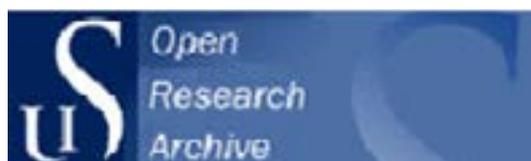




Universitetet
i Stavanger

Fadnes, P.F. (2013) Knut Tønsberg: Akademisering av Jazz, Pop og Rock – En Dannelsesreise” [The Academisation of Jazz, Pop and Rock – An Educational Journey]. *Studia Musicologica Norvegica*, 39, pp. 142-145

Lenke til publisert versjon: http://www.idunn.no/ts/smn/2013/01/knut_toensberg_akademisering_av_jazz_pop_og_rock_en_dann?highlight=#highlight (Det kan være restriksjoner på tilgang)



UiS Brage
<http://brage.bibsys.no/uis/>

Denne artikkelen er gjort tilgjengelig i henhold til utgivers retningslinjer.
Det er forfatterens siste upubliserte versjon av artikkelen etter fagfelleevaluering, såkalt postprint.
Dersom du skal sitere artikkelen anbefales det å bruke den publiserte versjonen



Knut Tønsberg: Akademisering av Jazz, Pop og Rock – En Dannelsesreise [The Academisation of Jazz, Pop and Rock – An Educational Journey]

av Dr Petter Frost Fadnes

Knut Tønsberg

Akademisering av Jazz, Pop og Rock – En Dannelsesreise [The Academisation of Jazz, Pop and Rock – An Educational Journey]

Trondheim: Akademika Forlag, Trondheim, 2013

Akademisering av jazz, pop og rock – en dannelsesreise [The Academisation of Jazz, Pop and Rock – An Educational Journey] was originally submitted as a PhD thesis in 2007 and is now published as a book in 2013 “based on my PhD”, according to Knut Tønsberg, and “relevant to everyone interested in music”, as stated on the back cover. The six chapters diligently follow the “educational journey” of jazz, pop and rock within the Norwegian conservatory sector. The book opens with a historical overview, mapping both the inception of popular culture into the Norwegian cultural establishment, as well as the creation of the Norwegian conservatory sector as a whole (classical music only at this stage). Chapter 2 discusses the justification of jazz, pop and rock as disciplines in conservatories, and the subsequent three chapters air out everything from political tensions, genre discourse and educational platforms, to more obvious contentions surrounding musical status, popular culture and high art. As a summary, Tønsberg raises issues associated with the academisation process – both in a historical context, but also with a certain, albeit cautious, view to the future.

Indeed, a temporal perspective is essential in understanding the development of value systems, hierarchy and the status between musical genres. The jazz diaspora establishes itself within a national and transnational value system dependant on its proximity to high art or popular culture, concert halls or underground subcultures. The same goes for its position within the conservatories. Graz and Leeds¹ have offered jazz courses since the 1960s, and the genre’s seniority within these institutions is beyond question – even taking centre stage within the institutional consciousness. What then about the Norwegian journey towards the “academisation” of the rhythmic diasporas? *The Academisation of Jazz, Pop and Rock* maps this transition from “outside” to “inside” the educational establishment. What is the book’s justification for this status-journey into the conservatory? Failing recruitment within the classical courses is as good an explanation as any; pop, rock and jazz have greater appeal to the average teenager, and the availability of talent outweighs the demand for most of the institutions. In addition, Tønsberg mentions how a new breed of department head saw the value of bringing this type of music “inside” the protection of academia. Certain key individuals are indeed important here – I am a curious as to why the interviewees in this research were anonymised (unless a majority asked for it?). As a reader, I feel a compulsion to guess who might be responsible for the quotes; and in all likelihood my assumptions are correct given the small scale of the Norwegian conservatory fraternity.

Looking at the book’s thematic platform (jazz, pop and rock) from a broader perspective, we can easily identify that a sub-categorisation of rhythmic music is problematic within the aesthetics of the Norwegian music scene. Contemporary musicians move between all areas

and are preoccupied with making good music, ahead of labelling their artistic output. This is perhaps a problem for academia – in terms of developing didactics based on tradition and genre and thereby the establishment of institutional identity. However, this is not a problem for the Norwegian music scene, in which the jazz scene in particular is one of the most eclectic, innovative and successful in the world. Tønberg quite rightly raises the issue of the Norwegian and Danish application of the term “rhythmic music”, but fails to link this to the music scene and the area in which we see the students eventually working. As a consequence of this inherent lack of rhythmic sub-categorisation, it is hard to determine what the logic content and overarching meaning of “rhythmic music” in itself might be. Here the tables are turned, the terminology is not problematic for the institutions – they can elegantly insert it into their course documentation (as Copenhagen has done, for example), however; it is vastly problematic within a shifting music scene due to its lack of stylistic meaning. The issue is crowned by irony when we see the terminology increasingly included in the official governmental classification of music. Tønberg’s use of Simon Frith’s discussion of jazz as popular music is relevant (p. 27), but more from a historical point of view, as I see it. Jazz has for a number of years moved into unknown and (so far) relatively unclassifiable territory. This is perhaps academia’s greatest challenge, and the reason why institutions worldwide are misinterpreting the genre’s core values within their curricula. New England Conservatory in Boston is exemplified in the book as a parallel to the pioneering Norwegian institutions. A European example (perhaps in addition) would have made such a comparison more pertinent; comparing a Norwegian institution to an American conservatory which teaches an art form that is originally American makes for a very complex discourse beyond the confines of this book.

Tønberg calls the temporal factor of increased respectability and acceptance (cultural capital and canonisation) an “educational journey”, during which conservatory teachers move around on socio-political ladders – high or low status on a sliding scale dependant on how your colleagues view your particular stylistic predisposition (and ultimately your knowledge and expertise of conservatory-worthy music). Many conservatory teachers will nod in recognition – strong egos, idiocentric performance approaches and contrasting stylistic schools provide the basis for powerful factions within faculties. The big question is whether this is such a bad thing? The book diligently gives an overview of how jazz, pop and rock moved into academia, with all the internal educational processes involved for the sector, but refrains from mentioning the positive outcomes concerning what academia and scholarly work actually mean for a field. The aforementioned vagueness and eclecticism of Norwegian jazz is not merely a result of a certain geographical and cultural distance from the US, but equally a result of an institution like Trondheim’s development of pedagogy and didactics, which provide ample room for personal development (as opposed to US-style assembly-line teaching). The quarrels of academia bear fruit even for the arts! And where are the students in all this; should not the pioneering graduates from Trondheim, for example, have been interviewed about the relevance of their educational background? How were the first graduates received by the Norwegian jazz scene? Tønberg makes an important point when underlining how even parts of the jazz community disliked the idea of moving into the sanctities of academia. Perhaps this points to an implicit fear of devaluing “street cred” or “improvisational magic” – the danger of destroying a beautiful thing through theorising. Tackling popular culture also brings up interesting and intangible conundrums in pedagogical and didactical philosophies: are we educating artists or function musicians, composers or pastiche imitators?

In addition to internal feuds, the classical representatives of the faculty are perhaps anxious about losing ground to these contemporary, “hip” forms of music. Justifiably so it seems; the rhythmic genres are indeed catching up (both in terms of resources and student numbers). The *why* to this sudden level playing field is simply down to the relative contemporaneity of jazz, pop and rock, compared to the more historically-based repertoire of classical music. What is worth mentioning though – amongst all the negative quotes from disgruntled classical teachers – is how faculties of classical music are picking up good advice from their “new” colleagues. Perhaps one crucial outcome worth mentioning from the academisation of jazz, pop and rock is in fact the modernisation of classical didactics (utilising improvisation, aurality of music, and so on). From a grand social perspective, the insertion of a quote by Professor Even Ruud from the pivotal jazz education conference in Oslo in 1992 summarises the situation poignantly: “the demand must be that the same musical values which apply in society are represented within the conservatories”, furthermore; “[only] this way may we increase the quality of our society’s musical life at the same time as we give everyone access to a musical expression they can recognise themselves in, or express themselves through” (p. 99).

Tønberg’s book and his summary of the institutionalisation of jazz, pop and rock in Norway is an important one. He thoroughly contextualises the national move towards sanitising art forms which only decades earlier were treated with contempt by the political and artistic establishment. However, I only wish that Tønberg had ventured outside of the institutional bubble – it is this confinement in itself that instigates the majority of the book’s unresolved issues. The issues of rhythmic music, cultural and educational policy, faculty feuds and outdated teaching platforms all stem from the reluctance of parts of music academia to step into the real world where music is actually made. Indeed, one interviewee from The Norwegian Academy of Music justifies the inclusion of rhythmic music to their portfolio by stating “[we] couldn’t isolate ourselves from the world” (p. 56). Simply put, the genres of jazz, pop and rock are based on an ever-shifting, organic aesthetics that develops according to the needs of a multi-layered and chaotic music business. An educational institution versus new trends in musical aesthesis, technology, and dissemination is a parallel (sometimes dysfunctional) partnership based on the ability of the student and staff to shift between the institution and its relevant music scene. Indeed, an argument can be made that institutional development depends on this constant migration outside the conservatory bubble – inventive thinking is continuously imported into the developmental processes of music academia. A mapping exercise of the academisation of jazz, pop and rock should perhaps also include how academia is involved, influenced and affected by “the musical world” outside its premises, and furthermore how the academisation process affects the musical world directly through its prolific output of young, talented musicians.

1 I was both a student and lecturer in Leeds for some years and was struck by how classical music was sidelined by the jazz faculty.