Stylistic Feature Mapping for Music Performance

A model for performance style analysis from a performance education perspective

Sven Ahlbäck
Professor of Folk Music
Royal College of Music, Stockholm
sven.ahlback@kmh.se
1979: me - a folk fiddler in a classical conservatory
What about my music?

How can I describe and communicate performance style in Swedish traditional fiddle music in relation to other styles?
Terminology linked to style:
There is no "roll bowing", "snake strokes", "diatt", "jiri-jiri", "rocking bowing" in the chart.

Instrumental technique linked to expression linked to music making linked to culture…
Nor Lomax, Schaeffer or Dart would help me

Musicology & Ethnomusicology - from the outside
Early music, Classical music - from another style

key is ”for performance”
**Artistic development work:**

Model for description of fiddle playing style (1983-1987)

**Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artistic development work:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Model for description of fiddle playing style (1983-1987)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Describe, Name, Investigate**

Conceptualize from the point of view of the performing musician

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Style Analysis in Bachelor Examination Projects Folk music since 1988

Documentation & Transcriptions

Performance

Essay

Stylistic mapping & Analysis

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Artistic research course for master students
Stylistic quality mapping since 2004

In Performance Studies for developing language, communication, stylistic awareness, concepts, aesthetics

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Listen

Write down the first 3 words that spontaneously comes to mind!
A multitude of diverse concepts and categories are used in spontaneous descriptions of music

Examples from a brain storm session with four persons (KMH 2015) listening to "Luftstråk 'Skarv' (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>person 1</th>
<th>person 2</th>
<th>person 3</th>
<th>person 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Touching</td>
<td>Modal, Dorian?</td>
<td>Anticipation</td>
<td>Large room/reverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film music</td>
<td>Dominant key</td>
<td>Intro?</td>
<td>Accordion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early morning</td>
<td>Accordion</td>
<td>Like a dialogue</td>
<td>Trills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk music from India?</td>
<td>Trills</td>
<td>Rests between phrases</td>
<td>Sparse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rests between phrases</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Makes me calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Sparse</td>
<td>'Antiphonal'</td>
<td></td>
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**Stylistic categorisation model** (Ahlbäck 1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To me?</th>
<th>As in?</th>
<th>Like?</th>
<th>What's heard?</th>
<th>Action?</th>
<th>What is?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>subjective</td>
<td>objective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions/ values</th>
<th>Contextual/ Associations</th>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Music structure</th>
<th>Performance/ Technique</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the music affect me/what values does it have to me?</td>
<td>How can the music be described by context and or association</td>
<td>How can we describe the expression of the music? (direct description of music by means of other dimensions)</td>
<td>How can we describe the perceived music structure?</td>
<td>How is the music performed or created?</td>
<td>What are the general, global setting for the music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Emotionella categories, e.g. makes me happy/sad, touches me…
- Values: good/bad, exciting…
- Historical, social, medial, geographical, genre, style etc., e.g.
- Renaissance music
- Hiphop
- Film music
- Dance music
- Indian music
- It reminds me of …
- It's like…
- Physical parallels, Force, Mass etc.
- Process parallels
- Texture/Spatial parallels
- Behavioural parallels, e.g. dancing, dramatic
- Emotional parallels and State of mind, e.g. melancholic
- Synesthesic parallels, e.g. colour hearing
- Tonality
- Timbre
- Form
- Rhythm
- Meter
- etc etc.
- Instrumental Technique
- Composition Technique
- etc.

Musikperception/cognition from the point of view of extra-musical dimensions

Musikperception/cognition from the point of view of music terminology

Musikperception/cognition from the point of view of production/performance

Musikperception/cognition from the point of view of musical setting, conditions

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## Mapping example (based on spontaneous description)

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<td>• Folk music-indian?</td>
<td>• Expectational</td>
<td>• Rests between phrases</td>
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• Terms might be ambiguous, and appear in more than one category
• Different individuals different preferences, e.g. technical vs expression
Mapping example *(based on spontaneous description)*

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Luftstråk ”Skarv”
A case study

> 400 participants
> 50 sessions
from 2010-2021
Students within Artistic Research Studies
pop, music production, jazz, classical, composition,
music from other cultures, scandinavian folk

Stylistic Feature Mapping for Music Performance, Royal College of Music, Stockholm sven.ahlback@kmh.se
- used by students in their master works/essays

for developing language, communication, stylistic awareness, concepts, aesthetics
There’s more to it than good and bad music
Thank you for your attention!