become oriented and aligned. This does not always mean that the experiences of the previous musicians are explicitly understood—in fact, the exhibition bears witness to multiple attitudes—but the audition process is similar for everyone involved. The presentation of musicians with various backgrounds, instruments, ages and gender, thus in a sense speaks of simultaneous sameness within difference and difference within sameness, reinforcing that ‘we’ are all taking part in the ritual together. In sum, similar to the small exhibition at the registration office, the larger exhibition in the saw mill reminds the players of why they are there and what they are aspiring to be part of. It defines their role within the auditions.

It is important to underline that this kind of temporal rehearsal space, situated within an exhibition, is unusual. Nevertheless, it varies considerably depending on location. Over the last five years, the spaces for practice have in general included an old saw mill, a kitchen, a bedroom, a hotel room and formal rehearsal rooms at music schools. These spaces have temporally become special

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199 The exhibition in itself raises interesting questions. Customarily, the local host arranges an exhibition at the auditions, often with focus on spelmän from the region. In Korrö, the music archive in the area was responsible. In a conversation with Mathias Boström, ethnomusicologist and director of ‘The Music Archive of Småland’ (*Smålands musikarkiv*) he explained the challenging requirement of how to select representative musicians. Inevitably, it involved questions of inclusion and exclusion, and he expressed a strong discomfort to categorize the music or the people from the criteria of geography. Boström decided instead to let the jury’s choices for the silver and gold badges help to guide the selection process, and also used the database. All the musicians that were registered for Småland, were contacted and became part of the exhibition. The criteria of selection were then declared in the beginning of the row of portraits. Nevertheless, it was controversial afterwards. Some musicians became angry and upset that they were not included. It highlights the strong identification with the badge and the importance of belonging to the community, not to be left out or forgotten, and to receive recognition for their musical work. This also concerned the ‘gold and silver concert’ of riksspelman that is routinely held at the end of the week. Interview: MB by phone, 10 September 2015.
and active, due to the presence of directed ritual actions. For practical reasons, the aim of the institution has been to keep the rehearsal rooms as close to the registration office as possible. It allows the volunteers, or members of the secretariat, to follow the strict time schedule, when they summon the players before each audition. My interlocutors often remarked on the prominent shift in atmosphere and acoustics as they entered the audition space from the rehearsal room. The comments are both positive and negative: for some the acoustics ‘really helped me to play better’ and ‘inspired me.’ Others commonly mentioned the carpet or towel placed opposite the microphone, to mark the position of the player in order to generate the best quality of the audio recording. Sentiments like: ‘You could hardly hear yourself tapping your foot to keep time’ or ‘The sound was dead; there was hardly any resonance’ were frequently voiced in relation to this. The players also shared their experiences of being physically herded into and out of certain areas by the members of the secretariat. On the one hand, many performers underlined how nice the encounters were and that they felt more calm and less nervous by talking to the secretariat. On the other, the situation was also often sensed as ‘almost too serious’ and ‘unnecessarily formal.’ Instead of composure, this physical guidance contributed to increased feelings of being unsettled and anxious before their performances and reinforced the serious atmosphere of the event.

It is interesting to reflect on how the initiatory ritualisation of the auditions has become manifested in spatial symbolism. As shown in the previous sections, it is explicit in the very disposition of the audition site, enacted in its buildings, predetermined repetitive routines and the oriented geographical movements of the actors. This is very similar to how Victor Turner described the rite of passage:

The passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another. This may take the form of a mere opening of doors, or the literal crossing of a threshold, which separates two distinct areas, one associated with the subject’s pre-ritual or preliminal status, and the other with his post-ritual or postliminal status.

The opening and closing of doors guides the players as they pass through different thresholds during the day. In addition, the activities surrounding the audi-

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201 Participant observations and casual conversations with the participants 2012–2015. From my observations the jury were very considerate concerning these matters and listened to the players. For example, in Tobo 2013 they quickly removed the carpet after complains from the players.
202 In Borås 2012, when the auditions were held in a church, one player jokingly commented: ‘It felt like we were going to get married, walking down the aisle together.’
203 Conversations with players at the auditions 2012–2015.
204 Turner, From Ritual to Theatre, p. 25.
tions (such as music concerts, workshops in music or dance, or the public research presentations) never remove the focus from the auditions as the main event. The host institutions’ use of exhibitions also reinforces this focus, and may be interpreted as a kind of parallel tradition within the auditions. Ethnography and history are clearly being used to raise awareness, inviting the players to perform acts of collective and cultural remembrance together, thus re-enforcing the affective bonds and experience of communality.

How then do Anna’s experiences and sentiments correspond to the other players taking part in the auditions? How and why do musicians engage in the auditions by taking that symbolic step over the threshold into the audition room?

The Players’ Motivations and Preparations

This section primarily explores the Zorn Auditions from the players’ point of view. It aims to convey the emotional, aesthetic and sensorial experiences of participation. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and participant observations from the auditions between 2012 and 2015, as well as on archival material from previously-conducted interviews with players at the auditions in 2007 and 2006, I will explore different levels of commitment and engagement amongst the musicians. The main topics addressed will direct attention to a broad range of areas: processes of self-localisation, the importance of ritual partial belonging, the relationships between musical traditions, transmission of local repertoires, and how the auditions denote connections to cultural heritage.

As multisensory encounters, interviews create a space in which participants are encouraged to talk about—and reflect on—their lives, experiences, values and practices. An important methodological consideration here concerns the interpretation of the players’ sentiments. As Bruno Latour contends: ‘actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but also how and why they do it.’ This is a main concern in this section of the chapter. In regard to this concern, it is also important to acknowledge the particular style of sociability and relationship that develops between me, as a researcher, and the players during our interviews. Even if the individual players know what they do and why, they may also decide not to share that in the moment of conversation. If they are not sure about the answer to a question, they may try to negotiate and talk themselves through different strategies and aims. It

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206 Pink, Doing Sensory Ethnography, pp. 80–81.
could also happen that they find their true feelings embarrassing and instead prefer to say something else. This is all part of being human and interacting with other humans: we are neither transparent nor rational.\textsuperscript{208} Indeed, the interview as a research method is highly performative, and the researcher is as much a part of forming that space and the effects of it, as are the interlocutors.\textsuperscript{209} In addition, the effects of the actors’ actions may of course also be different from those that they first intended.\textsuperscript{210}

In fact, the ethnographic setting and the individual sentiments are always linked with other contexts and interconnected with figurative discourses and patterned associations.\textsuperscript{211} In the following sections, I will also show how certain tropes or narratives of auditioning are revisited by the interlocutors. In line with Timothy Rice, I strongly argue that musicologists should take every musical metaphor [seriously] whether of their own making or of their research subjects, for what they are: […] claims to truth, guides to practical actions and discourse, ways of reconfiguring our understanding of the world, and sources for comprehending music’s profound importance to human life.\textsuperscript{212}

The shifting attitudes elucidated in the following sections sometimes happily commingle and coheres as a single collective, other times they are far apart as competing strategies or practices that mirrors a variety of individual experiences.

Why audition for the Zorn Badge?

I’ve always known about the \textit{rikspelman}. Hm. “Why did I want to do it”? [Silence] It’s a difficult question. I’ve been thinking: “Why”? It’s something to aim for; it’s something… so that, people know you are serious. Also it gave me focus on \textit{säckpipan} [the bagpipe], and also it’s good to know about the tradition and where it’s come from. It’s like when you are writing a thesis, you have to do


\textsuperscript{209} Obviously, the understanding of the material differs between my own conducted interviews and the interviews performed by Dan Lundberg and Tommy Sjöberg in 2006 and 2007. In the latter only the conversation is recorded without any further documentation.

\textsuperscript{210} With that taken into consideration, I would like to underline the significance of caution in the analysis, not to neglect or turn the actors’ claims or experiences into suspicions. See Paul Ricoeur, \textit{The Conflicts of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics}, ed. by. Don Ihde (London and New York: Continuum, [1989/2000] 2004), on ‘the hermeneutics of suspicion.’ Ricoeur does, however, find suspicion useful, especially in his work on memory. See Paul Ricoeur, \textit{Memory, History, Forgetting} (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), NB: within this text it is uncoupled from hermeneutics. See also Alison Scott-Baumann, \textit{Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion} (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 9.

\textsuperscript{211} Law and Singleton, ‘ANT and politics’, pp. 492–493; 500–501.

The reply above unfolds several of the typical reasons players give in explaining why they audition for the badge. The auditions encourage the musicians to motivate their playing, improve their skills on the instrument and allow them to immerse themselves into the sounds of a particular style, absorbing the features of the idiom and study a specific local tradition or the individual repertoire of their favourite musical role models in detail. For the player, the responsive relationship to the bagpipe is highlighted in the answer and is bound with the importance of situating the instrument within a history of Swedish folk music. The comparison with a bibliography provides an extra level of interest. It indicates a process of thorough selection, valuation and listing of important figures within tradition, tunes and relevant histories; to look back in time and trace ‘where it’s come from.’ Explicitly, it implies the importance of shared knowledge of tradition, and also directs attention to the importance of details. Being a native English speaker, it is interesting to note that the player also uses the Swedish words of both riksspelman and säckpipa, as means to locate oneself within the tradition and the community.

A similar process of preparation for the auditions was described by another participant. Being a fiddle player and trained music teacher, the musician addressed how the feelings of tension or thrill were constantly present, while unceasingly aspiring towards traditionally-informed playing. This sensation was present from the moment of submitting the application to being awarded the Zorn silver badge:

And then I started to search. Both for people I could meet and play with and for tunes and recordings. And well, ever since then it’s been a kind of job. And that job doesn’t end now, but continues, only with a little bit more silver on it.

Although being at different stages within the ritual—the first quoted player just started to audition and the second one was at the end of the process—both speak of how the auditions become something to strive for and to conquer. Hard work, social investment and serious commitment informs their answers; to

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213 Interview: VD F/43 years old, Bagpipe (B) debut, ZA. The interview was conducted in a mix of Swedish and English.

214 All interlocutors (2012–2015). See also the exhibition of 'Riksspelmän in Småland' (Småländska Riksspelmän) ZA, Korrö 2015.

215 To use certain expressions as identity markers has been further investigated by Dan Lundberg in: See Dan Lundberg, Kåklåtar. Fängelsevisor som identitetsmarkör och kulturarv. (Möklinta: Gidlunds, Forthcoming October 2017).

216 ‘Och sen började jag leda. Både efter människor som jag kunde träffa att spela med och efter låtar och inspelningar och ja, sedan dess har det varit liksom ett arbete. Och det arbetet slutar ju inte nu, utan nu fortsätter det, fast bara med lite extra silverkant på.’ Interview: KSN F/33 years old, Fiddle (S) ZA.
participate is not to be taken lightly, it demands a sincere effort, partly for the purpose of being taken seriously by others. In passing, I should note that this ritual seriousness is woven into the practices of the auditions in multifaceted ways. On one hand, it is often articulated in the players’ approaches to participation, and on the other it is characteristic of the whole atmosphere on site, resonating Turner’s ‘human seriousness of play’.

Indeed, the auditions encourage activities as visiting archives, listening to old recordings of spelmän and the study of transcriptions and tunes as well as learning music (and stories of tunes) from tradition bearers and local musicians. Correspondingly, these figures of discourse are often referred to in studies of the function or value of traditional music competitions, especially the revitalising effects of involving people to play and promote folk music. Goertzen has discussed the issues with reference to the national and local fiddle contests in Norway and how they contribute to ‘structure the folk music year, inspiring practice, requiring travel and offering opportunities to display folk traditions publicly.’ However, considering the last aspect, the social and public occasions significantly differ from other types of folk music gatherings most common in Sweden. There is, in comparison, little informal jamming or spontaneous playing on the audition site. Furthermore, only a few of the participants are invited by the jury to perform on stage during the distribution of awards at the end of the week. Many of the players travel to the auditions just to audition and then leave very soon after playing. Generally, there are far fewer people present at the beginning of the auditions than there are at the final weekend and the celebrations of Riksspelmansstämmen.

The players seldom mention the social aspect of the auditions as a reason for aspiring for the badge. Nevertheless, the social network, such as friends and fellow musicians, is often asserted as an important driving force, or ‘trigger’, for the idea to audition. One fiddler, who is a member of a famous Swedish folk music band from the northern part of Sweden, described it with the following words:

217 See Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 16–17. Ahmed argues that to ‘follow a line’ is a form of social investment and commitment that requires resources, time and energy.

218 Paraphrasing Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*. This contrast with how Goetzen described the Norwegian kappleiks, as ‘business-like and warm.’ Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, p. 94.

219 For example, Fleming, ‘Resisting Cultural Standardization’, p. 244, or Ian Russell, ‘Competing with Ballads (and Whiskey?)’, p. 187.

220 Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, p. 90. Obviously, both folk music festivals and folk musicians’ gatherings in Sweden have similar functions.

221 For example, folk festivals, workshops or participatory events like spelmans’ gatherings. To perform on stage at the auditions primarily concerns the Silver badge, with exception for participants with unusual instrument as the horn or herding call.

222 For example, interviews with BT, IM, KSN, G and KT. It is also frequently mentioned in the interviews by DL in Mora 2006, SVABA4303 and by TS, SVABA4304.
Partly, because of my friends. I have at least three friends that are already riksspelmän. It’s also actually a goal to have in mind, even if you perhaps don’t aim for the badge or something. But you have something that you to practise for. To practise and to not have a goal is difficult. It’s hard to find motivation [...] the Zorn Badge gives you motivation.223

The combination of the social aspect and to be encouraged to practice is commonly mentioned in the participant’s answers. A nyckelharpa player with Swedish relatives, portrayed a similar dynamic amongst his fellow musicians. Many of those with whom he grew up have already received the Silver badge, and he considered himself to have a similar level of musical skill: ‘I guess when one of us got it, the rest of us wanted it too. It became a bit of a status thing.’224

Another metaphor frequently used by the players to describe their experience of the auditions on a narrative level is to compare the auditions with sports events. The players often refer to one of the most famous competitions in cross-country skiing in Sweden, called Vasaloppet, or the marathon race held in Stockholm. The quotations show striking similarities:

It is good to have a goal to play for, and the feedback afterwards is really important; you get some tips on what you should think about [...] The audition, I think, is like a Vasalopp or the Stockholm Marathon or something... one has something to train for during the year.225

It’s really sport [...] Banana and water are perfect! [before the audition] And then to play through the tunes in your head, because you can’t really do anything more on the day. You just have to get on with it!226

It’s about the same as signing up for Vasaloppet, to have something to practise for and to see how one could improve one’s time in comparison with last year. And then, the verification, I mean the title riksspelman exists for a reason. It is a mark of high quality, and if one were to achieve that, it has advantages in all kinds of situations.227


225 ‘Bra att ha ett mål att spela inför och sen att man får feedbacken efteråt, tycker jag är jätteviktigt, man får lite tips vad man kan tänka på [...] Själv uppspelandet tänker jag, det är lite som ett Vasalopp eller Stockholm maraton eller nåt, man har något att träna inför under året.’ Interview: EML F/29 years old, Fiddle (PBC) ZA.

226 ‘Det är ju sport egentligen [...] Banan och vatten är perfekt och sen just det här att tänka låtarna mentalt för att man kan inte göra så mycket samma dag, det är bara att köra på!’ Interview: SV F/Fiddle, auditioned the first time, by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303.

227 ‘Det är ungefär som att anmäla sig inför Vasaloppet, man ska ha något att träna inför och se vad man kan förbättra tiden mot förra året. Och sen kvittot jag menar, Riksspelmansititen finns ju av nån
Since the Swedish folk music community is relatively small, many participants hear about the dates and locations through friends and fellow musicians. If it is not that far to travel, many return the next year to audition again. The musicians pay a fee of 850 SEK to participate; travel costs and accommodation are at their own expense. Some musicians travel together to the auditions. Others have personal coaches, friends or partners with them for support, encouragement and company on the audition day. However, it is most common to visit the auditions alone.

The preparation strategies discussed by the musicians are various and inventive. The tunes are carefully selected and rehearsed. The most common method of preparation is to perform in front of a ‘fake’ jury, often made up of colleagues at work, family or friends. One player also used the screen saver on his computer with a photo of the jury members to normalize the situation. Some participants talked about actively challenging themselves to perform their solos in all kinds of situations, as well as to perform for dancing in order to ‘find the right rhythm’ and get the dance floor going. They also gave examples of performing for refugees and immigrants. These all became ways for the players to practice, talk about their music and introduce tunes to these new listeners, who may not be familiar with traditional Swedish music.

Many performers record themselves when they practice, and then use the audio recording to attentively listen for mistakes and compare themselves with their role models. As one player noted: ‘It is easier to hear your mistakes when you listen to yourself.’ Players who have auditioned in previous years also listen to their recorded auditions and compare them with the advice they got from the jury, to do better work the next time. Commonly mentioned is the importance of imitating other spelmän and deliberately playing differently from how you normally do. This practice is meant to ground yourself better in your own playing, as well as raise awareness of your own style. The special situation of performing solo was often brought forward: ‘When you play in a group it is easy to lean on or hide behind others’. However, when you play solo it is a challenge to make the tunes ‘interesting, varied and pleasant to listen to without

\[\text{anledning, det är ju en kvalitetsstämpel, skulle man uppnå det är det en fördel i alla sammanhang.} \]

\[\text{Interview: MH F/32 years old, Fiddle, by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303. The metaphor of the Swedish ski competition } Våsåloppet \text{ was recurring in the interviews by DL, 2006 in Mora, an area where the competition is also held. In the interviews, Lundberg talked about the auditions in terms of ‘the game’ (själva matchen) so the participants might have taken over that metaphor in their answers.} \]

\[\text{228 Observations at the Zorn Auditions 2012–2015.} \]

\[\text{229 See SVABA4303.} \]

\[\text{230 This was often uttered by players who have auditioned a couple of times. From my observations the jury also often gave this kind of advice in the feedback conversations. It could have influenced the players. See for example Interview: EA M/35 years old, Fiddle/Nyckelharpa (S) auditioned 9 times by TS in 2006, Mora, SVABA4306; Interview: EML F/29 years old, Fiddle (PBC).} \]
accompaniment.’ In general, the players tried to vary their repertoire in terms of types of tunes to demonstrate both particular expertise and broader knowledge. One player described it as showing ‘a diversified representation of what you do’; it would be unwise to play ‘three waltzes, for example.’ However, mixing tunes from different geographical areas were perceived to be a very bad idea by the majority of the interviewed players. They assume that the jury prefers to hear music from the same local tradition, specific region or individual tradition bearer. Interestingly, this notion is also connected to assumptions of musicality; if you play too many different kinds of styles, you may lose the depth and local distinctiveness of them, at the expense of broader musical knowledge.

As demonstrated above, attentive listening and imitation are embraced as important practices to become a better musician. Needless to say, this is closely linked with transmission of knowledge within oral traditions. One pipe and fiddle player explained his preparation with the following words:

I can’t read sheet music, so I had to listen. I got hold of recordings, around fifty to sixty tunes […] that I converted to a CD. And I listened to it loads. I usually go for a run and I listen with my FREESTYLE [media device] and when I’m outside picking berries I listen to it, so [in this way] I get to know the tunes really well.

The player added that many musicians had interpreted this particular spelman before, and after the intense listening process he contacted one of the musicians he admired, and took private lessons. It was perceived as very enriching by the player, and whether or not the player received an award at the auditions, they would definitely continue playing together. As shown in the discussion above, it is also common to start with a large number of tunes, and then gradually reduce the numbers to five or six tunes which are then practiced more intensely one or two months prior to the audition. The quotation also stresses the importance of knowing the tunes really well once you stand in front of the jury. Almost all players underlined the crucial aspect of being mentally prepared and to have a clear idea of what message you desire to convey with your music. They stressed the importance of carefully reflecting on the performance beforehand; to know

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231 See SVABA4305.
234 Interviews by DL and TS, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303–SVABA4306.
what to say, how to act and when, and to visualise oneself playing in the specific audition room.235

**Different Experiences: Performing Herding Music**

Slightly more unusual tales of preparations involve playing for animals, such as cows, goats and sheep. Not surprisingly, this method concerns instruments that traditionally have been used in specific herding cultures: in the grazing pastures of the mountain and forest regions in Sweden, especially in the county of Dalarn. Ever since the Middle Ages, until around the 1970s, people moved during the summer from their villages to summer farms or cottages (jäbodar) in order to feed the cattle for the cold winter. In many herding cultures in the world, men have traditionally been responsible for this kind of work. However, in Scandinavia this work has typically been performed by women.236 Herding calls (kulning) and different horns and lurs were used for long-distance communication, both with the animals and other human beings at the farms nearby. This created a special musical soundscape that historically has been mythologized and embraced as part of the ‘genuine’ sound of the ‘folk.’ Today, herding music is often performed on folk- and world music stages, solo or in new compositions.237 It has also become part of cultural tourism; for visitors to experience the ‘exotic’ music live in the mountain regions.238

At the auditions, these performances have customarily been held outside for the jury to judge in the natural environment of the musical practice. Herding calls involve a special high-pitch vocal technique, using sharp attacks and falsetto voice. The call is a descending one and usually alternates short passages with longer melismatic phrases. There are also calls which are more similar to ordinary folk melodies and with spoken text.239 It is unusual to perform herding calls at the auditions, and during my fieldwork only three singers tried their luck in front of the jury. Last time a player was awarded the title riksspelman for performing herding calls, was in 1989. Before 2012, the last time a competitor performed herding calls at the auditions was in 1996.240

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235 See for example Interview: IM F/28 years old, Cow Horn (B); Interview: OW M/25 years old, Fiddle (B), auditioned two times. SVABA4306; ET F/35 years old, Fiddle, auditioned two times, SVABA5405, by TS and DL, 2006, Mora.
236 Ivarsdotter, ‘And the Cattle Followed Her for they Know Her Voice…’, pp. 146–149. During the seventeenth century this was enforced by law. Women should take care of goats, sheep and cows, and the men had responsibility for the horses.
239 Ivarsdotter, ‘And the Cattle Followed Her for they Know Her Voice…’ pp. 147–148.
240 The Database of the Zorn Committee.
One of the singers described how important her work at an outdoor museum had been for preparation, since it allowed her to be outside and sing whilst meeting tourists:

We’ve had shows seven to eight times a day, and then I could start with a herding call. So I’ve been able to practise and start by just singing two or three notes a couple of times a day and then perform an entire call and herding tune at a show. And then gradually build up the voice. It is really hard for the voice [...] in one way, it’s such an abstract thing in a way to work on your voice, to find the right adjustment without wearing yourself out. So that workplace at the museum was absolutely crucial. And another dimension is that you can’t sing herding calls carefully. They’re supposed to be loud, so you really have to go for it to get it right.241

Since the call is powerful and loud, a large space is often needed for practise. Horn players and performers of herding call also commented on how it was quite easy to select tunes, since they are not that well documented compared to repertoires connected to the fiddle or nyckelharpa. The tunes are often not that long and more in the forms of signals, but still demands strong physical effort and may be exhausting to perform. They also put forward how it was important for them that one of the jury members in the panel had expertise on herding music, since it made them more comfortable during the audition. Cowhorn players also spoke of how the horns are sensitive to weather and air, and that the instrument might surprise them during the audition, as one player phrased it: ‘I can’t get to grips with the instrument.’242 One of the main challenges for them was to try to play soft, and not in a forced manner.

‘I Always Wanted to Do It.’ Affective Affinities and Long-Distance Intimacy

To become riksspelman was always my dream, then I realised that it was the same as the Zorn Badge. I wasn’t really clear about that. It has been an unattainable dream, but in recent years perhaps [...] it could be done! [Laughs] It is ordinary people who become riksspelmän.243

241 ‘Vi har haft föreställningar sju-åtta gånger om dagen och då har jag kunnat inleda med kulning. Så jag har kunnat öva upp mig och bara ta kanske två, tre toner ett par gånger om dagen i början och sen kunna ta en hel lock och kulningslåt till en tillställning och sen gradvis bygga upp rösten helt enkelt. Det är väldigt tuftt för rösten. [...] det är ju så abstrakt på ett sätt att jobba med rösten, att man hittar inställningen och inte sliter ut sig. Så den arbetsplatsen på museet har varit helt avgörande. Och en annan dimension är att det går inte att kula försiktigt, det är ju så högt och man måste ta i för att hitta rätt.’ Interview CF F/29 years old, Herding call (B) ZA.

242 ‘Jag blir inte klok på instrumentet’ Interview: IM F/28 years old, Cow Horn (B) ZA.

Players I met during fieldwork often spoke of an indescribable urge to audition for the Zorn Badge although they found it hard to articulate why. One performer who was awarded Silver at first try told me how he had found a book at home in which, as a child, he had noted his future profession as *rikspelman*. Older players mentioned having had reservations about the auditions when they were young, especially during the 1970s, but that their attitude changed with age so they got curious to try. Many also described it as the ‘finest thing you can become’ within the folk music scene.

Their strong feelings towards participation may also be grounded in a sense of responsibility towards certain musical traditions. This is especially prominent amongst players performing music from ‘weaker’ areas of tradition, as highlighted above in the section about Anna. By participating, they hope to encourage others to start playing and raise awareness of their local music. The dominance of the provinces of Dalarna and Hälsingland was often mentioned in regard to this. As one player put it:

> I’ve always chosen to play tunes from Västmanland […] and the more I’ve been doing this, the more I start to feel that they are so fantastically good, and there are so many of them, but they are not so well known as they should be […] There’s real worth in the way each and every one of us contributes something, because there are so much good [tunes] everywhere. If you go back to the folk music revival, there were a lot of [tunes] from Dalarna and maybe Hälsingland. But everywhere I think that you notice how really good tunes are coming from all over the place […] Even if I’ve not learnt this tune within the tradition of some living *spelman*, I think that is less important, you have tunes on CD, so to say [laughs].

In addition to repertoire, instruments are frequently mentioned as primary reasons for participation, particularly in connection with less common instruments such as bagpipe, cowhown, herding calls and hurdy gurdy. To make an instrument part of the audition map were believed to heighten its visibility and perhaps interest others in starting to play as well. My English speaking interlocu-

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244 See SVABA4304.
245 ‘Finaste man kan bli.’
246 See for example Interview: LM/M 70 years old, Nyckelharpa (B) auditioned six times, by TS, 2006, Mora, SVABA4306.
247 See for example Interviews: JHS, KS, EML, MO and AM.
248 ‘Jag har valt hela tiden att spela västmanlandsåtar […] och ju mer jag hållit på, dess mer börjar jag tycka det är så fantastiskt bra och det finns så mycket men de är inte så kända, de borde ut […] Det ligger ett värde i det att var och en bidrar med, för det finns så mycket bra överallt. Om du går tillbaka till folkmusikvägen, då så det var ju väldigt mycket Dalarna och lite Hälsingland kanske. Men jag tycker man märker överallt att det har kommit fram åt det från alla möjliga håll, det finns överallt […] Även om inte jag har lärt mig den här låten i tradition efter någon levande spelman, så tycker jag väl att det är mindre viktigt, man har ju låtar efter CD om man säger så [skratt] Interview: KW M/74 years old, Fiddle (C) auditioned six times, by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303.
249 See for example interview: GH, ZA.
tors described their instruments as sensorial links to their Swedish ancestors.\textsuperscript{250} Interestingly, players whose first instrument was fiddle but also had a second instrument tended to pick their second instrument for audition. They explained that the jury’s expertise on the fiddle made them think it might be easier to win the title on less common instruments. These players also mentioned that it would hurt less to be rejected on their second instrument than on their main one.\textsuperscript{251}

For many players, to earn the title and to become a ‘real’ tradition-bearer involves high responsibility. They stressed the importance of being able to transmit musical knowledge to other musicians and to keep the tradition ‘living.’ They were aware that once awarded, people around them would raise their expectations of their performance, generating extra pressure. One player who had auditioned seven times asked herself: ‘Am I really ready to become a \textit{riksspelman}, with all its responsibility?’\textsuperscript{252} I heard these doubts often from players who auditioned several times, but I also recognised a supportive community spirit between the players on the audition site, and this encourages efforts to continue trying. Strong feelings of community and solidarity recurred in interviews. Through participation in the auditions, sharing the experience of auditioning, musicians feel a strong connection to the history of \textit{riksspelman}.\textsuperscript{253}

In sum, these examples elucidate ways in which the players engage emotionally in the auditions. They indicate how playing traditional tunes or certain instruments evokes and involves feelings of responsibility, empathy and identification with the community. In the next section I turn to the more commercial, product-oriented and marketing aspects of participation, as well as the players’ various interpretations of the title \textit{riksspelman}. While a prestigious cultural mark of a player’s skills and presumed authenticity, this title has also been the subject of conflict, resistance and ambivalence within the folk music community. Players respond to and handle the debates in varied ways, revealing how particular values and ideas are negotiated in relation to one another.

\textbf{‘Everything and Nothing’: Multivalent Attitudes Towards the Zorn Badge}

Importantly, many players clearly express ambivalence towards attending the auditions. The desire to ritually belong and to be recognised for your musical skills clashes with expressed reluctance towards being judged in traditional mu-

\textsuperscript{250} Interviews: VD, JD and BT, ZA.
\textsuperscript{251} Interviews: CF, IM, ZA and GS by TS, 2006, Mora, SVABA4304.
\textsuperscript{252} Interview: LO F/49 years old, Fiddle (PBC) auditioned seven times, by TS, 2006, Mora, SVABA4304.
\textsuperscript{253} See for example SVABA4303, SVABA4304 and SVABA4306.
sic, or experienced disagreements with the jury. The players also tend to reduce the significance of taking part, which I argue may be both coping strategies in a competitive environment, and literally resistance towards the audition practice.

One of my interlocutors is a professional musician who has been involved in the British traditional music scene for several years. Unlike the quotation that opened this part of the chapter, in which the player carefully articulated the reasons for auditioning, JD instead responded:

I don’t think it’s difficult. When you learn to play instruments, you need a metric to know how you improve, to know how people perceive your skills, to know how your skills fit into within the landscape [province] that you are working in […] This is what people want: this is an accepted set of rules and standards. It’s wonderful. It might not mean anything as a phrase […] rikspelman means less to me than [the fact that] I have played to a jury of people that understand Swedish Folk Music and they believe it has this quality.  

As a multi-instrumentalist (guitar, piano, harmonium, mandola) JD recently started to learn to play Cow Horn and traditional Swedish tunes. Being a beginner and not that familiar with the Swedish folk music community, it is not surprising that he speaks of the importance of learning a set of rules or standard measures. However, his response is indicative of the way that many musicians explain their position towards the title: participation receives greater weight than the award. The possibility of getting feedback on their playing from a specialist jury and to be graded in comparison with other folk musicians in Sweden: these are the facets that the musicians consider to be important. As previously shown, the auditions stimulate a strong sense of ritual belonging to a specific group formation. Here, the introduction of a particular ranking system into that sense of belonging, interestingly contributes to reinforce and intensify senses of togetherness, social harmony and order.

Another, more experienced Cow Horn player, is the Swedish participant IM. Working as a vocal coach and music teacher in upper-secondary school, she shared a similar understanding:

I felt that I had a chance to develop, myself or my playing. It’s a bit like a “carrot”, an incentive to improve my playing. […] Of course, it would be fun to be able to name yourself rikspelman on cowhorn, but it’s not really an end in itself. I can after all still play the cowhorn, and I still know how I would like to play and what I can do […] You never know what kind of jury it is, how they judge,

254 Interview, JD M /43 years old, Cow Horn (C) debut, ZA. The interview was conducted in a mix of Swedish and English.
255 All my interlocutors.
or what they listen for, if they are sated and happy, or alert or tired or what have you! [Laughs].

To improve musical skills is once again emphasized as an important point of inspiration and, similarly to JD, IM suggests that she does not consider the title as an end in and of itself, although she mentioned it would be ‘fun’ to receive it. By commenting on the jury’s constitution, mood and their current lineup, the response also hints at the elusiveness of judging creative art. Furthermore, she also expresses a self-awareness of her musical skills, independent of any reward.

To me, the two players’ utterances imply that their coolness towards the auditions may be a coping strategy in a competitive environment. To trivialize the outcome of the audition and to create distance from the music scene might be ways to handle feelings of discomfort and disappointment during the emotional process of being scrutinized and graded in music. IM and JD are by no means the only ones, hence utterances such as: ‘I still know my musical skills’ or ‘It is not that important to me, but for others…’ are established tropes amongst the players. David Kaminsky has noted a similar tendency in his study of the Zorn Auditions and furthermore put forward the suggestion that the use of irony or casual language amongst the musicians is meant for camouflaging the seriousness of their participation. Indeed, by rethinking and negotiating their position the players also empower themselves and make sense of failure. It helps to encourage and maintain their enthusiasm so that they can keep coming back, and trying to qualify in the future.

However, contrary to the previous comments, the title for some players undoubtedly becomes the only reason to attend the auditions, and the reluctance towards being ranked in folk music is outspokenly articulated:

It is an institution within Swedish Folk Music and it feels like…Well, I don’t know if I… Of course, it is a mark of high quality which is something you want and, above all, it’s that particular something you want. I’m studying at the Royal

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257 Jag kände att jag hade en chans att utveckla mig själv eller mitt spel. Det är lite som en morot och ett litet driv för mig att förbättra mitt spel. […] Det är klart, det skulle vara kul att kunna kalla sig riksspelman på kohorn, men det finns inget självändamål i det. Jag kan ju fortfarande spela kohorn och jag vet ju fortfarande hur jag vill spela och vad man går för liksom… […] man vet aldrig riktigt vad det är för jury, hur de bedömer och vad de lyssnar efter och så, om de är mätta och glada, eller pigga och trötta och så! [skratt] Interview: IM, F/28 years old, Cow Horn (B) ZA.

258 See for example Interview: AM F/37 years old, Fiddle (B) ZA, Interview: JH/M 25 years old, Fiddle, ZA and several casual discussions with musicians at the auditions 2012–2015.

259 Kaminsky, ‘The Zorn Trials and The Jante Law’, pp. 29–31. Indeed, to frame failure as relatively unimportant and to use jokes, as coping strategies of rejection seems to be common amongst contestants in other auditions as well, such as the participants in Junhow Wei’s study of performers dealing with disappointment in the public TV-reality show American Idol. Wei draws on Erwing Goffman’s concept of ‘cooling the mark out’ as coping strategy of role loss; accepting and making sense of failure and continuing trying again. Junhow Wei, “I’m the next American Idol” Cooling out, Accounts and Perseverance at Reality Talent Shows Auditions’, Symbolic Interaction, 39.1 (2016), 3–25 (pp. 12–13).
College of Music in Stockholm and music is my living. And then I want that title because I would like people outside the music community to recognize it, when I perform concerts. So I will be able to say: [that I’m a] riksspelman [...] So they know: ‘Ah: riksspelman.’ That’s the harsh reality [...] it’s more for marketing, unfortunately, than for myself. Or rather, it’s for more than just my own sake. Actually, until a couple of years ago, it wasn’t something I really cared about, until I realised it was probably worth doing, for those reasons. But I’ve always felt quite against the idea of being judged and graded within folk music.260

This approach is connected to the title as a career facilitator and highlights the power relationship between the institution and the individual musician. If the ranking system endorsed harmony and ritual belonging for the players in the previous comments, it is here associated with tension, dissonance and discomfort. The main aim of participation becomes promotion as a traditional musician, instead of an act to improve your playing. Thus, the title and the badge becomes a marketing brand: a qualification for the CV or to display on your home page, as a means of communication with audiences or concert organizers, sponsors and journalists. It carries weight in the world ‘outside’ the folk music community and enables more employment for musicians. The manifested attitude is common, both amongst amateurs and professional musicians.261

One of the few participants that perform herding calls expressed a similar sentiment and referenced a conversation she had about the Zorn Badge with her vocal teacher:

Within the family or the inner circle of the folk music world, no one cares if you have the Silver Badge or not. Because people know so well how you sound and who you are and so forth. But outside it is really valuable to be able to put forward the title riksspelman, or to say that one has Zorn’s Silver Badge. Or if you apply for a job, or if people in TV for example say, “We need to find someone that knows how to perform herding calls”, then there’s a need perhaps for this


261 See interviews by TS in Degerberga, 2007, SVABA4319. Indeed, this is especially relevant for professional musicians. Interview: JH/M 25 years old, Fiddle ZA; A1, ZA; Interviews with: Mats Thiger, Anders Löberg and Jeanette Walerholt Rousseau displayed at the Exhibition, ‘Riksspelman på Smålandslåtar’ Korrö 2015; In connection to the centennial celebration of the Zorn Badge in 2010, Sara Pettersson interviewed 22 players bestowed the title, see Per Gudmundson and Thomas von Wachenfeldt, in Sara Pettersson, Silver i Folkmusik (Karlstad: Votum förlag, 2010), pp. 16, 35. See also Kaminsky, ‘The Zorn Trials and The Jante Law’ and Lundberg, ‘Tävla i Folkmusik’, pp. 175, 178.
kind of title, so that people know to find you, and for them to feel that it is some kind of quality assurance. So that was her advice, or her reasoning around it [...] so I thought I’d give it a go! And it was also so new and exciting that I felt it could be a goal for myself, something to rehearse for and an incentive to improve.  

Although, she initially mentions the promotional aspects of the auditions, embedded in her answer is the need to justify participation through the urge to develop her singing skills. Fiddler RW perceives the title in a similar manner, but additionally sheds light on how, for her, it would actually facilitate encounters with other musicians:

For me, personally, it feels like it [the badge] doesn’t mean that much, because in some sense I already know what I can do and I feel secure in that and pretty happy with how I play. But on the other hand, when it comes to other people, both other musicians that I don’t know and with the general public, it actually means a great deal. That is, the day I receive the silver badge, I should say, it’ll mean even more than a bronze one, because you notice that when you’re out talking to people: “Oh, is she a riksspelman?” Ah!, they all say. It’s like a kind of quality assurance badge […] Outwardly, I feel it could be rather good to have: a little bit of PR for oneself in some way. It’s good in another way, too, to have a confirmation that what I’m doing is really good.  

The players’ diverse responses reveal certain attitudes towards taking part in the auditions, and the title becomes an important entity at play. On a personal level, many players’ express satisfaction with their musicality and skills on their instrument. For them, curiosity, joy and desire to learn more and test their traditional knowledge in comparison to standards and other musicians are the guiding principles to audition. To be proven worthy of recognition is foremost an act for themselves, and the title or badge is therefore not at all important. On the

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262 ‘Iinom familjen, eller inom kretsen inom folkmusikvärlden, så är det ingen som bryr sig om man har Silvermärke eller inte. För där har folk sån koll på hur man låter och vem man är och så, men utanför så är det väldigt värdefullt att kunna slänga fram titeln riksspelman, eller kunna säga att man har Zorns silvermärke. Eller om man söker jobb, eller om folk utanför t.ex. på TV: “och nu vill vi har nån som kular”, då krävs det kanske en sån typ av titel, för att folk ska hitta en. Och för att de ska känna att det är nån slags kvalitetssäkring. Så det var hennes råd, eller hennes resonemang kring det. […] Då kände jag, men då får jag försöka på det! Så var det så pass, nytt och spännande att det kändes som att då kan jag ha det som ett mål för min egen del, mål för min egen övning och som en sporre att utvecklas.’ Interview CF F/29 years old, Herding Call (B) ZA.  
other hand, for some musicians (in some cases the same ones) the badge transforms into a powerful symbol of poly-semi character when it comes to sharing their musicality with others, a ‘cool’ title and resource, and for some even the main reason for auditioning. Despite one’s personal approach to musical judgement, the title is what matters; it helps to communicate your musicality with the surrounding world. The different logics coexist in the participants’ interactions and highlight the complexities of taking part in the creative practices.264

Problems of Competing in Music: Liminality and Layers of Resistance

The different ambivalences that the examples above show, may also be interpreted as enactments of the liminal state within the rites of passage. As Victor Turner notes: ‘The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classification that normally locates state and position in cultural space.’265 The actors in the auditions handle these sentiments of ambiguity in various ways. Those acts in turn communicate instructive aspects of the practices that carry the web that produce the auditions. It is therefore important not to dismiss the players’ utterances only as strategies, but take into account the uneasy dynamics they express. Primarily, they articulate reluctance towards being judged and graded in music, especially traditional music, according to standard criteria. Research on competitions in traditional music commonly highlights how players express concern about the contradictions of imposing rigid standards on a range of local repertoires. This especially concerns music which is highly based on diverse individual interpretations and variations of melodies. Other worries regard the tendency of fragmentation, standardisation and impoverishment of musical traditions in competitions.266 All these aspects are interwoven in the dominant critical discourse surrounding the Zorn Auditions.

A pivotal aspect to take into consideration of the expressed uneasiness is that the auditions are atypical of the social venues of traditional music in Sweden today. Instead of music-making in smaller or larger ensembles (spelmanslag, music groups, trios or duos) often performed at informal egalitarian gatherings or music festivals, solo playing in a closed recital is put in focus. Thus, intertwined aspects in the players’ answers are the conflicting notions of what really distin-

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266 See Fleming, ‘Resisting Cultural Standardization’, pp. 244–248; Adam Kaul, Turning The Tune, Traditional Music, Tourism, and Social Change in an Irish Village (New York and Oxford: Berghan Books, 2009), pp. 51–52. Likewise, there are of course performers who enjoy competing but experience problems or disagree with the criteria of judgement.
guish an excellent *spelman*, and moreover how those qualities are judged. Yet again, ideas of the virtuosic solo player performing on stage are put in contrast to the adaptable ensemble player with the desirable skills of creating intricate and stimulating arrangements and adding voices to get the dance floor going. This raises questions and doubts about the ability of the jury to judge dance music and spontaneity in a highly artificial and formalised performance setting which only tests the player on a limited range of abilities and skills.  

Indeed, this field of tension between notions of the individual and the collective creativity within traditional music seem to be a global phenomenon. It is often argued that the trend to compete creates separate 'competing societies', where specific solo performance styles are fortified and awarded. For example, in North America a certain dominant fiddle style originating in Texas has spread through much of United States under the striking name 'contest style.' This style is both display- and listening-oriented instead of being linked to dance, as many of the older regional variations of fiddle styles, and additionally contrasting with the community’s values of jamming in the parking lot. It has simultaneously attracted players and aroused resentment within the communities.  

The Norwegian *Kappleik* system has also been described as a sub-genre of its own; where traditions regarding particular styles are refined and celebrated by players performing for each other, with little appeal for ‘outside’ audience. This contrasts with the more mixed styles or elaborated music collaborations that characterize the recent trends within the folk music scenes of Norway. I suggest that the Zorn Auditions may be described in a similar manner, as a self-sufficient sub-culture within Folk Music Sweden with its own rules, preferred sounds, styles and performative techniques, mainly performed by and for its own participants.

The assertion that music competitions valorise and judge differences of performance styles than differences in ability, masked in judgment criteria and ranking systems, is also part of a critical discourse prevalent in international classical music competitions. Hence, this is related to ideas of elusiveness in judging qualities of musicianship and artistry, which can never be quantifiable or objective and therefore concern musical taste and preferences of style.

Correspondingly, similar ideas also circulate in Sweden in connection with the practices of the Zorn Auditions. In December 2015, members of the Facebook group ‘Swedish Folk Music’ (*Svensk Folkmusik*) discussed the ramifications of

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268 Chris Goertzen have in analysed in detail the various techniques within this style with reference to performances at Texas State Fiddlers Championship. See Chris Goerzen, ‘Texas Contest Fiddling’, pp. 98–99.


how the jury, in their view, valued technical skills most highly, which, according to the member starting the debate, contributed to standardisation and additional impoverishment of traditional styles.271 Interestingly, similar criticism is often raised towards the effects of higher educations in folk music in Sweden, thus reinforcing the notion of how institutionalization of music, inevitably leads to standardisation and how ‘it all sounds alike.’272

Another interesting aspect to take into consideration is the striking similarities in the previous quotations by the players. Although expressing ambivalence and reporting different reasons for participating, specific narratives are revisited and used. For example, they refer to public awareness and reactions outside the community with expressions as: ‘Ah, is she a rikspelman’ or ‘Wow, rikspelman’, said with fascination and admiration.273 This contrasts with the responses within the Swedish Folk Music community: that players do not care, or found it completely irrelevant for them, or that the community already knows who is considered to be skilled or not. Therefore, the title rikspelman or the Zorn badge becomes ‘a quality mark for someone who can’t hear for themselves if a musician is good or not’274, as one player firmly phrased it.

The ambivalence towards the Zorn Auditions could further be interpreted as a form of resistance: the disapproval is directed towards how the audition is being performed and what is being judged and by whom, rather than the act of performing in itself. As previously mentioned, many spelman and traditional musicians go even further and openly resist participation. Apparently, the players are well aware of the manifold debates surrounding the auditions, thus it informs how they describe the reasons to participate in one way or another, without me asking a specific question to pinpoint it. These debates involve struggles over the ritual content, and what the title rikspelman ought to represent.

One debate that has attracted much attention in recent years is whether to include the vocal technique of trall as a traditional instrument, and acknowledge singers as spelman. Trall is the wordless singing of tunes and folk melodies, often performed with dancing and sounds very different from the herding calls. Performers of trall imitate the sound of instruments by using the top of the tongue

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271 Post in the Facebook group ‘Swedish Folk Music (Svensk Folkmusik) 16 Dec 2015, [Accessed 7 January 2016]. Interestingly, the member of the group that started the discussion also expressed a wish to revise the statutes and include one of the criteria of the badge in gold: ‘for meritorious service in the area of traditional music’ (förtjänstfulla insatser på folkmusikens område).

272 This topic was also discussed at the public seminar with the Zorn Jury, ‘Who can become a rikspelman?’ (Rikspelman—vem kan bli det?) held at Museum of Music and Theatre (Musik och teater museet) in Stockholm. Arranged by Svenskt-visarkiv in connection to the event: ‘Århundradets spelmannsstämma’, 6 August 2010, SVAA20100806ZS01. Interestingly, Goertzen put forward the exact same expression as one of the main accusations against the Texas contest fiddling. Goertzen, ‘Texas Contest Fiddling’, p. 110.

273 See also DL Interviews in 2006, Mora, SVABA4303.

274 Interview: EML F/29 years old, Fiddle, (PBC) ZA. See interviews by TS in 2007, Degerberga, SVABA4319.
to articulate syllables. Today, *trall* is often heard on stage at folk and world music festivals, both performed solo and in ensembles.\(^{275}\) My interlocutors often mention the conflict over *trall*, this will be explored further in the next section. The debate raises issues of belonging, recognition and gender, and sheds light on how the institution overcomes resistance, the processes of group delineation and the tense power relationship between the players and the jury.

Vocal Music at Play: Ordering Struggles over *Trall*

The discussion about *trall* started at the Zorn Auditions in 2005, when two musicians had their applications on traditional *trall* accepted and were listed for audition. They later received the message that they were denied participation. The jury explained it as an administrative mistake from the secretariat letting their application pass. A heated debate followed between the jury and the musicians involved about the boundaries of accepted music. Why, then, did the jury accept herding calls but not the vocal technique of *trall*? One of the players was singer Ulrika Gunnarsson\(^ {276}\) and she began actively campaigning for the inclusion of *trall* at the auditions and questioning the jury’s criteria for inclusion. The jury responded that they do not judge vocal singing because they lack the expertise and that *trall* is not a traditional instrument. Herding call is accepted due to the historical circumstances, clearly spoken for by Anders Zorn in the beginning of the twentieth century as one of the styles of music to preserve and protect, in line with the statutes and Zorn’s intentions.

The discussion was raised again, five years later, in August 2010 at a public seminar with the jury, titled: ‘Who can become a *riksspelman*?’, held in Stockholm as part of the centennial celebration of the Zorn badge.\(^ {277}\) Gunnarsson attended and in a contribution to the seminar she referenced and responded to the previous conversations with the jury:

> Anders Larsson and I applied for *trall* in 2005, but were not allowed to participate, because *trall* doesn’t count as an instrument. And it’s true: I don’t have anything outside of my body, just inside it. But we still think we are *spelmän* just as much as the others. And we have a certain style of playing, a complete repertoire with recordings, unbroken tradition, one knows exactly how it could have sounded. You can judge it as well as any instrument, or even much better than instruments like the hurdy gurdy, *stråkharpa* [bowed lyre] and bagpipe, which you hardly know how they sounded.\(^ {278}\)


\(^{276}\) At that time, she was working at *Svenskt Visarkiv* in Stockholm, and had therefore access to the archive of the Zorn Committee. Although being an employee at the archive, in these controversies she spoke from a private position.

\(^{277}\) ‘Who can become a *riksspelman*? (Riksspelman, vem kan bli det?), 6 August 2010, SVA20100806ZS01.

\(^{278}\) ‘Jag och Anders Larsson ansökte om att få tralla 2005 men fick inte det, för *trall* räknas inte som ett instrument, och mycket riktigt jag har inget utanför kroppen, utan det sitter i, men vi hävdar då
Contrary to the jury, she argues that the voice is an instrument mediated through her body, and that trall is a traditional dancing technique with equivalent distinctive characteristics, to for instance, the herding call. Therefore, they are also spelmän. Embedded in her reasoning are references to the criteria in the statutes and the similarities with the traditions of instrumental music: how the music is well-documented, with detailed knowledge of specific stylistic traits, in a line of tradition-bearers and performed in the living tradition of today. By addressing arguments of difficulties in judging, she creates a comparison with the challenges of valorising the music of bagpipe, hurdy gurdy and stråkharpa that was most recently added by the institution. She then concluded by providing historical instances of when the jury, two times previously, bestowed the Silver badge for trall and fiddle. The written dedications were read out loud in the auditorium; in 1978: ‘for playing tunes and performing trall within proper tradition’ and in 1962: ‘awarded Silver for preserving and skilfully performing, authentic vocal folk singing from the county of Skåne’ with a comment that fiddle was not even mentioned in the later textual formation. On top of this, she finished by asking how the jury related to these instances, and if they regret their decision. She paraphrased the jury’s dilemma: ‘Well, “we don’t do trall or sing anymore nowadays, because we decide that” or “once included, always included”? Does that mean, perhaps, that we can both tralla and sing in the next year?’ The audience applauded, presumably to show their support for the posted question.

The only ethnomusicologist in the jury answered at the seminar with the following main arguments to justify their position:

Over the years, the jury has been formed slightly differently and some years they’ve been nice and so on…. but this is very much a question of practical issues too, of where boundaries need to be drawn. If one should include the vocal expressions: where does one draw the line? Trall is one thing, medieval ballads are dance music and ‘Nu är det jul igen’ [sings a vernacular tune] and so forth, is also dance music. Where do you draw the line then? […] It’s not primarily an economical issue, but that’s still a part of it. It’s primarily a question of demarcation, if you include parts of the vocal repertoire which are not herding music, where do you draw the line? From my point of view, someone is very welcome

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Ulrika Gunnarsson at ‘Who can become a riksspelman?’, SVAA20100806ZS01.

279 They started to be accepted at the auditions from the beginning of 1980s. See Ramsten, ‘De nya spelmännen’, pp. 58–59.

280 ‘För låtspel och trallning i god tradition.’

281 ‘Tilldelas silver för bevarande och äkta skickligt framförande av skånsk folklig sång.’

282 Gunnarsson SVAA20100806ZS01.

What is really under negotiation here? The two comments, from a player and a jury member, clearly articulate a struggle of order within the network. Different wishes and desires for the form and content of the auditions rub against each other. It is important to underline that the individual jury member, during this public occasion, also speaks on behalf of the entire jury group. The response therefore reflects part of the jury’s private discussions on the matter. On the one hand, the contemporary jury clearly perceives these historical examples of trall as exceptions from their usual and established practice. Therefore, they take no responsibility for the previous jury’s actions and the players’ arguments concerning inconsistency within the jury’s work and the need for revision are easily dismissed and silenced.285 This is especially interesting since it stands in stark contrast to how the judgments of previous juries are frequently put forward as important guiding principles for the sitting jury when they concern other aspects of traditional music performance.286 In this instance, however, historical choices made by the previous jury are placed in the background. At the same time, these choices are once again placed in the foreground when it comes to the music of herding, which has a secured place within the auditions. What Gunnarsson sees as problematic in the discussion of traditional instruments, the jury member confronts as practical and economic issues, highlighting restrictions of finances and the need for further expertise. Certainly, the jury’s gatekeeping position is manifested in the answer through the necessity of establishing boundaries, entrenched by an uneasiness and concern for what the future might bring. Several times, the question is repeated: where does one draw the line and what will the consequences be? If the jury allows vocal traditions connected to dancing, how would they justify restrictions on other types of singing? Importantly, the fact that they already judge herding calls is not taken into consideration at all in this particular enactment. The jury member in the quotation above draws this comparison even further, using the act of singing what is a nowadays well-known vernacular Christmas tune (an old polska) as a way of framing the uncertainty of

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286 The jury often highlight how their work is also part of a tradition that is transmitted form member to member in the jury. See for example <www.zornmarket.se> The importance of this transmission was put forward by the jury in the interview 16 January, 2016 in Stockholm. This inconsistency is often perceived as problematic and provocative by the folk music community.
where it would end up in the future. The tune is not at all relevant for the institution, and they use this example to underscore the possible ramifications of undermining the purpose of the auditions.

I suggest that this reasoning and the sentiments involved are part of a prevalent figurative discourse—an ‘ordering attempt’—within the jury regarding the manner in which they cope with changes. These quotations articulate their self-reflexive view of their own position, the notion of the vast importance of the effects of their actions, and the anticipation of the ritual. Indeed, the strategies enacted in the conversation are underpinned by a strong fear of losing control. The player’s suggestion is perceived as threatening, and the unforeseen and imagined future is managed with caution. If the jury includes one more element in the criteria of selection, it will inevitably unleash a snowballing effect, undermining their gatekeeping position and making the judgment process more complicated. Indeed, most institutions or social organisation inevitably encounter an instance in which the need to cope with uncertainty arises, whilst simultaneously trying to maintain control. As Helga Novotny points out, it is within this tension and interplay that group formation takes place, by seeking continuity for the unforeseen future:

It is in the productive, ever-changing tension between the two poles of a dynamic spectrum, of being in control and exposed to uncertainty, that personal and collective identities are formed by seeking continuity in defiance of what might happen next. The interplay between overcoming uncertainty and striving for certainty underpins the wish to know in order to be able to influence present and future. It is as old as humanity. It is rooted in the deep seated desire for security, the material, technological and social protection, necessary for survival, comfort and well-being.

The jury thus aims to reduce this type of uncertainty by attempting to find continuity within the suggestion of including *trall*; in this case, they fail to do so. I would suggest that in this attempt to reform the auditions, by drawing musical parallels and finding new links between styles and instruments, a sense of displacement occurred and the boundaries between order and disorder became visible. Thereafter, the group was stabilised and recreated conditions for possible future interactions at the auditions. *Trall*, as a competing associative tie, was then placed in the list of anti-groups. It is these exclusionary choices and their connected statements that have been perceived by large parts of the folk music community as far too preservative, conservative and old-fashioned. In their view, it contributes toward the formation of a collective representation and affiliations

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iation of traditional musicians in which they do not recognise themselves. Furthermore, the conflict is also an example of how the institution’s engagements with ‘pre-packaged’ musical pasts are determined by the interpreted needs of present time and made with anticipation for the future. Yet the jury also uses similar rhetoric when it concerns choices of inclusion—they are always made with consideration for future realities.

Importantly, another crucial idea under negotiation here is that *trall* should be acknowledged as instrumental music and the vocalists valued as *spelmän*. Yet, it seems like the jury member avoids the topic, since it is not further addressed in the conversation, perhaps due to time limits of the debate. Anyhow, the final comment by the jury member is instructive, whilst also reinforcing the distance. The jury member encourages the players who wish to be included to create their own badge for vocal music instead, thereby removing the responsibility from the institution. Moreover, the statement also raises important issues of gender. Both men and women have traditionally performed vocal singing in Sweden, with the exception of herding music, as previously explained. On the contrary, traditions of fiddling and other instrumental music, have predominantly been performed by men. *Trall*, differs here, in that female performers are well-documented in recordings and transcriptions, having performed solo with dancing, or with a *spelmän*. In interviews with *spelmän*, they also report on how fiddle tunes, often *polskas*, were vocally transmitted to the next generation, often from mother to son. Therefore, one could assume that to include *trall* at the auditions would be a strong affirmation towards the community, to vocal technique and its female performers increased value, recognition and, consequently, additional visibility.

This debate highlights the complexities of the ritualistic event, and how the assumed shared content is in an on-going negotiation with the individual actors and the general patterns of ritual action determined by the institution. However, this time the musicians failed in their effort to creatively re-negotiate the
possibility of their inclusion. Instead, the jury embraced the contested criteria, which remained fixed, its boundaries affirmed, ensuring the sense of stability in the audition practice.

Paradoxically, the jury often encourages debates like this, supposedly since the attention it creates enhances the value of the auditions, as well as their relevance and legitimacy. As Turner makes clear, the ritual space—and especially the liminal state—enables the actors to subvert norms and values, to introduce novelty, cross borders and ‘speak truth to power’. However, importantly, it is only temporally sanctioned and one eventually needs to submit to authority in order to be able to take part. And, in the end, it is ultimately the jury’s decision. Still, in debates like these the actors in a sense become an audience themselves; the performative dimension of social action thus affords a public reflexivity ‘that enables the community to stand back and reflect on their actions and identity.

As an effect of this public mirroring, players performing herding calls at the auditions are well aware of these controversies. During my fieldwork, other more discreet ways of challenging and experimenting with the established boundaries were performed in the audition room. For example, at the end of one audition when the jury asked for a fourth herding tune, the player replied: ‘Well, I haven’t prepared another one, but in that case… I can also do trall, would you like to hear?’ The question made the jury uncomfortable, and the conversation was quickly ended— ‘Then we thank you there’ (Då får vi tacka så)—with no further explanation and the secretariat escorted the player out of the room, before she had a chance to continue singing.

One of my interlocutors also recalled the open debate, and stressed that if it had been approved she would prefer to perform trall:

Well, I’ve been thinking, if you were allowed to tralla, and that was part of it, I would prefer to do that instead of the herding call [kula], I think. But, I’ve never felt the need to support it, and be a kind of pioneer. And it is probably because I feel that: “Ok, now I’ve decided that I will go for the Silver Badge, and concentrate on becoming a Riksspelman, and to do that I need to play the game by the rules.” At the same time, I think it is really good, healthy and fantastic, that those who want to quarrel and be troublesome do it because they believe it is important. But I feel that, it sounds a bit ugly, but I don’t want to forfeit the “good will”, that I might possibly get. For me, it is important to receive the badge, so I make my priorities, and cheer on the others! [Laughs].

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296 Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, p. 75.
297 Participant observation ZA 11 August 2012, SVAA20120811.
298 ‘Jag har väl tänkt, om man hade fått tralla och det ingått, då hade jag nog gjort det istället för att kula, det tror jag. Men jag har aldrig känt att jag har haft något behov av att ställa mig bakom, och vara en sår pionjär. Och det är nog helt enkelt för att jag känner att: “Ok, nu har jag bestämt mig för att jag vill satsa på att få ett Silvermärke: att satsa på att bli riksspelman och då får jag gå efter spelets
To receive the title is the most important element for this player, therefore she prefers to act according to social and musical conventions, ‘playing the game by its rules’, rather than jeopardise the potential positive outcome.209 At the same, she underlines the huge impact of critical voices. I suggest that this player’s honesty in highlighting her own instrumental attitude towards adapting to the rules, elucidates the tension between her desire to ritually belong and also challenge current norms. This illustrates the player’s own agency in actively negotiating her position within the auditions.300

Indeed, power is one obvious and crucial relational effect of this specific struggle over *trall*. It is generated as a consequence of stabilizing certain interactions at the auditions at the behest of others. Power is therefore not a possession; it is a persuasion of the distributed manner of the entities being networked.301 It is also an example of how the effects of power prevent the actor from following their own proclivity. The institution’s influence as a gatekeeper thus imposes restrictions on the players and create lines that they need to follow, in order to secure and enhance their future careers.

Conversely, whether they openly debate, carefully question or basically willingly participate, the players’ various responses and different attempts articulated in this chapter are connected by a presumed shared importance of taking part in the auditions—to ritually belong. I will here return to the question of why musicians, and especially professional musicians, need to participate in these kinds of events?

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209 This is what Bourdieu would have called a conscious strategy, to adapt to a particular *habitus* and have a ‘sense of the game’, in order to gain cultural and social capital as a source of power. See for example Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Columbia University Press, 1993).


Effects of Power: Trademark and Means of Visibility

Clearly, the Zorn Auditions can be understood as having an agency of their own, mainly manifested in the Zorn Badge or in the title rikstapelman. One key aspect frequently mentioned in this chapter is visibility. It informs the players’ answers and is an important reason for and effect of participation. Indeed, by enacting a rite of passage, the auditions are a vital means of visibility for social actors, ‘who claim access to and over this visibility.’ Visibility is not just about attention, but also about higher levels of recognition, status or prestige. These are all significant and closely related elements that motivate the individual players to participate, whether the act is directed towards the community, other musicians, the general public, or oneself.303

In several studies, Dan Lundberg, Krister Malm and Owe Ronström have highlighted the changing demands on traditional musicians in Sweden today. In their research they link increased professionalization to greater need for visibility within the marketing fields of arts. In a globalised world, traditional musicians constantly need to adapt to new genres and music scenes. Information technologies and the digital media are well-integrated and crucial parts of social realities and everyday life activities. Therefore, webpages, You Tube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc. are vital channels for musicians, to communicate their music and artistic image. Moreover, they become important contact zones with audiences, critics, musicians, fans, sponsors, record labels, and festivals. As I have shown in the previous section, this seems to be highly relevant on a daily basis for the majority of the participants in this study.

Thus, the managing of public relations is a matter of importance for artists and other actors currently working within the music industry. To explain the increased popularity of competing in folk music in the recent years, Lundberg draw on the concept of the ‘attention economy.’ The term was originally coined by Michel H. Goldhaber (1997) and later developed by Thomas Davenport (2001), to pin down how in post-industrial societies attention has become a valuable currency and an important economic factor. Lundberg argues that this is extremely relevant for professional musicians, creating attention for their own cultural brand as artists, and one important platform on which to do this is on the contest stage. According to Lundberg, the discrepancy between the minor effort it takes for the players to take part and the large amount of attention and

303 Brosius and Hüsken, Ritual Matters, p. 4. The aspect of visibility is also often studied in relation to festival culture.
304 These aspects are frequently referenced when scholars discuss the vast area of music, consumption and the markets, see Robert van Krieken, Celebrity Society (London and New York: Routledge 2012), pp. 2–8.
visibility they might gain, could be a contributing factor in the popularity of competitions.\(^{306}\) Interestingly, in comparison to the Zorn Auditions, participation instead appears to be perceived as hard work for several of the players, underpinned by ritual seriousness. The overall prospects of visibility also differ. For example, those performers that do not succeed in the eyes (and ears) of the jury are not at all seen by community or public. At a contest, even though the judges might not like what they hear, the audience is still there to observe and make their own aesthetic judgments of what happens on the stage. These are situations that can lead to possible gigs and work in the future. However, the effects for the players that succeed are equivalent in generating value and attention by a prestigious title, award or prize.

Media attention is another vital channel for visibility. In general, music contests receive better media coverage than other folk music gatherings or events, including the Zorn Auditions.\(^{307}\) Only a few players report that their participation in the auditions has interested journalists in their local community. Usually during the week of auditions, the local newspaper or TV-channel will make a visit, resulting in a short segment of coverage, otherwise little interest is shown in the event. This is indeed of great concern for the Zorn Committee, since they aim to get more publicity in order to attract more players. The auditions in Korrö 2015 were, in this sense, a new strategy, since they were held in connection with a music festival. It generated five more attending players who became interested in the auditions whilst visiting the festival.\(^{308}\) The auditions have been held in connection to spelmanstämmor before, but rarely in connection to a festival.

The actual impact of the title riksspelman for the individual players’ careers in a broader perspective is of course difficult to predict. The participants in this study were all interviewed during various stages within the rite of passage. Nevertheless, they all are part of a music scene and their experiences also convey expectations on musicians from the surrounding world. It is also interesting to note that musicians who had already been awarded the badge, spoke of how they realised its importance only afterwards.\(^{309}\) Clearly, to participate in the audi-


\(^{308}\) Two of those players were well known spelman and folk musicians: Olof Misgeld, teacher in folk music theory at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and Kjell-Erik Eriksson, member of a famous drone folk rock band: ‘Hoven Droven.’ They were performing at the festival and gave workshops on fiddling, and both earned the title. It will be interesting to see if the institution continues with this in the future, since it might attract other kinds of players who prefer to attend more spontaneously, rather than applying several months beforehand.

\(^{309}\) Eva Blomqvist Bjärnborg, portrayed in the exhibition, ‘Riksspelman on Tunes from Småland’ (Riksspelman på Småländska låtar), Korrö, 2015; Interviews by TS in 2006, Mora. Conversations with
tions is predominantly perceived as a ‘door opener’ and a technology for performance of self. However, it is important to put forward that many traditional musicians in Sweden today have entirely successful professional careers without ever attending the auditions or aspiring for the Zorn Badge. Furthermore, the auditions have a relatively small impact on the general activities within the folk music community. For example, this is in contrast to the Kappleiks in Norway or the ‘All-Ireland Champion/Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann’ in Ireland, both events that involve the communities in a more profound manner. In addition, to be the winner of Kongepokalen or honoured with the latter coveted Irish title, seems to be of greater importance for the players’ future careers. In Ireland, scholars draw this even further in pointing out that a career as a traditional musician is in principle impossible without participation in the competitions. Yet again, to use titles, championships, or awards as part of musical entrepreneurship, is indeed not unique for the performers in the Zorn Auditions.

As previously mentioned, the effects of participation in the Zorn Auditions are clearly also those of power. Receiving the title enables the players to empower themselves in order to improve their chances for future work. An intertwined aspect to take into consideration is that the organisation is economically weak, but the trademark and affective alliances are strong. One important ramification of this is that the players that disagree but remain silent or those that just ‘do not care’ but participate anyhow, contribute to upholding an organisation that they do not find important. It is an example of how musicians often:

replicate the very systems they claim to critique, and that they may participate in containment rather than empowerment, and that they often mask rather than expose asymmetries. On the other hand, there are patently multiple risks involved in engaging in activities that actually challenge the status quo.

My participants also primarily express concerns or fears of bad reputations or being perceived as a disloyal fellow musician. Potential risks of not being hired for workshops or other gigs are also mentioned, together with more sceptical voices: ‘it would not change anything, anyhow.’ Noticeably, musical participation foremost works to maintain the practices of the auditions—without players,

awarded musicians at the Zorn Auditions in connection to the ‘Silver and Gold concerts’ held at the end of the audition week, 2012–2015.

310 Spencer, ‘Traditional Irish Music in the Twenty-First Century’, 58–70; See also Sean Williams, ‘Competing Against “Tradition” in the Sundanese Performing Arts’ in The World of Music, 45.1 (2003), 79–95 (p. 88). Williams highlights how victory in a competition can help to set up a reputation for a performer, contribute to getting gigs and record contracts, or earn respect from fellow musicians.


312 Conversations with players at the auditions 2012–2015.
they would not exist. Therefore, the players’ involvement assists in making the auditions durable and fortifying the promotion of specific musical traditions.

This example also highlights the inherited conflicts and tensions between artistic ambitions and financial rewards that many musicians experience. It is worth reflecting on the necessity of participation in contests or auditions in the context of governmentality. The roles of musicians—and, more specifically, professional musicians—are today highly complex. Apart from being a performer or composer, the music market requires them also to be producers, brand managers, celebrities and entrepreneurs. Musicians’ occupations often bring social, financial and existential insecurity with unstable work arrangements and short-term contracts. Hence, in order to survive in their precarious economic realities, they need to identify their original and ‘unique’ artistic values and clearly communicate them towards the target audience.  

In the recent ‘turn to labour’ within cultural studies, musicological scholarship has become increasingly interested in the issues of music as labour and affective work, as keys to capitalist value production. The intensified pressure to perform give rise to new anxieties, and sheds light on formations of the intrinsic relationship between individual life and private property. The recent trend to compete—not just in music, but in a range of activities such as cooking, finding a home, gardening, surviving in the wilderness, or in a reality show, etc.—may be explained as part of neoliberal governmentality; a particular mode of producing subjectivity, where individuals acts as entrepreneurs in all dimensions of their lives. Governable subjects are comprehended as rational and calculating beings:

They are atomic individuals whose natural self-interest and tendency to compete must be fostered and enhanced. Under neoliberal governmentality society thus becomes a game in which self-interested, atomic individuals compete for maximal economic returns.

Indeed, many musicians are flexible, self-employed and freelance creative workers who fit perfectly into the subject model of contemporary capitalism, where competition is often directed towards other fellow musicians to gain more work opportunities. Although being a compelling critical diagnostic of the realities of musicians, it is important to acknowledge the recent efforts to counteract this

313 O’Reilly, Larsen and Kubacki, Music, Markets and Consumption, p. 77
precarity through resistant activism within the arts and cultural industries.316 Furthermore, musicians themselves often report on how these competing and auditioning situations are experienced as tiring, demanding and exhausting, but that they feel obliged to participate in order to economically survive.317 As I have shown in this chapter, similar experiences are expressed by my interview participants and thus again, with a badge or title on your CV, it becomes easier to transcend power structures and gain social recognition in society.318

This emphasised precariousness associated with musicians’ occupations is closely comparable to the state of ambiguity. Katherine Butler Schofield [Brown] draws on the concept of liminality, in order to better understand the location of professional musicians in modern social hierarchies and the relations between musicians and their audiences. Schofield claims that professional musicians in all societies possess an institutional liminal status (to Turner’s terminology) in how the music enables them to move between different social spheres, crossing and recrossing boundaries of social rank, and dwelling permanently between two worlds.319 According to Turner, liminality is not just an act of crossing, it is also a condition, phase or space of temporary ambiguity, fluid and without status. Schofield notes how Turner places musicians in this liminal group: ‘Prophets and artists tend to be liminal […] people, “edgemen.”’320 I would suggest that this reasoning contributes to a deeper understanding of musicians’ realities, and sheds further light on the spoken ambiguities expressed by the interviewees in this chapter. This understanding will also work as an explanatory frame for the experiences conveyed in the next chapter: ‘Time to Audition: To Find Your Way’—when the players enter the audition room.

Initiation and Incorporation into the Ritual World: Narrative Structure and Emotional Encoding

In this chapter I have shown examples of how the values of Swedish folk music are performed on various levels within the rite of passage, enacted by the auditions. In the first separation phase, the players as initiates are immersed into a ritual world that actively evokes sensorial responses from the actors. Through the geographical setting of the auditions, the players encounter ideas and values of tradition and cultural heritage, emphasised in the nostalgic pre-rural past of Sweden manifested in buildings and material objects on site. In the act of registration, other equally important values such as formalisation and professionalisation are most explicitly performed. At the registration office, the overall nostalgic frame of the event is furthermore reinforced by the players’ sonic encounters. Traditional tunes on various instruments resonate in the room, and follow the player into the sequestered rehearsal space. Thus, the auditions form a social space that enables the actors to remember and perform together and make the linking of historical practices in present time tangible.

According to Victor Turner, ritual public iteration is capable of creating modification on all of its levels:

Ritual, in its full performative flow, is not only many-leveled, “laminated”, but also capable under conditions of societal change, of creative modification on all or any of its levels. Since it is tacitly held to communicate the deepest value of the group regularly performing it, it has paradigmatic functions, in both the senses argued for by Clifford Geertz. As a “model for” ritual can anticipate, even generate change; as a “model of”, it may inscribe order in the minds, hearts, and wills of participants.321

In the Zorn Auditions, the orderings of work are to a great extent achieved by narrative structuring, performed throughout the different stages in the passage. During the first phase of separation, this is perhaps most clearly embodied in the exhibitions that reinforce the ritual as a ‘model of.’ Historical images, facts, events, newspaper articles, pre-existing photos of players and important fore-runners, or statements and stories of musicians being awarded, are used as a sort of material pretexts to produce an ‘affective cartography of history’322, educating the player, yet again, in which kind of ritual they are participating in. Thus, the exhibitions clearly bestow agency upon the players. This is not just made through narration; equally important are the various emotional encodings that characterize the event. The affective experience associated with the institutionalised forms, that so many players remark on, ‘works to schematize understanding

321 Turner, From Ritual to Theatre, p. 82.
about historical events in terms of their significance for self. What is presented in the narrative by the institution concerns acts that all the players will experience for themselves in the audition room, and therefore become important facets for self-realisation and the identification as an initiate of the auditions.

The shared experience of participation, although differentiated and multivocal, as shown in this chapter, clearly contributes to the rituals strong effects, and to creating affective affinities between the actors involved—‘reinforcing we are all in this together.’

Thus, to ritually belong becomes the main aim for committing and engaging in the auditions, whether the act is performed in order to strengthen emotional bonds or directed towards the more commercial aspects of earning the title. A ranking system is further introduced into that sense of belonging, to establish a sense of order and fairness.

Another crucial aspect emphasised in this chapter is the unsettled ambiguity experienced by the participants. It sheds light on the liminal state of the auditions, and the liminal personae that the actors being initiated take on. The ambivalence is enacted in several ways: in the form of reluctance towards being scrutinised in music, as strategies of empowerment in a competitive environment, and as resistance towards how the auditions are performed. Here, the ordering struggle of the ritual as a ‘model for’ was put forward by the example of the dispute of *trail* between the players and the jury. This further emphasises the perceived importance by the community of what kind of visibility, attention and recognition that the auditions ought to represent. This concern is equally directed towards the folk music community as towards general public awareness, and is shared by both players and jury members. This example also highlights the potential of the rite of passage to be a ‘contested space for social action and identity politics—an arena for resistance, negotiation and affirmation.’

This observation contrasts to how Catherine Bell perceives the ritualisation process:

The agents of ritualization do not see how they project this schematically qualified environment or how they re-embroider those same schemes through the physical experience of moving about within its spatial and temporal dimensions. The goal of ritualization as such is completely circular: the recreation of a ritualized agent, an actor with a form of ritual mastery, who embodies flexible sets of cultural schemes and can deploy them effectively in multiple situations so as to restructure those situations in practical ways.

Contrary to Bell, I suggest that the players within the Zorn Auditions do see—and are very well aware of—how they re-embroider and replicate the

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schemes and routines expected of them. They constantly reflect, negotiate, and question their passage within the auditions and transform along the way. On the other hand, I partly understand Bell’s assertion of ritual circulation, since to be a successful player includes skills of orientation and re-orientation, to be able to restructure the ritualisation in ‘practical’ and self-beneficial ways, in order to be honoured with the badge. Importantly, according to my observations these choices are deliberately and consciously made.

The ambivalence expressed by the participants may be summarised in the words of one player: ‘It means everything and nothing. Everything, because it tells me that I’ve reached a point, and nothing, because it’s just a piece of paper.’ Indeed, to measure your musicality in juxtaposition to other performers is perceived as one of the main vital reasons for participation. The badge, title or ‘piece of paper’ is therefore described has having less value. However, this may rapidly shift for the involved players depending on the situation and can transform into significant symbols of musical quality and promotion, as well as, for some, the main objective in taking part in the auditions.

To conclude, this chapter has highlighted the players’ different priorities and reasons for taking part in the auditions. It has also elucidated some of the strategies used by the institution in becoming a transportable and useful obligatory point of passage for the actors. I have shown how the affective bonds amongst the players are strong, and may be described as part of the glue that holds the network together. The observations conducted have also shown how the iteration of the sets of acts performed contribute to fostering a sense of ritual belonging. This supports the claim by Roger Abraham that: ‘in the ritual world, repetition is commonly carried out to intensify, things done in unison convey the message that community exist and communion is possible.’

In the next chapter I will follow the players into the audition room and explore their sensorial experiences at audition. What do the players encounter once they step over the threshold into the audition room?

327 Interview: JD M/ 43 years old, Cow Horn, ZA.
2. Time to Audition: To Find Your Way

What is liminal is situated at a sensory threshold, something barely perceptible: posed between the implicit and explicit, between external and internal, and by extension, between familiar and alien. Indeed, the body itself can act as a threshold between itself and a material world.330

The threshold captures the temporary and fluent character of the world; it simultaneously separates spaces and binds them together, stressing awareness of the difference between them.331 By crossing over the threshold into the audition room the players enter a semi-private, unfamiliar space, leaving the public, familiar one behind. Passing over, hesitating and entering, the threshold holds within itself the moment of ‘being in transit’ and, as noted above, it becomes a resonant space of its own. Inhabiting that space involves physical work: finding your way and following the lines set out by the institution, in a dynamic negotiation between the familiar and the unfamiliar.332

In this chapter, I will explore the players’ transition over the threshold and their sensory and bodily experiences of audition. Key aspects of performing and passing a successful music audition is to understand the expected embodied practices, learn how to read the activities of others involved, and to respond appropriately.333 Of course, the experiences and previously-held knowledge of this act differ between players that have already performed at the auditions and players who have not auditioned before. Nevertheless, they all strive to be in alignment with the surrounding environment, following the definition of orientation by Sara Ahmed:

The work of inhabitance involves orientation devices; ways of extending bodies into spaces that create new folds, or new contours of what we would call liveable or inhabitable space. If orientation is about making the strange familiar,

through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails.334

This chapter also engages with experiences of disorientation and ritual failure. How do the players express their feelings of being ‘out of line’ or alienated in the moment of audition? And how are the strategies of getting back ‘in line’ performed?335 Before the audition, the players receive a letter stating their time and place of audition. The competitors may also read about the event at the website of the Zorn Badge.336 As a reminder, at the auditions the jury evaluate the players’ knowledge of the traditions from which the tunes and instruments are selected from. They consider rhythm, intonation, timbre, technique and the performers’ qualities as spelman.337

‘What Are You Supposed to Do, Really?’: Disorientation, Mystery and Audible Silence

As highlighted in the previous chapter, it is noteworthy how many of the players believe that it is important to participate in the auditions. This idea is performed by the institution in various ways and constructed by the environment surrounding the players. Yet, once in the audition room they get confused. Many of my interlocutors expressed a sense of disorientation and bewilderment about what was expected of them during the audition. Unsurprisingly, it was mostly players who were auditioning for the first time who made these remarks. They expressed their wishes to be adaptable and to be better oriented to the situation, but lacked the knowledge of exactly what to adapt to and how:

It’s hard to know the difference in what the jury is actually judging. I feel that it is all rather unclear, because you don’t find any information on the website about what they’re going to focus on. If I’m going to audition, what is one expected to do, really? I also felt that it was a bit awkward when I entered [the room], partly because they already knew which tunes I was going to perform and I was completely unprepared for that. […] I shook their hands; I didn’t really know what to do! And then everyone went silent. I expected to get a question, like: “Well, tell us something about yourself?” I’ve always thought a lot about tradition, that it is important to show that you follow a tradition and didn’t just learn the tunes from books. But it didn’t feel like it was important to them. Well, I told them anyway how I’d learned the tunes. But if I hadn’t said anything, I

334 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 11.
336 <www.zornmarket.se>
perhaps wouldn’t have needed to say anything but just got on with playing. It surprised me, because I thought that this was something which counted. Then maybe they would have asked later anyway: “Where have you learnt that tune?” It is possible. I don’t know. It felt a bit weird actually that they were so … well so quiet in some way … it was surprising actually […] it’s a bit of a mystery what you’re supposed to do. Really.

The sense of disorientation forms the foundation of the player’s story. The need to constantly reorient her behaviour to inhabit the audition space is brought to the fore. To solve the problem of this lack of information, players tend to ask advice from fellow musicians who have experience at the auditions. This concerns both the selection of tunes and how to best present them, as well as the expected behaviour within the audition room. The response also conveys the feeling of awkwardness, the jury members’ surprising and palpable silence, along with an enduring and vibrant atmosphere of mystery which lingers over the situation. These aspects elicit a common refrain from the participants. Another fiddle player described his first encounter with the jury in a similar manner. For him, this mysteriousness was experienced as almost intentionally constructed by the institution, creating unnecessary nervousness:

Well, I was pretty nervous. It was a rather tense situation and it felt a bit … […] I was a bit surprised because I thought I could… I’m used to standing in front of an audience and also to giving talks, but this felt almost on the verge of being… purposefully designed to scare one in some way, I guess: [It was a] beautiful but huge locale, very dark, the way they sat and were lined up, but also how they were so taciturn. It almost felt like they were creating unnecessary nervousness, which I believe affects how I played too […] I also found the whole thing, well maybe it’s a hard thing to solve: “Here, you stay in this room, and later someone will come and call for you.” Everything was just so very serious. Perhaps it’s a practical thing? But it was almost like they purposefully wanted to build up some kind of mystique round the whole thing.

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Interview: RW F/34 years old, Fiddle (B) debute.

339 ’Jag var ju rätt nervös. Det var en ganska spänd situation, det kändes nästan lite… […] Jag blev lite förvånad själv för att jag trodde nog att… jag är ju van att stå inför publik och så där och även
The ritual seriousness of the event is yet again emphasised in the above quotation, and is felt in both the overall arrangements and the specific atmosphere in the audition room. The player stresses how he wished the jury would have taken a more active role at the audition and helped the performers calm their nerves, inevitably caused by the performance setting. One suggestion was for the jury to respond with more questions after a tune, instead of being quiet, with their eyes fixed on their notes, or just saying ‘aha’. Importantly, the jury has decided not to applaud after each tune, due to the sensitive evaluation process and to avoid giving the players the wrong signals of approval or depreciation. Almost all the players I talked to during fieldwork mentioned the strange and disorienting feeling that stemmed from the absence of applause; that it rendered audible the complete silence. One coping strategy for the players was to close their eyes and imagine the sound of clapping hands and then slowly bow to mark the end of the routine. It became a way for them to transform the formal setting into the more natural act of performing in front of an audience. From my observations, the players also frequently made remarks about this awkward experience whilst they were performing.

The overwhelming and unpleasant feelings of nervousness and worry described in the fiddle player’s response above, characterizes a majority of the competitors’ answers: how you suddenly felt your heart pounding in your chest, your muscles tightened and your breath became more shallow and rapid. While your legs were shivering, you clutched the instrument with clammy hands and stiff fingers and tried to handle the bouncing bow. To stage a successful audition, it becomes crucial for many players to learn how to control or just accept these emotional or physical responses of the tense situation. Another competitor, who was awarded post bronze certificate and auditioned seven times, shared her experiences on the matter:

I become so incredibly nervous in there […] The jury tells me so each year as well: “You’re there [at the level of S] but it’s just that are so nervous” […] The main thing is just coming into the room where the jury is sitting. You don’t even see their feet. There’s no feedback, so to speak. In a normal context, when you

tala inför publik, men det där kändes nästan på gränsen till… konstruerad på något sätt, för att vara kuslig, tyckte jag […] Vacker men stor lokal, väldigt mörk, sättet de satt på och var uppställda och så, men även hur dem, de var väldigt färdiga liksom. Och det kändes nästan som att dem skapade en nervositet som kändes onödig som jag tror påverkade hur jag spelade också […] Och jag tycker även det här runtikring att det var, det kanske var svårt att lösa på något annat sätt också: “Då är du i det här rummet, och sen kommer någon och kallar på dig.” Det var som att det var så otroligt allvarligt allting, kanske är en praktisk lösning? Det är nästan som de bygger upp någon slags mystik kring det, utan att det är motiverat.’ Interview: JHS M/28 years old, Fiddle (C), debute.

340 Conversations with players and participant observations at the auditions 2012–2015.
341 Almost all of my interlocutors mentioned this. See for example Interview: BT M/29 years old, Nyckelharpa (C), auditioned two times.
play for dancing then you can somehow see if it’s working or not, or [you’ve got] an audience applauding. But here you get nothing. 342

The lack of feedback—specifically any physical and audible response to the player’s performance—is yet again brought forward as a contributing factor for the heightened anxiety. Interestingly, the jury deliberately have a long cloth on the table in front of them, reaching all the way down to the floor. It is presumably to prevent the players from being disturbed by the sight or movements of members’ legs or feet whilst keeping time or counting the tempo in the music, as mentioned in the quotation above. The jury is very strict about reducing movement, sound and noise within the audition room. On several occasions, members have addressed the archivists who record the auditions, asking them not to beat time with their hands, fingers or feet, since it distracts them from doing their job. Everyone present at the audition should remain still and silent, and all focus should be directed towards the performer. The jury has carefully planned the visual aspects of what the players encounter while entering the room, and how to make the performance as comfortable and effective as possible, for both parties. The players, on the other hand, have generally perceived the audition room as too strict, formal and clean, creating an artificial setting which clashes with the notions of the types of environment in which folk music is most commonly performed. The player above compares the situation with the more typical venues of dancing where she usually performs the tunes, such as many other spelmän and folk musicians. The disparity between music for dancing and music for the stage emerges in her answer.

Importantly, one of the jury members’ most deeply-held criteria for the auditions is that the player should be able to bring out the characteristics of the specific dance in their musical performance. Interestingly, this understanding is so prevalent within the jury that it was not even mentioned in the formal instructions or criteria for the auditions until after 2015. 343 The challenge of playing dance music in this setting was experienced to feel strange, and was also noted by another player who auditioned three times:

It’s very odd, really, because we play dance music in there. When I stand on a dancefloor and play for dancing, I have a totally different focus and the music sounds quite different. When you stand there in an audition, the crucial thing is to find the same energy in your playing which you’d use to get a whole dancefloor moving. But that’s really hard when four people are sitting completely still


343 This concerns the period of my fieldwork in 2012–2015.
and are staring at you. Then it is really hard to sustain the kind of “woohoo!” feeling [waves arms in the air and laughs]. But I found the situation today was really nice. They smiled at me and I had the feeling they were pretty happy, but then there’s always that strange feeling of “Oh, now they’re writing something”. But at the same time, you can’t think about that, because you might lose your focus and play an extra reprise or … and you analyse all those things afterwards […] “What did I do? Did I do everything I planned to? Did I play softly at that point? Did I say that?” […] Then you dwell on it until six o’clock in the evening, when you get to know. It’s a pretty extreme audition situation. Of course, you’re nervous. I think I am able to deliver around 80% of my normal capacity, because one knows that this is the time to deliver what I have been preparing for several months.344

The response describes the unsettling—albeit also exciting—feeling of balancing on a threshold. This player is trying to be attuned to the environment, reading the jury members’ behaviour in detail whilst self-reflexively analysing their own actions in the audition room. The sentiment also offers an alternative to the previous illustrations of the jury members as silent and morose, and instead describes the panel as warm and welcoming, with smiles and happy faces. The agony of waiting for the results to be revealed is also described, framing how the auditions involve risk-taking and uncertainty.

The difficulty of bringing out the ideal qualities of dance music in the audition room also draws attention to the presumed overall qualities of an excellent spelman. As discussed in the previous chapter, some players go even further and criticise the auditions’ current form. In their view, folk music—in which value is placed on being an entertainer, telling stories, interacting with the listeners and putting on a show—is certainly not suited to being tested or performed in this kind of environment. One of the few interviewed players to be awarded the Silver badge over ten years ago, had strong opinions on the matter:

I know many really skilled and established spelman who tremble all over when they have to go up before the Zorn Jury. And the jury sits there and thinks: “What the hell is this?” They know their name, and who it is, and the person’s

significance within the community, but they can’t give them a good mark because they play terribly in there [at the audition]. And I am one of them, I get terribly nervous when I enter the room. But never elsewhere. […] Many [of the players] I’ve talked to today or at the auditions say the same […] The problem is that when you come in, it catches you off guard. […] The Zorn Jury examine each note, the technique is the most important […] It wouldn’t be the thing to do either if you just stood there and told a bad joke, like you normally do when you prepare yourself and your performance. The situation is absurd; you can’t find it elsewhere. People say: “If you are capable of performing there, you are skilled.” […] but it’s just not true. It’s a bit like riding a camel when you’re supposed to be riding a bike [jokes]. I think the situation is so absurd that it doesn’t really give the spelmän a sporting chance.345

For this player, holding the audition behind closed doors removed the possibility of testing the most important part of being a skilled spelman: being able to entertain, improvise and capture an audience. Yet again, the formal setting is presumed to arouse nervousness and insecurity amongst the performers. As a reminder, the counter argument—by both the jury and others who advocate the auditions’ current procedure—is that it invites spelmän who are shy or less outgoing to try their luck in front of the jury, without being scrutinised in front of the whole community.346

All the examples addressed in this section are brought together by the players’ experiences of disorientation within the audition room. The similarity in their answers is striking. The encounter with the jury is described as weird, strange and odd or even absurd, shrouded with an atmosphere of mystery. On one hand, it is not surprising that the players feel nervous, worried or express self-doubt during audition. These feelings are often associated with performance anxiety, stress or stage fright; well-known emotional states for an individual when required to perform music in front of an audience. On the other hand, it is certainly noteworthy how this is perceived by the players to be almost deliberately reinforced by the jury, both through their behaviour and in the overall ar-


346 The newly started association Danmarks Rigsspillemaende has for similar reasons combined the Norwegian Kappleik system with the Swedish Zorn Auditions, and tests the players both behind closed doors in front of a jury and at a public event. Fieldwork in Denmark, 13 to 15 April, 2013.
rangement of the event. Their silence is interpreted as means of lending a kind of mystique and attractiveness to the auditions.

It is important to remember that the players meet different juries each year. Only three or four of the original nine jury members take part each summer, along with a local representative. As noted by one player who auditioned three times:

Yes, things were unusually nervy, and the jury was really quiet and said nothing and you didn’t really know what to do.

K: Was there a big difference compared with last year?
Yes! Really big. Or the first year: the jury said almost nothing either. They just sat there, very grumpy and they said “Hello”, but almost nothing after that until one of them asked for an extra tune. But last year, they were really nice and talked about all kinds of things and I talked to them as well […] and then when I was going to start playing I had loosened the bow […] and I had to finish and apologize and then start all over again. But that was fine, too.347

The silence in the audition room has many layers and is interesting from various perspectives. The silence is clearly active and affects the situation.348 Even if some of the jury panels are perceived as more receptive, as shown in the quotation above, it is clear that a majority of the interviewed players experienced the jury as surprisingly quiet and unresponsive.349 This was also one of the aspects that surprised me the most when I started to observe the auditions. Contrary to what one might presume from the players’ stories, the jury takes great care that the players feel welcome, relaxed and comfortable at the auditions, and the jury members often self-reflexively discuss their own behaviour. The jury follows a specific opening routine. One of the members usually addresses the player who enters the room and asks them if they prefer to sit or stand whilst playing, and then offers them the chance to try out the acoustics of the room. Another frequently used phrase is: ‘The stage is yours’ (Scenen är din), inviting the player to start performing. After each tune the jury members often nod and say ‘Thank you’, or ‘Aha’, marking the end of the performance. Sometimes the panel asks how the players have learnt the tunes and in the style of whom. However, this procedure tends to be performed more strictly in the beginning of the audition week or audition day. The jury does not always decide beforehand who shall

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347 ‘Det var ovanligt nervöst, och juryn var väldigt tyst och sa ingenting och man visste inte riktigt vart man skulle ta vägen. K: Var det stor skillnad om man tänker mot för förra året? Ja! Otroligt stor. Eller första året, då sa juryn ingenting heller, de satt bara där, väldigt buttra och de sa hej, men sen så de nästan inget mer, så var det en som önskade en låt till. Men förra året, då var de jättetrevliga, och pratade om allt möjligt, och jag pratade med dem […] och sen när jag väl skulle börja spela, då hade jag skruvat lös stråken […] och var tvungen att avsluta och säga ursäkta och börja om. Men det gick bra det också.’ Interview: EML F/29 years old, Fiddle (PBC) auditioned three times.


349 This concern both my own conducted interviews (2012-2015) and the interviews conducted by DL and TS in 2006, Mora.
address the player, and the structure of the auditions tends to become blurred the longer they remain in the audition room. After listening to about twenty players they may feel tired of asking the same questions over and over again. A new player entering the room, is yet another one in succession. For the player, however, this entry is their one and only moment. And, as shown in this section, the players often analyse that experience in detail. These different sensorial worlds converge in the audition room. From my observations the jury tends to get very quiet after lunch, and I even witnessed one of the members fall asleep during a performance. The archivists often notice when jury members get tired, and sometimes directly address them: ‘You need to sharpen up now!’

The voices addressed in this section also point towards the bodily restrictions of engaging in the musical performance in the audition room. I found the noted lack of applause or physical movement particularly interesting, since it to great extent embodies the presumed awkward feeling of the event. In negotiating the spatial context, we situate our physical being alongside those of others. In these cases the extension of the players’ bodies into space fails. In a similar way, to clap your hands and show your appreciation when someone performs for you is such a strong learned bodily reflex. For me, this was one of the hardest parts while doing participant observations: I had to battle the bodily urge to clap my hands, since it is such a strong corporal sensation. One of the members in the secretariat also commented on their experience in the audition room: ‘I had to sit on my hands not to clap!’ These restrictions by the jury create a stillness both in sound and in bodily movement at the auditions, which evidently has a significant effect on the players’ musical performances.

During my interview with the jury in January 2016, I asked the jury members to share their thoughts on the players’ confusion about what they were supposed to do during the auditions. The members responded in various ways. One of the members directly commented that he had reflected on the matter. He suggested that one member should stand up and better introduce the performer to the situation, the other members in the panel, and where they should stand whilst performing. The member added: ‘It is not that welcoming to enter [the room] and four people are sitting there behind a table with white table cloths. It reinforces a kind of distance. […] Staring and looking grumpy.’

350 See Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 11.
351 Pink, Doing Sensory Ethnography, pp. 27–28.
they can play anywhere. The communication of information beforehand was, according to the jury, the responsibility of the secretariat.

My fieldwork and dialogue with the jury has certainly had implications on the institution’s practice. In 2016, both the information on the Zorn Badge’s website and the information letters sent to the players before audition had been changed. Instead of the previous letter, which mainly stated the audition time and when to be there, a more detailed description of the event was given. The selection of tunes was also further specified: how they should correspond to both traditional practice and the specific style of dance. This example clearly shows how the institution finds it important to constantly develop their practice.

This section has engaged with the players’ sensorial experiences of disorientation at audition. The next section turns to the competitors’ strategies of handling these situations and how they are trying to get ‘back in line’ again, embodying the presumed ideals of the institution.

‘The Stage is Yours’: Getting Back in Line

Stick to what you’ve prepared because not many can really improvise […] Hold your ground, because this jury is a bit, how to say, it’s a bit like talking to a brick wall. They say: “Do as you like. Play the way you want.” So it’s just down to you.

DL [interviewer]: And that’s not a good answer, not what you want to hear? No, you’d like a bit of guidance, but that’s not how it works here. You just have to run your own race in there [at audition] and it’s good to have a plan […] Well, at least that’s what works for me.

The importance of being well-prepared for what you are going to say and do within the audition room is noted by almost all the players. As described in the

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354 Email correspondence with one of the members in the secretariat, 15 May, 2016. The letter of information to the players at the Zorn Auditions in 2016. See also information about the Zorn Auditions in 2017 at the website of The Zorn Badge. Interestingly, in spring 2017 the Zorn Committee also offers a series of workshops at Gotland, where the auditions will be held in the summer of 2017. The workshops aim to prepare the players for audition, and include conversations about tradition and musical criteria, as well as the opportunity to try to perform in the very same room where the auditions will next be held. <www.zornmarket.se> [Accessed 26 March 2017].


quotation above, players often find the jury’s inviting phrases—‘The stage is yours’, ‘Do what you like’—to be disorienting. To believe in oneself as a *spelman* and show confidence as a performer then becomes even more important in order to handle the lack of guidance by the jury. Another player, who was auditioning for the first time, voiced a similar approach:

You can’t go in there and make excuses. You just have to go in and show them what’ve you’ve got: “This is my way of playing. This is me!” And, then, if it doesn’t suit this format, then it’s important to be open to what they’re saying this evening: “Think about this, maybe you could do it better.” Then you have to consider: “Does it suit my way of playing?” Well, it might, and then you need to incorporate it. It feels like I’m here to try it out today. To check what level I’m at. […] If I don’t agree [with the jury] then I have to make a choice: either to ignore their opinions or to take the advice and make something good out of it. I think there’s a lot of experimentation the first time around.357

In this self-reflexive response, self-confidence is perceived to be important, along with humility and sensitivity towards the jury member’s advice. The player further underlined how it is vital not to become too self-assured and overdo it, since the performance then loses its ‘folk-like’ expression and becomes too staged. In this regard, many players believe the selection of tunes to be of the highest importance for the jury. This was especially noted by competitors who were auditioning for the first time. For them, the tunes were chosen to correspond with the jury panel’s presumed musical tastes and preferences: they should be old, preferably from one single *spelman* or a very specific local musical area. On top of that, legacy and familial relations to certain *spelmän* were assumed to increase the chances of being awarded, since they allow the performer to embody a ‘real’ genealogical link to history and past practices.358 Interestingly, some of these ideas amongst the players tend to change the more times they have auditioned. Instead of thinking about what the jury desires, the performers stress their own relationships with the tunes, and their personal musical expression is brought to the foreground. As noted by one fiddle player who auditioned four times:


Of course, deciding on which tunes to play is a rather long process. You have to feel they carry enough weight and that they mean something to you personally, and that there’s also something you want to convey. Of course there’s a certain amount of adjustment [...] one thing leads to another [...] I don’t think you should audition and do something that is not grounded in yourself. [...] I need to feel that the music I perform is something that I want, that it carries my message, in some way.\(^{359}\)

An important aspect to take into consideration here is that after auditioning a couple of times the players have become more familiar with the procedure, by slowly getting to know the jury members’ musical tastes and sensibilities. It might become easier then to focus more on elements of individual performance and work with the jury members’ comments from the feedback conversations. Players also stress how, from the beginning, they thought that the jury favoured intricate or technically advanced tunes. However, after participation they realised how the jury rather encouraged them to find their own way of playing and to perform tunes they like, which meant that simpler tunes worked as well. Other frequent advice from the players included: ‘Pick the tunes you play the most’ and the ones ‘you know really well’, or are ‘your own favourites’, since these are well-rehearsed and might prevent you from failing.\(^{360}\) This is perceived to be especially important for the first ‘starting tune.’ Likewise, being prepared to play an extra tune or two at the jury’s request is also frequently addressed. The questions posed by the jury often surprise newcomers, who find it difficult to interpret if it is good or bad to be asked to play an extra tune. The jury members often ask if they are insecure about the level of the player’s performance. The players quickly learn to expect such questions from the jury and generally interpret it as a positive opportunity to show more of their musicality—because of this, they were often happy to receive the question. Yet again, for the majority of the players it also seems to be important to show a variety of types of tunes. Bearing this issue in mind, one nyckelharpa player who was awarded the Silver badge (after trying nine times) shared what he had learned throughout the process:

> You have one chance, once a year. And, if it is a competition, you are competing with yourself. That much I’ve learned [...] It’s not a competition against the jury, or against any other spelman. It’s more a matter of getting your nerves together and keeping the situation under control. And that’s what the jury has to be able to judge, what it does judge. But you often think it’s the tune selection

\(^{359}\) ‘Det klart att det är en ganska lång process att hitta låtarna. Man måste känna att de bär och att de säger mig någonting och det är någonting som jag också vill förmédla. Det är klart att det finns en anpassning, [...] det ena ger de andra. [...] Jag tror inte att man ska spela opp eller göra något som inte bottnar ordentligt i en själv [...] Jag måste ju i den musik som jag framför känna att det här är någonting som jag vill, ett budskap som jag har på nåt sätt.’ Interview: MH M/57 years old, Fiddle (B) auditioned four times, by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303.

\(^{360}\) See SVABA4303—SVABA4306.
which is important [...] or maybe what you eat beforehand, or if you’re related to the right person, there’s a lot of that kind of thing.\(^{361}\)

For this player, the audition enables the jury to judge how the player copes with this specific situation; all the other aspects are perceived to be superfluous. This response reflects the attitude brought forward in the previous section, and yet again puts focus on the method rather than the content of the ritual.

The selection of repertoire is clearly a matter of concern for all players and the collection ‘Swedish Tunes’ (\textit{Svenska Låtar}) is frequently used by the participants. It is believed that this collection particularly captures the timeframe with the music the jury is most interested in. Many players, both newcomers to the auditions as well as more experienced participants, share this understanding, which includes avoiding tunes from the twentieth century, and instead focusing on the time period before 1900.\(^{362}\) Others stress how they do not care at all about the age of tunes and would even play their own new compositions for the jury. Clearly, their responses are varied. Similarly, players are often concerned with how to best demonstrate their knowledge about the tunes, and to introduce them in a pleasant manner. One player shared his experiences on the matter:

\[\text{Last year I played tunes from Eks-Härad, where I’ve got family and so could talk about it a lot with them [...] and the last tune was a polska by Per Löv [...] Before I played the tune, I told a long story about him, who he was and also about a recording of his music [...] It can be found in ‘Swedish Tunes’ (Svenska Låtar) [...] and you can tell in the recordings that he varied the melody a lot. [...] Then in the talk afterwards, one [of the jury members] said: “You don’t have to start with an entire thesis for each tune [...] It’s ok to go in and say nothing and just play really well, that’s what matters.” She seemed a bit irritated that I took so much time.}\(^{363}\)

\(^{361}\) ‘Man har \textit{en chans en gång om året på sig. Och om det är en tävling, så är en tävling med sig en själv, det har jag lärt [...] Det är inte tävling mot juryn, eller det är inte tävling mot någon annan spelman, utan det är att ha nerver i styr och att kunna ta situationen. Och det klarar juryn att bedöma, det är det som de bedömer. Men ofta så tror man att det är låtvalet som är viktigt [...] eller kanske vad man åter, eller att man kanske ska vara släkt med rätt person, det finns många sådana aspekter.’ Interview: EA M/35 years old, Nyckelharpa (S), auditioned nine times, by TS, 2006, Mora, SVABA4306.

\(^{362}\) Interviews and conversations with the players at the auditions 2012–2015. See for example: SVABA4303.

\(^{363}\) ‘I fiol så spelade jag låtar från Eks-Härad, där jag har släktingar ifrån så jag pratade en hel del om det [...] och sista låten var en polska av Per Löv [...] innan jag spelade upp låten så drog jag igång en lång historia om han och vem han var, och t.o.m. någon uppteckning av hans låtar [...] Den finns i “Svenska Låtar” [...] så man såg i uppteckningarna att han varierade melodin jättemycket. Sen i eftersnacket sa [en av jurymedlemmarna]: “Du behöver inte sätta igång med en hel avhandling om varje låt [...] det ska gå bra och komma in och säga ingenting och bara spela jättebra, och det är det som spelar roll.” [...] Hon verkade lite små irriterad på att jag tog så mycket tid.’ Interview: BT M/29 years old, Nyckelharpa (C), auditioned two times.
On one hand, after the players’ first try it becomes easier to return to the auditions, since they know a little bit more about what to expect. On the other hand, it also becomes crucial for the players to show their improvements and how they have worked with the jury’s comments from the last year. One horn player reflected on the differences between the first and second time at the auditions:

Now, I’m much more comfortable, I can talk to them about what I’m doing and why I’m doing it. But the first time, you think you are trying to tick all the boxes, although you don’t know what the boxes are. But the first-time experience is wonderful—in the end I came out, I’m thinking “Oh! Next time, I will do this, and I will do that, and I love to tell them about this, I love to tell them about that.” Brilliant.364

As indicated in the quotation above and shown in the previous chapter, the players very much appreciate the feedback conversations with the jury. These occasions are also experienced as being much more relaxed and welcoming, in comparison with the encounter in the audition room. One of the few players who performed on hurdy-gurdy described his experience in the following words:

It was both nice and frustrating. It was nice because there was no table in there, and you felt like a folk musician among folk musicians. It’s like there wasn’t the same barrier, the sense of formality the whole thing had—that was gone. And when they talked and said things, you felt they were saying things they had really thought through as well, both the positive and negative things. So, it was a bit nicer and more relaxed, in that specific situation. But also a bit frustrating, because one of them made a comment which I would really have liked to answer. If there had been for example an academic debate, I could have talked about evidence and so on. You still feel that it is more relaxed, but you still get the sense of “we’re the ones who decide.”365

As noted by this player, the feedback is often described by the competitors as being honest and enriching. Still, it is the jury that sets the agenda and has the final say on the matters discussed, and the players sometimes hold back on their own views in order to show respect for the jury and the ritual they are participating in.

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364 Interview: JD M/43 years old, Cow Horn (C), debut.
365 ’Det var både skönt och frustrerande. Det var skönt på det sättet att det var inget bord i närheten, man kände sig ändå som en folkmusiker bland folkmusiker. Där var det liksom inte samma gräns, där var den väldigt officiella prägeln på det hela, där var den borta. Och när de pratade och sa saker och ting, så kände man att det var väldigt mycket av vad de tyckte många gånger också, både positivt och negativt. Så det var väl lite mer skönt och avslappnat just den situationen. Men också lite frustrerande, just eftersom det kom någon med en kommentar som jag jätegärna skulle vilja svara tillbaka på. Om det hade varit t.ex. en akademisk debatt kunde man […] prata belägg och så. Man känner fortfarande att det är avlappnat här, men det är ändå ”vi som bestämmer.”’ Interview: GH M/41 years old, Hurdy Gurdy (B), auditioned three times.
Omnipresent in all the examples in this section is how the players connect a successful audition with sincerity and honesty in their own musical performance. In order to make the stage your own and get back ‘in line’ again, the players stress the importance of playing ‘from your heart’, to ‘have fun’ and to find yourself within the tradition. As noted by one player: ‘Being the tradition and making the tradition’ rather than working alongside, with, or next to the tradition. Music is certainly recognised as powerful means of self-expression. The ability to evoke real-time communication through the musical performance and convey messages is believed to be of the utmost importance to impress the jury.

As shown in the previous sections, many players experience the auditions as somehow strange or mysterious. Despite the awkward feelings the event tends to leave behind, the players interestingly keep coming back to the auditions. In the following sections, I will further explore the strong emotions that the auditions tend to evoke, and shed light on the players’ urge to return again.

On or Off the List?

Join me in Korrö again, at the auditions in 2015. We are waiting in the yard at the audition site and it is soon time for the list of awards to be announced. More and more people are slowly gathering. Some of them are playing together, others are talking or buying their recording from the archivist of Svenskt Visarkiv. The time is getting closer to six o’clock. The jury is nowhere to be seen. The door of the annex opens, and one member of the secretariat walks out with a paper in his hand. He immediately captures the players’ attention, and continues to walk towards the green door. More people are approaching. The members of the secretariat are documenting the event by taking photos, and I am as well. Once there, he attaches the paper to the door, and covers it with another blank page, and then announces that the result is ready. To further the suspense, and to mark the special occasion, he slowly moves the blank page downwards, until all the names on the underlying paper are revealed. A few seconds of silence follow, and everyone stands still. Who shall take the first step to find out if their name is on the list? After a couple of seconds, the two players standing in front start to move closer towards the door. A sudden burst of feelings. One player shouts out loud, the joy of victory, and then gives the person next to them a long embrace. Other players directly turn away when they see the results, trying to hide the disappointment in their faces. The newly awarded riksspelmän are being congratulated, and now the jury also start to approach the scene. The panel inter-

366 ‘Hitta sig själv i det traditionella, jättehäftigt!’ See for example Interview: ML F, Fiddle (B) by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4305.
367 Interview: VD F/43 years old, Bagpipe (B), debut. See also McDonald, ‘Tradition as Personal Relationship’, pp. 60–64.
mingles, and one of them is taking photos of the players. Tears of joy and happiness are shared with sad faces. People are staying in the yard for a while, hugging and supporting each other, creating a murmuring of voices. The secretariat does short interviews with the newly awarded players, to display on the webpage. Some players are then seen leaving the site alone, others in pairs or in groups, with their arms around each other. Some players wait until later, when the site is empty, to approach the door and find out how they did. There is indeed no hurry; now the next phase of awaiting follows. A new list is attached to the door: it is the order in which the players will talk to the jury. Five more hours to go…

The ethnographic sketch illustrates the affective tensions during the phase of incorporation. Similarly to a music contest, there are ‘winners and losers’—those who will find themselves on the list, and those who are left out. The initiation rite may also be frightening and involve strong emotions, an aspect that will be addressed in the next section.

Step by Step: ‘Once You’ve Started….’

A majority of the interviewed players have auditioned several times before, and a common expression is that ‘I can’t really let it go now, once I’ve started.’ One player, just awarded the Silver Badge, explained the urge to keep coming back to the auditions, year after year, with the following words:

When I had auditioned the first time, and then I also won a competition in connection to the auditions […] then I really got the wind in my sails and I felt that I’m good at this. I wanted to see how far I could go […] and that I could really get something out of it, I can be good at this, and then I couldn’t stop. […] I guess they [the jury] wants to see how you become better and better. You can’t get Silver straight away, when you are completely unknown, so that really encouraged me to continue. And perhaps it’s in fact not so much the badge, or the certificate, that’s important in the end, but rather the whole long process I’ve been through. How my playing has changed … it’s like I’ve found my own playing style. And that will probably continue to change through the years until I stop playing, which I will never do while I’m alive.

368 Assembled from participant observations at the auditions 2012–2015.
369 In Turner’s theory of rites of passage, violence is inherited in liminality. Often with symbolic actions of death, or physical starvation or blood offerings etc. Clearly, those acts are not part of the audition practices. But the harsh ordeal of the audition test, may be comparable to a phase involving strong emotions and mixed feelings for the players, it is a tough test to go through. Turner, The Ritual Process. A similar comparison is brought forward in connection to the reality show Idol, by Koos Zwan and Tom ter Bogt: ‘Can a Zero Become a Hero?’, in Adapting Idols: Authenticity, Identity and Performance in a Global Television Format, ed. by Koos Zwan and Jost de Bruin (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 151–168.
370 See for example, Interview: JH and AM.
371 ‘När jag väl hade spelat upp en gång, och då vann jag även en tävling i samband med uppspelningen […] Och då fick jag väl vatten på min kvarn och kände att det här är jag bra på. Jag vill se
Here, there is no ambivalence towards participating, and it is clear that the player enjoys the challenges of contests and auditions. The positive attitude is therefore not surprising, since the player just completed the rites of passage, and got incorporated into the community of rikspelmän. Hence, the response lingers on transformations; how the auditions and the jury’s feedback have changed her way of playing and contributed to finding her own personal style and expression. It supports the claim that: “To enact any kind of rite is to perform, but to enact a rite of passage is also to transform.”

The jury often refers to the auditions as a way “to get a driver’s license in folk music.” Once the player is awarded the Silver Badge and becomes a rikspelman, then their ‘real’ musical life within the folk music community begins. Contrary to the jury, the players never themselves speak of the auditions as a driver’s license. Instead, value is often given to the process and journey through the auditions, rather than the certificate in the end. These expressions might be interpreted as strategies in making sense of failure. However, from my observations and interviews, it seems like the players truly find the process of returning enriching. For some, it even becomes the main aim of participation. The answer above also implies that an inherent part of the process is that you cannot be awarded on your first try, you need to return again and again, because the jury wants to see and experience the player’s transformation, before giving their endorsement. Additionally, this recurring trope is comforting for the players who do not succeed on the first try.

Indeed, alongside experiences and emotions of joy and happiness, the event also triggers disappointment and desolation. One player, after trying over ten times, emotionally explained the urge to keep coming back to the auditions:

> It is a challenge for spelmän, and a very fun thing to do and… but as I said, I remember how happy I got when it went well. I would really like to feel that spark of joy… through others too […] Some, you really care about whether they succeed, you get so happy for them […] So, it’s like a real spark of joy at that moment—the kind you want everyone to be able to experience. But there are many sources of joy in life, this isn’t everything.

373 Critics claim that this process also masks the means for the institution to finance their organisation, rather than to put ‘the best musicians’ into focus. Receiving the title may in the end be expensive for the individual player.
374 ‘Det är ju en utmaning för spelmän, det är ju en väldigt rolig grej och… men som sagt, jag minns ju hur glad jag blev då när det gick bra då. Så den glädjekicken vill jag… jag upplever den genom andra också […] En del känner man för väldigt mycket om de lyckas, man gläds med dem […] Så
The last sentence was spoken with a trace of sadness, which also highlights the affective tensions in the event. The participants need to frequently handle disappointment, and reliving the feeling of being awarded becomes an important motivation to try again. To accomplish the next step, often the Bronze badge, is by many described as the main aim, rather than to aspire for the Silver badge. A fiddle player, who auditioned six times, reflected on his journey by saying:

I thought it went really well the first time. I wasn’t nervous at all. But I guess there was no pressure, no self-expectations. I got a certificate [clears his throat]. My goal since then has been the Bronze, but it hasn’t really worked out so well the other times, because each time I just got more and more nervous. And it really shows. You ask yourself: “Why do I put myself through this?” and I’ve asked myself the very same question [laughs!]. But, in a way: what else can you do?375

The last question was posed as a gesture of resignation, and it is clear that many players found it difficult to talk about their failures. As previously shown, almost all players addressed the tough feelings of nervousness. In addition, the returning players also remarked on how they became more nervous the more times they tried, as evident in the quotation above. It became embedded in their experience of auditioning.376 One harmonica player, who had already received the post Bronze certificate, recalled his fifth try and the experience of getting closer to Silver: ’Indeed, [with every try] the more nervous you get!’377 Some players also expressed embarrassment and shame for trying so many times, over a time period of ten to twenty years, without ever succeeding again.

These sentiments are also examples of how the ritualization ‘periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable.’378 Thus, the repeated social investment in following the lines involves time, resources and energy. For the players, the ‘promises’ of return, in the words of Sara Ahmed, sustain the very will to keep going. The more times they try, the stronger the urge for and commitment to success gets:

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376 See for example, Interview: LO F/49 years old, Fiddle (PBC), auditioned seven times, by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4304.
377 ‘Och nervösare blir man, det är ju så!’ Interview: OA, M/70 years old, Harmonica (PBC), by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303.
So we follow the lines, and in following them we become committed to ‘what’ they lead us to as well as ‘where’ they take us. […] We are pressed into lines, just as lines are the accumulation of such moments of pressure.379

The promises of return, do not only have to do with status. It may also be an accomplishment for yourself—hidden from the view of others. For example, the previously quoted fiddle player expressed the aim of being awarded the Bronze badge as follows: ‘Yes, it would be nice. It doesn’t have to be on show […] it [the badge] can sit in a drawer. But you can see it on the inside, something like that.’380

The just-cited players mostly expressed modesty and understanding towards the jury’s judgement of their musical performances. For other players, the jury’s decisions may instead evoke resentment and a sense of mistreatment. One such example is a harmonica player who got angry after the consultation with the jury, and swore to never participate again. The player experienced that the jury was too occupied in judging technical skills, rather than musicality and claimed that the older autodidact musicians ‘did not stand a chance’ against the younger educated and skilled performers. The player expressed suspicion towards the music teachers in the jury. From his point of view, they got hung up on trifles and he would rather be judged only by fellow spelmen.381 The player explained:

The Zorn Badge can lose its way and become too careful. Of course, it is important to keep the feeling for the old things […] They […] who sat on the jury last year […] if I compare, it was my third year to audition, and they were a real tough lot. They sat and looked at each little detail and bodily movement. One of them claimed I kept moving my right leg to the beat, but I was so nervous that my leg started shaking. If you focus on that, and you’re not given a chance to explain it during audition: “why do you shake your leg or why do you move your leg like that”? [referring to the jury] I’m so incredibly nervous. They use it in their judgement, and then you don’t have a chance […] I think how I play is the most important thing.382

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380 Interview: KW M/74 years old, Fiddle (C) by DL, 2006, Mora, SVABA4303.
381 Interview: KT M/73 years old, Harmonica (C), auditioned three times.
Two years later I met the player at the auditions again, happy and in a good mood. He said: ‘It just worked out, I was nearby and took the chance to try again.’ The urge to try again became stronger than the feeling of disagreement.

By returning to the auditions, the participants in a sense dwell on the threshold. From this point of view, the ritual is also efficacious in transporting the players into another group formation, in which they share the experience of auditioning. Clearly, many players revisit the auditions on a regular basis and they are important for the sustainability of the network, since they reproduce the lines directed by the institution. Of course, there are also those players that never return again, but still share amongst themselves the involvements of participation and rejection. These experiences may be individually satisfying, but are incomplete from the perspective of the rites of passage.\textsuperscript{383} Paradoxically, the players that complete the effective transit to a well-defined post-liminal status as rikst Challenge never return to the auditions. Hence, it is the players that stay that contribute to uphold the organisation’s practices.

The Promise of Return: Transforming the Voluntary into the Desirable

In this chapter a certain mosaic of images emerges of how the players are actively reorienting themselves at audition, whilst also trying to balance on the threshold. Their sentiments clearly point towards how the lack of information together with diffuse and open criteria, contribute to senses of disorientation and confusion during audition. I suggest that the audition practices are informed by the idea of ‘learning by doing’ and value the processes of musical progress and ‘maturing’ in terms of time. Part of the idea of the event is that the players shall revisit the auditions again. One main ramification of this is that the players then are required to first learn the preferred behaviour and norms through participation, before they may participate successfully. Hence, the prevalent mode of communication through existing relationships facilitates success for those with previous experience of the scene, but creates barriers and anxiety for those with no former contact.\textsuperscript{384}

The players employ various strategies in order to make the stage their own and to handle the unsettling feelings of disorientation in the audition room. For some, the main focus is placed on the selection of tunes, along with careful preparations of both the introductory statement and the musical performance. For others, the personal relationship towards the traditional tunes and their own


musical expression is believed to be of the utmost importance for a successful performance. The affective dimension of the auditions also brings forward the aspect of ritual failure, and how to handle feelings of disappointment. The ‘promises of return’, sustain the very will for the competitors to continue trying, despite previous let-downs.\(^{385}\) It becomes clear how the Zorn Auditions are effective in transforming the voluntary into the desirable, as well as initiating the player into another strong affective group formation; of those players that share the experience of auditioning.

I found the experienced overall mysteriousness and strangeness of the event to be very interesting, including the fact that it is perceived by some players as being deliberately reinforced. It is clear how the auditions maintain their attractiveness and desirability by being esoteric and less transparent. It somehow becomes a way for the institution to protect and strengthen their own trademark \textit{rikstspelman}. Moreover, the debates and rumours surrounding the auditions are often addressed by the jury as manifestations and affirmations of the significance of the Zorn Badge.\(^ {386}\) The jury members are well aware of how the auditions—due to being held behind closed doors—may contribute to form ‘myths’ around the event. As noted by one member: ‘No one can hear […] how we are reasoning in our deliberations. It’s perfect for myth-making.’\(^ {387}\) And another member chimed in: ‘At the same time it shows how important the badge is. That myths form around it, that it’s so important even if some people think it’s crap, but actually it is really important.’\(^ {388}\)

Chapters One and Two of this thesis have mainly explored the auditions from the players’ point of view. In the following two chapters I will attend to the jury’s involvement and experiences of participation. How and why do they engage in the auditions, and how is it to sit on the other side of the table?

\(^{385}\) See Ahmed, \textit{Queer Phenomenology}, p. 17.
\(^{386}\) Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm. See also Kaminsky, ‘The Zorn Trials and The Jante Law’, p. 38.
3. Impossible Decisions: Jury Perspectives on the Zorn Auditions

Art gives form to human feeling; it is the shape that is taken by our perception of the world, guided as it is by the specific orientations, dispositions and sensibilities that we have acquired through having had things pointed out or shown to us in the course of our sensory education.389

Imagine you are a jury member, sitting in line behind a table in a warm room. Having listened already to fifty players, you are tired, a little jaded even, and have the feeling of being almost glued to the chair. Your colleagues are in good spirits, joking and laughing at a prank but one of them suddenly says: ‘Listen, we need to sharpen up and stay focused now, we must behave in a professional way.’ The door opens and you get a glimpse of a face. ‘Are you ready to start now?’ You all answer yes, in chorus. You make the usual remarks as the player appears. ‘Welcome, the stage is yours… try the acoustics if you’d like.’ The performer lifts the instrument slowly. Driving the bow randomly at first, turning around as if trying to grasp the sound and figure out how it bounces there. The schottis played by the previous performer still resonates inside your body. The memory of the rhythm vibrates inside you, and you seem to feel it on your skin.

In what may feel like a single moment, you are to demonstrate that you have the expert knowledge and capacity to make a fair and reasonable judgement of a musician’s skill during a performance. The performer starts to play a polska. You recognize the tune. You wonder about choice of bowing. You notice that the fiddle has resonant strings. You wonder if the panel really approved that. You glance at your fellow colleagues, but no one seems to be reacting. The technique is imperfect: nerves, perhaps. You try to smile but at the same time you are taking notes. Does the performer demonstrate the skills required for a bronze badge? Your body seems to think so, keeping time with your foot. You hear a voice saying: ‘So, we thank you.’ The player walks out. You think: that was quick, is it already over? What will hit me next?

Embodied Skills and Ways of Knowing

The atmosphere of ritual seriousness, which at times characterised the previous part of this thesis, is at the beginning of my sketch above replaced with high spirit, joy and laughter. I wrote it in an attempt to lead the reader towards tactile and experiential ways of knowing, to evoke a feeling; to capture a sense of liveliness and the brimming of felt qualities in the precarity of the situation. I also wished to highlight tension between felt experience and the commitment towards the assignment to valorise traditionally informed musical performances, i.e. the quality of being a gatekeeper and thus part of an elite group formation. Just as in the case of the sketch opening Chapter One, I assembled it through defining moments of shared experience with the jury, from inside the audition room in 2012—2015 and by participant observations of the jury’s deliberations and open ended semi-structured interviews with the jury.

Auditions bring up crucial issues of the status of uncertainty. Artistic evaluations are open, fragile, unpredictable risk-taking activities, involving hesitations and reappraisals of advices, tastes and skills. The jury members value musicality, even with the difficulties and ambiguities of the notion, and are forced to give marks by measurable criteria and, occasionally, using contradictory norms. Uncertainty is thus a realistic feature of value and quality judgements of musical performances—and the jury knows this very well.

This chapter engages with the emotional actuations of the jury’s work, their aesthetic sensibilities and how they proceed to make decisions in uncertain situations. With special attention to the jury’s deliberations, I attend to the lines that direct the jury to their sensory education in order to explore what they are oriented towards—and against—in their different judgements. How do the repetitions of actions lead the jury in particular directions? I will also discuss how they inhabit the listening process and how it plays out in the verbal pedagogy they use. One jury member self-reflexively explained how their main challenge during evaluation is to transform the active feeling of perceptual and sensorial engagement in the music into words:

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Well, all of us who sit on a jury have an intuitive feeling of what is good. The problem is how to communicate that feeling with words… with […] language, to reach consensus with the terms at hand. After all, there isn’t really a language for describing music, since music just goes right into your head, regardless of language, and makes you feel something. But to be able to express that in some kind of formulation of words is really hard. Still, that’s what we are doing, or trying to do all the time.394

In the following chapter, I trace and explore the social practices of how the jury develop and circulate a vocabulary of value to make effective musical assessments.395 I engage with how the jury negotiate the vagaries of live performances, and how they handle alternative embodiments in a context in which particular criteria of traditionality are upheld. The first part of the chapter explores what it means to be a jury member and the broader mapping of the boundaries of tradition. These observations lead into the second part, in which the crucial roles of musical instruments are placed in the heart of the discussion. My analysis foregrounds the jury’s ideas, values and notions of how Swedish folk music most preferably should sound within the auditions.

To get a better sense of how the jury works, I start by attending to their own voices and experiences of taking part in the auditions. I explore the ways in which the jury approach musical evaluations and handle challenges and discrepancies within their group.

On the Other Side of the Table

To be part of the jury is described by the members as a great honour, involving responsibility and strong commitments. Their stories of how they got invited to be members of the jury resemble almost spiritual experiences. One of the jury members recalled the situation when the flattering question was posted: ‘I was out walking with my family when I got the telephone call. The world stopped spinning for a moment.’ Another jokingly described it as ‘a marriage proposal,’ although in a reverential tone. A third member stated how becoming a rikspelman was amongst the greatest moments in life for him, next to becoming a parent. On top of that, to receive the request to join the jury was another recognition of competence and skills.396 Their sentiments clearly resonate with

395 See Born, ‘For a Relational Musicology’, p. 233.
396 Interview with Jury panel, 20 July 2015, Korrö.
the emotional satisfaction of ritual initiation, this time into the exclusive jury group. Yet this musical elevation also comes with sacrifices. Not everyone accepted the request immediately and instead expressed doubts, mainly due to the jury’s exposed position and the harsh critique directed towards the institution. Others talked about the importance of support and understanding from their families to be able to oblige to the jury work, especially since the auditions are held during summer, the usual time planned for holiday and leisure. Nevertheless, in the end they ‘could not resist’ the opportunity and their own desire to join the jury.

The individual jury members often speak about their own try-outs and recall how they felt during audition. Many of them auditioned several times before succeeding and met with different jury panels. Interestingly, the jury members’ own stories to a great extent resemble those of the players, highlighted in Chapter Two. In general, the feeling of disorientation is innately portrayed as part of the first encounter. The experience of not agreeing with the juries’ feedback or having difficulties in understanding it was also a common refrain. However, after taking some time to digest the advice given, the value of the critique is usually realized and then voiced as given ‘for one’s own good.’ These testimonies humanise the awkward first encounter echoed by many players, and transform it into a normal, almost obligatory part of the audition process. It becomes a way to get to learn the ritualistic event and conform to its beliefs. From this point of view, the jury are also players that have stayed at the auditions—upholding the organisation’s practices. Their own experiences also become part of the jury’s narrative of themselves and the history of the institution.

As previously argued, the auditions may be described as an educational project. It is evidently so for many of the players but the jury also speak of their own participation in a similar manner, as an ongoing learning process involving transmitting and negotiating musical knowledge:

—When you yourself auditioned, you had a strong focus on your own tradition […] but then, when you find yourself on the other side, about to judge players from all over Sweden, you need to broaden your knowledge, and learn new traditions, how to play. When you sit in the Zorn jury it’s like you get a fresh pair of eyes… you learn a lot about traditions from other provinces and, not least, other instruments, that you didn’t really know much about before ….

—It’s important that we have our own internal education, so we learn from and teach each other. It is not like, you think: “Now, I’m learning.” It’s more of a process that happens all the time. During the days of audition, you also listen to the

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398 Interviews with the jury and conversations between 2012–2016.
Indeed, this process of learning, listening and sharing knowledge of the musical pasts and a sincere concern for a common collective musical remembrance creates affective sociality within the group. Importantly, the jury does not only foster the knowledge of specific tunes, important recordings, spelman’s books or tradition bearers, but they also cherish the ties to their own history by holding on to important spokespeople and changes within the organisation. The individual jury members often refer to older members’ opinions, and how they would evaluate the present situation or the musical performance under scrutiny.

At the first day of audition each year, the jury starts by listening to two test pilots (föräkare) performing a tune, in order to immerse themselves into the sonic environment and better able themselves to judge the upcoming performers. The jury prefer if these players are at varied musical levels, whether or not they have auditioned before. The test pilots are often connected to the local spelman’s association, or are active musicians in the area in which the auditions are held. After the performance the jury do a session of test deliberations. They often stress on how important this procedure is for them, in order to get ‘into the music again,’ to become attuned and ‘in sync’ with each other, setting a standard for the spectrum of musical ability.

During the actual audition, the jury listens to three performers, each scheduled for fifteen minutes, followed by fifteen minutes of private deliberation. The jury use a regular opening routine, in which each member declares the level at which they perceived the competitor’s performance, using the letters: D/Certificate (Diplom), B/Bronze badge (Brons), DEB/Post-bronze certificate (Diplom efter Brons), S/Silver (Silver) or ‘nothing.’ To avoid creating circles of influence, the members take turns being the first one to start. After the procedure, they individually give a more detailed description of their judgements. If they disagree, or find some issues more difficult, they talk it through until they reach consensus. The jury member with the expertise of the instrument or chosen repertoire, is often consulted if the others feel unsure about anything in the play-


401 Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
er’s performance. This behaviour is rearranged and repeated during each deliberation.

When I asked the jury how they would define a good jury member, the criteria of being sympathetic, open-minded and humble towards reaching agreement were placed amongst the top characteristics. Especially the ability to relinquish and to let go of consuming passions if others have convincing arguments. This aspect relates to being a good and attentive listener and showing awareness of one’s weaknesses. They all also agreed on the importance of being able to clearly articulate and justify their own musical judgements, as one jury member phrased it: “It’s very easy to think loads, but harder to put it into words.”\textsuperscript{403} This becomes particularly important in the feedback conversation with the players; to give constructive and helpful comments without upsetting the players. Other aspects that were brought forward included acknowledging the life outside the audition room and actively participating in the folk music scene and musical life.\textsuperscript{404}

Sometimes the jury members disagree with each other. Debate is then perceived as enriching for the group and their individual learning processes, as one member explained:

The task is to distinguish between what is consensus and what is personal judgement. Consensus is possible, and if we have differing views about the details then that’s also good. It’s enriching, in fact. If there are moments when we have divergent views on something, we discuss why we judge it one way or the other, and that is in itself an education because we get the possibility to weigh up our impressions of the spelman’s performance. If we all agree of course it goes quicker, but the discussion process is also exciting. That’s a part of what is so rewarding about it, to be able to listen and debate. For me as an individual. You are sitting there [on the jury] because it is so wonderful to be able to listen to the different people that are playing and then to be able to talk about it. That is really lovely and what makes it delightful, for us.\textsuperscript{405}

\textsuperscript{403} ‘Det är bra lätt att tycka en massa, men svårare att sätta ord på det.’ Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
\textsuperscript{404} Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
Thus, dialogue and debate are believed to generate trust and fair decisions within the group. However, finding the right arguments or words to express your feelings when the discussion got heated was not always experienced as easy:

You often get a feeling of what you want, and if you are at odds, sometimes you encounter feelings which go in completely different directions to your own. It’s all based on feelings, but at the same time it’s the arguments you can find, objective arguments, that allow [the discussion] to get somewhere, that can justify the different feelings. You try to be constructive, to find the objective arguments for the different aspects […] Today, it’s not enough to just play in a dancing manner, or just with a solid technique. We want [the performance] to form a whole where everything is good.

Interestingly, the jury put great effort in keeping a unified or coherent approach towards the folk music community. They have deliberately chosen not to participate in public debates on Facebook, etc. Their silence has often been questioned by musicians, who wish for a more active involvement in discussions in order to clarify questions, etc., depending on the issue at hand. The jury has responded to this critique by underlining that they are a collective and do not wish to speak individually for the group. They have also decided not to participate in debates on social media due to the harsh tone that often occurs in online forums. From their point of view, the feedback conversation is the main channel of keeping a dialogue with the players. The jury also encourages the players to be in direct contact with the Zorn committee or secretariat. As previously argued, this furthermore underlines how the auditions create a self-contained world within the folk music community in Sweden, mainly performed for and by its own participants.

In the next section I attend to how the jury are inhabiting the audition space, sensing musical quality and what they are listening for during the auditions.

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406 This approach has striking similarities with how peer review systems are perceived within academic panels, where debating plays a crucial role and leaves room for ‘discretion, uncertainty, and the weighing of a range of factors and competing forms of excellence.’ See Michèle Lamont, How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment (Cambridge and Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009) p. 7.

To Feel the Good Music: Quality in all its Simplicity

You always recognize good folk music, even from other countries; this attracts me! You recognize it, you can distinguish it, you have the ears to listen for good folk music.408

Join me at one of the auditions again, and keep this jury sentiment in mind. It is a warm and humid summer day and the next performer has just entered the room with a compelling presence and a large smile on her face. The player tries out the acoustics to get a feeling for the room, and then starts to perform. She holds the fiddle in a less conventional way, positioned at the lower part of her chest. The contour of the instrument’s body follows her left forearm, and her fingers run over the wooden fingerboard. Her body is swaying, back and forth, resonating with its environment. One of the jury members is clearly interested in what she is doing and slowly leans forward, squinting with his eyes, to better see how she moves. They make eye contact. As a response to his bodily movement, she leans forward as well to facilitate the sight of the instrument for him. They meet in the flow of motion, as if mirroring each other. The jury member next to him is softly slouching over the table, resting her head on her hand; a gesture partly covering her mouth. She listens intently, with lowered eyes fixed on the record, while attentively taking notes, trying to translate the sonic experience. Her pencil scratches the paper, a sound that merges with the tune. The windows are half-open. A blast of wind makes the white lace curtain dance. The sound of a motor-driven lawn mower is heard in the distance, together with a hum of voices from the festival going on outside. The scent of freshly-brewed coffee loiters in the air from the kitchen nearby, reminding us of the break soon to come. Another jury member is placed next to the window and sits completely still. With a relaxed posture, she is leaning backwards on her chair with closed eyes and her face towards the ceiling. Clearly consumed by the music, her arms hang loosely at the sides, creating an almost devotional stance that emanates tranquillity. The last note resounds, and the player directly moves on to the next tune. One jury member starts to move their hands to the music, up and down, up and down; openly counting the beats per minute. A wristwatch is put on display just in front of her, to facilitate the counting. Every movement in the room vibrates and the sound brings the body home.409

What is going on in this observation? The sketch gives a glimpse into the audition room, and indicates how the jury members deploy different ways of listening through their bodily behaviour. Attention is directed towards the visual aspects of the player, the position of the instrument, and the bodily movements

and sounds. This was evident in all of the auditions I observed. The clock at the end revealed the alleged importance of keeping the right tempo, explicitly performed by the gestures of one jury member. This manifests one of the key values of the jury, or ‘lodes’ (ledsjärna) as they call it: to wit, folk music is dance music. The jury clearly looks for a player that brings out the characteristics of the specific dance in their musical performance. Rhythmical skills and a ‘correct’ tempo are highly sought after. Interestingly, as previously mentioned, this tacit understanding is not even mentioned in the formal criteria of the auditions.

From my observations the various jury panels had different pressing issues each year. Rhythm and tempo were focused on during the first and third year. This differed from the second year when the jury panel instead clearly preferred a specific kind of performative technique on the fiddle. They searched for rich tone, archaic playing with drone and double stops and for the player to use an almost over-exaggerated accentuation of marking the beats by tapping their foot. This ideal is very similar to the observed trends by Märta Ramsten at the auditions during the 1970s, yet again highlighting the jury members’ participation in the folk music revival. What more do the jury members listen for in a successful performance?

The jury show great confidence in immediately sensing if the musical performance appeals to them or not, as enacted in the opening sentiment of this section. Conversely, they had no difficulties at all in explaining to me what they prefer to hear, and how the performer should embody the desired qualities of a spelman. References to emotional states were frequently made, such as being ‘swept away’, ‘touched’, ‘thrilled’, ‘captured’ or ‘moved’ by the performance. During the best auditions, the jury spoke of how the need to take notes vanished. Instead, they let go of their pencils and immersed themselves completely into the music, to fully enjoy the performance, as depicted in the observation above. The ability of the player to ‘convince us… to beam forth something special, to know what they want to achieve with their playing, and show us that’, is highly sought out, as one of the jury members explained. Another member shared a similar sentiment of how the performer ‘should speak directly to us and make it interesting.’ Comparisons were made with being an actor and the capability to reach an audience: ‘You need to be able to play convincingly, distinctly, clear and in a narrative way […] with precise technique and clear rhythms. It should not only be suitable for dancing but also to demonstrate knowledge

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410 This concerns the period of my fieldwork.
412 Interview with Jury panel, 20 July 2015, Korro.
413 ‘Spelmannen ska tala till en, och göra det intressant.’ Interview with Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
about a specific tradition.” In relation to this, notions of brilliance and excellence were often linked with ideas of simplicity. The players’ musical personae should be ‘sincere’, ‘natural’ and ‘genuine.’ This simplicity concern both the chosen repertoire, that preferably should ‘do one justice and be close to the player’s heart’415, and the overall visual impression of the performance.

All this reveals that the jury is creating an emotional space of its own, where sensory fragments and a range of affective tones justify meaningful and feelingful judgements. The perceived ability of the performer to convey emotions remains in the foreground as the main criteria for a cherished audition. This vocabulary of value, displayed above, generates a figurative discourse at the auditions that in many ways resembles other worlds of musical evaluation.416 For example, Lisa McCormick demonstrates in her studies of juries within international classical music competitions, how they initially look for a musician who evoke a particular emotional experience for them, in terms of: ‘touches my heart’ and arouses ‘the goose bump factor’ or ‘does something with emotion.’417 Similar sentiments were put forward by the jury members in Erik Nylander’s dissertation on jazz auditions in Sweden; to ‘do something’ with the performance, ‘really move us’ with ‘energy’, and create the feeling of being ‘genuine and grounded in their own expression.’418 These expressions also draw attention to how the act of listening involves our whole body, and how our bodies resonate and vibrate together with the music. Value is directed to sensations in the flesh; to be ‘touched’ and ‘thrilled’ is to feel and be affected.419 As Tia DiNora argues, music may be seen as ‘a resource for producing and recalling emotional states.’420 However, if these studies share many similarities, there are of course differences in practice, due to genre-specific expectations and sensibilities.

Interestingly, during my fieldwork I rarely heard the jury members use the words ‘authentic’ or ‘authenticity.’ Neither are these concepts listed in the formal criteria at the auditions. Yet, all the responses by the Zorn jury demonstrated above to a great extent hinge on ideas in relation to the authentic, in terms of searching for the ‘natural’, ‘pure’, ‘real’ and ‘genuine’ musical expression and, as it follows, traditional tunes, performative techniques and instruments. I suggest that this thinking underpins the whole endeavour of the institution and reso-

414 ’Så måste man kunna spela övertygande, distinkt, tydligt och berättande […] teknik och precision rytmiskt sett, inte bara tydligt och dansant det som krävs, utan också att det passar in i en särskilt tradition.’ Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
415 Interview with jury panel, 20 July 2015, Korrö.
417 McCormick, Performing Civility, p. 171.
418 Nylander, Skolning i Jazz, pp. 158–161.
419 It is also an example of how emotion and bodily sensation are intricately linked, and cannot so easily be separated. See Sara Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotion (New York and London: Routledge 2004), p. 6.
nates ‘the active presence of absent things.’ Scott Spencer has noted a similar tendency in his study of the annual Irish traditional music competition *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*. Spencer argues that ‘the idea of authenticity is so fundamental to the art–form that it is an assumed foundation of every conversation [and] performance.’ Authenticity at the auditions, then, refers both to the player’s knowledge of tradition and of embodying the affective dimension of that understanding in a ‘truthful’ manner.

However, the criteria of knowing a tradition is interesting here, since the jury describe how they search for a specific kind of style, though the process is not as straightforward as it may seem. This aspect was brought forward when I asked them about the different guideposts in the judgement record that they use during auditions and deliberations. Several members underlined how the general criteria of musicianship, and techniques such as rhythm, intonation and sound production, often were sufficient in valuing the performance. The specific expertise of certain traditions was also acknowledged as important. At the same time the jury self-reflexively noted that perhaps it is rather a special kind of stylistic convention they seek within the performative framework of folk music. One of the jury members claimed: ‘It is impossible for us to have knowledge of every little village in Sweden.’ Another member reflected on how emotionally grounded judgements also have their limits, and then the need for specific expertise is brought to the fore:

—If a performance captures you and tells you something, if it truly enchants you, then it’s on a level where you don’t need to know all the tunes, or if all the notes were right in the tune, or even to know the instrument, but where you just know instinctively that something is really good. […] when we are sitting there listening, we often agree that a person will be awarded Silver […] But if it’s not Silver standard […] then we get to the point where we really need specialist knowledge of the subject, of the instrument, to be able to give feedback afterwards and explain what you [the player] need to do with your playing, and what your instrument is lacking […] We need to be able to know… […] It might happen that you become totally enraptured—because you don’t play the instrument yourself, or maybe you aren’t from the part of the country where the dance is known—then you become enraptured, and it sounds good, but there is still something behind there that you can’t…

—They are trying to trick us! (Laughs)

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423 Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
Intriguingly, the sentiment enacts the unsettling feeling of how emotions may be deceiving or even misleading. They may cloud your judgement and prevent you from hearing what is missing or left out of the performance. Sensory modalities are therefore not always to be trusted. In a way, the quotation also endorses how musical knowledge is highly respected and held in veneration by the jury. Even if the Zorn jury express certainty about what they are looking and listening for during the auditions, each performance induces its own specific questions and uncertainties.

In relation to the jury’s assessments, the record was furthermore described by the jury as an ‘old remnant from the past.’ The members asserted how the evaluation process was considerably more complex and multidimensional than what may be captured by the categories in the form. Remarkably, when compared to the earlier records from the 1930s, not much has changed in the current design. The different guideposts are generally the same, with small variations. The most interesting change is the removal of the category: ‘The value of the tune’, which was found on the judging form from 1942 until the 1970s. The category is representative of the auditions’ roots and clearly exemplifies the selectivity of repertoire and the search for ‘older’ tunes. During the 1970s, ‘tradition’, ‘performance’ and ‘artistic innovation’ were added. These aspects are not specified in the form today. Still, they are often under discussion in relation to the more elusive category: ‘qualities as spelman.’ In connection with the work of revising the statutes, between 1973 and 1976, the jury also changed the previous system of numerical rating (1–5) and started to grade by level instead. The decision was made after many of the members expressed difficulties in assigning...
numerical value to commensurate diverse musical qualities. As previously mentioned, the practice of rating by level is still in use today.

It is certainly noteworthy that the jury generally show little consideration for the awkward and artificial setting during the auditions, an aspect that the players kept coming back to in my interviews. For the jury, a real and qualified spelman should not be bothered with the venue for his or her solo performance; they should be able to perform well anywhere. This view is also related to the musicians’ working reality. The ability to quickly adopt to new environments becomes important, since they usually get requests for all kinds of gigs. One day they may perform at a local supermarket or town square and the next day at a pub or concert house. The jury value this flexibility highly, as well as the ability to ‘make the stage your own.’ One jury member facetiously expressed it: ‘We should not be mollycoddling them, a good spelman plays well on a toilet or in a telephone booth.’ In this way, the system of the auditions is believed to best examine the desired potentials. Therefore, the jury have no intentions of changing the current arrangements or form. They believe that most players prefer the audition platform over the public stage. One of the jury members also underlined that the musicians’ ‘true colours’ will be revealed anyhow at the public distribution of awards (bekänna färg på scenen).

As I verified over the course of my fieldwork, the jury generally conveyed similar sentiments about the players’ levels of artistry and musicality. In fact, this is most likely induced by the long time commitment required from each member of the jury. Their socialisation may encourage similar preferences of musical tastes and sensibilities. However, as indicated by one of the jury members in the previous section of this thesis, a great variety in terms of detail were often put forward in the specific individual judgements. From time to time, the jury also encountered performances that aroused tense and heated discussions within the group. In the following, two of those auditions will be addressed and serve as rich examples of the jury’s judging process and the difficulties of harmonising different musical tastes. The particular cases especially shed light on how divergent views and sensory ambivalences are directed towards instrumental soundings and stylistic features of staging and performing tradition.

428 See for example letter correspondence between members in the Jury, 28 February, 1974, in the Archive of the Zorn Committee.
429 Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm
431 Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
Audible Aesthetics of Tradition: How to Respond to a New Sound

The two auditions used as examples here were performances by a fiddler who had previously been awarded the bronze badge, and a debuting chromatic nyckelharpist. None of the performers provided long background stories or gave any further introduction of their music, which is usually the norm. Instead, they just announced the name of the tunes or made a short comment, and started to play. The nyckelharpist commented on the strange experience of the applause being absent and expressed a feeling of missing an audience or a dancing couple when performing. The fiddler performed a schottis and three polskas, and the nyckelharpist played a schottis, a waltz and three polskas. The jury asked for a fourth tune from the fiddle player, and a fifth from the nyckelharpsit.

During the deliberations, the fiddler was fervently perceived as a very talented performer, who was truly mastering the instrument with great musicality, virtuosity and technical skills. The voiced disagreements concerned intonation (tonsäkerhet), rhythmic skills, and how well-informed the performers were of traditional stylistic features, for accomplishing the level of DEB or S. The first member who started to give feedback was very enthusiastic and impressed by the performance. He gestured broadly with his arms, saying: ‘This is groovy! [The player] can do anything with the performance […] S, of course!’ The next member continued in a similar optimistic manner, while also expressing some concerns:

Definitely DEB, possibly S […] Really lovely playing, fine expression, technically skilled. There are mistakes in intonation in all three tunes, easily made on fiddle, in a strained situation. Otherwise, nothing else, uses glissando […] not entirely traditional solo playing…

At this point, another jury member hastily moved his body to the top of the chair and bent forward over the table to better see the others: ‘Bends the notes, I don’t know if it’s deliberate. Uses mannerisms […] Not really my thing [but] I’m leaning towards DEB…’ The next member suddenly turned around, raised his eye brows and looked puzzled, while expressing a contrasting view:

Amazing technique, has a whole tasting menu of styles and most of the baroque and folk techniques. Really motivated spelmän use these kinds of elements, dif-

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432 Participant observations 2012–2015.
433 ‘Det svänger! Kan göra vad som helst med sitt spel […] S förstås!’ Participant observation of the jury’s deliberations.
434 ‘Definitivt DEB ev S […] Jättefint spel, fint uttryck, tekniskt skicklig. Intonationsmissar i alla tre låtar, lätt att bli på fiol, i ansträngt läge. I övrigt inte mer, glissar […] inte helt traditionellt i sitt solo-spel.’ Ibid.
different bowings and ornaments. What could the player do better? Is already deeply rooted in tradition.436

What one member experienced as a compellingly original ‘rhythmical finesse’ another perceived as repellently uneven and jerky. The members raised their voices and went on to ask each other to clarify what they meant by pitch bending and lack of intonation. One asserted that the player was far too competent to be ‘out of tune’—rather, it was the tuning of the instrument (aeae) that produced that kind of sound. But another member interpreted the playing as over-exaggerating ornaments and having flaws of intonation.

The jury was also divided in the regard to the use of glissando. According to one, it was part of the desired stylistic elements. This was contradicted by another, who claimed that the playing mirrored a recent trend amongst new folk music groups, and then sharply underlined that ‘it is not part of tradition.’ The playing was also perceived to be ‘audibly Norwegian,’ due to the tuning and how the last note was tied over to the first note in the following passage (låsande av anslutningsston), creating rhythmical displacements, especially in the schottis. This reasoning was put forward as an argument for not awarding Silver. The two members in favour of Silver found the criticism hard to understand: ‘I did not hear that at all!’ one of them remarked. Instead they were touched and affected by the player’s ability to perform so well in front of the panel. Another commented with a sigh: ‘Well, this takes time…’ referring to their difficulties in reaching a decision. The member who offered the most resistance noted that it would have been different if the entire performance was perceived as ‘spotless/flawless’ (fläckfritt), not just the last tune. The fourth member agreed with a nod of assent, but added that the overall impression was really good.

The two members in favour then turned toward the member with most reservations and engaged in an intense dialogue. ‘I do not have any doubts at all’437 one of them asserted and the other said: ‘Of course, you may feel and think whatever you like’438 but remember that: ‘we in the jury’ actually have awarded the gold badge to spelmän within this specific tradition. This argument seems to have influenced the member, since he rather quickly responded: ‘Ok, let’s award Silver.’439 The jury then started to elaborate on expressions that would capture the performance. Interestingly, the qualities of groove and rhythm were rapidly put forward, even though they had been among the main criteria previously under debate. They all agreed that the music encouraged dancing. Even the doubtful member cheerfully said: ‘I put S [in the box in the judgement record]

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436 ‘Otrolig teknik, ger en provkarta över de flesta tekniker om finns folktligt sett och barockmässigt, drivna spelmän kan använda sig av det här, olika stråkarter och ornament. Vad ska man säga att den uppspelade ska förbättra? Är ju förankrad i traditionen.’ Ibid.
437 ‘Jag tvekar inte.’ Ibid.
438 ‘Du måste få tycka och tänka vad du vill.’ Ibid.
439 ‘Ok. Vi tar Silver.’ Ibid.
for all the tunes! The member also commented on their discussion: ‘Sometimes you feel really quarrelsome’ and another quickly answered ‘But that it is our role.’ The jury were content in reaching a decision and decided on what they were going to write on the certificate. In just a short amount of time, the rather intense and anxious atmosphere had transformed into calmness and conciliation.

The performance of the nyckelharpist also raised sensitive topics and tricky questions for the jury. The ranking between DEB and S was yet again under negotiation and this time in relation to the statutes: Was it an exception to reward Silver at first try? Jury members perceived the audition as well-performed, with high musical skills, nice rhythms and grooves, and one vehemently emphasised: ‘The player can do anything with their instrument!’ Another underlined that the performance, despite the used mannerisms, was ‘In its infancy as a tradition […] The music doesn’t become set in a fixed form within the frames that we are guarding.’ However, some of the members expressed doubts over the design and sound of the instrument. It was tuned in an unconventional way and altered, by a rebuilt row of keys, to sound more like a fiddle, with equal temperament. In this way, the patterns of the scales and chords are all the same, no matter where you start on the keyboard. In addition, the repertoire performed consisted of fiddle tunes from a specific region, without a documented repertoire for nyckelharpa. In Sweden today, the most common repertoire for the nyckelharpa is tunes from the county of Uppland. The instrument is also highly associated with this specific geographical place.

During audition, jury members asked the player who had built the instrument and where it was made. These questions are often solicited with regard to different forms of nyckelharpas, or other older types of instruments such as the bagpipe, possibly in order to facilitate a better context for what is heard. Here, the jury particularly wanted the player to explain the reasons for altering the instrument. ‘It is good to start from the music you are playing, and let the tunes guide you’ the player responded, and furthermore underlined how it facilitated the encounters with other musicians and made it easier to play music from other genres. The issue of the modified instrument was a hot topic within the jury. It

440 ‘Dansant rytm, har skrivit S på alla låtar!’ Ibid.
441 ‘Ibland känner man sig riktigt gnällig.’ Ibid.
442 ‘Men det är vår roll.’ Ibid.
443 ‘Den U har också manér för sig. Ligger i traditionens linda, traditionen avstannar ju inte med oss utan fortsätter, försöker variera sitt spel, stannar inte i stelnad form inom de ramar vi sitter och bevakar.’ Participant observation of the jury’s deliberations.
444 A traditional tuning for the chromatic nyckelharpa is A, D, G, C, also called C-tuning. This instrument was instead tuned in fifths A, D, G, C/D/A, D-tuning, with the same interval between all the melody strings. A lot of tunes from Uppland are in C major, whilst the D-tuning facilitate to play other traditional tunes in Sweden, often in D major. This tuning also facilitates to play fiddle tunes on the instrument.
445 Participant observation and recording of the audition.
had previously been debated at great length during their annual meeting the same year, and was then approved for the auditions. Nevertheless, during the deliberations some of the members expressed a lingering discomfort with the potential changes in the instrumental acoustics, and the issue was raised again:

There are some aspects of the playing which I didn’t buy, it sounds like a fiddle with sympathetic strings, but [the player] has taken their own path, and stands up for it. Observe the sound, what will happen with the music of the nyckelharpa? Many players are learning to tune like this at music courses, etc. I’m not fond of it. […] We need to be aware of what is at stake here.

The other members responded in various ways to the concerns at hand. One of them gently shook their head and asserted how it was unnecessary to worry, since the players still need to perform very well to be awarded.

From that point of view it would not be a problem at all for the jury. The conversation continued, and another member commented on how the player is ‘certainly taking the easy way out’ with reference to the tuning. The jury members started to compare with their own fiddle playing: ‘If I play with an A in the base (A-bas), then I use another position, to make it work. I don’t tune the fiddle in another way,’ one of them said disapprovingly, while making illustrative gestures, as if the hands were carving the air, to show the fingerings of the instrument. Still, despite these reservations, the very same member strongly advocated awarding the player the Silver badge anyhow, even if it was the player’s first try. This attitude also corresponded with the jury’s overall positive and enthusiastic impression of the player.

After careful considerations the jury members tried to gather themselves. They were very tired by now. One of them complained of a headache and felt the need to reach consensus. The member who recently expressed concern for the new sound took command over the situation and encouragingly said: ‘Let’s award Silver.’ No one objected, instead they agreed on how the musical skills and artistic creativity atoned the expressed doubts. They started to elaborate on expressions for the written dedication. The solo recital was described as ‘groovy’ (svängigt), ‘skilled’ (skickligt), ‘personal’ (personligt) and performed with ‘superior quality,’ (överlägen). It was indeed ‘part of a living tradition,’ followed by the argument that skilled musicians can do anything with their instruments. The jury members were clearly happy to have reached consensus. One of them stood up and stretched, another left the table and a third started to chat and told a joke.

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447 See for example: ‘Kommer de med en sån stämning och spelar krattigt, får aldrig märke.’ Ibid.

448 ‘Gör det lätt för sig’ Ibid.

449 ‘Vi sätter S.’ Ibid.
the others responded with laughter. The relaxed behaviour marked the end of the session.

It is interesting to reflect on how the jury panel in these two deliberations move from emotional states of disagreements and anxieties to reconciliation and self-reassurance. The turning point is embodied by the jury when they state their final decision on written paper. In both these examples, this abruptly occurs when the two members who expressed most resistance gave into the others, saying: ‘Let’s award Silver.’ The sentiment acts and marks a shift into another phase of evaluation. In this rather strange moment of transformation, the jury leave the emotional space of openly sharing their feelings, moving into a more closed space where they need do their job, verbalising the written award. Words start to proliferate in their search for the right expressions. The jury sometimes turn to a folder in which they collect frequently used words and sentences over the years. To facilitate their work, they are often read out loud (‘skilled’, ‘personal’, ‘traditionally informed’, ‘brilliant’ etc.) The jury’s recycling of words in this way is one explanation for the rather standardised written awards. However, as showed by these two auditions, this process is carefully embraced by the jury and they take their time in order to find the right words to capture the performance.

Negotiating the Boundaries of Tradition

These two multivocal examples of auditions bring together a range of insights into how the jury skilfully tries to cope a rapidly changing world. In the push of performance, they create new proceedings and preserve old ones—necessarily with a degree of improvisation. Different forms of knowing are deployed in order to make sense of what they hear, often derived from their immediate feelings about the performance, or their own experiences of playing. The first audition evoked intense feelings and conflicting views of ornamental embellishments, intonation and choices of rhythm. In the second audition, the sight and sound of the instrument were under negotiation. Both cases involved ideas of the traditional and how well the performers embody the jury’s musical expectations.

The cases are also illustrative examples of how the jury engage with select parts of the statutes. Rather than exact rules, they were perceived as loose guidelines, open for interpretation. The possibility of rewarding Silver on the first try was a recurring topic of discussion during this specific audition year. The statutes clearly declare:

To be awarded the Zorn Badge in silver, the *spelman* should already have been bestowed the Zorn Badge in bronze. Exceptions to this are decided by the jury, when specific circumstances exist.451

Several jury members shared the opinion that the statutes had never been so ‘neatly’ interpreted before. They gave many examples of players who had been awarded Silver anyhow. In addition, one of them was also part of the jury panel that year.452 Interestingly, age was also a frequent topic in these discussions. The jury brought forward examples of players who had already received the title of *riksstspelman* at the age of 16 and commented: ‘Who is ready/fulfilled then?’ (*Vem är färdig då?*)453 This argument, in the form of an opening but evocative question, was actualised when the jury was unsure whether to award or not. Members stressed how the younger participants had time to ‘mature’ and revisit the auditions again, in contrast to the older ones who, in the harsh reality, might not have many chances left to audition again. The jury self-reflexively considered the matter: ‘Do we discriminate by age, then? Are we tougher towards the younger players, and nicer towards the older ones?’ Importantly, the responsiveness to the statutes and the concept of tradition exemplified in these discussions may also be due to the jury’s awareness of my project. It became a subtle way for the jury to self-reflexively tell me about the institution’s practices. In fact, the two observations were conducted during the first year I attended the deliberations and I was certainly part of creating that shared space. In addition, sometimes the jury members directly asked me: ‘Are we being too hard now?’, trying to calibrate the level of their judgements, simultaneously negotiating my presence and clarifying their awareness of the tricky assignment at hand.454

The dialogue depicted in the previous auditions also engaged with experiences of not knowing what the future might hold.455 The nyckelharpsist is clearly pushing the limits of the preferred aural aesthetics, which aroused both anxiety and optimism within the jury. In both auditions, sensitive attention was also given to the general folk music community: What kind of signals will be sent to the community if we honour this kind of playing? Or if we decide not to? During my fieldwork, these concerns reappeared within the jury when tricky questions occurred. Thus, decisions are certainly not made in a void; the jury self-reflexively analyse how their decisions will be received by the larger community.

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451 ‘För att erhålla Zornmärket i Silver bör spelman inneha Zornmärket i Brons. Undantag beslutas av juryn då särskilda skäl föreligger.’ The Statutes 2.4. ‘Normer och bedömningsgrunder vid uppspelningar’, Riksfunktionärshandboken.
452 Participant observation.
453 Participant observation. The question of age was a recurrent topic that week and has frequently been addressed by the jury during the period of fieldwork (2012–2016).
454 Yet again it highlights how the observer is also always observed. See for example Ingold, ‘That’s Enough about Ethnography!’, pp. 387–388.
455 As a reminder, I deliberately turn to uncertainties and the imagination of the future here, as important methodological approaches. See Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, p. 48.
Furthermore, these concerns also intersect with ideas of collective creation and individual innovation, as well as notions of the ‘genuine’ amateur and the ‘educated’ professional. In both of these auditions the jury additionally expressed feelings of resentment towards bodily movements and sounds.

The tactile experience of the instrument was especially important in the last example, within the embodiment of playing. Jury members often sing or count the beat out loud, to illustrate certain melodic passages or rhythms they like or dislike and as a means of sharing their experiences with each other. On many occasions they also imitate the players’ bodily positions to point out specific moves or sounds. The body is thus expressly used during their assessment: to recollect and reconnect with the performed music again.456

These two auditions decisively divided the jury, and are examples of how ‘strong artistic statements produce strong reactions.’457 Still, the flexible evaluation process with fewer fixed criteria and the use of debate as generating trust and knowledge, also raises possibilities to reward the more ‘unconventional’ players.458 Interestingly, during this specific year the jury kept coming back to these auditions. In trying to ensure fairness, they became a kind of benchmark for Silver in which they measured the other players. In this way, they standardised the unconventional. From my observations, this occurred regularly: the jury used a couple of auditions as references each year, to measure both the lower and higher levels of awards. In this way, the interaction nurtured a group style; defining a shared sense of brilliant performances.459 Dialogue and debate are understood as high ideals of the ‘home’ the jury are embodying. Hence, controversy is understood as being part of tradition, ensuring and reinforcing the value of the auditions.

It is also important to consider the aspect of time. The jury only have fifteen minutes to pass judgement on three performances, and are therefore forced to reach consensus rather quickly. If they get delayed, the entire schedule of the day gets displaced. Lunch and coffee breaks are shortened, the list of announcements may be postponed, and the feedback conversations in the evening will end even later. The jury members also know that another player is waiting out-

456 Erik Nylander observed a similar use of gestures and short hand expressions (snapping fingers), by the jury at auditions for jazz music schools in Sweden. See Nylander, Skolning i Jazz, pp. 154–156.
457 McCormick, Performing Civility, p. 190.
458 This system highly contrasts with those often used in the larger international classical music competitions, studied by Lisa McCormick. Instead of group discussion, sophisticated voting systems based on a grading scale of points designed by mathematicians are used. As McCormick argues, outstanding players may then be eliminated because of the ‘the split jury theory,’ where individual preferences are overlooked by majority rule. The competitions, then, do not promote the most interesting musicians and instead support the more ‘solid’ performances. McCormick, Performing Civility, pp. 190–191.
459 This also contrasts with how the majority of jurors interviewed in Lisa McCormick’s study expressed their approach towards the evaluation process. In the large competitions, debate was deliberately avoided and instead they relied on the voting system and kept silent until the computer presented the results. McCormick, Performing Civility, p. 185.
side the door to enter, so they all work together towards reaching a common decision as quickly as possible. However, from my observations the jury rarely finished on time and were often already delayed early on during the day. This rushed the evaluation process even more, as the jury tried to save time by being more effective. Sometimes the jury encountered performances in which they had difficulties in reaching an agreement. Those discussions were typically postponed to the end of the day. This allowed them to sort through the tricky auditions that had accumulated through the day.

This first part of this chapter has engaged with the jury’s general orientations while judging traditional music, and explored the jury members’ sensory involvements during auditions and deliberations. In the next part of the chapter, the particular cases of the fiddle and nyckelharpa will serve as starting points for the discussion of musical instruments’ crucial roles within the institution. I will shed light on how the world folds and unfolds around the co-dwelling of instruments and bodies situated at the auditions. Special attention is given to the jury’s lived experience of time and their sensorial ways of knowing tradition.

Thinking Through Musical Instruments

Musical instruments are key actors in dialogue within the auditions and are by no means passive artefacts. They become powerful mobilising forces and are celebrated as parts of traditions, connected to particular bodily skills, sounds, repertoires and knowledge sets. Intricately linked to the ritual in various ways, they create desire and affect and sometimes aversion, through their materiality and sounding ability. Clearly, the instruments often become contested sites of meaning and mediate interpersonal disputes within the folk music community.

In the pages to come, two main aspects will be addressed: how the jury responds to instrumental modification and how members perceive the instruments’ particular relationships to the performed repertoires. I follow that discussion by examining the question: How do some instruments become site of struggles, while others seem to exempt from litigation or conflict?

Emplacements of the Cherished Nyckelharpa

As demonstrated in one of the auditions depicted above, the nyckelharpa strikingly acts as a mediator of change, raising questions about the appropriateness of

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460 See Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 52–53.
a rebuilt instrument and the manipulation of sound. Here, the modernisation of the instrument is perceived both as a threat and as an opportunity for the regional tradition to creatively evolve. The individual nyckelharpist is thus perceived as being part of the continuing collective tradition. Still, the question remains: How far can the instrument be modified while still being considered ‘traditional’ within the audition practices? In order to better understand the jury’s arguing for inclusiveness while simultaneously expressing doubts, it is important to consider the nyckelharpa’s strong agency within the tradition of Swedish folk music, and the impact of its symbolic status as Sweden’s unofficial national instrument.

Along with the fiddle, clarinet, wooden pipes and horns, the nyckelharpa has been central to the auditions since their start in the 1930s. The instrument belongs to a family of chordophones played with a bow, employing key-actuated tangents to change the pitch of the strings. Presumably already existing in Sweden in the fourteenth century, it has a long presence within traditional performance narratives. Its origins are still lost, but apparent similarities between the nyckelharpa and hurdy-gurdy might suggest a connection to Germany. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, nyckelharpas seem to be fairly known in the Northern parts of Europe and are found portrayed in church paintings, held and played by angels, both in Sweden and in Denmark. From the early seventeenth century onwards the nyckelharpa has been found exclusively in Sweden, especially in the eastern region, in the county of Uppland.

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1960s, there were only a small number of players and makers of the instrument. Yet a few dedicated enthusiasts—August Bohlin (1877–1949) and Eric Sahlström (1912–1986)—modernised it, turning it from a diatonic drone instrument (gammelharpa) into a fully chromatic instrument. Interestingly, the dramatic change the instrument has undergone has indisputably been perceived as part of tradition. The three row chromatic nyckelharpa was approved at the auditions in the late 1940s. During the folk music revival in the 1970s, the instrument faced a revival and

thousands of people started to engage with the instrument again. The older types of nyckelharpa was then revived (as *moraharpa*, *kontrabasharpa*, *silverbasharpa* etc.) and became part of the approved instruments at the auditions. In the beginning of 1980s, there were a heated discussion of including the four-row chromatic nyckelharpa, but the request from the musicians was turned down by the jury.\footnote{Ramsten, ‘De nya spelmännén’, pp. 58–59; See also ‘Who can become a riksspelman?’ (Rikstapelman, vem kan bli det?), 6 August 2010, SVAA20100806ZS01.} Today the instrument is taught in music colleges, conservatories and established music institutes.\footnote{The two main institutions for studies of the nyckelharpa are The Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where nyckelharpa has been offered as the student’s main instrument since 1990, and at The Institute of Eric Sahlström in Tobo, Uppland. The institute started in 1997, and particularly emphasis courses in nyckelharpa and has become the main centre of nyckelharpa in Sweden.}

The strong lineage of transmission, informed by notions of authenticity and cultural identification, is obviously part of the instrument’s appeal and forms a powerful story. Embedded in national imagination, politicians, players and makers have actively attempted to promote the nyckelharpa as an official National Instrument, in order to strengthen its position and vitality within Swedish society.\footnote{Lundberg, Malm and Ronström *Music, Media, Multiculture*, pp. 241–242.} In addition, the instrument has a rich public life. It has been perceived as both exotic and unique, and is often embroiled in tourism campaigns, such as the seat-pockets of Scandinavia Airlines (SAS)\footnote{In Spring, 2000. Ibid, p. 243.} to emphasise Swedish design or as soundtrack in TV commercials for organic food and milk, in both cases tied to notions of purity and quality. Until 2016 it was also depicted on the Swedish 50 krona (national bill); literally embedded in value.\footnote{The national bill is depicted in Ternhag and Boström, ‘The Dissemination of the Nyckelharpa.’ See for example one famous commercial for butter: ‘Bregott Mindre. Årets nykomling i bregottfabriken 2011’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGdhwlP5v0> [Accessed 16 February 2017].}

The nyckelharpa is not solely associated with visual traces of history within Swedish local contexts. Over the last decade, it has also gained worldwide popularity and is now played in Europe, North America and Japan. Often described through its mesmerising and ethereal sound, harsh drone and exotic wooden body, the instrument is part of the international world music scene, caught up in transnational networks of musicians.\footnote{See Lundberg, Malm and Ronström, *Music, Media, Multiculture*, pp. 232–239. For example: The American Nyckelharpa Association, workshops at festivals, online networks and facebooks groups. Ternhag and Boström, ‘The Dissemination of the Nyckelharpa.’} It is within these networks that the previous audition is best understood and interpreted. Altering the tuning to facilitate playing in ensembles is not unique to the nyckelharpist. Adopting new practices, experimenting and adapting technology in order to meet the demands of professional performances and audience expectations, are all necessary in order to make a living within modern music scenes. Instead of historically-informed playing, the focus is directed towards curiosity about new kinds of sounds, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{468} Ramsten, ‘De nya spelmännén’, pp. 58–59; See also ‘Who can become a riksspelman?’ (Rikstapelman, vem kan bli det?), 6 August 2010, SVAA20100806ZS01.
\item \footnote{469} The two main institutions for studies of the nyckelharpa are The Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where nyckelharpa has been offered as the student’s main instrument since 1990, and at The Institute of Eric Sahlström in Tobo, Uppland. The institute started in 1997, and particularly emphasizes courses in nyckelharpa and has become the main centre of nyckelharpa in Sweden.
\item \footnote{470} Lundberg, Malm and Ronström *Music, Media, Multiculture*, pp. 241–242.
\item \footnote{471} In Spring, 2000. Ibid, p. 243.
\item \footnote{472} The national bill is depicted in Ternhag and Boström, ‘The Dissemination of the Nyckelharpa.’ See for example one famous commercial for butter: ‘Bregott Mindre. Årets nykomling i bregottfabriken 2011’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGdhwlP5v0> [Accessed 16 February 2017].
\item \footnote{473} See Lundberg, Malm and Ronström, *Music, Media, Multiculture*, pp. 232–239. For example: The American Nyckelharpa Association, workshops at festivals, online networks and facebooks groups. Ternhag and Boström, ‘The Dissemination of the Nyckelharpa.’}
\end{itemize}
sometimes even to ‘liberate’ the instrument from its older connotations.474 Here, the nyckelharpa’s sentiment ‘let the tunes guide you’ echoes a similar approach. Intriguingly, these changes in use of the instrument are rather rare within local Swedish folk music scenes, and are more common in global contexts.475 The nyckelharpsists’ participation thereby becomes an excellent example of how a glocalised practice is being introduced at the auditions. Obviously, it is also these changes over which the jury have expressed anxiety, warning that they need ‘to be aware of what is at stake here.’ The sentiment clearly marks a territory. To reiterate: by awarding the player a badge they indirectly encourage this new modification of the instrument.

Given the nyckelharpa’s strong agency and preferred intimacy of context, its many changes due to revival and revitalisation in the second half of the twentieth century have been adopted by the jury, and perceived as part of an unbroken tradition.476 These lines are drawn again in the previously-depicted audition, although with expressed caution, precisely because of the instrument’s cherished position. Therefore, the familiarity and inherited proximity of the nyckelharpa effectively makes it a strong orientation device for the jury. It becomes an object that matters, which is continuously at display and given valued attention by the jury.477 Within the guidelines of the auditions, the nyckelharpa become both an object on which to perform folk music, as well as an object around which Swedish folk music is written.478

With or Without Bellows? Encounters with The Swedish Bagpipe

While the modification of the chromatic nyckelharpa was approved by the jury, other instruments have faced much greater restriction. They are forcefully pushed to the background and kept away, balancing on the fringe of the familiar, in order to sustain a certain trajectory for the jury.479 Particularly, the family of wooden duct flutes and pipes inhabit an unsettled and less prominent status within the auditions. Focus is often directed towards the number, placement or types of fingerholes, or the material used for construction. During my fieldwork the jury frequently expressed hesitation and difficulties in judging wind instruments. This contrasted with string instruments, with which the majority of the jury has expert familiarity. For example, players of a specific flute called Härjedalspipa (named after its place of origin in a county in central Sweden) told me

474 Ibid. Ternhag and Boström, has termed this attitude towards the instrument and the playing as ‘The non-ethnic way’ in contrast to ‘the ethnic way.’
475 After conversations with professional nyckelharpa players.
478 Ibid, p. 549. This is a free paraphrase from Ahmed.
how they got advice from the jury that was impossible to realise on the instrument.\textsuperscript{480} Indeed, this leaves the players of these instruments with a lack of trust in the jury’s knowledge.

Another instrument which frequently receives troubled attentiveness at the auditions is the Swedish bagpipe. Similar to the nyckelharpa, the bagpipe is an ancient instrument and was also depicted in Swedish church paintings in the fifteenth century. It is innately associated with the medieval period and enacts a strong historicity of past practices. Beyond this visual representation, however, knowledge about its history is vague. Little is known about the occasions bagpipers performed, their playing techniques, tunes or tuning. Therefore, it is not associated with a specific folk music repertoire.\textsuperscript{481} Still, due to the instrument’s age, it retains a crucial position within oral cultural heritage. The instrument was revived in the 1980s by the use of preserved instruments held at music museums and by a limited amount of recorded tunes.\textsuperscript{482} Until then, only one bagpipe model had survived and was assumed to have been played in unbroken tradition in the region of Dalarna through the end of the 1940s. It was this specific type of instrument that was used for the revival, and which contributed to its title: The Bagpipe of Dalarna (\textit{Dalasäckpipan}). It grew in popularity, and makers and players arranged music festivals and courses featuring the instrument. The historical link with museums and musicology also implies authenticity, and because of this the bagpipe was rapidly perceived as a Swedish traditional folk music instrument.\textsuperscript{483}

In comparison with the Scottish Highland Pipes, the Swedish bagpipe has a softer sound. It belongs to the Eastern European instrumental family of bagpipes. These instruments have a single reed and often only one drone pipe, in contrast to the instruments from Western Europe which have double reeds and sometimes several drones. The Swedish bagpipe is traditionally mouth-blown, with a wooden chanter and a compass of eight notes and seven holes.\textsuperscript{484} The animal-like appearance of the instrumental body elicits notions of the natural and raw. The bag is made of the skin of a calf or cow, and the humming of the drone reinforces these notions of the instrument. In order to start playing, one needs to fill the bag with air, which generates sounds through the pipes, before

\textsuperscript{480} Conversations with players at the auditions between 2012–2015.
\textsuperscript{483} See Ronström, ‘Making Use of History’, pp. 98–100.
finding the steady drone.\textsuperscript{485} Although typically entangled with nostalgic reminiscence of the old pre-modern society, the bagpipe also arouses mixed feelings within Swedish society associated with the comical and amusing, as well as negative aspects of disgust and being physically painful to listen to.\textsuperscript{486}

The bagpipe is not a common instrument at the auditions, compared to the majority of fiddles and nyckelharpas. During my fieldwork (2012–2015) only eight competitors performed on bagpipe. Four of them were awarded the Silver badge, and one of them had interestingly learned how to play using YouTube. This fact is often put forward by the jury, as an example of the new ways of approaching traditional music. There is no institutionalised learning of bagpipe in Sweden, but the community consisting of players and makers is closely connected. The Swedish bagpipe is mainly a solo instrument, but is assumed to have been played historically in smaller ensembles. Nowadays, the instrument is often seen on folk music stages together with the fiddle. Other types of Swedish bagpipes are also common today, due to modifications: bellows-blown, with more drones and extensions of the chanters.\textsuperscript{487} However, it is only the Bagpipe of Dalarna that is considered to be traditionally Swedish by the jury—highlighting how the regional is becoming host to the national within the audition practices.

In the summer of 2015, the instrument became a site of controversy at the auditions. A player was denied entry performing on bagpipe with bellows, and was notified only two weeks before the audition. The use of bellows was introduced by bagpipe makers in the 1990s, to facilitate the playing.\textsuperscript{488} Through playing with bellows rather than an air pipe from the mouth, players avoid all the problems of moisture coming through the air-pipe. The moisture affects the reeds, and means that the musician often needs to adjust them. With the bellows that is avoided and the bagpipe becomes more stable, for example with respect to tuning. It also makes it easier to sing while playing. Obviously upset and disappointed, the bagpiper immediately wrote a post in the Facebook group ‘Swedish Bagpipe’ (Svensk säckpipa) and described the unpleasant situation. The jury’s decision aroused strong and fraught reactions amongst the other players in the online forum.\textsuperscript{489} The voiced criticism raised questions: why should it make a difference how the air gets into the bag? With or without bellows—it is the same fingering, the same tunes, producing the same sound. And if the jury were so strict about the bellows, why do they approve of the use of synthetic reeds instead of the original design?\textsuperscript{490} Furthermore, one of the players in the online forum.

\textsuperscript{485} See Ronström, ‘Making Use of History’, p. 104.  
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{488} Mainly by Alban Faust, who is also a riksspelman and instrumental maker. See his home page <albanfaust.se> [Accessed 17 February 2017].  
\textsuperscript{489} 35 posts in ‘Swedish Bagpipe’ (Svensk säckpipa) 8 July—10 August 2015 [Accessed 12 August 2015]  
\textsuperscript{490} Posts in ‘Swedish Bagpipe’ (Svensk Säckpipa) and interview with the bagpiper.
forum interestingly reported performing with bellows for the jury in 2009. The player recalled how the jury panel had responded well to the audition, with applause and laughter, and the performer was awarded the Silver Badge on the very same instrument.\footnote{The bagpiper’s performance in front of the jury is also documented by text and photo in the book about riksspelmän by Pettersson, Silver i Folkmusik, pp. 58–63.} This news reached the bagpiper that applied in 2015, who then emailed the jury and questioned their decision on the matter. The player also emphasised how stressful it was to learn a new way of playing and to find a new instrument just a few days before auditioning.

How did the jury respond to the critique and handle these inconsistencies? In a similar manner as the controversies over trall in 2005, the jury explained it as an administrative mistake by the secretariat in the application process. As means to avoid these kinds of conflicts, the Zorn Committee had recently added an explanatory line in the form where the player should state if the design of their instrument had any deviations. The bagpiper had specified: ‘Ordinary Swedish bagpipe with bellows’, but the entry was unintentionally approved. The jury again avowed a change in routine, and stressed the necessity of being even more systematically thorough when they approved the different applicants, in order to prevent it from happening again. However, the second mistake was harder to dismiss. The jury was divided on how to best solve the situation and debated the issue at great length. The general discussion in the Facebook group also quickly reached the jury, because one of the group members contacted a jury member. This communication triggered a conversation amongst the jury via email. Parts of the jury favoured allowing the bellows, and argued that all revival instruments are inventions anyhow and are surrounded by uncertain historical circumstances. Their main concern should instead be to encourage the playing, since there are not that many bagpipers in Sweden today. One of the jury members expressed a similar sentiment as the players in the online forum: ‘Does it really matter how they look when they are playing? Shouldn’t the sound be the main aspect?’\footnote{Email correspondence between the jury members 8 July—10 July 2015.} Others were more determined to uphold their original line, and asserted that the case was not enough to change their practice; the instrument had not been in ‘traditional use long enough.’ They also referenced an old decision from the 1990s, when the issue had been previously raised. Moreover, even if the jury panel in 2009 unintentionally allowed the instrument, the present jury had the authority and right to change its mind on the issue. In the end, the jury decided to hold on to the original edict and the player had to perform on the mouth-blown bagpipe, or withdraw the application. The player responded by performing anyhow, and was awarded the Bronze badge.

When I asked the jury afterwards how they experienced the situation, they expressed regret of how for was handled, especially with respect for the player
and for their own reputation. The case certainly evoked a lingering discomfort within the group:

They had reason to question what we said. But you can do it in a nicer way. Everyone can get things wrong. We’re not superhumans, who know everything and remember everything [...] this blunder damages our reputation. We let an instrument through in 2009 and now we refuse to audition them on the same one. It’s to our discredit, one must admit. It is not good, but we cannot undo the decision, we just can’t.493

These reflexive considerations never reached the community, nor the bagpiper. Following the jury’s typical practice, they did not post in the forum or participate in the public debate, or further explained their position to the bagpiper. Their chosen silence was instead explained as a deliberate act to avoid ‘fanning the flames’ (spä på elden).494 However, regardless of intentions, the actions of the jury yet again reinforces the esoteric nature of the ritualistic event.

The use of bellows clearly pushed the limits of what may be imagined as traditional within the auditions. The player gave the bagpipe a voice from a position of dependence. In our interview afterwards, the bagpiper commented on the dispute with the jury:

I wasn’t very happy [...] You have to retrain your brain to blow instead, that’s the only difference. To have this; “you can’t play with bellows”, it doesn’t make any sense musically, but it’s the jury and they have the final say [...] I have spoken to other riksspelman, and I was under the impression that there were riksspelman that played with bellows. But the jury denies it, but I have spoken to him…. but the jury denied it [...] I think they won’t be changing their minds at the moment, I think there was enough discussion now that they have to stick with [their decision].495

Given the fragile position, the bagpiper had to conform to the lines of the institution and accept the jury’s directions. Needless to say, the jury have the privilege of selecting what is perceived as traditional, ensuring that their truth become beholden principle. This case also epitomises the strong affective investment by players and jury in the auditions. The bagpipe clearly speaks to different affinities and is entangled in differing community values. It is intriguing to reflect on how

494 Interview with the jury.
495 Interview with bagpiper.
a detail in the design of an instrument may engender these fierce reactions, shaping the social life of the auditions.\(^{496}\)

This case is certainly a remarkable one. It triggered intense emotions on all sides, involving the player, the community on Facebook and the jury. One of the jury members was also deeply shaken by the vigorous confrontations and even considered resigning. The criticism was seen as harsh, cold and unsympathetic and the member commented in distress: ‘It hurts, and it’s not pleasant.’\(^{497}\) The member also explained how one dissatisfied player may stir up discontent and encourage others to embrace and share their feelings of mistreatment (‘I’ve experienced something even worse!’) and the condemnation escalates.\(^{498}\) Interestingly, these emotional responses towards the bagpipe contradict the value of debate, otherwise so precisely emphasised by the jury. Good arguments have their boundaries, and those are often intensely grounded in emotional states and sensibilities. The intense power of this controversy indeed threatened the integrity of the process, with jury members near resignation—it destabilised the whole institution.

The bagpipe, in this instance, becomes a marker of boundaries: not only the boundaries of tradition in terms of the music, but also tradition in terms of behaviour and verbal expression, as exemplified above. If the nyckelharpa is somehow at the core of the tradition, the bagpipe is balancing on the edge. One is in a place of safety, the other potentially precarious, enacting danger. Presumably, these opinions towards certain instruments involve more general orientations and ‘takes’ towards and on the world.\(^{499}\) If this is the case, it is worth exploring this spectrum of broader orientations and problematise what the jury is trying to hold on to. Why this strong insistence on sticking to the original judgement, despite of the obvious contradictions in doing so?

**Imaginaries of the Pre-Modern: ‘To Grow Organically Together’**

In these two rich and complex examples of the nyckelharpa and the bagpipe, the struggle of upholding a delineation between ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’

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\(^{497}\) Interview with the jury.

\(^{498}\) Ibid. In regard to this enacted vulnerability, it is important to remember that this was not the first time the jury experienced blame or criticism. For this particular jury member, this issue was the culmination of several incidents during their almost thirty years on the jury. Apart from the organised debates and the more formalised disputes held in periodicals, the jury has faced various confrontational situations with displeased players. Most commonly these encounters happen at Spelmanstämmor during jamming, but there are also examples of players being drunk and yelling at the jury late at night or angrily questioning their judgements over the phone. Yet again, the auditions trigger strong feelings and the position of the jury is indeed precarious.

\(^{499}\) See Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 22.
instruments emerges.\textsuperscript{500} Obviously, this implies that certain instruments are perceived as more ‘authentic’ than others and are seen as privileged sites of cultural memory retention\textsuperscript{500}—in line with the auditions’ purpose. In this respect, the jury is oriented towards the nyckelharpa and against the modification of the bagpipe.\textsuperscript{502} In both cases they are faced with uncertainties, trying to maintain their authority and control—although self-reflexively aware of traditions being unstable across time—in constant flow. These examples also elucidate how, to a certain extent, the jury makes decisions based on emotions, and then needs to find ways to rationalize and justify them. Here, the affective responses are emphasised, rather than merely the aesthetical dimensions of tradition and the advocated traditionality.\textsuperscript{503} It is worth noting that many of these kinds of conflicts would easily be prevented if the jury published a list of instruments approved for audition, especially since the issue remains open for interpretation in the statutes. Both the players and the secretariat have frequently echoed this opinion.

In 2003, the chair of Svenska Folkdansringen directed a formal request to the Zorn Committee to investigate the possibility of including more instruments at the auditions. The explanatory letter of response was published on the Zorn website, where the jury clarified their key agenda.\textsuperscript{504} The jury argued that a list would be too restrictive for them. Instead they stressed the importance of keeping the issue open, since they continuously consider new instruments anyhow in their work.\textsuperscript{505} In the aftermath of the bagpipe controversy in the summer of 2015, the question was raised again by the secretariat, at the annual meeting in January 2016. Yet again, they argued how a list would certainly facilitate their work and counteract the previous mistakes. I attended the meeting and the jury responded in a surprisingly fretful way, clearly provoked by the question and its hidden ambivalences. Many of the members effusively raised their voices, and the discussion was abruptly ended by the enunciation: ‘We have talked about this many times, and decided not to have a list!’\textsuperscript{506} This deliberate resistance towards

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\textsuperscript{500} It is not just within the auditions that this arbitrary understanding is prevalent. David Kaminsky brought forward a controversial situation at the Ransäter gathering of spelman in 1999, where players of certain instruments (fiddle, nyckelharpa, clarinet, bagpipe and accordion) were given free entrance. Interestingly, one of the members in the current Zorn jury initiated the declaration at the gathering. Not suprisingly, this generated a considerable amount of debate within the community. Kaminsky analyzes these commentaries in detail, and shows how a delineation is used to enforce boundaries. See Kaminsky, \textit{Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century}, pp. 35–38; and Eriksson, \textit{Bland polskor, gånglåtar och valsor}, pp. 42–43.


\textsuperscript{502} See Ahmed, ‘Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology’ p. 543.

\textsuperscript{503} See Atkinson, ‘Revival: Genuine and Spurious?’, pp. 150–151.

\textsuperscript{504} See <www.zornmarket.se> [Accessed 16 November 2016]

\textsuperscript{505} The jury sometimes ask outside their own organisation for expertise when they are insecure about certain instrumental types and use that as guidelines in their work. For example, see email correspondence about the family of folk flutes between the jury and \textit{Svenskt Visarkiv}, 16 April, 2010.

\textsuperscript{506} Participant observation, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
transparency is very interesting. It allows the jury to be more flexible during auditions, and might more easily lead to decisions made under affect. The emotional response enacts the need to mark out their own territory, simultaneously reassuring their expertise remains necessary. If they had a list, they would be bound to follow it, and the list would become even more powerful than the jury. By keeping the issue open, the jury retains its power and maintain its underpinning mystique.

I would like to return to the instructive letter on the Zorn website again, and further explore its content. ‘The Intentions of Zorn’ as articulated in the statutes, was put forward as their main anchoring point for inclusion of new instruments, and the historical perspective of interpretation was held up as being crucial to their work. They also underlined how old tunes and styles of playing direct them in their judgements, rather than an instrument’s age or manufacturing:

The instrument for audition ought to have a traditionally-informed folk repertoire, which in turn is based on older styles of playing, but also idiomatically designed for the instrument, that is to say, has grown organically together with the instrument.507

Intriguingly, the excerpt enacts how the repertoire is perceived as intrinsically adhered and constrained to the instrument, its materiality and construction. The instrument foremost acts as a vehicle for the tunes, and brings the entire past into the present. The emotionally-charged metaphor ‘grown organically’ points to the passage of time. It draws attention to old ideas of pre-modern society and the collective creation of folk music and art, which slowly and securely develops along a continuum of changes. Thus, everything must ‘naturally’ hold together and be rigidly connected within tradition, in contrast to the modern world, with its ruptures, discontinuities and rapid vagaries.508 The approved instruments are validated by having assumedly undisputed origins and well-documented coherent and solid ‘careers’,509 permeated with inherited meanings that correspond to a reified cultural purpose.510 This essentialist rhetoric remarkably connotes older views of folk music. Echoing the national romantic ideas of both Johann Gott-

507 ‘Uppspelningsinstrumentet skall ha en traditionell folklig repertoar, som i sin stil bygger på äldre spelstilar men också är idiomatiskt utformad för instrumentet, d.v.s vuxit fram organiskt tillsammans med instrumentet.’ [Accessed 16 November 2016].
510 Karl Neunfelt has shown in his studies of the didjeridu that when instruments are perceived in this way concepts of authenticity emerge with salience around them, often in exotic or essentialistic terms. This is certainly the issue here as well. See Karl Neunfelt, ‘The Essentialistic, the Exotic, the Equivocal and the Absurd: The Cultural Production and use of the Didjeridu in World Music’, 1.2, Perfect Beat, 1.2 (1994) 88–104 and Neunfelt, ‘Notes on Old Instruments in New Contexts’, The World of Music, 40.2 (1998), 5–8.
fried von Herder (1744–1803) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), this approach puts emphasis on the ‘folk’ as an organism, and the music as having grown anonymously, collectively and naturally, along ‘universal linear time.’

In nineteenth-century Sweden, these ideas were expressed foremost by Götiska förbundet in Uppsala. Thomas von Wachenfelt has shown how these ideas were revived and adopted by Spelmansrörelsen during the beginning of the twentieth century, featuring provincialism, musical archaism and anti-modernism.

Here, the revivalist roots of the Zorn Auditions’ history become traceable. This is not surprising, due to the fact that the auditions were a modern project from the start. The statutes were written in the 1930s, to preserve the older styles of folk music played before 1900s; a view also put forward in the jury’s letter of response in 2003. From my field observations it seems that even to this day the jury still orient themselves towards the idea of repertoire and instrument having ‘organically grown together,’ where the aspect of time is crucial. In a sense, the jury is trying to uphold the imaginaries of a pre-modern and modern world, where the connection between the tunes and the instruments are interpreted as naturally given. However, as I verified over the course of my fieldwork, the issue is much more complex. This is just one musical reality of many that the jury is trying to hold on to at the auditions. In a postmodern world, these old binaries also collapse within the practice of the auditions, through imaginative leaps and competing interpretations, as I will show later in this chapter.

To summarise, for new instruments to be considered legitimate by the jury, the instrument needs to be historically patterned and linked to a certain repertoire. In the letter, the harmonica and one- and two-row diatonic accordions were put forward as illustrative examples of how the jury aligns to the principle stated above. Yet again, with emphasis on the passage of time, the jury pointed out how these instruments were first introduced in Sweden around the year 1870. ‘One hundred years later, the fact could be stated’ that the diatonic button accordion ‘with time’ had shaped its own repertoire, specifically due to the diatonic. Interestingly, the changes made to the chromatic nyckelharpa between

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513 One of the main spokespeople for these ideas was Ernst Granhammar. He was also part of the Zorn Jury from the start.
514 ‘Till den andra kategorin hör munspel och en- och tvåradigt diatoniskt dragspel, som kom in i svenskt folkligt musikliv åren kring 1870. Hundra år senare kunde det konstateras att dessa instru- ment och deras repertoar kunde innefattas i “den musik och de spelstilar som vi ärvt från äldre tiders spelmän” [...] Durspelen har med tiden fått en unikt folklig repertoar som framförs i en spelstil som formats just av att de är diatoniska.’ <www.zornmarket.se> [Accessed 8 January 2017].
the 1940s and 1960s were also put forward as an example. Despite the new design of the nyckelharpa, the jury stressed how the tunes and styles of playing had remained similar since the 1930s. This is yet another instance of the iconic status of the nyckelharpa, showing how it is looked upon fondly within the auditions. In this sense, the instrument also embodies the jury’s own narrative of the auditions’ history.

How then do the chromatic nyckelharpa and the bagpipe fit into the jury’s criteria of suitable instruments? It is easy to see how the audition with the nyckelharpa explicitly contradicts the statement, considering both the design of the instrument and the tunes performed. The enacted ideas also shed further light on the expressed anxiety for the changes of sound and the jury’s discontent with the musician taking ‘short cuts’ by not using the nyckelharpa’s original construction. Invested with agency, the new sound nevertheless redirected the jury’s actions, and was accepted as part of the future along with the fiddle repertoire. Yet again, this underlines the ‘natural attitude’ towards the instrument and its inhabited nearness within the jury’s work. The bagpipe, on the other hand, is not understood as having a ‘given’ folk music repertoire with an alleged natural connection to the instrument, as sought in the declaration above. As a revival instrument, it clearly designates discontinuity and a break with history. In this regard, the case cogently illustrates incongruities. That the music sounded the same with bellows according to the player and some of the jury members was not considered qualified enough by the jury, though being in line with the purpose set out in the statutes. Instead, the main focus was directed towards ‘the older styles of playing’, and, as follows, the construction of the instrument. Images of the past were used in trying to establish ‘the right look,’ through historical accuracy and the traditional ‘weight’ of the revival instrument. Going against their own principle, the construction of the instrument was indeed given valued attention by the jury in both of these cases—in the first by affecting the sound, and in the latter by changing the visual and physical aspects of playing. The jury members are certainly thinking through the instruments in order to reach their conception of traditionally-informed playing. To reiterate, the members of the jury clearly do care about the preservation of older instruments and show hesitation towards certain modifications; thus characteristic features of revival movements, such as the audition practices.

These two cases are also excellent examples of how revival activity and the practice of safeguarding well-documented traditions coexist and reconfigure the spaces within the auditions. Furthermore, they highlight how the jury’s quest for authenticity, in the words of Regina Bendix:

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is at once modern and anti-modern. It is oriented towards a recovery of an essence whose loss has been realized only through modernity, and whose recovery is feasibly only through methods and sentiments created in modernity.\textsuperscript{517}

However, as previously argued, the jury’s longing is not only directed towards local ‘pastness’; of equal importance is their view of a future in which tradition is maintained and respected.\textsuperscript{518}

**Sensing the Layers of Time**

Perhaps equally significant in both cases is the enacted conceptualisation of time and the assumed prerequisite of slow change. The jury is frequently—and predictably—directed towards temporality and transmission. Both these features are intrinsically part of the ordering attempts of the particular criteria of traditionality. Thus, long lasting ideas are manifested within the elusive concept of tradition.\textsuperscript{519} Recurring utterances by the jury consider how the instruments have ‘not been in traditional use long enough’, or are not being part of tradition ‘yet’. In one of our interviews a jury member suggested an instrument should have been in practice for at ‘least a hundred years’ to be considered traditional. Even so, some jury members felt the selection of instruments to be a slippery task:

> The transmission of knowledge is important. For better or worse we sit with the rulings of old juries, so to speak, that we must stick with. For now, we are the only ones who can influence which instruments are allowed, and that’s a sticky situation. But perhaps that’s how it should be? Others might think it’s ok to ‘throw in a saxophone,’ but we don’t do that only just because you can play tunes on it, or on a bouzouki or something. Rather, it’s because everything happens so slowly with us that maybe leads to better quality over time—the fact that any change to tradition is so hard won, that’s is a good thing for the Zorn Jury.\textsuperscript{520}

Another member of the jury described their attitude with the following words:

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We are dynamic but also very conservative, and it lies within the concept of preserving traditions that we should be conservative. But we’re not static, there are certain dynamics, although things don’t change quickly. So we are still open to discuss new things. Changes take place slowly, and that is good.521

While reflecting on their position as gatekeepers, the jury proudly situate themselves in a line of reactionaries. Predicated by the passage of time, slow changes are believed to generate quality. Similar sentiments have frequently been voiced by the juries since the 1970s. One of their main spokespeople, who resigned in 2010 after 30 years on the jury, even claimed that the institution should be ‘the last of all’ to include new developments. During my fieldwork, jury members often responded to the question of when to include new instruments with the expression ‘when time has come’ (när tiden är kommen). This sentiment is intriguing in many ways: it enacts how they rely on external potencies and circumstances, implying that it is not completely under their control to make the decisions. Thus, the passage of time will eventually take care of the tricky questions. It will lead the jury to their arrival—as if by fate—whilst hidden from view.522 However, when I asked them about who decides when ‘the times has come’ they quickly and with confidence responded: ‘Of course, we do.’523 To me, this example highlights the coexisting sensibilities of being in charge and simultaneously experiencing an expanding sense of belonging to something larger than oneself: in this case the ongoing, moving history and the moulding of tradition. Interestingly, sensing the layers of time then becomes a crucial way of knowing tradition. The sentiments above also enact how the jury self-reflexively employ enculturated ways of living, making and conceiving time, in order to construct musical value.524

Rather than making an analysis along the axis of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ here, I would like to forge a new pathway and address these issues from another angle. By returning to the sensational aspects of the jury’s lines of thinking, analysed above, I aim to dwell a little longer on the effects of the jury’s reiterative, and sometimes tenacious, action of trying to embody the values of the institution.

521 ‘Vi är dynamiska fast vi är väldigt konservativa och det ligger i traditionsbevarande begreppet att vi ska vara konservativa men vi är ju inte statiska det finns viss dynamik fast inte förändras så snabbt. Så vi är ändå öppna att diskutera nya saker, förändringar sker inte snabbt och det är bra.’ Interview with Jury panel, 20 July 2015, Korro.
522 Interview and conversations with the jury 2015 and 2016.
Giving into the Lines: Holding on to the Jury’s Vision of ‘Otherness’

Indeed, what is presumably traditional directs the jury’s gaze, and as previous sections of this thesis have shown, this gaze differs depending on the points of view taken towards an instrument. That these approaches are multiple and shifting is not surprising, enacting the jury’s privilege of selectivity. I would suggest, in line with the ideas of Sara Ahmed, that what is reachable for the jury in these judgements is determined precisely by the orientations that are already taken. In the words of Ahmed: ‘Our body takes the shape of this repetition; we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of this work.’ Even if contradictions and uncertainties occur, as they did for the jury in the controversy over the bagpipe, it might be difficult to change the original path, and take another direction to make a new mark on the skin of the social. The social investment and urge to try to follow the lines and the forms of inheritance by the institution may be too strong, impeding the act of turning back. For the jury to alter their decision becomes impossible; they do not dare to rebel. This paralysed feeling is explicitly enacted in one of the jury member’s sentiments, earlier quoted: ‘We cannot undo the decision, we just can’t.’ Except, of course they can. The jury manages the institution and is in charge of setting the rules—the members do have the power to change their minds and choices. Perhaps they cannot make them completely undone, but surely they could publicly apologise and reduce the possibly bad reputation or even change their practice. I found this tenacious persistency by the jury to stick to certain principles—despite their inconsistency in relation to previous decisions—highly interesting.

Obvious parallels exist here with the controversy over trall. In a similar way, the secretariat let the applicants through and the jury denied them the opportunity to participate. The historical argument that trall had been performed and awarded at the auditions before was also easily dismissed. A crucial difference is, of course, that trall is rejected from the standard audition practices. However, in a similar manner, the jury got stuck in their path, incapable of seeing a future including the vocal technique of trall. To me, both these controversies may be perceived as ‘points of pressure’, where the jury had to decide between following previous actions or creating new lines from past journeys of earlier juries. In their attempts to reduce uncertainties, they gave into the well-trodden social and worldly line. Both these auditions actualise the words of Ahmed, illustrating the drama of life in its critical moments of decision-making:

You face a fork in the road and have to decide which path to take: this way or that way. And you go one way by following its path. But then perhaps you are not so sure. The longer you proceed on this path the harder it is to go back even

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525 Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 57.
526 Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 17.
in the face of this uncertainty. You make an investment in going and the going extends the investment. You keep going out of the hope that you are getting somewhere. Hope is an investment that the “lines” we follow will get us somewhere. When we don’t give up, when we persist, when we are “under pressure” to arrive, to get somewhere, we give ourselves over to the line. Turning back risks the wasting of time, a time that has already been expended or given up. If we give up on the line that we have given our time to, then we give up more than a line; we give up a certain life we have lived, which can feel like giving up on ourselves.527

Therefore, lines are sensational. As shown in the previous sections, the jury are constantly paying attention to knowledge of their own history, and are investing time and resources in trying to embody the institution’s values. In this regard, the last sentence from the above quotation, about giving up on ourselves, might be considered a step too far, if only the details of the instruments are kept in sight. However, these particular cases are examples of how the fringes of the institutional home are being rendered audible. These enacted uncertainties all hinge on upholding the institution’s broader vision of embracing the cultural ‘otherness’ in contemporary society. While deliberately ‘dragging behind the times’, they seek to protect and ‘reintroduce, the forgotten, abandoned, neglected […] practices from the past into present.’528 To care for the traditional solo playing from ‘former times’ is to counterbalance modern-day ‘ensemble groups, accordions, fiddle teams’529 and the world music orchestras, perceived as mainstream within contemporary folk music scene. If they give up on this—their vision—and start to include more and more instruments or repertoires, it might feel as if they are giving up on themselves; scattering the institutions’ endeavour and its history. The previous pages have shown how deep and strong the jury’s affective involvements are; as life-changing experiences, the auditions have become a crucial part of all their lives. The thought of losing all that may indeed be fearsome and generate angst. Thus, the jury are the lines—they are the institution. Here, the activist nature of the auditions’ efforts becomes visible. Their venture is not only conducted in opposition to mass culture in society, but also as a means of improving existing culture.530 As Tamara Livingston argues, this is typical for revivalist movements, in which ‘legitimacy is grounded with references to authenticity and historical fidelity.’531 Thus, the process of reflexivity is intrinsically entangled in these processes, as repeatedly shown throughout this chapter.

527 Ibid. p. 18.
529 Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
The enacted worries in the discussions of all the auditions explored so far are brought together in the overall questions, frequently echoed by the jury: Where does one draw the line? Where will it all end and what will the consequences be? These are certainly not new queries for the jury. During the two public debates in 1973 and 1987, these issue were repeatedly discussed. Certain sentiments by previous jurors share striking similarities with the reasoning in the current jury. At the seminar in 1987, around thirty people had gathered for a weekend at the music museum in Stockholm to discuss how to best support the genre of folk music. The pivotal role of the Zorn Auditions was at the centre of the debate, especially the selective process of including new instruments. Jury members, players, music researchers, archivists, journalists and instrument makers attended the seminar. An introductory speech entitled ‘Folk music—Diversity or Simplicity?’ (Folkmusik—mångfald eller enfald?) was given by musicologist Jan Ling, a previous member of the jury. The talk raised topics for discussion, to be handled in detail later that day. The overall challenges for the Zorn Auditions were addressed with the following words:

As with everything else, with too much order and too much chaos, everything goes to hell. It’s important to find some sort of balance. And that, to some extent also goes for what we’re doing here. That is, if we have too much order, so that, let us say, the Zorn Badge would focus on just three instruments: nyckelharpa, clarinet, fiddle, along with three types of tunes: march, polskas and waltzes. Then we get to a kind of order which leads to insanity, and it would just die out. There’s one thing, what you might call simplicity, which is important here. Diversity may also have its drawbacks. You might say that if you just let everything go and relax the rules, then you can also lose a lot so that the thing no longer has any real substance, any quality control [...] And suddenly we’re just floating around aimlessly, but we’re also on a dangerous path, that makes it difficult for us to orient ourselves, and then everything will go [...] For it’s not correct, I think, to say that it’s only the three jury members who matter, or at least it shouldn’t be. Rather, it’s a long, long tradition which is important. I mean it’s like there’s always someone new arriving but there’s also the two old ones who remain from before. And I believe this is enormously important. So, chaos and order, [...] How does one have democracy for music at the same time as making demands on things which have to do with quality?532

532 ‘Som med allting annat, för mycket ordning och för mycket kaos så går det åt helvete, det gäller att hitta någon slags balans. Och det gäller kanske i ganska hög utsträckning också det här med vad vi håller på och sysslar med här. D.v.s. får vi för mycket ordning, låt säga att Zornmärket skulle inriktas på tre instrument: nyckelharpa, klarinett, fiol, samt tre typer av låtar marsch, polska, vals. Så kanske vi får en typ av ordning som gör att det här blir fullständigt vansinnigt, det dör ut. Det är den ena, det är den man skulle kunna kalla för enfalden, i det här fallet. Mångfalden, kan också ha sina nackdelar. Det kan hända att man så att säga tappar en massa, man så att säga låter det ”flyta ut” så att det saknar substans överhuvudtaget, man släpper kvalitetsbegrepp [...] Och helt plötsligt är vi ute och flytter i någonling och då är vi också ute på en farlig väg, som gör att så att vi så att säga inte kan orientera oss längre, och då släpper alltsammans. [...] För det är inte helt riktigt att säga, tror jag, att det bara är de här tre som sitter i juryn som är av betydelse, åtminstone borde det inte vara det, utan det är också en lång, lång tradition. Det vill säga att det är alltid någon ny som har kommit in
Although uttered thirty years ago, the resemblance in attitude with the current jury is conspicuous. The extract is an eloquent example of how certain ideas become transmitted and circulate, generation by generation, within the jury group. Importantly, three of the people active in the jury today also attended the seminar in 1987. One of them made the comment on *träl*, previously discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. At the core of their discussion in that controversy was yet again the fear of losing control over the institution’s future, and its potential transformation beyond recognition in a never-ending chain of circumstance. In other words, grasping at answers to the question of ‘how to uphold the balance between order and chaos.’

By the same token, in my conversations with the current jury they kept coming back to the last question posed in the quotation above, and sensed the crux of the matter; to devote great care for quality in their work and uphold it, concurrently listening to fair and democratic ideals of inclusion. Practical and financial constraints were repeatedly put forward as vexing issues:

—We have a queue of questions, but we do not have time …

—And there are requests from people outside, in “Folk Music Sweden”, who think: “You need to come to terms with this” and “You need to change this”, or “We think you should include that instrument.” “Why isn’t anything happening within this area?” And we can’t keep up! Even if we want to have time to discuss things…

Since the jury value face-to-face dialogue, and well thought-out decisions, the lack of time is perceived as highly disturbing, obstructing them from doing their work. Due to the economic situation, they can only afford to gather once a year. This is considered insufficient, as shown in the sentiment above, with the corollaries of questions being postponed year after year. As it follows, this creates frustration and impatience within the Swedish folk music community that demands quick answers. Interestingly, the sentiment also points towards how the social to some extent depends on agreement of how to measure time and space. Social conflict is here experienced as being ‘out of time’ with others. This is a cultural position otherwise positively valued by the jury, as previously argued. However, in order to function as the embodiment of this institution, they need


533 ‘Vi har ju en kö av frågor som vi inte hinner med …’ —Och det kommer det önskemål utifrån från folk, i Folkmusiksverige som tycker att “ni måste komma fram till något om detta” och “ni måste ändra på detta” eller “vi tycker ni borde ta in det här instrumentet.” “Varför hånder det inget på det här området?” Och vi hinner inte med! Även om vi vill hinna prata om saker…’ Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016 Stockholm.

to be up to date with current trends and issues, and measure their own vision towards the contemporary society. This anxiety is also connected to their own competency in judging new instruments and repertoires. When the jury are insecure about inclusion, they do not only discuss the moral or historical circumstances for their decision. Thus, their own practical and tactile lived experiences of listening and their possibilities of making open-minded judgements are just as important, as I shall discuss below. Here, the shortcomings of their own musical capabilities may also be a contributing factor for instruments or repertoires to be rejected.

What is in front of the jury also shapes what is behind them; what is available as the background to their vision. In the next section, I will turn to this emergent background, directing special attention towards one instrument that in one design has been forcefully rejected from the auditions, but in another physical form was invited to participate. The instrument in question is the illustrious—and contentious—accordion.

Turning to the Background: Hearing the Politics of the Accordion

‘You either hate it, or love it’ is an oft-heard sentiment describing the sound of the portable shiny accordion. Indeed, few instruments have attracted such simultaneous contempt and admiration as the accordion. The box-shaped and bellow-driven instrument was first introduced in Sweden during the 1860s, mainly imported from Germany, where mass production flourished at the time. The accordion quickly grew in popularity, especially amongst the growing working classes in the cities. It was an affordable instrument, easy to carry and not that difficult to learn to play, and provided melody along with chordal and rhythmic accompaniment at the same time. Its powerful sound and strong volume also facilitated outdoor performances, at spontaneous gatherings or boisterous dance venues. By the turn of the twentieth century, the accordion had become a vivid collective symbol of the new world, and enacted the emergent industrialisation, urbanisation and internationalisation of Swedish society. The new modern Pan-European repertoires (schottises, waltzes, mazurkas, polkas, etc.), later called Old-time dances (gammeldans), also worked well when played on the instrument. Between 1820 and 1920, the instrument was modified from one- and two-row diatonic designs into chromatic multi-rows, in the forms of buttons or piano keys.

If the majority of the working-class people loved the instrument, it was fiercely rejected by the bourgeoisie and higher classes in society. The accordion

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transformed sound, tonality and rhythm of the old fiddle tunes, due to its limited scales and chordal underpinnings. These changes, together with performances of modern dance music, aroused fear and reluctance by the cultural elite. Perceived as a mechanical foreign instrument, the accordion was accused of obliterating or completely wiping out the ‘authentic’ Swedish music and cultural folk heritage.538 On top of this, it was associated with bad taste, a crass and noisy sound, and was alleged to have embodied something dangerously ‘un-Swedish.’539 This nationalistic attitude is epitomised in an often quoted appeal from 1907, by the Swedish–Finnish folklorist Otto Andersson: ‘Dance not to the squeal of the squeezebox! Buy them not! Give them neither house nor home! Burn them!’540 These objections towards the accordion were shared by Anders Zorn and Nils Andersson (the main spokesperson of the Folk Music Commission). The accordion was thereby inevitably banned at the auditions from the start, along with the accompanied old-time music. These values were held for a long time within Spelmansrörelsen.541

The popularity of the accordion reached its peak between 1930 and 1950. During this time, the old-time dance on accordion was without dispute—the most popular genre of music in Sweden.542 However, the cultural establishment and conservative forces still associated the instrument with immoral ways of living—it was a hotbed for sin, due to its closeness with dancing. It was not only the proximity of bodies that evoked affective responses. Warnings were also directed towards the blunting of intellect, and how the accordion could ‘make you apathetic or stupid.’543 It goes without saying that these struggles over the accordion illuminate the tension between the values associated with the ‘low’ culture of the masses, and the ‘high’ culture of the elites. The accordion was embraced as a vernacular instrument, but faced strong resistance in regard to its being considered a traditional folk instrument.

538 Johansson, ‘Dragspelet—hyllat och föraktat.’
539 It seems like the accordion was perceived in a similar manner in other Scandinavian countries as well, for example Finland, and highlights how nationalism tend to be is intriguingly international. See Vesa Kurkela and Marko Tikka, ‘The Accordion in Finland—an instrument of contradictions’ in FMQ Finish Music Quarterly, <http://www.fmq.fi/2015/07/the-accordion-in-finland-an-instrument-of-contradictions/> [Accessed 16 February 2017]. See also Matt Rahaim’s study: ‘That Ban(e) of Indian Music: Hearling Politics in The Harmonium’, The Journal of Asian Studies 70, (2011), 657–682 (pp. 657–659). His depiction of how the harmonium has been perceived in India share striking similarities with those of the accordion in Sweden.
542 Lundberg, Malm and Ronström, Music, Media and Multiculture, p. 196.
This attitude started slowly to change during the 1970s with the national folk music revival, which involved an awakening interest in the accordion, followed by the development of accordion clubs and associations.544 This interest also reached the Zorn Auditions. In 1973, for the first time, a well-known player and tradition-bearer auditioned on the diatonic accordion. The issue of inclusion divided the Zorn jury, and generated a heated debate within the folk music community. Those in favour claimed it was time to acknowledge the instrument. Those against felt threatened and afraid and echoed a well-known misgiving: if the jury accepted the diatonic accordion, it would inevitably lead to difficulties in drawing the boundaries against other types of accordions and repertoires.545 The jury handled the tricky questions by awarding an extra prize, in the form of a plaque of honour (Zornplaketten), on the grounds that the accordionist had made a ‘great cultural contribution of collecting and preserving the oldest traditions of the accordion.’546 Between 1973 and 1979, diatonic accordionists and harmonica players started to participate in the auditions, trying their luck in front of the jury, and also received badges. In 1979, the first player was granted the Silver Badge on diatonic accordion. Importantly, the diatonic accordion and harmonica were then judged by repertoire and ways of playing that were traditionally and idiomatically connected to the fiddle. This, yet again, highlights how the juries tend to be in conflict with their own principles. Meanwhile, the discussion of whether other forms of accordions should be considered historical folk instruments continued within the jury, and is still today a hot topic of debate.547

The interest in the accordion and old-time dance music declined after the middle of the twentieth century. Nowadays, accordion clubs are still active in Sweden, but the musical practice is mainly associated with the retired, older population. Stefan Bohman argues that the old-time repertoire for the accordion has become museumised and has gained status as cultural heritage.548 Importantly, today the instrument is also used within a range of musical genres, and is played by people of various ages. For the general population in Sweden, many people encounter the accordion every day in the soundscape of the public space. It has become a kind of ‘soundtrack of our lives’, since the instrument is a crucial part of busking culture in the cities, not least amongst EU-migrants. Yet again, the accordion symbolically represents the music of the lower classes in society. Some love it, others hate it, and the love-hate relationship towards the instrument is kept alive and resounding.

544 Lundberg, Malm and Ronström, Music, Media and Multiculture, p. 199.
545 Ramsten, ‘De nya spelmannen’, p. 60.
546 ‘Stora kulturella insats genom att samlar och bevara den äldsta dragspelstraditionen.’ Quoted by Ramsten in ‘De nya spelmannen’, p. 60.
547 Mats Edén (‘för medvetet spel i gammal tradition’). Ramsten ‘De nya spelmannen’, p. 60.
548 Bohman, ‘Vad dragspel kan säga oss?’, p. 181.
Sounding Out Loud: Questions of Repertoire and Inherited Inconsistencies

In the light of the previously-depicted narratives, the jury panel at the auditions in 2015 made a bold move within the history of the institution. They asked one of the archivists at Svenskt visarkiv to perform for them on the five-row accordion, as a simulated audition. The jury were curious to see how they felt while listening critically to the instrument and what questions might arise. The director of Svenskt visarkiv got excited over their surprising attempt, and asked if they could publish a short note about it at their website, because many would be glad and interested to hear about their new ways of thinking. The jury became uneasy, and quickly turned down the request and said: ‘No. We are already in such an exposed position and we need to move slowly with these tricky questions.’

Yet again, the jury panel emphasised caution and insisted on gradual change. During the audition, the archivist clarified that he had no personal agenda to plead for the inclusion of the five-row accordion. He then performed four tunes, including one extra on request from the jury. All were part of the old-time dance music repertoire; two waltzes, a schottis and a hambo. The tunes were carefully introduced as ‘hits’ from the 1910s and 1920s, chronologically placed after the repertoire traditionally connected to the diatonic accordion. The archivist also told us how these tunes also were frequently played by fiddlers during that era, as shown by many of the recordings held in the collections at Svenskt visarkiv. He facetiously added how the tunes came from ‘a time when Nils Andersson and his crew hated accordions most of all.’

The jury exchanged glances, and responded with smiles and recognition. After the first tune the archivist apologised for the volume of the performance, since the acoustics of the room had taken him by surprise. During the rest of the audition, the jury listened attentively and took notes. One of them asked if the archivist had met any of the musicians he played the tunes after and whose playing style he was following, but otherwise no further questions were directed towards the performance.

Afterwards, the jury found no difficulties in judging the instrument, that they had experienced very similar to the diatonic accordion. The only expert on accordion was present in this panel and this may have contributed to this shared feeling. Critical attention was quickly directed towards the sonic experience and especially the level of volume and ‘loudness’ of the instrument, as indicated by the archivist’s comment above. This was a recurring topic of discussion during performances on diatonic accordions, and the jury clearly prefer and value a softer sound. If the instrument was not perceived as problematic in the test

549 Participant observations, ZA, Korrö.
551 ‘Från den tiden då Nils Andersson och hans gäng hatade dragspel allra, allra mest’ SVAA20150723ZN002.
audition, the issue of repertoire instead raised questions: perhaps the genre was not ready yet? When does this ‘old-time’ dance music become sufficiently old enough? And how do we control and communicate what we want the players to perform? The last question relates to how many accordionists today play a canon of popular tunes from the middle of the twentieth century552 clearly not considered appropriate for the auditions. Remarkably, these tunes are already heard at the auditions by performers on diatonic accordion or harmonica. This is perhaps unsurprising, due to the open interpretations of the desired tunes in the statutes. Thus, it causes exasperation within the jury, and forces them to cope with issues of potentially skilled musicians performing the ‘wrong’ kind of tunes. These players are often not awarded at all; sometimes certificates are handed out anyway as a gesture of encouragement. The jury never commented on the choice of tunes during the actual auditions. Therefore, if the player chose not to participate in the feedback conversation, they would never know why their audition was not approved.

The idea to do a test audition came from one of the jury members who had often expressed irascibility and irritation over their own inconsistency regarding instrument selection.553 The member argued that in comparison with other instruments, the accordion certainly aligns with the jury’s principles; it shows historical continuity and has its own repertoire of old-time dance music. The decline of active accordionists today was also taken into account; since becoming a tradition requires preservation, along with the criteria of being intrinsically bound to the practice of dance. During my interview with the jury at their annual meeting in 2016, the panel’s actions clearly surprised the others, and the announcement was followed by a short, circumspect silence. Many of the members were visibly uncomfortable; their initiative was not entirely received with enthusiasm—in fact, it was met with tentative resistance. Questions were raised: ‘Who will dole out the judgements, then? We do not have the expertise.’ The member in favour responded with a confident tone: ‘Let us get it then.’ Several members underlined their belief that ‘this will not happen during my time in the jury.’ They further discussed how they use the statutes as a template which can be moveable through time adapted to the current time period. Would Zorn have approved of accordions today? Does it have to take hundred years? The unsettled feeling of inconsistency was, however, acknowledged by others as well: Why do we approve of the chromatic nyckelharpa and rebuilt harmonicas, but not the five-row accordion? The accordion also inspired questions of what they really search for in new instruments: is it a certain musical idiom or a specific sound? The jury self-reflexively raised questions, without offering any answers.554

552 For example: ‘Drömmen om Elin’, ‘Livet i finnskogarna’, ‘Avestaforsens brus’ and ‘Gammal dalavals.’
553 For example, the issue was raised during the discussion over the modification of the bagpipe.
554 Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
Interestingly, the only ethnomusicologist in the jury was not present at this meeting, but later clarified to me that the jury is guided by the UNESCO convention of intangible cultural heritage. From his point of view, this was why the others referenced a hundred years, since the definition of tradition in the conventions is three generations. The UNESCO convention was also put forward as an explanation of why the discussion around including the five-row accordion had started at this specific time. However, during my interviews and observations, the other jury members never mentioned these guidelines or spoke about the convention. Instead, they openly reflected on the matter. I suggest that many of the objections by the jury members present at the interview towards the five-row accordion is grounded in uneasy feelings of not being capable of judging the instrument, rather than logical arguments or historical circumstances.

I also observed this insecurity in many of the auditions featuring the diatonic accordion, especially when the member with the specific expertise was absent from the panel. The issue of volume was frequently brought to the fore. At one audition this even became part of the main discussion on whether or not to award Silver.555 Three of the members held the performance to be almost uncomfortably loud, with a ‘penetrating sound’,556 and reacted on the crescendo and how the bass took over at the phrase endings (basen slog över vid fraslut). It created a kind of back beat, especially audible in a schottis, indicating influence from Norwegian styles of playing. The fourth member did not agree with the others whatsoever. Instead, they felt that the player’s rhythmical skills and smooth way of turning the bellows (bälgvändningar) were admirable; to play dynamics audibly and with power was perceived to be crucial to get ‘the dance floor going.’ The performance was described as compelling, and the notable features were said to be a convincing part of the desired style in that particular geographical area. The discussion continued at great length and the jury were certainly involved emotionally.557 In trying to clarify their arguments they listened to the recording of the audition again. ‘It really makes you want to stand up and dance!’558, one of members said encouragingly. Another responded to the feeling by slowly walking around the table, moving their body to the music, dancing and spinning around on the floor, illustrating the steps of the polska, while searching for the right rhythm—a physical embodiment of the tradition under exploration. The dancing member commented on how it sounded and felt more like a mazurka, since the tempo was too fast for a polska; another disagreed, saying that the tune is supposed to be played like that. They continued by comparing the performance with recordings of other diatonic accordionists from the very same year, and started to search for similar tunes on Spotify and YouTube. While

555 Participant observations at ZA 2012–2015.
556 ‘Genomträngande ton.’
557 They found it so hard to make a decision during the original time of deliberation, so they postponed the discussion until later that day.
558 ‘Vill slänga sig upp och dansa.’
listening to another tune by a *spelman* from the same area, one member started to count the beat by tapping their foot and then switched back to the audition, to compare the tempo in the *polska* again. They stayed with the tune for a while; sitting down at the table, moving their knees up and down, simultaneously snapping their fingers in the air and waving their arms to the beat, as if conducting an orchestra. The dancing member had returned to the others and started to sing the melody of the tune, and yet again said: ‘It just doesn’t feel right in style…’ The member in favour of Silver argued: ‘We can listen to many […] it doesn’t matter; people play differently.’ A third member chimed in: ‘There are no straightforward answers.’ One of them felt the urge to move on, and noted that the recordings did not help them: ‘We need to reach a decision.’ Two of the members expressed doubts due to their own lack of knowledge of the instrument. The member in favour started to become a bit annoyed, lashed out with their arms and challenged the others: ‘Give me a different image. Put out my fire!’ The members tried to grasp what they felt was missing, and narrowed it down to three aspects: The tempo in the polska, the reverberation of the base, and the loud sound. In addition, they firmly decided that there should be no hesitation at all in awarding Silver on the first try. Tired and a bit upset, they all sighed and tried to calm down. A long silence followed. They started to discuss again. The member in favour shrugged their shoulders and said, laughing: ‘Fair enough! I won’t order people about. I have one saved for later.’ Another juror tried to finish up: ‘We have discussed this comprehensively over a long period of time. No hard feelings. Let us agree on Bronze.’ In just a few minutes they settled the written dedication for the award and marked the end of the discussion by thanking each other: ‘Well fought, all of you!’

This example explicitly shows how the jury constantly use ways of bodily and sensory perception in order to evaluate the music. They sing, listen, dance, count the beats out loud, trying to feel the rhythm in their bodies or sense it through touch. Through the use of additional recordings and auditions, the jury also relate what they hear to other domains of experience, in order to guide and share their listening. The interpretation of style was placed at the core of the controversy, underpinned by the unsettled feeling of a lack of expertise. The audible details under negotiation all related to instrumental techniques producing the sound. The jury tried to consult the member with the greatest knowledge of the accordion, but they did not succeed and had to cope with the delicate questions themselves. One member called the discussion ‘a happy party of argumenta-
The sensibilities towards the volume also mark out the fringes of the institution’s comfort zone, including those who are ‘out of line.’

The accordion inhabits an ambivalent position at the auditions. On one hand, the diatonic accordion is accepted but surrounded by uncertainty. On the other, the five-row accordion has long embodied everything that the institution is not. It has been hated for its sound, despised for its industrial design and transnationality, symbolising all that Zorn found despicable. The instrument is pushed aside, and currently only available as background feature in the musical landscape of the auditions. However, as shown in the previous sections, it is still in the realm of the reachable. Thus, the background is not just ‘behind’, it also becomes something to aspire ‘toward’ and the far-off horizon is perceived as moving closer. This feeling is illustrated in a statement from one of the jury members: ‘The accordion is knocking on the door.’ Similar could also be said about trall: that the members believe it to be ‘the next to enter the auditions.’

These two instruments were often mentioned when I asked the jury about their visions of the future. They stressed how the controversy over trall took place over ten years ago, so perhaps ‘the time is soon to come’ for its inclusion? Other instruments, such as the guitar, mandolin, saxophone, drums and zither, have completely disappeared from sight, and are not considered at all, mainly due to their historical function as instruments for accompaniment.

The Politics of Time and Coercive Alignments

In this chapter I have explored the jury’s aesthetic sensibilities and sensory education during musical evaluation through close readings of a range of musical performances. The jury members clearly know what they are listening for in a successful audition and inhabit the listening through embodied practice. During evaluation they use touch, sight and bodily movement to make sense of what they hear whilst trying to transform the instant feeling into communicative arguments. In this way, the jury creates an emotional space in which musical meaning is grounded in affect and feelings. Debate and controversy are highly valued as part of the audition practice, and are believed to generate trust, harmony and knowledge. In their view, the ritual system undoubtedly generates quality. However, we have also observed how they handle their feelings with caution, since they may result in clouded judgement, underlining how good arguments also have their limits.

565 ‘Argumentationsfest med leenden.’
568 Interview with Jury panel, 20 July 2015, Korrö; Interview with the Jury, 16 January 2016, Stockholm.
A further insight has been that the jury are in constant conflict with their own principles—repeatedly breaking them while trying to embody the values of the institution. They indeed wish to be consistent, but constantly find themselves in complicated and delicate situations which generate vexation within the group. I would suggest that the jury’s deliberate resistance towards transparency and their insistence on debatable, open criteria of inclusion contribute to the frequency of these situations. These strategies are also deployed by the jury as a tool for retaining power. I addressed these brimming anxieties, fears and ambivalences, particularly in the second part of the chapter. I directed special attention towards aesthetic and symbolic valences of musical instruments and their presumed traditionality, to reveal how the musical instruments enact split agencies, simultaneously durable and fractured, and in different ways mediate social action at the auditions.

The politics of time and the ways in which categories such as ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ temporalise history in different ways—linking the dimensions of past, present and future—have occupied many scholars. The lived experience of time creates generic perceptions of the world, and forms historical epistemologies.569 ‘Sensing the layers of time’ informs the jury’s agency and functions as a crucial way for them to understand tradition and sense when to include new instruments. By relaying on old statutes and principles, the jury is trying to hold on to the imaginaries of a modern and pre-modern world. However, as several examples have shown, they are self-reflexively aware of the contradictions of their actions, and these binaries tend to collapse within the audition practice.

By drawing on Sara Ahmed, I have proposed an alternative way of understanding the jury’s persistent actions in times of crisis. The jury members tend to get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of their work. As Ahmed reminds us: ‘We follow the line that is followed by others: the repetition of the act of following makes the line disappear from view as the point from which “we” emerge.’570 Thus the jury are the lines and the lines accumulate privilege. The act of turning back becomes impossible, since by giving up on the line they give up on themselves. To recall the words of Helga Nowotny: it is in the tension between coping with uncertainties and trying to maintain control that the formation of group belonging emerges.571 This is explicitly enacted through the jury’s forceful reactions, to immediately pushing certain things out: ‘We don’t do that!’ It clearly indicates fear, simultaneously as a need and brings the main question of their existence to the forefront: how far can the institution go in allowing change, without erasing their own purpose representing ‘otherness’ in society?

570 Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 15.
This chapter has gone some way towards mapping out how the jury are drawing a map of preferred sonic boundaries. In the next chapter I will further explore the favoured repertoire, as well as performative techniques.
4. Music on the Borders: The ‘Folk’ Idiom and Influences of Art Music

‘The player may bring dancers to the audition’. 572

Folk music in Sweden has historically been closely connected to participatory performance contexts, such as accompaniment for dance, work or part of certain ceremonial celebrations. In line with this, during the 1970s competitors at the Zorn Auditions started bringing one or two dancing couples with them for performance to the jury. The trend was part of the leftist counter-movement and national folk music revival in the seventies, best interpreted ideologically. It functioned as a strong reaction against the previous generations of folk musicians and their use of classical violinistic norms and concert-like chamber performances from sheet music, which until then had dominated within spelman groups and associations. Many folk musicians and activists stressed the importance of bringing back the music from the concert stages and realm of art music, to the ‘authentic’ and original context of the dance floor. As a result, in 1975 the Zorn Committee altered the statutes and added that a player may bring dancers to the audition. 573 As shown in the previous chapters, the Zorn Jury today places a high value on bringing dance characteristics to the fore in the performance of traditional music. Many of its current members were young and active during the 1970s revival, and still embrace many ideals of the movement. Still, the institution embodies interesting tensions. Its historical roots are built on traditions of music competitions and stage performances. The solo recital is performed behind closed doors and not on a public stage or at a dance floor. Yet in the jury’s evaluations, it is precisely those characteristics they search for: ‘To keep the dance floor going.’ However, few players today take advantage of the opportunity to bring dancers to the auditions, and according to the jury none have been privileged by it. 574 Only one player performed with a dancing couple during my fieldwork, and many of the interviewed players had no idea that it was even allowed. In relation to this, players who auditioned several times described how they first thought equilibristic and virtuous playing with trills and ornaments would impress the jury. This slowly changed the more times they tried.

572 ‘Uppspelande får medföra dansare till uppspelningen.’ The Zorn Statutes, p. 5.
and they learned that the jury preferred simpler tunes, without unnecessary embellishments, evaluated in regard to whether or not they were easy to dance to. Importantly, there are also certain traditional styles of dance music in Sweden, dominated by virtuosic violin music, called ‘folk baroque,’ where the influence of art music idioms is seen as part of the ‘folk’ tradition, for example in the provinces of Ångermanland, Hälsingland and the isle of Gotland.

This chapter engages with the tensions between notions of so-called traditional ‘folk’ characteristics and classical art music idioms, exploring the intersections of music for the stage and music for dancing. In relation to these tensions, another important development is taken into consideration: the implications of the institutionalisation of folk music in universities, music colleges and conservatories in Sweden. Today, folk music may be studied on every level of the Swedish educational system. There are also folk music and dance programmes on pre-college or post-secondary (‘folkhögskola’) levels.575 I explore how the jury relate to these processes, in which the old tensions between the skilled and self-taught amateur and the trained professional musician emerge.

There are many imaginaries of the ideal spelman. Preferences and sensibilities in regard to performance practices involve both sonic experiences and visual aspects. These issues will be further explored through two carefully articulated case studies. The first will attend to the jury’s disapproval of mannerisms, and the second engages with the relation between the jury’s preferred performative techniques and musical traditions on the geographical borders of Sweden. I will move from an analysis of embodied practice to one of narrative and temporality; through the jury’s construction of historical music periods within the auditions I will delineate the connections between these realms.

**Mannerisms and Preferable Performance Practices**

Music as embodied practice draws attention to the visual aspects of a performance, such as the players’ posture and physical use of their body. The recognition afforded by the eye is of crucial importance for the jury during their evaluations, especially considering the category ‘qualities of a spelman.’ As shown in the previous chapter, when tricky questions occur the jury use the audio recording to listen to the performance again. This was occasionally perceived as disorienting due to the lack of a visual referent, and the jury often expressed a wish to film the auditions instead. This was first tested at the auditions in the summer of 2016 and further heightens how value is placed on visual aspects. Interestingly, this practice stands in stark contrast to other types of orchestral auditions, where

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575 See for example Kaminsky, *Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 112.
‘blind’ auditions are deployed in order to prevent biased evaluations in regard to age, gender and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{576}

During my observations, jury members frequently used the expression ‘mannerisms’ (manér) when they disliked certain bodily gestures, performance practices or sounds. For example; tapping the foot too hard in the floor, exaggerating movements while playing or using a more theatrical stance during the audition. These aspects were perceived by the jury as artificial and learned, rather than sincerely grounded in the inner state of the performer. ‘Mannerisms’ also signified an excessive use of ornaments and embellishments in a tune.\textsuperscript{577} For the jury, these exaggerated performance practices may produce good effects on a concert stage in front of an audience, but are perceived as less appropriate for the intimate audition space. Spontaneity and improvisation is highly cherished, and in order to ‘make the stage yours’ the performer should not reveal how well rehearsed the restored behaviours are.\textsuperscript{578} These mannerisms were also often connected to youth and a less ‘mature’ way of playing, representing those who had ‘not yet’ found their own performative style. The jury clearly searched for a musical performance that reflected a more equal footing, as if playing among peers, rather than reinforcing the delineation between the audition stage and the jury as an audience. Importantly, it had still to be a show and to entertain them, but be performed in a ‘natural’ and ‘genuine’ manner. The word ‘mannerisms’ was clearly used in opposition to these desired characteristics, and was closely linked to the jury’s disapproval of recital-like manners (sceniskt spel) and formal staged performances (konsertant). During my observations, almost all members used the word ‘mannerisms’, and three of them used it specifically in regard to conservatories. Of those three, two were part of the panel during two of the years I conducted observations, which counted for half of the jury group in those years.

The word konsertant was frequently used by jury members as well. It is not easy to interpret or translate this into English, since the jury used the term in a slightly different way than is normally the case in Swedish. It captures a specific timbre related to art music, a performance practice and certain bodily postures reinforcing the formal solo staged performance. The players to whom it was applied often had their chins up, heads slightly leaning towards the ceiling and sometimes they performed with closed eyes, as if over-dramatizing the show. They often stood still on the same spot, perhaps swaying with their upper bodies, displaying awareness of being observed by an audience. This stands in stark contrast to the jury’s value of spontaneity—of being invited into the performer’s world on equal footing, and using the whole body while playing, as if they were


\textsuperscript{577} The expression was especially used by the jury panels during 2013 and 2015, and less frequently addressed in 2014. See for example, participant observations ZA 14 June, 2013; Participant observation ZA 6 August 2014, Umeå; Participant observations ZA 23 July, 2015, Korrö.

\textsuperscript{578} Schechner, \textit{Performance Studies}, pp. 34–35.
dancing to the music, inviting the jury members to literally dance with them. I suggest the expression *konsertant* captures both recital-like manners and mannerisms, indicating how the act of staging itself somehow subverts folk music’s ‘true form.’

Interestingly, three of the jury members also used the expression ‘mannerisms’ in direct link to trained musicians. This perspective is connected to the last 40 years of institutionalisation of folk music in programmes at music colleges, universities and conservatories in Sweden. It is associated with the common assumption that these programmes nurture a specific kind of style and sound, making the students ‘play in the same way and same manner.’ And, as previously discussed, it contributes to standardisation, homogenisation and canonisation of orally-transmitted music. Another criticism articulated concerns about the ‘artification’ of folk music through value systems in curriculums and course plans. This proximity to classical idioms was also highlighted in the jury members’ sentiments above.

I was curious to hear how the jury responded to my observations, and I asked them to clarify and explain their views on this issue. During our interview in one year early on, one of the members answered:

Yes, Well, it … I will not conceal the fact that it makes you very happy when a [player] comes, let’s say a young person, who plays really well and is not a product of the music colleges and has instead acquired a good way of playing quite naturally. They are often very nimble in the way they play [referring to the students at the conservatories]. And it might shine through, you may feel a bit: ‘This one has probably studied with this and that teacher and so on, while these others learned at music college that they ought to play this way …’

It is intriguing to note how the member describes the educated player in terms of a ‘product’, reinforcing the idea that music colleges generate uniformity of expression and, by extension, artificiality. The player who learnt the music ‘in a

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580 Juniper Hill has, in several studies, investigated the impact of institutionalisation of folk/traditional music into conservatory and music college programmes, especially in Finland, but also Sweden and other Nordic countries (in comparison with the British Isles, North America, China, Indonesia, and former Soviet states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia). Hill show how these programmes have often been shaped by certain agendas and political ideologies and transformed music practices ‘far beyond institutional walls.’ For both Sweden and Ireland, a few charismatic influential leaders have strongly shaped music pedagogy. See for example Juniper Hill, ‘The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context’, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 18, 2nd ser., (2009), 207–241 (pp. 207–208, 210, 215, 222, 225).

581 ‘Ja, jo, det …. Vill inte sticka under stolen med att man tycker att det är väldigt roligt att det kommer, låt säga en ung person som spelar väldigt bra och inte är en produkt av någon av högskolorna, utan som har tillägnat sig ett bra spel på en naturlig väg. De är ofta väldigt flyhända att spela sådär. Och det kan väl skina igenom, man kan känna lite grann: “den har nog gått efter den och den läraren och så, och de har nog fått lära sig på musikhögskolorna att de ska göra sådär.”’ Interview with the jury.
natural way’, i.e. not by an education, is placed on the opposite side. The sentiments enact romantic ideas of the talented and skilled self-taught amateur. During another occasion, the very same member used the expression ‘children of nature’ (naturbarn) to describe these kinds of players, endorsing an essentialist view of musicality.

Another jury member tried to expand upon their response to my question and further explained how they search for a specific kind of ideal and style of playing:

There are differences in what one aims at in the different contexts, for example, we focus on solo playing and traditionally informed playing and the spread of things which are important within the Zorn Auditions. And it is not automatic that these are the things which you think are important when you go to music college, perhaps [...] If you, for example, join a music programme and want to support yourself as a folk musician, perhaps there are more modern modes of expression which are more contemporaneous than what you get in college. Then you need to be able to distinguish what you do in those contexts and what you perform for us. [It is important] to be aware of that when you audition and where to draw the line, and keep them apart.582

More examples were put forward of how the music programmes encourage playing in ensembles and combining different types of genres or folk musics from other countries, in order for the musicians to become adaptable in the working market. The members talked about how this changed the performance practices of folk music and affected the styles of playing. One brought forward the schottis as an example of a new trend. The influences of jazz had contributed to the amplification of rhythmic displacement and the increased use of syncopation and back beat to reinforce the ‘groove’ in the music. The members stressed how these stylistic changes might become part of a tradition in the future. But for the time being, they underlined how the Zorn Auditions were a completely different platform, where solo playing and tradition were the main criteria being sought. In relation to this, the skills of adaptability and flexibility were again put forward as important qualities of a good spelman and performer. The first member commented again:

I also know that there are forces in educational institutions which are against playing the way we want. There are teachers who counteract it […] or work in

582 ‘De är ju lite olika inriktning på vad eftersträvar i olika sammanhang t.ex. vi gör ju ett fokus med det med solospelet och traditionellt uttrycksspel och paletten som är viktigt i Zormärkessammanhanget. Och det är ju inte automatiskt så att det är det som är det som är det viktiga om man går på kanske en högskola […] Om man nu t.ex. går på en musikerlinje och försöker sig som musiker inom folkmusik, då kanske det finns modernare uttrycksmedel som ligger längre in i nutiden än vad som passerar i det här sammanhanget. Då måste man ju hålla isär det som man gör i det sammanhanget och det som man gör när spelar upp för oss. Att man är medveten om det när spelar upp för oss, och var gränsen går och hålla isär det.’ Interview with the jury.
another direction, and believe that what we do here is not important? [...] It’s a question of returning to this stylistic ideal, so to say, that we have. It is something that we have created in this process. We are creating a stylistic ideal, and there is nothing that says that this is the absolutely right one. We know nothing about how someone played in [mentions a name of a small village in Sweden, just to illustrate a point] in 1840, we cannot possibly know that. But we think we know sometimes, and we are trying to think it through...

This self-reflexive reasoning also highlights how the jury members are well aware of the problems of interpreting traditional soundscapes in contemporary times. It is indeed impossible for the jury to know exactly how musicians played in the past. At the same time, the answer is underpinned by feeling the desire to know, and the manner in which, sometimes, they jury may even think they do know. An important context for the comments about folk music programmes may be found in the case of a well-known professional folk musician who had won the Zorn Badge, but then rejected it publicly on Facebook. This musician, worked at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and wished to rid himself of the title. He claimed he could no longer stand for the institution’s values, since they did not at all represent they way his musicianship developed as a living, exploring and thriving tradition.

The issue of mannerisms was raised again during the interview with the entire jury in 2016. The members received my questionnaire beforehand, and the question of ‘mannerism’ in relation to music college training seemed to elicit a sense of discomfort within the group. Some of the members were upset and expressed very strong emotions. They stated at this point that musicality had nothing to do with the players’ background, and were concerned that the idea that it could, might give the wrong impression of their work. They recognised they used the term ‘mannerisms’ but they did not find a link the conservatoires. One of the members explained:

Performance practice [uppförandepraxis] is an exact term and that is what we judge, without regard to what background the player comes from, if they have attended a college or if they are self-taught or something. It is the performance practice that counts. That is what we listen for, no matter what.

583 ‘Sen vet jag att det finns motkrafter på utbildningarna emot att spela på det sättet vi önskar. Det finns lärare som motarbetar det [...] jobbar i en annan inriktning och tycker att det här inte är något att ha. [...] Det är väl återigen att föra tillbaka till det här stilidealt, vad man ska säga, som vi har. Det är något som vi har skapat i den här processen. Vi skapar ett stilideal, det är inget som säger att det är det absolut rätta. Vi vet inte ett dugg om hur nån spelade i [nämner en by i Sverige som exempel] 1840, det vet inte vi. Men vi tror oss veta ibland och vi försöker tänka till…’ Interview with the Jury.

584 Post in the facebook group ‘Swedish Folk Music’ (Svensk folkmusik) 2015.
Another member added how these practices may be quite varied and what they listen for is how well the performer embodies the norm of the different levels of awards. The member further underlined how the players compete against a norm, not each other. As this one put it:

It makes me very happy when you know someone who has attended one of the programmes at the conservatories and who still maintains a kind of authenticity. And we also get very happy when someone auditions who has authenticity and not attended any music college and in quotes: ‘been spoiled.’

At first sight, these two quotations seem to be representative of ambivalences and asymmetries. The first one stresses how background is not important for musicality—what the jury listens for in an audition is the knowledge of performance practice. In the second quotation, this is blurred through the member’s belief that the performers’ ‘authenticity’ (genuinitet) might be ‘spoiled’ by formal training, i.e. the performers’ background, resulting in the performers embodying an undesirable performance practice. The first member quoted then added, a bit irritated:

To be awarded the Silver Badge you need to have a solid technique on the instrument which corresponds to the level [of the badge] which is what you get through music schools or maybe colleges. And it is the same, no matter if you play so-called Classical music, if you play Romantic music from the nineteenth century or devote yourself to Baroque music. Performance practice in this context leans more towards the Baroque side, so you need to be really aware of your instrument to be able to reach [that level]. You cannot be a bad spelman (kvistspelman) and get Silver […] no matter how genuine you are; you need to reach a certain level. Then you need to have a solid technique.

The member drew the attention back to the performers’ musical skills and technique rather than their background, and highlighted the importance of music schools and colleges for musicians to learn to play well. All the other jury members agreed and further underlined how the level of the competitors during the last thirty years had improved. The possibility of education was indeed an important aspect of raising the standard, and it also contributed to higher expecta-

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586 ‘Det är ju då man blir så glad när man vet att det är någon som har gått någon av de här högskoleutbildningarna och som ändå behåller en slags genuinitet. Och så blir vi också glada när det kommer någon som har genuinitet och inte gått på någon musikhögskola och citat “förstört det.”’ Interview with the Jury.

tions towards the players. One jury member added how technically skilled performers were always welcome and embraced by the jury.

This case is highly interesting for the way it intersects with diverse ideas of musicality. All the examples addressed in this section show how multifaceted the jury is. The group consists of nine individuals who do not always agree or have the same values and perceptions of their own work. The members clearly acknowledge how the conservatories and the Zorn Auditions have different ideals concerning performance practices. Nevertheless, they assert that it is not necessary to polarise them from one another.

One individual within the jury clearly stood out when this particular matter was discussed, articulating very strong opinions, namely that formal education might obliterate the performer’s authenticity (genuinitet). While this position would uphold the old binary opposition between the self-taught amateur and the educated professional, the other jury members maintained that a performer’s background was not important for the judgement of artistic skills. They also underlined how some of the members themselves were educated at the music colleges or conservatories.

Incongruities and contradictions are part of our reality. This case highlights the discrepancies that frequently occur between what we do and what we believe or say we do. People’s activities and behaviours do not always correspond with their own ideas. And for that matter, certain values might be felt to be too embarrassing or potentially upsetting to articulate openly.588 In this case, this is exacerbated by the publicity and potential exposure involved. As a researcher, I engage with and interfere in the world of the auditions, trying to trace the multiple trails of becoming. To recall the words of Tim Ingold, not ‘making a view of the world, but taking up a view in it.’589 I also give the jury a public voice by publishing a thesis—transforming their private deliberations into public text. This might of course be experienced as intimidating by the jury, and involves responsibility and ethics towards their sentiments and responses. Research does have implications and helps to make some social realities more or less real.590 By inviting the jury to comment on my observations, I gave them an opportunity to further clarify and explain their answers. It goes without saying that this is an important ethical approach within my fieldwork.

The case also shows one of the strengths of observations: it may help us to better understand practices and shed light on tacit knowledge, aspects that might

not be captured in interviews. Regardless of the jury’s intentions and self-awareness, I suggest that they show ambivalences and sometimes suspicion towards formally trained musicians, as well as doubts about the ways in which folk music is studied and learned at the music colleges and universities in Sweden. To further illustrate my point: this is an extract from an observation in which the jury decided on awarding Silver and discussed the selection of words to best capture the performance:

—Let us give Silver, how nice! For…?
—Virtuosity?
—No, play that down. Weak tradition.
—Brilliant?
—No, tone down that as well. All words that may be associated with formal training.
—Sonorous? Perceptive? Are really virtuosic, Rhythmical?
—Doesn’t sound that nice…
[they turned towards the list of words to choose from, and read them out loud: Skilled? Perceptive? Sonorous?]
—The timbre was so damned fine.
—Remove all the words that refer to his training. Excellent playing? We’ve had that before. Skilful? [One of them underlined how the playing was performed with beautiful small gestures]
—Plays cleanly, finely and beautifully
—Not masterfully either, on the verge of showy, on the edge of that.

The conversations clearly show how jury members consistently reject words that may be associated with formal training or education. Again, one member is especially persistent, but the others do not object. The performance was also perceived as stage-like, with classical influences. One jury member singled out one of the tunes, stating that it was wholly inappropriate to be performed on stage at the final ceremony because of the classical way the player performed it in the audition. The jury panel deliberately sought to avoid being associated with a certain performance practice connected to art music idioms and trained musicianship. These concerns are both associated with how the institution is represented in public, and the signals being sent to the players about what kind of style the jury prefer.

—Brilliant? —Nej, också tona ned, alla ord som omgivningen skulle associera till att vara skolad.
[De vänder sig till listan och läser högt: Glänsande låtspel? Skickligt? Lyhört? Klangfullt?]
The ambivalent attitude towards higher education in Sweden is not new within the Zorn Jury. I would like to return to the question of standardisation here. At the public seminar in 2010, ‘Who Can Become a rikspelman?’, a spectator in the audience asked the jury if they distinguished any similarities in musical style and performance practice amongst the younger players. One member answered:

The possibilities of formal training for these young spelman today are so many and the teachers who work at the different programmes are also more or less of the same generation now […] In fact you can train yourself, from the day you start to play until you stand there with an advanced degree in folk music, without ever immersing yourself in the old traditional folk music. Unfortunately, today you can get by without meeting a single old man or lady [referring to older spelman]. I think you miss out on a very large possibility, when you think of folk music that way. You could actually get both parts; you don’t have to choose.

The response resembles the sentiment by one of the previously-quoted jury members, who spoke about the possibility of being able to hear in a player’s performance which teacher they had learned from. It is clear that the jury perceive their own practice very differently. They polarise the ‘conservatory’ system and single teacher against their own suggested method of contacting a range of musicians and trying them out, in order for the players to find their own style. This perception assumes a rather generalised view of folk music’s presence in Swedish higher education. To learn music from one teacher does not inevitably mean that you will play exactly like that teacher when you finish the programme—otherwise you would have none of your own agency in the development of a style. Moreover, these programmes involve encounters with a range of musicians, and students are encouraged to explore personal expression and different forms of playing beyond idiomatic boundaries.

During the public seminar in 2010, a musician with a degree in folk music from the Royal College of Music in Stockholm was upset by the jury member’s answer above. He asked a follow-up question: ‘Which programmes do not have tradition-bearers as teachers?’

The jury became uncomfortable and explained that he had misunderstood their answer. Rather than explaining how he had misunderstood, however, they tried to smooth things over, and

593 ‘Utbildningsmöjligheterna för de här unga spelmännen är så stora idag, och de lärarna som arbetar på utbildningarna är väl ungefär i samma generation nu […] Man kan utbilda sig faktiskt, från att man börjar spela till att man står där och har jättehög examen i folkmusik, utan att ha tränt in i den gamla traditionella folkmusiken, man behöver inte träffa en enda gubbe eller gumma idag, tyvärr och jag tycker man går miste om en stor möjlighet faktiskt och få folkmusiken på det sättet. Man kan faktiskt ha båda delarna man behöver inte välja.’ SVAA20100806ZS01.


595 SVAA20100806ZS01.
highlighted the importance of the programmes and their stimulating effects on young people in the field of traditional music. It is important to consider that the folk music community in Sweden is relatively small. To point to certain programmes inevitably becomes a personal matter, since only a few musicians are involved as teachers. This sheds further light on how sensitive these issues may be, particularly when discussed in public. In fact, the very same criticism of standardisation in music colleges or formal training has been directed towards the Zorn Auditions.¹⁰⁶ As an institutional practice, the auditions—through a small group of people—also create, encourage and nurture a specific musical style and performance practice worthy of preservation.

As this section has shown, there are many layers of ambivalence towards trained musicians within the jury group. The resultant tensions will be further explored in the next part of this chapter, in which I investigate one music audition in detail, one in which the player and the jury members had diverse views of the stylistic features of the local tradition. The conversations addressed in the following section involves sentiments of ‘how it really was’ or ‘how it should be,’ negotiating emotional claims of authority and cultural memories of the musical pasts.

Resounding Musical Past: The Example of Gotland

The audition used as an example here is from a performance with a fiddle player who performed tunes from the geographical borders of Sweden; specifically, the isle of Gotland.

The competitor had started to play fiddle as a child and, early on, became interested in the local repertoire of Gotland. Important sources of inspiration for him were family members and music teachers at school. He also had a general interest in local culture and history. Initially, the fiddler was a bit sceptical towards the Zorn Badge, yet this changed when he decided to put aside the idea of being a professional musician. At the age of 28, the fiddler became curious about trying to audition and described it as ‘a fun thing to do.’ To raise the status of the local music tradition of Gotland and place it on the larger map of folk music in Sweden was a primary interest for the player. If bestowed the title riksspelman while playing tunes from Gotland, he would be the first to be awarded in the last 60 years.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Several of my interlocutors expressed this view. It has also been discussed in the Facebook forum ‘Swedish Folk Music’ (Svensk folkmusik) and put forward by members in spelman’s associations, See for example: Magnus Lundberg, ‘Riksspelman i grekisk folkmusik” in Spelfot. Medelmblad för Smålands Spelmanförbund och för Folkdansningen Småland-Oland, 43.3 (2015) p. 3.

At audition, the fiddler performed two polskas, one bridle march and a waltz. When the jury asked for an extra tune, he finished with a slängpolska, which he presented with the following words:

Perhaps I can try a tune in a minor key? I have some in major here … I thought about an old polska. It is also after Fredin but is referred to as “very old” by August Fredin—after Florsen, to say—but in turn it then comes from Laugren the older, who was one of them… Florsen was a cousin of Laugren the younger. They played a lot together, [with his] father who was then living in Burs. In this case we’re talking about the middle of nineteenth century or at the turn of the century, somewhere around then. And it’s called; ‘Gubben Laugrens polska’ (The old man Laugren’s polska). It is also a polska in semiquavers.598

The fiddler was one of those players who introduced each tune at great length. He carefully explained which transcription or version of the tunes he performed, and placed them within a genealogical and temporal frame, reinforcing the mindscape of spelmän.599 It is noteworthy how the player stressed the age of the tune, as observed in writing: ‘Very old.’ The fiddler also told the jury about his own personal relationships with the tunes, and how he had enthusiastically been searching for older tunes together with friends, and ‘the genuine music of Gotland, in a sense, an old style of playing.’600 Since few tradition bearers are alive today, recordings of older spelmän became important ways for him to learn about the particular styles and to absorb the features of the local idiom.601 In our interview afterwards the player told me how he had deliberately prepared to tell the jury about this, since he thought it was expected of him. However, this impression changed after the audition. To his surprise the jury was more occupied with the musical qualities of the performance, rather than showing interest in his historical and personal relationship with the music.602

The fiddler was awarded a certificate. When it was time for the jury conversations in the evening, I followed him into one of the old buildings at the outdoor museum where the discussions took place. We entered a darkish room, over a

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598 ‘Kan ta en låt i moll kanske? Har lite låtar i dur här… tänkte på en gammal polska, den är också efter Fredin men skrivs som, “mycket gammal” av August Fredin—efter Florsen då alltså—men den kommer i sin tur från Laugren den äldre, som var en av dem… Florsen var kusin med Laugren den yngre, de spelade mycket ihop, hans far då som levde i Burs. Då handlar det om början av 1800-talet, eller sekelskiftet där någonstans, och den kallas för “Gubben Laugrens polska”, det är också en 16-dels polska.’ Recording of the music audition. Olof Niklas August Fredin (1853–1946) was son to the most famous traditional musician at Gotland during this time period, Nils Mårtensson Fredin (1823–1907), called ‘Florsen i Burs.’ The referenced musician in the quotation transcribed and collected a large number of tunes from Gotland, resulted in the volume ‘Gotlandstoner’ (Tunes from Gotland) 1912/1926/1933 (514 tunes and 185 songs). See Märta Ramsten and Owe Ronström, ‘Preface 1’ in August Fredin och Gotlandstoner (Fårö: Wessmans förlag 2004).


600 Recording of the music audition.

601 August and Nils Fredin and Svante Pettersson. The latter are musicians active during the 1950s.

602 Interview: JHS (2012–2015). This is also a general impression by many of my interlocutors.
high threshold of wood, and were met by warm, almost penetrating damp air. The ceiling was low in the old kitchen, furnished with wooden benches and tables alongside the walls. The jury panel sat down in the right corner. Rays of sunshine from the window adorned the table in front of them. The player was directed to a chair on the opposite side, next to an open fireplace. I took a seat, a bit behind them to get a better overview of the scene. At the same time, I tried not to be in the direct angle of their sight. The jury welcomed the player in a very informal manner and happily congratulated him on the certificate. The strict atmosphere that had characterised the audition room had completely vanished. The dialogue then quickly started, informed by the player’s eager expectations. A small sandglass was turned upside down in order for the jury to keep time of their conversation—five minutes to go. Interestingly, this marks a shift within the jury’s practice during recent years. The feedback conversations are being rendered more effective, in contrast to the 1970s or 1990s when the conversations could be going on for a long time, sometimes even until two o’clock in the morning.603

Playing with a ‘Classical Attack:’ Divergent Views of Tradition

During the conversation with the player, the jury brought up three main points for improvement. First, they commented on technical skill, since they perceived the performance as stumbling (knagglig) and wished for a brighter intonation (renare ton) and better musical flow (bättre flyt i spelet). Second, the tempo was perceived as too fast, especially in the last slängpolska. Third, the performative elements of style were addressed and the jury believed that it had brought to mind prestigious art music characteristics, rather than traditional styles and techniques. This is an extract from my observations of their conversation:

Jury: Sometimes, I hear you play with a classical attack. All we ask for is embellishments and rhythms within folk tradition.

Player: Well, just a comment: many [spelmän] played together with church musicians…

Jury: [continues]. Yes, which was common all over Sweden […] But they had to be able to keep the different styles apart: one day they played at a country manor, another at the church and then at farmers’ festivities.

Player: On the other hand, […] one hypothesis may be that he absorbed its influence [i.e. art music]?

Jury: If we move further back in time, they are closer to each other. Today, they are more separate […] More separate today than before.604

603 Of course, this also depends on the number of players auditioning. This is also an example of how the jury’s practice is being more professionalised in recent years.

The dialogue contains many interesting layers of ideas and shows how stylistic criteria and performative expression are under negotiation. It is noteworthy how the jury uses a specific notion of history and an indefinite ‘past’ in terms of ‘further back in time’ to legitimise their evaluation. In this case, the jury and the player share similar views of the ‘old Swedish society’ where musicians were closely connected to the practices of the church. However, the influence of art music as a part of local traditions is clearly rejected by the jury. The player, on the other hand, suggests other interpretations. In the interview afterwards, the fiddler told me that he had listened to the recording of the audition again and agreed with the jury that some notes were performed with ‘a classical tone.’ In addition, he clarified that the fiddler he had emulated and played tunes after, called Svante Pettersson, was active in the 1950s and had close contact with musicians performing art music on the mainland in Stockholm. Contrary to the jury panel, the player was convinced that art-oriented performing techniques were typical of the region:

K: How did you experience the feedback? If you compare it with your own knowledge of the music, you mentioned that it is impossible for the jury to have competence within all traditions, but yet…?

Player: I think that there is, in any case, in Gotland a, well, not a consensus exactly, because there are always different opinions, but still, there are many who claim you may look at any folk music record, or book, and they mention this classical influence as being typical for the folk music of Gotland.

I would like to relate these contrasting viewpoints on elements of style to the criticism of player’s choice of tempo in the slängpolska tune. The jury considered the tune to be played too fast, and therefore not suitable for dancing. They advised him to investigate further the styles of playing in the neighbouring mainland counties of Östergötland or Småland, since better-documented practices were to be found there. In our interview, the player questioned the criticism and instead claimed that there is no documentation of musicians playing slower at Gotland. Furthermore, according to the player, since the slängpolska as a dance
has been reinvented out of old descriptions and not preserved in the present time at Gotland, the advice for him involved too much conjectures:

“This is probably the way one danced, and this is probably the way one played, and perhaps one played like this on Gotland too”? There are many deep assumptions which make it a matter of asking what is more correct in such cases. If I were to audition by playing Gotland tunes in a Småland style, and “Well, now you are a riksspelman on Gotland tunes” … In my world, it can’t be more correct than to play in the manner that has been played on Gotland during the twentieth century.

This is a clear example of how the player and the jury panel have slightly divergent views of the local tradition of Gotland. They form shifting narratives over diverse desirable musical pasts, suitable for contemporary preservation and revitalization. In this particular enactment, history is a strong source of inspiration for agency for both player and the jury. So, why do they interpret and select the performance practices and historical precedents of the musical traditions so differently? On one hand, the jury advocate a reconstructive ideal and view traditions of the region as scattered and ruptured, and therefore in need of revival and reinvention. This approach was common within the folk music community during the national and international folk music revival of the 1970s, a time in which several of the jury members were young and active within the scene. The player, on the other hand reads tradition as ‘alive’, in the sense of continuity regarding approaches to performance during the twentieth century, specifically from the 1950s until today. Interestingly, in spite of these differences, the jury and the player also share much in their ways of arguing and perceiving the music. Essentially, they are choosing different historical time periods to support their argumentation, but they both value aspects such as time, geographical place and important individuals, making them crucial references in their reasoning. Furthermore, the jury members and the player also conflate individual expression and regional style. Yet it is important to remember that the jury is setting

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607 Importantly, this is the player’s point of view and a delicate question. There are for example notes of slängpolskas in Sörmland from the 1950s, and reconstructions made in the 1970s. See Bert Persson, ‘Om Henry Sjöberg och hans liv med dansen’ in Eldsjälarna och dansaret. Om forskning och arbetet med att levandegöra äldre dansformer, ed. Linnea Helmersson (Rättvik: Folkmusikens hus, 2012) pp. 128–143 (129–132).

608 “Så här dansande man nog, då spelade man nog på det här sättet, och så kanske man spelade på Gotland också?” Det blir många antaganden till många steg som gör att vad är det som är mer rätt i sådana fall? Om jag skulle gå dit (till uppspelningen) och spela Gotlandslätar i Smålandstil, “Ja nu är du riksspelman på Gotlandslätar”… i min värld kan det inte bli mer rätt än att spela som man ändå har gjort på Gotland under 1900-talet.’ Interview with the player.

609 See Law, Organizing Modernity, pp. 95–96; 105.


the agenda for the feedback conversation and the player is trying to refute the jury panel’s arguments. Their disagreements hinge on whether an individual player is appropriate as representative of the musical style of Gotland. The controversy also elucidates some directions towards the time frames of the ideal musical styles performed within the Zorn Auditions. Why do the jury dismiss the choice of style by this player and what would the player choose to do differently? How might the comments be understood from their perspective?

I would like to revisit the jury’s mode of reasoning here, with reference to a conversation I had afterwards with two of the members of the jury panel. We listened to the recorded tune again and I showed them my observations and asked them to clarify and reflect on their statements. The jury reiterated their judgement and advice and gave several reasons for their advice. They explained that the role models in the 1940s and 1950s, referenced in the conversation above, were part of a movement that revived traditional music and created their own style influenced by classical chamber music. These activities were not isolated to Gotland; similar trends can be traced in several places in Sweden. Therefore, the jury did not deny the tradition’s orientation towards art music, but they clearly did not perceive it as a part of the tradition worth promoting within the context of the auditions. In their view, this movement was made by approaching folk music as a ‘museum,’ contrary to what they would like to promote within the Zorn Auditions, as they clarified:

—That was then and it was them. But if we go one step further back from them, because we want to get back to the folk tradition, when this music was at its peak, then we have a focus on the dancing…

—[…] so we would like to get back to the time when the music really lived, like you said [referencing the other jury member] before them.614

The jury members are forming their own music-historical time here. With the statutes in mind, their sentiments reflect how they are affected by a longing to travel ‘back in time’ to when the music ‘really lived’ and, importantly, was danced to. The past is sensorially brought to the present, nostalgically and affectively both real and imagined, spoken of with great passion.615 Yet again, instead of playing a documented style from the 1950s, they advocate a practice of revival: to restore and rebuild a lost home. I asked the members to further specify which period of time they were referring to and they identified a period of around 150 years prior to the documentation (i.e. 150 years before the 1950s);

613 Conversation with two of the jury members, 16 January, 2016, Stockholm.
the end of the eighteenth century or beginning of the nineteenth century. They clarified that it was during that time the musicians in the standard collection ‘Tunes of Gotland’ (Gotlandstoner) were active. A collection from which the player drew some of the repertoire.\footnote{616}

From the jury’s feedback and their reasoning afterwards it is easy to draw the conclusion that one should not perform in the style of Svante Pettersson at all, or at least not applying that style to an earlier repertoire. However, when I asked the jury members if that was the case, they became a bit doubtful and answered that they wanted the player to show skills of variation and that he was traditionally informed by both styles. In passing, I should note that many players perform three tunes of the same type from one single role model, without being asked by the jury to show a broader expertise within the style of the region.

In this case, one of the main concerns for the jury was that the performance did not ‘sound like folk music,’ a perception profoundly informed by the tacit understanding that traditional music is dance music. As Georgina Born put it, in ‘hearing’ the musical past in a certain way, the jury ‘configures’ its forbearers, positioning them as antecedents to and aesthetic formation that is actively being assembled in the present.\footnote{617} They did not hear the embellishments of folk tradition in the performed music, which they claimed are ‘clearly easy to distinguish.’ The jury added that the ‘classical attack’ was not typical of the time they had in mind, but was a construction of the nineteenth century instead of the ‘Baroque style’ of playing that they are listening for. As one of the jury members firmly phrased it:

The difference in stylistic elements is huge. That is bothering us, our folk ears. Then, as for the use [of the music], they have totally lost it. But we think that if they are to audition for the Zorn Badge, then they shouldn’t have lost it. They ought the whole time to have a feeling and an eye for it.\footnote{618}

The jury furthermore asked a rhetorical question: why would Gotland, then, differ so much from the counties nearby? This approach is connected to the advice about studying the styles of playing on the mainland. The jury underlined that: ‘We would like to get away from this view of province to province, and instead talk about larger areas and traditions’\footnote{619} and stressed the notion that

\footnote{616}The jury specified this time frame in the conversation, citing: ‘The intentions of Anders Zorn.’
\footnote{618}‘Skillnaderna enormt stora i uppförandepraxis, det som stör oss, våra folkliga öron. Sen är det funktionen, då har de tappat den totalt, då tycker inte vi att de ska inte ha tappat funktionen om de ska spela upp för Zornmärket. Då ska hela tiden ha en känsla och en blick för det.’ Conversation with two of the jury members, 16 January, 2016, Stockholm.
\footnote{619}‘Vi vill ju komma bort lite från detta att det inte är landskap för landskap utan större områden och traditioner.’ And: ‘vi är ju inte anhängare av klimatläran, och sagt att de här låtarna har föds i de här landskapen, och folklynten, vi ser ju de här stora dragen.’ Conversation with two of the jury members, 16 January, 2016, Stockholm.
tunes are not ‘born’ in a certain province, as well as how they are interested in the broader ideas of transmission and movement. They described how it is their responsibility to inform the players of the relationships between the folk music movement and the dance movement, and of how the spirit of the time has influenced the ways in which the music is being approached today. They added that some players do not like to hear that, or do not have the knowledge about it and further emphasised: ‘But we have to talk about it, even if they won’t listen: that is our task.’

Temporalizing Music History: Musical Traditions Embodied through Space and Place

The example above is a complex and multi-layered case and does not only tell us about the particularities of this specific audition. Rather, it also sheds light on patterns of association within the auditions. These final sentiments above highlight the jury’s own view of their pedagogical purpose: to inform the players about traditional music and its history in Sweden. The claims stated are highly interesting. As shown in previous chapters, the regional and local focus and the geographical mapping of different musical styles are reinforced in many of the institution’s practices. They are enacted in judgement records, exhibitions, performances, behaviour and speech. Here, however, other ideas are emphasised: how the music is not restricted to geographical and provincial boundaries and is instead part of larger movements and encounters. This approach blends easily into the revivalists of the seventies, and their strong reactions against previous generations’ national romanticism, which, in the words of Kaminsky, ‘So heavily favoured the central provinces in constructing a Swedish monolithic folk tradition.’ The jury members’ emphasis on movement and transition also resonates with post-revival and contemporary ideas of folk music’s disconnection between cultural and national boundaries. Still, the jury paradoxically linked these ideas to the search for a general soundscape, informed by a ‘folk’ tradition. Moreover, their understanding clashes with how many players perceive the jury’s ideas as highly restricted to certain provincial areas.

During my observations, the jury never disapproved of tunes newly-composed by spelmän active today, or even of compositions of actual competitors. Instead, they encouraged the players to find their own personal expression

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620 ‘En del vill inte riktigt ta till sig det, men vi måste ju prata om det, även om de inte vill ta till sig det, det är ju vårat uppdrag.’ Conversation with two of the jury members, Jury 16 January, 2016, Stockholm.
621 See Law, Organizing Modernity, p. 83.
622 Kaminsky, Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century, p. 53.
623 See for example, Lundberg and Ternhag, Folkmusik i Sverige, pp.14-17; Kaminsky, Swedish Folk Music in The Twenty-First Century, pp. 11, 54.
in the music and their own relationship towards tradition (‘att landa i spelet’).\footnote{Participant observations, ZA 2012–2015.} Yet the example of Gotland clearly differs here, and sheds further light on how it was the performance practice that evoked feelings of rejection within the jury panel instead.

In relation to this, temporality is one of the main aspects brought to the fore in this case. The ideals of the 1950s, with classical violinistic norms and staged chamber music performances, are clearly placed in opposition to the auditions’ contemporary concerns. This folk/art split is not only evident in this particular example: it remains a fairly powerful aesthetic marker within the whole institution.\footnote{Kaminsky made a similar observation in ‘The Zorn Trials and The Jante Law’, pp. 39–40.} One of the most successful acts that came out of the staged competitions of spelmän in the first part of the twentieth century was the virtuosic tradition of fiddlers in the province of Hälsingland. Famous folk musicians, such as Jon-Erik Hall (1877–1948) and Jon-Erik Öst (1885–1968), developed their own fast and virtuosic playing, with broken chords, arpeggios and leaps, strongly influenced by art music idioms.\footnote{Kaminsky, Swedish Folk Music in The Twenty-First Century, p. 144.} This is now a well-established tradition within Swedish folk music, and players regularly perform music from these areas and traditions. This art-influenced style is acknowledged by the jury, but often ambivalently approached by them due to the recital-like manners, and the difference to their perceived ‘overall folk music sound.’

It is, however, important to problematize this folk/art boundary and remember that the categories are constructions of the late eighteenth century. As shown in the previous case, both jury panel and player agreed on the historical aspects of how rural musicians and spelmän served all classes in society. The repertoire of spelmän therefore often overlapped with music from the higher classes, what we today call ‘art music.’ Many of the traditional tunes, in provinces such as Hälsingland for example, are also versions of popular dance tunes from the upper classes (minuets, etc.). The tunes in the so-called ‘spelman books’—manuscripts that were held by the musicians as a kind of memory aid in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—also tend towards the style of Baroque and Galant.\footnote{Magnus Gustavsson, Polskans historia: En studie i melodityper och motifsformer med utgångspunkt i Petter Dufvas notbok, (Dissertation, Inst. för kulturvetenskaper, Lunds Universitet, 2016); Kaminsky, Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century, pp. 120–121.} It is also this kind of playing that the jury highly value and listen for in the musical performances, as shown through their responses in the previous section.

Another interesting aspect brought forward in the example of Gotland is yet again how the music should be played in a manner appropriate for dancing. The jury member’s strict use of the clock to count the beats-per-minute is symbolic of control and power, and stands in stark contrast to the ideals of naturalness, spontaneity and creativeness otherwise so affectionately embraced by the group.
Here, tempo is measured in relation to an ideal performance. In a sense, the jury is disciplining the body of the performer, inscribing on it the normative way of doing things. This enacts an interesting asymmetry, since music is perceived by the jury as an organic and flourishing art form. The clock, on the other hand, epitomises something vastly different and becomes an embodied exercise of power, controlling the players’ musical sounds, moves and operations of their body at audition.628

This case also draws attention to the geographical borders of Sweden. Even if the jury embrace transitions and movements across different musical areas, certain borders are rendered visible within the institution’s practices. For example, the music of western Sweden and the province of Värmland and Härjedalen have much in common with the eastern parts of Norway. As many examples in this thesis have shown, several auditions have evoked responses by the jury about how the music sounded ‘too Norwegian.’629 This especially concerned the use of back beat in the schottis. This attitude is further reinforced by the institution’s rejection of the Swedish/Norwegian repertoire ‘finnskoggspols,’ which has become very popular within the folk music scenes in recent years. Fiddler Mats Berglund has been a central actor in reviving this style of playing and dancing, based on Einar Övergaard’s transcriptions from western Värmland and in collaboration with Norwegian fiddlers and researchers. Berglund is also a prominent and admired musician and teacher, and his type of playing from western Värmland has become a kind of standard for younger performers. Berglund is also one of those musicians who chose deliberately not to audition for the Zorn Badge. At spelman’s gatherings or social dance venues, the tunes from the different sides of the borders are often performed together, and ‘finnskoggspols’ is known as both a Swedish and a Norwegian tradition.630 (It is performed in asymmetrical metre, with the proportions 4-3-2).631 The jury, on the other hand, perceive ‘finnskoggspols’ as a Norwegian style of music, and put forward the recent revival or reconstruction of the tradition as one of the main criteria for its exclusion.632 Interestingly, in the previous case the jury advocated a similar approach but in a different musical area. The player was encouraged to listen to music on the mainland, and rethink how it could have been performed at Gotland. This revivalist approach is otherwise embraced by the members, but in the case of ‘finnskoggspols’ the style of music is firmly rejected. The jury’s dismissal of this repertoire is well-known among many of the players. In my interviews there are

629 Participant observations 2012–2015.
631 Lundberg and Ternhag, ‘Folkmusik i Sverige’, pp. 111–121; Interestingly, this rhythm is not named finnskoggspols by Lundberg and Ternhag. Instead, the authors just point towards how it is evident in the tradition of western Sweden. See also Tellef Kvifte, Musikkteori for folkmusikk—en inforg (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag 2000) Metrum och rytme, pp. 38–43.
632 Conversation with the Jury, 10 September, 2016, Tobo.
examples of musicians who deliberately choose not to perform this style of music, even though it might be part of their ordinary repertoire.633

Another geographical and sonic boundary has been drawn by the jury in the northern parts of Sweden close to the border with Finland. From my observations, the jury often expressed ambivalence towards performances of music from this area. Tunes performed on accordion were particularly perceived as being ‘too Finnish.’ In relation to these auditions, the jury discussed the matter self-reflexively. The members underlined how music does not follow geographic borders, and how it is impossible to draw a strict line ‘in the middle of Torneälven’634 denoting the river that runs through the two countries. Three years ago, the Zorn Committee also received a request from the Finnish-Swedish organisation of spelmän in Finland, asking if they might take part in the auditions. The Swedish-speaking population in Finland is a minority group within the country.635 The request has been discussed by the jury ever since, but they still have not been able to reach a decision. Some of the members have expressed doubts about their expertise in judging these traditions, whilst others see no complications at all on the matter and draw on the musical similarities with traditions in Sweden. The request is interesting and may also have political implications. If the institution would acknowledge these musical styles as part of Swedish folk music, it would certainly raise awareness of the musical links between Sweden and Finland. One might also presume that it would strengthen the Finnish-Swedish music within Finland. I should also note, that the traditions of Sámi indigenous people, living across many regions in Sweden, Norway and Finland, are not considered to be Swedish folk music at the Zorn Auditions, or in other national musical contexts.636

In these examples of music on the geographical borders of Sweden and normative performance practices within the institution, the discourse of heritage emerges. The institutional acts of exclusion and inclusion of certain musical styles and areas of repertoires, generate imagery cultural norms pertaining how Swedish folk music should sound.637 The jury manifests certain practices which inform and define the agency of the preferred embodied skills of the musicians, reinforcing certain sonic boundaries and rejecting others. Even if members are self-reflexively aware of how music transcends geographic borders, their judge-

633 See for example BT, M/29 years old, Nyckelharpa (Certificate). This was also explicitly stated in the letter sent to the players before the auditions in 2016.
634 Participant observations, ZA, Umeå, 2014.
635 Around 400 000 people.
636 Sámi do not in general argue for their place within Swedish national music, for their agenda is based on identity politics, seeking restitution not absorption into the national project. For work on the Sámi see, Thomas R. Hilder, Sámi Musical Performance and the Politics of Indigeneity in Northern Europe, (Lanham, Bulder, New York, London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014); Lundberg and Ternhag, Folkmusik i Sverige, pp. 155-168; Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag, eds. Aspects of Performing, Collecting, Interpreting Yoik (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv, 2011).
ments still act to reinforce the contrary assumption, and express certain values towards the community. The processes outlined in this chapter reflect the words of Dan Lundberg:

Music is perhaps the aesthetic expression that can most travel across cultural and political boundaries. This has perhaps always been the case, but it seems clearer now than ever in an increasing globalized media world. Nevertheless, different understandings of the concept of folk music, from different time periods, persist, continuing to compete over its meanings.638

In the last chapter of this thesis, I will further address the questions of what a gathering such as the Zorn Auditions may do, and where the repetitions of actions take the actors involved.

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5. Conclusion: Precarious Musical Values and Performing the Rite to Belong

Cultural memories live in the body as presence. We are possessed by the repetitions that we perform each day, by the sounds that reside in our soundscape. But we are also always involved in the coming to terms with cultural identity, the codification and objectification not only of other cultures, but also of our own.639

Across this thesis I have closely explored how the Zorn Auditions enact Swedish traditional music in various ways: moving in and out of spaces and visiting places, following the players’ paths within the rites of passage and attending to the jury’s journey of musical judgements. There are no maps of this scene; the various routes and situated views and priorities within it have emerged as complex and contradictory. In order to draw together the main discoveries of this thesis, my last chapter here begins with a scene of the awards ceremony at the end of the audition week. This case will be the starting point for a general discussion that will also open up some new questions following on from this study.

*     *     *

The melodic strains of a violin resonated in an outdoor area of an old county museum on a cloudy, yet bright, summer day in the beginning of July, in 2011. A provisional tent was strung between two wooden houses in red, like a white canvas sail, in order to shelter the people on the stage from possible rain. The jury, secretariat, players and audience had gathered in high spirits to celebrate the newly awarded musicians and welcome them into the community of *riksspelmän*. They were dressed for festivity, in a mixture of colourful folk costumes, dark suits, and more casual summer clothing. Informed by an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation, this public celebration manifested the end of the annual week-long Zorn Auditions.640

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640 This year the event was held at the outdoor museum Wadköping, in the city of Örebro, situated in central Sweden. This description is based on the video recording of the distribution of rewards 2 July 2011. Documented by *Svenskt Vitarkiv*, SVAVDA20110702ZN003.
Four members of the jury were seated solemnly behind a table on the left side of the stage. For the jury, the occasion marked the joyful finale of an intense week. Likewise, the administrative secretariat had worked from early morning to late night on practical issues, and was now standing with delight in the centre of the stage, holding the awards in the forms of badges and written certificates. The names of the performers awarded the Gold badge are routinely kept secret and are only announced at the end of the ceremony.

One of the players that received the Silver badge and was bestowed the title riksspelman on fiddle rushed towards the stage when his name was announced. The dedication for the award was, as usual, read out loud: ‘for personally and traditionally informed playing on tunes from Norrbotten.’ The small Zorn Badge in Silver was then attached with a pin to his breast pocket, and it shimmered on the dark suit. The fiddle player was noticeably in a good mood, honoured and very happy. The badge decorated his jacket in conformity with the other performers standing in line against the red wall on the right of the stage, holding on to their certificates. These performative acts have become marks of alignment among fellow musicians and their predecessors; individual and personal as well as collective and national, supervised under the jury’s watch and control.

It was time for the fiddle player to perform one of his tunes on stage, which he introduced as ‘a song of happiness.’ Instead of performing a traditional tune as would be customary, he surprised everyone by singing and playing a cover of a pop song from the 1970s called ‘Hooked on a Feeling’, well-known from performances by the Swedish artist Björn Skifs and with lyrics in English. It was clearly not a tune that would be considered suitable repertoire for this event. In addition, when the player introduced the tune, he played around with phrases and sentiments, clearly elaborating on authorised discourses of spelmän. He even referred to Skifs only as ‘Björn’, stressing familiarity with him, as if he were part of a specific family of traditional musicians. Then, he told the spectators how he first encountered Björn on the radio and learned the tune from him, emphasising a particular transmission. Finally he underlined his point: ‘I know that you’ve heard this tune before’ and ‘it’s a very “folky” (folklig) tune’ (meaning ‘common’, well-known and part of everyday life).

643 Björn Skifs is a popular singer in Sweden. His cover version of this tune became very famous in the 1970s. It was no. 1 in U.S. on the Billboard Hot 100, on 6 April in 1974, with the band Blue Swede.
644 This term in Swedish connotes the English meaning of both ‘folky’ and ‘popular’ and will be discussed later in this chapter.
The audience responded with laughter quickly, sensing the vigorous rhythms produced by the chopping technique with the bow and the player’s own singing voice. They also inserted themselves audibly into the sonic event by singing together on the request of the performer. After he played the last note and the applause faded out, he leaned towards the microphone and addressed the audience with the following statement:

Someone in the beginning said that […] if Anders Zorn had been here today he would have felt secure in thinking Swedish folk music is alive and well […] And since we have heard so many talented traditional musicians here, I thought we could afford to do this, right? [The audience respond: Yes!] And, as I said, I’m a riksspelman now, like […] my maestros, forever—no matter what. Thank you very much and forgive me!645

This joke on stage has many layers and obviously references numerous other occasions. The player is performing a balancing act between apologising for his behaviour, and underlining that he may now play whatever he wants—since he is a riksspelman, and therefore does not have to play by the jury’s rules anymore. The jury’s disapproval of his actions was then enacted when one of the members jokingly interrupted his statement, saying ‘he is going to pay for this afterwards’646, which triggered laughter among the audience. On request by the jury, the player then complied with the authorised behaviour, getting back in line with the institution.647 The ceremony thereby ended in the usual manner: by a newly awarded riksspelman performing a traditional tune from his home region.

The enacted ambivalence, anxiety and friction in this example epitomises the findings of this thesis. Their combination points towards the many examples of how the ritual generates feelings of togetherness and harmony but also fear of being left out from the national performance. Players raise criticisms of the auditions at the same time as sharing a strong urge to belong and gain recognition within the community. The power dynamics have been discussed extensively in the previous chapters, but are reaffirmed most strongly in the final moments of the audition week. Here, the divergent views of knowing and sensing traditional music are brought to the forefront by the player explicitly criticising the jury’s view on folk music, and counteracting their preferences by performing a well-known popular tune instead.

646 ‘Han kommer att få stryk’, ‘Daniel Wiklund, Riskspelman (Rikspelman) 2011.’
647 See Sarah Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, pp. 15–17.
The act sheds light on a very important aspect of the folk music scene in Sweden. Compared to many other countries, the genre of folk music is very narrowly understood. This is mainly due to the work of the *Folk Music Commission* and the ideas of the collectors such as Nils Andersson and others in the beginning of the twentieth century, which separated out certain musics that were perceived to be popular, international or modern. What was preserved was a core repertoire with a strong association to a pre-industrial society, cultural conservatism and national romanticism. Even though revivalists questioned this selection in the 1970s, they also adopted parts of it and did little to change it in their struggle against anti-commercialism, and their placing of the local in opposition to the national.\(^\text{648}\) As several examples have shown, the narrowness is accentuated, even emphasised within the practices of the Zorn Auditions in their search and institutional ‘desire’ for a quasi-purified sound of ‘folk tradition.’

The word ‘*folklig*’ in Swedish covers styles of music that in many other languages are captured by the term ‘popular.’ The term ‘popular music’ in Sweden is instead often used to refer to music within the genres of pop and rock, or older types of music distributed through mass media.\(^\text{649}\) The player in the example above seemed to express a wish to open up the concept of folk music to include other kinds of music traditions as well. This wish is also connected to ideas of the historical role of the *spelman*, in which s/he is an entertainer, up-to-date with recent trends of music, as well as combining them with historical musical styles.

Significantly, on the same occasion the player awarded the Gold badge revealed the same interest. After his performance, he raised the bow high in the air and declared in a slight tone of irony: ‘I was the one who told [the player] to play “Hooked on A Feeling.” We must not forget the enormously tasteless heritage, that we, within the traditions of *spelman*, are sustaining.’\(^\text{650}\) The player’s use of ‘tasteless’ in connection with heritage intimates the traditions excluded by the institution, those historically perceived of ‘lower’ value while popular amongst the people, and—outside the audition spaces—central to the role of a *spelman*. In this context, ‘tasteless’ also draws attention to the traditional musics that are left out, such as certain repertoires for the accordion or folk tunes accompanied on guitar. These are repertoires that today would actually fit within the jury’s time span of hundred years (and fall in line with the definitions set by UNESCO), yet, as we have seen, are excluded.

The criticism these players put forward, in line with the critical voices raised by players throughout this thesis, are shared by a larger community of musicians


that are openly against the auditions. The jury’s current interpretations of the ‘intentions of Zorn’ are believed to be too conservative and to embody and reinforce the old national romantic views of music and musicality; not a reflection of the vibrant folk music scene of today in a multicultural Sweden. Members of the network ‘Folk Musicians Against Racism’ (Folkmusiker mot Rasism) have several times expressed criticism towards the institution. Its nationalistic foundations are perceived as highly problematic, reinforcing notions of folk music as grounded in historical locations of cultural purity and folk identity. Such criticism is not only directed against the auditions, but has also been raised towards the general folk music movement: the charge is that the folk music movement needs to properly acknowledge the convoluted and exclusionary narratives that has defined it.

One of the initiators of the network, a musician playing the accordion, arranged a theatre and music performance in Stockholm called ‘The Last Concert (The Tradition is Dead—Long Live the Tradition)’ in 2014. The show involved eleven musicians and dancers. During one scene, performers made statements comparing the 1930s statutes of the Zorn Auditions with the current agenda of the right-wing Sweden Democrats political party, including their anti-immigrant agenda. Through this, they drew attention to the complex and sensitive issues concerning music and ethnicity, race and space, and illuminated how easily certain bodies and worlds are embraced whilst others are excluded. For critics such as them, the auditions are a reactionary force in contrast to contemporary times characterised by migration, movement and change in both Sweden and Europe.

The Zorn Jury certainly do not agree with these comparisons. Rather, as shown through various examples in this thesis, they understand their work as contributing to and endorsing pluralism in society by cherishing and safeguarding the precarious value of traditional music in Swedish society. They understand themselves as embracing revolutionary ideas, holding on to their vision of being a contrary movement against commercial and mass-produced music. Neverthe-

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651 This group started in 2010 under the name Folk Musicians Against Xenophobia (Folkmusiker mot främingsfientlighet) and changed their name in 2015. The network is part of a counter-culture movement within the Swedish folk music scene that has reacted against the Swedish Extreme Right’s efforts to stake a claim to folk music as part of their anti-immigrant agenda. The group has organised demonstrations and arranged debates in various parts of Sweden. Prominent folk musicians have discussed these issues with spokespeople from the political party Sweden Democrats. The group also aim to question the mainstream willingness by people in Swedish society to accept the notion of folklore as reactionary. Instead they stress folk music’s multiculturalism, openness and music that develops as a result of immigration. The group assert that Swedish culture should not be placed in opposition to multiculturalism. See their website [http://folkmf.se] [Accessed 16 April 2017]. For a detailed discussion regarding these debates see David Kaminsky, ‘Keeping Sweden Swedish’, pp. 73-96.

less, these actions do sometimes tend to become reactionary, just as the case in other regions, as noted by Peter Manuel:

It should scarcely need pointing out that national elites in the developing world are internally heterogeneous in outlook, and may comprise not only cynical, clannish and narrowly self-interested reactionaries but also a cultural intelligentsia endorsing cosmopolitan liberal notions of social justice and pluralism. In various countries worldwide, such cosmopolitans have found reasons to promote or rearticulate forms of music associated with local minorities or low-class communities.653

In the case of the Zorn Auditions, lower-class communities and old Swedish rural society have been beneficiaries in certain ways, but local minorities have not. As previously mentioned, the musical traditions of the Sámi are for example not included in their definition of the musical styles of Swedish folk music.

Certainly, critical questions have arisen in the previous chapters that cannot be dismissed. Many of the jury’s enactments connote an essentialist view of folk music. They reinvest tunes, instruments and performances with notions of ‘genuine’, ‘old’, ‘unique’ and ‘authentic’, and reference a pre-industrial time when the music ‘was really alive’—thus embedding judgements in a romantic narrative of a deeply-rooted tradition. History as well as place is constantly important in the negotiations. Sometimes even specific time periods before the twentieth century are referenced.

In this regard, however, jury members are not very different from many players. Similar values and affective bonds with these musical pasts are shared by a large part of the actors within the folk music community, even though they are well aware of the complicated ideological baggage they carry.654 To ‘feel the roots’ and a connection with a ‘lost home’ through the music are considered crucial aspects for participation by many competitors. Moreover, by participating, they also contribute to the colourful mosaic of different musical styles in Swedish society.

The jury also expresses anxiety towards musical loss and subversion, which is particularly explicit in their ways of holding on to certain instruments as traditional, while rejecting others. On the other hand, such views are counterbalanced by an ongoing reflexivity and pursuit of projects that support of reinvigoration and reinvention. To paraphrase the jury: ‘Not to let the music become fixed within the frames that we are guarding.’ Tradition is certainly perceived as being in constant movement, but has to correspond with the needs of its own


654 David Kaminsky has put forward this aspect in many of his studies of the Swedish folk music scene and has also reflected on how it informs his own relationship towards the music as a folk musician. See for example Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 161-163.
time to become durable. Through gradual adaptation, the institution maintains its position within society.

This thesis has approached the auditions as temporary sensory environments and argued that the ritual activities constantly trigger and shape sensorial responses from the actors involved in the event. The brimming of felt qualities within these localities contributes strongly to the sensing of history, tradition, memory, place, geography and the emotional proximity between the music and the individual performer. Cherished values are reinforced and produced by the material, social and sonic environments on site.

Within this ritual world, as I have shown, anxiety and ambivalence are felt on both sides of the audition table. The jury members constantly find themselves in tricky situations due to the openness of the criteria, which to a large extent depend on their own historical interpretations of the statutes. In these times of tension and struggle, the responsibility of making choices is often handed over to the passage and lived experience of time—relying on the idea that history will eventually take care of the tricky questions itself. Yet the broader community sees little of this process, receiving only silence from the jury in the case of disputes; a silence that is interpreted as a means to maintain the institution’s attractive mystique.

The institution seems, from the outside, to be unified, but there is an important structural quality often missed, namely that the jury maintains a separateness from the secretariat. The jury inhabits a kind of expert role on site, while the secretariat is responsible only for administrative tasks. Even the players encounter the jury and secretariat as one committee that represents the institution. Moreover, thanks to the jury’s policy of upholding a unified front towards the community, their internally divergent views of musical judgements and their different ideas of how to best accomplish and perform their practice never reach the outside world. Nevertheless, I would suggest that their moments of disagreement and passing disorientation are highly important for the Zorn organisation. They force collective reflection on how to continue their practice, whether to maintain the inherited lines or to make new paths. And no matter how impossible the situation may seem in experience at the time, the jury do find intriguing ways to hold on to their vision.

This thesis has shown various examples of the human need to belong: what I would describe as ‘making marks on the skin of the social’. It has also revealed how the creation of memories is needed in order to make sense of the present, and to hold on to visions of a flourishing future. Additionally, it has also shed light on the fear of letting go of the known, and the complex sensorial involvements in knowing and learning music. I would contend that even if our com-

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fortable alignments and the effects of our past work may be strong, we still always have the potential for change, for forging new paths on the ground that we walk on, for embracing our feelings of anxiety and disorientation in order to sustain the wonder of the very forms of gathering we make in the world. And, we should not underestimate the immense power and value of music and music-making within these processes.
Swedish Summary: Svensk sammanfattning

Denna avhandling utgör en etnografisk studie om hur ritualiserade musikaliska praktiker kan bidra till att skapa ambivalenta och konfliktyllda rum av tillhörighet och gemenskap. I fokus för studien står en fallstudie om de årliga uppspelningarna för Zornmärket.


Studien följer de uppspelande och jurymedlemmarna genom uppspelningarnas olika ritualrum. Undersökningen syftar till att öka kunskapen om hur traditionell musik identifieras, upplevs, känns och förstås inom dessa sammanhang. Vid varje uppspeling ställs idéer, värderingar och förhållningssätt kring vad som anses vara svensk spelmanstradition på sin spets. I dessa situationer är bedömningskriterier och värdegrunder i ständig förvandling och omförhandling. Särskilt fokus ges åt vad som inkluderas respektive excluderas i dessa meningsskapande processer, med avseende på repertoarer, instrument, framförandepraxis och musikalisk gestaltning. Avhandlingen söker svar på följande huvudfrågeställningar:

- Hur skapas, förstås, förhandlas, överföras och upprätthålls musikaliska värden inom dessa kontexter av gemenskap och kunskapsproduktion?
- Vilka övergripande föreställningar förkroppsligas i dessa materiella och föreställda rumsligheter och platser?
- Hur mobiliseras sociala praktiker, tidsrum och historiska tidsgestaltningar för att forma tillhörighet och gemenskap?
Studien syftar också till att bidra till en fördjupad förståelse för hur musikaliska värden produceras och hur förståelse och kunskap skapas. Särskilt intresse ägnas åt hur överenskommelser och samsyn nås och hur meningsskiljaktigheter och konflikter hanteras inom musikaliska bedömningsprocesser.

Zornmärkesspelningarna betraktas övergripande i avhandlingen som en *rite de passage*. Inom detta teoretiska ramverk ges särskild uppmärksamhet åt den individuella upplevelsen av att befinning sig i gränslandet eller övergången mellan olika tillstånd och faser. Genomgående i studien diskuteras därför de uppspelandes upplevelser i uppspelningrummet och hur de balanserar på tröskeln till att bli del av den musikaliska gemenskapen av *Riksspelmän*. Studien bygger vidare på och går i dialog med tidigare forskning om performans, performativitet och ritualiseringsprocesser. Den tar utgångspunkt i ett fenomenologiskt synsätt som fokuserar på levde erfarenhet och betraktar världen som i konstant rörelse med inspiration från bland annat Tim Ingold och Nigel Thrift.


Kapitel 1 och 2 behandlar uppspelningarna huvudsakligen från de uppspelandes perspektiv och följer dem genom ritualens olika passager. Den dramatiska inramningen påminner ständigt den uppspelande om ritualens syfte och vikten av gemenskap. Genom fysiska byggnader, allmogemiljöer och utställningar för-


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