

Nina Grieg 175! Grieg Research Centre Seminar

Women in music history, musical heritage and gender

23 November 2021, 10.00–15.00, Festsalen, KODE 1, Bergen

Introduction: Whose music history?

- 10.00 Arnulf Christian Mattes, Leader Grieg Research Centre, UiB

Session 1: Contemporary practice and overcoming structures

Chair: Marion Hestholm, PhD, music journalist and program leader, NRK

- 10.15 Lilli Mittner, PhD, Research fellow, UiT:
Feminist theory in practice: RESCAPE as a method for performative historiography
- 10.45 Emil Bernhardt, music critic and post.doc, UiO:
Gender biases in the art music field today? Descriptive, personal and critical remarks.
- 11.15 Elisabeth Treydte, PhD fellow, Universität Siegen
Framing, blaming, shaming?! Equality, empowerment and (new) music

11.45-12.30 Lunch break

Session 2: Historical agency and legacy: Forgotten pioneers?

Chair: Monica Jangaard, curator, KODE Composer homes

- 12.30 Camilla Hambro, PhD, Associate professor, Åbo Academy University
Agathe Backer Grøndahl's agency, legacy and impact on Nordic music history
- 13.00 Ingrid Skovdahl, MA-student, UiO
"Resolve to be thyself": Agency, legacy and impact in the case of Signe Lund (1868–1950)

Session 3: Biased narratives revisited: Gender, genre, and genius

Chair: Arnulf Mattes, leader Grieg Research Centre, UiB

- 13.30 Christine Hamm, Professor, UiB
Finding a voice: Nina Grieg and Camilla Collett
- 14.00 Jill Halstead, Professor, UiB
"Men compose symphonies, women compose babies": Reflections on genre and gender in late 20th century classical music.
- 14.30 Erlend Hovland, Professor, NMH
Why have there been no great women composer in Norway: On reading Linda Nochlin in 2021

Abstracts and author biographies

Lilli Mittner, UiT:

Feminist theory in practice: RESCAPE as a method for performative historiography

How to re-thinking categories of difference and power, dissolving binaries, and enabling intersectionality in future music historiography? Building on Schuster & Van Dyne (1985), I introduce six stages of problem representation when it comes to the 'women question': (1) invisible women (2) women as disadvantaged/subordinated group (3) women within the framework of womanhood and female aesthetics (4) mainstreaming women into existing narratives (5) balancing gender representation (6) re-writing gender and power relations. I further present a method for performative historiography that aims at stage (6) by privileging materiality, collective thinking practices, and every-day life. A toolbox, developed by the interdisciplinary research team RESCAPE, enable us to better understand what matters when we perform historiography – in text, on stage, in art and research.

Lilli Mittner is a researcher at the Centre for Women's and Gender Research at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. She received her PhD in 2014 from the University of Music, Drama and Media in Hanover. She coordinated the project [Gender Balance in Art Education](#) (RCN 2015-2018) and is currently leader of the qualitative work package of the research and intervention project [Prestige. Gender Balance in Research Leadership](#) (RCN 2018-2021). Since 2017 Lilli has led the international research group [RESCAPE](#). Her work encompasses research on multimodality and gender, critical pedagogy and curriculum transformation, gender equality in higher music education and feminist art intervention research. Lilli has published the monograph *Space for Possibilities: Studies of Cultural Practices of Women Composers in 19th Century Norway* (2016), and co-edited *Norwegian Female Artists in Berlin* (2019) and *Constructing Historiography of Music: The Formation of musicological Knowledge* (2012). Her recent works include a chapter in *Multimodality and Aesthetics* (2018), a paper in the *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education* (2018), a book chapter in *Gender Issues in Scandinavian Music Education: From Stereotypes to Multiple Possibilities* (2021) and the method paper [Autumn Talk and Ocean Songs. Dramatic Assemblage – Methods and Relevance of Performative Historiography](#) (2021).

Emil Bernhardt, UiO:

Gender biases in the art music field today? Descriptive, personal and critical remarks

In my work as a music critic, I have in the last ten years witnessed a considerable change and increased awareness regarding questions of gender balance in the field of music. My own opinions and perspectives have also undergone some revisions, and questions of gender balance - what it means and how to achieve it - is a topic of continuous reflection. Is targeted actionism a fruitful way to proceed, and if so, how should it be carried out? Which goals can be obtained through campaigns and actionism, and what risks do they imply?

Emil Bernhardt (1979) has a Ph.D. in musicology and is currently a postdoctor research fellow at the University of Oslo. For about ten years he has worked as a music critic in the Norwegian newspaper Morgenbladet.

Elisabeth Treydte, Universität Siegen

Framing, blaming, shaming?! Equality, empowerment and (new) music

New Music wants to be radical, progressive and emancipatory but often seems to be a closed, backward-looking circle struggling for recognition. The paper discusses the status through a gender perspective: How is new Music's discourse around female and male composers currently shaped, in which practices are unequal structures of masculinity and femininity (re)produced? And last but not least: What can we do to empower women and people of colour and create equity in new music?

Elisabeth Treydte is a researcher at the University of Siegen. Previously she was a researcher at the Hamburg University of Music and Drama and at the Frankfurt Archive of Women and Music. Her research focusses on music and gender through a lens of the sociology of knowledge, and abuse of power in the music industries.

Camilla Hambro, Åbo Academy University

Agathe Backer Grøndahl's agency, legacy and impact on Nordic music history

Even if our Nordic countries are model regions for equal rights and opportunities, several women composers and musicians lie in oblivion, rest, and neglect. When reading Nordic music history books at our schools and universities, the presentness of the past and the pastness of the present are striking in their endless recycling of yesteryears canons: Women composers like Nina and Edvard Grieg's friend, Agathe Backer Grøndahl, seem like sleeping beauties who noted their music with invisible ink. However, curiously, she has always been a part of our cultural heritage, which raises questions like; under what conditions did she compose and perform her music? Aiming at addressing how the situation has arisen historically, the foci of the presentation are threefold: (1) Societal expectations towards Agathe Backer Grøndahl and her contemporary Nordic women colleagues and originality concepts. (2) Gender and genius, Nordic music criticism and historical gender roles as represented by her. (3) Past and present attempts by musicologists and musicians at affirmative action on behalf of women in Nordic music history. I base my paper on my doctoral thesis on Agathe Backer Grøndahl, my postdoctoral project on Gender and Canonisity in Scandinavian Music History 1890-1920 and my more recent biography on Laura Netzel and other Swedish and Finish women composers.

Camilla Hambro works at Åbo Academy University, Finland, as Associate Professor in musicology, focusing on music theory, history, music analysis and gender. She holds a B.A. in music, theatre, and literature (University of Oslo), an M.A. in music history (University of Oslo), and a PhD in music history and analysis (University of Gothenburg). Her Master's thesis was on Hildegard of Bingen (*Hildegard of Bingen and her Ordo virtutum*) and her dissertation on Agathe Backer Grøndahl (*What smoulders beneath the surface. Agathe Backer Grøndahl (1847-1907), gender, genre and Norwegianness*). In 2009-10, she was a fellow of the Swedish Research Council at the University of Stockholm conducting research on the hermeneutics of feminism and canon transformations of men's and women's music over 1890-1920. Her most recent publication (2020) is a biography on the Swedish-Finnish composer Laura Netzel, commissioned by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, Stockholm.

Ingrid Skovdahl, UiO

“Resolve to be thyself”: Agency, legacy and impact in the case of Signe Lund (1868–1950)

As a woman during the first half of the 20th century, Signe Lund (1868–1950) frequently went against the norms, always claiming her right to succeed as a composer on equal terms with her male colleagues. One of her ambitions was to get out of the salon and into the public concert hall, where her larger orchestral pieces would be performed.

In her autobiography, Lund describes the song *Self-dependence* (op. 54, 1909) as her greatest composition. “Some day – when I am no longer here – this song will probably get the recognition it deserves, for it will live – of this I am sure”, she adds. The song is composed for soprano and orchestra, and the lyrics are strikingly suitable as a depiction of her life-long struggle to realize her potential to become a recognised composer: “Resolve to be thyself; and know that he, who finds himself, loses his misery!”, the song ends. *Self-dependence* was soon forgotten, however, and despite her many achievements, Lund’s legacy turned out quite differently. Because of her decision to become a member of the Norwegian national socialist party, *Nasjonal Samling*, from 1935–1945, she has deliberately been excluded from the historiography of Norwegian music. After the war, Lund was convicted for treason, and she was prohibited from composing or getting her music performed. Since then, her reputation has remained damaged, and it is still controversial to perform her music.

In this paper I discuss Signe Lund in her role as a female composer, particularly focusing on how she acted in relation to the dominating preconditions, limits, and expectations that a female composer of the early 20th-century would have met. In this context, *Self-dependence* is used as a springboard that might open for deeper insights and further questions regarding the biography, aesthetics, and reception of Signe Lund as a female composer.

Ingrid Skovdahl is a master student at the Department of Musicology, University of Oslo. She holds a bachelor’s degree in musicology from Uppsala University. Her main field of interest is the history of Scandinavian 19th and 20th century-music, with a particular focus on aspects such as music and ideology, politics, and gender. Her bachelor thesis treated the politicised celebrations of Edvard Grieg’s centennial in Oslo in 1943. Currently, she is writing a master thesis about the Norwegian composer Signe Lund.

Christine Hamm, UiB

Finding a voice: Nina Grieg and Camilla Collett

In most reviews of concerts with Nina Grieg, critics praise the “simplicity” of her voice and her “natural” singing. Was this only because Nina, with her own words, lacked voice-training and musical education? I will show that finding a voice was a special challenge to women in the second half of the 19th century, and that they struggled to defeat theatricality. The situation of Nina Grieg will be compared to the one Camilla Collett describes as typical for Norwegian women with ambitions at the time, in her famous novel *The District Governor’s Daughters* (1854/55).

Christine Hamm is a professor of Scandinavian literature at the University of Bergen. She has published books on Amalie Skram and Sigrid Undset.

Jill Halstead, UiB

***“Men compose symphonies, women compose babies”:* Reflections on genre and gender in late 20th century classical music**

In this paper I will explore how the discourse surrounding gender and genius continued to impact on the work of women composers in the late 20th century. Focusing on the work of two British women symphonists, I will examine the ways in which traditional gender roles were reinforced through musical practices more broadly and through the framing of musical genres specifically. I will argue that the gendered tropes of musical genre circulating during this era played a key role in perpetuating beliefs of women’s artistic inferiority which were operationalized through the fields of musicology and psychology.

Jill Halstead is professor in musicology and music therapy at the University of Bergen. She has published the book *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, which explores the physiological, social, and political factors that have inhibited women from pursuing careers as composers.

Erlend Hovland, NMH

Why have there been no great women composer in Norway: On reading Linda Nochlin in 2021

This paper is a presentation of an on-going research and pedagogical project in which the Norwegian music history is presented as a history of women composers and musicians. The institutionalization of music seen from the perspective of Norwegian women is creating a different picture, exhibiting power structures and ideologies, tampering with the Helden-Geschichte that distinguishes the official Norwegian narrative of its music history.

Erlend Hovland is professor in musicology at the Norwegian Music Academy, Oslo. He has published widely on music aesthetics, the history of orchestration, Norwegian music history, and music historiography. He is also editor of the journal *music+practice*.