



## **Feminist musical engagements**

The struggle against gender inequalities in  
music-making practices

av

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## Abstract

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The debate around gender equality and feminist concerns in relation to musical life are increasingly part of Swedish public discourse. Attention directed to structural gender inequalities in various music scenes by feminist associations, governmental intervention in these issues, and the recent #metoo-protests against sexual harassment and violence in the music industries, are all part of this. Based on interviews with musicians engaging in affecting change, who start out from a gendered perspective, this thesis explores the feminist political potential of both music-making and organisational work to combat inequalities in relation to music, and focuses on several features of such an engagement: the negotiating character of relating to gendering categories as part of feminist attempts to transform music; the relation between power structures and musical performance by discussing embodied practices and musical material concerned with feminist social commentary and what these *do* politically; and feminist approaches to practice beyond notions of gender equality as representation. The theoretical concept of *affective dissonance* is used to shed light on musicians' self-reflective negotiations with social power structures and how these negotiations produce a specific potential for collective feminist action and solidarity within and across music environments. The musicians interviewed are active in various music scenes, from opera, jazz and blues, *visa*, new music composition and sound art to *dansband*, rap and folk music and they all engage in different ways with both notions and practices of gender-related and feminist transformation in music-making. This thesis examines the interrelated aspects of such an engagement, of individual experiences of sexism, gender power dynamics and social-professional relationships, musical performance and material, and collective feminist ambitions and capacity in music practice.

*Keywords:* Music-making, feminism, gender equality, affective solidarity, Swedish music.

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